

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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As everyone, surely, knows by now, the man who used to be referred to in Sherlockian circles as 'the Literary Agent' is the subject of two highly important new biographical works. First out was Andrew Lycett's *Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, Orion House, 5 Upper St Martin's Lane, London WC2H 9EA; £20.00), which may be the closest we'll get to that elusive and probably unattainable thing, the definitive biography. Over the years, even before the family papers were finally made available, the various aspects of Sir Arthur's life and character were discovered and described, but only now is the whole story told in a single book. Andrew Lycett's genius as a biographer matches Holmes's as a detective: his dedicated and inspired research is complemented by his admirable ability to acknowledge and appreciate all aspects of his subject, and to present his impeccably balanced conclusion in a lucid and thoroughly engaging form. Conan Doyle was, perhaps more than most, a man of contradictions — or maybe it only seems so because he was such a public figure. He created 'the quintessentially rational Sherlock Holmes', yet became the great spiritualist apostle. But Mr Lycett points out that Conan Doyle regarded spiritualism as a science, 'or, at least, a natural extension of science.' His character and beliefs were not as paradoxical as many have thought. The real contrast is, it seems to me, between his generally open and generous nature and the madly over-protective possessiveness of his second wife and their two sons.

What you can't get from Mr Lycett's book is the feeling of immediate contact with his subject. For that, you must — and you should — read *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters*, edited by Jon Lellenberg, Daniel Stashower and Charles Foley (HarperPress, Westerhill Road, Bishopbriggs, Glasgow G64 0QT; £25.00). John Carey complains that the letters can't compare with, say, Lord Chesterfield's, but that's missing the point. We read Conan Doyle's correspondence (those that survive are mostly to his mother, with whom he was always able to share his thoughts) in order to understand the man, not for literary elegance or social philosophy — though those qualities are not absent. He rarely dated his letters, so the editors have had to become detectives themselves, as Richard Lancelyn Green had to, when tracing the genesis of *The Hound of The Baskervilles* (see the SHJ, Winter 2001 & Summer 2002). With their joint expertise they have, of course, done an excellent job, both in the chronological arrangement and in the succinct and informative commentary. *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters* was the BBC Radio 4 Book of the Week at the end of September. Five extracts, drawn from chapters 3-9, were very effectively read by Forbes Masson and John Dougal. They were repeated the following week at [www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/arts/book\\_week.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/arts/book_week.shtml), but it would be nice if the Beeb were to release a recording.

Conan Doyle's letters weren't written for publication, so they provide an interesting contrast with, and complement to, his autobiography, *Memories and Adventures*, first published in 1924 and now available as an attractive and remarkably cheap paperback (Wordsworth Editions, 8B East Street, Ware, Herts. SG12 9HJ; £3.99). This is very much the public face of Sir Arthur. He can't be blamed for writing the story as he did, but it's far from being the whole story, as David Stuart Davies indicates in his instructive introduction. Look, I don't really need to recommend this book, do I? Everyone should have a copy.

The first publication of the Quartering Press, a joint venture by **The Sherlock Holmes Society of London** and **The Baker Street Irregulars**, is *To Keep the Memory Green: Reflections on the Life of Richard Lancelyn Green, 1953-2004*, edited by Steven Rothman &

Nicholas Utechin. I knew Richard for more than twenty-five years, and had some idea of how remarkable he and his family were, but since his death I've learned so much more about his talents and his achievements that his loss — or rather, *our* loss — is even more regrettable. There's an inevitable sadness in these essays by family and friends, but there are happy recollections too, and tributes to Richard's singular achievements. I doubt now that even he could have written the definitive biography of Conan Doyle, though he'd hoped to do so, but his legacy is monumental, and he's unlikely to be overtaken as the world's greatest Conan Doyle expert. The regular edition costs £17.50 postpaid within the UK, £20.00 or €30.00 to Europe, and £22.50 or \$45.00 elsewhere. The limited edition (signed by Nick Utechin, Steve Rothman, Douglas Wilmer, Michael Whelan and Guy Marriott) is: £40.00 postpaid within the UK, £42.00 or €63.00 to Europe, and £45.00 or \$90.00 elsewhere. The book is available from Judi Ellis (13 Crofton Avenue, Orpington, Kent BR6 8DU) and from The Baker Street Irregulars (2 Dettling Road, Maynard, MA 01754, USA).

Maurizio Ascari's *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction*, the latest volume in the 'Crime Files' series from Palgrave Macmillan (Brunel Road, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hants. RG21 6XS) is of peculiar interest. The subtitle is *Supernatural, Gothic, Sensational* — so you can guess where we're heading. Arthur Conan Doyle wrote tales of the supernatural as well as stories of detection, as Poe had done before him, and as others were to do after. *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, after all, shares a heritage with *Wuthering Heights*, and the 'sensational' pervades the work of Joseph Conrad, Thomas Pynchon and Umberto Eco just as much as that of Mrs Braddon. Lord Lytton and Agatha Christie. After Conan Doyle, the most space in this fascinating survey seems to be devoted to Wilkie Collins and — the writer who perfected the art of creating a supernaturally impossible situation and then explaining it rationally — G K Chesterton. John Dickson Carr raised the technique to even greater heights, and it's rather surprising that his superb detective stories are not mentioned here. The detective story as we know it is a child of both reason and unreason, the latter sometimes masquerading as the former (think of phrenology and eugenics). *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction* is well worth reading, but at £45.00 for 222 pages, with no illustrations, it's unlikely to be bought by anyone outside specialist academic libraries.

