

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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*Oscar Wilde and the Ring of Death* (John Murray [Publishers], 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH; £14.99) is the eagerly-awaited second volume in Gyles Brandreth's series of detective stories, and it doesn't disappoint. In 1892, at a meeting of his dining club at the Cadogan Hotel, Wilde introduces a game of 'Murder': each member and guest anonymously names a person to be disposed of, and everyone tries to identify which would-be assassin chose which putative victim. Those present include Wilde's friends Arthur Conan Doyle, Bram Stoker, Walter Sickert, Lord Alfred Douglas, Edward Heron-Allen and Robert Sherard, as well as Douglas's brother Lord Drumlanrig, Doyle's friend Willie Hornung, and Stoker's guest Charles Brookfield. There are fourteen in all. Next day, the first named victim is found dead... and the list includes two of the guests at the dinner. And Sherlock Holmes. And Oscar and Constance Wilde... That curious, uneasy shadowland of late Victorian London, where Society, Art and Popular Entertainment overlap, is richly evoked, and the details of Wilde's life are mentioned by Sherard, the narrator, in a perfectly natural, convincing manner: the man he presents to us is both the authentic Oscar and the authentic amateur sleuth. He isn't Sherlock Holmes, of course, but we are invited to consider the possibility that he is the inspiration for Mycroft Holmes. The dining club is named after Socrates, and it isn't a vast leap from there to Diogenes. Three final points — First: were Elizabeth Scott-Rivers' eyes open or closed? Second: it's commendably bold of Mr Brandreth to choose his own middle name, Daubeny, as the surname for the least attractive character in the story. And third: yes, Charles Brookfield was the first actor to play Sherlock Holmes on stage, in a spoof called *Under the Clock*, with Seymour Hicks as Watson.

Believe it or not, my copy of *The Baker Street Journal Christmas Annual 2007* reached me just a couple of weeks ago. The BSI knew that the subject would be popular, but they hadn't expected the entire print run to sell out before all the orders were filled! You won't be able to buy a copy now, but I'll tell you a little about it anyway. The title of this annual is *Rathbone Returns! A Misadventure called Sherlock Holmes*, and it's an authoritative account, by S E Dahlinger and Glen Miranker, of what should have been a triumph for Basil Rathbone, returning to his most famous rôle in a spectacular Broadway production. In fact, it was a disaster. Almost unbelievably, the try-out in Boston attracted hardly any audience. True, the play itself, written by the star's wife, Ouida Rathbone, was clumsy and overblown. True, they'd had to settle for a young publicist instead of an experienced producer. True, Nigel Bruce was dead, and the less famous Jack Raine was cast as Watson. Still, you'd have thought that the chance to see Rathbone as Holmes, live on stage, would be irresistible — after all, this was 1953, only seven years after Rathbone's final appearance as Holmes on film and on radio! The citizens of Boston resisted it, though, and on Broadway the play closed after just three performances. Basil Rathbone's career never regained the heights, and Bill Doll never produced another play. I've long known the basics of the story, but I'm greatly indebted to Ms Dahlinger and Mr Miranker for telling us what really happened. It must be gratifying to know that so many people snapped up *Rathbone Returns!* but I do think the BSI should consider reprinting.

Baring-Gould, Bell, Blakeney, Brend, Butters, Christ, Dakin, Folsom, Hall, Thomson, Zeisler... and now there's a new, comprehensive and closely reasoned chronology to add to the list. Actually, *Holmes and Watson: A New Chronology of Their Adventures* by Vincent Delay has been around since 2004, but only in French. At our AGM last weekend an excellent English translation by Margaret Owens was launched, and Vincent was there to sign copies. It's published by the Sherlock Holmes Society of London as an attractive A4 paperback, and is available from the Society's Merchandising Officer, Judi Ellis, at 13 Crofton Avenue, Orpington, Kent BR6 8DU; [rjandje@aol.com](mailto:rjandje@aol.com). (The price at the AGM was £10.00. Judi can give you dollar and euro equivalents, and tell you the cost of postage.)

It's nearly a year since the last newsletter from **The Conan Doyle Collection: Richard Lancelyn Green Bequest**, though I'm told that another is due very shortly. Meanwhile, there's a booklet, *A Study in Sherlock: Uncovering the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection* by Neil McCaw, available for £3.50 from the City Museum & Records Office, Museum Road, Portsmouth PO1 2LF or online from [http://www.portsmouthmuseumshop.co.uk/acatalog/Arthur\\_Conan\\_Doyle.html](http://www.portsmouthmuseumshop.co.uk/acatalog/Arthur_Conan_Doyle.html). The website at [www.conandoyllection.co.uk](http://www.conandoyllection.co.uk) is worth a look.

I'm fascinated to learn from Randall Stock's invaluable website at [www.members.aol.com/ht\\_a/sbhest/ref/sidney-paget-original-art.htm](http://www.members.aol.com/ht_a/sbhest/ref/sidney-paget-original-art.htm) that the Collection includes an unpublished portrait of Sherlock Holmes by Sidney Paget, signed and dated October 1904.

