

# The DISTRICT MESSENGER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON  
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Overseas postal rates went up this month, but for the time being I can absorb the increase.

Peter Blau notes that **Vitaliy Solomin** died on 28 May. His distinguished acting career in Russia and the Soviet Union saw him as a splendid Dr Watson to Vassily Livanov's Holmes in five Russian television films in the early 1980s.

Professor **Richard Chorley** also died in May. Jim Ballinger notes in *The Independent* that Chorley 'pursued Dorothy L Sayers' deduction that Sherlock Holmes had been a student at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge,' developing the idea in a booklet *Sherlock Holmes at Sidney Sussex College, 1871-1873: An Imaginative Reconstruction*.

Christopher Roden reports the death on 8 July of Professor **William A S Sarjeant** of the University of Saskatchewan, aged 66., A noted commentator on crime and detective fiction, Bill Sarjeant's major contribution to our field was the notorious *Ms Holmes of Baker Street*, in which he and C A Bradley 'proved' that Holmes was a woman!

Billy Bunter died on 9 July, in the person of 81-year-old actor **Gerald Campion**, who will forever be identified with the Fat Owl of the Remove, thanks to an immensely popular BBC TV series in the 1950s. His career was much more varied than that, of course, and he made a notable impression as Morse Hudson in Granada's excellent production of *The Six Napoleons*.

**Carey Blyton**, who died on 13 July aged 70, is best known as the creator of *Bananas in Pyjamas*, but he was a very versatile and prolific composer and writer. Look out for his 1999 CD *Sherlock Holmes Meets Doctor Who* (Upbeat Classics URCD148) which features his 'Sherlock Holmes Suite' along with some of the music he composed for the much-missed BBC TV series *Doctor Who*.

Like Gerald Campion, **Leo McKern** is known to the public at large for just one character — in his case, Horace Rumpole. But McKern, who died at the age of 82 on 23 July, was a versatile and compelling actor, whose career included a very non-canonical Moriarty in Gene Wilder's hit-&-miss 1975 comedy *The Adventure of Sherlock Holmes' Smarter Brother*.

**Maurice Denham**, who died the following day aged 92, had a huge range of characters and voices (he provided all the voices for the 1954 animated feature film *Animal Farm*), and was convincing in all of them. His performance as the Revd Mr Merridew was one of the good things in Granada's not terribly successful 1993 two-hour film *The Last Vampyre*.

Lin Carter coined the word 'anamundism' for the geographical equivalent of an anachronism. There's rather a lot of both, I'm afraid, in *Curious Incidents: Being a Collection of the Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, edited by J R Campbell & Charles Prepolec. (Mad for a Mystery, Suite D308, 3805

Marlborough Drive N E, Calgary, Alberta, T2A 5M4, Canada; US\$8.00 or Cdn\$12.00). The six stories, all by different authors, are clever and frequently puzzling in the right way. G M Kelly's 'A Slaying in Suburbia' is well written, and offers an ingenious new twist on the Sebastian Moran conundrum: how does an air rifle become a deadly firearm? 'The Adventure of the Lodger's Secret' by Kristin Vichich, clearly inspired by 'The Red Circle' and 'The Veiled Lodger', is neat and humane, though Holmes and Watson's attitude strikes me as appropriate to the 1990s rather than the 1890s. 'The Case of Vamberry the Wine Merchant' by James R Stefanie and 'The First Mate's Jacket' by J R Campbell both show a lack of understanding of Victorian English mores and procedures, though the plots are clever enough to make me wish I could have had a hand in writing them. (Anyone who orders a pint of bitters in a British pub is in for a shock, as it's the stuff that gives pink gin its flavour and colour. The beer that's evidently meant is called bitter, to distinguish it from the sweeter mild.) Bob Byrne's story 'The Adventure of the Tired Captain' takes an actual puzzle that was presented to Arthur Conan Doyle, introduces William Gillette, and has the two men brazenly adopt the rôles of Holmes and Watson. It's a nice conceit, let down only by some clumsy writing. The best story in this collection is Peter Wood's 'The Case of Lady Sannox', which retells one of Conan Doyle's most horrifying short stories as a Holmes investigation. It's neat, very well written,, thoroughly gripping, and faithful to the original story and to the Canon. But having listened spellbound for an hour or more while Peter Wood told me tales of his childhood home, the Isle of Man, I expected nothing less. *Curious Incidents* is a mixed bag, made coherent by an evident love for Holmes, Watson and Conan Doyle, and by some splendid illustrations from the inspired pen of Philip Cornell.

