

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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

e-mail: [shjournal@btinternet.com](mailto:shjournal@btinternet.com)

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*The recent sharp rise in postal prices here means that I must finally increase the subscription for postal subscribers who send money rather than stamped & self-addressed envelopes. For 12 issues in the UK it'll be £4.50. Overseas it will be £11.00 or US\$18.00. Please make dollar checks payable to Jean Upton. (Bear in mind that I've absorbed all the increases for the past several years.) Note that an e-mail subscription costs nothing and pretty much guarantees instantaneous delivery. Also note my new e-mail address! (Though the old one is still valid.)*

A reminder that the fate of **Undershaw**, the house at Hindhead where Conan Doyle wrote *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, may be decided by the judicial review at the High Court in London on 23 May – the day after Conan Doyle's 153rd birthday. I'm told that the review is likely to start at 10.00am, and that interested parties are welcome to attend. Since they bought the house in 2004, Fossway Ltd have allowed the house to fall into a shocking state of disrepair. In 2010 the Waverley Borough Council granted planning permission for the house to be carved up into three terraced houses divided by solid block walls, with five more homes to be built on the site. Following protests by the Undershaw Preservation Trust, development has been put on hold pending the Judicial Review. Meanwhile, Undershaw continues to deteriorate.

The aim of the **Undershaw Preservation Trust** is simply to ensure that Undershaw remains intact. Whether it then becomes a private house, a hotel or a museum is, rightly, a less urgent matter. To follow the progress and to support the Trust's campaign, see [www.saveundershaw.com/](http://www.saveundershaw.com/).

The **Undershaw Alliance** (Academics for Undershaw and Crime Writers for Undershaw) wishes to relaunch the house as a Conan Doyle Museum and Centre for British and Irish Crime Writing. See the website at [www.undershawalliance.com](http://www.undershawalliance.com). (An admirable aim, but the first priority, surely, must be to secure the integrity of the house.)

The real importance of *The Illustrated Speckled Band: The Original 1910 Stage Production in Script and Photographs* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, edited by **Leslie S Klinger** (Gasogene Books, [www.wessexpress.com](http://www.wessexpress.com); \$19.95) is in the contemporary review from *The Playgoer and Society Illustrated*, R Dixon Smith's skilful account of the curious circumstances in which the play came to be written and performed, and the thirty-six excellent production photographs, also taken from *The Playgoer*. There are two versions of the script. The earlier one, called *The Stonor Case*, can be found in Richard Lancelyn Green's *The Uncollected Sherlock Holmes* and Leslie Klinger's *The Apocrypha of Sherlock Holmes*. This one, reverting to the original title, also appears in Jack Tracy's *Sherlock Holmes: The Published Apocrypha*. In adapting his tale Conan Doyle made numerous changes: some are clearly for better dramatic effect and some are dictated by the need to flesh out a short story to the size of a three-act play, but others – the renaming of characters, for instance – may be evidence of his real lack of interest in the Holmes stories. The result was a considerable and deserved success, though!

The script of a more recent and even less faithful dramatisation has just been published, and I for one am delighted. This is that 'wonderfully barking spoof' *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, adapted by **Steven Canny** and **John Nicholson** (Nick Hern Books, [www.nickhernbooks.co.uk](http://www.nickhernbooks.co.uk); £9.99). If you saw the original production by the three-handed company Peepolykus you'll know how dazzlingly, crazily funny the play is. If you didn't, then keep checking the *Radio Times*, as an adaptation, with the original cast, is due this month on BBC Radio 4.

There aren't many writers who can capture the Doyle-Watson style almost to perfection (I don't suppose anyone's got it exactly right). One of the few is **June Thomson**, the distinguished creator of Detective Inspector Jack Finch, and author of the excellent *Holmes & Watson: A Study in Friendship*. Her sixth collection of short stories is *The Secret Archives of Sherlock Holmes* (Allison & Busby, [www.allisonandbusby.com](http://www.allisonandbusby.com); £19.99),

in which, besides the facts of the Conk-Singleton forgery, the arrest of Colonel Carruthers, the Abergavenny murder, and the case of Madame Montpensier, we learn how Holy Peters was finally brought to book, how the last of Moriarty's gang was captured, and how the young Sherlock Holmes, newly down from university, solved an apparently impossible case of theft. These are exactly the sort of narratives that we find in Conan Doyle. The plots are clever without being too fancy, the writing is literate and appropriate, the atmosphere is authentic, and the characters ring true – except that Lestrade very disconcertingly drops his aitches, which he never does in the true Canon. Half a mark off for that, then, but otherwise wholeheartedly recommended! (And it's nice that the book is dedicated to our Society's President.)

