

# 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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The death of **Dame Jean Conan Doyle** on the 18th November marks the end of an era, severing the last direct link with Sir Arthur. She had coped with Parkinson's disease and cataracts for some years, and finally succumbed to cancer. Dame Jean was the only one of Sir Arthur's five children to equal his own achievements, though in a quite different field. She entered the ATS in 1938, transferred to the new WAAF in 1940, and rose to become Director of its successor, the Women's Royal Air Force. Her title was not inherited: it was a personal honour, awarded in 1963, when she became an honorary ADC to the Queen. She took her duties to her father's estate seriously, always recognising that he wrote to entertain and enlighten. She was a great friend and supporter of our Society. During one of our Swiss Pilgrimages she observed: 'My father would have been delighted to see you all having such fun!' and when Jean and I were married, she told a fellow-guest, 'My father would have loved this.' In 1991 she was the first woman to be invested into the Baker Street Irregulars with all rights and privileges. Her investiture, appropriately, was 'A Certain Gracious Lady'. Those who were honoured to know her feel her loss keenly.

Two days later, we lost one of our senior members, **Freddie Bryan-Brown**, a scholar in the true sense of the word. (I characterised him in a report for the SHJ as a 'tousured pedagogue' - fortunately he had a grand sense of humour as well.) His impeccably reasoned and presented papers graced our meetings and publications for many years.

**Robert G. Harris** died in September. Invested into **The Baker Street Irregulars** in 1952 as 'The Creeping Man', he was a founder of **The Amateur Mendicant Society of Detroit** and a link to the days when the BSI met at the Murray Hill Hotel. Pilgrims to Switzerland in 1978 will remember him as Jabez Wilson, with an outrageous bright red wig. **James Cuthbertson**, who died in August, rarely attended our Society's meetings, but in 1989 he published a first-rate monograph, *A Study in Banking: An Investigation of the Relationship of Mr Sherlock Holmes with His Bank*. That wasn't quite the last word on the subject: five years later he contributed an equally excellent article, 'The Banking Connection: 1894-1994', to the Society's book *Back to Baker Street*.

A new book on the subject should be ready before Christmas. Eric Monahan's *Banking and Finance in the Canon, with Some Notes on the History and Canonical Connections of the Capital and Counties Bank* doesn't replace *A Study in Banking*, but complements it. There's been much surmise about Holmes and Watson's finances, but little solid research. James Cuthbertson and Eric Monahan have put that right. This 24-page A5 brochure, with card wrappers and full-colour illustrations, is published at £5.50 or \$9.75, including postage, by Parallel Publications (14 Silver Bridge Close, Broadsands Park, Paignton, Devon TQ4 7NW). Cheques should be payable to Eric Monahan.

Just out from Ian Henry Publications Ltd (20 Park Drive, Romford RM1 4LH) is *Sherlock Holmes and the Curse of the Mummy's Tomb* by Julian Harries (£6.25). This clever, affectionate and delightfully funny spoof was written and presented as Eastern Angles' Christmas entertainment in 1994 (see my review in the SHJ, Summer 1995). The play's publication gives many more people the chance to enjoy it; I hope, too, that it will lead to more productions. Archaeology, murder, illicit romance, theft, a secret cult and a love-lorn mummy

named Otis all play their part, along with neat detective work and a cartload of jokes. It's an ideal Christmas present - go on, treat yourself!

Ian Wilkes passes on news of a pastiche spotted at the Frankfurt Book Fair: *Sherlock Holmes und der Schrecken von Sumatra* by Jörg Kastner (Verlag Thomas Tilsner, Postfach 1829, 83637 Bad Tölz, Germany; DM36). Baron Maupertuis and H.G. Wells are featured. Ian also notes that early in the new year Ian Henry will have a new printing of Jack Tracy's superb *Encyclopaedia Sherlockiana*, at £15.99 + 73p postage.

