



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

Jean Upton, Mole End, 41 Sandford Road, Chelmsford CM2 6DE

e-mail: district.messenger@yahoo.com

No. 398 April 2020

While the lockdown continues, we recommend that you check the Society's website for regular updates on items of interest: www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk.

Our Honorary Member Philip Porter, proprietor of Porter Press International, is offering the remaining copies of the Classic Edition of Douglas Wilmer's memoirs, *Stage Whispers* at £14.95 each, of which 75% will be donated to the World Health Organisation's COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund. This link will take you to the Porter Press website:

https://porterpress.co.uk/products/stage-whispers-douglas-wilmer-the-memoirs-standard-edition?_pos=2&_sid=761eb1bb9&_ss=r

or to 'Buy Now', this link goes straight to check-out:

https://porter-press-international.myshopify.com/cart/40554189577:1?channel=buy_button

Andrew Jupp at the BBC has confirmed that Series 6 of the *Sherlock Holmes* 1966/67 radio series with Carleton Hobbs will be broadcast on Radio 4 Extra from April 23 for nine weekdays.

Nancy Holder has discovered on YouTube a short video of Basil Rathbone reciting Vincent Starrett's poem, *221B*. The virtual animation is a bit creepy, but if you can ignore the visual element it's a pleasant rendition. Here's the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12iCXXzKQSU>

From *Radio Times* 11-17 April issue: "Time for some nostalgia? There are plenty of episodes available from the 1940s starring Basil Rathbone as Sherlock Holmes. Introduced by the fictional 'Boston Blackie', these will while away the hours. Listen at <https://www.stitcher.com/>"

If you're struggling to find ways to keep yourself occupied, The Happy Puzzle Company is offering a set of two attractive wooden Sherlock Holmes puzzles – *The Case of the Priceless Coin* and *The Case of the Treasury Safe*. Suggested for ages 8 to adult, they have three levels of difficulty and a selection of clues.

www.happypuzzle.co.uk/products/set-of-two-sherlock-holmes-puzzles.aspx?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI27aUsILO6AIVV-DtCh1KxwsUEAQYASABEGkTX_D_BwE

Paul Thomas Miller has done much to raise the spirits of many Sherlockians through his creation of Doyle's Rotary Coffin, a Portsmouth-based society which aims to promote positivity in the Sherlockian community. As Paul says, "If

you would like to become a member, you already are. If you'd like to seal the deal you can print yourself a membership card from the website, but you don't have to. We hope you accept your invitation to share the Holmesian enthusiasm of others in ways you might not have considered otherwise." The DRC's first publication, *No Holmes Barred: Being a Scrapbook of Holmesiana* includes contributions from twenty-five Sherlockians in a collection of thirty-two essays, pastiches and artwork (140pp, paperback), which is now available on Amazon at the cost of production. There is a free pdf to download at <https://sites.google.com/site/doylesrotarycoffin/>

Submissions are currently being considered for a DRC second volume, *However Improbable*, planned for summer 2020. The new book will feature poems, essays, stories and artwork around the theme of "Utterly Bizarre Holmes." Submissions should be sent for consideration to DoylesRotaryCoffin@outlook.com

The elusive street artist Banksy, who has been observing the lockdown with the rest of us, has posted photos on Instagram of his latest artwork. It depicts what are clearly distant relatives of the Giant Rat of Sumatra, hilariously wreaking havoc in his bathroom. Apparently not everyone in his household is delighted. Banksy commented, "My wife hates it when I work from home." <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/banksy-creates-lockdown-bathroom-182917821.html>

Earlier in the year, Chapter House Theatre announced that they would be including *Sherlock Holmes and the Hound of the Baskervilles* as part of this summer's open-air programme of productions. Because of COVID-19, the tour will not be going ahead, but you can keep in touch for future tour dates and venues at <http://chapterhouse.org/>

Steve Emecz of MX Publishing knows that we will all be looking for ways to while away our time at home, so he has donated an assortment of books for a Grab Bag Giveaway. Titles include: *Sherlock Holmes on the Air* by Matthew J Elliott; *The MX Book of New Sherlock Holmes Stories Part X: 2018 Annual* edited by David Marcum; *Sherlock Holmes and the Dead Boer at Scotney Castle* by Tim Symonds; *Sherlock Holmes and the Murder at Lodore Falls* by Charlotte Smith; and *Conan Doyle Notes: The Secret of Jack the Ripper* by Diane Gilbert Madsen.

