

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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A Tangled Skein (*The Baker Street Journal*, PO Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, USA; \$21.95) was edited by Leslie S Klinger to accompany the **Baker Street Irregulars'** trip to the Country of the Saints. The 'Mormon episode' of *A Study in Scarlet* tends to be dismissed as a mushily romantic, geographically absurd, and historically inaccurate appendage to the main body of the novel – all criticisms that are deserved to some extent, but as Will Bagley demonstrates, the totalitarian theocracy described by Conan Doyle was not imaginary. Things had changed when he visited Utah in the 1920s, and they have changed more since then, but the Church of the Latter Day Saints still seems reluctant to be open about the darker episodes in its history. Marshall S Berdan reveals that 'The Country of the Saints' reads like sober fact compared to the fantasy that undoubtedly influenced it, 'The Story of the Destroying Angel', from *The Dynamiter: More New Arabian Nights* by Robert Louis Stevenson & Fanny van de Grift Stevenson. And then there's Conan Doyle's (thankfully) unproduced play *Angels of Darkness*, which tells essentially the same story as 'The Country of the Saints' but ends with Lucy embraced by, er, Dr Watson... The play appears, as Peter Blau notes, to postdate the novel. *A Tangled Skein* is full of good things – Steven Doyle on *Beeton's Christmas Annual*, Donald Pollock on Sir Richard Burton's visit to Salt Lake City, Ben Vizoskie on the Danites' sign and counter-sign, Steve Hockensmith on Holmes out west, Greg Darak on reconciling the novel and the play. And more! I do wonder what connection the 'Dorando affair' at the 1908 London Olympics has with *A Study in Scarlet*, but I'm glad to have Clifford Goldfarb's essay, which scotches the suggestions that Conan Doyle assisted Dorando Pietri across the finishing line of the marathon. *A Tangled Skein* can be ordered online at www.bakerstreetjournal.com.

For the **Sherlock Holmes Society of London's** visit to Portsmouth, Bob Ellis and Guy Marriott edited *I Proceeded to Portsmouth*, a collection of new articles and reprints. The latter include Percy Metcalfe's discovery that the *Orontes* brought invalids from the Afghan War to Portsmouth on just one occasion, establishing the true date of *A Study in Scarlet*, Geoffrey Stavert's essays on First World War espionage (the real German spies were less efficient than Von Bork) and on the influence of Southsea on the Holmes Canon, and Yasha Beresiner's examination of Freemasonry in the life of Conan Doyle. Derek Hinrich considers a tragic-comedy of espionage. Grant Eustace and Guy Marriott examine the early days of the submarine, and the place of the Bruce-Partington. Guy also looks at the great military hospital at Netley, and at the Doyle family graves in Hampshire. Edward Lacey tells a little about the Richard Lancelyn Green Bequest and how the City of Portsmouth is progressing with the immense task of cataloguing and processing every item. And, in contrast to the BSI's book, *I Proceeded to Portsmouth* is well illustrated, both with photographs, including three rescued by Andrew Palacio from a rubbish bin at Netley, and with five new drawings by José-Luis Errazquin. *I Proceeded to Portsmouth* is available at £7.50 plus postage from Judi Ellis at 13 Crofton Avenue, Orpington, Kent BR6 8DU; 01689 811314; e-mail SHSL221b@aol.com. (Judi also has copies of *To Keep the Memory Green: Reflections on the Life of Richard Lancelyn Green, 1953-2004*, priced at £17.50 postpaid within the UK, £20.00 or €30.00 to Europe, £22.50 or \$45.00 elsewhere.)

