

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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A couple of years ago, **Brian Pugh** and **Paul Spiring** broke new ground with *On the Trail of Arthur Conan Doyle: An Illustrated Devon Tour*, of which their latest book, *Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes and Devon: A Complete Tour Guide and Companion* (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; £12.99/ \$19.95/ €14.99) is essentially an enlarged and improved version, benefiting greatly from the participation of a distinguished Devon historian, **Sadru Bhanji**. We knew that Conan Doyle was briefly in practice in Plymouth with the volatile Dr George Turnavine Budd, and that he later visited Dartmoor in company with his friend Bertram Fletcher Robinson to research local colour for *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, but Devon can claim another man, no less important to the success of the author and his immortal character – Sir George Newnes, founder and publisher of *The Strand Magazine*. Each man's life and career, and his contribution to the life of the county, are summarised in the first hundred pages, with well-chosen illustrations. Then some 220 pages are devoted to the much-expanded Devon tour. Even without the literary interest the tour would be worth undertaking, as the county is so remarkably varied and beautiful, but the chance to walk in the footsteps of Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes is almost irresistible. The book's easy readability belies the awe-inspiring amount of research that's gone into it.

MX Publishing has compiled a **Fletcher Robinson Collection**, comprising *Bertram Fletcher Robinson: A Footnote to 'The Hound of the Baskervilles'* by Messrs Pugh & Spiring; *Aside Arthur Conan Doyle: Twenty Original Tales* by Robinson; *The World of Vanity Fair* by Robinson; *Bobbles & Plum*, four satirical Playlets by Robinson & P G Wodehouse; and *Rugby Football During the Nineteenth Century* by Robinson. Members of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London can get a hefty £50.00 discount by ordering using the code 'bfr' at www.mxpublishing.co.uk/engine/shop/category/Sherlock+Holmes+Books/Bertram+Fletcher+Robinson+Books.

Last year the German society **Von Herder Airguns Ltd** held a Sherlock Holmes short story competition, and the seven best entries have been published as *Das Giftbuch des Sherlock Holmes* (Baskerville Bücher, Hermeskeiler Platz 14, 50935 Köln, Germany; €19.95) It's a very attractive 120-page hardback, illustrated by Anke and Dirk Seliger. (The society's newsletter is at www.sherlock-holmes-kurier.de.)

Oscar Wilde and Arthur Conan Doyle were acquainted, of course, and several writers have described what might have happened had Wilde and Sherlock Holmes met. The latest such imagining, *The Case of the Ill-Fated Playwright* by **Fred W Edmiston** (CreateSpace; \$13.99), is one of the best. Apart from introducing Holmes and Watson, initially to investigate a plausible minor mystery and then a rather more serious one, Mr Edmiston adheres pretty fairly to the facts of Oscar Wilde's life and his fall from grace – a tragedy in the true Aristotelian sense. First-person narrative would have demanded too much obvious artifice, so, unlike most of the Canonical adventures, the story is told in the third person. A gripping story it is, too, and well told. The author has done his homework in British idiom as well as British history. Only a reference to a policeman as 'Officer McConnell' rather than Constable McConnell or PC McConnell broke my concentration. *The Case of the Ill-Fated Playwright* is available from www.amazon.co.uk for about £9.20.

More than one writer has made Mrs Hudson the central character in a novel, but **Barry S Brown**, in *The Unpleasantness at Parkerton Manor* (Sunstone Press, PO Box 2321, Santa Fe, NM 87504-2321, USA; \$22.95), is, I think, the first to suggest that she was the true detective genius at 221B Baker Street. This isn't a comedy, along the lines of *Without a Clue*. Holmes and Watson play their parts intelligently, learning on the job, so to speak, and you know that before long they will be quite capable of a successful investigation without Mrs Hudson's

supervision. Their enquiry into the unexpected demise of Sir Stanley Parkerton is interrupted by another sudden death and by the flight of Sir Stanley's son and daughter-in-law. It's a gloriously complex and improbable scenario, made even more so by a relationship with one of the most unlikely royal dynasties of the time, the White Rajahs of Sarawak. There's rather too much of the Irene Handl cockney about Mrs Hudson for my taste – a few dropped h's and g's go a long way, and smart quotes will invariably get the apostrophe in Mr 'Olmes the wrong way round. She's a likeable character, though, and disconcertingly credible. The punctuation is poor, but the writing is good, and the occasional misconception can easily be rectified. (To be Sir Stanley, Dr Parkerton would have received a knighthood, a higher honour than the OBE. Nelson, not Drake, fought and died at Trafalgar. And Mr Caldwell's given name would surely be Ernest rather than 'Earnest'.)

