

The DISTRICT MESSENGER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON
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David Stuart Davies reports that **Michael Pointer**, who set the standard for research into Holmesian drama in works such as *The Public Life of Sherlock Holmes* and *The Sherlock Holmes File*, died on Boxing Day. Peter Blau notes that another of our members, **Willard Van Valkenburgh**, died on 6 December.

At the **Baker Street Irregulars'** dinner on 9 January, *Wiggins* announced the following well-deserved investitures: **Marilyn MacGregor** ('V.V. 341'), **June Kinnee** ('Hatty Doran'), **Leslie Klinger** ('The Abbey Grange'), **Paul Jeffers** ('Wilson Hargreave') and **William S. Dorn** ('Newgate Calendar'). At the William Gillette Memorial Luncheon, **David Stuart Davies** & **Kathryn White** awarded the Northern Musgrave Crown to Susan Rice.

You'll enjoy *On the Rack with Conan Doyle, and Other Journeys* comprising 23 of Michael Higgs's essays from *The Petrel Flyer* (Hansom Press Ltd, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C. V7P 3C6, Canada; e-mail lenhaffenden@bc.sympatico.ca). Michael seems to have been everywhere, and he's kept his eyes open for Sherlockian connections (and found them). His writing is easy and literate, his comments are stimulating, and the result is a grand contribution to our Game. The price is Cdn\$17.95, US\$12.50 or £8.50 (plus postage).

Let me also recommend Patrick Campbell's *Shades of Sherlock*, a handsome hardback containing three enjoyable new Holmes stories, a short play and essays on the troopship *Orontes*, the Vernet connection, the railway connections in 'The Final Problem', and other subjects. It's nicely illuminated with illustrations by Jean-Pierre Cagnat and Paul Churchill. *Shades of Sherlock* is published at Cdn\$30.00 by The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box (P.O. Box 204, 420 Owen Sound Street, Shelburne, Ontario L0N 1S0, Canada) and should be available from specialist dealers.

The Mammoth Book of Armchair Detectives & Screen Crimes edited by Peter Haining (Robinson Publishing, 7 Kensington Church Court, London W8 4SP; £6.99) includes a rare gem in Thomas H. Hutchinson's script for the very first Sherlock Holmes TV play, *The Three Garridebs*, broadcast by NBC in 1937, with Louis Hector as Holmes.

The Ultimate Guide to Unusual Leisure by Stephen Jarvis (Robson Books Ltd, Bolsover House, 5-6 Clipstone Street, London W1P 8LE; £10.99) is a compendium of uncommon pursuits, such as ningle jumping, vertical archery and pyramidology. Holmesian groups featured include **Holmes in Scale**, **The Solar Pons Society of London** and **The Watsonians**.

Rupert Books (58/59 Stonefield, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB3 8TE; e-mail rupert_books@compuserve.com) have issued two more Rupert Books Monographs, each priced at £10.00 plus postage. No. 9, at 28 pages, is 'a facsimile of a scarce 1925 Conan Doyle Spiritualist pamphlet', *The Early Christian Church and Modern Spiritualism*, with an afterword by Michael W. Homer. No. 10, at

60 pages, is *Collecting Sherlockiana: John Bennett Shaw's Basic Holmesian Library*, edited and annotated by Catherine Cooke.

Catalogue 33 from **Violet Books** (P.O. Box 20610, Seattle, WA 98102, USA; e-mail violet@drizzle.com) lists 12 of John Kendrick Bangs' rare parodies, including *The Dreamers: A Club* and *The Enchanted Typewriter* — both Sherlockian.

More new catalogues: **Bibliotective** (P.O. Box 47347, Oak Park, MI 48237, USA; e-mail wroth@mich.com); **The Mysterious Bookshop** (129 West 56th Street, New York, NY 10019, USA); **The Mysterious Bookshop** (82 Marylebone High Street, London W1M 3DE; e-mail mysteriouslon@compuserve.com); **Post Mortem Books** (58 Stanford Avenue, Hassocks, Sussex BN6 8JH; e-mail ralph@pmbooks.demon.co.uk); **Nigel Williams Rare Books** (22 & 25 Cecil Court, London WC2N 4HE; e-mail nwrrarebook@tcp.co.uk); and **Rupert Books** (address above).

The Sherlock Holmes Memorabilia Company (230 Baker Street, London NW1 5RT; website www.sh-memorabilia.co.uk) is always worth a visit. The shop has *The Bedside, Bathub & Armchair Companion to Sherlock Holmes* by Dick Riley & Pam McAllister (favourably reviewed in DM 185) at £10.00, a significant saving on the published price of £12.99. Also in stock is the new *Strand Magazine*, at £3.50, and the shop has added a new range of miniature collectibles in porcelain.

