

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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Two awards that should have been bestowed at the Society's annual dinner had to be postponed because the beneficiaries were snowed in over the weekend. Fortunately they were present at the March meeting, so, to well-merited applause, the Chairman presented the annual Tony Howlett Award to **Lynne Godden** and conferred Honorary Membership, the Society's highest and rarest tribute, upon **Auberon Redfearn**.

A couple of years ago Dr Redfearn portrayed the great detective in **Alan Stockwell's** murder mystery play, *The Singular Adventure of the Gloved Pianist*. Now the author has published the script, along with a fuller account of the case, as told by Dr Watson, in *Sherlock Holmes and the Singular Adventure of the Gloved Pianist* (Vesper Hawk Publishing, Vesper Cottage, Vesper Hawk Lane, Smarden, Ashford, Kent TN27 8PU; £4.95, \$6.95 or €5.95). Always at a loss for a suitable Christmas present for his friend, Dr Watson gives him a subscription to the Baker Street Chamber Music Society, little suspecting that the first recital they attend will be marred by the gruesome murder of Guido Salvato, the celebrated 'gloved pianist'. The suspects include a professional rival and a jilted lover, but Holmes needs all his skill and specialist knowledge to discover the culprit. Watson's narrative includes a less grisly but equally baffling mystery, that of the disappearance of the Hon. Edward Dunstable. As I said of the earlier volume, *The Singular Adventures of Mr Sherlock Holmes* (also available from Vesper Hawk): 'The style is an acceptable simulacrum of Dr Watson's, and Mr Stockwell clearly knows his period and his Canon. He also has an engagingly inventive imagination.' The acting version of *The Gloved Pianist* would be great fun to stage, as the audience has a significant rôle in the drama. There are fuller details at <http://mrsherlockholmes.co.uk>.

Lawrence Fischman narrates *The French Artillery Officer* (Gram's Group Ltd, 18 Royal Way, Dallas, TX 75229, USA; \$24.99 hardback, \$14.99 paperback) in the third person, which frees him from the need to reproduce Dr Watson's style in recounting Sherlock Holmes's reluctant investigation of the infamous *Affaire Dreyfus*. In 1894 Captain Alfred Dreyfus was convicted of passing French military secrets to the Germans and was sentenced to life imprisonment on Devil's Island. It soon became evident that Dreyfus was an innocent victim of anti-Semitism. Five years on, his supporters campaign for a re-trial, but powerful forces are determined that the truth must not be discovered. Holmes might resist a request from his brother Mycroft, or even from the Prime Minister, but he can't refuse a personal plea from the Queen. Mycroft's office provides financial support, but makes it clear that if Holmes or Watson fall foul of the French authorities, the British government will deny all knowledge of their mission. Inevitably, they come into contact with some familiar personalities, including Winston Churchill, César Ritz, Alphonse Bertillon, Oscar Wilde and Caroline Otero, but their presence rarely seems forced. *The French Artillery Officer* is a big book, and the proof-reading isn't brilliant, especially of the French phrases, but the story is compelling, and it's well told.

Young Sherlock Holmes: Death Cloud by **Andrew Lane** (Macmillan Children's Books, 20 New Wharf Road, London N1 9RR; 4 June; £6.99) is the first children's book to be commissioned by the Conan Doyle Estate Ltd. (It was a pleasure to see Catherine and Richard Doyle at the book-launch with their families.) This isn't the first attempt to imagine the great detective's boyhood, of course, but Mr Lane plays fair with Victorian history and with the life and character of Sherlock Holmes. Fourteen-year-old Sherlock is removed from his boarding school and sent to live with relations in rural Surrey, where he incurs the disfavour of a sinister housekeeper but earns the friendship of a most unusual tutor, Amyus Crowe, an American tracker and bounty hunter. Crowe's lessons come in useful when Sherlock is faced with the puzzle of a strange and deadly dark cloud. In solving the mystery, he makes

enemies as well as friends; I need only say that the ultimate villain has devised colossal schemes... The novel combines ingenuity and breathtaking excitement with a real feeling for character. Future books will take Holmes through to his time at university, and I for one am looking forward to reading them!