Sherlock Holmes on the Stage: A Chronological Encyclopedia of Plays Featuring the Great Detective by Amnon Kabatchnik (Scarecrow Press, c/o Book Network Int'l Ltd, Estover Road, Plymouth PL6 7PY; £36.00) was published in May, though I learned of it just recently. Author and publisher being American, it's understandably oriented towards North American plays, but it's nice to see, for instance, good coverage of *The Secret of Sherlock Holmes* and *Sherlock Holmes – The Last Act!* The chronology goes up to 2006, though nothing is listed between *Murder in*

Baker Street (2002) and *Clash of the Vampires* (2006) and there's no mention of the phenomenally popular *Sherlock Holmes: The Final Adventure*. Inevitably in a book of just over 200 pages some plays are given just a brief glance, but it seems odd that one of them should be the hugely successful *The Crucifer of Blood*, with no reference to the fine London production. This useful and interesting volume is not, alas, flawless. When we read that 'Doyle wrote sixty tales and three novels (the third was *The Valley of Fear*, 1915) featuring Holmes and his chronicler, Dr John H Watson,' we may wonder just how reliable the book is. Sir Arthur's reply to William Gillette's enquiry, 'May I marry Holmes?' was possibly rapid, but surely not 'rabid'. Seymour Hicks, who died in 1949, was knighted in 1935, not in 1953... But my main reservation is that there's simply not enough here to justify the very high price. Mr Kabatchnik's book complements Charles Hall & Peter Blythe's 1997 *On Stage: Sherlock Holmes: Comedy, Drama and Musicals*, but we're still waiting for the definitive book on Holmesian plays.

Paul Spiring reports that the Diocese of Exeter has rejected Roger Garrick-Steele's claim that Arthur Conan Doyle murdered his friend Bertram Fletcher Robinson, and has refused to allow Robinson's body to be exhumed (see today's *Western Morning News*). Now, with impeccable timing, comes *Bertram Fletcher Robinson: A Footnote to The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Brian W Pugh and Paul R Spiring (MX Publishing Ltd, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; £18.99 or \$28.95). It's not as bulky or as profound as the best lives of Conan Doyle: although Robinson achieved a good deal in his thirty-six years there probably isn't enough primary material extant to justify anything on that scale. What we have is a well illustrated, handsomely presented, and very readable account of his life as journalist, novelist and sportsman, with, naturally, particular emphasis on his part in the genesis of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. 'Bobbles', as his friends called him, seems to have been, as Conan Doyle said, a 'fine fellow', and it's no wonder that the two men liked each other. Amazon.co.uk has *Bertram Fletcher Robinson* at £12.34. A paperback edition is due next month.

You may know that Basil Rathbone was awarded the Military Cross for exemplary gallantry while serving on the Western Front in summer 1918. You may know that Nigel Bruce was so severely wounded by machine-gun fire that he was discharged from the army in 1915 as no longer fit for service – and the next year he enlisted again... *Famous 1914-1918* by Richard van Emden & Victor Puik (Pen & Sword Military, 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorks. S70 2AS; £25.00) tells their stories, and those of nineteen other British soldiers who served in the trenches and survived to become famous – or, in the case of John Reginald Halliday Christie, notorious. It's a fascinating book that shows a different side to such men as Ralph Vaughan Williams, Dennis Wheatley, Alexander Fleming, CS Lewis, Harold Macmillan and Arnold Ridley.

In 1999 Michael Mallory introduced Amelia Watson in *The Adventures of the Second Mrs Watson*, which I called 'a very neat idea stylishly executed. Sherlock Holmes knew where he stood with Mary, the first Mrs Watson, but he thinks that the doctor's spirited second wife Amelia takes up too much of his friend's time. She has a different view on the matter, and as she is pretty much the detective's match in ingenuity, intelligence and stubbornness the relationship is not exactly smooth.' *The Exploits of the Second Mrs Watson* (Top Publications Ltd, 3100 Independence Parkway, Suite 311-349, Plano, TX 75075, USA; £14.95) is no less entertaining.

