

# THE DISTRICT MESSENGER

The Newsletter of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London  
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opinions expressed are the editor's unless noted otherwise

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**Ronald Howard**, who died last month aged 78, seems destined to be remembered as 'the son of Leslie Howard'. In the early 50s he played Sherlock Holmes in 39 short films for American TV, with an excellent Watson in H. Marion Crawford. Often a long way after Conan Doyle, the films are never less than entertaining.

Camden House Inc. (Drawer 2025, Columbia, SC 29202, USA) has published *Good Old Index: the Sherlock Holmes Handbook* by Thomas W. Ross, a 182-page paperback costing \$25.95 or £14.95, which is actually a very idiosyncratic dictionary or encyclopaedia. Mr Ross gives a minimum of information in his entries ('**chianti**: Sholto offers SIGN'; '**Holborn**: restaurant STUD'), but he shows evidence of a pawky sense of humour ('**cross-dresser**: Adler, who dons her "walking clothes" to pose as a male youth SCAN'). However, his complaint that Holmes's reference to a sawn-off shotgun as a 'truncated fowling-piece' is ponderous suggests that the humour isn't strong. He gives a little information that previous lexicographers missed, though his notion that Blackheath was Watson's public school is plain wrong. The publisher's claim that 'This volume fills a unique void in the literature on Doyle and his famous detective' hardly stands up. It's better presented than Orlando Park's *Sherlock Holmes Encyclopedia* and has fewer errors than Matthew Bunson's *Sherlock Holmes Encyclopedia*, but none of them can hold a candle to Jack Tracy's *Encyclopaedia Sherlockiana*. The British distributors are Boydell & Brewer Ltd, PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF. (\*Mr Ross's book is not to be confused with *Good Old Index* by William Goodrich or *A Sherlock Holmes Handbook* by Christopher Redmond.\*)

M.C. Black sends the most welcome news that Tracy's book is to be reprinted as *The Ultimate Sherlock Holmes Encyclopaedia*. Bibliophile Books, a well-respected mail-order company, will stock the book at the very low price of £7.00. For details, contact Bibliophile at 5 Thomas Road, London E14 7BN (phone 0171 515 9222; fax 0171 538 4115). Please quote reference MCB001045.

*Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective, Volume I: The Early Years* by Kelvin I Jones is a 52-page A4 booklet packed with observation and research but rather primitively produced — more so than Kelvin's *The Psychology of The Hound* (see DM 167). In all, there will be three instalments of this 'first full length biography of Holmes to appear for some years'. (\*But what of June Thomson's *Holmes and Watson*?\*). Volume 1 is £3.95, post-paid, from Oakmagic Publications, 2 South Place Folly, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 4JB. Cheques should be payable to K.I. Jones. (Volume 2, just out, runs to 72 pages and costs £4.75.)

*Sherlock Holmes: From Victorian Sleuth to Modern Hero*, edited by Charles R. Putney, Sally Sugarman and Joseph A. Cutshall King (Scarecrow Press Inc., 4720 Boston Way, Lanham, MD 20706, USA) is a collection of papers presented at a conference of the Baker Street Breakfast Club at Bennington College in 1994. The book costs \$34.50, and has had very favourable reviews.

Issue no. 18 of *The Sherlock Holmes Gazette* contains part 4 of *A Study in Celluloid*, Michael Cox's unique account of the Granada TV series. Here he considers 'The Dancing Men' and 'The Crooked Man' (\*I have a fondness for 'The Crooked Man'. Michael's team did justice to a story that's much better than he believes. This is not to downplay the excellent production of 'The Dancing Men'.\*) John Hall looks at Dr Watson, Catherine Cooke at T.S. Eliot, and Paul M. Chapman at Joseph Bell. Gaynor Coules surveys the novels of Lindsey Davis. Christopher Roden interviews Linda Jones of Tangled Web Audio. 'Collectors Corner' discovers theatre memorabilia. And, of course, there's much, much more. Annual subscriptions are: UK £14.00; Europe £18.00; North America US\$35.00/£21.00; elsewhere £22.00. (46 Purfield Drive, Wargrave, Berks. RG10 8AR — U.S. representative: Classic Specialties, P.O. Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH 45219, USA.)

Bert Coules sends the good news that his script of *The Valley of Fear* was recorded a couple of weeks ago. 'Messrs Merrison and Williams slipped back into their roles with an ease which belied the fact that they last played Holmes and Watson in November 1994.' The cast also includes Iain Glen, Mark Bonnar, Timothy Bateson, Constantine Gregory and Ronald Pickup. The director-producer is Enyd Williams. The play will be broadcast in two parts on BBC Radio 4, on Sunday 23 and 30 March at 2.30 pm, repeated Friday 28 March and 4 April at 2.02 pm. Bert adds, 'The first five episodes of *The Casebook* are currently scheduled for a Saturday evening repeat, starting on 19 April.'

