

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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no. 327 26 November 2012

As Randall Stock notes in his foreword, a chronology is not a biography, but *A Chronology of the Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, May 22nd 1859 to July 7th 1930*, the magnum opus of **Brian W Pugh**, is more valuable than most of the published lives of Conan Doyle. The new edition adds about fifty pages, seven of them containing a chronological summary of the journal recently published as '*Dangerous Work*': *Diary of an Arctic Adventure* (enthusiastically reviewed in DM 325). Here are lists of ACD's various homes, his sporting career, the burial places of the Doyles, statues and plaques, and more, including some fascinating photographs. But the essence of the book is in the orderly calendar of Sir Arthur's life, in which innumerable ambiguities and uncertainties are authoritatively resolved. Brian Pugh has created that rare thing, a genuinely essential work of reference (MX Publishing, www.mxpublishing.co.uk; £14.99/ \$22.95/ €16.99).

Oscar Wilde and the Murders at Reading Gaol by **Gyles Brandreth** (John Murray, 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH; £18.99) was launched at the Cadogan Hotel, where Wilde was arrested on 6 April 1895. His favourite champagne, Perrier-Jouët, was served, his grandson Merlin Holland read John Betjeman's famous poem, and Michael Seeney of the Oscar Wilde Society observed that for almost the first time all three of the society's Patrons were in the same room – Merlin Holland, Stephen Fry and Gyles Brandreth! And what of the book? The Oscar Wilde Murder Mysteries started superbly and, amazingly, get better and better. The first four were narrated by Robert Sherard, and the fifth by Arthur Conan Doyle, but only Wilde himself could tell of the two years in which he endured penal servitude with hard labour, of the deprivations, the temptations, the small kindnesses, the conspiracies and the cruelties. When an unpopular warder is killed the prison governor reluctantly requests Wilde's help, only to reject his suggestions. But when the chaplain is murdered, the new governor turns for help to Reading Gaol's most notorious inmate. The fictional crime and detection fit seamlessly alongside the squalid reality of prison life and the complex genius that was Oscar Wilde. The result is both a dazzling detective story and an excellent historical novel.

We encounter Wilde again in *The Singular Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* by **Alan Stockwell** (Vesper Hawk Publishing, www.vesperhawk.com ; £7.95, \$12.95 or €9.95). Like Mr Stockwell's earlier collection *The Singular Adventures of Mr Sherlock Holmes*, these stories are firmly 'in the traditional manner', apart from the occasional introduction of 'certain characters and events of the time' – and the fact that one story, 'A Christmas Interlude', omits Holmes altogether. But the voice throughout is that of John H Watson (or an acceptable imitation), the setting is true to the period, and the plots are inventive. I particularly like 'The Ancient Ring of the Prophet', which tells the tale of the politician, the lighthouse and the trained cormorant.

Our sort of scholarship is, I maintain, entirely valid, but it isn't the only way to approach the chronicles of Sherlock Holmes. *Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle: Multi-Media Afterlives*, twelve essays presented at a conference at Hull in 2009, edited by **Sabine Vanacker** and **Catherine Wynne** (Palgrave Macmillan, www.palgrave.com; £50.00) is the fifth recent collection of academic papers to come my way. Conan Doyle would be bewildered by the serious attention now paid to what he saw as some of his least important work. This book opens, pleasingly, with a piece on Holmes in advertising by Amanda J Field, winner of the Tony & Freda Howlett Literary Award for *England's Secret Weapon: The Wartime Films of Sherlock Holmes*. Clive Bloom and Andrew Lycett consider Conan Doyle's spiritualism and his belief in fairies, which say more about him than we may think. Neil McCaw, Academic Director of the Conan Doyle Collection at Portsmouth, looks at the Granada TV series from a political standpoint... Most of the papers are intellectually stimulating, some are challenging – all are interesting.