The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection at Toronto Public Library (Clifford Goldfarb, Scotia Plaza, Suite 3100, 40 King Street W, Toronto, Ontario M6C 1T1, Canada) have published the 2008 Cameron Hollyer Memorial Lecture as a nice 32-page booklet. This is *Tincture of Conan Doyle: Christopher Morley on Sherlock Holmes* by **Steven Rothman** (no price given). Steve Rothman is probably the world's leading authority on Morley – who deserves to be remembered for many more achievements than his founding of the Baker Street Irregulars. Later this year the Friends plan to publish the 2009 Lecture, *Arthur Conan Doyle as Essayist and Journalist* by Michael Dirda.

Two stories alternate in *The Magnificent Spilsbury and the case of the Brides in the Bath* by **Jane Robins** (John Murray, 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH; £16.99 hardback, £12.99 paperback), told seemingly in parallel until the moment when they merge. We're introduced in turn to three pleasant single ladies, no longer young and seemingly destined to live alone. Into each one's life comes a plausible, charismatic man who proposes marriage. Such is his charm that the lady hardly hesitates, and she seems only too willing to make a will in his favour and to insure her life – and to take a bath when he suggests it... In contrast to these sad little lives, brutally cut short, is the rise to fame of the brilliant forensic pathologist Bernard Spilsbury. He came to public notice as an expert witness at the trial of Dr Crippen, but it was this case that made his name. Jane Robins is both a scrupulous historian and an excellent writer. She tells the extraordinary story with the skill of a major novelist. She paints a vivid picture of lower middle class life in Edwardian England, when marriage was the goal of every woman and a bathroom was a rare luxury. And she brings each individual to life for us: Bessie, Alice and Margaret, the unfortunate victims; the intelligent and determined detective, Arthur Neil; the flamboyant defence counsel, Edward Marshall Hall; the dedicated, even doctrinaire Spilsbury; and the unaccountably attractive psychopath, George Joseph Smith.

The Abbey National used to employ a member of staff at 217-229 Baker Street to answer the letters that arrived addressed to Sherlock Holmes. In 1990 **Tony Harries** toured the USA, with a detour to Toronto, lecturing about his experiences in the post. He kept a diary on his travels, which he's now published as *The Case of Sherlock Holmes' Secretary (and His Tour of America)* (Lulu, www.lulu.com; £7.10 – also available as a file download at £2.50). As a diarist, unfortunately, Mr Harries is no Alan Clark or Gyles Brandreth. His accounts of the people and places he encounters are superficial, and the writing itself curiously flat. He'd have done much better to tell the story in retrospect, using the diary as an *aide mémoire*, fleshing out his descriptions, perhaps providing some photographs, and giving us at least a summary of one of his lectures. The book is mildly entertaining, but that's all.

Arthur, Louise and the True Hound of the Baskervilles by **Margaret Newman Turner** (Logaston Press, Little Logaston, Woonton, Almeley, Herefordshire HR3 6QH; 3 June; £10.00) puts the case for Hergest Court in Herefordshire as the real home of the phantom hound. *The Sign of Fear*, the first novel by **Molly Carr**, is narrated by Mrs Watson (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; 15 June; £12.99). In October comes *Baker Street Irregular* by **Jon Lellenberg**, which takes young lawyer Woody Hazelbaker and his fellow-Sherlockians on a journey beneath the surface of American history, from the Great Depression to the Cold War (Arkham House, PO Box 50, RR #4, Eugenia, Ontario N0C 1E0, Canada; \$39.95).

A nice-looking addition to the growing number of Holmesian cookery books is *Alimentaire, mon cher Watson!* by **Anne Martinetti**, published on 15 May by Editions du Chêne/EPA Editions (43 Quai de Grenelle, 75905 Paris, France). It's in French, of course, and priced at €35.00. I've also had notice of a three-volume Russian edition of the Holmes Canon, extensively illustrated by **Leonid Kozlov** and published, apparently, by Panda Books (OOO 'Kitoni', 107078 Moscow, Basmanny Lane 5/20, Building 2, Office 36; phone/fax [499] 261 1291).

On 15 July **Sotheby's** in London will auction the 1887 *Beeton's Christmas Annual*, containing the first publication of *A Study in Scarlet*. This is one of only two known copies signed by Arthur Conan Doyle, who wrote in it, 'This is the very first independent book of mine which ever was published.' The inscription is dated January 9, 1914. The estimate is £250,000–£400,000. There'll be public viewing in New York 14-16 June and in London 11-14 July. (Sotheby's Book Department, 34-35 New Bond Street, London W1A 2AA; phone 020 7293 5295; e-mail peter.selley@sotheby's.com.)