Wilde about Holmes by Milo Yelesiyevich (Comic Masque, UPS Store #1052, PMB199 Zeckendorff Towers, 111 East 14th Street, New York, NY 10003, USA; 10 October 2008; \$19.95) is an intriguing blend of literary art, parody, political satire, historical mystery, and probably other

things as well. In New York, Sherlock Holmes enlists Oscar Wilde's aid in protecting candidate Grover Cleveland from a sexual scandal in the 1884 US presidential election. Lillie Langtry is the woman at the bottom of it all, and Professor Moriarty is the villain. Alternate chapters are narrated by Wilde and by Holmes, presenting the reader on occasion with contrasting views of the same event. The continental practice of introducing direct speech with a dash is a constant indication that English is not the author's first language (besides, I don't think 'bollix' thus spelt was used as a verb a century ago, and anyway I doubt very much that Holmes would have used it in recounting a case). But that doesn't really matter. Mr Yelesiyevich writes excellent English, tricked out here with Wildeisms and with sentences from the Holmesian Canon (and from Wittgenstein and others) adapted to circumstance. I'm about half-way through the book and enjoying it very much.

The de Vere Papers by Michael Langford (Parapress, The Basement, 9 Frant Road, Tunbridge Wells TN2 5SD; £7.99) is set in Cambridge, London and Castle Hedingham in 1868. Those familiar with the debate over whether Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare will have guessed that the novel has to do, in part, with the claim that the poet and playwright was really Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. Add the murder of a college librarian, the theft of valuable documents, and a legendary monastic treasure, and you have a truly singular case for young Dr Simon Weatherspoon to investigate. Professor Langford writes with easy knowledge of time, place and subject, and he juggles the pieces of the complex puzzle in masterly fashion.

Russell Miller's new biography *The Adventures of Arthur Conan Doyle* (Harvill Secker, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2SA; £20.00) will be published on 2 October. I've received a proof copy, but it deserves more time than I've been able to give, so I'll review it in the next issue. Meanwhile, Andrew Lycett's highly recommended *Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes* is now out in paperback from Phoenix (Orion House, 5 Upper St Martin's Lane, London WC2H 9EA; £10.99). Of the making of many books there is no end...

Holmes and Watson Country: Travels in Search of Solutions, the magnum opus of **Bernard Davies**, will be launched at our Society's meeting on 14 October in a limited edition of 200 copies, at £30.00. The book consists of two large hardback volumes, illustrated with more than fifty maps. There is also a special collectors' edition of 25 copies, the two volumes in an attractive slipcase, and both signed by the author, at £50.00. The special edition will be available on a first-come first-serve basis and will be limited to one per applicant. Advance orders are welcome particularly for the special collectors' editions. (Judi Ellis, 13 Crofton Avenue, Orpington, Kent BR6 8DU; 01689 811314; e-mail SHSL221b@aol.com). In view of the high cost of postage, members may arrange to collect their copies at the Society's meetings if they wish.

Anna Smyth wishes to sell her late husband Fraser's complete run of *The Sherlock Holmes Journal* from 1952 to 1990, and she is keen that it should stay within the UK. Offers are invited (think in the region of £1,000) at anna.smyth@ntlworld.com.

The August 2008 issue of the *Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-newsletter from **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA) is online at www.sherlock-holmes.com, with a great variety of Holmesian books and collectibles. See also www.cafepress.com/sherlockholmes2.

The One Voice Recordings website (the voice is that of the versatile actor David Ian Davies) is offering a Sherlock Holmes pen, based on cartoons by the famous *Mad Magazine* artist **Tom Richmond**. You can order direct at <http://onevoicerecordings.com/PenPage.html>.

David Palmer, artist in stained glass, has created a panel called *Spirit of Place*, which evokes Arthur Conan Doyle's presence amidst his former haunts in Mr Palmer's native city, Portsmouth. It's on display at The Cochrane Theatre Gallery, Southampton Row, London WC1 till 28 November 2008, and from January 2009 at the Stained Glass Museum at Ely Cathedral. You can see an image of the panel at <http://www.crimsonmonkey.co.uk/leading/>.

First Edition Audio Books at www.firsteditionaudiobooks.com/ offers more than 110 Sherlock Holmes titles, from the BBC and other publishers, for instant download, from as little as £1.19.