Since *Sherlock Holmes vs Dracula: The Adventure of the Sanguinary Count* was first published in 1978, **Loren D Estleman** has become a highly respected crime writer. Others have matched the Master Detective with the King Vampire – Fred Saberhagen, David Stuart Davies, Stephen Seitz, Gerry O'Hara – but Mr Estleman was there first. And now his novel is reprinted by Titan Books (www.titanbooks.com; £7.99). As on my first reading, the opening paragraphs strike me as unnecessarily insulting to Bram Stoker. Dr Watson complains that *Dracula* is a 'spurious monograph' and that 'Professor Van Helsing induced Stoker to deliberately falsify the facts'. Once past that, though, it's clear that Mr Estleman holds Stoker in high esteem and is thoroughly familiar with his great work. Unlike some, he takes surprisingly few liberties with Stoker's plot, slotting Holmes, Dr & Mrs Watson, and Lestrade into place so deftly that we can cheerfully ignore the detective's well-known outburst: 'Rubbish, Watson, rubbish! What have we to do with walking corpses who can only be held in their grave by stakes driven through their hearts? It's pure lunacy.'

In *The Many Watsons* (MX Publishing; £7.99/ \$11.95/ €9.99) **Kieran McMullen** takes a look at fifty-four actors, male and female, who have played Dr Watson or a Watson character on screen. It's good to see the Watsons getting their share of attention, though the text needs proofreading, and I could wish that the actors had been dealt with in alphabetical or chronological order. Should there be a second edition, I hope Mr McMullen will include some at least of the radio Watsons – Leigh Lovell, Alfred Shirley, Norman Shelley, Michael Williams, Andrew Sachs, Larry Albert... Royalties from this light, lively collection of essays will go to the **Undershaw Preservation Trust**.

Also new from MX Publishing, and definitely worth a look: *Sherlock Holmes: Have Yourself a Chaotic Little Christmas* by **Gwendolyn Frame** – thirty-one tales, charming, poignant, thrilling and funny (£6.99/ \$9.95/ €7.99). *Sherlock Holmes and the case of the Bulgarian Codex* by **Tim Symonds** – a literate and exciting short novel of intrigue in the Balkans (£7.99/ \$12.95/ €8.99). *Sherlock Holmes and the Missing Snowman* by **David Ruffle** and **Rikey Austin** – the author of the Lyme Regis pastiches and the creator of *Alice's Bear Shop* collaborate on a delightful illustrated children's story (£6.99). *Sherlock Holmes and the Lyme Regis Trials* is due on 10 December (£6.99/ \$9.95/ €7.99).

The Baskerville Inheritance by **Teresa Collard** (favourably reviewed in DM 324) is now available as an eBook (PDF for Adobe Digital Editions) for £2.99 from www.lulu.com/shop/teresa-collard/the-baskerville-inheritance/ebook/product-20325219.html.

AudioGO, 'The home of BBC Audiobooks', whose releases include the epic Radio 4 complete dramatisation of the Canon, is now on-line at www.audiogo.com/uk.

A wonderfully encouraging sign of the way that our Great Game is expanding and developing is *The One Fixed Point in a Changing Age: Essays on Sherlockiana by Online Fandom*, written exclusively by members of the tumblr and internet fandom of Sherlock Holmes. The idea was conceived by **The Baker Street Babes** to give a voice and the beginnings of a body of work for the younger generation of Holmes fans. It will be published by Wessex Press. There's a call for entries at <http://bakerstreetbabes.com/call-for-entries-the-one-fixed-point-in-a-changing-age-essays-on-sherlockiana-by-online-fandom/>.

The current *Sherlockian E-times*, the catalogue-magazine of **Classic Specialties**, online at www.sherlock-holmes.com/e-times12-10.html, is full of interest and temptation.

In December *The District Messenger* will be thirty years old. Thanks to the publishers Simon & Schuster, there'll be an anniversary competition to win signed copies of **Robert Ryan**'s novel *Dead Man's Land*, in which Dr Watson proves his worth as a detective on the Western Front.

