

THE DISTRICT MESSENGER

The Newsletter of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London
Roger Johnson, Mole End, 41 Sandford Road, Chelmsford CM2 6DE

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We have lost two great actors this month. Sir Michael Hordern, who died on the 2nd May aged 83, had a wonderful gift for comedy, but was also the finest King Lear of our time. His was the narrator's voice, as the adult Watson in **Young Sherlock Holmes**. Eric Porter, who was only 67 when he died on the 16th May, will be best remembered as Soames Forsyte, but he too was a formidable classical actor; like Hordern, he was an outstanding Lear under Jonathan Miller's direction. We shall remember him as the best Moriarty ever, opposite Jeremy Brett's Holmes in Granada's **The Final Problem**.

Has anyone seen or heard anything of Stephen ("Grüner") Farrell since Christmas? Please contact me if you have.

In **The Death and Life of Sherlock Holmes** (Anchorage Press Inc., Cressrelles Publishing Co. Ltd, 10 Station Road Industrial Estate, Colwall, Malvern, Worcs. WR13 6RN; £5.00) Susan Zeder presents a rather surreal account of the relationship between the detective and his creator. The play opens with Holmes, Watson and Conan Doyle (as Colonel Moran) enacting the events of "The Empty House". It concludes with the three playing out "The Final Problem" (Conan Doyle is now Moriarty - I hope you're following this), having taken in "The Speckled Band" (guess who is Roylott...). The moving force in all this is Conan Doyle's daughter Mary; it's she, not he, who thinks that Holmes takes his mind from better things, and encourages him to kill his creation, It's an ingenious play, aimed at children, though I see no reason why it shouldn't work for adults, except for the Americanisms that masquerade as British English. The dislocation of chronology is rather disconcerting too. (The proof-reading is rotten.)

Val Andrews' latest novel, **Sherlock Holmes and the Houdini Birthright** Breese Books Ltd, 164 Kensington Park Road, London W11 2ER; £5.99), is a clever story, as we've come to expect from Mr Andrews, but the book is not one of his best. It opens with an elderly Holmes and Watson assisting Harry Houdini to expose a fraudulent medium for the benefit of Sir Arthur and Lady Conan Doyle, a gesture which the couple find offensive. A few years later Holmes is called upon to investigate the magician's death, a case which takes him to the United States, Canada and Hungary. Unfortunately, the two parts of the story sit very uneasily together, and the idea of Houdini at the centre of a Ruritanian romance is hard to swallow (though Mr Andrews states that the clues presented are authentic). The basis of the final revelation was handled better in the author's earlier novel **Sherlock Holmes and the Wood Green Empire Mystery**; as it's presented here, it seems rather insulting to Rabbi and Mrs Weiss, Houdini's parents. I should add that the narrative kept me reading to the end, to find out what happened next. Val Andrews is offering inscribed copies at £6.50 including postage (\$12 US airmail), if ordered direct from him at 1 George Court, 67 Willoughby Lane, London N17 0QZ.

In Pursuit of Lewis Carroll by Raphael Shaberman (Greenwich Exchange, 50

Langton Way, Blackheath, London SE3 7TJ; £14.95) is something different again. The author, a noted Carroll authority who has the right balance of scholarship and fantastical humour, offers new information and deductions in the form of conversations between himself and Sherlock Holmes (it was W.S. Baring-Gould who claimed that Holmes had known Dodgson at Christ Church, Oxford). It's a very convenient and effective way of presenting what amounts to a detective story, but not a solemn one (it would be a different matter if we were investigating the Ripper murders - or perhaps that's not a good example, as one of the book's revelations is that Lewis Carroll actually did take an interest in that case). This is not pastiche in the usual sense of the word, and Mr Shaberman is not tied to imitating the Doyle/Watson style, which helps. There's a number of unfamiliar and intriguing illustrations, including one by ACD's father Charles Doyle, for an 1877 "Alice" parody. It's all quite fascinating.

Une bibliographie des oeuvres d'Arthur Conan Doyle traduites en périodiques 1894-1914 by Jean-Luc Buard, with numerous illustrations, is available at 60 FF + 15 FF from Xavier Legrand-Ferroniere, 38 avenue du Marechal-Joffre, 92190 Meudon, France. Published last September was the 2nd edition of John Cooper and Barry Pike's **Detective Fiction: A Collector's Guide** (Scolar Press, Gower House, Croft Road, Aldershot, Hants. GU11 3HR; £39.50). In February Nelson ELT published **Three Sherlock Holmes Adventures** by Arthur Conan Doyle, as a Nelson Graded Reader (100 Avenue Road, London NW3 3HF; £1.45). In March Penguin issued **Sherlock Holmes and the Mystery of Boscombe Pool** as a Penguin Reader, Level 3 (Bath Road, Harmondsworth, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 ODA; £1.70), This month Wordsworth began publication in hardback of their three-volume edition of the canon, with **The Adventures** at £3.99 (Cumberland House, Crib Street, Ware. Herts. SG12 9ET), From Wordsworth in April came **The Lost World** at £1.00. Alan Sutton published the same title in February at £5.99, and an edition edited by Ian Duncan comes from Oxford University Press this month at £4.99.

