

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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Sir Robert Stephens died on the 12th November. We who treasure that wonderful idiosyncratic film **The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes** were put in our place by the obituaries, all of which dismissed it as a resounding flop. Stephens flourished mainly in the theatre, and he did actually play Sherlock Holmes on stage, in Toronto in 1976, in the RSC production of William Gillette's play. Like his friend Jeremy Brett, he really hit his stride in the last ten years of his life, especially as Falstaff and Lear. He was knighted last January.

Lady Stephens was among the many friends and family who attended Jeremy Brett's memorial service last Wednesday at St Martin-in-the-Fields. The Sherlock Holmes Society of London, the Northern Musgraves, the BSI, the ASH, the Arthur Conan Doyle Society, the Société Sherlock Holmes de France, the Poor Folk Upon The Moors, and other groups were represented at the service, which was organised by Granada Television. Reports appeared in **The Times** and the **Daily Telegraph** the next day.

Philip Attwell notes that plans to broadcast a tribute to Brett have been dropped, though BBC TV showed **The Private Life** last night in tribute to Robert Stephens. (*Last week's late film was the Hammer **Hound of the Baskervilles**; the **Radio Times** claimed that "Holmes scholars" regard it as the definitive version! I'd suggest that the BBC's own 1968 production, with Peter Cushing and Nigel Stock, more nearly fits that description. There's no sign of any of that flawed but fascinating series being re-broadcast or issued on video. However, I'm assured that some of the 1965 series, with Stock and Douglas Wilmer, will appear on video starting early next year. Hurrah!*)

Philip also notes that last weekend's **Children in Need** show on BBC1 included a Holmes mystery: "The Affair of the Bamboozled Hooter", also featured in the "Smell-o-vision" booklet sold in aid of the appeal.

John Hall follows his study of John H. Watson with **The Dynamics of a Falling Star; Some Notes on the Late Professor Moriarty** (Tai Xu Press, 20 Drury Avenue, Horsforth, Leeds LS18 4BR), a 32-page A4 booklet in which he collates just about all that's known on the subject, along with his own sound deductions and speculations. The result is the nearest we're likely to get to a definitive study (though he misses the point that the "Brothers Three of Moriarty" are specifically the Professor, the Colonel and the Station Master; the "Moriarty" in question is the small town in New Mexico, nominal HQ of this unlikely society). The booklet will be available from John "early next year, at £4.50 including post in Britain", cheques payable to John Hall; "to the USA etc., \$10.00 or equivalent including post, cash only."

Out now, and a good Christmas present for friends with a sense of fun, is a little parody by David Stuart Davies: **The Annals of Skelington Bones, Spook Detective: The Case of the Phantom Paperhanger of Bughare Hall** (Thumbprints,

Overdale, 69 Greenhead Road, Huddersfield HD1 4ER; UK £2.75; USA \$6.00 airmail). The Davies humour pervades this 16-page A5 booklet, and Kathryn White's illustrations fit perfectly. (*A more solid work is due from David next spring, when Calabash Press publish **Bending the Willow: Jeremy Brett and Sherlock Holmes**, a full-blown book drawing on his interviews with JB and others, illustrated with previously unpublished photographs. More details in the next DM.*)

The Arthur Conan Doyle Society (Ashcroft, 2 Abbotsford Drive, Penyffordd, Chester CH4 0JG; e-mail c_broden@cix.compulink.co.uk) can offer copies of Michael Coren's new biography **Conan Doyle** at a saving on the £18.99 published price: UK £15.99; overseas surface mail £16.99 / US\$27.00 / Cdn\$37.50; N. America airmail £18.99 / US\$30.50 / Cdn\$42.00; Europe airmail £16.99; elsewhere airmail £19.50 / US\$31.50.

John Moule of the Priory Scholars put me on to a little book called **Location Cornwall** by David Clarke & Alison Poole (Bossiney Books, Land's End Cottage, St Teath, Bodmin, Cornwall PL30 3JH; £2.95), giving illustrated information about TV and film location shooting in Cornwall. Granada's **The Devil's Foot** features strongly. **The Sherlock Holmes Quiz Book** by M.J. Grieve appeared in August, at £9.99, from Owlhouse Publications (no address to hand).

The Poor Folk Upon The Moors have issued the first Charles Merriman Monograph: **The Joint Investigation** by Brian P. Gallimore. Only 50 copies have been printed of this essay, in which a Crime Scene Manager with the Devon & Cornwall Police imagines how the Baskerville case might have proceeded had the authorities of a century ago had the scientific aids of today. No price is given, and the monograph may not be for sale to non-members (Shelley Philipson, 4 Dolvin Road, Tavistock, Devon PL19 9EA).