Also recommended is *Sherlock Holmes at the Breakfast Table* by **L F E Coombs** (Robert Hale, [www.halebooks.com](http://www.halebooks.com); 31 May; £19.99). It would be unnecessarily picky of me to find fault with Mr Coombs's style (apart from a couple of instances where 'Holmes and I' should be 'Holmes and me'). An editor himself, he writes well, and with an evident knowledge and love of the period and of Conan Doyle's stories. A quick search reveals that he is the author of half a dozen well-regarded books on rail and air transport – topics that inform several of the thirteen tales in *Sherlock Holmes at the Breakfast Table*. Another recurring theme, perhaps related to the book's title, is marmalade and the making of preserves – an activity that can, it seems, have sinister connotations. We always knew that Dr Watson was familiar with *Bradshaw*; these narratives reveal an unexpected and engaging knowledge of other aspects of the railways. Most of the tales involve Holmes and Watson in matters of national importance, including espionage and sabotage, and naturally Mycroft Holmes makes his presence felt. There's the occasional dry, subtle joke too, such as a house at Grantchester, named 'Archers'...

*Sherlock Holmes & the Whitechapel Vampire* by **Dean P Turnbull** (MX Publishing, [www.mxpublishing.com](http://www.mxpublishing.com); £10.99/\$18.95/€12.99) bears the seal of approval of the Conan Doyle Estate Ltd, but it's on a different plane from the books by Mrs Thomson and Mr Coombs. This is full-blooded pulp fiction, imaginatively identifying Jack the Ripper as an aristocratic Italian – well, the title is self-explanatory. (The novel has no connection with the 2002 television film *The Case of the Whitechapel Vampire*, by the way.) Mr Turnbull has some curious ideas about late Victorian England, having Watson refer to coffee as a 'new drink fad', as if there wasn't a 'well-polished silver-plated coffee-pot' on the breakfast table at 221B Baker Street every morning, and when it comes to the historical figures who must feature in such a tale – Inspector Abberline, Sir Charles Warren, James Monro – invention and well-researched fact are so mixed that it's easiest to imagine that all this happened in an alternative version of our history. The narrative rushes along, carrying you with it, in the best tradition of the thriller. And at the end (a good touch, this) Sherlock Holmes still doesn't believe in vampires!

Wessex Press is doing us a great service with its occasional release of archive material on CD. *Starrett Speaks: The Lost Recordings* (Wessex Press, [www.wessexpress.com](http://www.wessexpress.com); \$12.95) is a small but select collection of recordings of the great **Vincent Starrett**, whose book *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* should be on every Holmesian's shelf – even if he does pronounce it 'Hol-meesian'. After an informative introduction by Steven Doyle, we have Starrett reciting his own most famous work, the sonnet '221B', followed by a brief, mad parody called 'The Acephalous Agronomist'. Then the recorded greeting that Starrett sent to the Sherlockians assembled in New York and his even briefer 'Ave Sherlock' flank the longest piece, an off-air recording of *Book Beat*, which I think was a television programme in the Chicago area. It evidently dates from about 1962, because being interviewed with Starrett was Orlando Park, whose encyclopaedia *Sherlock Holmes, Esq. and John H Watson, MD* was

published that year. Unlike the other items, all stylish and carefully prepared, this one has the spontaneity and the natural clumsiness of unrehearsed live broadcasting. It's fresh, it's interesting, and there's an awful lot of ums and ahs and hesitations. *Starrett Speaks* is the nearest, I suppose, that most of us will come to encountering the great man in person. For that reason alone it's to be treasured.

