

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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Owing to circumstances beyond our control (the manufacturers can't come up with the goods in time) the unveiling by Gyles Brandreth of a plaque at the **Langham Hotel**, commemorating the dinner at which both *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Sign of the Four*, has had to be postponed. It was originally scheduled for Thursday 19th November, but we're now looking towards a date early in 2010.

[*Gyles Brandreth's latest book, *Something Sensational to Read in the Train: The Diary of A Lifetime* (John Murray, 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH; £25.00), is funny, touching, and intensely readable – and, yes, Sherlock Holmes does feature.*]

Titan Books (144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP) has issued new editions of four good non-canonical novels, under the rather unoriginal series title *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. All are priced at £7.99 (US\$9.95, Cdn\$12.95).

In *The War of the Worlds*, first published in 1975 as *Sherlock Holmes's War of the Worlds*, **Manly Wade Wellman**, with his son **Wade Wellman**, pits Holmes, Watson and Professor Challenger against H G Wells's Martian invaders. In this version, the aliens are not native to Mars, and their defeat owes much to the resourcefulness and courage of our heroes. It's intelligent, exciting and literate – as you'd expect from a multi-award-winning science-fiction writer who was also a Baker Street Irregular. The suggestion that Holmes and Mrs Hudson are conducting a clandestine love affair stretches belief to its limits, however. **Daniel Stashower**, BSI is as well known for his biographical studies of Arthur Conan Doyle as for his fiction. *The Ectoplasmic Man*, his first mystery novel, originally published in 1985, is set in London in 1910. Harry Houdini has escaped from a police cell, and even moved the occupants of the other cells around (he actually did accomplish this feat, I believe). When he is arrested for a robbery that appears to have been committed by someone able to walk through walls, it's clear to Sherlock Holmes that Houdini has been framed. The story of how Holmes, Watson and Houdini solve the mystery and save a very illustrious client is thrilling, ingenious and very funny. Dan Stashower went on to write four more detective novels featuring Houdini, all highly recommended.

In *The Scroll of the Dead* by **David Stuart Davies**, BSI, Sherlock Holmes begins by exposing a fraudulent medium, but soon finds himself pursuing a ruthless fanatic who will not stop at murder to obtain the scroll which is the key to immortality. A decadent dandy, a vicious sprig of the aristocracy and the hot-headed daughter of an archaeologist lead Holmes and Watson to adventure in rural Norfolk and to mortal peril amid the lakes and mountains of Cumberland. I hailed the book on its first publication in 1998 as a rattling good yarn, and a re-reading confirms that description. The fourth novel is also DSD's work, but it's very different. *The Veiled Detective* (2004) requires us to accept that much of what we know from the Canon is wrong. For a start, Dr Watson is actually Dr Walker, and he was cashiered from his regiment rather than honourably invalided out. Walker's predicament leads plausibly to his recruitment by Professor Moriarty to infiltrate Sherlock Holmes's household, and the result, for the reader, is a remarkable tension between the familiar investigations and the hitherto unrevealed machinations of the arch-criminal through his reluctant underling. The novel gives us a uniquely intelligent, thought-provoking and fresh view of one of the great friendships in all literature, without diminishing the stature of either Holmes or Watson.

Avril Field-Taylor, whose first novel *Dearly Ransomed Soul* has been well received, has a crack at the perennial enigma of the politician, the lighthouse and the trained cormorant in *Murder at Oakwood Grange* (New Generation; www.newgenerationpublishing.info/home/buy-new-generation-publishing-books.html; £7.99 – also available from

Amazon.co.uk). In the summer of 1889, the threat of death hangs over Laurence Applegarth, MP and his daughter Celia, as they're accused of murdering the vile Sir Walter Hardwick at his country house. But Sherlock Holmes, with the invaluable assistance of Dr Watson and the Baker Street irregulars, gradually uncovers a plot that threatens the very highest in the land. Only one man is capable of such villainy: ex-Professor Moriarty of mathematical fame, whose weapon, smuggled into the Royal household, is ingenious and deadly. Holmes and Watson need all their intelligence, courage and stamina to defeat him. In fairness I should point out that the book reads like a first draft, with a few disconcerting inconsistencies. We're told first of all that Mr Applegarth's constituency of Seale Green is in Devon, and then that it's near Winchester. Halfway through the story Holmes, in disguise, encounters Moriarty, yet towards the end he says that he has no idea what Moriarty looks like. Well, these matters are easily put right. Meanwhile, the period setting, the characters and the language all strike the authentic note. *Murder at Oakwood Grange* is a real page-turner.

New from Black Coat Press (Hollywood Comics.com, LLC, PO Box 17270, Encino, CA 91416, USA) is *Harry Dickson: The American Sherlock Holmes – The Heir of Dracula* adapted by **Jean-Marc & Randy Lofficier** (£12.99/\$20.95). Harry Dickson's adventures began as unauthorised Sherlock Holmes pastiches published in Germany, but with the change of name became an immensely popular and long-running series in France, Belgium and Holland. The nearest British equivalent was probably Sexton Blake, but his chronicles were aimed at a juvenile readership. In these four tales Dickson and his sidekick Tom Wills do battle with a vampire, a woman who can turn men to stone, and the denizens of a fantastic subterranean temple, where hideous sacrifices take place – but all is not what it seems. Harry Dickson is no Houdini, but he always manages to provide a rational, though not always credible, explanation for the apparently supernatural horrors. The narrative pounds along at a cracking pace, the plots are ingenious, and the stories are very engaging. Jean-Marc Lofficier provides an excellent introductory account of the Harry Dickson phenomenon.