The resurgence of Holmesian drama in the UK continues. At **St Ambrose Church Hall** in Leyland, Lancashire from 4 to 8 December, St Ambrose Players will stage *Sherlock Holmes: The Panto-Crime*. Tickets from Sheila Kenny on 01772 452296. Details are at www.stambroseplayers.co.uk/St_Ambrose_Players/Home.html. On the same dates at The Place in Bedford, the **Swan Theatre Company** present that lovely spoof *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by **Steven Canny & John Nicholson** (www.theplacebedford.org.uk; phone 01234 354321).

A reminder that at the Devil's Punchbowl Hotel, Hindhead on 23 December, **Don't Go Into the Cellar** will present *Ho Ho Holmes*, a new story of Sherlock Holmes with a seasonal touch. This free show will be in support of the **Undershaw Preservation Trust**, and donations will be gratefully accepted. The Devil's Punchbowl Hotel will donate a portion of proceeds from the evening's food and drink sales. Fund-raising auctions are also planned. See www.saveundershaw.com/.

Ben Eagle is currently training at the Central School of Speech & Drama. To help with his fees, **Benedict Cumberbatch** has kindly donated a deerstalker hat, signed in silver ink, which will be auctioned on 12 December at Bonham's in Knightsbridge. The hat is Lot 140 in the Entertainment Memorabilia sale, with an estimate of £300-£600. www.bonhams.com/auctions/19801/lot/140/?list_search_query=1&lang=en_gb&back_to_year=2003&sale_no=19801&limit=9999&query=benedit&create_facets=False&page_anchor=q1_1%3Dbenedict%26m1%3D1%26b1%3Dlist.

Gautier Cazenave, writer-director of the projected *Sherlock Holmes vs Frankenstein*, which will reunite **Nicholas Rowe** and **Alan Cox** as Holmes and Watson, notes that the film needs backers. See <http://marteaufilmsproduction.com/site/pages/projets.php?varPage=2&varform=2&varlang=eng> if you're interested in investing.

Paramount plans to remake *Young Sherlock Holmes*, with the original writer, **Chris Columbus**, producing. **Evan Spiliotopoulos** is a likely choice to write the screenplay.

Word is that production of the third series of *Sherlock* will begin in March, with transmission possibly not until 2014. Meanwhile two more episodes are planned for the first series of *Elementary*, bringing it up to twenty-four.

Suzanne Adams has created a collection of handmade and handpainted Christmas ornaments relating to Traditional Holmes, and another collection relating to BBC TV's *Sherlock*, all available from her Etsy Shop at www.etsy.com/shop/VibrantAdventure. Some items are also available individually as either ornaments or magnets. [*There's other Holmes material offered by craftworkers on Etsy at www.etsy.com.*]

This was received today from PR Linija, a marketing agency in Latvia. The website at www.holmes.lv is impressive. 'On January 5th, 2012 it will already be the second time, that Riga will celebrate **Sherlock Holmes Birthday**. The project, created in 2012 by Riga marketing agency PR LINIJA and supported by many enthusiasts and fans of the literature character is aimed to bring to our city a colourful and unforgettable atmosphere, to create many interactive events, attract tourists from all over the world and, of course, to celebrate the Birthday of best known and beloved investigator on the planet – Sherlock Holmes.' Baker Street and some other exteriors for the classic Lenfilms series with Vasily Livanov and Vitaly Solomin were shot in Riga.

In the BBC2 series *Great Continental Railway Journeys*, **Michael Portillo** follows routes in *Bradshaw's 1913 Continental Railway Guide*. On Thursday 29 November he's in Switzerland, ascending the Jungfrau, visiting Meiringen, and paying homage to Sherlock Holmes at the Reichenbach Falls.

The Bartitsu Society has a link to the BBC Online video clip of our Swiss Pilgrimage at www.bartitsu.org/index.php/tag/sherlock-holmes-society/, and coverage of the Bartitsu/Baritsu display at **Marylebone Library** and the demonstration by James Marwood and George Stokoe.

Prospect magazine has posted a good long report on the Swiss trip by **Ed Docx** at www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/sherlock-holmes-pilgrims-conan-doyle/.

