

THE DISTRICT MESSENGER

The Newsletter of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London
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Some news that didn't make its way into the last DM. Among those invested at the Baker Street Irregulars' dinner on the 6th January were Kathryn White ("The Musgrave Ritual") and David Stuart Davies ("Sir Ralph Musgrave"). Bob Katz received the Two-Shilling Award.

I omitted to note the death last month of Peter Cook, who was, as Barry Took observed, a nice man and a very funny man, but the worst Sherlock Holmes ever (in **The Hound of the Baskervilles**, 1978). He redeemed himself with a lovely cameo in **Without a Clue** (1988), as the editor of **The Strand Magazine**. Steven Emmons, whose superb paintings and prints were a feature of the festivities in New York, also died last month. So did Arthur H. Lewis, a stalwart of the Sons of the Copper Beeches of Philadelphia, who featured largely in his fine detective story **Copper Beeches**; he also wrote the classic **Lament for the Molly Maguires**.

I couldn't give a price last time for **It's a Print! Detective Fiction from Page to Screen** (Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1994). Now I can. It's \$18.95 paperback, or \$46.95 hardback. Recommended. Philip J. Attwell sends notice of a couple of graphic novels: **The Lost World** (Millennium Comics; about £3.10) and **Sherlock Holmes: The Soul of the Dragon** (Northstar Comics; £6.20). One I missed earlier is **Sherlock Holmes in Orbit**, a collection of science-fiction tales published last February by DAW Books of New York at \$5.50.

In November Chivers Press Ltd (Windsor Bridge Road, Bath BA2 SAX) published **The Hound of the Baskervilles** in large print at £6.95. From Penguin Books, as Puffin Classics (27 Wrights Lane, London W8 5TZ) come: **Extraordinary Cases of Sherlock Holmes** (January; £3.50), **Great Adventures of Sherlock Holmes** (March; £3.50), **Mysterious Adventures of Sherlock Holmes** (April; £3.50). Also from Penguin, as a Level 3 Penguin Reader (Bath Road, Harmondsworth, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 ODA): **Sherlock Holmes and the Mystery of Boscombe Pool** (March; £1.70). Other school textbooks are **Three Sherlock Holmes Adventures** (Nelson ELT, 100 Avenue Road, London NW3 3HF; February, £1.45), and **Sherlock Holmes and the Jewel and other short plays** (Sangam Books Ltd, 57 London Fruit Exchange, Brushfield Street, London E1 6EP; January, £3.25). In May, Wordsworth Editions Ltd (Cumberland House, Crib Street, Ware, Herts. SG12 9ET) will publish **The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes** in hardback at £3.99, containing **A Study in Scarlet**, **The Sign of Four**, **The Adventures** and **The Memoirs**. **The Return of Sherlock Holmes** (also including **The Hound of the Baskervilles**) follows in June, and **The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes** (everything else) in August.

This month sees **Sherlock Holmes and the Houdini Birthright** by Val Andrews (Breese Books, 164 Kensington Park Road, London W11 2ER; £5.99). Next month there's the first hardback edition of **Sherlock Holmes and the Hellbirds** by Austin Mitchelson and Nicholas Utechin (Ian Henry Publications Ltd (20 Park Drive, Romford RM1 4LH; £14.99), as well as **The Sherlock Holmes IQ Book** by Eamonn Butler and Pirie Madsen (Pan Books Ltd, Cavaye Place, London SW10 9PB; £3.99). Peter Blau notes that **Evolution**, a

Doctor Who adventure by John Peel (Virgin Publishing Ltd, 332 Ladbroke Grove, London W10 5AH; 1994, £4.99) involves the Doctor and Sarah Jane with Arthur Conan Doyle, Rudyard Kipling and the Hound of the Baskervilles.

The Sherlock Holmes Encyclopedia by Matthew E. Bunson (Pavilion Books Ltd, 26 Upper Ground, London SE1 9PD; 6th April, £19.99) was first published in America as **The Encyclopedia Sherlockiana**. The change makes nonsense of Mr Bunson's reference to "the brilliant work of the same name by Jack Tracy". This new book is not a replacement for Tracy's **Encyclopaedia Sherlockiana**, but rather a complement to it, as it covers (or makes a pretty good try at covering) the whole phenomenon of Sherlock Holmes, including stage, film, TV and radio, scholarship, parody and pastiche. Jack Tracy is a perfectionist, and his proof-reading is impeccable. That can't be said of Mr Bunson and his publishers: typos and minor errors are rife. The funniest compares Lord Mount-James to an undertaker's mule instead of a mute (p.173)! Others, more or less random: Jephro Rucastle's chin, described as hairy rather than heavy (p.217); the notice that "The Red Haired League is Dissolved" (p.209); the publication of "A Scandal in Bohemia" in **The Strand Magazine** in July 1881 (p.253); the apparent founding by me of The Solar Pond Society of London (p.323) (*need I explain that it's actually the Solar Pons Society of London?*)...