Richard Dalby notes that Tor Books have issued *Seance for a Vampire* by Fred Saberhagen, price \$6.00. 'When Sherlock Holmes is kidnapped by a vampire Dr Watson must contact Holmes' cousin Prince Dracula, to help track the master detective...'

There are new catalogues from **Nigel Williams Rare Books** (22 & 25 Cecil Court, London WC2N 4HE); and **Rupert Books** (58/59 Stonefield, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB3 8TE). The 3rd and 4th Rupert Books Monographs are now available, at £10.00 each. No. 3 is *The New Revelation (The London Spiritualist Alliance Speech of 1917)*, with an afterword by Richard Lancelyn Green (\*this is not the text of ACD's speech, but a previously unrecorded pamphlet reporting on it in full\*). No. 4 is *Remembering Jeremy Brett* by Michael Cox and R. Dixon Smith, being six articles collected from various Sherlockian and other periodicals. Rupert has a homepage at [http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/rupert\\_books](http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/rupert_books).

Otto Penzler's famous **Mysterious Bookshop** now has a branch in London. The address is 82 Marylebone High Street, London W1M 3DE. It's just a couple of minutes' walk from Baker Street.

Geoffrey Stavert passes on a flyer for *Sherlock Holmes: The Missing Stories*, 'an interactive book containing six original short stories including *The Politician, the Lighthouse and the Trained Cormorant*' by Stanley Graham. There's a note that 'This program requires a computer running Windows and a mouse'. It costs £5.00, post-paid, from Stanley Graham, 148 Silk more Lane, Stafford ST17 4JD. (\*Not a CD-ROM at that price, surely? Presumably a floppy disc, then. Sounds like fun, anyway.\*)

Issue 22 of *Sherlock Holmes: The Detective Magazine* (the magazine formerly known as *The Sherlock Holmes Gazette*) continues the improvement in presentation that has been apparent of late. Michael Cox's marvellous series 'A Study in Celluloid' brings the story of the Granada TV films up to the beginning of *The Return* and the introduction of Edward Hardwicke as Watson. Paul Chapman surveys the early history of *A Study in Scarlet*. Gaynor Coules looks at the works of Peter Lovesey (\*will the great Granada series **Cribb** ever be repeated, I wonder?\*). David Stuart Davies examines my favourite Rathbone movie, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Catherine Cooke begins a musical tour of Holmes's London. A.L. Blake considers one of the classic 'rivals of Sherlock Holmes' - Dr John Thorndyke. Jean Upton's 'Collectors' Corner' offers suggestions for seasonal gifts. All this and more - including a new Holmes adventure by Denis O. Smith (reprinted from *The Mammoth Book of New Sherlock Holmes Adventures*.) This is the fifth issue of *Sherlock Holmes: The Detective Magazine* for 1997; next year there will be six! A four-issue subscription costs £14.00 from 46 Purfield Drive, Wargrave, Berks. RG10 8AR. The American representatives are Classic Specialties, P.O. Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH 45219, USA.

Recent and forthcoming books include *Sherlock's Men: Masculinity, Conan Doyle and Cultural History* by Joseph Kestner (September 1997: Scholar Press; £40.00); *The Adventure of the Detected Detective: Sherlock Holmes in James Joyce's Finnegans Wake* by

William D. Jenkins (February 1998: Greenwood Press; £36.50); *Shadows of Sherlock Holmes* edited by David Stuart Davies (April 1998: Wordsworth Editions; £1.00); *Shelley Holmes, Ace Detective* by Michaela Morgan (January 1998: Oxford University Press; £2.99); and *The British Campaign in France and Flanders, 1914-1918* by Arthur Conan Doyle (December 1997: Danowski Press; £9,999.00) (\*that price is not a misprint - at least, not on my part\*).

