

The DISTRICT MESSENGER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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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.

Peter Blau reports the death on 8 June of **Eric H Silk** ('The Blue Carbuncle', BSI), former Commissioner of the Ontario Police and co-founder of **The Bootmakers of Toronto**, whose constitution he drafted.

To close their 2001 *Footprints of the Hound* symposium, **The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection of the Toronto Public Library** and **The Bootmakers of Toronto** produced the first performance in sixty years of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* in Edith Meiser's radio script. Bill Nadel, the expert on Sherlockian radio, condensed the script from three hours to one. Doug Elliott assembled a talented cast of professional and amateur actors, and the play was presented as on one of the rare occasions when Basil Rathbone, Nigel Bruce and their colleagues broadcast before a theatre audience. Now the production has been committed to CD. Since no recording exists of the original 1941 serial, this is the only chance we're likely to have of hearing the play. Chris Cocoluzzi and Frank Quinlan wisely don't attempt to impersonate Rathbone and Bruce, but the format of the original radio series has been retained, with the presenter and interlocutor Knox Manning (played by Earle Toppings) taking time out to publicise the sponsor's product, Grove's Bromo-Quinine. There are some doubtful British accents and some cracking good ones, which was also true of the original productions. A lot of people contributed to this recording, including the Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota, who provided Edith Meiser's script, and the result makes grand listening. I'd love to have been able to take part in it! You can order the disc from the Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection, c/o Doug Wrigglesworth, 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4; e-mail acdfriends@sympatico.ca. The price is a very reasonable Cdn\$25.00, US\$20.00 or £12.00, postpaid.

Another new CD, likewise boasting fine cover artwork by Chris Senior, is *Four from the Canon*, a two-disc set of readings by David Ian Davies of 'The Final Problem', 'The Resident Patient', 'The Beryl Coronet' and 'The Dying Detective'. Actually, these are not so much readings as full-blooded theatrical performances by a very versatile actor with a remarkable range of voices. I have a feeling that Mr Davies would have been thoroughly at home in radio drama of the 1930s and 40s. It is a pleasure to be carried away from the prosaic here and now to the London of a century ago, with its comforts, its excitement, its danger and its intrigue. For some reason the word 'swashbuckling' comes to mind. I should point out, though, that Mr Davies could have used the services of a director to correct his mispronunciations in 'The Final Problem'. The French phrase *Salle à Manger*, for instance, requires a soft G, and should not sound like 'Sallamanga', whereas the names *Gemmi* and *Meiringen* are German and require a hard G. Nevertheless, *Four from the Canon* is a worthy addition to David Ian Davies's list of Sherlockian recordings. It's available from One Voice Recordings, 16835 Halper Street, Encino, CA 91436, USA (e-mail ddavies858@aol.com).

(You can hear more of David Ian Davies's readings on-line, as he has recorded over twenty-one hours of Sherlock Holmes for

Audible.com. And there's a thirty-six minute one-man play about Dr Crippen at www.rusc.com/software/2004.0/14_Crippen.mp3. Mr Davies is a busy fellow! See also www.onevoicerecordings.com.)

This is a good time for Sherlock Holmes on spoken word. Naxos AudioBooks (18 High Street, Welwyn, Herts. AL6 9EQ) have just released *The Return of Sherlock Holmes II*, comprising 'The Dancing Men', 'The Solitary Cyclist', 'The Priory School' and 'Charles Augustus Milverton', read by the excellent David Timson. Mr Timson's approach is less melodramatic than Mr Davies's, but no less engaging. The pacing of the narration is superbly judged, and the characters subtly but precisely portrayed. It had not occurred to me before that Hilton Cubitt might have spoken with a Norfolk accent, but he does so here, and it seems quite in character. Moreover, the accent sounds authentic, though it's one that is deceptively difficult to assume. The blunt honesty of Squire Cubitt, the dangerous confidence of Abe Slaney, the aristocratic hauteur of the Duke of Holderness, the false charm of Charles Augustus Milverton — all are exactly defined. As always, the readings are enhanced by music, Mendelssohn's string quartets in this case, chosen from the extensive Naxos catalogue. I doubt if, when he began six years ago with *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes I*, David Timson intended to record the entire Holmes Canon, but he's more than half-way there now, and I very much hope that he does complete the project. Meanwhile, *The Return of Sherlock Holmes II*, on three CDs or three cassettes, is not to be missed.

The sixteen classic radio plays starring John Gielgud & Ralph Richardson as Holmes & Watson will be re-released on 8 November by Hodder Headline Audiobooks (338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH), this time in four 2-CD packs, at a rather steep £14.99 each.