The centenary of the *Titanic* disaster has inspired stories of wildly varying quality. *The Adventure of the Perfidious Mariner* by Jonathan Barnes, which concludes the second batch of Sherlock Holmes audio plays from Big Finish (<http://bigfinish.com/ranges/sherlock-holmes>) is something special. After an unrecounted failure in his career, Holmes has cut himself off from his past, but the past refuses to leave him alone. When Dr Watson arrives at his bee-farm, simmering with grief and anger at the loss of his wife on the great liner, Holmes is like a stranger to him. But with the arrival of another visitor, Watson's anger becomes almost murderous. J Bruce Ismay is the most hated man in Britain: Managing Director of the White Star Line, first-class passenger on the *Titanic* – and one of the comparative few to escape the sinking ship, leaving 1500 people behind. Ismay is haunted by the phantom of a drowned woman, and he seems to carry death with him. The mystery is tantalising, and it doesn't matter that the solution may not hold up scientifically. The magnitude of the disaster, and the sorrow and pain it caused, are treated with integrity and respect. Writer and actors expose raw depths in Watson's and Holmes's complex personalities, and it all rings true. **Nicholas Briggs** and **Richard Earl**, among the very best portrayals of the detective and the doctor, are well matched by the tortured performance of **Michael Maloney** as Ismay.

New and forthcoming books include *Sherlock and Transmedia Fandom: Essays on the BBC Series* edited by **Louisa Ellen Stein** & **Kristina Busse** (McFarland & Co, [www.mcfarlandpub.com](http://www.mcfarlandpub.com); \$40.00). *Sherlock Holmes and the Murder at Lodore Falls* by **Charlotte Smith** (MX Publishing, 4 June; £7.99), *Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Jacobite Rose*, a play by **Fiona-Jane Brown** (MX Publishing; £7.99), *Holmes and Watson End Peace* by **David Ruffle** (MX Publishing, 7 June; £6.99), *Steampunk Holmes: Legacy of the Nautilus* by **P C Martin**, illustrated by **Daniel Cortes** (Noble Beast/MX Publishing, June; no price yet) [*\*there's more to this one than the paper edition – see [www.steampunkholmes.com](http://www.steampunkholmes.com)\**], and *The Sherlock Holmes Miscellany* by **Roger Johnson** & **Jean Upton** (History Press, [www.thehistorypress.co.uk](http://www.thehistorypress.co.uk), 15 July; £9.99).

Forbes Gibb passes on the news that a set of previously unseen papers belonging to Conan Doyle have been donated to the **John Murray Archive** at the National Library of Scotland. They include some short stories, found after the author's death and assumed to have been rejected by him as substandard. The Library's website says, 'Another of the stories is "The memoir of Sherlock Holmes – The field bazaar" which research reveals was published in an unnamed charity magazine in 1896, but never since.' [www.nls.uk/news/press/2012/04/conan-doyle-papers](http://www.nls.uk/news/press/2012/04/conan-doyle-papers) [*\*Shome mishtake shurely?\**]

*On Conan Doyle, or, The Whole Art of Storytelling* (Princeton University Press; [press.princeton.edu](http://press.princeton.edu); £13.95), by **Michael Dirda** has deservedly won the Edgar for Best Non-Fiction from the Mystery Writers of America.

At [www.sherlock-holmes.com/e\\_times12-4.html](http://www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times12-4.html) is the April issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-magazine of **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; [sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com](mailto:sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com)). Lots to tempt us, as always.

Earlier this month the British Academy of Film & Television Arts (BAFTA) confirmed its decision not to make a posthumous award to **Jeremy Brett**. Disappointing news, after so many people have worked so hard organising a campaign, but, alas, not wholly surprising.

Alan Lance Andersen notes that the July and August issues of *GAMES Magazine* will feature a two-part article, 'Sherlock Holmes – Call Our Bluff'. And somewhere in the article will be an unannounced Hidden Contest, with the chance to win a copy of Mr Andersen's script *Sherlock Holmes: Author's Expanded Edition*. [www.gamesmagazine-online.com/](http://www.gamesmagazine-online.com/).

At 6.00pm on 6 June at the Senate House Library, University of London, **Dr Emelyne Godfrey** will give the Bestsellers Book Talk, on 'The Empty House' and 'The Speckled Band'. (Dr Godfrey recently assisted Gyles Brandreth in researching Bartitsu on *The One Show* on BBC 1.) Details are at [www.shl.lon.ac.uk/friends/documents/conandoylebooktalk.pdf](http://www.shl.lon.ac.uk/friends/documents/conandoylebooktalk.pdf). All are welcome. Contact [shl.officeadmin@london.ac.uk](mailto:shl.officeadmin@london.ac.uk) to register.

