

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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Too quickly after the death of Jeremy Brett came the news that David Healy died on the 25th October, aged 64. An American resident in England, he was equally at ease playing Britons and Americans. By an ironic coincidence, his one venture into Holmesiana is newly reissued on video. This is **The Sign of Four**, in which Healy was Watson to Ian Richardson's splendid Holmes.

Gerit Stenitzer reports that both this and Richardson's other Holmes movie, **The Hound of the Baskervilles** (with the late Donald Churchill as Watson), can be had from Virgin at £6.99 each. Brian Pugh adds that the classic silent version of **The Lost World**, with Wallace Beery as Challenger, is on sale at about £6.00 at Virgin, and that Volume 1 bookshops stock all three. Check out your local video store.

Jessica McMahon wants to obtain video recordings of Granada's **The Second Stain** and **The Priory School**. If you can sell or lend copies to her, please write to me in the first instance. Thanks.

Published this last week was Patricia Guy's **Bacchus at Baker Street: Observations on the Bibulous Preferences of Mr Sherlock Holmes and His Contemporaries** (Ian Henry Publications Ltd, 20 Park Lane, Romford RM1 4LH; £9.95). Ms Guy speculates with expert authority on the wines, beers and spirits mentioned or implied in the Holmesian Canon, setting the references firmly in their historical context. She goes into fascinating detail on the different kinds of drink, native and imported, good and bad, strong and weak. She also provides recipes, some of them very tempting, for Victorian mixed drinks, for medicinal brews, and for domestic tipples. I only drink the stuff, and for the most part I'm happy to take Ms Guy's expertise on trust. If she says that the Chianti kept by Thaddeus Sholto was Frescobaldo di Nipozzano, then it was. This is admirable material in a nicely produced paperback format. Some stray typos should have been caught, though. Joseph Stangerson's name is given throughout as "Strangerson", and the Scowrsers become "Scowsers" - which raises the possibility that they travelled from Ireland by way of Liverpool. Recommended, nonetheless.

I'm not quite sure what to make of **Artists in Crime: An Illustrated Survey of Crime Fiction First Edition Dust Wrappers 1920-1970** by John Cooper and B.A. Pike (Scholar Press, Gower House, Croft Road, Aldershot, Hants. GU11 3HR; phone 01252 331551), It's an offshoot of the authors' near-definitive **Detective Fiction: The Collector's Guide**, but its subject is really very specialist. Yes, I did find it extremely interesting, but for the very high price of £49.50 the publishers should have been able to print the illustrations in colour throughout, instead of restricting the colour to just 12 pages. The only direct Holmesian relevance, by the way, is in Joseph Abbey's cover to the first edition of **The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes** (shown in black & white). Collectors of crime and detective fiction will enjoy this book, but they may want to request it through their local

library rather than buying it. **Artists in Crime** is due for publication in December.

The Bookstore at our local branch of Debenham's has had copies of **The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes** reduced from £4.99 to £2.50. This is the Bloomsbury Books hardback, not the Penguin paperback, and the text is that of the standard Doubleday edition, so even at £4.99 it's a considerable bargain.

Michael Connolly has a new booklist available, featuring hardbacks, paperbacks, journals and magazines. The new edition of David Stuart Davies's **The Tangled Skein** tops the list, at £14.95 plus postage. Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Michael at Tirgarve, Allistragh, Armagh, BT61 8EZ, Northern Ireland. There's also a new catalogue from The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box, including the first volumes in the Vincent Starrett Memorial Library, August Derleth's **Collected Poems**, Peter H. Wood's splendid Holmesian mystery **The Winged Wheel**, a very welcome English translation of Zeus Weinstein's **Sherlock Holmes: The Truth about Ludwig II**, a new edition of **The Martyrdom of Man** - and much, much more. Send an SSAE or two International Reply Coupons to George A. Vanderburgh, P.O. Box 204, 420 Owen Sound Street, Shelburne, Ontario L0N 1S0, Canada.

John Hoath sends an extract from the 1995 catalogue of the French publisher Librio ("Le livre à 10F"). Featured are five Holmes collections beginning with **Sherlock Holmes 1: La bande mouchetée, et trois autre récits**, and concluding with **Sherlock Holmes 5: Les six Napoléons, et trois autre récits**. Unfortunately I have no address for the publisher.

