

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

Roger Johnson, Mole End, 41 Sandford Road, Chelmsford CM2 6DE

e-mail: rojerjohnson@yahoo.co.uk

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At our Annual Dinner the deserving recipient of the Tony Howlett Award for dedicated service to the Society was **Heather Owen**.

At the BSI's Annual Dinner, Michael Whelan announced eight new investitures: 'Thucydides' to **Mark Schwartz**, 'Birdy Edwards' to **Phil Bergem**, 'Helen Stoner' to **Helen Dorey**, 'Thorneycroft Huxtable' to **Peter Accardo**, 'Baritsu' to **Akane Higashiyama**, 'Inspector Lestrade' to **Don Hobbs**, 'John Hector McFarland' to **Donny Zaldin**, 'Mary Morstan' to **Mary Ann Bradley**. The rare Two-Shilling Award was presented to the Master of the BSI's Music, **Henry Boote**.

Congratulations and best wishes to all!

The answers to the AudioGO *Last Bow* competition: 'sparking plugs' are **naval signals**; the **Admiralty** was 'buzzing like an overturned beehive'; and the Tregennis brothers were being taken to **Helston**. M C Black, Douglas Johnstone, Diane M Mayo, Jim Peters and Oscar Ross, whose names were picked at random from the correct entries, have each received a copy of *His Last Bow*, read unabridged by **Derek Jacobi**. Many thanks to AudioGO! (See the website at www.audiogo.co.uk.)

Derek Jacobi has now lent his superb vocal talents to *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*, just released by AudioGO as an 8-CD set. This is certainly the most varied collection. Some scholars even refuse to accept the stories as authentic, but if 'The Lion's Mane' and 'The Blanched Soldier' are pretty poor, there are some real gems here. 'Thor Bridge' and 'The Retired Colourman' are at least in the second rank, and 'The Veiled Lodger', with its mixture of domestic abuse and exotic tragedy seems to me to deserve a high place. Sir Derek approaches each tale as if it were a masterpiece, and he almost convinces you that they all are.

Alistair Duncan's *Eliminate the Impossible* was a very good start, and *Close to Holmes* confirmed him as a truly important writer in our field. In *The Norwood Author* he illuminated, as no previous biographer had, an essential period in the life of Conan Doyle, when Sherlock Holmes leapt to international fame – and his creator killed him. Now *An Entirely New Country: Arthur Conan Doyle, Undershaw and the Resurrection of Sherlock Holmes* (MX Publishing; www.mxpublishing.co.uk; £12.99/\$19.95/ €14.99) throws light on the drama of the years that followed, when Conan Doyle and his family lived in Undershaw, the house he'd had built at Hindhead, where conditions were favourable for his invalid wife Louise. Hindhead was also the centre of an informal community of writers and artists. During the Undershaw years Conan Doyle wrote *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*. He served as a field surgeon in the Boer War and wrote a full history of the conflict. He adopted the cause of the wrongly convicted George Edalji. He was knighted. And he fell in love with Jean Leckie, who would become his second wife. Today, Undershaw is in a sad state, empty and threatened by inappropriate 'development'. It's fitting that the foreword to this admirable book was written by Mark Gatiss, the Patron of the Undershaw Preservation Trust. See <http://www.saveundershaw.com/>.

Alistair Duncan will be one of the speakers at the **Arthur Conan Doyle Weekend** to be held at Haslemere, near Hindhead, from 15 to 17 June. Others include Andrew Lycett, Andrew Lane, Catherine Cooke and me, and there'll be drama from Roger Llewellyn and the Irregular Special Players. See www.haslemere.com/conandoyle for more information.

There are thirty-eight contributors to *Sherlock Holmes and Philosophy: The Footprints of a Gigantic Mind* edited by **Josef Steiff** (Open Court; www.opencourtbooks.com; \$19.95, currently \$13.97 from the website). I recognise just one name: Rafe McGregor, who argues that *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is not a mystery but a horror story. The range of topics and approaches is very wide, and the 'philosophy' of the title often seems to be no more than a convenient tag. Besides essays on Holmes's logic, his

use of drugs, and his regard for the law, there are others here on graphic novels, Mary Russell, *Sherlock* and *Star Trek*. The book is, after all, one of a series called Popular Culture and Philosophy, and what could have been academic fustian actually has a certain welcome playfulness.