A reminder of the first annual *Dr John H. Watson Prize Essay* competition, organised by **The Friends of Dr Watson**. It's open to all who have an interest in Holmes' great-hearted friend, and there is no entry fee. You are asked to discuss, in 1000 - 3000 words, Watson's relationship with Sherlock Holmes. The best essay will win *A Sherlock Holmes Reader*, *The Original Illustrated Strand Sherlock Holmes*, the *Dr John H. Watson Prize Essay* certificate, and a year's subscription to the Friends of Dr Watson. Well worth going for, I'd say! Write for an entry form to: Richard Stacpoole-Ryding, 14 Western Close, Letchworth, Herts. SG6 4SZ.

David Stuart Davies's new play *Sherlock Holmes: The Last Act* will be produced at **Salisbury Playhouse** from Tuesday 18 to Saturday 22 May, with Roger Llewellyn as Holmes. There are plans to take it to the Edinburgh Festival, and it will be staged at the **Cockpit Theatre** in London during the *Sherlock Holmes Festival* in September.

Plans for the Festival include a reception at Tower Bridge on Wednesday 22 September; the unveiling of John Doubleday's statue of Holmes at Baker Street Station on Thursday, followed by Music Hall at the Players' Theatre; a film-show at the Museum of London on Friday; and a Sherlock Holmes Fête in Regents Park on Sunday 26 September. The principal sponsor is Abbey National, which has occupied 221 Baker Street since the 1930s.

Peter Blau notes that Scott Lucy of ACD Holdings, who plan to establish The Undershaw Club at Conan Doyle's former home in Surrey (see DM 185), can supply information from The Undershaw Club, c/o Grannom House, Gasden Lane, Witley, Surrey GU8 5QB (e-mail slucy@supralife.co.uk).

The *Daily Mail* for Saturday 26th December featured 'A special Boxing Day Sherlock Holmes story — by Stephen Fry'. Though no acknowledgement was made, the story was 'The Adventure of

the Laughing Jarvey', an anachronistic but enjoyable comedy first published in *The Listener* in 1987, and reprinted in Stephen Fry's book *Paperweight* (Heinemann, 1992).

Alex Booth has been in touch with VCI, who have the video licence for the Granada TV *Sherlock Holmes* series. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (GV0035) and *The Master Blackmailer* (GV0036) are currently available, and the rest are slowly being made available, beginning with the first series. Alex adds: 'Apparently VCI have done a deal with Britannia to release the whole set, but you can only get the last series by buying all of the videos in turn (which I imagine is not a lot of use to most people who have the others already!).' (**Britannia, I think, sells only by mail order.**)

I'm happy to report that the *original* Portsmouth-based Sherlock Holmes society is still alive and well. The Chief Secretary of **The Fratton Lodgers** is Simon Smyth, whose address is 31 Sandyfield Crescent, Cowplain, Hants. PO8 8SQ. The annual subscription is just £5.00; cheques or postal orders (payable to Chris Neale) should be sent to the Paymaster, Chris Neale, at 15 Boldre Close, Bedhampton, Havant, Hants. PO9 4BN.

A distinguished offshoot of **The Baker Street Irregulars** celebrates its first half-century with a book. *Hugo's Companions, Chicago: 50 Years of a Sherlockian Scion Society* introduces such notable Companions as Vincent Starrett, Basil Rathbone and T.S. Eliot. This limited edition hardback is available by subscription only at \$65.00, post-paid, from **Hugo's Companions**, Grosse Point Lighthouse, 2535 Sheridan Road, Evanston, IL 60201-2431, USA.

The Phœnician Tin Traders are a new Branch Office of **The Franco-Midland Hardware Company**, founded by Tracey and Bryan Knuckey (1 Cross Street, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 2EY). **The Noble West Enders** have 'ceased to function as an FMHC Branch Office', but the founders, Paula and Frank Brown, have formed another at their new home in Oregon. The address of **The Portland Prisoners** is 132, 7th Street, Ashland, OR 97520, U.S.A.

The Poor Folk Upon the Moors will hold their Annual General Meeting and 'Beryl Coronet Lunch' on Saturday 6 February at the Globe Hotel, Topsham, near Exeter. As well as the Guests of Honour, Bernard Davies and Geraldine Beare, there will be a Victorian musical entertainment by Tony Yates, a raffle and a short auction. The Poor Folks' Secretary is Shirley Purves (Lea House, Couches Lane, Woodbury, Exeter EX5 1HL).

The AGM of **The Irregular Special Railway Company** will be held on 13 February at the Montague Hotel in Montague Street, near the British Museum (a candidate for Holmes's first London lodgings). A visit to the London Transport Museum will be followed by lunch at the hotel, then the AGM, a tour of the British Museum, tea and an auction. (Antony J. Richards, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB2 4DX; e-mail arichards@msicam.co.uk.)

