

# The DISTRICT MESSENGER



## THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

Roger Johnson, Mole End, 41 Sandford Road, Chelmsford CM2 6DE

e-mail: [rojerjohnson@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:rojerjohnson@yahoo.co.uk)

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With *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes II* (Naxos AudioBooks, 2nd Floor, 40A High Street, Welwyn, Herts. AL6 9EQ; £16.99) **David Timson** completes his reading of the complete Holmes Canon, ten years after the release of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes I*. It's a task he's fulfilled with dedication, erudition, panache and wit, proving himself to be one of the great 'voice men'. He may not be as famous as, say, Martin Jarvis, but he really ought to be. He makes every character a distinct individual, without resorting to exaggerated mannerisms — except, of course, for those flamboyant types for whom exaggeration is a part of their personality. Mr Timson's collaboration with Nicolas Soames, who has overseen the project from the start (though *The Valley of Fear* was produced by Roy McMillan) ensures that the pacing is just right. Listening to these familiar tales you can appreciate how sure-footed Arthur Conan Doyle's storytelling is, for the most part — and how an excellent reading can improve a poor story, such as 'The Lion's Mane' or 'The Three Gables'. Mr Timson's recording of the Canon is a triumphant achievement. This final instalment includes as a light-hearted bonus 'The Adventure of the Wonderful Toy' written (and very well written) by David Timson himself, a new story with, as he says, just a hint of parody: it concerns the introduction of the phonograph to Baker Street, an aspiring American actor, and an alleged peculiarity of Queen Victoria. Like other Naxos recordings, *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes II* can be downloaded at [www.naxosaudiobooks.com](http://www.naxosaudiobooks.com).

Sherlock Holmes long ago became fixed in our minds as the archetype of the detective, especially the Victorian detective. Can you imagine a book called *The Rivals of C August Dupin*? No. But there have been two separate series entitled *The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes* (and an equally splendid collection called *Shadows of Sherlock Holmes*) and now Nick Rennison, author of the exceptionally clever *Sherlock Holmes: An Unauthorized Biography*, has compiled another volume with the same name, subtitled *An Anthology of Crime Stories 1890-1914* (No Exit Press, PO Box 394, Harpenden, Herts. AL5 1XJ; £9.99). I suppose it was inevitable that there should be some overlap with Sir Hugh Greene's classic series for Penguin, since both editors have chosen what they believe to be the best chronicles of the Thinking Machine and Carnacki the Ghost Finder, but it's good to see that Mr Rennison has also selected some rarer pieces — and rarer detectives, such as November Joe, Sebastian Zambra, Cecil Thorold and Lois Cayley. Some of the authors are well known for their mystery stories (Jacques Futrelle, G K Chesterton, Guy Boothby, Fergus Hume, Arthur B Reeve), some are more familiar in other fields (Arnold Bennett, Grant Allen, William Hope Hodgson, Hesketh Prichard), and some are almost unknown to me (Heaton Hill, Rodrigues Ottolengui). The fifteen stories, and their protagonists, all have the virtue of individuality, even those most obviously influenced by Sherlock Holmes, such as Professor Van Dusen, 'the Thinking Machine' — but then Van Dusen's creator, Jacques Futrelle, was a deviser of jaw-droppingly ingenious plots. You may well find that some of these sleuths really do qualify as rivals of Sherlock Holmes (Father Brown surely does!) and in any case it's good to be reminded that Holmes was not a completely isolated phenomenon.

You don't need me to tell you that Raffles 'the Amateur Cracksman' was created by Arthur Conan Doyle's brother-in-law E W Hornung to

be the antithesis of Sherlock Holmes. I've never particularly liked Hornung's stories, finding it hard to accept the idea that it's morally offensive for Raffles to earn his living honestly as a professional cricketer but perfectly acceptable to steal from those whose hospitality he accepts. However, I am greatly enjoying *Raffles and the Match-Fixing Syndicate* by Adam Corres (Grosvenor House Publishing, Crossways, 28 -30 High Street, Guildford GU1 3HY; £15.99), which gives us Raffles and Bunny up-to-date. Rather than relocating Hornung's characters to the 21st century, with all their baggage of class and empire, Mr Corres has comprehensively re-imagined the gentleman crook and his rather unwilling sidekick and faced them with problems such as on-line betting and the 'Rainbow Nation'. *This* Raffles actually *is* a professional cricketer, with a fund of tactics that Stephen Potter would have acknowledged as Gamesmanship of the highest order, and a very cynical view of modern Britain. This Bunny is naïve but likable, intelligent and far from uncritical of his friend. *Raffles and the Match-Fixing Syndicate* is exciting and wickedly funny. It's available from [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk).