Since he vacated the editor's chair at *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*, **Nicholas Utechin** seems to have become more prolific as a writer. Jolly good, say I! His latest essay is *Wycombe Wonders: The Sherlock Holmes Society of London versus The Gold Bats of the PG Wodehouse Society, 2001-2010*, a nicely-produced 32-page booklet, published in just 221B copies for the tenth anniversary match at West Wycombe, played on 20 June. Copies are available at, I think, £3.00 from our Merchandising Officer Bob Ellis (13 Crofton Avenue, Orpington, Kent BR6 8DU; SHSL221B@aol.com). And you can read Nick's account of the match at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/press_cutting.php?id=229.

Thanks to Guy Marriott, I've been able to examine the first volume of the three-volume Russian edition of the Canon, published as **ХОЛМС (Holmes)**. Each story is presented in graphic form by **Leonid Kozlov**, whose powerful and distinctive style reminds me of some illustrators of the 1920s and '30s. A commendation from Dame Jean Conan Doyle is reproduced, in which she says, 'My father, coming from a family of artists would have been so interested in the artist's imaginative interpretation. This original idea will entertain Sherlockians all over the world.' (Panda Books, OOO 'Kitoni', 107078 Moscow, Basmanny Lane 5/20, Building 2, Office 36, Russia.)

Lawrence Fischman asks me to mention that his novel *The French Artillery Officer*, favourably reviewed in DM 303, is available through his website at www.TheFrenchArtilleryOfficer.com (case sensitive).

In the next issue I'll review *The File on Colonel Moran: Sherlock Holmes Takes a Hand* by **Vernon Meador** (weirdbook, c/o 60 Yarnacott, Shoeburyness, Southend-on-Sea SS3 8AP; no price as yet); *The Baker Street Phantom* by **Fabrice Bourland** (Gallic Books, Worlds End Studios, 134 Lots Road, London SW10 0RJ; 5 August; £7.99); and *The Sign of the Four: A Sherlock Holmes Graphic Novel* adapted by **Ian Edgington**, illustrated by **I N J Culbard** (SelfMade Hero, 5 Upper Wimpole Street, London W1G 6BP; 5 August; £14.99).

A revised and expanded edition of *Bending the Willow: Jeremy Brett as Sherlock Holmes* by **David Stuart Davies** is newly out from Calabash Press at £23.00/ Cdn\$35.00/ US\$35.00 plus postage (PO Box 1360, Ashcroft, BC, Canada V0K 1A0; e-mail ashtree@ash-tree.bc.ca).

On 15 July **Sotheby's** in London will auction the 1887 *Beeton's Christmas Annual*, containing the first publication of *A Study in Scarlet*. This is one of only two known copies signed by Arthur Conan Doyle, who wrote in it, 'This is the very first independent book of mine which ever was published.' The inscription is dated January 9, 1914. The estimate is £250,000–£400,000. There'll be public viewing 11-14 July. The catalogue has four pages devoted to this one lot. What price will it make? Will it reach the reserve? (Sotheby's Book Department, 34-35 New Bond Street, London W1A 2AA; phone 020 7293 5295; e-mail peter.selley@sotheby's.com.)