Michael Gilbert, who died in 2006, was one of the giants of crime and detective fiction. His story 'The Two Footmen' is one of the best in Greenberg & Waugh's 1987 collection *The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, and in 1980 he was a drily witty and erudite speaker at our Society's annual dinner. BBC Radio 7 is currently broadcasting a series of plays based on his tales of DI Patrick Petrella, and now Robert Hale (Clerkenwell House, Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT) has published a final collection of his stories, *The Murder of Diana Devon, and Other Mysteries*, edited by John Cooper (£18.99). There's no Petrella here, and no Holmes, but these sixteen pieces, written over a period of some forty years, demonstrate the lasting worth of intelligent, humane, civilised crime writing. The book is well worth seeking out.

Back in 1994 I greeted *A Sherlock Holmes Handbook* by **Christopher Redmond**: 'This really is something special. In 250 pages, without apparent strain, Chris Redmond covers the whole Holmes phenomenon with a light but authoritative touch. The Canon, the author, the background, the literary and social impact - it's all here.' Now, as Chris Redmond says, 'It's more than time for a new edition, catching up on new films and books (a few with a hint of the supernatural) and the advent of the Internet, which has spread Sherlock Holmes's fame and Sherlockian fun even farther worldwide. These years have brought three multi-volume editions of the Holmes stories, with hundreds of footnotes providing new insight and amusement. They have also seen Holmes appear repeatedly on the amateur and professional stages . . . and there have been changes to everything from copyright law and library collections to booksellers and audio recordings.' The new edition, called

simply *Sherlock Holmes Handbook* and published by Dundurn Press (3 Church Street, Suite 500, Toronto, ON, M5E 1M2, Canada) at £19.00 or Cdn \$32.00, is the finest overview of the world of Holmes and the Holmesian that we're ever likely to see.

The Sherlock Holmes Handbook: The Methods and Mysteries of the World's Greatest Detective by **Ransom Riggs** (Quirk Books, 215 Church Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106, USA; \$16.95) is a more elementary affair altogether – but a very clever and attractive one. Mr Riggs has compiled a remarkably sound basic guide to understanding why Holmes is a great detective and an immortal character, under such headings as 'How to Question a Suspect', 'How to Fake Your Own Death', and 'How to Stage a Dramatic Entrance'. This very nice 220-page hardback is embellished with excellent black and white illustrations by Eugene Smith.

From Japan comes *The Holmes Monowakari Jiten (The Encyclopaedia Sherlockiana)*, written and edited by **Saburoh Hiraga** and members of the Japan Sherlock Holmes Club (Mr Saburoh Hiraga, Chairman of the Kansai Branch of the JSHC, 3-6-24 Ueno-higashi, Toyonaka-shi, Osaka, 560-0013, Japan; JZB04100@nifty.ne.jp). Alas, my ignorance of the language doesn't allow me to comment with any authority on this attractive 250-page book, but Mr Showsaku Mashimo, who sent me a copy, says that the number of items – 101 – represents Holmes's address, 221(b) minus the 120 years since Watson's wedding to Mary Morstan. Mr Mashimo himself has contributed articles on the 2008 Holmes and Conan Doyle Exhibition in Maizuru, Scotland Yard, Richard Lancelyn Green, and Inspector G Lestrade.

Just received are *A Trick of the Light*, the third Inspector McLevy mystery by **David Ashton** (Birlinn Ltd, West Newington House, 10 Newington Road, Edinburgh EH9 1QS; £9.99), and *Sherlock Holmes's London* by **David Sinclair** (Robert Hale Ltd, Clerkenwell House, 45-47 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT; £17.99). I'll review them in the next issue.

Forthcoming from Breese Books (Baker Street Studios Limited, Endeavour House, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridgeshire CB22 3DX) are *The Case of the Missing Stradivarius* by **Emanuel E Garcia** and *In the Dead of Winter*, a new edition of the first Myrl Adler Norton mystery by **Abbey Penn Baker**.

Mike Ripley tells me that Ostara Publishing has issued a new edition of *The Case of the Philosopher's Ring* by **Randall Collins**, in which Sherlock Holmes is engaged by Bertrand Russell 'to investigate the theft of a uniquely precious treasure – the mind of Ludwig Wittgenstein' (ostara@ostarapublishing.co.uk; £10.99).

The classic biography *Doctor Joe Bell: Model for Sherlock Holmes* by **Ely Liebow** is about to be published in French by Editions Baker Street (2 Rue Christine, 75006 Paris 06, France; €21.00) as *L'homme Qui Était Sherlock Holmes: une biographie de Dr Joe Bell*, with an introduction by Thierry Saint-Joanis.

