

The DISTRICT MESSENGER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON
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A happy new year to all — and indeed a happy new millennium!

Within the last few days we've lost two outstanding figures in the world of Sherlock Holmes. On Thursday 10 January **Michael Williams** died after a long battle with cancer. His acting career, mostly on stage and radio, was inevitably overshadowed by that of his wife Dame Judi Dench, but he was a fine actor, and particularly he was a great Dr Watson, to Clive Merrison's Holmes, in the ground-breaking BBC Radio 4 series which dramatised the entire Canon. It's good that he was recently awarded a Papal Knighthood. Yesterday my good friend **Wayne Swift** ('The Giant Rat of Sumatra', BSI) died, also from cancer. I say 'my friend', but Wayne's friends — Sherlockian and otherwise — are legion. At least he was able to enjoy the Baker Street Irregulars' dinner and to see the publication of his *magnum opus*, the BSJ Christmas Annual. Our thoughts are with Francine.

Wiggins made the following investitures at the BSI dinner: 'Marlowe Bates' (**Charles Foley**), 'Rosenlauri' (**Marcus Geisser**), 'The Duchess of Devonshire' (**Julie McKuras**), 'Corporal Henry Wood' (**Scott Monty**), 'George Sand' (**Lloyd Rose**), 'Thurston' (**Daniel Stashower**), and 'Professor Coram' (**Andy Solberg**). **Donald Pollock** received the Two-Shilling Award (*in absentia*), and **Ben Vizoskie** won the Morley-Montgomery Award. Congratulations to all!

The Baker Street Journal Christmas Annual 2000 is a worthy memorial to Wayne B. Swift, being his *History of the Silver Blaze*. What do you mean, I hear you cry, by *the Silver Blaze*? Well, 50 years ago Thomas L. Stix Sr had the clever idea of re-creating the race for the Wessex Cup, in sound, with the scene set by the sports journalist Red Smith, and the race described by the well known commentator Joe Palmer. (Our Society did the same thing 40 years later, with Sir Peter O'Sullivan providing the commentary.) The success of the recording led Tom Stix to propose an actual race, to be called the Silver Blaze Cup; in the event the race, run at Jamaica, NY, was the Silver Blaze Purse — most subsequent races have been known simply as the Silver Blaze. Wealthier organisations actually sponsor a race, with prize-money and a copy of an appropriate Canonical volume for the owner of the winner; more modest groups adopt an existing race. The original Silver Blaze was run for nearly half a century at one or other of the various racetracks in New York, before moving last year to Saratoga. Other societies took up the idea, and notable races have been run in Chicago, Copenhagen, Washington, Toronto, St Louis, Winnipeg, Tampa and elsewhere. (**Isn't it time that the Sherlock Holmes Society of London had a day at the races?**) This nice 64-page booklet opens with a brief survey of the Wessex Cup as described by Dr Watson, and goes on to look at all the Silver Blaze races. As the publishers say, 'This collection of recollections, contemporary reportage, and racetrack statistics is a fitting companion to the BSI History Series.' It's well illustrated too. The cost, postpaid, is: USA

\$11.00, check only; elsewhere \$12.00, by check, Visa or MasterCard (*The Baker Street Journal*, PO Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, USA). If you'd rather pay in sterling, Francine Swift has a few copies at £8.00 each plus postage (4622 Morgan Drive, Chevy Chase, MD 20815-5315, USA — cheques payable to Francine).

The latest book in the BSI History Series is Jon Lellenberg's *Dissecta Membra*, 'a catch-up collection of items, reproduced in facsimile, which came too late to be included in the 1930s and 40s volumes'. Jon has copies at \$13.00 within the USA or \$13.50 outside (3133 Connecticut Avenue NW, # 827, Washington, DC 20008, USA). I'll be reviewing the book in the next DM.

Musgrave Monograph Number Ten is a very engaging survey by Susan Rice of Vincent Starrett and his life-long affair with Sherlock Holmes. Starrett's books *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* and *221B: Studies in Sherlock Holmes* are essential reading, and his sonnet '221B', written in the dark days of the war, is a perfect encapsulation of the appeal and the importance of Holmes and Watson. I wish I'd known him personally. *The Somnabulist and the Detective* is a well illustrated, strongly bound 60-page brochure; copies can be had from Anne Jordan (Fairbank, Beck Lane, Bingley, West Yorkshire BD16 4DN), priced at £7.00 (UK), £9.00 (Europe), Cdn\$25.00 (Canada), US\$15.00 (USA & rest of world). Please make sterling cheques and US and Canadian dollar checks payable to The Northern Musgraves.

