

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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Baker Street Beat by **Dan Andriacco** (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; www.mxpublishing.co.uk; £9.99/\$16.95/€12.99) is subtitled *An Eclectic Collection of Sherlockian Scribblings*, which sums up the book rather well. There's nothing particularly profound or abstruse in its 140 pages. Rather, it gives you the same sort of feeling as when you're chatting over a drink with a knowledgeable fellow-Holmesian. After explaining how he came to be an enthusiast – his principal allegiance is to the Tankerville Club of Cincinnati – Mr Andriacco tells of his pilgrimage to Reichenbach. He considers the influence of Sherlock Holmes on the methods of John Thorndyke, and lays out sensible rules for the composition of a Holmes story. The reader can then judge how well he follows his rules in 'The Peculiar Persecution of John Vincent Harden'. Another neat story and two radio scripts complete this very pleasant book.

As students of crime will have guessed, *Sherlock Holmes & the Hilldrop Crescent Mystery* by **Val Andrews** (Irregular Special Press, Baker Street Studios Ltd, Endeavour House, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB22 3DX; www.breesebooks.com; £7.50) brings Holmes out of retirement to investigate, for his own satisfaction, the case of H H Crippen – rather belatedly, as Dr Crippen was hanged six months before, for the murder of his wife, the music hall singer Belle Elmore. Val Andrews spent his working life in variety, as a writer and performer. Also, he was adept at imagining how certain events might have turned out otherwise. His explanation of Crippen's innocence is ingenious and appealing. Unfortunately, the authoritative introduction by David James Smith, author of *Supper with the Crippens*, leaves little room for doubt about the doctor's guilt. Also unfortunately, the text reads like a rough draft: enjoyable as it is, it's in sore need of editing, especially as regards the punctuation.

When young Griffin Sharpe arrives in England to stay with his uncle the Baker Street detective, he's disappointed to learn that said uncle is not Sherlock Holmes but the occupant of 221A, a rather more erratic and socially inept sleuth named Rupert Snodgrass, who resents his neighbour's success. That's the premise of *No Place Like Holmes* by **Jason Lethcoe** (Thomas Nelson, PO Box 141000, Nashville, TN 37214, USA; \$9.99). Snodgrass's strength is as an inventor: he has created devices that we'd recognise as, for instance, a lie-detector, a metal-detector, and even a primitive computer – but he lacks Holmes's sharp eye, retentive memory, and logical mind, and he's reluctant to accept that his nephew has just those qualities, along with intelligence and a cheerful, forgiving nature. The plot is wildly fantastical, involving a scheme by Professor Moriarty to kill Queen Victoria, destroy the Houses of Parliament, and ruin Sherlock Holmes. It would make a great cartoon film, and may well have been written with that in mind, as Mr Lethcoe is an award-winning animator. Don't expect much fidelity to history or to the Holmesian canon. Just enjoy the ride.

For full-blooded excitement, it would be hard to beat the *Young Sherlock Holmes* novels by **Andrew Lane**. The latest, *Black Ice* (Macmillan Children's Books, 20 New Wharf Road, London N1 9RR; 3 June; £6.99) seems to take its cue from Sam Goldwyn, who said: "We want a story that starts out with an earthquake and works its way up to a climax." When Sherlock and his mentor Amyus Crowe are ushered into the Strangers' Room at the Diogenes Club, they find a dead man, stabbed through the heart, and Mycroft Holmes clutching a knife. No one else has gone in or out, and there is no other entrance. The most significant clue is a name written on the dead man's card:

The Paradol Chamber. Before they can discover its meaning the brothers must face deadly danger in London and Moscow. It's fascinating to see Sherlock, who at fourteen has no real plans for a career, learning the skills that will make him an outstanding detective and undergoing experiences that shape his personality, making him in time the man we know. Rufus Stone, from *Red Leech*, who taught Sherlock to play the violin, has a more substantial rôle here, making for some tension between him and Crowe, but each has a lasting effect on the boy. Sherlock's purchase of a violin from a broker in the Tottenham Court Road is a poignant episode, a touch of goodness amid the evil that threatens him. Future books will reveal something of the Holmes family's secrets, and Mr Lane has promised that next one, *Fire Storm*, will see the malevolent housekeeper, Mrs Eglantine, 'get her comeuppance'.

Derek Jacobi is one of our great actors. He's also one of our great readers, which is not quite the same thing. A critic has rightly said that, as narrator, 'he can capture the attention so fully that a listener is immersed in the story', and as actor he defines each character, creating an entire cast with apparent ease. AudioGO, formerly BBC Audio Books, is issuing what looks to be the entire Holmes canon, read unabridged by Sir Derek, the latest release being *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (AudioGO Ltd, St James House, The Square, Lower Bristol Road, Bath BA2 3BH; www.audiogo.com). The ten-CD set is currently available from the website for £16.00, or the recordings can be downloaded for £9.84. Either way, for more than twelve hours' listening pleasure, it's a bargain.