The Spanish paper *El Mundo* celebrates Holmes's 125th anniversary at www.elmundo.es/especiales/2012/cultura/sherlock-holmes/los-hechos.html. There are essays, artwork, photos, interactive material, video clips and a great deal of input from our Society.

On Saturday 24 November, the **Arthur Conan Doyle Collection (Lancelyn Green Bequest)** at Portsmouth held an event at the Central

Library to celebrate 125 years of *A Study in Scarlet*. Richard Green's copy of *Beeton's Christmas Annual* for 1887 will remain on display throughout December and January. Randall Stock's annotated checklist and census of *Beeton's* is at www.bestofsherlock.com/beetons-christmas-annual.htm.

The Deerstalkers of Welshpool, headed by Roy Upton-Holder, are determined to increase the number of languages in which the Holmes stories are published by having them translated into Welsh. The society's website is at www.sherlockholmeswelshpool.com.

Ron Tiner, who created the splendid painting for last year's 'Blue Carbuncle' Christmas card, needs a photo of the long-demolished houses originally numbered 69-82 Baker Street, between George Street and King Street on the west side of Baker Street. So far all sources have failed. If you can help, please contact me in the first instance.

Terri and David Haugen of **The Sound of the Baskervilles** report on the first *Sherlock Seattle Convention* on the SOB's' excellent website at www.bestofsherlock.com/beetons-christmas-annual.htm.

The Baker Street Babes' latest podcast is a recording of the Q&A session with *Sherlock* composer **Michael Price** and blog-writer **Joe Lidster** made at the Babes' wonderful *Sherlopalooza* day. You'll find the link, and a link to wearsherlock's video recording, at <http://bakerstreetbabes.com/>. (Joe Lidster writes the blogs for John, Molly and Sherlock. See, e.g. www.johnwatsonblog.co.uk/.)

The Baker Street Chronicle, the very stylish journal of **Die Deutsche Sherlock Holmes Gesellschaft**, is well worth a look. The German language version of the *Sherlock* special issue is sold out, but the English edition is still available from www.baker-street-chronicle.de/.

Cyril Millot reports that **Le Cercle Holmésien de Paris** held its first meeting on 10 October. The Cercle has an internet presence at <http://cercleholmesiendeparis.tumblr.com/>.

I was saddened to learn that our American member **John E Weber** died on 26 October at the age of sixty-five. John crossed the pond to attend the occasional meeting, and participated in several of our excursions, but he'll probably be best known for his excellent contributions over the years to *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*. His book *Under the Darkling Sky: A Chrono-Geographic Odyssey Through the Holmesian Canon* was unanimously voted the winner of this year's Tony & Freda Howlett Literary Award, which was presented to him during the Society's visit to Switzerland. He played the Game with skill, intelligence and humour.

Larry Hagman, who died on 23 November aged eighty-one, will forever be associated with the rôle of J R Ewing in *Dallas*. In 1976, in an adequate TV movie called *The Return of the World's Greatest Detective*, he played Sherman Holmes, a policeman who suffers a blow on the head and believes himself to be Sherlock Holmes.

Periodicals received. **The Baker Street Journal**, Autumn 2012 (Steven Rothman, 220, West Rittenhouse Square, #15-D, Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA; subscriptions, PO Box 583, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). **The Camden House Journal**, October 2012 and November 2012 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). **Canadian Holmes**, Fall 2012 (**The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Mark & JoAnn Alberstat, 46 Kingston Crescent, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, B3A 2M2, Canada). **Ineffable Twaddle**, November 2012 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). **Ironmongers Daily News**, er, irregularly (**La Société Sherlock Holmes de France**, Thierry Saint-Joanis, www.sshf.com/inscription-sshf.php). **Mayday Mayday**, November 2012 with *Elementary* supplement (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarney Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). **The Petrel Flyer**, November 2012 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). **Report from the Unscrupulous Rascals**, November 2012 (**The Sherlock Holmes Society of South Australia**, Mark Chellew, 50 Richmond Ave, Colonel Light Gardens, SA 5041, Australia). **The Scion**, Autumn 2012 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP).

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

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