

# The DISTRICT MESSENGER



## THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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Gary Lovisi's monographs *Relics of Sherlock Holmes*, *Souvenirs of Sherlock Holmes* and *Sherlock Holmes: The Great Detective in Paperback and Pastiche* may not constitute the last word upon the subject, but they are most useful reference works for the collector. He is also responsible for some Holmesian fiction, now collected as *The Secret Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (Ramble House, 443 Gladstone Blvd, Shreveport, LA 71104, USA; \$18.00 pbk, \$30.00 hbk). The earliest, 'The Loss of the British Bark *Sophy Anderson*', is the most fantastic, with a strong whiff of the pulp magazine, and the least successful, though not for that reason. The style doesn't ring true, either to Dr Watson or to the time and place. In the first sentence we have Watson 'overlooking' his notes, which gives the erroneous impression that he is neglecting rather than scanning them, and reference to a 'stage actress', though there were no other dramatic media in the 1890s. The story is otherwise luridly entertaining. The other two tales, 'Mycroft's Great Game' and 'The Adventure of the Missing Detective', are more satisfactory, being narrated respectively by Mycroft and Sherlock Holmes, who each give a different account of what lay behind the Moriarty affair and the Great Hiatus. I don't say that they're convincing, mind, but they are intelligent and thought-provoking.

Twelve years ago I welcomed the first edition of Patricia Guy's *Bacchus at Baker Street: Sherlock Holmes & Victorian Drinking Lore*, now revised and republished by iUniverse (2021 Pine Lake Road, Suite 100, Lincoln, NE 68512, USA) at \$13.95. As I said then, Ms Guy speculates with expert authority on the wines, beers and spirits mentioned or implied in the Holmesian Canon, setting the references firmly in their historical context. She goes into fascinating detail on the different kinds of drink, native and imported, good and bad, strong and weak. She also provides recipes, some of them very tempting, for Victorian mixed drinks, for medicinal brews, and for domestic tipples. This edition goes into more depth about beer and Arthur Conan Doyle (separately) and features more Victorian cocktail recipes — no, the cocktail was not an invention of the Jazz Age. The elegant cover is the work of Gianni Burato. I've said in another context that one of the great pleasures of our Game is the way in which the Canon serves as a firm base for exploring the world in which Holmes and Watson lived, and *Bacchus at Baker Street* is prime evidence of that.

*Formal Investigations: Aesthetic Style in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Detective Fiction*, edited by Paul Fox and Koray Melikoğlu (*ibidem*-Verlag, Melchiorstr. 15, D-70439, Stuttgart, Germany; £20.90) is rather more academic, as the subtitle suggests. These essays, constituting the fourth volume in the *Studies in English Literatures* series, naturally approach their subject from a literary standpoint. Sherlock Holmes, naturally, features prominently, and two at least of the essays have encouraged me to reconsider certain aspects of the Canon. In 'The Science of Detection: Geology and Aesthetics in Victorian and Edwardian Detective Fiction' Helen Sutherland uses geology more or less as a metaphor for Holmes's method, contrasting it with the ostensibly more intuitive practice of Father Brown; she also contrasts Holmes's proclaimed practicality with the undeniable influence on him of the Victorian aesthetes — a topic considered also by Nick Freeman in 'Double Lives, Terrible Pleasures: Oscar Wilde and Crime Fiction in the *Fin de Siècle*'. The eleven essays cover an unexpectedly wide range, including the psychic detective tales of Algernon Blackwood, and even Arthur Machen's 'The Great God Pan' among the stories examined. The most interesting from a purely Holmesian point of view, though, is 'Horrifying Ho(l)mes: Conan Doyle's Bachelor Detective and the

Aesthetics of Domestic Realism', in which Rudolph Glitz convincingly argues that Conan Doyle was strongly influenced, for all the apparently fantastic nature of some of his plots, by the French realist school, exemplified by Balzac and Zola. As far as I am aware, this idea is quite new, and it seems to me to be incontestable.

While we await the final set in David Timson's magnificent recorded reading of the complete Holmes Canon, Naxos AudioBooks (2nd Floor, 40A High Street, Welwyn, Herts. AL6 9EQ) has issued a very nice twin-CD pack for the holiday season. *A Family Christmas*, priced at £10.99, contains a magical variety of stories and poems, by Dylan Thomas, L Frank Baum, Hans Christian Andersen, Thomas Hardy and others — including, of course, Arthur Conan Doyle. 'The Blue Carbuncle' remains, as Christopher Morley termed it, a Christmas story without slush. David Timson reads it superbly, and he's matched by the other readers: Jenny Agutter, John Chancer, Teresa Gallagher, Philip Madoc, Benjamin Soames and Benjamin Zephaniah. Like other Naxos recordings, this can now be downloaded at [www.naxosaudiobooks.com](http://www.naxosaudiobooks.com).

