

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

no. 182 1st September 1998

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John Hopkins, who died recently, is best known as a writer for *Z Cars*, *Softly Softly* and other TV series. He also wrote the well-regarded 1979 movie *Murder by Decree*. **Robert A.W. Lowndes** ('Langdale Pike', BSI) died on 14 July. An editor and author, mainly of fantasy and science-fiction, he often referred in his work to his delight in the world of Sherlock Holmes.

Out today is Rupert Books' most ambitious publication, *The Jeremy Brett - Linda Pritchard Story: On the Wings of Paradise*. Telling her story has clearly been a therapeutic act for Linda Pritchard, and it helps the countless many who liked and admired Jeremy Brett to understand what his last years were like. Ms Pritchard, perhaps on the advice of her co-author Mary Ann Warner, has cast her narrative in the third person, which makes the story somehow less personal, even slightly less real, for the reader. Perhaps it's as well. It avoids the situation of a memoir so intimate that reading it feels like the act of a voyeur. We know that Jeremy Brett struggled with the demon of manic-depression, and that mistaken treatment fuelled the cardiomyopathy that eventually killed him. Linda Pritchard gives us perhaps the only first-hand account we shall have of that struggle, and of her own struggle to understand and to help him. Nearly ten years ago, she approached him for help in raising sponsorship for a 5000-mile run in aid of cancer research. His generous response was to have unexpected results: without her patient support, he might never have achieved the tranquil resignation of his last couple of years. No-one interested in the actor who was the great Holmes of our time can fail to gain from it.

This well illustrated 146-page hardback can be had from Rupert Books (58/59 Stonefield, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB3 8TE) at £20.00 or \$32.80, plus postage (UK £1.75; Europe £2.70; N. America [air] £5.40/ \$8.85 [surface] £2.70/ \$4.45; elsewhere [air] £6.25 [surface] £2.70). Cheques should be payable to R.D. Smith. £1.00 from the sale of each copy will be donated to the Jeremy Brett Memorial Fund for Imperial Cancer Research. On Friday 25 September, from 6.30 pm, Linda Pritchard will be signing copies of the book at Crime In Store, 14 Bedford Street, London WC2.

New from Calabash Press (P.O. Box 1360, Ashcroft, British Columbia, V0K 1A0, Canada) is *The Case Files of Sherlock Holmes: 'The Dying Detective'*. Prices are: hardback £18.50/ US\$30.00/ Cdn\$42.50; paperback £12.50/ US\$21.00/ Cdn\$28.50. Postage is extra: USA US\$3.75; Canada Cdn\$5.30; elsewhere [air] £4.35/ US\$7.05 [surface] £2.55/ US\$4.15. (*The book is available from Rupert Books, Black Cat Bookshop and other dealers. Black Cat's address is 36-39 Silver Arcade, Leicester LE1 5FB.*)

Issue 26 of *Sherlock Holmes: The Detective Magazine* is as full of good things as ever. John Hall observes Dr Watson's

detective abilities; Paul Chapman concludes his comparison of Holmes and Bond; David Stuart Davies looks at the 1972 movie *They Might Be Giants*, and celebrates the conclusion of the BBC Radio 4 series with Merrison & Williams; Roger Forsdyke looks at Victorian crime; Gaynor Coules surveys Anne Perry's novels; Martin Edwards examines Inspector Wexford; Pat Ward becomes 'our special American correspondent'; Barbara Roden considers the Cottingley fairies; Kathryn White assesses Holmes the deceiver; 'Societies Forum' puts **The Poor Folk Upon The Moors** under the lens . . . all this, and the first part of a new Holmes story by Denis O. Smith, and part 12 of Michael Cox's definitive account of the Granada TV series! The magazine is published six times a year, at £2.50 or \$5.50 the issue. A six-issue subscription is £18.00 (Europe £20.00, rest of world £25.00 or \$40.00) from 46 Purfield Drive, Wargrave, Berks. RG10 8AR. The US representative is Classic Specialties (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH 45219, USA; e-mail sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com).

Rupert Books have a new catalogue available (address as above; e-mail rupert_books@compuserve.com), as have **Nigel Williams Rare Books** (22 & 25 Cecil Court, London WC1N 4HE; nwrrarebook@tcp.co.uk).