Mark Chadderton has found **The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes: Detecting Social Order** by Rosemary Jann (Twayne Publishers; £6.95) (*see also DM 150*). The Pleasant Places of Florida offer a **Sherlockian Calendar, Noting Red-Letter Days: 1996** (Dr Ben Wood BSI, P.O. Box 740, Ellenton, FL 34222, USA; \$2.50 in US, foreign orders [in cash] US\$4.00 or £3.00). At Murder One we found **The Mystery of the Yellow Hands**, the first "Baker Street Mystery" by Jake & Luke Thoene (Moorings, Nashville, Tennessee; \$5.99), featuring Sherlock Holmes and the Baker Street Brigade: Danny Wiggins, Duff Bernard and Peachy Carnehan (that name will be familiar to readers of "The Man Who Would Be King").

The excellent book and poster that were produced for the John Bennett Shaw Conference in October are now available from: Shaw Conference Publications, 466 Wilson Library, University of Minnesota, 309 19th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA. The poster costs \$16.70 and the book, **Sherlock Holmes: The Detective and the Collector**, \$38.00. Both prices include postage (MN State residents should add the appropriate tax). The book, beautifully produced and well illustrated, includes essays by major scholars such as Nils Nordberg, J Randolph Cox, David Hammer, Bill Nadel, Jennie C Paton, Derham Groves, Peter E Blau and Thomas L Stix Jr. Checks payable to University of Minnesota.

This year's **Rupert Annual**, the 75th anniversary edition (Pedigree Books Ltd, The Old Rectory, Matford Lane, Exeter EX2 4PS; £5.50), includes "Rupert and the Pharaoh's Treasure", which involves the little bear with Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson - and H.G. Wells's time-machine! At his local Tesco store, Phil Attwell has found the big Parragon paperback edition of the Holmes Canon in two volumes at £1.99 each (Parragon Book Service Ltd, Unit 13-17,

Avonbridge Trading Estate, Atlantic Road, Avonmouth, Bristol BS11 9QD).

Ian Wilkes notes that Libro, whose nice French language edition of the Canon was mentioned in DM 155, is at 27 rue Cassette, 75006 Paris, France; phone 33 (1) 44 39 34 79. The contact is Jaques Sadoul. There are very tempting new catalogues of Holmesiana and Doyleana out from the Black Cat Bookshop (36-39 Silver Arcade, Leicester LE1 5FB) and Gravesend Books (Box 235, Pocono Pines, PA 18350, USA).

The Biography documentary on Sherlock Holmes, featuring David Burke, was recently shown on the Sky History Channel. Brian W. Pugh may be able to provide video-tape copies, adverts and all; price as yet unknown (20 Clare Road, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1PN).

I've heard from Tangled Web Audio, whose 2-cassette pack **Sherlock Holmes: Tales of Intrigue**, read by Edward Hardwicke, was mentioned in DM 154. They've also released **Sherlock Holmes: Tales of Suspense**, also read by Hardwicke and including "The Sussex Vampire", "The Creeping Man" and "The Speckled Band" (he recorded that one before, in 1987 for Marks & Spencer). The price of each set is US\$16.95 + airmail postage (\$5.00 for 1 item, \$4.00 for 2-5, etc.). Orders should go to Box 700, Greenhurst, NY 14742-0700, USA; the letter, however, came from 401 Queen Street South, Hamilton, Ontario L8P 3T8, Canada. IMPORTANT NOTE: we recently found **Tales of Intrigue** at Murder One in London at £8.99!

Malcolm Payne notes that Crowborough Town Council and Crowborough Chamber of Commerce plan a Sherlock Holmes Festival next year. The Conan Doyle (Crowborough) Establishment is not entirely happy, partly because publicity to date has conveyed inaccurate information, partly because a longer period of planning seems to be needed, and partly, I suspect, because the town's connection is not with Holmes but with his creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Information can be had from the Festival Secretary, The Sherlock Holmes Festival, The Town Hall, The Broadway, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 1DA (phone 01892 665464). (*Malcolm also asks me to say that he has been out of circulation due to illness since early July, and that the Establishment can be contacted via Richard Greep; phone 01892 655534.*)

The Sherlock Holmes Experience is a major exhibition opening on the 7th December at Croydon Clocktower (Katharine Street, Croydon CR9 1ET; phone 0181-253 1030; fax 0181-253 1003), and running until the 10th March. Norwood, Conan Doyle's one-time home, is now within Croydon.

