

# The DISTRICT MESSENGER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON  
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**Richard B. Shull** ('An Actor and a Rare One', BSI) died on 14 October. Well known on stage and screen, he'll be remembered by Sherlockians as Alex Holmes in television's *Holmes & Yoyo*.

Eric Monahan (Highcliff, 14 Silver Bridge Close, Broadsands Park, Paignton, Devon TQ4 7NW) has written and published an attractive 40-page booklet, *Sherlock Holmes Right and Wrong*. As the title suggests, there's a humorous touch to a couple of these tales, though all three remain on this side of parody. The writing is assured, and the plotting neat. The cost is £5.00 or \$8.25 including postage. (\*I understand that *George Vanderburgh's Battered Silicon Dispatch Box* will shortly publish a collected volume of Eric's *Sherlock Holmes* stories. More on this as it reaches me!\*)

Catalogue 5 from Calabash Press (P.O. Box 1360, Ashcroft, B.C. V0K 1A0, Canada) has lots of interest, including Arthur M. Alexander's satisfyingly chunky *Hot on the Scent: A Visitor's Guide to the London of Sherlock Holmes* (Cdn\$37.50 / US\$27.50 / £17.50), which I'll review in DM 196; Stephen Clarkson's *The Canonical Compendium* (Cdn\$60.00 / US\$45.00 / £28.50); Denis O. Smith's *The Chronicles of Sherlock Holmes, vol. 3* (paperback Cdn\$23.50 / US\$19.50 / £12.50; hardback Cdn\$40.00 / US\$30.00 / £19.00); and David Stuart Davies's new novel *The Shadow of the Rat* (paperback Cdn\$23.50 / US\$19.50 / £12.50; hardback Cdn\$40.00 / US\$30.00 / £19.00). Postage is extra.

*The Shadow of the Rat* may well be Sherlock Holmes's most terrifying case. He and Watson chance to meet their old friend Stamford, drunken, drugged or both. Shortly after, a body is recovered from the Thames — dead of bubonic plague. How and why is Stamford involved? A hypnotist called the Great Salvini, a very dubious club called the Bridge of Dreams, the beautiful and cruel Baroness Dubeyk, a doctor named Karswell (\*that will ring a bell with readers of M.R. James's ghost stories\*), and of course the giant rat of Sumatra — all play their part in a conspiracy that could bring down the government and destroy the country. David Stuart Davies conjures up a grand atmosphere of excitement and fear. As in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Watson is at the centre of things for much of the time, and this is his case as much as Holmes's. *The Shadow of the Rat* is both a tremendous read, and a story to make you think.

*A Study in Celluloid*, Michael Cox's account of the groundbreaking Granada TV *Sherlock Holmes* series, will be launched at Murder One in Charing Cross Road on Wednesday 1 December. Michael will be signing copies from 6.00 to 8.00 pm, and it's hoped that David Burke and Edward Hardwicke will be there. All are welcome. The 235-page book, expanded from his series in *Sherlock Holmes: The Detective Magazine*, is published by Rupert Books (58-59 Stonefield, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB3 8TE) at £19.00. The TV series was Michael Cox's idea, and he was involved as producer or executive producer for nearly all its ten-year run. Only Jeremy Brett could have given us as full an account, and he probably couldn't have told us why things went as they did — why Mrs Barclay and ex-Cpl Wood meet in a social hall, not in the street, why Professor Moriarty appears in *The Red-Headed League*, why *The Reigate Squires* was scripted but not

filmed . . . Michael has given, as only he could, what must now be considered the definitive story of a vital episode in the dramatic career of the great detective even including the final, sometimes unwatchable, series, in which he played no part. *A Study in Celluloid* is an important, enlightening and immensely enjoyable book. Read it!

**The Poor Folk Upon The Moors** have several booklets available, including *You Have Lost One of Your Boots, You Say?* by Roger Matthews, *Sherlock Holmes, Cryptanalyst* by Eric Monahan, *Some Ecclesiastical Reflections by a Non-Holmesian* by Revd S.J. Davies, and *Two Fills of Shag Tobacco, Being a Brief Discourse on the History of Pipe Smoking with Some References to Mr Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street* by Reggie Musgrave. Enquire of H. Vosper Arthur, Spynishlake, Doddiscombsleigh, Exeter EX6 7PR, or e-mail the society at [poorfolk@talk21.com](mailto:poorfolk@talk21.com).

Geoff Jeffrey sends news of Rick Boyer's *A Sherlockian Quartet*, a 1998 paperback from Alexander Books (65 Macedonia Road, Alexander, NC 28701, USA; no price given). The book contains 'The Adventure of Zolnay the Aerialist', 'The Adventure of the Bell Rock Light', 'The Adventure of the Eyrie Cliff' and 'The Giant Rat of Sumatra' — that last was first published in 1976.