Also this month Studio Editions publish **The Complete Illustrated Sherlock Holmes** at £5.99. From Hearthstone Publications in June comes **Best Sherlock Holmes Stories** by Arthur Conan Doyle, in hardback at £22.00 and paperback at £9.50. Hearthstone plan **The Collected Brigadier Gerard Stories** for the same month at the same price. **The Complete Brigadier Gerard Stories**, edited by Owen Dudley Edwards, was published by Canongate in April at £4.99. Last December Rosemary Jann's **Adventures of Sherlock Holmes: Detecting Social Order** was published by Twayne Publishers at £10.95 hardback and £6.95 paperback.

The next Musgrave Monograph, in the autumn, will be **The Misadventure of the Sherlock Holmes Pilot**, in which Richard Lancelyn Green examines the circumstances surrounding the pilot for what would have been the first Sherlock Holmes TV series, **The Man Who Disappeared**, drawing on Denis Conan Doyle's correspondence. Information from the Northern Musgraves, Overdale, 69 Greenhead Road, Huddersfield HD1 4ER. **The Blood-Stone Tragedy** is a Conan Doyle story, published anonymously in 1884 and never since reprinted. Now the Arthur Conan Doyle Society offers a hardbound edition, edited and introduced by Christopher and Barbara Roden, with an afterword by Owen Dudley Edwards, at £13.50 or US\$23.00 or Can\$30.00 plus postage (per book - UK £1.65; Europe £2.50; N. America £4.25/US\$7.25/Can\$9.35; elsewhere £4.90/US\$8.35/Can\$10.80). Orders with full payment should be sent to the Society at Ashcroft, 2 Abbottsford Drive, Penyffordd, Chester CH4 0JG.

Colin Huggett (Y Bwthyn, Dob, Tregarth, Gwynedd LL57 4PW, Wales) has a number of Holmesian books for sale. Send him a stamped, self-addressed envelope for details. Catalogues are available from: Gravesend Books (Box 235, Pocono Pines, PA 18350, USA); Sherlock in LA (1741 Via Allena, Oceanside, CA 92056, USA) (*Catalogue no. 11 contains essays about: Edgar W. Smith and Michael Harrison, as well as the expected list of books for sale*); The Black Cat Bookshop (36-39 Silver Arcade, Leicester LE1 5FB

The April issue of **Physics World** featured a pastiche, "Sherlock Holmes investigates the EPR paradox" by Colin Jack (it's to do with quantum theory); the cover has a nice photo of Peter Gushing and Nigel Stock.

From One Tree Publishing last December came **The Hound of the Baskervilles: A FCE Set Text Photocopiable Resource Pack** (£10.00) by Graham Palmer (no, I don't know what it is either). In June Penguin Audiobooks will issue a 2-cassette pack of **The Hound of the Baskervilles** at £7.99. An abridged reading of **The Sign of Four** is available as a Heinemann Guided Reader for £6.00. Oxford University Press, in its Bookworms series, has released recordings of **The Hound of the Baskervilles** (£7.25) and **Sherlock Holmes Short Stories** (£5.05).

Peter Blau asks if anyone recorded the episode of the TV comedy series **Get Up, Stand Up** (Channel 4) that featured Malcolm Frederick as a black Sherlock Holmes. Please let me know if you can help.

The charity MENCAP will host a Midsummer's Evening in Baker Street at the Granada Studios Tour in Manchester on Saturday 24th June. There'll be a champagne reception, formal dinner, auction of Holmesian and other memorabilia, dancing and cabaret. Tickets are £60.00 (all profits to MENCAP). B&B accommodation at the Victoria & Albert Hotel can be had at the special rate of £50.00 single or £70.00 double. Tickets and further details from Mrs Hannah Ramuz, Corporate Events Dept, MENCAP, 123 Golden Lane. London EC1Y 0RT. Shirley Purves reminds me that Ngaio Marsh's centenary fell on 23rd April this year. Dame Ngaio created Detective Inspector Roderick Alleyn, and is generally regarded as the last detective-story writer of the Golden Age. Tributes of various sorts have been held in New Zealand, England and the USA. Bouchercon 26, the 1995 World Mystery Convention, will take place at the Royal Centre Complex in Nottingham, 28th September - 1st October. Guests of Honour will be James Elroy and Colin Dexter. Details can be had from Conference Nottingham, The Business Information Centre, 309 Haydn Road, Nottingham NG5 1DG (phone 0115-985 6545; fax 0115-985 6612).