New from Calabash Press (PO Box 1360, Ashcroft, B.C., Canada V0K 1A0) are *The Haunted Grange of Goresythorpe*, a previously unpublished early story by Arthur Conan Doyle (hardback: £21.00; US\$35.00; Cdn\$45.00); *The Transcendent Holmes*, a collection of essays by John Warwick Montgomery (paperback: £12.50; US\$19.50; Cdn\$26.50); and *Knight Errant: The Singular Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, stories by Jane Rubino (hardback: £19.00; US\$30.00; Cdn\$42.50; paperback: £12.50; US\$19.50; Cdn\$26.50). These prices exclude postage. Check the Calabash website at www.ash-tree.bc.ca/calabash.html for details of other publications.

More new and forthcoming books. *Arthur Conan Doyle and the Meaning of Masculinity* by Diana Barsham (Ashgate, c/o Bookpoint Ltd, Gower House, Croft Road, Aldershot, Hants. GU11 3HR; November 2000; £40.00). *The Man Who Became Sherlock Holmes: The Tortured Mind of Jeremy Brett* (revised edition) by Terry Manners (Virgin Books, Units 5 & 6, Thames Wharf, Rainville Road, London W6 9HA; February 2001; £14.99).

Over Christmas, BBC Knowledge, the digital TV channel, broadcast Nigel Williams' unsatisfactory but entertaining series *The Great Detectives*, along with *Top Cops*, a new series of four short films (10 minutes each) about detective story fans. Both series featured Sherlock Holmes, of course; in *Top Cops* a dozen of our members followed Watson's trail from *A Study in Scarlet* — the Criterion to Holborn to Bart's to 221B Baker Street (actually the sitting-room exhibit at the Sherlock Holmes pub). It's an entertaining and very agreeable little film.

John Addy, membership secretary of the Northern Musgraves, is writing a book, probably the first, about W. Clark Russell, whose fine sea stories Dr Watson enjoyed. John is keen to trace his relatives, letters, books, short stories and any sources of information about him. If you're interested in this unfairly

neglected Victorian author, or have information about him, please contact John at 184 Bradford Road, Otley, West Yorkshire LS21 3LT (phone 01943 464760; e-mail john.addy@redcats.co.uk).

A reminder that just about everything of Sherlockian interest on the Internet is accessible through one or both of the two great sites: Chris Redmond's *Sherlockian.Net* at www.sherlockian.net, and members.home.net/sherlock1Sherlocktron.html, which is Willis G. Frick's *Sherlocktron*.

The world-famous *Sherlock Holmes* public house at Charing Cross is always worth a visit. The food and drink are excellent. Moreover, though it was never officially called that, the pub was the first Sherlock Holmes museum, featuring the first re-creation of the sitting-room at 221B Baker Street. The exhibits were originally assembled for the Festival of Britain in 1951, when they were to be seen at Abbey House in Baker Street. Then they went on tour to New York and around the world before finding their permanent home here. It was the organising of the exhibition 50 years ago that prompted Tony & Freda Howlett, Colin Prestige and others to found the Sherlock Holmes Society of London, so our Society and the pub are really inseparable! The *Sherlock Holmes* has a nice new website at www.sherlockholmespub.homestead.com. It's even better to go there in person, however. The pub is at 10 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5DA (phone 020 7930 2644).

Other sites of interest that you might like to investigate include *Sherlock Holmes on Oxford Lane*, which is largely devoted to Holmes on screen, at www.geocities.com/upabob/ (the site is run by Bob Byrne, who reviews mystery-themed websites for *Sherlock Holmes: The Detective Magazine*); *SHADoWS — Sherlock Holmes And Doctor Who Site* at www.shadws.freereserve.co.uk; *Pinacotheca Holmesiana*, which aims to present as many illustrations of the Canon as possible, at www.spiner.org/ch/gallery/index.html; and *The Tourist's Sherlock Holmes: A Not So Elementary List of Filming Locations* at pages.prodigy.net/jcnash/sherlock_places.htm.

Lynne Godden sends news that at 8.00 pm on Friday 23 February at the Trinity Arts Theatre in Tunbridge Wells, Footloose Theatre will present *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, in which Paul Lehmann will perform 'The Blue Carbuncle' and 'The Engineer's Thumb'. The box office is at 01892 678678.

Issue 38 of Geoff Bradley's admirable magazine *CADS: Crime And Detective Stories* features much of interest to Sherlockians, especially Donald A. Yates's article 'The Musgrave Ramble'. Get details from Geoff at 9 Vicarage Hill, South Benfleet, Essex SS7 1PA.

Peter Blau notes that Ron Fish has founded a new society, **The Master's Masons**, open to any male belonging to a Masonic Lodge. Ron's address is PO Box 4, Circleville, NY 10919-0004, USA.

