

# The DISTRICT MESSENGER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON  
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Please note that I give such addresses and prices as I have. If I don't provide details of importers or agents, it's because I don't have those details.

The actor **Morton Lowry** died in August. Sherlockians will always honour him for his excellent Jack Stapleton in the 1939 *Hound of the Baskervilles*. He also played opposite Basil Rathbone's Holmes as Sanford in the 1945 *Pursuit to Algiers*.

An interesting sub-division of Holmesian studies involves speculation about the Great Hiatus, the years between the duel at Reichenbach and Holmes's return to London. Did he really spend two years in Tibet and go on to visit Persia, Mecca and Khartoum? To the horror of some, half a dozen or so scholars have applied their imaginations to the subject in the form of fiction, from Richard Wincor's *Sherlock Holmes in Tibet* (1968) and Hapi's *221A Baker Street: The Adamantine Sherlock Holmes* (1974) to more recent novels such as John Hall's *The Travels of Sherlock Holmes*, Tracy Cooper-Posey's *Chronicles of the Lost Years* and T.F. Shiel's *The Siam Question*. Now another title has been added to the list. *The Mandala of Sherlock Holmes: The Missing Years* purports to be an account by Holmes's companion Hurree Chunder Mookerjee — a name that will be familiar to readers of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*.

The actual author is Jamyang Norbu, whom the Tibet Society calls 'one of Tibet's foremost intellectuals in exile and a former member of the Tibetan resistance'. Unsurprisingly, the novel exudes a fierce idealistic passion for Tibetan freedom, which sustains a plot that sometimes seems to owe as much to Indiana Jones as to Kipling or Conan Doyle. I enjoyed it, but I can understand the frustration of those who complain that Holmes's place is not with the supernatural. The novel is published by John Murray (50 Albemarle Street, London W1X 4BD), a firm long associated with Sherlock Holmes and his creator. The price is £16.99. (\*Mr Norbu delivered the David Ennals Memorial Lecture on 'The Reality of Tibetan Independence' at the School of Oriental & African Studies on 14 November.\*)

Eric Monahan has written and published an attractive booklet in good time for Christmas. In 'The Isadora Persano Affair' he gives his own interpretation of the remarkable worm, said to be unknown to science, while 'The Swan Upping Adventure' is a jollier affair, touching on a famous English tradition and a peculiar secret of West London. 'The Isadora Persano Affair' and 'The Swan Upping Adventure' is available at £5.00 or \$9.00, including postage, from Eric at Highcliff, 14 Silver Bridge Close, Broadsands Park, Paignton, Devon TQ4 7NW. (\*Has no one but me considered the possibility that the feminine name 'Isadora' in 'Thor Bridge' is a misprint for 'Isadore'??\*)

*The Sherlock Holmes Walk* is a nice little booklet written by Paul Garner and published by Louis' London Walks (phone 07050 224991; e-mail [lw@cableinet.co.uk](mailto:lw@cableinet.co.uk)). The walk, in two stages, covers most of the Canonical sites in Marylebone and

the West End, with clear directions and appropriate quotations. Mr Garner has confused John Doubleday's London statue with the one in Meiringen — not an obvious mistake — but that's a rare error in this pleasant guide. The Sherlock Holmes Memorabilia Company (230 Baker Street, London NW1 5RT; phone 020 7486 1426) has copies at £2.50.

John Sutherland's three books of bookish puzzles are now available in a single volume, *The Literary Detective*, (Oxford University Press, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP; at £12.99). Prof. Sutherland is one of the few literary critics who enjoy playing our Game, which he's applied to all sorts of authors and their work — as the titles of the original books attest: *Is Heathcliff a Murderer?*, *Can Jane Eyre Be Happy?*, and *Who Betrays Elizabeth Bennet?* And of course each contains a Holmesian investigation.

Other new and forthcoming books: *Maggots, Murder and Men: Memories and Reflections of a Forensic Entomologist* by Zakaria Erzinçlioglu (Harley Books, FREEPOST, Great Horkesley, Colchester CO6 4YY; phone 01206 271216; e-mail [harley@keme.co.uk](mailto:harley@keme.co.uk); November; £13.95 plus postage); *Favorite Sherlock Holmes Detective Stories* by Arthur Conan Doyle (Dover Publications, David & Charles PLC, Brunel House, Brunel Road, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 4PU; December; £1.90); *Sherlock Holmes vs Dracula* by Loren D, Estleman (i Books, Simon & Schuster, 4th Floor, Bought Ledger Dept, Africa House, 64-78 Kingsway, London WC2B 6AH; January; £9.99); *Sherlock Holmes and the Crosby Murder* by Barrie Roberts (Robinson Publishing, 3 The Lanchesters, 162 Fulham Palace Road, London W6 9ER; January; £16.99).

