

THE DISTRICT MESSENGER

The Newsletter of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London
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Ida Lupino, the lovely maiden in distress in the classic Fox film, **The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes**, opposite Rathbone and Bruce, died on the 3rd August. A fine actress, and a pioneer as a female director in Hollywood, she came of a distinguished British theatrical family. Her relations included Stanley Lupino, Lupino Lane and Lauri Lupino Lane. (*Thanks to Gerit Stenitzer for information.*)

This is a good year for Holmesian scholarship. First there was June Thomson's excellent **Holmes and Watson: A Study in Friendship** (Constable; £15.99); now we have **Unexplored Possibilities: Some Notes on the Life, Habits and Character of Dr John H. Watson** by John Hall (Tai Xu Press, 20 Drury Avenue, Horsforth, Leeds LS18 4BR; £8.95). John's chronology **I Remember the Date Very Well** (1993; Ian Henry Publications; £6.25) established him as a scholar to be reckoned with, and this new book, the first attempt at a comprehensive survey of Watson's life and career, consolidates his position. His picture of the good doctor is based firmly upon the Canon, while drawing upon the researches of earlier writers, all of them scrupulously acknowledged. The observation is sound, and the deductions sensible: I found it heartening that there is nothing controversial in the conclusions offered. All right - almost nothing: I don't think John has proved his case for Watson's middle name being Hector, but mostly he has used Occam's Razor with great care, distinguishing between the certain, the probable, the possible and the fictional. His explanation for Holmes's custody of Watson's cheque-book does no violence to the character of either and is so obviously right that I wonder why I didn't think of it. **Unexplored Possibilities** consists of 110 A4 pages, cerlox bound (I think that's the right term: it's the same format as **The Universal Sherlock Holmes**), and is available from Murder One in London and Classic Specialties in Cincinnati (or direct from the author/publisher at the above address, post-paid, cheques payable to John Hall).

Running Press (Glen House, 200-208 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9LA) has published a very nice new edition, completely reset, of **Sherlock Holmes: Two Complete Adventures**, being "The Five Orange Pips" and "The Blue Carbuncle" in a miniature hardback: 188 pages, 2" square. The excellent new illustrations are uncredited, which is a pity. The book would cost £3.50 (add £1.00 if ordering direct from Running Press).

As mentioned in DM 152, Cadds Printing Ltd (59 Lancaster Avenue, West Norwood, London SE27 9EL) has published a 20-page A5 booklet, **The Complete Set of Illustrations from The Hound of the Baskervilles** by Sidney Paget, with a brief but entertainingly personal commentary by Hugh Scullion. Unfortunately the pictures themselves are much less sharp than they should be (the result of being scanned and reproduced by computer?), but it's an interesting little item, and at £2.50 including postage won't break your bank balance. By the time you get this, Cadds' portfolio of 32 captioned cartoons (based on Paget and Steele originals) in a wallet-style 4-page

cover should be available at £20.00. I'm not terribly impressed by the standard of the artwork that I've seen for this project, nor do I find the new captions very funny, but humour is subjective after all. (*Cadds does lots of nice artistic things for Holmesians. Write for a catalogue, and do enclose postage. And do, please, mention **The District Messenger** when you make enquiries or send orders.*)

Solar Pons lives! After August Derleth died in 1971, Basil Copper was authorised to write more adventures of "the Sherlock Holmes of Praed Street", and no-one else, surely, could have captured the flavour so authentically. After numerous unforeseeable problems, Copper's complete Pontine oeuvre of 6 volumes is being published in a uniform edition by Fedogan & Bremer (603 Washington Avenue SE, 177, Minneapolis, MN 55414-2950, USA), with text restored to the author's original. **The Recollections of Solar Pons** will appear in October in an edition of 1900 copies at \$25.00 (plus a signed limited edition of 100 at \$75.00). It contains three previously unpublished stories plus one, "The Adventure of the Singular Sandwich", which suffered severe editorial alteration on its original appearance. There are fine illustrations by Stefanie Kate Hawks. Copper's preferred length is the novella: the shortest of his Pons tales is noticeably longer than the longest of August Derleth's, but the style and the substance are as close to Derleth's as we'll see. (*The Solar Pons canon is scandalously little-known in Britain, but the original tales are still, fortunately, available in **The Solar Pons Omnibus** by August Derleth, published by Arkham House Publishers Inc. of Sauk City, Wisconsin, at about \$40.00.*)