Ales M. Kolodrubec reports that at the first meeting of **Ceska spolecnost Sherlocka Holmese** (The Czech Society of Sherlock Holmes) Zora Wolfova and Miroslav Kucera were elected Vice-Presidents, and Ales himself was elected President. The society's members include Rudolf Cechura, a long-time member of our own Society. Contact Ales at Milesovska 1, 130 00 Praha 3, Czech Republic (e-mail classifieds@praguepost.cz).

The Friends of Dr Watson invite entries for the 3rd *Dr John H. Watson Annual Prize Essay*. The subject this year is to explore Holmes's remark, 'I never get your limits, Watson. There are unexplored possibilities about you.' The judges this year are John Hall, associate editor of *The Ritual*, Steven Rothman, editor of *The Baker Street Journal*, and Nicholas Utechin, editor of *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*. The competition is open to all. Get details and entry forms from Dr Watson's Dresser,

The big event in Canada this year will be the *Footprints of the Hound* symposium in Toronto on 19-21 October, to celebrate 100 years of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and 30 years of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection at the Toronto Reference Library. The

speakers will include Christopher Frayling, Richard Lancelyn Green, Daniel Stashower, Leslie Klinger, Christopher & Barbara Roden, Richard Sveum, Chris Redmond and Roy Pilot. Some exciting treasures from the Collection and from other sources will be on display. Register before 31 March and the fee (excluding the banquet on Saturday) will be Cdn\$160.00; after that it's Cdn\$180.00. Get full details from *Footprints of the Hound*, 10 Pinetree Crescent, Brampton, Ontario, Canada L6W 1C8.

Allan Devitt sends word that the **STUD Sherlockian Society** will celebrate its 10th birthday at its annual dinner on 2 March at Sheraton Four Points in Schiller Park, IL.. The main speaker will be Steven Doyle, and there'll be a silent auction of the collection of the late Dennis France, as well as the usual STUD toasts and awards. The following day there'll be the *Solar Pons Breakfast* at Walker Brothers Original Pancake House, a visit to Scotland Yard Books, and the annual STUD pizza party. Get details from Bill Sawisch, 418 Galahad Road, Bolingbrook, IL 60440, USA.

The Red Circle will hold a Lodge at the National Press Club in Washington on 2 February (Peter E. Blau, 3900 Tunlaw Road NW #119, Washington, DC 20007-4830, USA). **The Franco Midland Hardware Company** and **The Baker Street Branch Lines** will meet in Southampton on 3 February to explore Sir Henry Baskerville's place of disembarkation (both societies are at 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU). **The Northern Musgraves** birthday party at the Huddersfield Hotel on 10 February will be entitled *The Hound Hip Hooray*; the special guest will be Roger Llewellyn (details from David Stuart Davies, Overdale, 69 Greenhead Road, Huddersfield HD1 4ER). The FMHC also plans a weekend in Cromer, 24 - 25 March, where Conan Doyle and Fletcher Robinson discussed the Dartmoor legends that gave rise to *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

Periodicals received. *Cliff Notes on Mrs Hudson's Cliffdwellers*, December 2000 (**Mrs Hudson's Cliffdwellers**, Henry Boote, 184 Central Avenue, Old Tappan, NJ 07675-9069, USA). *The Ritual*, Autumn 2000 (**The Northern Musgraves**, Paul M. Chapman, Alderley, Chapel Street, Easingwold, North Yorks. YO61 3AF). *The Illustrious Clients News*, December 2000 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T. Doyle, 540 W. Sycamore Street, Zionsville, IN 460777, USA).

Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections, December 2000 (Sherlock Holmes Collections, Suite 111, Elmer L. Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). *The Serpentine Muse*, Winter 2000 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 360 West 21st Street # 5A, New York, NY 10011, USA). *The Camden House Journal*, December 2000 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). *The Dr John H. Watson Annual Prize Essay Competition 2000: The Winning Entries*; and *The Formulary*, December 2000, and index 1997-2000 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, 14 Western Close, Letchworth, Herts. SG6 4SZ.).

Communication, November-December 2000, and 'Special End of the Year Clearance Issue'; and *25th Annual Fall Gathering Report, November 18, 2000 (The Pleasant Places of Florida)*, Jeff & Wanda Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). *The Log of the Canonical Hams*, July 1999 - December 1999 (*sic*) (**The Sherlock Holmes Wireless Society**, Ron Fish, PO Box 4, Circleville, NY 10919-0004, USA). *The Baker Street Journal*, Autumn 2000 (PO Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, USA).

And the invaluable newsletter *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, November 2000 and December 2000 (Peter E. Blau, 3900 Tunlaw Road NW #119, Washington, DC 20007-4830, USA; e-mail pblau@dgs.dgssys.com).

Roger Johnson