Just out from MX Publishing at £7.99 is *The Case of the Grave Accusation*, a novel by **Dicky Neely** edited by **Paul R Spiring**, in which Holmes and Watson investigate certain bizarre allegations made against Sir Arthur Conan Doyle – that he stole the narrative of his most famous book from his friend Fletcher Robinson, that he had an affair with Robinson's wife, and that he murdered Robinson in order to conceal the scandal. If this sounds familiar, it's because those charges have been made! Richard Belzer said, 'If you tell a lie that's big enough, and you tell it often enough, people will believe you are telling the truth, even when what you are saying is total crap.' I hope Mr Neely's book nails the nonsense for good.

Andrew Lycett reports that his excellent biography *Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes* is now available in Italian as *Conan Doyle: l'uomo che creò Sherlock Holmes* (Excelsior 1881; www.excelsior1881.eu/catalogo/bookshow.php?id=81; €26.50).

'Of making many books there is no end.' The trend seems to be towards making new pastiches available only on-line as Kindle books. From one point of view, clearly, it makes practical sense, and yet I can't help thinking that the ease and cheapness with which such a book can be produced encourages some (I stress, *some*) people to overlook such desirable things as proof-reading. Be that as it may, there are more than 700 entries under 'Sherlock Holmes' in the Kindle Store category at www.amazon.co.uk or www.amazon.com. Of course, that includes editions of the canon.

David Ruffle, whose short novel *Sherlock Holmes and the Lyme Regis Horror* was reviewed in DM 302, has compiled *Sherlock Holmes: Tales from the Stranger's Room* (Manor Avenue Publishing), an anthology of stories and squibs by contributors to the Holmesian.net forum. Among the mostly unfamiliar names I did recognise those of our members Hayley Williams and Ashley Polasek. Nearly all the stories and verses are refreshingly quirky, and none

outstays its welcome. It's a very entertaining collection. I can't comment on the novels *Whitechapel: The Final Stand of Sherlock Holmes* by **Bernard J Schaffer** (Apiary Society Publications; £1.70) and *The Case of the Russian Chessboard* by **Charlie Roxborough** (Forest Fountain Books; £1.90), but I hope they're as good as Mr Ruffle's anthology. All three books are published only in Kindle form.

Eva Masthoff has kindly sent me a copy of her story 'Bär Higgins auf den Spuren von Sherlock Holmes', published in the July-August issue of the German teddy bear collectors' magazine *Teddys Kreativ*. Fortunately for me, she also sent an English translation: 'Bear Higgins following in the steps of Sherlock Holmes'. The story was inspired by the nostalgic teddy bears created by Heather Lyell, a New Zealand artist, and by Ms Masthoff's own holiday in Leukerbad, where she – like Higgins – sought the plaque at the foot of the Gemmi Pass, and encountered a party of pilgrims from the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. It's a charming tale, especially for arctophiles, with some splendid photographs by Horstfried Masthoff. You can buy the magazine from <http://www.teddy-kreativ.de/>.

Sherlock Magazine, originally *The Sherlock Holmes Gazette*, ceased publication in 2006 after 68 issues. Now Atlas Publishing (Jordan House, Old Milton Green, New Milton, Hampshire, BH25 6QJ; e-mail info@sherlockmagazine.co.uk) offers back issues for sale, 'either the originals, or as a complete collection digitally archived on to DVD-ROM'. For details see www.sherlockmagazine.co.uk.

At www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times11-6.htm is the June issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-magazine of **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com). It's full of good things, as always.

On 23 and 24 July the New York Nineteenth Century Society will present the Antagonistics Weekend, showcasing **Bartitsu**, the gentlemanly art of self-defence devised by Edward Barton-Wright and misremembered by Conan Doyle as 'baritsu'. From 1.00pm to 5.00pm each day at 34 West Street, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10001, **Mark Donnelly**, Professor di Armes will conduct a seminar in Bartitsu. And on 23 July at 7.00pm the Society will host 'A Study in Scarlet: An Evening of Sherlockian Splendor' featuring cocktails, prizes and more Bartitsu, at The Way Station, a steampunk bar at 683 Washington Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11238. Admission is free. For more information see www.nycsteampunk.com/bartitsu or contact Rachel Murphy at mleiviolet@nycsteampunk.com.

The creator's original book has been reissued under a new title: *The Sherlock Holmes School of Self-defence: The Manly Art of Bartitsu, as Used against Professor Moriarty* by **E W Barton-Wright** (Ivy Press, 210 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 2NS; 27 May; £6.99).