Philip Weller points out that Conan Doyle and Fletcher Robinson actually stayed at the Royal Links Hotel in Cromer, not at the Links Hotel in West Runton (see DM 154). Since the destruction of the former by fire some 50 years ago, the Doylean connection has come, erroneously, to be associated with the latter. Well, the Links is still a nice place to stay, in a delightful part of the country, near sites with genuine Doylean and Holmesian connections.

Some of the early Talking Classics recordings have been repackaged, without the informative magazine, as Classics On Tape, and can now be found in various bargain bookshops at about £1.99. Among them is Peter Egan's rather disappointing abridged reading of **The Hound of the Baskervilles**. The publisher is Blitz Editions, trading as Bookmark Ltd, Desford Road, Enderby, Leicester LE9 5AD.

Philip Attwell brought back a lot of information from the Bouchercon Festival in Nottingham. Enyd Williams, director of the Radio 4 series with Clive Merrison and Michael Williams, said that the BBC does intend to complete the Canon. **The Hound of the Baskervilles** and **The Valley of Fear** will probably be produced in about 18 months' time. (*Bert Coules deserves the opportunity to finish the project that he began six years ago with **A Study in Scarlet**.) **The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes** should be released on cassette in three stages, vol.1 in February, vol.2 in March and vol.3 in April. Starting in May, each series may be issued as a boxed set (*no suggestion yet of releasing **A Study in Scarlet** or **The Sign of the Four** on cassette, apparently*). Finally, on this subject, sets of postcards are available, featuring original **Strand Magazine** illustrations to **The Return**, **His Last Bow** and **The Casebook**. Each set costs £3.50 from Sherlock Holmes Postcards, Room 6069A, Broadcasting House, Portland Place, London W1A 1AA.

Cheques should be payable to British Broadcasting Corporation. State how many sets you require, and enclose an A5 self-addressed envelope, bearing a 36p stamp.

Emilys (11 Flying Horse Walk, Nottingham NG1 2HN; phone 0115-955 9191) deals in limited edition and specialist Teddy Bears. Among the shop's latest is a "special Sherlock Holmes Bear". Tom Speirs tells me of a venture in Hereford called "Pigmania", producing hand-made ceramic pigs in a wide variety of characters and costumes (you can guess what "Lolita", "Biggles" and "J.R. Hartley" are like, for instance). Yes, there is a Sherlock Holmes pig, so new that he isn't even in the catalogue yet. Contact John Brett at Pigmania for details (Unit 5, Capuchin Yard, Church Street, Hereford HR1 2LB; phone 01432 277923; fax 01432 353375).

I've mentioned Past Times before, and have no compunction about doing so again. There's a decent amount of Holmesiana available in their 54 shops and by mail order, including Philip Weller & Christopher Roden's book **The Life and Times of Sherlock Holmes**, the handsome Sherlock Holmes chess set, and the highly recommended **Sherlock Holmes Video**. You could furnish a delightful Victorian Christmas almost entirely from Past Times. Catalogues can be had from Past Times, Witney, Oxford OX8 6BH (phone 01993 770441; fax 01993 700749). Another wonderful source of Christmas presents is Hawkin & Co. of St Margaret, Harleston, Norfolk IP20 0PJ (phone 01986 782536; fax 01986 782468). Hawkin's sell all sorts of things that you didn't know were still made, and much that you didn't know was made in the first place. Forget the computer - show your kids what fun real toys are!

Jonathan Timby sends an ad for a Murder Mystery "Baskervillainy" Weekend at the Manor House Hotel at Moretonhampstead (base for our Society's Dartmoor expedition in 1992). "The ghastly deed will take place on the weekend of November 10/11/12, 1995." More details can be had by phoning the hotel on 01647 440355. (*Prominent in the ad is the claim, "As featured in the original Basil Rathbone's film 'The Hound of the Baskervilles' back in the 1940s." WRONG! The Rathbone film was made entirely at Fox Studios in Hollywood. The hotel featured in the 1931 Gainsborough production, with Robert Rendel as Holmes and Fred Lloyd as Watson, seen at the Society's Film Evening in 1993.*)

Catherine Cooke passes on information from the Ironbridge Gorge Museum (also known as Blists Hill Open Air Museum), which plans a Literary Evening for Saturday 27th July 1996, specifically featuring Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes. It looks like great fun. The Museum provides a unique insight into life in industrial Victorian England. More on this as it reaches me.