Classed as a school textbook is John O'Connor's play *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, published in May at £5.75, by Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd (Nelson House, Mayfield Road, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey KT12 5PL). Published last year is a nicely produced novel, *Sherlock Holmes and the Shakespeare Globe Murders* by Barry Day — who knows his Holmes and his Shakespeare (Oberon Books, 521 Caledonian Road, London N7 9RH; £5.95).

Michael Ross sends notice that Baskerville Bücher (Postfach 83 01 25, D-51034 Köln, Germany) will publish the first comprehensive bibliography of German crime fiction. *Krimis im Fadenkreuz* by Thomas Przybilka is due on 1 December. If ordered before then, the price is DM 148; after publication it will be DM 198.

Peter Blau reports news from Ken Greenwald: 221A Baker Street Associates plan a new series of Sherlock Holmes radio recordings for later this year. Each cassette will contain two plays from the 1947 series with John Stanley and Alfred Shirley. The distributor will be Radio Spirits.

A reminder to devotees of the wireless: ORCA (the Old-Time Radio-Show Collectors' Association) has what may be the most extensive archive of radio recordings in the world, and an unbeatable fund of knowledge. ORCA can be contacted via John Wolstenholme, 56 Melbourne Avenue, Dronfield Woodhouse, Sheffield S18 5YW.

Ian Wilkes sends advance notice of *Sherlock Holmes and the Sign of the Four*, to be performed at the **Northcott Theatre**, Exeter, next February by Exeter University Student Theatre. The play is written by Adam Dodd, a member of our own Society who is studying for his PhD at the university. The company has been called 'startlingly innovative' by the impeccably Canonical *Western Morning News*. Further information can be had from

Adam Dodd at Stone Cottage, 7 Coldharbour, Great Hinton, Trowbridge, Wilts. BA14 6DA (e-mail a.g.dodd@ex.ac.uk). A reminder of Dramatis Personae's production of *The Final Problem*, the conclusion of their Holmes trilogy, at **Portsmouth Arts Centre** in Reginald Road, Southsea, 8 - 10 October (phone 01705 732236). Tickets cost £4.50 (concessions £3.50). For information about the play or Dramatis Personae, contact Nick Scovell, 274 Fawcett Road, Southsea, Hants. PO4 0LG.

Elaine Hamill sends reassurance about the *Sherlock Holmes Festival*, which will definitely take place in September 1999, centring on the unveiling of John Doubleday's statue of Holmes at Baker Street Station. Donations are still needed, to ensure a sinking fund for the statue's upkeep. They can be sent to Elaine, who is Treasurer to the Sherlock Holmes Statue Company Ltd, at 16 Kirton Close, Chiswick, London W4 5UU.

Some Experiences of an Irish R.M. by Somerville & Ross originally appeared in *The Strand Magazine* and elsewhere; the books are still in print and well worth reading, but the superb television series *The Irish R.M.* has been unavailable for 16 years. Now the complete first series is out on video (Acorn/DISC VHS:AV0102). £16.99 gets you a double video-cassette, giving over *five hours* of sheer quality, with the performances of Peter Bowles, Bryan Murray, Faith Brook, Doran Godwin and others, the witty scripts of Rosemary Anne Sisson, and production values to rival those of the early Granada *Sherlock Holmes*.

Peter Horrocks tells me that a 1941 recording of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* has been reissued on CD. Leopold Stokowski conducts the All American Orchestra, and the narrator is Basil Rathbone.

Thanks to one Chris Lloyd (could he be our member C.P. Lloyd?) *The Sherlock Holmes Journal* has been quoted in *The Bookseller*. 'Bent's Notes' in the issue for 14 August gives a chunk of Colin Dexter's talk at the Society's annual dinner, as reported in the summer issue of the SHJ.

The recruitment of two bloodhounds by Essex Police is paying dividends. Even a helicopter with a heat-seeking camera couldn't find a patient who recently went missing from a hospital in Epping, but Sherlock the bloodhound did. His success is more remarkable as he's only eight months old and less than half-way through his one-year training course.

Our member Kenneth Ross, who participated in the Society's *Devil's Foot* trip to Cornwall, recorded a good deal of the weekend on video, and is offering copies to interested parties. The recording runs about 30 minutes, and Kenneth asks only £3.50 to cover his costs. Send cheques, payable to K.I. Ross, to 2 Cherry Rise, Flackwell Heath, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP10 9PS.