At 7.30pm on 21 July at the Methodist Church in Daventry, Footloose Theatre will present **Paul Lehmann** in his well-received one-man play *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, comprising 'The Blue Carbuncle' and 'The Engineer's Thumb'. For tickets phone 01327 828391. A review in *The Stage* said: 'Paul Lehmann demonstrates both versatility and mental agility... he is the gaunt authoritative figure of Sherlock Holmes himself.' See also www.paullehmann.co.uk/.

From 9 to 12 November at the Stag Theatre in Sevenoaks, the **Sevenoaks Players** will stage Tim Kelly's play *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. You'll find booking details at www.stagesevenoaks.co.uk. Sylvia Thorpe, the company's Head of Drama, says: 'We would be delighted to offer Sherlock Holmes Society members a welcome drink in the theatre bar. The wearing of a deerstalker is all that is required to partake of this offer.' See also www.sevenoaks-players.co.uk/.

Paul Spiring sends this link to details for a flat for sale at Park Hill House in Ipplepen. He adds: 'This is of course Fletcher Robinson's former residence, and ACD stated in a letter sent to his mother from Princetown in 1901 that he intended to visit the property.' So, if you want to live in rural Devon and have £189,950 to spare... <http://www.rightmove.co.uk/property-for-sale/property-18850536.html?premiumA=true>

Paul recommends the National Library of New Zealand's **Papers Past** website at www.paperspast.natlib.gov.nz, where you'll find thousands of the country's newspapers covering the years 1839 to 1945. Peter

Blau notes that a search for "conan doyle" turned up 8016 hits, and there were 6801 hits for "sherlock holmes".

Wessex Press will host its third conference, **From Gillette to Brett III**, in Bloomington, Indiana, 11 to 13 November. It's 35 years since the film *The Seven-per-cent Solution* was released, and author-adaptor Nicholas Meyer heads a list of presenters that includes Bert Coules, Tony Earnshaw, David Stuart Davies, Leslie Klinger, Kathryn White, Henry Zecher and Curtis Armstrong. You can register now at www.wessexpress.com.

A reminder to prospective participants in next year's Pilgrimage to Switzerland: **Ian Hartley**, a veteran of (I think) two Swiss trips in the 1980s, offers two highly appropriate leather suitcases which someone may like to use. Please drop Ian a line if you're interested. His address is 18A York Road, Harrogate HG1 2QL.

Vincent Delay points out that I've given the wrong address for him and for the **Société d'études Holmesiennes de la Suisse Romande**. The correct address is: Vincent Delay, Chaumière 1, 1010 Lausanne, Switzerland. My apologies for the error.

A fine actor with a craggy face and a distinctive voice, **Terence Longdon** was a familiar face on television fifty years ago, and for a while was hugely popular as the star of the children's thriller series *Garry Halliday*. His film work included the rôle of Drusus in *Ben Hur* as well as several early *Carry On* comedies. In 1986 he played Isa Whitney in the Granada TV production of *The Man with the Twisted Lip*. He died on 23 April, aged eighty-eight.

Jody Baker reports the death, aged ninety-four, on 17 June of **Revd Christopher Morley**, son of the founder of the Baker Street Irregulars. Father Morley served as an ambulance driver in the Second World War and was honoured for his activities with the American Field Service attached to the British Forces. Jody notes that he was happy to talk about his father and his uncle Felix, but he had no interest in Sherlock Holmes or the BSI.

Peter Blau records the death of **Bill Blackbeard** on 10 March, aged eighty-four. 'His cornerstone contribution to our literature was his book *Sherlock Holmes in America* (1981), which contained his essay on "The Image of Sherlock Holmes in Popular Art and Literature" and a wide variety of comic strips and cartoons, story illustrations, advertising, and reviews extracted from his collection.'

Anna Massey, who died today aged seventy-three, was an actress of great distinction in all media. Her father Raymond played Sherlock Holmes in the 1931 film *The Speckled Band*, and her first husband was Jeremy Brett, so it's perhaps surprising that she never performed in a Holmes production – particularly as her brother Daniel was an excellent Neil Gibson opposite Brett in *The Problem of Thor Bridge* in 1991. Her autobiography, *Telling Some Tales*, is exceptionally good.

Periodicals received. *The Arthur Conan Doyle Newsletter and Birthday File XVIII (The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment*, Brian Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). *Communication*, no. 304 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). *The Illustrious Clients News*, June 2011 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). *Ineffable Twaddle*, June 2011 and July 2011 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *The School Report*, Summer 2011 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). *The Scion*, Spring 2011 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP). *The Serpentine Muse*, Summer 2011 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA). *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*, Summer 2011 [**I trust you've all received your copies?**]

And *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, May 2011 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

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