The third volume of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, read by our Honorary Member Douglas Wilmer and produced by our former Chairman Philip Porter, is due from Penguin Audiobooks in January. This 2-cassette pack costs £7.99. In February HarperCollins Audio will release *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes* read by Christopher Lee, at £8.99 (no indication as to content). From the BBC Radio Collection in March comes *The Valley of Fear* with Bert Coules's grand script; it's followed in June by *A Study in Scarlet*.

Out now is *Sherlock Holmes on the Rails, volume 1*, released by the Irregular Special Press (170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB2 4DX). Miles Richardson, an outstanding Holmes in *Sherlock Holmes: The Adventure at Sir Arthur Sullivan's*, reads unabridged 'The Bruce-Partington Plans' (my favourite of the Canonical short stories) and 'The Wealden Pullman Theft' (a clever and knowledgeable tale by Kidenin Kohl and Richard Stanney - the latter name is an anagram, and the former must surely be). There are a few grammatical infelicities in the pastiche, but the story flows very convincingly; there are also some minor fluffs in the reading which should have been corrected, but they are very minor. Besides, Miles Richardson reads excellently and individualises his characters; he also has a voice that's sheer delight to listen to, whatever he says. The production quality is splendid. *Sherlock Holmes on the Rails, volume 1* costs £9.00, post-paid within the UK, and is worth every penny. Cheques should be payable to the Irregular Special Railway Company. (The ISRC has quite a range of goods for sale. Drop the Company a line, or check out its homepage at <http://mesmsgl.me.ic.ac.uk/sherlock>)

Eddie Maguire's Big House Books (63 Wellington Road, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 5EZ) has prepared two handsome sets of greeting cards, featuring Paget illustrations to 'The Man with the Twisted Lip' and 'The Blue Carbuncle', printed in dark sepia on ivory; the insides are blank for your own message. They're sold in packs of ten (five of each design), with envelopes, priced at £4.25 including postage.

*The Hound of the Baskervilles* is to be broadcast on Channel 5 at 2.50 a.m. on the 29th December. This is the laughably bad 1972 Universal movie with a miscast Stewart Granger and Bernard Fox as Holmes and Watson. Worth seeing once, just so you'll believe it.

(\*Can anyone please lend or sell me a video recording of the recent 'Inspector Morse' episode, *Death Is Now My Neighbour*, which we managed to miss?\*)

Currently at the Royal Academy (Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V 0DS) is a wonderful exhibition of *Victorian Fairy Painting*, including a number by ACD's uncle Dickie Doyle and one by his father Charles. (\*Which reminds me: does anyone know when Edward Gardner died? He was the Theosophist who 'discovered' the Cottingley fairies.\*)

About the only place these days that you can experience a real Victorian pantomime, with rhyming couplets and wonderfully awful puns, is **The Players' Theatre** in London. It's situated in The Arches under Charing Cross Station. This year's panto is *The Babes in the Wood and the Good Little Fairy Birds* by H.J. Byron, first performed in 1859. The old story is given a Shakespearean twist, being reinterpreted as The Scottish Play! Check with the box office on 0171 829 1134 (there's a website at [www.theplayers.co.uk](http://www.theplayers.co.uk)). The theatre's just along from the *Sherlock Holmes* pub in Northumberland Street, where the Baker Street study has been decorated for the season (by Dr Watson and Mrs Hudson, presumably). The pub is well worth a visit anyway, and serves excellent lunches and dinners. Phone 0171 839 5864 (and check the website on [www.users.dircon.co.uk/~sherlock/](http://www.users.dircon.co.uk/~sherlock/)).

A reminder of the proposal to erect a statue of Sherlock Holmes in Baker Street (where better for the first such monument in England?)

John Doubleday's design is widely admired, the site outside Baker Street Station has official approval, and the main task now is to raise the necessary money. Donations of any amount are welcomed by Elaine Hamill, Treasurer to the Sherlock Holmes Statue Company Ltd. Cheques, payable to the Company, should be sent to The Appeal Fund, The Sherlock Holmes Statue Company Ltd, 16 Kirton Close, Chiswick, London W4 5UU. For further details, contact Elaine at the same address.