Sherlock Holmes first appeared on radio eighty-one years ago, and audio dramas far outnumber television plays or films. *The Further Adventures* on BBC Radio 4 appears to have finished, but a series of the same name continues in America. Jim French's production *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* began syndication in 1998. **M J Elliott** contributed his first script in 2003 and is now one of the most prolific and intelligent writers in the field. If you've ever listened to a radio play and asked yourself, 'How did they do that?' – or even, 'Why did they do that?' – you'll love *Sherlock Holmes on the Air* (MX Publishing; £14.99/\$22.95/ €16.99), a satisfyingly chunky volume containing eight of Matthew Elliott's best scripts for *The Further Adventures* plus 'A Study in Scarlet' and 'The Empty House' from *The Classic Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, the parallel series of dramatisations from the Canon, which has been Mr Elliott's sole domain since he began it in 2005. Check the Imagination Theater recordings at www.jimfrenchproductions.com, and enjoy the book! [**The Old Court Radio Theatre Company's* production of 'The Lost Special', on the Society's website at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/world/radio.php, predates the version published here.*]

The title of *A Professor Reflects on Sherlock Holmes* by **Marino C Alvarez** (MX Publishing; £9.99/\$16.95/ €12.99) deliberately echoes that of *A Doctor Enjoys Sherlock Holmes* by Edward J Van Liere. The twelve essays make you think, but they also entertain you. Dr Alvarez compares the writing styles of Watson and Holmes, but stresses that only the reader can say which was the better storyteller. He considers Holmes's potential as a teacher and as an academic. He distinguishes between the logical and the empirical. In the second section, Dr Alvarez follows Holmes to Meiringen and the Reichenbach Falls, and then visits Trinity College, Oxford, preceding the Society's time there by a month. This professor is the sort of teacher who makes learning a pleasure. I'm sorry our visits didn't coincide!

In *The Real World of Sherlock Holmes*, the 2013 Cameron Hollyer Memorial Lecture, **Peter Calamai** argues convincingly that, although the London depicted by Conan Doyle is generally authentic – one reason why the stories satisfy – there are important aspects of life there that are ignored. This excellent 36-page booklet is published by the Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection, and copies may be available from them (Toronto Public Library Foundation, 789 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4W 2G8; www.acdfriends.org).

Sam Siciliano took a new approach to Sherlock Holmes in *The Angel of the Opera*. His narrator, Holmes's cousin, Dr Vernier, claimed that he was the detective's true friend, and that Watson's accounts had falsified events and distorted Holmes's personality. It wasn't an approach that appealed to me, and it still isn't. I can't deny that Mr Siciliano's new book *The Web Weaver* (Titan Books; www.titanbooks.com; £7.99/\$9.95) is well written and exciting, but I just can't believe in it. I have my doubts about Henry Vernier's wife as a qualified physician in the 1890s, but that's really a quibble. The insurmountable problem is that the protagonist, passionately in love with another man's wife, and ever ready to denigrate John H Watson, simply is not Sherlock Holmes.

Margaret Park Bridges takes an even more revisionist approach in her novel *My Dear Watson* (MX Publishing; £9.99/\$18.95/ €12.99). The detective's secret is disclosed at the very start of the book, and it'll do no harm to reveal it here: Sherlock Holmes was a woman. It's not a new idea but it's handled here with great skill and confidence, and it has a purpose, to account for much of Holmes's personality as described by Dr Watson.

Visits to the Turkish baths must have posed problems, but there's no real contradiction here of Watson's accounts. The woman Holmes lives as a man, and Watson believes her to be a man. Am I convinced? No. Do I accept it while reading the book? Yes, and not only because it's essential to the story, which is a good one, involving the beautiful daughter of the late James Moriarty.

