

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

<http://www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/>

Dr. Carrie Parris e-mail: distmessenger@yahoo.co.uk

Twitter: @SHSLondon Facebook: www.facebook.com/TheSherlockHolmesSocietyofLondon

no. 357 4 January 2016

Belated compliments of the season and a happy new year to you all. I spent a very pleasant New Year's Eve in Whitstable, the Kentish seaside town that was once home to **Peter Cushing**. Should you ever travel to the area, you can still visit some of his regular haunts, such as the Tudor Tea rooms (29 Harbour Street, Whitstable, Kent, CT5 1AH, 01227 273167, <http://goo.gl/s76hk4>). There is also a Peter Cushing-themed Wetherspoons Pub, located in a former cinema that features sumptuous art deco furnishings. The pub currently has a small display of film posters and stills from Hammer's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1959) just inside the entrance (16–18 Oxford Street, Whitstable, Kent, CT5 1DD, 01227 284100, <https://goo.gl/VD5jR4>).

Readers will be pleased to learn that, after a turbulent summer, the **Criterion Restaurant** has reopened. It has been taken over by the Savini Restaurant Group and the menu now has a distinctly Italian flavour, but otherwise very little has changed and the plaque commemorating the meeting between Watson and Stamford on New Year's Day 1881 remains in place (224 Piccadilly, London W1J 9HP, 07493248819 <http://goo.gl/HROPUr>).

Christmas post allowing, members will have received the Winter 2015 issue of **The Sherlock Holmes Journal**. Highlights include an article on 'Sherlock Holmes and the London Underground' by Guy Marriott, a consideration of Moriarty's existence by Nishant Kumar, and a review of *Mr Holmes* by Russell Merritt.

In the SHJ's Obituaries, Roger Johnson notes the passing of the Australian-born actor, **Keith Michell** on 20 November 2015, and writes: 'In 1979 he was magnificent as Sherlock Holmes in the original British production of *The Crucifer of Blood* at the Theatre Royal Haymarket.'

Roger has also noted the passing of the screen writer **Anthony Read** on 21 November 2015. He was script editor on the 1968 *Sherlock Holmes* series on BBC TV, with Peter Cushing and Nigel Stock, and he created and wrote (with Richard Carpenter) the 1982 BBC TV series *The Baker Street Boys*. More recently he wrote seven novels inspired by the series.

American actress **Marjorie Lloyd** died on 28 November 2015, aged 97. She walked around with dynamite in her handbag as Nancy Partridge alongside Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce in *Sherlock Holmes in Washington* (1943).

Star of Yorkshire Television's 1970s TV adaptation of *Raffles*, **Anthony Valentine**, died on 2 December 2015, aged 76. Valentine was superb as the nefarious Baron Gruner in Granada's adaptation of 'The Illustrious Client.' Like Edward Hardwicke, he was also a veteran of the BBC's 1970s series *Colditz*.

Sherlock Holmes's 'birthday' is almost upon us, which means it is nearly time for our next event: our **Annual Dinner** at the House of Commons is taking place on Saturday 9 January. The title this year is 'The Beryl Coronation' in homage to 'The Beryl Coronet' and to our special guest: Beryl Vertue.

To clarify a note from the previous DM, Flicker Alley's BluRay/DVD release of **William Gillette's Sherlock Holmes (1916)** is region-free. I have played my copy on a number of different UK devices with no problem whatsoever. It is also an incredibly comprehensive release, featuring two complete versions of the film (the original discovered French-language version, and an English-language version translated from the French). There is a wealth of bonus material, including newsreel footage, a typescript of the play, Robert Byrne's presentation from the 2015 San Francisco Silent Film Festival, et al. There are even other short movies thrown in: *Sherlock Holmes Baffled* (1900); *A Canine Sherlock* (1912); and Italian trick-film *Più forte che Sherlock Holmes* (1913). A booklet of essays by a host of contributors including Russell Merritt, Céline Ruivo and Neil Brand gives you the history of the discovery and restoration of the film. This is a treasure trove and a marvellous celebration of Gillette's iconic interpretation of Holmes.