There's at least one less trivial error: John Bennett Shaw was not a founder of the Baker Street Irregulars, as the jacket proclaims, nor even an early member (p.20). The list of Sherlockian societies is a grand idea, but the arrangement is very unhelpful. Well, enough carping. Matthew Bunson has worked hard to produce **The Sherlock Holmes Encyclopedia**, and for all its flaws the result is a valuable reference tool, deserving John Bennett Shaw's enthusiastic foreword. I shall make frequent use of it, and I'm sure that others will too.

Another important addition to Holmesian scholarship is June Thomson's **Holmes and Watson: a Study in Friendship** (Constable & Co. Ltd, 3 The Lanchesters, 162 Fulham Palace Road, London W6 9ER; 20th March, £15.99). Two of Miss Thomson's three volumes of pastiches have included as appendices scholarly essays on aspects of the Baker Street establishment. Now we find that she has been working away at the first comprehensive biographical survey of the detective and the doctor in years (I except John Hall's **I Remember the Date Very Well**, which is essentially chronological). Like the classic works of Blakeney, Brend, Starrett and others, June Thomson's book is aimed at the general reader; like theirs, it must quickly be recognised as an admirable contribution to the Higher Scholarship. The publisher describes the book as a "fictional biography"; I prefer to reserve the term for works like Baring-Gould's **Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street**, which contain as much invention as investigation. **Holmes and Watson: a Study in Friendship** is a prime example of scholarship lightly worn. Fascinating, readable and highly recommended.

Sherlock Holmes and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in Edinburgh by Charles Hall and Peter Blythe (Charles Hall, 12 Paisley Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 7JW; £4.95 + 50p postage) is both a light-hearted survey of the numerous appearances of Holmes in plays at the Edinburgh Festival in the 1980s and 1990s and a look at his creator's connections with the city (including the different ways in which Edinburgh remembers its famous son - Quiz Night at the Conan Doyle pub must be quite an experience). Charles Hall's own inimitable cartoons and caricatures add to the fun, and anyone interested in Conan Doyle, Edinburgh or Sherlock Holmes on stage will find this

nicely produced little book worth while.

Ian Henry Publications Ltd (20 Park Drive, Romford RM1 4LH) have a new catalogue out. Forthcoming, besides **Sherlock Holmes and the Hellbirds**, are Ernest Dudley's acting edition of **The Return of Sherlock Holmes**, Glen Petrie's new Mycroft Holmes novel **The Hampstead Poisonings**, and Patricia Guy's **Bacchus in Baker Street**, a study of drink and drinking in the Canon. (*Ian notes that the Canadian bookshop Sleuth of Baker Street has moved to 1600 Bayview Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M4G 3B7.*)

Both volumes of the BBC Radio 4 production **His Last Bow**, with Clive Merrison and Michael Williams, are out now. (BBC Enterprises, 80 Wood Lane, London W12 OTT; ZBBC 1603 and ZBBC 1607; £7.99 each.) Alas, the copy of volume 1 sent to me, although it's all labelled correctly, actually contains recordings from **The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes**, but I can tell you that the plays featured on the two cassettes in volume 2 are well up to the standard set by **A Study in Scarlet** back in 1989. "The Dying Detective" is particularly interesting, as Edward Petherbridge is allowed to play Culverton Smith as a rather admirable character, driven to murder by his nephew's callous greed; it makes for a more complex interplay of personalities than the original, and is, I think, justified. The script is credited to one Robert Forrest, a name new to me. Either Bert Coules is using a pseudonym or Robert Forrest is making good use of Bert's sometimes daring techniques. Performances, production and all are first rate. The first part of **The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes** is now being broadcast, so we haven't long to go before this brave project is complete.

The Sherlock Holmes Gift Pack reviewed in DM 147 (Hodder Headline Audiobooks, 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH; £19.99) is actually entitled **The Best of Sherlock Holmes**. These three double-cassettes featuring John Gielgud and Ralph Richardson are available separately at £7.99 each, and a final volume will be released in April. **The Treasury of Sherlock Holmes**, a 4-cassette pack of readings by Ben Kingsley, is due for release in September by Redback Audiobooks at £9.99 (Pickwick House, The Waterfront, Elstree Road, Elstree, Borehamwood, Herts. WD6 3BS).