Mark of the Baskerville Hound by **Wilfred Huettel** (MX Publishing; £10.99/ \$19.95/ €12.99) offers a parallel to Holmes's greatest case. Bill Hughes, retired NYPD officer and Sherlockian, encountered something terrible and inexplicable when he visited Dartmoor. The narrative is cleverly presented through his consultations with a psychiatrist.

Sherlock Holmes and the Lyme Regis Horror by **David Ruffle** (MX Publishing; £10.99/ \$18.95/ €12.99) is an expanded edition of a book first published in 2009. The central story, in essence, relocates the plot of *Dracula* to the Dorset resort. Eleven short tales complete the book. MX has simultaneously published the sequel, *Sherlock Holmes and the Lyme Regis Legacy* (£19.99/ \$16.95/ €12.99), which also contains twenty short-short pieces.

Also new from MX is *Sherlock Holmes and the Discarded Cigarette* by **Fred Thursfield** (£6.99/ \$9.95/ €7.99): 'London 1895. A well known author, a theoretical invention made real, and the importance of a sometimes overlooked clue challenge Holmes and Watson to prevent the perfect crime.'

Vincent Delay has translated **Ronald Knox's** seminal essay into French as *Études sur la Littérature de Sherlock Holmes*, published as a nice 32-page booklet by the Société d'études holmesiennes de la Suisse Romande (Chaumière 1, 1010 Lausanne, Switzerland).

In the Shadow of Sherlock Holmes: Classic Detective Fiction 1862-1910 is a gratifyingly big collection edited and annotated by **Leslie S Klinger** and graced with splendid illustrations by **Michael Manomivibul** (IDW; www.idwpublishing.com; \$16.99). Twenty atmospheric and ingenious tales by Thomas Bailey Aldrich, M P Shiel, George R Sims, Arnold Bennett, B Fletcher Robinson, as well as the more familiar names, show us that Holmes wasn't the only Great Detective of the period.

As If: Modern Enchantment and the Literary Prehistory of Virtual Reality by **Michael Saler** (Oxford University Press; www.oup.com; £60.00/ \$99.00 hbk, £17.99/ \$27.95 pbk) must wait until the next issue for a review.

Gasogene Books (www.WessexPress.com) have just published *The Illustrated Speckled Band: The Original 1910 Stage Production in Script and Photographs* by **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**, edited by Leslie S Klinger (\$19.95), and *Starrett Speaks: The Lost Recordings*, a collection of rare, never-released recordings by the legendary Sherlockian and bookman, **Vincent Starrett** (\$12.95).

At the Centre Page pub the day after the Annual Dinner, Richard Dinnick, who dramatised *The Hound of the Baskervilles* for Big Finish, interviewed Holmes and Watson – or, rather, **Nicholas Briggs** and **Richard Earl**, a formidable, intelligent duo, who make the most of their characters. Watson is especially important in the Big Finish productions, as his narration underpins the story to a greater extent than I can recall in any other such audio drama, and Richard Earl is fully equal to the task. This production of *The Hound* is nail-bitingly exciting, as it should be, and the same can be said of *The Tangled Skein*, adapted by Richard Dinnick from David Stuart Davies's sequel – which also completely rewrites the story of *Dracula*. For full-blooded gothic excitement this pair would be hard to beat. (Big Finish are offering a generous discount to members of the Society. Look out for details in the mailing for the March meeting.)

I hadn't come across *Journey Planet* before, but the Sherlock Holmes issue has lots of good articles in its eighty pages, and it's freely accessible at <http://efanzines.com/JourneyPlanet/JourneyPlanet11.pdf>.

From 10 February, in the Vaults Cinema at the Old Vic Tunnels, **The Flicker Club** will screen a three-week celebration of Hammer Films. This will naturally include the famous, though deeply flawed *Hound of the Baskervilles* on 12 February, which will be introduced by a special surprise guest. Details are at <http://www.theflickerclub.com/>. Or phone 020 3012 1232.