At 1.00pm on 2 July our member **Richard Burnip** will give the Gresham College lecture on Literary London Crime – 'A Stout Heart in the Great

*Cesspool*': Arthur Conan Doyle and London. Details are at <http://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/a-stout-heart-in-the-great-cesspool-arthur-conan-doyle-and-london>. Admission is free.

On 21 May the classic 1983 Russian film *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, directed by **Igor Maslennikov**, will be available – for the first time, I think – in British shops (Mr Bongo, [www.mrbongo.com](http://www.mrbongo.com); £7.99). It's all done with such skill and integrity that the western viewer soon learns to accept a winding thoroughfare in Riga as Baker Street, and a dacha in the steppes as Baskerville Hall. **Vasily Livanov**, thin, hawk-faced and penetratingly perceptive, is an ideal Holmes, complemented by the courageous, active and intelligent Watson of **Vitaly Solomin**. Sir Henry comes across as larger than life, determined to show his North American background by wearing a ten-gallon hat and arriving in London with a huge western saddle. The Hound too is larger than life, and rightly so. First glimpsed as a mere luminous skull, it's eventually revealed as one of the most effective apparitions in any version of the tale. The subtitles could profitably have been revised, but all in all it's a first-rate production.

**Nicholas Rowe** and **Alan Cox** will resume their roles as Holmes and Watson, alongside Shane Briant, in *Sherlock Holmes vs Frankenstein*, (<http://marteaufilmsproduction.com/site/pages/projets.php?varform=2>) written and directed by **Gautier Cazenave**.

In Spain *Holmes, Madrid Suite 1890*, directed by **José Luis Garci**, is in post-production. Holmes, played by **Gary Piquer**, goes to Spain on the trail of Jack the Ripper. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=YzcBrjtsyZM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YzcBrjtsyZM). (Thanks to Vicente Castillo.)

*Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* is out now on DVD and Blu-Ray. Nick Utechin suggests that if you're tempted by Amazon's Triple Play package, which claims also to include a 'digital copy', you should check the reviews on Amazon.

**Karen Murdock** has an interesting article, 'Recovering the Classical in the Common: Figures of Speech in "A Scandal in Bohemia"', which you can read online at [www.mcte.org/journal/mejv47/Murdock.pdf](http://www.mcte.org/journal/mejv47/Murdock.pdf).

*Sherlock Holmes and The Hound of The Baskervilles* is Now Available on Steam! <http://store.steampowered.com/news/7808/>. Product Release - Valve 15:35. [*\*And now you know as much as I do...\**]

**Jack Bagley** is a painter who has always fancied painting a portrait of Sherlock Holmes. He's looking for someone with a keen interest in the history and mythology of the character to commission such a portrait. If you're interested, contact him at [jbagleyart@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jbagleyart@hotmail.co.uk). You can see some of his work at [www.oilpaintingsonline.com/jackpaints/portfolio/](http://www.oilpaintingsonline.com/jackpaints/portfolio/).

Anthony Richards notes that Raylo makes a beautiful O gauge model of the Metro-Vickers Bo-Bo locomotive, *Sherlock Holmes*, whose original name plate is owned by the Society. The model costs an eye-watering £455.00. [www.raylo.co.uk](http://www.raylo.co.uk).

The specialist dealer **Brian Grimshaw** is still in business at [www.221b.co.uk](http://www.221b.co.uk). *District Messenger* subscribers will receive a further 10% discount if they mention the fact when purchasing from 221b.

Periodicals received. *The Baker Street Journal*, Spring 2012 (Steven Rothman, 220, West Rittenhouse Square, #15-D, Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA; subscriptions, PO Box 583, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). *Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections*, March 2012 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). *Ineffable Twaddle*, May 2012 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *Ironmongers Daily News*, almost daily (**La Société Sherlock Holmes de France**, Thierry Saint-Joanis, 15 rue Grande, 03370 Saint-Sauvier, France). *Mayday Mayday*, May 2012 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). *The Moor: Magasin för Sherlockianer*, April 2012 (**The Baskerville Hall Club of Sweden**, Anders Wiggström, Byggmästarvägen 29, 168 32 Bromma, Sweden). *The Torr*, Spring 2012 (**The Poor Folk Upon The Moors**, Stephan Arthur, Camelot, Hombergstrasse 9, CH-4433 Ramlinsburg, Switzerland).

And *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, April 2012 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; [blau7103@comcast.net](mailto:blau7103@comcast.net)).

Roger Johnson