The Sherlock Holmes Memorabilia Company (230 Baker Street, London NW1 5RT; phone 0171-486 1426) has a new catalogue out; £3.00 is asked. The shop is well worth a visit when you're in upper Baker Street. Further south are two other nice establishments: the Sherlock Holmes pub in Northumberland Street and the shop, Sherlock Holmes In The Arches, a few yards away. The shop has a remarkable range of goodies in a very intimate space. It's open from 11.00 to 3.00, and sometimes beyond. (These shops, as well as Past Times and others, stock **The Sherlock Holmes Video**; this excellent documentary can also be bought direct from Countryside TV Productions, Chargot Manor, Luxborough, Watchet, Somerset TA23 OSL; price £12.99 + £1.00 in the UK.)

Sherlock is one of Priscilla Hillman's Cherished Teddies figurines from Enesco Corporation of Itasca, Illinois. A seated figure, about 3" high, with deerstalker, cape, pipe, lens and book entitled "A Sherlock Holmes Mystery", he's very attractive, and not outrageously priced at £15.99. (*He comes, however, with a really nauseating Certificate of Adoption.*) More expensive,

and extremely desirable, are the maquettes in cold-cast bronze on a mahogany base of John Doubleday's famous statue of Sherlock Holmes in Meiringen; copies can be ordered from Albert Kunz (20 Highfield Road, Chislehurst, Kent BR7 6QZ) at a maximum cost of £82.00 including postage.

(*Someone's sent me a photocopy of an anonymously produced burlesque: **The New Baker Street Pillory Block: The Drawn-and-Quartered Journal of the Franco-American Hardcheese Company**. It appears to be American in origin, and it's quite disgracefully funny. Well, "good parody is an entirely valid form of literary criticism", as the editor of a well-known Holmesian journal recently observed.*)

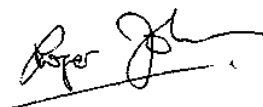
Godfrey Hunt tells of the formation of a new society: The Retired Colourmen of Essex, whose aim is to promote the study of the Canon in its relation to the County of Essex. Membership is by invitation only, but it imposes a duty of study, research and publication of the results. Information can be had from Godfrey at 21 Mount Avenue, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex SS0 8PS.

Our Society's next meeting, of course, will be the Annual Dinner at the House of Commons on Saturday the 6th January, followed by a social gathering next day at the Plough in Museum Street. Also on the 6th, the Franco-Midland Hardware Company will make its "Disjecta Membra" excursion from Birmingham (details from The Stock-broker's Clerk, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU). The following weekend will see the usual festivities in New York. Alas, we can't be there this time, but hope to make it in January 1997. On the 28th, the Glades of the New Forest will meet in Hill Head to discuss the location of Lord Backwater's estate (Jane Weller, address as above).

David Stuart Davies asks me to say that the autumn issue of **The Ritual** should be posted this week. Its 54 pages will contain a good deal of exclusive material about Jeremy Brett, including comments from Edward Hardwicke, David Burke, Rosalie Williams, Michael Cox, June Wyndham Davies and Jeremy Paul; there'll also be a transcription of the phone message from JB that we heard at the Musgraves' weekend in Edinburgh. Non-Musgraves can order copies from Anne Jordan (Fairbank, Beck Lane, Bingley, West Yorks. BD16 4DN) at: UK £5.50; elsewhere \$10.00 airmail. David adds that on the 16th March there will be a Jeremy Brett Luncheon at the Café Royal in London; people who worked with JB "will attend as schedules permit". More details as they reach me.

Periodicals received: **The Parallelogram** November 1995 (The Parallel Case of St Louis, Joseph J. Eckrich BSI, 914 Oakmoor, Fenton, MO 63026, USA); **Communication** no. 155 (The Pleasant Places of Florida, Dr Benton Wood BSI, Box 740, Ellenton, FL 34222, USA); **The Petrel Flyer** vol.7 no.6 (The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., V7P 3C6, Canada) (*features a report on the 7th Annual Holmesian Games, and a piece on the amusements of Victorian children*); **The School Report** no.23 (The Priory Scholars of Leicester, Horace L. Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 OFY); and as always, the indispensable **Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press**, October 1995 and November 1995 (Peter E. Blau BSI, 3900 Tunlaw Road NW #119, Washington, DC 20007-4830, USA).

THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON TO ALL!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. J.', written over a horizontal line.