Cenarth Fox has sent a copy of his latest play *Sherlock Stock and Barrel*. Being half a world away I didn't see the world première season in Australia, but just reading the script made me chuckle, and I can easily imagine what fun it must be to see — or indeed to stage. If the Reduced Shakespeare Company were to tackle Sherlock Holmes the result might be something like this, but it would probably lack Cen Fox's profound knowledge of the Holmesian Canon. Five actors set out to present all sixty stories in one show; they manage just twenty-five, which is still quite a feat. There's plenty of good comedy, some slyly pointing up absurdities in the stories and some of the 'Which character am I now?' variety, but none of it detracts from the magic of Holmes, Watson and their world. You can read the script and find out about performance rights at [www.foxplays.com](http://www.foxplays.com).

This month sees the second edition of *Starring Sherlock Holmes* by David Stuart Davies (Titan Books, 144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP). Remarkably, it's not only twenty pages longer than the original, but £5.00 cheaper, at £24.99! As I said back in 2001, I fancy that it's the wonderful illustrations, many of them from the Lancelyn Green Collection, that will first impress the reader, but those are the icing on the cake of David's deep knowledge and love of the

cinematic and televisual Holmes. For reference, I turn first to Allan Barnes's *Sherlock Holmes on Screen*, but *Starring Sherlock Holmes* is more handsomely presented — even though H Reeves-Smith is still named as Reginald Owen in the photo on page 4...

*On the Trail of Dr Arthur Conan Doyle: An Illustrated Devon Tour* by Brian Pugh & Paul Spiring is due on 31 January from Book Guild Publishing (Pavilion View, 19 New Road, Brighton BN1 1UF; [www.bookguild.co.uk](http://www.bookguild.co.uk)), at £12.99. You can order copies now from [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk). German, Japanese, French and Spanish editions are planned.

John Addy reminds me that Bibliophile Books (5 Thomas Road, London E14 7BN; phone 020 7515 9222) are offering the revised edition of *A Bibliography of A Conan Doyle* by Richard Lancelyn Green and John Michael Gibson for £20.00 plus £3.00 postage. That's one hell of a bargain, as the publishers' price is £65.00.

Steven Dietz's play *Sherlock Holmes — The Final Adventure* has been doing good business in theatres across the USA. Now the script has been published, and is available at \$6.75 from the Internet Theatre Bookshop at [www.stageplays.com](http://www.stageplays.com).

*The Unusual Sherlock Holmes* by Jerry 'B-P' Riggs, featuring 'three singular problems', is available for \$18.95 plus postage from the usual sources, or direct from the author at 303 S Norton Street, Corunna, MI 48817, USA — [sherlockianscout@yahoo.com](mailto:sherlockianscout@yahoo.com).

New from our member John Radford is *Don't You Believe It! Some Things Everybody Knows That Actually Ain't So* (Stepney Green Press; £9.95). Sherlock Holmes features, but not for the reason you think. Copies can be bought from Amnesty International UK (*Don't You Believe It*, c/o Lara Woolston, Human Rights Action Centre, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2 3EA; [www.amnestyshop.org.uk](http://www.amnestyshop.org.uk)) and the National Secular Society (25 Red Lion Square, London WC1 4RL; [www.secularism.org.uk](http://www.secularism.org.uk)). Cheques or postal orders should be payable to the organisation concerned, which will receive all money from the sale. Overseas purchasers should contact John at [j.k.radford@btinternet.com](mailto:j.k.radford@btinternet.com).

The subject of the Society's Christmas card this year is the *Sherlock Holmes* pub in London, which opened under that name in December 1957. To celebrate its Golden Jubilee, on Tuesday 6 November, from 4.00pm to 6.00pm, the pub will offer a selection of food and drink at 1957 prices. I'm told that Holmes and Watson will be present.

**Undershaw**, Conan Doyle's house at Hindhead, is on the market again. Heloise Brown of the Victorian Society said, 'It is vital that the right buyer comes forward now. This is not just a charming and intriguing historic house, but a nationally and internationally significant building.' The Victorian Society has appealed, with strong support from our Society and others, against the Department of Culcha, Meeja 'n Sport's refusal to list the house at Grade 1.

A touring version of the 2006 exhibition *The Case of the Portsmouth Doctor: The Story of Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes, and their Greatest Collector* is on display until 25 October at the Hôtel de Ville in Caen, Portsmouth's twin city. **La Société Sherlock Holmes de France** has arranged activities linked to the exhibition. See [www.sshf.com/index.php3?file=news&num=610](http://www.sshf.com/index.php3?file=news&num=610).