If you would like to receive a surprise book in the post, simply email or post me your favourite positive or amusing quote from a Sherlock Holmes story. The first half-dozen

or so respondents will be sent a title at random. To take a look at all of MX's Sherlock Holmes titles go to <https://mxpublishing.com/>

Books of Interest

A Knife in the Fog by Bradley Harper (Seventh Street Books; 288pp pbk, \$15.95). I'm always delighted to discover a new author, who I can recommend unreservedly! This is the debut novel of a retired US Army pathologist who has recently turned to writing. (He is especially busy in December. Have a look at the photo on his website and you will immediately see why: <https://bharperauthor.com/>.) In *A Knife in the Fog*, the young Southsea doctor Conan Doyle assists the London Metropolitan Police in the hunt for Jack the Ripper, joined by his former Edinburgh Professor, Joseph Bell and Miss Margaret Harkness, a real-life historical author and Suffragette who was living in Whitechapel at the time of the Ripper murders (you can still find her books online). The mix of real-life characters in a fictional setting works remarkably well, and they interact in a believable manner. The author has excelled at capturing Conan Doyle's uncomplicated, direct style of prose. Although the occasional Americanism creeps into the text, it's a good story that has a realistic and sympathetic approach to the desperate life of the poor in the slums of the East End.

Unsurprisingly, the book was a Finalist for the Edgar Award for Best First Novel, and went on to win the Silver Falchion for Best Mystery at Killer Nashville. The audiobook, narrated by Royal Shakespeare Company alumnus Mathew Lloyd Davies won Audiofile Magazine's 2019 Earphone award in the Mystery and Suspense category.

The second novel in the series, *Queen's Gambit*, involves Margaret Harkness in a struggle to prevent an anarchist from assassinating Queen Victoria during her Diamond Jubilee. Conan Doyle makes only a brief cameo appearance but Joseph Bell is rather more involved.

Bradley reports that he is working on a third novel, which places Margaret aboard the Titanic, and involves a gang of all-female thieves. It sounds like great fun, and I look forward to reading it.

Obituaries

Catherine Cooke sends the sad news that SHSL member **Norman Nathan** died on 4 April. "Norman was a keen sailor and received many cruising awards. He was a member of The Little Ship Club in London, enabling us to have a very successful meeting at the club in 2007. He received an honours in Maths at Queens College, Cambridge and worked as an Electrical Engineer. For many years he was also a member of the Internal Committee to set standards on electrical plugs and sockets."

Andrew Jack died on 31 March, age 76. He was a highly regarded dialect coach on many prominent films such as *Robin Hood*, *Guardians of the Galaxy* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and worked with Robert Downey Jr. on *Sherlock Holmes*. He was also a versatile actor, both on-screen and in voice-work, and will be remembered by Star

Wars fans as Caluan Ematt, a Resistance officer in *The Force Awakens* and *The Last Jedi*.

Hans Meyer died on 3 April, age 94. Born in South Africa, his acting career took off in the 1960s with appearances in numerous French films. In a career spanning more than 60 years he is probably best known for playing Hauptmann Frans Ulman in the 1970s television series *Colditz*. He was to meet up again with fellow *Colditz* actor **Edward Hardwicke** when he appeared in *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes: The Master Blackmailer* (1992) as Hebworth/Veitch.

Tim Brooke-Taylor died on 12 April, age 79. A member of the Cambridge Footlights, he went on to be an actor and prolific comedy writer for stage, television and radio. A veteran performer on radio programmes such as *I'm Sorry I'll Read That Again* and *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue*, he will always be remembered for his appearances with Graeme Garden and Bill Oddie as *The Goodies*, which ran for 10 years on BBC television. (We of a certain vintage take great delight in re-watching the *Kitten Kong* episode.) Tim was appointed OBE in 2011 for his services to entertainment.

An episode of *I'm Sorry I'll Read That Again*, broadcast on 18 October 1965, included a Sherlock Holmes spoof, "The Singular Case of the Workington Shillelagh" with Catermole Sharp and Dr. Gaskit solving a baffling crime. Unfortunately, I could not find a recording. However, you can listen to a brief clip, "A Visit to Sherlock Holmes," from a 1973 episode about Jack the Ripper. Performers include Tim Brooke-Taylor, Bill Oddie, John Cleese, Jo Kendall and David Hatch. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmuHP1S7JgE>

Periodicals Received:

Canadian Holmes, Spring 2020 (**The Journal of the Bootmakers of Toronto**, Mark and JoAnn Alberstat, 46 Kingston Crescent, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, B3A 2M2, Canada; markalberstat@gmail.com)

Ineffable Twaddle, April 2020 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen; terri@soundofthebaskervilles.com)

Scuttlebutt from the Spermacti Press, March 2020 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net, <http://redcircledc.org/index.php?id=39>)

The Torr, Spring 2020 (**The Poor Folk Upon the Moors**, Stephan Arthur; editor.poorfolk@gmail.com)

The Whaling News, April 2020 (**The Harpooners of the Sea Unicorn, St. Charles, MO**; J Andrew Basford; pcairnes26@outlook.com)

Jean Upton