Nicholas Utechin (highfieldfarmhouse@yahoo.co.uk) may still have a few copies left of his 2008 Richard Lancelyn Green Lecture, *The Sometimes Elusive Quarry*. Few of us – perhaps none of us – could hope to achieve what Richard Lancelyn Green did as a collector, but Nick Utechin shows what intelligence and application can achieve on a more limited budget. You may never get to own a Beeton's or a first edition of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* in its dust-wrapper, but there are still prizes to be had by the dedicated collector.

The October issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-magazine of **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com), which you'll find at www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times09-10.htm, offers a delightful 2010 calendar. It's illustrated with photographs by Richard Ray Green Jr of his son Joshua and friends recreating scenes from the Canon. (We printed some of Richard's charming photos recently in *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*.)

You've been gripped by **Roger Llewellyn's** performances as the great detective in the two one-man plays written for him by David Stuart Davies. Now, thanks to Big Finish (PO Box 3787, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 3TF), you can own those performances. *Sherlock Holmes – The Last Act!* is released this month at £14.99 as a double-CD set, with a superb cover design. The play itself – exciting, funny, tragic, poignant – works beautifully as an audio production, thanks to superlative writing and acting. Just to listen to Roger Llewellyn speak is a pleasure, and the recording gives him the chance to create a dozen personalities through

his voice alone, though, as he says in the interview that follows the play, it's not Roger Llewellyn playing these other characters, but Sherlock Holmes, recreating them as he reminisces. Now I'm looking forward to *Sherlock Holmes – The Death and Life*, released in December!

Thanks to **Nicholas Briggs**, who directed the two plays for Big Finish (and who plays the detective himself in the forthcoming *Holmes and the Ripper* by Brian Clemens), I can offer two copies of *Sherlock Holmes – The Last Act!* as prizes in a little competition. Just tell me which part Roger Llewellyn played in *Sherlock Holmes: The Musical*, when Ron Moody was Holmes. Send answers to me by 1 December, and the two correct answers drawn from the hat will win the CDs.

The long-awaited series *John Sergeant on the Tourist Trail* is currently being broadcast on ITV at 8.00pm on Tuesdays. The third programme, to be shown on 24 November, will feature Marcus Geisser, Thierry Saint-Joanis and other Holmesian visitors to Dartmoor, on the trail of the Hound of the Baskervilles.

The ramifications of Guy Ritchie's forthcoming film *Sherlock Holmes* include what looks like an intriguing on-line game, or what the publicity people call an on-line experience: **221B** (not to be confused with the board game of the same name). You'll find it at www.221b.sh/.

Paul Conway (pnc.2@virgin.net) offers a single page from *The Sphere*, December 1901, with a fine illustration of the confrontation of Holmes and Moriarty in William Gillette's play, then running at the Lyceum. He asks £20.00, which includes postage in a strong cardboard tube.

The fight for **Undershaw** is not over. Take a look at Lynn Gale's blog at <http://Undershawhelp.blogspot.com>.

John Addy passes on this charming oddity: 'To celebrate the fact that Conan Doyle was a founder member of the Portsmouth Football Association Club in 1884, and, apparently, was the team's goalkeeper for a while, CONAN DOYLE no 1 football shirts at currently on sale at http://www.philosophyfootball.com/view_item.php?pid=557.'

I was sorry to learn of the death on 26 August of **Robert Pepperday**, not long past his sixty-fifth birthday. Robert was one of the most active and reliable contributors to the Priory Scholars of Leicester, as writer, cartoonist, and, I think, speaker.

Edward Woodward, who died yesterday aged seventy-nine, will probably be remembered as the British Intelligence hitman in the TV series *Callan* or as a similar character in a later American series, *The Equalizer*. His best rôle may have been in the film *Breaker Morant*, though one could argue for his appearances in *The Wicker Man* and *A Christmas Carol*. His Dr Watson in John Kane's play *Murder, Dear Watson* in 1983 was well received, but his Sherlock Holmes in the dire 1990 TV movie *Hands of a Murderer* was not in the same league.

Periodicals received. *Canadian Holmes*, Michaelmas (Autumn) 2009 (**The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Chris Redmond, 523 Westfield Drive, Waterloo, ON, Canada N2T 2E1). *Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections*, September 2009 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). *The Illustrious Clients News*, October 2009 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). *Ineffable Twaddle*, November 2009 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *Ironmongers Daily Echo and Franco-Midland Branches Advertiser*, September 1909 [*sic*] (**La Société Sherlock Holmes de France**, Thierry Saint-Joanis, 15 rue Grande, 03370 Saint-Sauvier, France). *Mayday Mayday*, November 2009 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarney Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). *The Petrel Flyer*, Autumn 2009 and Nov/Dec 2009 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). *The School Report*, Winter 2009 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). *The Soft-Nosed Bullet-in & Striking (T)Rifles*, Sommer 2009 (**Von Herder Airguns Ltd**, Jan Kipping, Schürbeker Str. 2, 22087 Hamburg, Germany).

And *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, October 2009 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

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