News from the Frankfurt Book Fair: 'Joseph J. Healey, an American currently domiciled in Cologne, claims to have sold film rights in his *Houdini Meets Holmes*; Nellessy Uitgeverij of Postbus 30227, 6803 AE Arnhem, Netherlands, propose to issue a new pastiche for the 100th anniversary of *The Hound*; and Eulen Verlag, Hebelstrasse 11, 79104 Freiburg in Breslau, Germany, have published *London von Scotland Yard bis Jack the Ripper: Ein Führer zu über 400 Kriminalschauplätzen* by Gerald Hagemann' (thanks to Ian Wilkes for this information).

There are new catalogues, full of Sherlockiana and Doyleana, from **Nigel Williams Rare Books** (22 & 25 Cecil Court, London WC2N 4HE; [nwrarebook@tcp.co.uk](mailto:nwrarebook@tcp.co.uk); website [www.nigelwilliams.com](http://www.nigelwilliams.com)); **Bibliotective** (21861 Stratford, Oak Park, MI 48237, USA; e-mail [wroth@mich.com](mailto:wroth@mich.com)); and **Janus Books** (PO Box 40787, Tucson, AZ 85717, USA; e-mail [mike@janusbooks.com](mailto:mike@janusbooks.com)).

Francine & Wayne Swift note that the complete Holmes Canon is available on CD-ROM from **John Thibeau**, Insight Engineering, PO Box 10785, Franconia, VA 22310, USA (e-mail [thibeau@erols.com](mailto:thibeau@erols.com)), priced at \$95.00. That includes postage within the USA.

Hirayama Yuichi tells me that volume 10 of *The Shoso-in Bulletin* is due next month. This Japanese-originated but truly international journal is one of the great success stories of the Sherlockian world. There's now an English language website at [www.parkcity.ne.jp/~hirayama/index.htm](http://www.parkcity.ne.jp/~hirayama/index.htm). European readers

can order copies at £7.25 post-free from John Hall, 20 Drury Avenue, Horsforth, Leeds LS18 4BR (cheques payable to John Hall). The American agent is Classic Specialties, PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH 45219, USA (website [www.sherlock-holmes.com](http://www.sherlock-holmes.com)); and the price is \$12.00 plus postage.

*The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes - IV*, read by the excellent David Timson, is due in March as a 3-cassette or 3-CD set from Naxos AudioBooks (18 High Street, Welwyn, Herts. AL6 9EQ; e-mail [Naxos\\_Audiobooks@compuserve.com](mailto:Naxos_Audiobooks@compuserve.com)).

Last month, CSA Telltapes (101 Chamberlayne Road, London NW10 3ND) issued *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes vols. 1 & 2*, read by Edward Hardwicke, as a set of four cassettes. These recordings, originally released in 1993 and 1994, are first-rate.

It's a bit late to mention it, I know, but on Wednesday mornings at 11.30 BBC Radio 4 is currently running a 4-part dramatisation of Laurie R. King's *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*, with Monica Dolan as Mary Russell and James Fox as Sherlock Holmes. The script is by Shaun Prendergast.

The BBC's entertaining but deeply flawed *Murder Rooms: The Dark Beginnings of Sherlock Holmes* was popular enough to spawn a series of four 90-minute films, currently in production. David Pirie has written two of the scripts and is consultant and associate producer on all four. Three books have been commissioned, of which the first, *The Patient's Eyes*, is due from Random House next May.

Alexis Barquin sends word that *Sherlock Holmes et le Chien des Baskerville* will be performed at Espace Paris Plaine, 13 rue du Général Guillaumat, 75015 Paris (phone 01 40 43 01 82) from 2 to 7 December.

On 21 November Reuters Financial reported that **Abbey National**, whose connection with Sherlock Holmes goes back some 70 years, has had great success with its Holmes (No. 2) PLC, 'Europe's largest ever residential mortgage-backed bond'.

I've had a message from Ales Kolodrubec (Milesovska 1, 130 00 Praha 3, Czech Republic), who tells me that the former kingdom of Bohemia now has a Sherlockian Society. **Ceska spolecnost Sherlocka Holmesa** (The Czech Society of Sherlock Holmes) is holding its first meeting in Prague even as I write! Mr Kolodrubec is Classified Advertising Manager at the Prague Post; his e-mail address is [classifieds@praguepost.cz](mailto:classifieds@praguepost.cz).