Our Society's Christmas card reproduces a watercolour by Douglas West showing Holmes, Watson and Lestrade meeting at Coombe Tracey. A pack of ten costs £5.50 (UK); £6.00 (Europe); \$13.50 (USA); £7.00 (elsewhere) cheques should be payable to the Sherlock Holmes Society of London, and orders sent no later than the 30th November to Captain W.R. Michell R.N. (retd), 5 Old Farm Place, Hinton St George, Somerset TA17 8TW. The Northern Musgraves' card features a seasonally snowy scene with Holmes and Watson. The artist is Paul Lowe, who illustrated the new edition of **The Tangled Skein**. A pack of five costs £4.00 (UK); £5.00 (Europe); \$15.00 (USA). Cheques should be payable to The Northern Musgraves, and orders sent to Anne Jordan, Fairbank, Beck Lane, Bingley, West Yorkshire BD16 4DN.

Philip Attwell notes that a Jeremy Brett tribute has been offered by ITV for networking, but no details are yet available.

As promised, the new issue of **The Sherlock Holmes Gazette** features 18 pages of tributes to Jeremy Brett, by David Stuart Davies, Michael Cox, Elizabeth Wiggins, Jean Upton and others. I think they bring us closer to Brett the man than any of the obits I read in the national newspapers. (*David and Michael remind me that Jeremy's last broadcast was a radio appeal on behalf of manic depressives. The Manic Depression Fellowship would welcome donations in his memory [8-10 High Street, Kingston-upon-Thames KT1 1EY].*) Elsewhere in the **Gazette** are articles and columns about the Sherlock Holmes Collection at Marylebone Library, the Calabash Press, Arthur Wontner and his Holmes films, the sale of the Stanley MacKenzie Collection, Dorothy L. Sayers, and more. Look for it in the shops, or buy direct from 46 Purfield Drive, Wargrave, Berks. RG10 8AR (US representative is Classic Specialties, P.O. Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH 45219, U.S.A.).

Our Society's next meeting will be at Over-Seas House on the 22nd November, when Patrick Halling will speak on the subject of "Holmes and the Violin". The only other meeting I know of in the coming month is the Baskerville Hounds/Franco-Midland Hardware Company's "Dr Watson Day", for which bookings have closed.

Periodicals received: **The Cormorant's Ring** vol.2 no.3 (The Trained Cormorants of Long Beach, Jim Coffin, 6570 E. Paseo Alcazaa, Anaheim Hills, CA 92807, U.S.A.) (*lively and interesting - but please, Don Hardenbrook, the saint's name was Pancras, not Pancreas!*). **The New Baker Street Pillar Box** no.24 (The Franco-Midland Hardware Company, "The Stockbroker's Clerk", 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. P014 3RU) (*this issue's highlight for me is Antonio Iriarte's masterly "Some Leagues to the North of Oporto: The Truth about the **Norah Creina?**"*). **The Torr** no. 7 (The Poor Folk Upon The Moors, Eric Monahan, Highcliff, 14 Silver Bridge Close, Broadsands Park, Paignton, Devon TQ4 7NW) (*lots of good stuff, including a very welcome new essay by Stephen Farrell, whose friends are relieved to know that he's alive and well*). **The Baker Street Journal** vol.45 no.2 (P.O. Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, U.S.A.) (*Leslie Klinger's essay conclusively proves that Irene Adler was not the one referred to in "The Five Orange Pips" who once beat Sherlock Holmes - which is odd, because Eric Monahan's piece in **The Torr** conclusively proves that she was! The BSJ is published by the Baker Street Irregulars, but is available to all Holmesians and Sherlockians*). **Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press** September 1995 (Peter E. Blau, 3900 Tunlaw Road NW #119, Washington, DC 20007-4830, U.S.A.) (*Peter recommends **Escapade** by Walter Satterthwait (St Martin's Press; \$22.95), as an exciting and enjoyable mystery featuring Harry Houdini and Arthur Conan Doyle; he notes that Wessex Press has bought David L. Hammer's Gasogene Press, whose address is now The Gasogene Press, Box 68308, Indianapolis, IN 46268, U.S.A.*).

Please forgive me if I haven't replied directly to your letter or note. This has been an exceptionally busy and stressful year. Thanks for your help and support.