Shakespeare & Company are staging Jeremy Paul's play *The Secret of Sherlock Holmes* at the **Founders' Theatre** at 70 Kemble Street, Lenox, Massachusetts until 28 October. On 20 October Scott Monty BSI and Leslie Klinger BSI will give presentations in Lenox. For details see [www.shakespeare.org](http://www.shakespeare.org).

Paul Singleton and Todd Butera will play Holmes and Watson in *The Blue Carbuncle*, dramatised by Andrew Joffe, for the **WorkShop Theater Company** in New York on 6-8, 12-15 & 19-22 December.

Roger Llewellyn will portray the Great Detective again in *The Death and Life of Sherlock Holmes*, a new play by David Stuart Davies, whose première is scheduled for 6 March at the **Yvonne Arnaud Theatre** in Guildford. A tour will follow, provisionally starting in Belfast, and taking in the Edinburgh Festival in August — at the **Assembly Rooms**, no less!

Not long after the first complete recording of Miklós Rózsa's score for Billy Wilder's film *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (Tadlow Music, 57 High Street, Tadlow, Royston, Herts. SG8 0EU; [www.tadlowmusic.com](http://www.tadlowmusic.com)) comes a very welcome new recording of

Rózsa's *Violin Concerto*, on which the film music was based (the reverse procedure to Vaughan Williams', when he derived his *Sinfonia Antartica* from the score for *Scott of the Antarctic*). The violinist is Anastasia Khitruk, and Dmitri Yablonsky conducts the Russian Philharmonic Orchestra. The CD also includes Rózsa's *Sinfonia Concertante* for violin cello and orchestra. It's on Naxos — [www.naxos.com](http://www.naxos.com) — and it's gorgeous.

An unabridged reading by David Ian Davies of all sixty stories was released last month in nine instalments as *One Voice Chronological: The Consummate Holmes Canon*. You can hear a sample of each, and buy downloads, at [www.audible.com](http://www.audible.com). David's Holmesian recordings stretch much further than the Canon, including works by David Stuart Davies (no relation, believe it or not), M J Elliott, and most recently my own play *The Great Detective*.

The 2008 calendar published by the Pilgrims Hospices in Kent feature very accomplished landscape paintings by Peter Cushing, who was cared for at the hospice in Canterbury before his death in 1994. The Pilgrims Hospices Fundraising Office is at Hythe Road, Willesborough, Ashford, Kent TN24 0NE (e-mail Lindsay Goode at [lindsay\\_goode@pilgrimshospice.org](mailto:lindsay_goode@pilgrimshospice.org)).

The New Zealand Mint has produced four \$2.00 coins for the Cook Islands. A set will cost you rather above face value — NZ\$325.00 in fact, because they're solid silver, each bearing a full-colour image based on the Russian TV Sherlock Holmes series, and only 8,000 of each will be issued. See [www.newzealandmint.com](http://www.newzealandmint.com).

Look out next month for a *Sherlock Holmes Weekend* on ITV 3, with contributions from Richard E Grant, Gyles Brandreth and Antony Richards among many others.

What was I think of? Bert Coules points out that the late **Peter Tuddenham** did indeed use his East Anglian accent to good effect when playing Inspector Martin in *The Dancing Men* — because he was in the BBC Radio 4 production, which Bert quite properly located in Norfolk. The actor in the Granada TV film was David Ross, to whom my apologies.

Congratulations to **Uno Studio in Holmes**, which was founded in Florence ('the only Italian city surely visited by the Master') in 1987, and will celebrate its twentieth birthday on 23 November.

Periodicals received. *The Baker Street Irregulars Trust Newsletter*, Summer 2007 (**The Baker Street Irregulars Trust**, Julie McKuras, 13512 Granada Avenue, Apple Valley, MN 55124, USA). *The Camden House Journal*, September 2007 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). *The Formulary*, September 2007 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, Highcroft Cottage, 14 Totteridge Common, Totteridge, London N20 8NL). *Ineffable Twaddle*, October 2007 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *Musgraves Matters* September 2007 and October 2007 (**The Musgraves**, Rafe McGregor, 62 Willow Park Road, Wilberfoss, York YO41 5PS; [musgravesmatters@aol.com](mailto:musgravesmatters@aol.com)).

*The Passengers' Log*, August 2007 (**The Sydney Passengers**, Rosane McNamara, 4/2a Merlin Street, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089, Australia). *The Petrel Flyer*, Special Edition (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). [*\*This year marks the twentieth anniversary of both The Passengers' Log and The Petrel Flyer. Long may they continue to stimulate and delight!*]. *Prescott's Press*, September 2007 (**The Three Garridebs**, Warren Randall, 15 Fawn Lane West, South Setauket, NY 11720-1346, USA). *The Serpentine Muse*, Fall 2007 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA).

*And Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, August 2007 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; [blau7103@comcast.net](mailto:blau7103@comcast.net)).

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