The weekend 4 - 6 September sees the annual meeting of **Von Herder Airguns Ltd** in Bonn. For details contact Michael Ross (Postfach 83 01 25, 51034 Köln, Germany). On 5 September **The Franco-Midland Hardware Company** and **The Baker Street Branch Lines** visit Canonical railway locations in Hampshire (6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU). On 12 September, **The Poor Folk Upon The Moors** investigate the area around Postbridge on Dartmoor (Shirley Purves, Lea House, Couches Lane, Woodbury, Exeter EX5 1HL).

On 19 September **The Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem** meet to discuss 'The Adventure of the Stock-broker's Clerk' (Gael Stahl at 1763 Needmore Road, Old Hickory, TN 37138, USA [e-mail GBStahl@juno.com]). There's a web site too, at http://www.nashville.net/~thehawk/3PP_SiteMap.html. On the same day, **The Irregular Special Railway Company** and **The Sherlock Holmes Society of London** travel by train

from Euston via Harrow to Bletchley Park — the centre of Allied code-breaking during World War II. There'll be a chance to compare the cryptanalysis of the 1940s with that of the 1890s (and the 1990s!). (Dr Antony Richards, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB2 4DX).

The Parallel Case of St Louis meets on 21 September at The Big Sleep Bookstore to discuss 'The Dying Detective' (Joe Eckrich, 914 Oakmoor, Fenton, MO 63126, USA), and **The Priory Scholars of Leicester** meet on 27 September to discuss *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (Horace Coates at 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY).

To round off the month, there are two major conventions in the United States. **The John Bennett Shaw Memorial Conference** will be held in Santa Fe, New Mexico, over the weekend of 25-27 September (e-mail sherlock@santa-fe.cc.nm.us), and for those of a more frivolous turn **The Canonical Convocation & Caper** will take place in Door County, Wisconsin (*The Baker Street Dispatch*, Box 5503, Toledo, OH 43613, USA).

Looking ahead a bit, on Saturday 7 November **The Six Napoleons of Baltimore** and **The Carlton Club**, both scions of **The Baker Street Irregulars**, will present the 19th annual programme of talks and panel discussions at the Enoch Pratt Free Library, 400 Cathedral Street, Baltimore, Maryland. All presentations are sensibly limited to 15 minutes. The speakers include William Hyder, Peter E. Blau and Canadian guest Peter Calamai. Details can be had from Bill Hyder at 5488 Cedar Lane #C3, Columbia, MD 21044-1374, USA.

Periodicals received. *The Parallelogram*, September 1998 (**The Parallel Case of St Louis**, Joseph J. Eckrich, 914 Oakmoor, Fenton, MO 63126, USA) (*Gordon R. Speck looks at fog in the Canon, and Pasquale Accardo offers a very curious theory about the death of Ronald Adair*). *The Striking (T)Rifles*, August 1998 (**Von Herder Airguns Ltd**, Michael Ross, Postfach 83 01 25, 51034 Köln, Germany) (*one of the most informative newsletters around*) *Communication*, July/August 1998 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Jeff & Wanda Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA) (*David Scott tells of a remarkable day at a Spiritualist colony and Carl Heifetz reports on June's Sherlockian Cruise and on his visit to Baker Street*). *1998 Club Roster of The Pleasant Places of Florida* (*includes Ben Wood's brief history of the PPOF*).

The Baker Street Journal, December 1997 (P.O. Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, USA) (*the BSJ is one of the essentials for Sherlockians; along with much else of interest there's the news that **The Baker Street Irregulars** are setting up two publishing programmes: the BSI Library Series and the BSI International Series — also, after a very long gap, 1998 will see a BSJ Christmas Annual, focusing on the 1940 BSI annual dinner*). *The Cormorant's Ring*, August 1998 (**The Trained Cormorants of Long Beach, CA**, Jim Coffin, 6570 E. Paseo Alcazaa, Anaheim Hills, CA 92807-4901, USA) (*Jim Coffin on Mycroft Holmes, Al Rodin on ACD as a physician — and more*). *The School Report*, Autumn Term 1998 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L. Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY) (*good full pieces on Grace Dunbar by Jeff Lowe and on dogs by Phil Attwell*).

Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press, July 1998 (Peter E. Blau, 3900 Tunlaw Road NW, #119, Washington, DC 20007-4830, USA; e-mail pblau@dgs.dgsys.com) (*the classic Sherlock Holmes newsletter*).

Roger Johnson