There are new catalogues to hand from **The Black Cat Bookshop** (36-39 Silver Arcade, Leicester LE1 5FB) (\*crime fiction & first editions\*); **Nigel Williams Rare Books** (22 & 25 Cecil Court, London WC2N 4HE; e-mail [nwrrarebook@tcp.co.uk](mailto:nwrrarebook@tcp.co.uk)); **Janus Books** (Mike Greenbaum, P.O. Box 40787, Tucson, AZ 85717, USA; e-mail [mike@janusbooks.com](mailto:mike@janusbooks.com)) (\*a dealer new to me, who has lots of Sherlock Holmes material; the list is also on the website at <http://janusbooks.com>); **Gravesend Books** (Box 235, Pocono Pines, PA 18530, USA; e-mail [gravesnd@epix.net](mailto:gravesnd@epix.net)) (\*a single collection of books and letters by Henry Lauritzen and Julian Wolff; also 'Prologue One to Gravesend Catalogue 34\*'); **Classic Specialties** (P.O. Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH 45219, USA) (\*as always, *The Sherlockian Times* is as much a magazine as a catalogue, and full of good things; check the website at <http://www.sherlock-holmes.com>).

Murray Shaw is still busy writing. Otto Penzler (The Mysterious Bookshop, 129 West 56th Street, New York, NY 10019, USA) plans to publish Murray's Sherlock Holmes story 'An Anatomy of Two Murders' and has asked for more! Meanwhile *Sherlock Holmes and the Arabian Princess* by John North (based on Terence Mustoo's play *Sherlock Holmes in the Deerstalker*) has been translated into Turkish as *Sherlock Holmes ve Arap Prensesi!*

In issue 33 of *Sherlock Holmes: The Detective Magazine*, David Stuart Davies reports on the 'Return of Sherlock Holmes' statue festival; Denis Smith concludes his story 'The Adventure of the Richmond Horror'; Toby Earnshaw sees how writers have imagined the giant rat of Sumatra; Kathryn White asks whether plot or character is more important; Peter Foors looks at Jules Maigret; Paul Chapman begins 'A Clash of Titans: Sherlock Holmes and Jack the Ripper'; Gaynor Coules surveys the novels of Robert Barnard; Brian Adrian examines disabled detectives on TV; Michael Cox is interviewed; DSD continues the coverage of the Granada series with *The Master Blackmailer*; Mike Ripley considers how and why authors kill their characters; Richard Stacpoole-Ryding illuminates the Friends of Dr Watson (\*don't forget the second annual Dr John H. Watson Prize Essay

*Competition on the subject of Dr Watson's medical abilities, knowledge and skills; get entry forms and rules from: Dr Watson's Dresser, 14 Western Close, Letchworth, Herts. SG6 4SZ\**) — and there's more, of course! 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 the Admin. Dept, PO Box 100, Chichester, West Sussex PO18 8HD. The US representative is Classic Specialties (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH 45219, USA; e-mail [sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com](mailto:sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com)).

The Conan Doyle Collection is now officially installed at Beacon Community College, Crowborough, where it was opened on 9 October by Georgina Doyle and Barbara Payne, Patron and Joint President of **The Conan Doyle (Crowborough) Establishment**. The Collection is open from 10.00 am to 6.00 pm, Monday to Friday; weekend visits can be arranged with the Curator, Brian Pugh (20 Clare Road, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1PN; phone 01273 475558) giving at least three weeks' notice. Entrance is free, but donations are welcome.

13½-inch maquettes of the statue of Sir Arthur commissioned from David Cornell by the **Crowborough Conan Doyle Trust Ltd** (The Town Hall, The Broadway, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 1DA) can be ordered from the Trust. There'll be 250 bronze maquettes at £890.00 each and an unlimited number of bronze resin maquettes at £390.00 each.

Cheaper, and very desirable, is the work of Kate Woodlock (Role Models, 2A Stonehouse Road, Liphook, Hants. GU30 7DD; phone 01428 723083). Ms Woodlock offers a good 3½-inch bust of Basil Rathbone (with turned-up coat collar, as in the Universal Holmes movies) and a superb Peter Cushing (in deerstalker, as in *The Masks of Death*). In white resin they're £12.00 each, and in bronzed resin £14.00 — a bargain! There are also 5-inch pewter figures of Sherlock Holmes and the Hound of the Baskervilles at £18.00 each. Prices include postage (ask about international prices).

Phil Attwell sends notice of a day course on *Smugglers and Bodysnatchers* on Saturday 27 November in Northampton. The cost is £18.25 including lunch (concessions available) from Leicester University Dept of Adult Education, University Centre, Queen's Building, 6-12 Leicester Parade, Barrack Road, Northampton NN2 6AF (phone 01604 251801).