The first full-length collection of Holmes stories by Gerry Kelly, author of 'A Slaying in Suburbia', is due about now from George Vanderburgh's Battered Silicon Dispatch Box (420 Owen Sound Street, PO Box 204, Shelburne, Ontario, L0N 1S0, Canada). *The Outstanding Mysteries of Sherlock Holmes* is likely to be priced at Cdn\$35.00 or £17.00. Contact Gerry for details at 74 Crofton Avenue, Timperley, Cheshire (phone 0161 286 0943; e-mail [info@bakerstreetbooks.co.uk](mailto:info@bakerstreetbooks.co.uk)), or check his website at [www.bakerstreetbooks.co.uk](http://www.bakerstreetbooks.co.uk).

More new or forthcoming books. *The Colonial Conan Doyle: British Imperialism, Irish Nationalism, and the Gothic* by Catherine Wynne (August 2002; Greenwood Press, c/o EDS, 3 Henrietta Street, London WC2E 8LU; £51.95). *Sherlock Holmes' Whodunits* by Tom Bullimore (August 2002; Sterling Publishing Co., c/o Littlehampton Book Services Ltd, Centre Warehouse, Columbia Building, Faraday Close, Durrington, Worthing, Sussex BN13 3RB; £3.99). *The Alternative Sherlock Holmes* by Peter Ridgway Watt & Joseph Green (Ashgate, Gower House, Croft Road, Aldershot, Hants. GU11 3HR; £45.00).

N Fisher of 7 Repton Close, Carshalton Beeches, Surrey SM5 3QG (I think I've read that correctly) invites offers for a copy of *The Complete Short Stories*. 'This is handsomely bound and I believe this to be a limited edition. The pages are edged in gold, and there is a gold 'inlay' around the outer cover. It is approx. 40 years old, and I won this as a first prize in a readers' competition

in the *Eagle* comic. It has been looked after and the binding is intact.'

There are new catalogues available from **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH 45219, USA; e-mail [www.sherlock-holmes.com](mailto:www.sherlock-holmes.com)), **Nigel Williams Rare Books** (22 & 25 Cecil Court, London WC2N 4HE; e-mail [nwrarebook@tcp.co.uk](mailto:nwrarebook@tcp.co.uk)), and **Janus Books** (PO Box 40787, Tucson, AZ 85717, USA; [mike@janusbooks.com](mailto:mike@janusbooks.com)).

The famous Baker Street sitting-room at the **Sherlock Holmes** public house & restaurant in Northumberland Street, London, recently suffered water damage from flooding on the floor above. The ceiling has been repaired, and I've given the room a pretty thorough spring cleaning. There are some items that need to be repaired or replaced, but fewer than we thought, and none of them especially important. The room is in reasonably good nick now, and we intend to work on it over the next two or three months. Meanwhile, you can get a good look at the room from the corridor, from the patio, or from the restaurant — and the restaurant can always be recommended (10-11 Northumberland Street, London WC2N 5DA; phone 020 7930 2644).

New owners Park Plaza Hotels have spent £9,000,000 on the **Sherlock Holmes Hotel** in Baker Street, which is now described as a 'refurbished elegant boutique hotel'. Get details from the Sherlock Holmes Hotel, 108 Baker Street, London W1U 6LJ; phone 020 7958 5222. Check the website at [shh-w1.com](http://shh-w1.com).

That unique bastion of Victorian Music Hall, the Players' Theatre, has closed, owing the landlords half a million pounds. The chances of the club surviving seem to be pretty slim, but one can hope.

Those thinking of booking a party entertainer should consider **Sherlock Holmes Mysteries**. 'For your special occasion, Dr Watson performs close-up magic with a Sherlock Holmes theme, ideally suited for a dinner party or restaurant setting. The actor portraying the good doctor is a professional member of Equity and has been a member of the Magic Circle since 1983. The performance can include cameo rôles played by your guests! Perhaps you could play the part of Inspector Lestrade of Scotland Yard... or Mrs Hudson, the housekeeper of 221B Baker Street... or even the fiendish Professor Moriarty! Sit back and enjoy close-up magic from a bygone age that will add a sparkle to your party video as the biographer of Sherlock Holmes takes you back in time to Victorian London... Imagine the fog, horse-drawn cabs and the gaslights flickering in Baker Street. For your convenience in the modern age, Dr Watson is pleased to accept Visa, MasterCard, Switch and American Express.' For details phone 01582 416116 or e-mail [AmazingMagic@talk21.com](mailto:AmazingMagic@talk21.com).