There are theatrical Hounds too. Global Productions present *the Hound of the Baskervilles* at **Harlow Playhouse** on 10, 11 and 12th February (www.playhouseharlow.com; phone 01279 431945). Matt Mitchell, the Press Officer, says, 'It would be nice to hear what members of the society who attend thought of the show after they've seen it.'

globalproductions.publicity@goosemail.com. And at the **Lawrence Batley Theatre** in Huddersfield from 12 to 17 March, you can see Oldham Coliseum's production of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Clive Francis (www.thelbt.org/Hound-Baskervilles; 01484 430528).

Sarah Greenwood, production designer for Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* films, has recreated the production studio for an exhibition at Arts Gallery, University of the Arts London, 272 High Holborn, WC1. A *Snapshot. Behind The Scenes of Sarah Greenwood's Sherlock Holmes* runs from 26 January to 9 March.

On 18 February from 3.00pm to 5.00pm, **Dr Amy H Sturgis** will host a live on-line video lecture, *Sherlock Holmes and Science Fiction*. Only twenty tickets are available. <http://sherlockholmeslive.eventbrite.co.uk/>.

Geraldine Bearman, who occasionally lectures there herself, tells me that on 16 July **Peter Street** will give a day course at Dillington House, a beautiful 16th century building at Ilminster in Somerset. The course is called *Not So Elementary: The Life & Times of Sherlock Holmes*, and the fee of £48.00 includes coffee, tea and lunch. Details are at www.dillington.com, or phone 01460 258648.

Gary Lovisi is looking to buy the 'Chocolate Jaime Boix' cards, originally from 1920 in Barcelona, Spain, featuring Sherlock Holmes art and info. They are post card size, and there are at least 2 sets of 40 cards each (that I know of). Gary can be reached at gryphonbooks@att.net.

The most important work of the playwright **Bill Morrison**, who died on 7 December aged seventy-one, had to do with his native Northern Ireland, but in 1978 he shared with Michael Bakewell the task of dramatising thirteen stories for a very good BBC radio series with Barry Foster and David Buck as Holmes and Watson.

Nicol Williamson, who died on 16 December aged seventy-three, was reckoned by many to be the finest actor of his generation. Some years ago he abandoned acting and moved to Amsterdam to concentrate on music. In 1976 he gave an electrifying performance as Sherlock Holmes in the film of Nicholas Meyer's *The Seven-per-Cent Solution*.

The artist and cartoonist **Ronald Searle**, who died on 30 December aged ninety-one, will always be known as the creator of the anarchic St Trinian's School, which he believed unfairly overshadowed his better, more serious work. (The drawings he did while working on the Burma Railway as a prisoner of the Japanese are immensely powerful and moving.) In 1951 his drawing of the 221B sitting-room at the Sherlock Holmes Exhibition in Baker Street was published in *Punch* and reproduced as the frontispiece for the exhibition catalogue.

Periodicals received. *The Baker Street Journal*, Winter 2011, and the BSI 2011 Christmas Annual: *First Lady*, the story of Lenore Glen Offord, the first female Irregular, by Mary Ann Bradley (Steven Rothman, 220, West Rittenhouse Square, #15-D, Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA; subscriptions, PO Box 583, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). *The Camden House Journal*, December 2011 and January 2012 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). *Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections*, December 2011 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). *The Illustrious Clients News*, January 2012 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). *Ineffable Twaddle*, January 2012 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *Mayday Mayday*, January 2012 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). *The Moor: Magasin för Sherlockianer*, December 2011 (**The Baskerville Hall Club of Sweden**, Anders Wiggström, Byggmästarvägen 29, 168 32 Bromma, Sweden). *The Passengers' Log*, Spring 2011 (**The Sydney Passengers**, Rosane McNamara, 4/2a Merlin Street, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089, Australia). *The Petrel Flyer*, Jan/Feb 2011 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). *The Scion*, Autumn 2011 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP). *The Serpentine Muse*, Winter 2011 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA).

And *Scuttlebutt from the Spermacti Press*, December 2011 and January 2012 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

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