New catalogues are available from **Janus Books** (PO Box 40787, Tucson, AZ 85717, USA; website janusbooks.com), **Rupert Books** (58/59 Stonefield, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB3 8TE; www.rupert-books.co.uk); and **Nigel Williams Rare Books** (25 Cecil Court, London WC2N 4HE; nwrarebook@tcp.co.uk). The first two are specialists in Sherlockiana, the third in first editions.

Sherlock Holmes in Babylon, and Other Tales of Mathematical History, by Marlow Anderson, Victor J Katz & Robin Wilson, will be published on 31 August by the Mathematical Association of America (no address to hand), priced at £30.00.

Andars Hammerqvist reports, via Jon Lellenberg, that a new Swedish edition of the Canon is to be published, beginning in September with *A Study in Scarlet*, translated and edited by Mattias Bostrom.

Due in July 2005 from Chancery Law Publishing (The Atrium, Southern Gate, Terminus Road, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 8SQ) is *The Science of Sherlock Holmes*. No other details are currently available.

Things I wish I'd been told about in advance ... The English Literature sale at Sotheby's in London on 8 July included two first editions of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, which fetched £2,400 and £2,160; two letters from Conan Doyle to Douglas Sladen, one mentioning that the Holmes stories had been translated into Arabic 'for the use of the Egyptian police force' (£2,160); the MS of a lecture in which ACD 'justifies the "death" of Sherlock Holmes and discusses his early career, literary influences and the importance of fiction' (£16,800); and other items of Doyleana and Holmesiana.

Adrian Nebbett's website at www.schoolandholmes.com includes, among much else, excellent indexes compiled by Mr Nebbett for more than twenty classic Sherlockian texts whose publishers neglected to provide them. They range from *The Private Life of*

Sherlock Holmes by Vincent Starrett and James Edward Holroyd's *Baker Street Byways* to *The Intelligence of Sherlock Holmes* by John Radford and June Thomson's *Holmes and Watson*.

Peter Blau reminds me that Randall Stock's site *The Best of Sherlock Holmes* at <http://members.aol.com/shbest/ref/rfmsalph.htm> is also well worth a look. Mr Stock covers the whereabouts of Conan Doyle manuscripts and copies of *Beeton's Christmas Annual* for 1887, the results of notable auctions of Doylean material, and much more.

The Lipstick Sherlock Holmes by E D Darling, 'a celebration of Conan Doyle's great detective and an exploration into the restrictions placed on women in the 19th century', will play at the **Marlborough Theatre** in Princes Street, Brighton, on 10, 11, 13 & 15 August (phone 01273 329433). See www.inaspace-theatre.co.uk for details.

Chelmsford Theatre Workshop will put on my entertainment *The Great Detective: The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* at **The Old Court Theatre** (Springfield Road, Chelmsford) on Saturday 21 August at 7.45pm. The box office number is 01245 606505.

A new dramatisation of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Clive Francis will be staged at **Nottingham Playhouse** (Wellington Circus, Nottingham NG1 5AF) from 4 to 25 September. Phone 0115 941 9419; website www.nottinghamplayhouse.co.uk. On 30 September the play will open at **Salisbury Playhouse** (Malthouse Lane, Salisbury SP2 7RA; 01722 320333) running until 23 October. Website www.salisburyplayhouse.com. At either theatre it looks like a pretty exciting occasion. [**Is this the actor and artist Clive Francis, who played Neville St Clair for Granada TV, and whose father Raymond was Watson to Alan Wheatley's Holmes in 1951?**]

On Thursday, Friday & Saturday evenings and Sunday matinees from 17 September to 2 October, the Stagecrafters will present *Sherlock's Last Case* by Charles Marowitz. Website www.thestagecrafters.org/play1-sherlock.html. The **Stagecrafters Theatre** is at 8130-34 Germantown Avenue, Chestnut Hill, in northwest Philadelphia. Phone 215 247 8881.

In November the wonderful duo Lip Service will be touring briefly with their deliciously silly parody *Move Over, Moriarty*. They'll be at **The Rose Theatre**, Ormskirk (01695 584468) on 4 November, at **Chester Gateway** (01244 340392) on 5 & 6, and at **Greenwich Theatre** (0208 858 7755) from 9 to 13 November.

From 16 to 20 November, Trinity Theatre Club of Tunbridge Wells will put on Brian Clemens's thriller *Holmes and the Ripper*. **Trinity Theatre** is in Church Road, and Tunbridge Wells is close to Crowborough. Phone 01892 678678. Website www.tctw.com.