Due on 30 November from Quirk Books (215 Church Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106, USA) is *The Crimes of Dr Watson: An Interactive Sherlock Holmes Mystery* by John Watson, edited by Duane Swierczynski). The publisher's price is £14.99. Brian Pugh reports that *The Mysterious World of Sherlock Holmes* by Bruce Wexler is due around now from Colin Gower Enterprises. I can't trace an address for the publisher. The author has previously written on the works of Margaret Mitchell and Louis L'Amour.

Brown's Valley, Minnesota was devastated by floods earlier this year. Beaver's Pond Press has published a special limited edition of Jeff Falkingham's 2001 novel *Sherlock Holmes and the County Courthouse Caper* to help the relief fund. Copies are available for a donation of \$17.00 or more plus \$3.00 shipping (more, presumably, to non-US addresses) from BV Flood Relief, PO Box 307, Browns Valley, MN 56219, USA. See [www.cccaper.com](http://www.cccaper.com).

In the last issue I gave an enthusiastic thumbs-up to the script of Cenarth Fox's new musical extravaganza *Sherlock Stock and Barrel*. Now the show is available on CD from [sales@foxplays.com](mailto:sales@foxplays.com). And you can see more details at [www.foxplays.com](http://www.foxplays.com). Twenty-five Canonical adventures in eighty minutes — I'm really looking forward to hearing this! Cen Fox's excellent earlier play *The Real Sherlock Holmes* is also out on CD, with the original cast.

The latest recording from the Old Court Radio Theatre Company will be up on the Society's website very shortly, at [www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk](http://www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk), where you'll be able to listen to and download 'The Beryl Coronet' and 'The Speckled Band', both dramatised by Chris Drake. Jim Crozier and Dave Hawkes return as Holmes and Watson, impeccably supported by Angie Budd, Ivor Jevons, Sarah Bell, Mark Preston and Brian Adrian. The two plays are also available from me on a CD. The price post-paid is: UK £5.00; Europe €6.00 or 9.00 Euros; elsewhere £9.00 or US\$12.00. Sterling cheques should be payable to Roger Johnson and US dollar checks to Jean Upton; Euros in cash only, please. 'The Yellow Face' and 'The Three Students' and 'The Mazarin Stone' and 'The Veiled Lodger' can also be had from me.

The Texas Radio Theatre Company has recorded *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and, most recently, *The Final Problem*. The former is available as a CD for 'a \$12 donation'. See the website at [www.texasradiotheatre.com/html/Home.htm](http://www.texasradiotheatre.com/html/Home.htm), or e-mail [info@texasradiotheatre.com](mailto:info@texasradiotheatre.com).

David Ian Davies (who has just beaten David Timson in recording the complete Canon) has won the Moonbeam Children's Book Awards Silver Medal for *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Congratulations! You'll find Mr Davies's *One Voice Chronological: The Consummate Holmes Canon* at [www.audible.com](http://www.audible.com).

Back in 1993, before it became a news & sport channel, BBC Radio 5 broadcast *The Unopened Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*, a highly entertaining series of six apocryphal adventures written by John Taylor and starring Simon Callow and Nicky Henson as Holmes and Watson. They were the closest thing the Beeb had done to the ingenious, fast-moving plays from the classic American radio. At last BBC Audiobooks (Woodlands, 80 Wood Lane, London W12 0TT) plan to release the series on CD — but not till next March.

Philip Woolley reports that the **Black Cat Bookshop** has closed its shop premises, but the business is still alive and active. See the website at [www.blackcatbookshop.com](http://www.blackcatbookshop.com). Phil and Karen trade online and by post. They have stalls at Leicester Market (Tuesday – Saturday) and exhibit at book fairs around the country. And they still specialise in Sherlock Holmes! You can contact the Black Cat Bookshop at PO Box 8662, Wigston, Leicester LE18 9BB (phone 0116 251 2756; e-mail [blackcatuk@aol.com](mailto:blackcatuk@aol.com)).

**Charles Hall** (12 Paisley Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 7JW) offers Sherlockian Christmas cards, with seven different bright colourful cartoon illustrations by Ian M Fraser. A pack of ten cards and envelopes costs £6.50, including postage.

Tuesday to Saturday from 6 to 22 December, our good friend Paul Singleton will play Holmes, with Todd Butera as Watson, in *The Blue Carbuncle*, dramatised by Andrew Joffe, for the **WorkShop Theater Company** at 312 West 36th Street, New York. The programme also includes O Henry's classic *The Gift of the Magi*. Performances are at 8.00pm, with Saturday matinees at 2.00pm. For details see <http://www.workshoptheater.org/mainstage/2006-2007/carbmagi/art.php>.

From 10 January to 3 February, Resonance Ensemble presents Victor L Cahn in the world premiere of his own play *Sherlock: Solo* at the **Kirk Theatre** (Theatre Row, 410 West 42nd Street, New York, NY 10036). Details are at [www.resonanceensemble.org](http://www.resonanceensemble.org).

Doug Wrigglesworth notes that as part of the Toronto Reference Library's 30th anniversary project several MURMUR posts have been set up, one of the in the **Arthur Conan Doyle Room**. You can listen in at <http://murmurtoronto.ca/place.php?306545>.