*Oscar Wilde and the Ring of Death*, the second detective story in **Gyles Brandreth's** deservedly well-received series, will be published on 15 May (John Murray [Publishers], 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH; £14.99). Bram Stoker features in this one, as well as Arthur Conan Doyle. Mr Brandreth was photographed in the Baker Street study at the *Sherlock Holmes* pub for a forthcoming issue of *Waterstone's Books Quarterly*: photos of Wilde and Stoker can be seen on the mantelpiece.

**Brian Pugh & Paul Spiring's** admirable book *On the Trail of Arthur Conan Doyle: An Illustrated Devon Tour* is now available in a German edition, as *Auf der Spur von Arthur Conan Doyle: Eine Rundreise durch Devon* (Dryas Verlag, [www.dryas.de](http://www.dryas.de); €12.95). [\*I understand that other translations are due, but I don't yet have details.\*]

It's been pointed out to me that Wordsworth Editions don't sell their books direct, but Bibliophile Books provides a full mail-order service at 5 Thomas Road, London E14 7BN (020 7515 9222; [orders@bibliophilebooks.com](mailto:orders@bibliophilebooks.com)). The Wordsworth list includes *The Game's Afoot*, an anthology of new Sherlock Holmes stories edited by David Stuart Davies, David's own novels *The Tangled Skein* and *The Hentzau Affair*, and Arthur Conan Doyle's *Memories and Adventures*.

*The File on Colonel Moran: The Lure of Moriarty* by our member **Vernon Meador** will be published in late August by the Clyvedon Press (95 Maes-y-Sarn, Pentyrch, Cardiff CF15 9QR). This collection of three stories will be followed next year by *The File on Colonel Moran: Sherlock Holmes Takes a Hand*. More on this as it reaches me.

**Philip Brown** of Göttingen, Germany, is working on an English translation of the long-running series of *Groschenhefte* ('penny dreadfuls') called *Aus dem Geheimakten des Weltdetektivs* — completely unauthorised adventures of Sherlock Holmes and his young assistant Harry Taxon. Watch this space!

The copy of *Beeton's Christmas Annual* for 1887, constituting the first edition of *A Study in Scarlet*, as mentioned in DM 281, will be sold on behalf of Oxfam at **Bonhams** in Oxford (39 Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1JD; 020 7468 8351; [www.bonhams.com/books](http://www.bonhams.com/books)) on 20 May, as Lot 67. 'Some staining to pages 1 and 16/17, bookplate of George Arthur Hodgson, bound with 4 other Christmas special issues in contemporary half-morocco, spine gilt (lettered "Christmas Annuals"), without original wrappers and advertisements, front hinge split, contents working loose.' Randall Stock gives more information at

[members.aol.com/shbest/ref/bonhams-2008-beetons.htm#description](http://members.aol.com/shbest/ref/bonhams-2008-beetons.htm#description). The auctioneers' estimate is £7000-£9000.

**The Old Court Radio Theatre Company** has recorded two more of M J Elliott's scripts, in collaboration with the Sherlock Holmes Society of London and Hosipro Productions. Jim Crozier and Dave Hawkes return as Holmes and Watson in *Shoscombe Old Place* and *The Five Orange Pips*. This fourth brace of plays will shortly be available to download free of charge from the Society's website at [www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/world/radio.php](http://www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/world/radio.php) — or you can order them on CD from me for: UK £5.00; Europe £6.00 or 9.00 Euros; elsewhere £9.00 or US\$12.00. (Please make sterling cheques payable to Roger Johnson and US dollar checks to Jean Upton. Euros in cash only, please.)

At [www.sherlock-holmes.com](http://www.sherlock-holmes.com) is the April issue of the *Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-newsletter from **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; [sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com](mailto:sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com)). And check [www.cafepress.com/sherlockholmes2](http://www.cafepress.com/sherlockholmes2) too. *Classic Specialties* is the specialist dealer in Holmesian books and collectibles.

