

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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The Society's newsletter, *The District Messenger*, is in need of a new editor. Founded by **Roger Johnson** as *The Grapevine Service*, back in 1982, it has become an invaluable resource. The complete back run is available on the Society's website at <https://www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/newsletter/>

Edited by **Roger** for many years, and by **Jean Upton** for seven years, the newsletter is now in need of a **new editor**. This is your chance to contribute to the ongoing activities of the Society, shape the newsletter as we go forward, and help create a permanent record of Sherlockian matters in the wider world.

While founded as an irregular newsletter, *The District Messenger* now publishes approximately monthly. The new editor would collate information about events, plays, new books, films, games, Sherlockian obituaries – anything that members would find useful to know. The editor would be able to gather the material themselves, or sit motionless in the centre of their web of informants, then distil the information into the equivalent of two sides of A4, to be distributed as a PDF attachment. If this opportunity is of interest to you, please get in touch with me at c.cooke@dsl.pipex.com

Sherlock Holmes - The Valley of Fear, adapted for stage by **Nick Lane** and presented by **Blackeyed Theatre** in association with South Hill Park, will be at **The Theatre Royal Bath** from Tuesday 16th to Saturday 20th April 2024. "Crammed full of adventure, mystery and of course one or two rather brilliant deductions, *The Valley of Fear* is brought to life in this spectacular new stage adaptation". <https://www.theatreroyal.org.uk/events/sherlock-holmes-the-valley-of-fear/>

After her series in which she examined **Agatha Christie**, **Lucy Worsley** turned her attention to **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**, with a three-part series broadcast during December. *Killing Sherlock* presents "the story of a power struggle between two men - one fictional, and one real. In one corner is the master of crime – the greatest detective who never lived, Sherlock Holmes. The other is writer, physician and spiritualist leader Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Lucy

Worsley explores the extraordinary love-hate relationship between author and creation". Those in the UK who missed the series will be able to watch on BBC iPlayer.

Mark Gatiss is well known to the Sherlockian world, and provided two treats for UK Sherlockians over Christmas. As part of the BBC's *Inside Classical* series, he played Sherlock Holmes in a television presentation of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, written and composed by **Neil Brand** and originally performed at the Barbican on 20th December 2022. His new adaptation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's short story, *Lot No 249*, was the BBC's Christmas ghost story, the first television adaptation since the lost 1967 BBC adaptation (although it appeared in the 1990 portmanteau film, *Tales from the Darkside*). Both programmes are available on iPlayer in the UK.

Actor **Joss Ackland** died on 19th November 2023 at the age of 95. Born in 1928 he appeared in over 100 films and was a regular with both the Old Vic and The Royal Shakespeare Company. He will be remembered by Sherlockians for his performance as Jephro Rucastle in the Granada television 1985 "*The Copper Beeches*". He also appeared as The Hon. Philip Green in the BBC's "*The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax*" (1965), as the American President in *The End of Civilisation as We Know It* and King Edward in *Sherlock Holmes: Incident at Victoria Falls*. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2023/nov/20/joss-ackland-obituary>

The Society recently lost valued members **Desmond Tyler** and **John Baesch**. More details appear in the Winter issue of the *Sherlock Holmes Journal*

This is of necessity a somewhat short and retrospective newsletter. As a subscriber, who we hope finds the information of value, may we urge you to consider whether you could take on the editorship. It need not be onerous – *The District Messenger* is what the editor makes it.

Your Society needs you!

Catherine Cooke