Bert Coules reports that the third series of *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, with Clive Merrison and Andrew Sachs, will consist of four plays to be broadcast on Friday afternoons beginning on 26

December. BBC Worldwide plans a four-disc set comprising the two unreleased plays from series 1 and 2 plus two from the new series.

On 23 August *Television and Radio Industry News* reported that **Steven Moffat** and **Mark Gatiss** are writing an updated Sherlock Holmes drama serial for Hartswood Films. When he was Guest of Honour at our Society's annual dinner, Mark Gatiss mentioned that he had an ambition to do something like this.

Richard Arnell: Ballet Music (Dutton Vocalion, PO Box 609, Watford, WD18 7YA) is a new recording, by the BBC Concert Orchestra conducted by Martin Yates, of Arnell's lively music for Kenneth Macmillan's 1953 ballet *The Great Detective*, together with *The Angels*.

From 23 to 25 October, at the **Wilde Theatre** in Bracknell (box office 01344 484123), TableNine Productions will repeat their well-reviewed play *The Extraordinary Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. See the website at www.tablenine.uk.com.

Peter Egan and Philip Franks take to the road again next month in Clive Francis' stunning play *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. They'll be at the **Theatre Royal**, Plymouth (01752 267222) 7-11 October; **Theatre Royal**, Bath (01225 448844) 13-18 October; **Richmond Theatre**, Richmond, Surrey (0870 060 6651) 20-25 October; and **Royal & Derngate Theatre**, Northampton (01604 624811) 3-8 November.

It appears that Russell Crowe will not be Watson to Robert Downey Jr's Holmes in **Guy Ritchie's** forthcoming film, but he may still be in the cast, as may Sienna Miller. Mark Strong *has* been signed up, to play a character named Blackwood,

The magazine *Around the Wolds and North Yorkshire* featured good Holmesian articles by **Rafe McGregor** in issue 113 ('Yorkshire's Greatest Detective') and issue 121 ('Sherlock Holmes in Whitby'). Rafe has copies available at £2.50 plus postage from rafeg@aol.com.

Peter Blau reports the death on 29 July of **Larry Townsend**, author of *The Sexual Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* – homosexual pornography, written with considerable knowledge of the Canon. **Terence Rigby**, who died on 10 August aged seventy-one, excelled in the plays of Harold Pinter but is likely to be remembered for his rôles as policemen and crooks on film and television. His Watson to Tom Baker's Holmes in BBC TV's 1982 *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was under-rated at the time, not least by me, and although he played Inspector Layton [*sic*] in *The Sign of Four* for Mapleton in 1983 it might have been better had he swapped with David Healy, who was Watson. Ted Schulz reports that **John Ruyle**, 'bookman, author, poet, printer, artist and Sherlockian', creator of the cherishable Turlock Loams parodies, died on 15 August. He was invested into the BSI as 'Baron Dowson' in 1983. **Ken Campbell**, a true maverick of the theatre, was famous for both intimate one-man shows and epic productions such as the eight-hour trilogy *Illuminatus!* He was a memorable James Ryder in Granada TV's *The Blue Carbuncle* in 1984. The *Scarlet Street* message board reports the recent death of **Gertan Klauber**, whose long career included small rôles in *The Boscombe Valley Mystery* (BBC TV, 1968), *The Seven-per-cent Solution* (1976) and *Sherlock Holmes and the Leading Lady* (1992).

Periodicals received. **The Baker Street Journal**, Summer 2008 (Steven Rothman, 220, West Rittenhouse Square, #15-D, Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA; subscriptions, PO Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, USA; correspondence for **The Baker Street Irregulars** should go to Michael Whelan, 7938 Mill Stream Circle, Indianapolis, IN 46278, USA). **The Illustrious Clients News**, September 2008 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). **Ineffable Twaddle**, September 2008 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). **Mayday Mayday** and **The Look Out**, September 2008, (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcairn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). **The Petrel Flyer**, Fall 2008 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). **The School Report**, Autumn 2008 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY).

And **Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press**, August 2008 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

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