Middle Ground Theatre Company's production of *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* is currently in rehearsal. Michael Cashman & Frederick Pyne are Holmes & Watson and Nicholas Smith plays Charles Augustus Milverton (not Lestrade as announced in the Tyne Theatre's brochure). The tour starts at **Tyne Theatre**, Newcastle on 17th March, then 24th at **North Wales Theatre**, Llandudno; April 7th at **Everyman Theatre**, Cheltenham; 14th at **Devonshire Park**, Eastbourne; 21st at **Southport Art Centre**; 28th at **Poole Art Centre**; in May on 5th at **Key Theatre**, Peterborough; 12th at **Rothes Halls**, Glen Rothes; 26th at **Yvonne Arnaud Theatre**, Guildford; in June on 2nd at **Theatre Royal**, Brighton, 9th at **Swan Theatre**, High Wycombe; 16th at **Theatre Royal**, Lincoln; 23rd at **Marlowe Theatre**, Canterbury; then July 7th at **Theatre Royal**, Bath. (\*There may be changes or additions to this itinerary, so check details with your local paper or tourist office.\*) The production promises to be a cracker.

The **New Victoria Theatre** (Etruria Road, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs. ST5 0JG; ticket office 01782 717962) commissioned Chris Martin to dramatise *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The play opened on 5 March, running until 15 March, and again from 1 to 12 April. Roger Llewellyn and Lennox Greaves play Holmes & Watson, and the Canadian Mark Renton is Sir Henry. Chris Martin's previous Holmes plays, *The Valley of Fear* and *A Study in Scarlet* were very successful, and *The Hound* will be no less so. Ticket prices range from £4.75 for Saturday matinees to £10.40 for the best seats on Saturday evenings. A snip!

Richard Dalby notes that the movie *Fairytale — A True Story*, with Paul McGann, Harvey Keitel and Peter O'Toole (as Arthur Conan Doyle!) is scheduled for release on 19 December. Does

anyone know the situation with the TV film *Photographing Fairies*, in which Edward Hardwicke is rather more plausibly cast as ACD?

Mr K. Holland (23A Gravenhurst Road, Campton, Beds. SG17 5NY; phone 01462 816435) is looking for a video recording of *Murder by Decree*. If you can help, please contact him direct. (*\*Can anyone sell me a recording of the recent Poirot episode, Dumb Witness? I managed to miss the broadcast!\**)

A.G. Bradbury 3 Link Road, Stoneycote, Leicester LE2 3RA) has designed splendid first day covers for the Royal Mail's stamps, issued 13 May, marking the centenary of *Dracula*. Under the overall title *Tales of Terror*, the stamps feature the four novels covered in Christopher Frayling's BBC TV series *Nightmare*. That devoted to *The Hound of the Baskervilles* uses Paget illustrations and is postmarked in Princetown, Dartmoor. The FDC with just the Hound stamp is £5.00; that with all four stamps is £10.00. A limited number of these are signed by Edward Hardwicke (£12.50) or by Tom Baker (£12.50). Cheques should be payable to A.G. Bradbury, and overseas orders should add £1.00. Philip Attwell points out that the Royal Mail offers a 1997 stamp album designed for the year's special issues. Pick up a leaflet at your Post Office.

Patrick Kirkby says that there will be a Veterans' Reunion & Display at Netley on 14 May 1998, to mark the centenary of the Royal Army Medical Corps and the 20th anniversary of the closure of Netley Hospital. 14 May is also the 100th anniversary of Queen Victoria's visit to present two VCs for courage in the Tirah Campaign in India. Admirers of John H. Watson who are interested in attending should contact Patrick at 2 Colson Road, Winnall, Winchester SO23 0EX. Events at Netley this year include *The Secret of Sherlock Holmes*, performed on 5th July. (Details from the Park Office, Royal Victoria Country Park, Netley, Southampton SO31 5GA; phone 01703 455157.)

News from other literary societies. **The Daphne du Maurier Festival of Arts & Literature** will run from 9 to 18 May, based at Fowey in Cornwall. Details from Daphne du Maurier Festival, c/o B.E. Arthur, Director Economic & Community Development, Restormel Borough Council, 39 Penwinnick Road, St Austell, Cornwall PL25 5DR (information line 01726 74324). **The George Eliot Fellowship** and Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council offer guided tours of George Eliot country, and a series of events including lectures, readings and a George Eliot Day on the 17 May. Details from the Marketing Division, Town Hall, Coton Road, Nuneaton, Warwicks. CV11 5AA (phone 01203 376490).

The new address for **The Baker Street Irregulars** is: **P.O. Box 2189, Easton, MD 21601, USA** (rather than P.O. Box 2089 as given in DM 167). This will reach Michael F. Whelan, the new Wiggins.