Our honorary member John Doubleday has turned his talents to sculpture of a different sort. He iced the four-foot tall cake for the wedding of his son James to Pesheya Ndhlovu, which took place at St Peter's church, Great Totham, on Saturday last!

*Sherlock*, the 'brand new film reinventing the Holmes legend' which will be previewed at the National Film Theatre on Monday 5 August, is the same film that was originally announced as *A Case of Evil* — see DM 221A. Booking and other information is on the NFT website at [www.bfi.org.uk/nft](http://www.bfi.org.uk/nft), or phone 020 7928 3232.

According to Whitaker's *LibWeb* site, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* read by Douglas Wilmer was released last Thursday on three double CDs at £8.50 each (Penguin Audiobooks, 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL) — but the price may not be wholly accurate.

Bruce Parker sends news of a website offering almost unlimited suggestions for Canonical-based pseudonyms. You can find it at [www.geocities.com/jcsherwood/BakerStreet12.htm](http://www.geocities.com/jcsherwood/BakerStreet12.htm).

Torger Kielland has found an on-line store in New York that sells the acclaimed Russian TV film of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* on DVD in PAL format, with English subtitles. (\*When I checked the website it appeared to be all in Russian!\*) You'll find it at

[www.rbcmp3.com/store/product.asp?dept%5Fid=1435&sku=29545](http://www.rbcmp3.com/store/product.asp?dept%5Fid=1435&sku=29545).

The cover of *Sherlock* issue no. 49 features a fine still of Peter Cushing as Holmes from the 1968 BBC TV series, the subject of an article by Tony Earnshaw and a review by Paul Chapman. Also in this issue — Paul Chapman writes about the legend of Sherlock Holmes; Calum McLeod looks at the novels of John Connolly; Gavin Collinson views *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror*; Jess Nevins examines M. Zenith the Albino; M J Elliott contributes a new Holmes story, 'The Adventure of the Mendicant's Face'; Roger Forsdyke investigates *NCS Manhunt*; Mike Ripley tells of 'Detectives I Have Known'; Martin Edwards recommends the Stephen Ramsay novels of Ann Cleeves; Bob Byrne reports on interesting Internet sites; Susan Z Diamond explains **The Watsonians**; Moriarty mutters ... and the rest! The magazine is published six times a year, at £3.50 or \$6.00 the issue. A six-issue subscription is £20.00 (Europe £22.00, 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 Illustrious Clients** will hold their annual Film Festival in Indianapolis on 3 August; get details from Steven T Doyle (540 West Sycamore Street, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). **The Occupants of the Empty House** will meet in DuQuoin, Illinois, on 9 August (Debbie Tinsley, P O Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). At the meeting of **The Sound of the Baskervilles** in Seattle on 12 August, David Haugen will present a paper entitled 'Holmes Illustrated' (David Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court N W, Gig Harbor, WA 98332-8981, USA). Between 17 and 26 August **The Footprints of a Gigantic Hound** will make a transit of the three peaks of Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, with all involved presenting talks on *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (write to Michael Mtua at 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU). The topic for the meeting of **The Harpooners of the Sea Unicorn** in St Charles on 24 August will be 'The Lost Special' (Michael E Bragg, P O Box 256, St Charles, MO 63302-0256, USA). On 7 September **The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia** will hold the third and final running of the Silver Blaze Sweepstakes at Toad Hall, North Vancouver (Len Haffenden at 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6).

Periodicals received. *The Magic Door*, Summer 2002 (**The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, Toronto Reference Library, 789 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario M4W 2G8, Canada) (\*welcome to new editor Peter H Wood\*). *The Illustrious Clients News*, July 2002 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 540 W Sycamore Street, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). *The Camden House Journal*, July 2002 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, P.O. Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). *The Whaling News*, April, May and June 2002 (**The Harpooners of the Sea Unicorn**, Michael E Bragg, P O Box 256, St Charles, MO 63302-0256, USA).

*Ineffable Twaddle*, July and August 2002 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court N W, Gig Harbor, WA 98332-8981, USA). *The Antipodean Holmesian Society Newsletter*, July 2002 (**The Antipodean Holmesian Society**, Ted Nye, 51 Irvine Road, The Cove, Dunedin, New Zealand). *Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collection*, June 2002 (**Sherlock Holmes Collections**, Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). *The Arthur Conan Doyle Research File*, 2002 (**The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian W Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, June 2002 (Peter E Blau, 3900 Tunlaw Road NW #119, Washington, DC 20007-4830, USA).

And of course *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*, Summer 2002.

*Roger Johnson*