Geoff Bradley (9 Vicarage Hill, South Benfleet, Essex SS7 1PA) needs a photocopy of the clues to the 1970 Sherlock Holmes 'follow the clues' jigsaw puzzle, issued as a tie-in to Billy Wilder's movie *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*. Can anyone help, please?

*The Guardian* for 13 October featured a two-page article by Jon Henley, asking if Sherlock Holmes was really French. (*\*Other papers were considering the question about 18 months ago. Well, it's a good plug for La Société Sherlock Holmes de France.\**)

That wonderful source of repro Victoriana, **Amazon Vinegar & Pickling Works Drygoods**, is moving to 411 Brady Street, Davenport, IA 52801-1518, USA. Check the company's goods on <http://www.victoriana.com.amazon/>.

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 The Arches under Charing Cross Station. This year's panto is *Cinderella, or, The Lover, the Lackey and the Little Glass Slipper*. 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, which is always worth a visit. The restaurant does excellent lunches and dinners (phone 0171 839 5864).

Wonderful Victorian (and other) Christmas presents can be had from **Past Times**, who have 60 shops and a mail order service. Call 01993 770440 for a catalogue. **Hawkin & Co.** (St Margaret, Harleston, Norfolk IP20 0PJ; phone 01986 782536) sell all sorts of toys and things you didn't know were still made. The 1999-

2000 catalogue is out now, and there are shops in Windsor, Salisbury and Tunbridge Wells.

A reminder that *Sherlock Holmes: The Pantomime* will run at the ADC Theatre, Cambridge, from 23 November to 4 December, at 8.00 pm. Book now at the Arts Theatre Box Office (6 St Edwards Passage, Cambridge; phone 01223 503333).

Sylvain Policard, Manager of **The Hôtel Dulong** (the Lyon scion of **La Société Sherlock Holmes de France**) is currently studying in Ireland. His address is: 7 Larchfield Road, Goatstown, Dublin 14, Republic of Ireland.

Visitors to New Zealand may like to check out **The Sherlock Holmes Club of Dunedin**. Contact Edwin R. Nye, 51 Irvine Road, The Cove, Dunedin, New Zealand.

Our Society's Christmas card, bearing Douglas West's picture of Sherlock Holmes examining his statue in London, is available from Geoffrey Stavert in packs of ten at £5.50 (Europe £6.00, USA \$13.00, elsewhere £7.00). Make cheques payable to **The Sherlock Holmes Society of London**. Note Geoffrey's new address: 22 Homeheights, Clarence Parade, Southsea, Hants. PO5 3NN. (*\*Other Society merchandise can be had from Lynne Godden at Apple Tree Cottage, Smarden, Ashford, Kent TN27 8QE.\**)

Our Society's next meeting will be the Film Evening at the Museum of London on 26 November, when David Stuart Davies will present the 1965 BBC film of *The Red-Headed League* starring our Honorary Member Douglas Wilmer; get details from Pam Bruxner (2B Hiham Green, Winchelsea, East Sussex TN36 4HB).

**The Franco-Midland Hardware Company** will hold its AGM, Lunch and Seasonal Activities in Oxford on Saturday 4 December (6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU). The following day will see the AGM, Lunch and Seasonal Games of **The Priory Scholars** in Leicester (Horace Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). On the other side of the world, **The Sydney Passengers** plan their Christmas Luncheon for that same day (Bill Barnes, 19 Malvern Avenue, Manly, NSW 2095, Australia; e-mail [bbarnes@ozemail.com.au](mailto:bbarnes@ozemail.com.au)).

Periodicals received. *The Camden House Journal*, October 1999 and November 1999 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, P.O. Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). *The Torr*, Autumn 1999 (**The Poor Folk Upon The Moors**, Eric Monahan, Highcliff, 14 Silver Bridge Close, Broadsands Park, Paignton, Devon TQ4 7NW). *Irregular Special Railway Company Directory*, 1999-2000 (**The Irregular Special Railway Company**, The Station Master, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB2 4DX). *Sherlockian Snippets*, October 1999 (Tabitha Smith, [SaralockH@aol.com](mailto:SaralockH@aol.com)). *The Parallelogram*, October 1999 (**The Parallel Case of St Louis**, Joseph J. Eckrich, 914 Oakmoor, Fenton, MO 63026, USA).

*The Petrel Flyer*, Sept./Oct. 1999 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). *Watson's Wanderings Again! A Guide to the Dr Watson Day Domiciliary Organised by The Friends of Dr Watson, Saturday 13 November 1999* (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Dr Watson's Dresser, 14 Western Close, Letchworth, Herts. SG6 4SZ). *The FMHC Memo*, November 1999, and *Interim Report 1999: The Stock-broker's Clerk Contract Reviewed* (**The Franco-Midland Hardware Company**, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU). *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, October 1999 (Peter E. Blau, 3900 Tunlaw Road NW #119, Washington, DC 20007-4830, USA).

*Roger Johnson*