At the Sherlock Awards on 10 July I met the actor John Elnaugh, who is keen to stage a major musical, *The Baskerville Beast* by the American writer, musician and director Teddy Hayes. The producers are seeking investors for the show. Mr Elnaugh says, 'The budget will not be large for a musical but any investment involves significant risk: on the positive side there is the opportunity to be involved in something that, even in a small way, contributes to the legend that is Sherlock Holmes.' If the idea appeals, you can contact Baskerville Productions at 32 Hamlet Road, Chelmsford CM2 0ET (phone 01245 283559). [**I should add that I have no connection with this project.**]

The Sherlock Awards were sponsored and administered by *Sherlock* magazine and presented at Crime on Store bookshop in Great Russell Street, London. Congratulations to the winners, especially P D James for her Lifetime Achievement Sherlock and to Bert Coules for his Special Sherlock.

On Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings, Premium Tours offer what they call the Ultimate Murder Mystery, an coach tour taking in the Old Bailey, the London Hospital and other sites, followed by a walk in the steps of Jack the Ripper, and returning from Tower Pier to the Embankment by boat. The evening ends with a fish and chip supper at the *Sherlock Holmes* pub. You can book on 0207 278 5300.

According to the Scottish press, David Barclay, the director of the shortest Sherlock Holmes movie ever is looking for a sponsor to host the film's premiere — in Scotland. *The Shortest Casebook of Sherlock Holmes (Ever)* lasts six minutes. Interested parties can contact Mr Barclay at scaredycat_inc@hotmail.com.

Belated thanks to Thierry Saint-Joanis and **La Société Sherlock**

Holmes de France for sending a copy of the famous French magazine *Le Monde* for 10 April. It's a special issue celebrating a century of *entente cordiale* between France and England, and it features thirteen pages about Sherlock Holmes, contributed by members of the SSHF.

Brian Pugh reports that Dunedin School now has planning permission to renovate Liberton Bank House, Arthur Conan Doyle's only surviving Edinburgh home, for school use. The curse of McDonald's has been staved off, it appears!

Also from Brian: the Conan Doyle Collection belonging to **The Conan Doyle (Crowborough) Establishment** has been removed from the town's Beacon Community College and is now in storage. It is hoped that the Collection will find a home in the proposed civic centre and museum. [**There is a Conan Doyle Collection on display at nearby Groombridge Place, but it is separate from the Establishment's and lacks the family connection.**]

The main feature at the Sherlockian Film Festival of **The Illustrious Clients** on 7 August will be the 1976 TV movie *Sherlock Holmes in New York*, with Roger Moore relishing the rôle of Holmes and John Huston chewing the scenery as Moriarty. The venue is the Glendale Mall Branch of Indianapolis Public Library. Get details from Steven T Doyle, 540 W Sycamore Street, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA)

Our member Rod Baser has come up with a very bold and exciting plan: a Sherlockian pilgrimage to India and the Andaman Islands. He will be heading for the subcontinent in a couple of months' time, to complete the extensive research necessary. You can find out more from his website at www.sherlockholmesinindia.com.

The Parallel Case of St Louis plans a symposium for the weekend of 20 - 22 May 2005, to be called *Holmes Under the Arch II*. The theme will be *The Sign of Four*. For information as it becomes available, write to Barbara Roscoe, 7101 Mardel, St Louis, MO 63109, USA; or e-mail <sherlock_holmes@sbcglobal.net>.

In the spring of 2005 **The Sherlock Holmes Society of London** will visit Switzerland again, provisionally taking in Geneva, Lausanne, Zermatt, Leukerbad, Kandersteg, Meiringen and Berne. Beekeeping will be a theme of the trip, and the title will be *Making a Beeline for Switzerland*. Watch the Society's website for developments at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk.

I reported in the last issue that on 11 - 13 June next year that grand Australian society **The Sydney Passengers** will celebrate *An Excellent Voyage: Twenty Years on the Hotspur*, and added, 'the depths of winter!' Bill Barnes, Captain of the Passengers, points out that the mid-June climate in Sydney compares very favourably to an English spring, with temperatures up to 68° Fahrenheit. Ask Bill about the Passengers' activities, at 19 Malvern Avenue, Manly, NSW 2095, Australia.

Periodicals received. *Irregular Newsletter*, July 2004 (**Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian W Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). *The Whaling News*, June & July 2004 (**The Harpooners of the Sea Unicorn**, Michael E Bragg, PO Box 256, St Charles, MO 63302-0256, USA). *The Camden House Journal*, July 2004 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). *The Illustrious Clients News*, July 2004 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 540 W Sycamore Street, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). *The Serpentine Muse*, Summer 2004 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 360 West 21st Street, 5A, New York, NY 10011, USA). *3 Pipe Problem Plugs and Dottles*, July 2004 (**The Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem**, Kay Blocker, 5017 Maywood Drive, Nashville, TN 37211, USA pkblocker@comcast.net).

And of course the great Sherlockian newsletter *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, June 2004 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; pblau@dgsys.com).

Roger Johnson