As mentioned in the last DM, the Museum of London's '**The Crime Museum Uncovered**' exhibition is now open and runs until 10 April 2016. This is the first time that items from the Metropolitan Police's legendary museum have been put on public display. It is very easy to imagine Sherlock Holmes visiting - and probably contributing to - this collection when it was housed at Scotland Yard. Conan Doyle was given a tour in 1892, in the company of E. W. Hornung and Jerome K. Jerome - the visitors' book signed by all three authors is on display. With items relating to infamous Victorian criminals such as Charles Peace, Neill Cream and the Tichborne Claimant, this exhibition deals very closely with criminal and investigative history contemporaneous with the Canon, as well as more recent events (despite indicating that crimes after 1975 would not feature, there is a section on Terrorism that deals with events as recent as 2007). It will not appeal to everyone, of course, and if you are likely to be disturbed by items relating to violence, murder and capital punishment then this is not for you. For those of us with a strong interest in the history of crime and detection, however, this is an important exhibition. In keeping with the Museum's purpose, it has noticeably been curated with a focus on the social history of London rather than on the development of criminology or forensic science, which sadly means the stories of the officers and scientists who foiled the criminals are often skirted over. The arrangement of the exhibition is infused with curatorial anxiety, as if those responsible for displaying the objects are terrified by the idea of people actually looking at them - a long row of display cases relating to individual landmark cases are boxed together so closely that they are difficult to view for any length of time during busy periods. It lacks the artistic confidence of the 'Forensics' display held at the Wellcome Collection last year. Despite its faults, I would highly recommend this to those of you with a Sherlockian interest in the study of crime, as it is a rare opportunity to see some fascinating and notorious objects (Neill Cream's pills, Charles Peace's violin, Dr. Crippen's pyjamas). Details can be found on the Museum's website (<http://goo.gl/LZRFSH>). The curators have also produced a book about the exhibition, and if you cannot make it to the museum in person then you can purchase this from their online shop (<http://goo.gl/TDmcaA>).

Big Finish Productions, best known for their Doctor Who audio dramas featuring original cast members, have released an adaptation of Andy Lane's 1994 novel *All-Consuming Fire* (under 'Andrew' Lane, he is known for his more recent *Young Sherlock Holmes* series of YA novels). In this story, Holmes and Watson are enlisted by the Vatican to investigate the theft of three books from the Library of St John the Beheaded, which houses 'the most dangerous books in all creation.' They soon cross paths with the 7th Doctor, with whom they must collaborate to save humanity. It is a fantastically entertaining and adventurous crossover romp, and if you have ever yearned for an encounter between Holmes and the Doctor then this will warm your heart (though if it does, please be careful and do not spontaneously combust in the manner of the story's less fortunate characters). Sylvester McCoy and Sophie Aldred reprise their roles as the Doctor and Ace, Nicholas Briggs and Richard Earl return as Big Finish's regular Holmes and Watson, and Hugh Fraser (Hastings from ITV's *Poirot*) joins in as the non-canonical older Holmes brother, Sherringford. The script was written by Guy Adams (The Breath of God, The Army of Dr. Moreau). *All-Consuming Fire* is available from the Big Finish website as a CD or audio download (<http://goo.gl/k3AXMx>).

On 23 December 2015, the BBC News website reported that the High Court challenge to the redevelopment of **Undershaw** has failed and the conversion of the building into new premises for Stepping Stones school will be going ahead: <http://goo.gl/6xpj3B>

On 27 December 2015, ITV aired a one-off drama titled **Harry Price: Ghost Hunter**. Conan Doyle famously tried to get Harry Price evicted from rooms he rented from the London Spiritualist Alliance after, like Houdini, he tried to expose the spirit photographer William Hope as a fraud (Alistair Duncan discusses this in his recent book from MX Publishing: *No Better Place*). Sadly, ITV's show did not deal with this incident, or with very much other biographical material from Price's life. Instead, *Ghost Hunter* was a rather generic ghostly thriller, though it did boast a cameo from the wonderful David Burke. If you missed it, it will be available on the ITV website for the next three weeks: <http://goo.gl/zyNh3R>. Far more entertaining is this British Movietone film of the real Harry Price, in which he discusses ghosts and psychic phenomena: <https://youtu.be/u6I0jtOQMAA>

Early in December, I had the pleasure of joining three other Society members to take part as a team in Hidden City's '**Moriarty's Game**.' This is an immersive street game that involves following clues around Mayfair in order to locate Professor Moriarty's 'safe house.' Starting at the beautiful Royal Institute of British Architects, we followed a trail laid out in cryptic text messages from the Professor himself. Telling you too much about the experience would spoil it for you, but I would recommend this as a very diverting way to spend an afternoon with your Sherlockian friends, and you will see parts of London you may never otherwise visit. The experience runs until 31 March 2016 and costs £60 per team. You will need a mobile phone to play and, as some of the clues involve visits to public houses, it is strictly over-18s only. See the Hidden City website for more details and to purchase tickets: <http://goo.gl/K7FFoC>.