The excellent **Sherlock Holmes Video** reviewed in DM 147 (Countryside TV Productions, Chargot Manor, Luxborough, Watchet, Somerset TA23 OSL; £12.99 + £1.00 postage) is currently available overseas by post in NTSC format at £14.99 + £5.00. However, it will soon be available direct from Classic Specialties, Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH 45219. A. Stobie reminds me that Buster Keaton's classic silent comedy **Sherlock Junior** (some distance from Conan Doyle, but wonderful anyway) is out on video from Virgin Vision at £6.99. Jonathan Timby (4 Wenlock Close, Giltbrook, Nottingham NG16 2WF) asks if anyone can provide him with a video recording of **The Triumph of Sherlock Holmes**.

Demand for our Society's tapes of unabridged readings by Douglas Wilmer has, it seems, been heavier than expected. Those who have not yet received their orders are asked to be patient. The tapes are well worth the wait, believe me! (They cost £5.50 each. Orders should be sent to Mrs E.M. Godden, Apple Tree Cottage, Smarden, Ashford, Kent TN27 8QE.) New from the Society is a version of the umbrella with a crook handle in solid chestnut. Cost is: UK £24.50; Europe £25.50; USA (surface) \$45.00; elsewhere (surface) £25.50. Cheques should be payable to The Sherlock Holmes Society of London.

Hallmark Cards have produced a birthday card with a "secret message" and a magnifying-glass to find and decode it. Sherlock Holmes is on the front,

holding the glass, and for the impatient the message is spelled out on the back. We found it at £1.10. We've had a flyer advertising **The Game's Afoot Playing Cards** (Spradlin & Associates, P.O. Box 863, Lapeer, MI 48446, USA; \$12.00 + \$3.30 per order). Each number card has a quotation from the Canon, and each court card bears a Paget illustration (this information sits rather oddly with the King of Spades shown, which clearly bears an illustration by F.D. Steele).

Malcolm Payne, Curator of the Conan Doyle (Crowborough) Establishment, tells of a forthcoming centenary history of the Crowborough Beacon Golf Club, of which Sir Arthur and Lady Conan Doyle were leading members. Price is likely to be about £10.00 plus postage. The Establishment is researching "the noisy electric monorail" that ACD erected at Undershaw c. 1898. Does anyone have any information? The Establishment has lost the use of the room at the Crowborough Cross Inn, but the Town Council has promised space in the proposed Town Museum. Malcolm can be contacted at 4 Wealden Close, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 2ST (phone 01892 663021). If you want a postal reply, please enclose a stamp or IRCs. The Establishment still offers Associate Membership for an annual donation of £10.00 or US\$20.00 (currency) /US\$24.00 (check) or equivalent.

The Poor Folk Upon the Moors have a new Secretary, Shelley Philipson (4 Dolvin Road, Tavistock, Devon PL19 9EA; phone 01822 615707); her husband Mike has taken on the role of Social Secretary. The Poor Folk's next meeting will be a debate on April 8th at the Dartmouth Inn, Totnes, and the event of the season is the "Appledore Towers" summer ball on June 10th at the Lord Haldon Hotel, Dunchideock, Exeter.

Jeremy Brett is recovering well from a recent severe illness and will not be able to attend **Aspects of Holmes III: A Study in Scotland**, the Northern Musgraves summer weekend on the 6th - 8th May. Even so, a good time is promised (details from David Stuart Davies, Overdale, 69 Greenhead Road, Huddersfield HD1 4ER). On March 19th the Franco-Midland Hardware Company will be in Manchester investigating the possibility of Holmes attending Manchester University - as Roger Dobson suggested a few years ago ("The Stock-broker's Clerk", 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU). On March 26th the Priory Scholars have a case study day on "The Crooked Man" (Horace L. Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY).

Periodicals received: **Communication** no. 146 (The Pleasant Places of Florida, Dr Benton Wood, Box 740, Ellenton, FL 34222, USA); **The School Report** no. 20 (The Priory Scholars of Leicester, Horace L. Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY); **The Devon County Chronicle** vol. XXX no. 4 (The Merripit House Guests, Robert W. Hahn, 2707 South 7th Street, Sheboygan, WI 53081, USA); **The Petrel Flyer** vol. 7 no. 1 (The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C. V7P 3C6, Canada); **The Baker Street Journal** vol. 44 no. 4 (P.O. Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, USA); **Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press** Jan. 95 and Feb. 95 (Peter E. Blau, 3900 Tunlaw Road NW #119, Washington, DC 20007-4830, USA), **The Parallelogram**, Jan. 1995 (The Parallel Case of St Louis, Joseph J. Eckrich, 914 Oakmoor, Fenton, MO 63026, USA).

This issue was complete when we learned from David Stuart Davies of the death of Stanley MacKenzie, a sad loss to our Society and the BSI.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. J. P.' or similar, written in a cursive style.