At 6.00pm that same day **Laurie R King** will be at Heffer's bookshop in **Cambridge**, where she commences a promotional tour for her latest Mary Russell/Sherlock Holmes novel *The God of the Hive*. At 5.30pm on 15 July she'll be at **Marylebone Library**. The tour continues: 17 July: Waterstone's, **Eastbourne** at 11.00am; 18 July: **Portsmouth Central Library**, 2.00pm; 20 July: Castle Bookshop, **Ludlow**, 6.00pm, in conversation with Kate Charles (reserved seating: phone 01584 872562); 22 July: Waterstone's Reading Oracle, **Reading**, 11.00am; 27 July: Bedminster Library, **Bristol**, 2.00pm; 30 July: Blackwell's, **Edinburgh**, 6.00pm (limited seating: phone Ann Landman on 0131 622 8222); 2 August: **Newcastle upon Tyne Lit & Phil Library**, 7.00pm.

Laurie King has created a remarkable phenomenon with the Russell and Holmes series. In January this year she received the Irregular Shilling from the BSI, with the investiture 'The Red Circle'. She's particularly keen to meet fellow-Holmesians during her tour of the UK.

Just out on DVD from Wienerworld (Unit 7, Freetrade House, Lowther Road, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 1EP) is a documentary, *The Man Who Murdered Sherlock Holmes*, produced by Electric Theatre. Despite the sensational title, it's a thoughtful and entertaining look at the relationship between Arthur Conan Doyle and his most famous literary creation, with contributions from Owen Dudley Edwards, Dr Allan Mackaill, Catherine Cooke, Antony Richards, and, er, me. In Edinburgh and London, writer-presenter **Richard Jones** brings an intelligent, enquiring mind to the problem: why did the author kill off the character who had made him rich and respected? There are more answers to that question than you might think. Well worth a look!

David Timson's recording of the complete Sherlock Holmes canon for Naxos AudioBooks is justly celebrated. Since then Glen McCready has recorded *The Lost World* and *The Poison Belt*, and now **Rupert Degas** brings to life another of Conan Doyle's immortal creations in *The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard* (Naxos AudioBooks, 2nd Floor, 40A High Street, Welwyn, Herts. AL6 9EQ). Gerard, an officer in Napoleon's *Grande Armée*, is brave, handsome, gallant, patriotic – and entirely unaware of how absurd he can be. It's a trait he shares with Charles Pooter and many other comic heroes. The unusual feature of these accounts is that the humour, often arising from Gerard's misunderstanding of foreign mores, is seasoned with genuine excitement. He faces real danger, and he does so with great courage. We don't usually think of Conan Doyle as a satirist, but through the Brigadier he pokes fun at both the English and the French, to charming effect. Rupert Degas employs a French accent that chimes perfectly with the text. The Gerard stories aren't as well known as they should be; I hope that these excellent readings will help to remedy that situation.

I knew that **David Warner** had played Sherlock Holmes in a good radio adaptation of William Gillette's play for California Artists Radio Theatre, but I wasn't aware till recently that he'd also played Mycroft Holmes, in a Bernice Summerfield adventure for Big Finish audio play (PO Box 3787, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 3TF). *The Adventure of the Diogenes Damsel* is written by Jim Smith and stars Lisa Bowerman as the time-travelling Professor Summerfield.

Music featured prominently in last year's Conan Doyle Symposium at Harvard University. Now **Henry Boote**, who has taken on the rôle of music master to the Baker Street Irregulars, has recorded the various songs and tunes that were performed over that weekend. *Doyle at 150: A Sesquicentennial Assessment* includes 'Oh! Mister Sherlock Holmes', 'Sir Nigel March', 'Sherlock Holmes, DT', 'The Lost World', 'The Amateur Detective', 'Sherlock Holmes Waltzes' and 'The Ghost of Sherlock Holmes'. I'd have liked some informative notes about these pieces, all of which, as far as I can discover, date from about 1895-1914. Even so, it's a real treat to have recordings of these unusual early musical tributes to Sir Arthur, especially when the performances are so good. The CD costs \$9.95 plus postage, either online at www.bakerstreetjournal.com/doyleat150.html or from Michael H Kean, The Baker Street Irregulars, 3040 Sloat Road, Pebble Beach, CA 93953-2837, USA.

The lead article in issue 58 of **Geoff Bradley's** admirable magazine *CADS: Crime and Detective Stories* is 'Sherlock Holmes and the Bankers' by George Bellairs, whose day job, under his real name of Harold Blundell, was as a bank manager. This entertaining piece appeared in the spring 1954 issue of *Martin's Bank Magazine*, and is reprinted for the first time in *CADS* (G H Bradley, 9 Vicarage Hill, South Benfleet, Essex SS7 1PA; Geoffcads@aol.com).