The Autumn 2007 issue of *The Pipe Smoker's Thing* is a Holmesian number, featuring articles on Holmes and tobacco by John Hall, Regis McCafferty and Albert Mendez. Copies are available from Mr Mendez (142-35 38th Avenue, Flushing, NY 11354, USA) 'in consideration of a small donation to help defray the cost of printing and postage'. One for collectors! And Steve Moss has kindly sent the November issue of *Guns & Ammo* (InterMedia Outdoors Inc., 6420 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90048-5515, USA), which contains a good article by Garry James on 'The Guns of Sherlock Holmes'. See also [http://www.gunsandammomag.com/117\\_1107NS/](http://www.gunsandammomag.com/117_1107NS/).

In November 2008 the University of Regina will host **Re-examining Conan Doyle: Arthur Conan Doyle Symposium**. 'Scholars interested in all aspects of the life and work of Arthur Conan Doyle are invited to submit papers... no more than 10 pages (20 minutes) and suitable for presentation as part of a panel of three papers... Submit papers/abstracts to: Dr Nils Clausson, Department of English, University of Regina, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada S4S 0A2. Deadline: April 30, 2008. Please send **three** copies; author's name should appear only on the covering sheet or letter.' You can get more information from Dr Clausson at [Nils.Clausson@uregina.ca](mailto:Nils.Clausson@uregina.ca).

Reviewing *The Norwegian Explorers Omnibus* in DM 273, I mentioned the connections between **The Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota** and our own Society. In early January the Explorers will celebrate 60 years as a scion society of **The Baker Street Irregulars**. Congratulations and happy birthday!

**Francine Swift**, a good and generous friend, died on 10 October. Seemingly inseparable from her husband Wayne, she never really recovered from his death in January 2001, but she will be remembered by many as a very active member of Sherlock Holmes

societies on both sides of the ocean. Her investiture in **The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes** was "Hatty Doran". In 1994 she was invested into the BSI as "The Wigmore Street Post Office".

Our member **Sal Angelle** died in June. Catherine Cooke notes that he regularly attended our summer weekends, booking his leave specifically to come over for them. Peter Blau reports the death on 24 August of actor and writer **Denny Martin Flynn**, whose novels *San Francisco Kills* and *Killer Finish* feature Spencer Holmes, private eye and grandson of Sherlock. In 1993 Flynn dramatised his friend Nicholas Meyer's *The Seven-per-Cent Solution* for BBC Radio 4. Also from Peter: '**L Frank James** died on Sept. 2. He was a pastor and an actor, and author of *An Unopened Grave: Sherlock Holmes Investigates His Ultimate Case*.' The book was favourably reviewed in DM 269. **Mary Schulz** died on 15 October. A delightful lady, she was the supportive and indulgent wife of Ted Schulz for fifty-four years — indulgent to the extent of allowing their son to be named William Sherlock. Peter Blau notes that the BSI honoured her as *The Woman* in 1998.

**Alan Coren**, who died on 18 October aged sixty-nine, may be remembered for his appearances on *The News Quiz* and *Call My Bluff*, but essentially he was an unbeatable humorous writer (his hero was S J Perelman). There are several Sherlock Holmes parodies in the dozen or more collections of his newspaper and magazine columns, and his children's books about Arthur, the boy who lived in the flat next to Holmes and Watson, are a joy.

**Paul Smedegaard** died on 15 November, around the time of his sixty-sixth birthday. His father was a Dane who settled in Wisconsin, and in the early 1960s Paul was welcomed into the **Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**. Later he was admitted by Vincent Starrett to **Hugo's Companions**, becoming in time "Sir Hugo XIII". His BSI investiture in 1977 as "The Randall Gang" was followed twenty years ago by his wife Margaret's, as "Criterion Bar". As Scott Monty says, Paul was not only a joiner but a leader. He was also a nice guy.

Periodicals received. *Bohemian Newsletter*, no. 79, 80, 81 and 82 (**České společnost Sherlocka Holmese**, Aleš Kolodrubec, Milešovská 1, 130 00 Praha 3, Czech Republic). *The Camden House Journal*, October and November 2007 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). *Canadian Holmes*, St Jean Baptiste Day (Summer) 2007 (**The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Barbara Roden, PO Box 1360, Ashcroft, B.C., Canada V0K 1A0). *Communication*, no. 274 and no. 275 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA) [*no. 275 is a spoof shopping catalogue for goods such as the Carfax-o-pedic bed — "So comfortable you'll think you're dead"*]. *Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections*, September 2007 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). *The Illustrious Clients News*, October 2007 and November 2007 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). *Ineffable Twaddle*, November 2007 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *The Magic Door*, Fall 2007 (**The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, Doug Wrigglesworth, 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4). *Mayday Mayday*, October 2007 and November 2007 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarney Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). *The Petrel Flyer*, November/December 2007 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). *The School Report*, Winter 2007 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). *The Whaling News*, July 2007, August 2007, September 2007 and October 2007 (**The Harpooners of the Sea Unicorn**, Michael E Bragg, PO Box 256, St Charles, MO 63302-0256, USA).

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

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