Earlier today, the Christmas Luncheon of **The Sydney Passengers** celebrated 'The Sussex Vampire' in true Draculean form. The Passengers plan a weekend jaunt next year to mark the centenary of *The Hound*. (Get details of this lively group from Bill Barnes, 19 Malvern Avenue, Manly, NSW 2095, Australia; e-mail [bbarnes@ozemail.com.au](mailto:bbarnes@ozemail.com.au)).

**Mrs Hudson's Lodgers**, under the guiding hands of Tom & Ruth Ann Stetak, have changed their meeting place to Borders Books in Westlake, Ohio. Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. November's featured a play entitled *Holmes in Egypt, or A Question of De-Nile*. A similar jocular offering is planned for December. (Contact J.W. Gombarcik, 1593 Ridgewood Avenue, Lakewood, OH 44107-5040, USA).

**The Illustrious Clients** will discuss 'Black Peter' over dinner on 2 December (details from Steven T. Doyle, 'Lomax the Sub-Librarian', 540 West Sycamore Street, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). The Annual General Meeting and Christmas Social of **The Franco-Midland Hardware Company** will take place on 3 December in Cambridge (6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU; or check the FMHC website at [www.btinternet.com/~sherlock.fmhc](http://www.btinternet.com/~sherlock.fmhc)).

The Annual Dinner of **The Baker Street Irregulars** will be held on 5 January, at the Union League Club in New York (Michael Whelan, 'Wiggins', 7936 Mill Stream Circle,

Indianapolis, IN 46278-2105, USA). At the same time, the Baskerville Bash at the Manhattan Club is open to all Sherlockians (Paula J. Perry, 346 East 87th Street #4A, New York, NY 10128, USA). There'll be lots of other things happening on and around that weekend. On 6 January, **The Franco-Midland Hardware Company** will explore *Hound* literary connections in London, 'from Baker Street to the Northumberland Hotel'.

That wonderfully funny man Barry Cryer will be Guest of Honour at the Annual Dinner of **The Sherlock Holmes Society of London** on 13 January, at the House of Commons. The Morning After luncheon party will be held next day at the New Commonwealth Club (Bob Ellis at 13 Crofton Avenue, Orpington, Kent BR6 8DU; check the website at [www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk](http://www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk)). Also on 13 January, **The Illustrious Clients** will hold their Victorian Dinner. Details from Steven T. Doyle, as above.

*The Baker Street Journal Christmas Annual 2000* will be a history by Wayne Swift of the Silver Blaze Races around the world. 'This 64-page collection of recollections, contemporary reportage, and racetrack statistics is a fitting companion to the BSI History series. This Annual will be printed only in a number sufficient to satisfy those who order before 10 December 2000. *This is not part of your subscription.*' Price including postage: USA: \$11.00; international: \$12.00. Orders to *The Baker Street Journal*, PO Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, USA. (\*It's odd that the Silver Blaze idea has never caught on in Britain.\*)

Periodicals received. *The Petrel Flyer*, Sept/Oct 2000 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). *3 Pipe Problem Plugs and Dittles*, Sept/Nov 2000 (**The Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem**, Gael Stahl, 1763 Needmore Avenue, Old Hickory, TN 37138, USA; website [www.thehawk.net/3ppEZ.htm/](http://www.thehawk.net/3ppEZ.htm/)). *The Passengers' Log*, Winter & Spring issue (**The Sydney Passengers**, Rosane McNamara, 4/2a Merlin Street, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089, Australia; website [www.ozemail.com.au/~bbarnes/sp.htm](http://www.ozemail.com.au/~bbarnes/sp.htm)).

*The Parallelogram*, November 2000 (**The Parallel Case of St Louis**, Joseph J. Eckrich, 914 Oakmoor, Fenton, MO 63126, USA). *The Illustrious Clients News*, November 2000 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T. Doyle, 540 West Sycamore Street, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). *The School Report*, Winter Term 2000 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). *The Franco-Midland Hardware Company Annual Report 2000: The Devil's Foot Contract* (\*principal content is an excellent comprehensive topographical study by Philip Weller\*) and *The FMHC Memo*, August 2000 (\*sic. — but the delay is my fault, not the FMHC's\*) (6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU).

*The Camden House Journal*, November 2000 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). *Sherlockiana*, no. 2, 2000 (**Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**, Bjarne Nielsen, Sherlock Holmes Museet, Algade 3, 4500 Nykøbing Sjælland, Denmark). And the invaluable newsletter, *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, October 2000 (Peter E. Blau, 3900 Tunlaw Road NW #119, Washington, DC 20007-4830, USA; e-mail [pblau@dgs.dgsys.com](mailto:pblau@dgs.dgsys.com)).

This is the last DM before Christmas, so -

**THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE  
SEASON!**

*Roger Johnson*