

The DISTRICT MESSENGER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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John Gardner, BSI is likely to be remembered as the author of a dozen or so authorised novels about James Bond. That's a pity, because he did much more and much better than that. In 1974 he published *The Return of Moriarty* followed a year later by *The Revenge of Moriarty*, in which he placed the Napoleon of Crime firmly in the real, violent and squalid world of late Victorian crime, revealing him as a sort of nineteenth century Godfather. The place and time are scrupulously researched and excitingly portrayed, but above all it's the characters that stay in the reader's mind — in particular Moriarty himself, his criminal 'family', and his enemy Inspector Angus Crow. The third volume of the Moriarty Journals was not completed until shortly before John Gardner died in 2007, but it's as richly atmospheric, as breathtakingly violent, as startlingly authentic as the first two. In *Moriarty* (Quercus Publishing plc, 21 Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2NS; £14.99) the Professor returns to London from America to find that control of his organisation is threatened by a gentlemanly villain named Jack Idell, known ironically as 'Idle Jack'. The story of Moriarty's reclamation of the London underworld is the sort that grabs the reader by the lapels and won't let go. The unexpected ending even suggests a sequel, but that must wait for another chronicler.

The File on Colonel Moran: Volume One: The Lure of Moriarty by **Vernon Meador** (The Clyvedon Press, 95 Maes-y-Sarn, Pentyrch, Cardiff CF15 9QR; £10.00) is shorter, but just as exciting. It begins with Moran's own account of the events at the Reichenbach Falls and at Camden House, Baker Street. There are welcome echoes of Harry Flashman here, and, as you might expect, the Colonel's story differs rather from Sherlock Holmes's. Then we come to 'a weekly series of exciting adventures' published in *The Daily News*, 'related by our reporter Mr Mark Jordan following exclusive interviews with the Colonel'. The interviews take place in a prison cell, and I have the feeling that Mr Jordan is not quite what he appears to be. The stories are clever, suspenseful and atmospheric. You can buy this nice hardback postpaid from the publisher at £13.00 (UK & Europe) or £14.70 (rest of world). Sterling cheques only, payable to The Clyvedon Press Ltd, or use PayPal, via the PayPal user name clyvedon.press@tiscali.co.uk.

I've just received *Sherlock Holmes at the Raffles Hotel*, the latest new Holmes novel by **John Hall** (Breese Books, Baker Street Studios Ltd, Endeavour House, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB22 3DX; £7.50), which I'll review in the next issue. John Hall, as most will be aware, is a most engaging storyteller and one of today's leading Holmesian scholars. It's a powerful combination!

Due on 8 January from Faber & Faber Ltd (3 Queen Square, London WC1N 3AU; £14.99) is *And Then There Was No One* by **Gilbert Adair**, which concludes the short series that began with *The Act of Roger Murgatroyd* and *A Mysterious Affair of Style*. As the titles suggest, the main object of Mr Adair's homage — and target of his humour — is the work of Agatha Christie, and this final novel has as many surprises as any by Dame Agatha. Unlike its predecessors, it's set in the future rather than the past. In 2011 Gilbert Adair is a guest speaker at a literary festival held to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Sherlock Holmes Museum at Meiringen, in the course of which he relates his own recently published Holmes pastiche, 'The Giant Rat of Sumatra' (it's a good one). And that's where the planned events are overtaken by the unplanned ones. Evadne Mount, whose name and character he had appropriated for the amateur sleuth in the earlier novels, appears at the festival, and she seems to have incorporated something of her fictional alter ego into her own life. Worse, the star guest, who appears to have gone out of way to antagonise just about everyone, is found dead in the Sherlock Holmes Museum, with an arrow in his heart. I don't say it's impossible for the reader to solve the mystery, but a good deal more than lateral thinking is

needed. *And Then There Was No One* fizzles with literary erudition, very good writing, a dark wit, affection for classic detective fiction, and a bold imagination. 'Metafiction', I think, is the word.

New to the November issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-newsletter from **Classic Specialties** at <http://www.sherlock-holmes.com/index.html> are the 2009 Sherlockian Calendar (\$19.95) and Tracy Revels' collection *Sherlock Holmes: Mostly Parodies*. The theme of the Calendar is *Sherlock Holmes in the Movies*; rather than simply selecting twelve stills of Rathbone, Wontner, Norwood and others, the creators have chosen to give an idea of the development of Sherlockian cinema. The graphic design is unusual and attractive, and the overall quality is, of course, very high. (Classic Specialties, PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com.)

Recently published by the History Press Ltd (The Mill, Brimscombe Port, Stroud, Glos. GL5 2QG; £19.99) is *Maiwand: The Last Stand of the 66th (Berkshire) Regiment in Afghanistan, 1880* by Richard J Stacpoole-Ryding. There have been other accounts of the battle, notably Leigh Maxwell's *My God – Maiwand!*, but this is the first to concentrate specifically on the fate of Watson's own regiment. **Richard Stacpoole-Ryding**, founder and Dresser Emeritus of **The Friends of Dr Watson**, is a recognised authority on Victorian battles. Signed copies of *Maiwand* are available for £17.50 each from The Rifles (Berkshire & Wiltshire) Museum, The Wardrobe, 58 The Close, Salisbury SP1 2EX; www.thewardrobe.org.uk.