The auction of the Stanley Mackenzie Collection at Sotheby's in London has been put back to Monday 24th July, as more Holmes material (not from the collection) will also be included. Viewing will be on the previous Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, and possibly on the Sunday. Catalogues will be ready in late June. For details, call Peter Selley on 0171-408 5295. (Thanks to Jane Weller for information.)

A 1996 Sherlock Holmes calendar is now available from Cadds Printing Ltd (59 Lancaster Avenue, West Norwood, London SE27 9EL) at £6.00 (UK). Each month features a full-colour still from the Granada TV series. Cadds have a lot of other nice things for sale, including postcards, a stationery set, a ceramic tile printed with the Dorr Steele picture of Holmes at Reichenbach. The prize item is the limited edition Enamel Battersea Box, hand-painted with the same picture; the legend inside says "The Return of Sherlock Holmes 1894-1994", It's beautiful and it costs £100.00. Write for full details, including overseas prices. Francine Swift sends a photo of a

"character coat hanger" from Scupell Industries (14 Industrial Lane, Johnston, RI 02919, USA). It depicts a bloodhound's head wearing a deerstalker and smoking a calabash pipe, and sells at \$14.00. Other animals are available, including a corgi.

Our own Society has a range of merchandise available, including books, journals, the excellent Douglas Wilmer cassettes, ties, scarves and umbrellas. The latest addition is a limited reprint of Margaret Bird's 1983 Oxford handbook **A Study in Dark Blue** (UK £11.50; Europe £12.50; USA \$23.50; elsewhere £14.50 - all prices include postage). Orders and enquiries should go to Lynne Godden, Apple Tree Cottage, Smarden, Ashford, Kent TN27 8QE.

Our Society's next meeting will be the trip to Berkshire on Sunday 9th July. Meanwhile, the Irregular Special Railway Company will visit Cambridge on 3rd June, in conjunction with the East Anglian Dancing Men & Women (details from Antony Richards, 163 Marine Parade, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 2RB, or Geoff Budd, c/o School of English & American Studies, University of East Anglia, Norwich). On the 10th June the Poor Folk Upon the Moors will hold a Summer Ball at the Lord Haldon Hotel, Dunchideock, near Exeter (Mike Philipson, 4 Dolvin Road, Tavistock, Devon PL19 9EA). Over the weekend 9th-11th June the Franco-Midland Hardware Company and the Priory Scholars will be in the Peak District ("The Stock-broker's Clerk", 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU, or Horace L. Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 OFY). The Head Llamas will explore the Windsor area on the 25th June (Catherine & Alan Saunders, 12 Booth Drive, Laleham, Staines, Middlesex TW18 1PR).

Periodicals received. **The Ritual** no. 15 (The Northern Musgraves, David Stuart Davies, Overdale, 69 Greenhead Road, Huddersfield HD1 4ER) (*no longer a newsletter, it's now more accurately called a bi-annual review*); **The Torr** no. 6 (The Poor Folk Upon the Moors, Eric Monahan, Highcliff, 14 Silver Bridge Close, Broadsands Park, Paignton, Devon TQ4 7NW) (*The Poor Folk's new Secretary is Shelley Philipson, 4 Dolvin Road, Tavistock, Devon PL19 9EA*). **Ironmongers Daily Echo and Franco-Midland Branches Advertiser** 28 March 1895 (sic), and **The Army Medical Corps Gazette of the Franco-Midland Health Dpt** 29 March 1895 (sic) (La Société Sherlock Holmes de France, 26 avenue de la République, 75011 Paris, France) (*beautifully produced broadsheets*). **The Petrel Flyer** vol. 7 nos. 2 and 3 (The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C. V7P 3C6, Canada) (*the Petrels will once more host the Annual Sherlympiad on the 16th and 17th September*). **Communication** no. 149 (The Pleasant Places of Florida, Dr Benton Wood BSI, Bo 740, Ellenton, FL 34222, USA). **Canadian Holmes** vol. 13 no. 3 (The Bootmakers of Toronto, Trevor Raymond, 4 Lyons Court, Georgetown, Ontario L7G 1P1, Canada) (*many thanks to Garth Hazlett for a copy of this excellent journal*). **The Hurlstone Chronicle** vol. 5 no. 4 (The Shadows of the Elm, P.O. Drawer G, Corrales, NM 87048-0178, USA). **The Parallelogram** April 1995 (The Parallel Case of St. Louis, Joseph J. Eckrich BSI, 914 Oakmoor, Fenton, MO 63026, USA), **The Log of the Canonical Hams** July - December 1993 (sic) (Sherlock Holmes Wireless Society, Ron Fish, P.O. Box 404, Pomona, NY 10970-0404, USA) (*this is a new address for Ron and his new wife Carol*). **Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press** April 1995 (Peter E, Blau, 3900 Tunlaw Road NW #119, Washington, DC 20007-4830, USA) (*the indispensable Sherlockian newsletter*).