An annual subscription to *Baker Street West 1* (three issues) costs \$9.00. Details from 110 South El Nido, #41, Pasadena, CA 91107, U.S.A. The magazine has announced a short story competition. 'In 2000 words or less, recreate the master detective as he and Dr Watson solve yet another baffling mystery. Our grand prizewinner will receive a framed original William Gillette signature dated 1906. All submissions will receive a postcard portrait of Mr Gillette. In addition to the framed prize, the winning article will be published in the January 1998 issue of BSW1. All other entries will be considered for future publication. Writing deadline is October 15, 1997, and will be judged by our editors. Entries will not be returned. Include your name, address and phone number with your, typed, double-spaced entry.'

Our Society's next meeting is at Over-Seas House on 26th March, when the subject will be Victorian headgear. On the 23rd, the **Priory Scholars** hold their Annual Case Study, presenting papers on 'Thor Bridge' (details from Horace Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). The Moor Meet, 28th-31st

March, will be a joint event of the **Franco-Midland Hardware Company**, the **Baskerville Hounds** and **Gerard's Hussars** (FMHC, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU).

Marcus Geisser tells me that **The Reichenbach Irregulars** will hold the first *Swiss Sherlock Holmes Symposium* from 12 to 14 September at the Castle of Wartensee, near Rorschach on Lake Constance. The society hopes to welcome speakers from Switzerland, Germany and England, and there will be particular emphasis on the Swiss detective Wachtmeister Studer, whose creator, Friedrich Glauser, lived near Rorschach. For details, contact Marcus at 40 av. de la Gare, CH-1003 Lausanne, Switzerland (e-mail [mgeisser@access.ch](mailto:mgeisser@access.ch)).

To mark their 25th anniversary, **The Pleasant Places of Florida** will host *The Sunshine State Sherlockian Scion Symposium I* over the weekend 2 - 4 May at the Dolphin Beach Resort in St Pete Beach, Florida. Details from Carl Heifetz, 5490 Salem Sq. Dr. S., Palm Harbor, FL 34685, U.S.A. Also celebrating a Silver Anniversary are **The Bootmakers of Toronto**, with *Lasting Impressions*, a weekend symposium at the Arts & Letters Club in Toronto, 26 - 29 June. Details from *Lasting Impressions*, #210, 30 Elm Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M4W 1N5, Canada (e-mail [lasting@syndesis.com](mailto:lasting@syndesis.com)).

Periodicals received: **The Sherlock Holmes Journal** winter 1996. (*\*Outstanding is Wladimir Bogomoletz's paper 'The Odessa File: Sherlock Holmes and Imperial Russia' — a tour de force!\**) From **The Priory Scholars** (Horace L. Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY) **The School Report** no. 28 (*\*John Moule completes his survey of the year 1904\**). From **The Pleasant Places of Florida** (The Papers on the Sundial, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA) **Communication** #170 (*\*contains a clever parody-pastiche by Tom Takach\**). From **The Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem** (Gael Stahl, 1763 Needmore Road, Old Hickory, TN 37138, USA) 3 **Pipe Problem Plugs & Dottles** Jan./Feb. 1997 (*\*great account of fun in New York\**). From **Von Herder Airguns Ltd** (Michael Ross, Bendheide 65, D-47906 Kempen, Germany) **The Striking (T)Rifles** Feb. 1997.

Three highly individual publications from **La Société Sherlock Holmes de France** (26 avenue de la République, 75011 Paris, France): **Ironmongers Daily Echo and Franco-Midland Branches Advertiser** no. 13, **The Army Medical Corps Gazette of the Franco-Midland Health Dpt** no. 3, and **Billy's Page 3** (*\*Philip Weller reminds us that this admirable society has no connection at all with his own Franco-Midland Hardware Company\**). **Interim Report 1996: The Lady Contract Reviewed and The New Baker Street Pillar Box** no. 29 (both from **The Franco-Midland Hardware Company**, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU) (*\*the Report includes some very stimulating essays, notably those by Donald Redmond, John Weber, Carol Whitlam and Philip Weller; the NSPB has good articles by various writers on Dr Watson and one by Philip Weller on aspects of The Hound\**).

**Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press** Jan. & Feb. 1997 (Peter E. Blau, 3900 Tunlaw Road NW #119, Washington, DC 20007-4830, USA). Peter keeps an up-to-date list of Sherlock Holmes societies world-wide, and is happy to respond by postcard to inquiries about which is your nearest. The full 76-page list will cost \$3.80 to US & Canada, and \$9.53 (airmail) or \$4.99 (surface mail) overseas. The list is also on the World Wide Web at Willis G. Frick's home page at <http://www.kaiwan.com/~sherlock/stro1.html>.

*Roger Johnson*