Lee Ann Borgia makes miniature books in approximately 1/12th scale. They're real books, with real tiny print, and they include fifty volumes of the Sherlock Holmes Canon at prices from \$11.75 to \$19.50 each, or \$430.00 for the set. See www.picturetrail.com/sfx/album/view/3194486. <http://fumettiartgallery.blogspot.com/> will take you to a site offering an original painting of Holmes and Watson, done in acrylic on board by the Italian illustrator **Giorgio Trevisan**. The asking price is €5,000 plus postage.

David Rowlands has sent a copy of the summer issue of *Festival Times*, the newsletter/journal of the **Festival of Britain Society**, which contains a good article on the Sherlock Holmes Exhibition mounted at Abbey House in Baker Street. It includes the only photograph I've seen of the designer Michael Weight – also, of course, responsible for the reconstruction of Holmes and Watson's study at the *Sherlock Holmes* pub at 10-11 Northumberland Street, Charing Cross. The website address www.festivalofbritain.org appears to be inactive, but you can access the Society's site at www.whitstablepier.com/fob/index.html.

See www.waverley.gov.uk/site/scripts/news_article.php?newsID=463. As you may know, Waverley Borough Council has granted planning permission for **Undershaw**, the house that Conan Doyle had built at Hindhead in Surrey, to be converted into flats. This move would preserve the building but would entail radical changes to those aspects that make it unique. See also <http://undershawhelp.blogspot.com/>. The MP for South West Surrey, Jeremy Hunt, is also Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media & Sport, and he's keen that the house should remain a single entity, accessible to the public. If you agree, then please write to Mr Hunt at 2 Royal Parade, Tilford Road, Hindhead, Surrey GU26 6TD, and ask whether the council's decision can be overturned.

On 11 September, while the Sherlock Holmes Society of London explore Surrey and Hampshire, **The Musgraves** will be at the University of Huddersfield for a *Forensic Science Day*. It looks quite fascinating, and at £36.00 each (£30.00 for under-eighteens) is well priced. Places are limited, so if you're interested, write now to Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP.

Alan Plater, who died on 25 June aged seventy-five, wrote nearly three hundred scripts for theatre, television, film and radio. He's probably best-known as a writer for *Z Cars* and *Softly Softly*, for *The Beiderbecke Affair* and its sequels, and for *Close the Coalhouse Door*. He contributed two excellent scripts to Granada TV's Sherlock Holmes series: *The Solitary Cyclist* and *The Man with the Twisted Lip*.

Periodicals received. *Canadian Holmes*, Summer 2010 (**The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Mark & JoAnn Alberstat, 46 Kingston Crescent, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, B3A 2M2, Canada). *Communication*, no. 299 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). *Ineffable Twaddle*, June 2010 and July 2010 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *The Morning Echo*, St George's Day number, St Perran's Day special number, Special Unscrupulous Rascal issue, and June Meeting edition (**The Sherlock Holmes Society of Victoria: The Eminent Victorians**, Steve Duke, P.O. Box 340, Reservoir, Victoria 3073, Australia).

Prescott's Press, March 2010 (**The Three Garridebs**, Warren Randall, 15 Fawn Lane West, South Setauket, NY 11720-1346, USA). *The School Report*, Summer 2010 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). *The Serpentine Muse*, Summer 2010 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA). *Sherlockiana*, Nr 2 2010 (**Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**, Bjarne Rother Jensen, Højbovängen 24, 9200 Aalborg SV, Denmark). *The Torr*, Spring 2010 (**The Poor Folk Upon The Moors**, Reggie Musgrave, Drummond Cottage, Old Tavern Yard, Westbourne, Chichester, West Sussex PO10 8TA). *The Whaling News*, June 2010 (**The Harpooners of the Sea Unicorn**, Michael E Bragg, PO Box 256, St Charles, MO 63302-0256, USA).

And *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, May 2010 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

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