Due on the 14th September is Laurie R. King's **A Monstrous Regiment of Women** - a sequel to **The Beekeeper's Apprentice** (St Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, USA; \$22.95). Again we meet the very personable Mary Russell, a character who really does make a fit partner for the retired Sherlock Holmes. Again the style is acceptably Edwardian without being stilted, and the author clearly knows both her Conan Doyle and her English (and American) social history. This is a complex tale, involving spiritualism, socialism and theology, murder, kidnapping and London fog. It's neatly constructed and well told - though the last sentence will boggle many a Holmesian's mind, as it boggled mine. Sherlock Holmes married? Never! (The author will be in England September to December, Ask St Martin's Press for details.)

Barbara & Christopher Roden are following up the deserved success of their Ash Tree Press imprint (ghost stories) with the Calabash Press (Ashcroft, 2 Abbotsford Drive, Penyffordd, Chester CH4 0JG), whose first publication will be a new edition of David Stuart Davies's **The Tangled Skein** (15th October; £14.95). Christopher says, "Calabash Press will not be concentrating on pastiche... our main series, to be launched in the spring of next year, will be 'The Case Files of Sherlock Holmes', a series which will look at individual cases through the eyes of various invited contributors. The first 'Case File' is to be 'The Musgrave Ritual'..." (*I've long regretted that Magico's "Reflections on..." series never made it beyond one volume, and this project looks set to fill the gap. Good news all round.*)

Dixon Smith of Rupert Books sends information about **The Botanical Holmes: A Monograph on Plants in the Time of Sherlock Holmes**, vol. 6 in Donald Girard Jewell's Sherlock Holmes Natural History Series. Rupert don't plan to stock this one, but it's available from Pinchin Lane Press (4685 Geeting Road, Westminster, MD 21158, USA) at \$16.95 + postage, It's a

limited edition of 100. Other new titles: **Sherlock Holmes and the Devil's Grail** by Barrie Roberts (Constable; July; £14.99); **The New Windmill Book of Sherlock Holmes Short Stories** by Arthur Conan Doyle (Heinemann; May; £4.50); **A Study in Surmise** by Michael Harrison (Gaslight Pubs.; July; £20.00); **Subcutaneously, My Dear Watson: Sherlock Holmes & the Cocaine Habit** by Jack Tracy & Jim Berkey (Gaslight; July; £10.00); **Nova 57 Minor: The Waxing & Waning of the 61st Adventure of Sherlock Holmes** by Jon L. Lellenberg (Gaslight; July; £20.00); **Myth & Modern Man in Sherlock Holmes: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the Uses of Nostalgia** by David S. Payne (Gaslight; July; £26.00). (*This new availability of Gaslight's titles is Good News!*)

Forbes Gibb (29 Falkland Street, Hyndland, Glasgow G12 9QZ) has a new list of detective fiction available. **Catalogue Dexter** can be had for 2 first class stamps or 2 International Reply Coupons. The same applies to his next Sherlock Holmes catalogue, due in November. **Catalogue 6060** from Ergo Books (46 Lisburne Road, London NW3 2NR) has 150 Holmesian & Doylean items. Some are pretty rare, and the prices reflect this.

(*Richard Lancelyn Green writes to say that despite the listing in DM 152 he is not now and never has been a book-dealer.*)

A reminder that the John Bennett Shaw Library will be dedicated during the course of a weekend of scholarship and frivolity at the Holiday Inn Metrodome in Minneapolis, from the 13th to 15th October. The overall title is **Sherlock Holmes & John Bennett Shaw: The Detective & the Collector**; there may still be places, though it's unlikely. Details from Registrar 2207, University of Minnesota, Professional Development, 235 Nolte Center, 315 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455-0139 (fax 612-626 1632).