The next day **The Franco-Midland Hardware Company** and **The Glades of the New Forest** will combine for a tour of forts connected with Sherlock Holmes and Arthur Conan Doyle in the Portsmouth area. The address for both societies is 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU. They stress the need for early booking, 'as we have a programme for overcoming potential problems with the required pre-reading study'.

The Red Circle of Washington will meet at the National Press Club, at 14th and F Streets NW, Washington, DC, on 19 February, when Henry W. Zecher will talk about the life & times of William Gillette. Details from Peter E. Blau, 3900 Tunlaw Road NW #119, Washington, DC 20007-4830, USA.

April sees the first open meeting of **The Napoleons of Crime**, who are devoted specifically to the villains in the Canon. The venue is Gelnhausen, near Frankfurt am Main, a village with a

curious history. Exact dates are to be announced. Contact Uwe Sommerlad at Rödelheimer Landstr. 32, 60487 Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

Periodicals received. **The Cormorant's Ring**, December 1998 (**The Trained Cormorants of Long Beach**, Jim Coffin, 6570 E. Paseo Alcazaa, Anaheim Hills, CA 92807-4901, USA) (**Sherlockian percussion by Clarence Barber, mystery in 1905 by Les Klinger, Bernard Oudin's correct assertion that 'A Gazogene Is Not a Seltzogene' [which misses the fact that the British used the word 'gasogene' indiscriminately — as they still do with 'tantalus']...**). **The Torr**, no. 13 (**The Poor Folk Upon The Moors**, Eric Monahan, Highcliff, 14 Silver Bridge Close, Broadsands Park, Paignton, Devon TQ4 7NW) (**Eric Monahan writes about Conan Doyle in Torbay and about Jonathan Wild; Eddie Maguire gives a brief introduction to Holmes on radio.**)

Le Nouveau Registre de l'Hôtel Dulong: Publication lyonnaise sur Sherlock Holmes, December 25th 1898 (**sic**) (Sylvain Policard, Manager of the Hôtel Dulong, 34 gde rue de la Guillotière, 69007 Lyon, France) (**among much else of interest there's Sylvain Policard's French translation of 'The Adventure of the Two Collaborators' by J.M. Barrie.**) **Communication**, November-December 1998 & Special Christmas Edition 1998 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Jeff & Wanda Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA) (**news, views and part 1 of a seasonal Sherlockian Star Trek story by Carl L. Heifetz.**)

The Log of the Canonical Hams, January-June 1998 (published: December 1998) (**The Sherlock Holmes Wireless Society**, Ron Fish, P.O. Box 4, Circleville, NY 10919-0004, USA) (**reprints a most interesting New York Times piece about the renovation of the Algonquin Hotel.**) **The Soft-Nosed Bullet-In**, no. 25, & **The Striking (T)Rifles**, December 1998 (**Von Herder Airguns Ltd**, Michael Ross, Postfach 42 06 70, D-50900 Köln, Germany) (**a handsome journal with a good mix of scholarship and fun, and a fine newsletter, both in German.**) **The Ritual**, Autumn 1998 (**The Northern Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Fairbank, Beck Lane, Bingley, West Yorks. BD16 4DN) (**the police, personal memories of Martin Dakin, glosses on Jack Tracy's Encyclopædia and more.**)

The Camden House Journal, December 1998 & January 1999 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, 105 Wilcox Street, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA) (**Lloyd Worley's controversial notes on 'The Red-Headed League' in December; Bill Cochran's comments on 'The Dying Detective' in January.**) **The Petrel Flyer**, Nov./Dec. 1998 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C. V7P 3C6, Canada) (**ears and fingerprints by Len Haffenden, and part 1 of a round-robin: 'The Adventure of the Indian Colonel' by Barbara Roden.**)

The Serpentine Muse, Winter 1998 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 360 W. 21st Street #5A, New York, NY 10011, USA) (**fond memories of Tom Stix, and a typically ASH Christmas story.**) **The Irregular Special Railway Company Newsletter**, no. 25 & no. 26 (Antony J. Richards, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB2 4DX) (**a reminder that the ISRC's engrossing annual The Sherlock Holmes Railway Journal vol.5, is available at £5.00 including UK postage, or \$10.00 including postage worldwide.**)

The Sherlock Holmes Journal, Winter 1998 (**The Sherlock Holmes Society of London** — but you should all know about this one anyway!).

Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press, December 1998 (Peter E. Blau, 3900 Tunlaw Road NW #119, Washington, DC 20007-4830, USA) (**the original Sherlockian newsletter.**)

Roger Johnson