I found reference on a German website to a 'very amusing and (in parts) very angry and overly didactic book about the event of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London'. The book, *Very British! Unterwegs in England, Irland, Schottland*, is written by **Elsemarie Maletzke**, whom many of us know as an enthusiastic and delightful participant in more than one of the Society's Swiss pilgrimages. Obviously it covers more than just our Society and Sherlock Holmes, but my limited German would be just too limited to appreciate it. It's published by Taschenbuch, and is available at €6.00 from [www.amazon.de](http://www.amazon.de).

Due in July, at \$20.00 plus postage, is *The Sherlock Holmes Stories of Edward D Hoch*, with an afterword by Gary Lovisi (Gryphon Books, PO Box 209, Brooklyn, NY 11228, USA; <http://gryphonbooks.com>). And in August comes *The Shadow of Reichenbach Falls* by John R King, in which it's revealed that there was another witness to the fatal struggle — a young ghost-hunter named Thomas Carnacki (Forge, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, USA; \$26.95). The provisional date for *Bertram Fletcher Robinson: A Footnote to The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Brian W Pugh and Paul R Spiring is 1 September (MX Publishing, 10 Kingfisher Close, Stanstead Abbots, Herts. SG12 8LQ; [www.mxpublishing.co.uk](http://www.mxpublishing.co.uk)); the book is dedicated to the memory of Richard Lancelyn Green.

The May 2008 issue of the *Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-newsletter, with lots of Holmesian books and collectibles, from **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; [sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com](mailto:sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com)) is online at [www.sherlock-holmes.com](http://www.sherlock-holmes.com). Check [www.cafepress.com/sherlockholmes2](http://www.cafepress.com/sherlockholmes2) too.

Congratulations to **Charles Foley, Jon Lellenberg and Daniel Stashower!** *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters* has won both the MWA's Edgar Award for the best critical/biographical book and the Malice Domestic Agatha Award for the best non-fiction, and is nominated for Bouchercon's Anthony Award for best critical work. Congrats also to Jeff Falkingham, whose novel *Sherlock Holmes and*

*the County Courthouse Caper* was shortlisted for the 2008 Next Generation Indie Book Awards in the Young Adult section.

*A Life in Letters* is will shortly be published in paperback. Meanwhile, so Jonathan McCafferty tells me, the hardback is available at just £5.99 from Bookcase London (268 Chiswick High Road, London W4 1PD; [bookcaselondon@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bookcaselondon@yahoo.co.uk)).

The leading article in June's *Book and Magazine Collector* (Room 101, 140 Wales Farm Road, London W3 6UG; £3.50) is 'Conan Doyle in *The Strand*' by Mike Ashley. W H Smith still had this issue on the shelf yesterday.

On 20 May a copy of *Beeton's Christmas Annual* for 1887, containing the first publication of *A Study in Scarlet*, was auctioned at Bonhams in Oxford, on behalf of Oxfam. The auctioneers' estimate was £7,000-£9,000. The hammer price was actually £15,500 (with commission, it came to £18,600). The purchaser, who was present in the saleroom, is apparently a private collector from the north-west of England.

Peter Blau notes: 'If you would like to read one of the textbooks Conan Doyle studied before he took his medical degree in 1881, Peter Wood has discovered Joseph Bell's *A Manual of the Operations of Surgery for the Use of Senior Students, House Surgeons, and Junior Practitioners* on the internet at websites that include [www.gutenberg.org/files/24564/24564-h/24564-h.html](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/24564/24564-h/24564-h.html). Bell wrote the book in 1866, and Project Gutenberg has the fifth edition (revised and enlarged) published in 1883.'

Also from Peter: 'Philip K Jones has compiled (and continues to compile) an excellent database for Sherlockian pastiches. There are 6,875 entries (and more to come, of course), and it's available on the internet at the Illustrious Clients' website at [www.gutenberg.org/files/24564/24564-h/24564-h.html](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/24564/24564-h/24564-h.html).'

One of the lots offered in the Entertainment Memorabilia sale at Bonhams in Knightsbridge on 18 June is 'A Victorian style dinner jacket from *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, 1939, as worn by **Nigel Bruce** as Dr. Watson, *Estimate: £800 - 1,200*'. The provenance seems impeccable. I'll be interested to see what it fetches. A photograph and details are in the online catalogue at <http://www.bonhams.com/cgi-bin/public.sh/pubweb/publicSite.r?sContinent=EUR&screen=lotdetails/NoFlash&iSaleItemNo=3621423&iSaleNo=15801&iSaleSectionNo=1>.

If you fancy owning some **Baskerville** family property, contact Bigwood Auctioneers (The Old School, Tiddington, Stratford upon Avon, Warwickshire, CV37 7AW; 01789 269415) or Martin Heath (01743 243186; mobile 07963 524704). On 27 June Bigwood's will sell a 40-piece silver cutlery set that Mr Heath found while valuing the contents of Clyro Court near Hay-on-Wye. The house was built in 1839 for the Mynors-Baskerville family, whose guests apparently included Arthur Conan Doyle; in recent years it has been renamed Baskerville Hall Hotel. Every piece of cutlery bears the Baskerville crest: a hound's head with a broken spear through its jaw. [*\*Confusingly, the local hound legend appears to be connected with the Vaughan family of nearby Hergest Court in Herefordshire.\**] Details of the sale and photos of the silverware are online at [www.bigwoodauctioneers.co.uk](http://www.bigwoodauctioneers.co.uk).