(*It's been said that "Unfortunately, there will be no great Holmesian or Doylean scholars involved in the learned presentations at the conference, with the singular exception of Mr Richard Lancelyn Green." That statement manages to insult Derham Groves, Jennie C. Paton, Enola Stewart and Stefanie K. Hawks, as well as the organisers and John's beloved Baker Street Irregulars. Besides, it misses the important point that those invited are people who knew and loved John, and who share his view that scholarship is less important than friendship and a simple love of Sherlock Holmes and Arthur Conan Doyle.*)

Graham Sudbury has found some interesting information in the new **Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature**: "The other Holmes novels include **The Mystery of Cloomber** (1889), **The Sign of Four** (1890), **The Doings of Raffles Haw** (1892), **The Hound of the Baskervilles** (1902), and **The Valley of Fear** (1915)." (*If you can't trust Webster's, who can you trust?*)

Kevin Jacklin tells me that **West End Adventures**, the 4th supplement to the **Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective** is now out from Chessex of Berkeley, California, at \$25.00. It should soon be available from hobby games shops here, "or try mail-order from Esdevium Games in Aldershot (01252 311443)." Philip J. Attwell points out that the autumn catalogue from Past Times (Witney, Oxford OX8 6BH; phone 01993 770441) features a nice Sherlock Holmes chess set at £84.95 (board: £39.95; pieces & board £110.00). (*Past Times shops are always fun to browse in; there should be one within reasonably easy reach of you.*)

Philip also discovered two recent pieces in The Times. On the 19th August we learned that a new species of pterodactyl has been found in Brazil, and

named **Arthurdactylus Conan-doylei**. The property pages on the 16th state that Crowsley Park House near Henley-on-Thames (for sale through Knight Frank & Rutley) was sold in 1845 "to Henry Baskerville, a keen plantsman whose name was borrowed by his neighbour Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, for his classic Sherlock Holmes novel." (*News to me - and to you, I expect.*)

Gerit Stenitzer points out that David Burke (Granada's first Dr Watson) is currently starring at the Fortune Theatre in London in Stephen Mallatratt's marvellous play **The Woman in Black**, adapted from Susan Hill's ghost story.

Comic book fans will probably be attending the UK Comic Art Convention in London on the 29th September. A principal speaker will be Paul S. Newman, "King of the Comic Book Writers", whose thousands of scripts include many for Sherlock Holmes. Mr Newman may have an evening free to chat to a group of Sherlockians over the first 3 days of October. He can be contacted at 10622 Green Mountain Circle, Columbia, MD 21044, USA (phone 410-992 4509).

Re last month's auction of the Stanley MacKenzie Collection, Robert C. Hess (559 Potter Blvd, Brightwaters, NY 11718, USA) says, "I would be interested in hearing from anyone who was successful on lots no. 165 -no. 193, if they have items from those lots to sell or trade. I am especially interested in the bookplates offered in lot no. 193."

From Peter Blau: "The manuscript of 'The Three Garridebs' (22 leaves, signed twice by Arthur Conan Doyle) went to auction at the Superior Galleries in Beverly Hills on June 24, and was sold to a private collector for \$97,750 (including the 15% buyer's premium)."

Over the weekend 8th-10th September, our Society will visit Southsea, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight. It promises to be one of the highlights of this year of '95. Over the same weekend, the Franco-Midland Hardware Company will go to Belgium (details from The Stockbroker's Clerk, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU). On the 17th, the Priory Scholars of Leicester are invited to show their least favourite video clips (Horace L. Coates, 21 Butcombe Road; Leicester LE4 0FY).

Periodicals received. The summer issue of **The Sherlock Holmes Journal** and the excellent **Back to Baker Street** supplement (*thanks to Anthea Sinclair & Richard Green for the supplement, and to Nick Utechin & Heather Owen for the SHJ*). **The Pleasant Places of Florida Communication** no. 1.52 (Dr Benton Wood BSI, Box 740, Ellenton, FL 34222, USA) (*I must try Joan Wood's recipe for Yorkshire pudding*). **The New Baker Street Pillar Box** no. 23 (The Franco-Midland Hardware Company, The Stock-broker's Clerk, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU) (controversial as usual; June Thomson contributes an exceptionally interesting piece about the chronology in her book **Holmes and Watson**, but on the other hand to announce the formation of a Liverpool subsidiary of the FMHC with "At last! It has finally been revealed that there is Holmesian scholarly interest North of Leicester!" is a crass insult to the likes of George Welch and John Hall - to name but two northern scholars. Rich, even by FMHC standards*). **Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press** July 1995 (Peter E. Blau BSI, 3900 Tunlaw Road NW #119, Washington, DC 20007-4830) (*the indispensable Sherlockian newsletter*).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Peter E. Blau', written in a cursive style.