Robert Langenfeld, editor of the academic journal *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, sends word of the inclusion of an article by Douglas Kerr (University of Hong Kong) on Conan Doyle's Professor Challenger in a recent edition. The ELT's back catalogue features articles of Sherlockian interest. You can view a list of contents of previous issues here: <http://goo.gl/8Ppkfq>.

According to The Portsmouth News, there may be plans afoot for a touring exhibition featuring highlights from the city's **Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, which is comprised predominantly of articles bequeathed by our former chairman, Richard Lancelyn Green: <http://goo.gl/EjC3u4>.

The International Sherlock Holmes Exhibition remains at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science in Colorado until 31 January 2016. Its next destination is the Telus World of Science in Edmonton,

Canada. You can find up-to-date information on the exhibition's website: <http://goo.gl/YwkU0G>.

The touring interactive murder-mystery exhibition '**Sherlock Holmes and the Clocktower Mystery**' reopens at The National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium in Dubuque, Iowa, on 16 January 2016: <http://goo.gl/ANOZLk>.

In the run up to the BBC's *Sherlock* special, there were publicity articles and stills everywhere, including Benedict Cumberbatch in a deerstalker on the cover of the *Radio Times*. Something more unusual and obscure you might have missed is *Vintage Explorer* magazine's Dec 2015/ Jan 2016 issue which presents a focus on 'Sherlock's Style' and the 'mantics' of Baker Street. See the magazine's website here: <http://goo.gl/igaE3Q>.

And so on to '**The Abominable Bride**' – and **SPOILERS**. Do not read any further if you have yet to watch the episode as I will be revealing plot details in this review. As had been widely publicised, there was a temporal shift back to the 1890s, re-re-imagining Sherlock and John in the world of their canonical originals, investigating a case with nods to 'The Five Orange Pips' and Ricoletti and his abominable wife in a reference from 'The Musgrave Ritual.' It was an aesthetically dazzling affair, with nods to Granada and *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, but perhaps most strikingly, to itself. Slowly the Victorian setting began to unravel, and it was revealed that we were watching the internal conflicts of Sherlock's Hannibal-esque 'mind palace.' Sitting on the plane where he had been left at the end of series 3, Sherlock binged on a dangerous list of drugs to enhance his contemplation of an unsolved case from the 1890s which possibly bore similarities to Moriarty's suspected resurrection. Resorting to the dream device (notoriously once employed to hammy effect by *Dallas*) could have been a cop-out, but the result was a move towards post-modern deconstruction through self-analysis. Here was modern Sherlock, imagining what it would be like to be his Doylean original, and so questioning the very act of adaptation (which was adeptly reversed later in the episode). Though it often leaves more questions than answers, *Sherlock* has always been willing to show its working. It was a bold act that challenged the audience to question the show's interpretation. In the age of social media, criticism happened very quickly in a knee-jerk fashion showing little attention to context. Commentators unaware of 'The Five Orange Pips' were baffled by the KKK red herring, and there was outrage in the *Telegraph* over Sherlock 'mansplaining' feminism to a group of anachronistic suffragettes (ignoring the revelation that they existed purely in his imagination and the only person he was talking to was himself). Admittedly there were moments that peeved me a little, like the perpetuation of the spurious assertion that Watson studied at Bart's (the first thing we are told in *A Study in Scarlet* is that he studied at the University of London, of which Bart's was not part until 1900), but this is just geeky nit-picking. 'The Abominable Bride' was exceptionally written, superbly acted, high-class, intelligent, self-reflexive entertainment that demanded the audience engage their brains and pay attention. We will be talking about this for years to come.

And finally...There was, of course, a wealth of weird and wacky merchandise released to appeal to the Sherlock fan over the Christmas period, including - and I admit to this being a recently-acquired guilty pleasure of mine - *Sherlock: The Mind Palace: The Official Colouring Book* (available to order for £6.99 from the BBC Shop <http://goo.gl/DsIo0P>). There is also the excellently-titled *Benedict Cumberbatch*: yes, it's a book with 15 patterns for the fan who wishes to render Benedict Cumberbatch in a cross-stitch design (available from Amazon <http://goo.gl/QU5oL1>). My knowledge of cross-stitch is nil, so I am unqualified to comment on this. If neither of these options appeal to you as time-wasters, why not try this Sherlock Holmes-themed hidden-object online pinball game forwarded to me by its creator: <http://goo.gl/NnYj4a>.