**Roger Llewellyn's** schedule for the next two months in David Stuart Davies's *The Death and Life of Sherlock Holmes* is: 4 May **Bowhill Theatre**, Selkirk (01750 222 04; [www.bowhilllittletheatre.org](http://www.bowhilllittletheatre.org)); 14 & 15 May **McCarthy Studio, Stephen Joseph Theatre**, Scarborough (01723 370541; [tickets@sjt.uk.com](http://tickets@sjt.uk.com)); 17 May **Number 8 Community Arts Centre**, Pershore (01386 555488); 21 & 22 May **Nightingale Theatre**, Brighton (01273 709709; [www.brightonticketshop.com](http://www.brightonticketshop.com)); 25 May **Jermyn Street Theatre**, London (SHSL private booking); 27 May **Cramphorn Theatre**, Chelmsford (01245 606505; [www.chelmsford.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=14684](http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=14684)); 5 June **Arts Centre**, Darlington (01325 486555; [www.darlington.gov.uk](http://www.darlington.gov.uk)); 12 June **Ashcroft Arts Centre**, Fareham (01329 223100; [www.ashcroft.org.uk](http://www.ashcroft.org.uk)); 18 June **The Castle**, Wellingborough (01933 270007; [www.thecastle.org.uk](http://www.thecastle.org.uk)); 19 June **artsdepot**, Finchley (0208 369 5454; [www.artsdepot.co.uk](http://www.artsdepot.co.uk)); 29 June **Guildhall Theatre**, Derby (01332 255800; [www.assemblyrooms-derby.co.uk](http://www.assemblyrooms-derby.co.uk)).

At Roger's website at [www.makinprojects.co.uk/page31.html](http://www.makinprojects.co.uk/page31.html) you can see video excerpts from *Sherlock Holmes – The Last Act!*

Stuart Kaminsky's play *The Final Toast*, featuring Holmes, Watson and, er, Charles Chaplin, will have its world premiere at **Discovering New Mysteries**, the second International Mystery Writers' Festival, at Owensboro, Kentucky, 12-22 June, along with the US premiere of Agatha Christie's play *Chimneys*. See [www.newmysteries.org/](http://www.newmysteries.org/).

**Joseph J Eckrich** has some very early *Sherlock Holmes Journals* for sale: Autumn 1957, Summer 1958, Spring 1959 (Conan Doyle Centenary Issue), Winter 1959 and Winter 1966. Contact Joe at [jeckrich@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jeckrich@sbcglobal.net) if you're interested. The condition is very good, except that the Centenary issue has a tear at the base of the spine. (Joe is also selling Holmesiana on eBay as 'eckrich221', though he has nothing there at the moment.)

*The Case of the Influential Illustrator: Sidney Paget's Sherlock Holmes* finishes on 5 May. It's at **Church Farmhouse Museum** (Greyhound Hill, Hendon, London NW4 4JR; [www.barnet.gov.uk/index/leisure-culture/museums-galleries/current-exhibitions.htm](http://www.barnet.gov.uk/index/leisure-culture/museums-galleries/current-exhibitions.htm)) and it's the first ever exhibition devoted to the artist.

Paul Spiring notes that Baskerville Carriages and BFRonline.biz will shortly offer **The Baskerville Weekend**, combining elements from The Baskerville Dining Experience and *On the Trail of Arthur Conan Doyle*. The cost will be about £299 a head. Information is available at [www.bfronline.biz/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=section&id=11&Itemid=47](http://www.bfronline.biz/index.php?option=com_content&task=section&id=11&Itemid=47), though I don't see anything yet on the Baskerville Carriages' site at [www.baskervillecarriages.co.uk](http://www.baskervillecarriages.co.uk).

BFRonline.biz at [www.bfronline.biz](http://www.bfronline.biz) is mainly devoted to **Bertram Fletcher Robinson**, and naturally has a great deal of interest relating to Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

Next year marks Arthur Conan Doyle's 150th birthday, but it looks as if Edinburgh will celebrate by removing the statue that marks his birthplace in Picardy Place. The house itself was destroyed in 1969 to make way for the eastern link road. Now it's planned to put the statue (of Sherlock Holmes, not Conan Doyle) into storage for up to two years while a new tram system is set up.