On 31 December Robert Hale Ltd (Clerkenwell House, 45-47 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT) will publish *Sherlock Holmes in Russia* edited and translated by Alex Auswaks. Publisher's price is £18.99, but at www.halebooks.com/index.asp?TAG=&CID you can pre-order the book for £13.29. Enter the title in the search box.

A reminder of the lovely facsimile editions of guidebooks and maps published by **Old House Books**, (The Old Police Station, Pound Street, Moretonhampstead, Devon TQ13 8PA; www.OldHouseBooks.co.uk). Prime examples of immediate interest to the Holmesian include *Baedeker's Great Britain 1890: A Handbook for Travellers* (£15.99), *Baedeker's London & Its Environs 1900* (£14.99), *Murray's Modern London 1860* (£13.99), *Bacon's up to date Map of London 1902* (£9.99), *London Railways Map 1897* (£9.99), *Dickens's Dictionary of London 1888* (£12.99)... not to mention *The Lady's Dressing-Room 1892* (£12.99) and *Enquire Within upon Everything 1890* (£14.99).

From Gwyneth Hanson via Guy Marriott comes the link to www.wowio.com/index.asp, where you can read all sorts of books online for nothing or download them at a reasonable price. There's a good amount of Sherlock Holmes there, and not only the Canon.

Congratulations to Jon Lellenberg, Daniel Stashower and Charles Foley! At this year's Bouchercon, they received the 'Anthony' award to add to the 'Edgar' and the 'Agatha' for *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters*.

Russell Miller tells me that Dame Jean Conan Doyle was registered at birth as 'Lina Jean' and not 'Jean Lena Annette', as I said in my review of his biography *The Adventures of Arthur Conan Doyle*. My apologies.

The latest recording from the **Old Court Radio Theatre Company** will be up on the Society's website shortly, at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk, where you'll be able to listen to and download *'The Gloria Scott'* and *'Wisteria Lodge'*, both dramatised by MJ Elliott. Jim Crozier and Dave Hawkes are Holmes and Watson, impeccably supported by Ivor Jevons, Mark Preston, Vince Webb, Cyril Bagshaw, Lindsay Lloyd and others. 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.

On Boxing Day Clive Merrison and Andrew Sachs begin a third series of *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* in four plays written by **Bert Coules** and broadcast at 2.15pm on Fridays. Titles are 'The Eyes of Horus', 'The Thirteen Watches', 'The Remarkable Performance of Mr Frederick Merridew', and 'The Ferrers Documents'. Stephen Thorne returns as Lestrade, Malcolm Tierney is Stamford, Hugh Bonneville is Merridew, Stuart Milligan is Harkness, and Nigel Anthony is Sir Gregory Backwater. Capital!

At <http://classicradioworld.com> you can listen to old time radio dramatisations of Sherlock Holmes. Don't expect great sound quality.

Bruce Holmes (3170 Joseph Howe Drive #7, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3I 4G1; ebh221b@eastlink.ca) offers Sherlockian postage stamps and stamp-related items. An example: 'ILLUSTRATED SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY: I will select quotations from your favourite of the 56 short stories and illustrate these quotations with genuine postage stamps. In effect I will be customizing your story. The layout of the sheet will be a minimum of 5 stamps vertical on the left side of the 8.5" x 11" sheet, with the quotation to the right of the stamps. The price for this unique illustration is only \$25.00 US.' If you'd like to see what Bruce's work looks like, e-mail me and I'll send you his catalogue.

More unusual Holmesian goodies are available from **Charles Hall** (12 Paisley Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 7JW), including a variety of postage stamps, caricature postcards, bookmarks and Christmas cards, resin medallions [**the one depicting Laurel & Hardy as Holmes & Watson is a knockout**], and the two excellent books that Charles wrote with Peter Blythe: *On Stage Sherlock Holmes* (£4.00 plus postage) and *Sherlock Holmes and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in Edinburgh* (£3.25 plus postage). Write to Charles for a catalogue, or e-mail me.

London's only specialist audiobook dealer has moved from Wigmore Street to Baker Street, next door to the site of the Empty House (see 'The Mews of Marylebone' by Bernard Davies). And of course **The Talking Bookshop** stocks pretty much the entire range of Holmes and Conan Doyle material. (The Talking Bookshop, 36 Baker Street, London W1U 3EU; www.talkingbooks.co.uk.)

Oscar Ross has kindly provided the October issue of *The Dalesman* (Country Publications Ltd, The Water Mill, Broughton Hall, Skipton, North Yorks. BD23 3AG) featuring an interesting though elementary article by Martin Hickes: 'On the Trail of the Hound of the Baskervilles'.

The 2 December issue of *The Lady* (39-40 Bedford Street, London WC2E 9ER) will include a piece by **Katherine Karlson**, ASH, BSI on Sherlock Holmes's women. Kate Karlson is co-editor of *Ladies, Ladies: The Women in the Life of Sherlock Holmes* (see DM 275).