**Nicholas Utechin** will present a three-hour special on the digital radio channel BBC7 on 19 July. *The Game's Afoot* will include the earliest known recording of a BBC Holmes production, *The Speckled Band*, dramatised by John Dickson Carr and starring Cedric Hardwicke & Finlay Currie (17 May 1945), as well as John Gielgud & Ralph Richardson in *The Red-Headed League* (19 October 1954), Carleton Hobbs & Norman Shelley in *The Boscombe Valley Mystery* (12 December 1966), Clive Merrison & Michael Williams in *The Solitary Cyclist* (17 March 1993), and Clive Merrison & Andrew Sachs in *The Abergavenny Murder* (18 May 2004). There's also an interview with Bert Coules, who introduces *The Solitary Cyclist*.

And Bert Coules is completing the scripts for a third series of *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, with Merrison & Sachs reprising their rôles for Radio 4.

Not long after the death of our member Mimi Langley comes the news that her cousin **David Galerstein** died on 29 April at the age of eighty-six. Scott Monty notes that Dave Galerstein was a former principal of the New York City Board of Education 'and was always interested in educating those around him'. His manner was friendly and lively, and

his contributions to Sherlockian literature included co-editing *A Singular Set of People* and *A Singular Sense of Humor*. In 1972 he was invested into the Baker Street Irregulars as 'Bert Stevens'.

**Bernard Archard**, who died on 1 May aged ninety-one, became a television star in 1959 in the curiously Holmes-like rôle of Colonel Oreste Pinto in *Spycatcher*, based on the wartime memoirs of the man General Eisenhower called 'the greatest living expert in security'. Twenty years ago, Richard Carpenter wanted to cast Archard as the elderly Sherlock Holmes in a proposed, but never made, TV series. He did finally get to play the part in a BBC radio production of G K Chesterton's story *The Absence of Mr Glass*, with Andrew Sachs as Father Brown. Archard's character, Dr Orion Hood, is very obviously the retired Sherlock Holmes.

**Alan Olding**, founder in 1978 of the Sherlock Holmes Society of Australia, died on 6 May, having contracted asbestosis decades before while building his own house after he and his wife Olive moved from England. Alan and Olive were occasional visitors to the northern hemisphere — I first met them on our Society's Dartmoor weekend in 1979. Their daughter Alex Threlfall told me, 'Dad was delighted that his youngest grand-daughter, Laura, is to marry later in the year, and her new surname will be... Holmes.' Alan received the BSI investiture 'Cooee' in 1988.

Lynne Godden has informed me of the death on 8 May, after a long illness, of the painter **Douglas West**, some of whose lovely watercolours graced our Society's Christmas cards for several years, while others were reproduced as prints for framing.

The American cartoonist **Will Elder**, perhaps best known for 'Little Annie Fanny' in *Playboy*, was one of the original artists for *Mad Magazine*, usually credited as Bill Elder. His astonishing talent for reproducing other cartoonists' styles didn't overshadow his own original work, which included several spoofs of the great detective, including in the 1950s 'Shermlock Shomes' and 'The Hound of the Basketballs'. He died on 14 May aged eighty-six.

**Margot Boyd** worked on stage with Bernard Shaw, Michael Redgrave and Noel Coward, but most of her acting career was on BBC radio. She'll forever be remembered as the formidable Marjorie Antrobus in *The Archers*, but of course she played many other parts, including 'Ma'am' in *Conan Doyle and the Edalji Case* in 1987, and Mrs Hudson in *Sherlock's Last Case* by Charles Marowitz in 1989. She died on 20 May at the age of ninety-four.

Periodicals received. *Arthur Conan Doyle Newsletter and Birthday File XV*, 22 May 2008 (**The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). *For the Sake of the Trust*, Spring 2008 (**The Baker Street Irregulars Trust**, Julie McKuras, 13512 Granada Avenue, Apple Valley, MN 55124, USA). *The Camden House Journal*, April 2008 & May 2008 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). *Communication*, no. 280 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). *Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections*, March 2008 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). *The Passengers' Log*, January 6 and May 22 2008 (**The Sydney Passengers**, Rosane McNamara, 4/2a Merlin Street, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089, Australia). *The Petrel Flyer*, May/June 2008 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). *The Scion*, Spring 2008 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP). *The Torr*, Spring 2008 (**The Poor Folk Upon The Moors**, Reggie Musgrave, Drummond Cottage, Old Tavern Yard, Westbourne, Chichester, West Sussex PO10 8TA).

And *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, April 2008 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; [blau7103@comcast.net](mailto:blau7103@comcast.net)).

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