The Guest of Honour at our Society's Annual Dinner on the 17th January is Colin Dexter. There'll be the customary informal get-together in Bloomsbury the following day. The Annual Dinner of **The Baker Street Irregulars** in New York is on Friday the 9th January, and there are the usual associated festivities. (Information about the BSI can be had from Michael F. Whelan, 'Wiggins', P.O. Box 2189, Easton, MD 21601, U.S.A.)

**The Franco-Midland Hardware Company's** annual *Dissecta Membra* event on the 3rd January, arranged in collaboration with **The Baker Street Branch Lines**, explores Canonical London railway termini, and celebrates Sherlock Holmes's birthday over lunch (The Stock-broker's Clerk, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU). The Master's Dinner of **The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia** is on the 10th (Fran Martin, at 10662, 129 Street, Surrey, B.C. V3T 3H4, Canada), and the 17th sees the dinner of **The Pleasant Places of Florida** (contact Carl L. Heifetz, 3693 Siena Lane, Palm Harbor, FL 34685, USA). On the 31st, **The Northern Musgraves** hold their Birthday Lunch in Huddersfield (David Stuart Davies, Overdale, 69 Greenhead Road, Huddersfield HD1 4ER).

Periodicals received. *The Torr*, Autumn 1997 (**The Poor Folk Upon The Moors**, Eric Monahan, Highcliff, 14 Silver Bridge Close, Broadsands Park, Paignton, Devon TQ4 7NW) (\*somehow this one got left out of DM 174; sorry\*). *The Ritual*, Autumn 1997 (**The Northern Musgraves**, Paul M. Chapman, Langford, Thirsk Road, Easingwold, North Yorks. YO6 3HL). *The FMHC Memo*, November 1997, and *Interim Report 1997: The Dancing Men Contract Renewed* (**The Franco-Midland Hardware Company**, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU). *The School Report*, Winter Term 1997 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L. Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). *The Striking (T)Rifles*, Oktober 1997, and *The Soft-Nosed Bullet-In*, Herbst 1997 (**Von Herder Airguns Ltd**, Michael Ross, Bendheide 65, D-47906 Kempen, Germany). *The Log of the Canonical Hams*, January 1994 - June 1997 (\*sic!\*) (**The Sherlock Holmes Wireless Society**, Ron Fish, P.O. Box 4, Circleville, NY 10919-0004, USA). *Communication*, November 1997 and December 1997 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Jeff & Wanda Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA).

*Scuttlebutt from the Spermacti Press*, November 1997 (Peter E. Blau, 3900 Tunlaw Road NW #119, Washington, DC 20007-4830, USA). Peter notes that from 7th January to 15th February Paxton Whitehead will star in Hugh Leonard's play *The Mask of Moriarty* at the Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn, New Jersey - 'a 35-minute drive from New York City'. The box office is at Brookside Drive, Millburn, NJ 07041 (phone 973-376 4343). 'Eve Titus is selling many of her own books and newspaper and magazine articles related to Basil of Baker Street and other Sherlockian matters, and you can have a copy of her sales-list in return for a self-addressed stamped envelope. Her address is 17094 Collins Avenue #A-405, Sunny Isles, FL 33160.' *The Sherlock Holmes Victorian Cookbook: Favourite Recipes of the Great Detective & Dr Watson* by William Bonnell (Macmillan Canada; Cdn\$24.95) offers an interesting look at Victorian cookery, with accompanying discussion of its history. 'Willis G. Frick has moved his Sherlocktron home pages to a new web-site at <http://members.home.net/sherlock/Sherlocktron.html>' In *Dr Doyle & Dr Bell: A Victorian Mystery* by Howard Engel (Viking/Penguin; Cdn\$19.99) medical student Conan Doyle is involved with Dr Bell in solving an 1879 mystery that prefigures the Oscar Slater case.

The Compliments of the Season to all!

*Roger Johnson*