On 24 November the Eastern Daily Press carried an article entitled 'Solved! Holmes Story Riddle'. At a recent Norwich book fair, Gerry Fuller bought an autograph album, which, though neither he nor the dealer realised it at the time, contains not only Arthur Conan Doyle's signature, dated 'May 1903, Happsburgh', but those of six-year-old Gilbert John Cubitt and Edith Alice Cubitt. After his name Gilbert wrote 'HASBORO, 1902' in animated letters, and Edith drew 'A Musical Tragedy' played out by stick figures based on musical notes. Gilbert's father was landlord of the Hill House hotel at Happsburgh (pronounced approximately 'Haisborra') where Conan Doyle stayed in 1903, and where he was inspired by the boy's use of stick figures as letters of the alphabet to write 'The Dancing Men' and to name its principal character Hilton Cubitt. You can read the story and see the 'dancing men' here: <http://new.edp24.co.uk/content/news/story.aspx?brand=EDPOnline&category=News&tBrand=edponline&tCategory=news&itemid=NOED24%20Nov%202008%2007%3A58%3A38%3A923>.

Aziz bin Adam has alerted me to *The Lost Cases of Sherlock Holmes* (JoWood Productions Software AG, Richard-Steinhuber-Strasse 10a/TOP 9, A-8940 Liezen, Austria, which claims to be 'the first computer game officially licensed by the Conan Doyle Estate'. You can play or download the game at various sites, such as http://www.legacygames.com/download_games/394/the_lost_cases_of_sherlock_holmes/, or buy it on CD-ROM. It features '16 unique cases of forgery, espionage, theft, murder and more. Investigate hundreds of potentially relevant clues and lively characters in each mysterious story. Explore 40 historically accurate locations around London, as you track down suspects and evidence.'

The Sherlock Holmes pub, the Sherlock Holmes Museum... and now London has a third re-creation of the famous sitting-room at 221B. The Museum of the Moving Image closed several years ago, but earlier this year **The Movieum** opened at County Hall, opposite the Houses of Parliament, and it houses, among much else, the Granada Suite, which 'includes artefacts from the actual set made famous by the hugely popular Granada TV/Film series of Sherlock Holmes... The study set from the popular series has been faithfully re-created using all of the original set pieces, furniture and props, courtesy of the Sherlock Holmes Company, with a gallery of photographs and posters...' See <http://www.themovieum.com/Latest/sherlock-holmes-comes-to-the-movieum.html>. Entrance to the Movieum [**at least it's a memorable name**] is £15.00 for adults; £9.00 for children of five to fifteen, students, and concessions; and £40.00 for a family of two adults and two children.

Earlier this month Novosti, the Russian News & Information Agency, reported that marble statuettes of Sherlock Holmes had been presented to the sixteen best police officers in the Novgorod Region. The awards were made on 10 November, the fourteenth annual Police Officers' Day.

Our Webmaster, Charles Markham, and our Website Editor, Robert Graham, are looking to move on, and the Council would like to hear from any members who think they have the knowledge, the skill and the enthusiasm to take over, preferably combining the posts. The new Webmaster will manage one of the most prestigious Sherlockian sites and have contact with enthusiasts worldwide. The workload fluctuates, but two hours a week should suffice to keep the website reviewed and updated. Ideally the Webmaster will be able to attend the (approximately quarterly) Council meetings in London. The site is written in PHP and MySQL, but in terms of both is pretty basic! For more information, please contact Robert Graham r.mgraham@btinternet.com.

Dancer, singer and actor **Peter Gorden** died on 18 October, aged sixty-nine. In 2005 he directed and choreographed Teddy Hayes' musical *The Baskerville Beast* at the Questors Theatre, Ealing.

I was looking forward to meeting **Paul Churchill** at the BSI dinner in January, as I've long admired the 'genuine faux documents' he created over the years, such as Dr Watson's commission, the patent for the Bruce-Partington plans, and John Clayton's hackney carriage licence. That privilege won't be mine now, as Paul Churchill died on 7 November, aged sixty-three. His BSI investiture was 'Corot'.

Periodicals received. *The Baker Street Journal*, Autumn 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). *Communication*, no. 284 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). *Ineffable Twaddle*, November 2008 and December 2008 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *The Magic Door*, Autumn 2008 (**The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, Doug Wrigglesworth, 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4). *Mayday Mayday*, November 2008, and *The Log*, volume 1 number 2, 2008 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). *The Morning Post*, November 2008 (**The Noble Bachelors of St Louis**, Randy Getz, 7456 Cornell Avenue, University City, MO 63130, USA). *The Petrel Flyer*, Nov./Dec. 2008 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). *The School Report*, Winter 2008 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). *Tonga Times*, Fall 2008 (**The Mini-Tonga Scion Society**, Jay Pearlman, 1656 E 19th Street, #2-E, Brooklyn, NY 11229, USA; minitongasociety@aol.com). *The Whaling News*, June 2008, July 2008, August 2008, September 2008, October 2008 and November 2008 (**The Harpooners of the Sea Unicorn**, Michael E Bragg, PO Box 256, St Charles, MO 63302-0256, USA).

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

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