Nine miles from central Edinburgh is Mauricewood House at Penicuik, the home from 1890 to 1911 of **Dr Joseph Bell**, to whom Conan Doyle wrote in 1892, 'It is certainly to you that I owe Sherlock Holmes.' The lovely seven-bedroom house comes with 3.26 acres. Bids in excess of £1,100,000 are invited. You can download the brochure at [www.savills.co.uk/quickSearchDetail.aspx?ID=210002#](http://www.savills.co.uk/quickSearchDetail.aspx?ID=210002#).

**Kathleen Bragg**, who was the treasurer, or Finback Whale, of The Harpooners of the Sea Unicorn of St Charles, Missouri, lost her fight against cancer on 31 March, and is deeply missed by her husband Michael and their fellow-Harpooners.

**Charlton Heston**, who died on 5 April aged eighty-three, will always be remembered as the actor who played Moses, Ben-Hur, and El Cid — and the astronaut in *Planet of the Apes*. His many rôles also included Dr Watson's hero General Gordon, and in 1980 he played Sherlock Holmes in Paul Giovanni's melodrama *The Crucifer of Blood*, with Jeremy Brett as Watson. In 1991 Heston took the part again when his son Fraser filmed the play, with Richard Johnson as Watson.

To my generation, growing up in the 1950s, **Willoughby Goddard** was the wicked Landburgher Gessler, doomed to humiliation each week in the television series *The Adventures of William Tell*, but of course that was just one aspect of his dramatic versatility. In 1997 he attended our annual dinner, as the guest of his godson Richard Lancelyn Green, and he was, I think, pleased when I complimented him on his performance as Zeal-of-the-Land Busy in *Bartholomew Fair* for the Royal Shakespeare Company. His only Holmesian rôle was in 1953, as Colonel Moran in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* at Bromley. Willoughby Goddard died on 11 April, aged eighty-three.

Bill Barnes informs me of the death on 20 April of **Lionel Fredman**, founding president of The Sydney Passengers. Dr Fredman was certainly a member of our Society from 1976 to 2000, and Bill adds: 'Along with Alan Olding in Adelaide and Douglas Sutherland-Bruce in Perth, Lionel was one of the elder statesmen of the Sherlockian movement in Australia. Thinking for years that he was the only Australian member of the SHSL, he formed a society of one in Sydney some time in the 1950s (exact date unknown) called "The Friends of Mary Fraser".'

A reminder that the 2008 **Annual Victorian Cricket Match** between the Gentlemen of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London and the Gentlemen of the P G Wodehouse Society will be held on Sunday 22 June at West Wycombe Cricket Ground. These events are quite delightful — and free! All are welcome, and Victorian costume and appearances are encouraged. The game is played to laws of 1895, which those seriously interested can consult on our Society's website at [www.sherlockholmes.org.uk/pdf/laws1895msw.pdf](http://www.sherlockholmes.org.uk/pdf/laws1895msw.pdf).

Periodicals received. *The Baker Street Bugle*, 1 March 2008 (**The Deerstalkers of Welshpool**, Joan & Roy Upton-Holder, Baskerville, 146 Little Henfaes Drive, Welshpool, Powys SY21 7BA). *The Baker Street Journal*, Spring 2008 (Steven Rothman, 220, West Rittenhouse Square, #15-D, Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA; subscriptions, PO Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, USA; correspondence for **The Baker Street Irregulars** should go to Michael Whelan, 7938 Mill Stream Circle, Indianapolis, IN 46278, USA). *The Formulary*, March 2008 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, Highcroft Cottage, 14 Totteridge Common, Totteridge, London N20 8NL). *The Illustrious Clients News*, April 2008 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). *Ineffable Twaddle*, May/June 2008 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *Mayday Mayday*, April 2008 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). *The Petrel Flyer*, Spring 2008 and Special *The Master's Dinner* Edition 15 March 2008 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). *Prescott's Press*, March 2008 (**The Three Garridebs**, Warren Randall, 15 Fawn Lane West, South Setauket, NY 11720-1346, USA). *Sherlockiana*, nr. 1, 2008 (**Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**, Bjarne Rother Jensen, Højbovangen 24, 9200 Aalborg SV, Denmark). *The Whaling News*, March 2008 and April 2008 (**The Harpooners of the Sea Unicorn**, Michael E Bragg, PO Box 256, St Charles, MO 63302-0256, USA).

*Roger Johnson*