The Baker Street Journal at www.bakerstreetjournal.com currently offers a special deal on several of the fascinating BSI History Series – two books for \$25.00 plus postage. And newly available is *Doyle At 150: A Sesquicentennial Assessment Music CD: 'Sherlock Holmes, DT', 'The Amateur Detective', 'Sherlock Holmes Waltzes', 'The Ghost of Sherlock Holmes' and others, performed by Henry Boote* (www.bakerstreetjournal.com/doyleat150.html).

At www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times10-4.htm you'll find the April issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-magazine of **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com).

Nicholas Briggs plays the lead in The Big Finish audio adaptation of Brian Clemens' play *Holmes and the Ripper* (PO Box 3787, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 3TF; www.bigfinish.com/ranges/sherlock-holmes; £14.99). Like the film *Murder by Decree*, it's based on Stephen Knight's book *Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution*, and takes even greater liberties with the facts. Mr Clemens probably doesn't believe that the Whitechapel murders were orchestrated by Freemasons in a bizarre attempt to preserve the monarchy — but he knows how much we love a conspiracy theory, and by golly that's what he gives us! Nick Briggs has played the rôle on stage, and he's clearly comfortable with the character. He and Richard Earl present a very credible partnership as the doctor and the detective. The third leading character is Katherine Mead, a comely clairvoyant, played by India Fisher — and, despite expectations, it's Holmes, not Watson, who falls for her. *Holmes and the Ripper* is deliriously exciting entertainment. I'm delighted to know that Big Finish plans to record more Sherlock Holmes plays.

BBC Worldwide lists *Sherlock Holmes: The Rediscovered Railway* ('Four more thrilling Sherlock Holmes adventures from **John Taylor**, the creator of *The Unopened Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*, inspired by the original stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle') for release on 2 September at £12.99, but you can pre-order a copy for £9.09 at www.bbcshop.com/Drama+Arts/Sherlock-Holmes-The-Rediscovered-Railway/inv/9781408426258.

You can listen or download several original audio dramas by **Scott Strosahl** at www.thewatsonfiles.com. That's Dr Jack Watson, friend and colleague of Mr Spencer Holmes.

The **Asylum's** production *Sherlock Holmes* (Revolver Entertainment, 10 Lambton Place, Notting Hill Gate, London W11 2SH) is far more entertaining than it has any right to be. A treasure ship is attacked at sea by a giant octopus. Whitechapel is terrorised by a velociraptor. London is attacked by a flying mechanical dragon. The warped mind behind all this belongs to a hitherto unknown Holmes brother. Invalided out of the police after being shot in the spine, he's invented an 'Iron Man' suit to overcome paralysis and now he wants revenge on his former colleague Lestrade before assassinating the Queen with a bomb hidden inside a mechanical woman. Gareth David-Lloyd makes a good Watson. Dominic Keating is fine as Thorpe, the villain, but would have been better suited than the mousy Ben Syder to the rôle of Sherlock Holmes. William Huw is a splendid Lestrade, helped by the fact that his clothes actually fit him. The film is completely mad, but it's never dull.

After years of campaigning, the eleven surviving episodes of the classic 1964-65 BBC TV series *Sherlock Holmes*, starring **Douglas Wilmer** and **Nigel Stock** will finally be released on DVD in September – but only in

America! www.bbcamericashop.com/dvd/sherlock-holmes-1964-1965-15784.html. Well, we'll carry on lobbying for a British release.

At www.sherlockshorts.com or www.youtube.com/user/sherlockshorts you can watch several brief entertainments made by **Amy Berkley Mantell** in silent movie style and starring **Martha Heller's** fine cloth dolls. The films are charming and very clever.

Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* was voted best action film at the 2010 National Movie Awards today, a nice addition to its Golden Globe, IFTA and Empire awards.

On 25 April **Ian Young** completed the London Marathon, dressed as Sherlock Holmes, in 4 hr 1 min 47 seconds, breaking the world record for Fastest Iconic Book Character. His main aim, though, was to raise £2,000 for Sparks, a charity dedicated to funding research into conditions and illnesses affecting children, babies and expectant mothers. So far he's made just over half that sum, but you can still donate via PayPal at <http://www.justgiving.com/Ian-Young0>.

Forbes Gibb sends word that the NHS Tayside Archive at the University of Dundee Archives contains a material from **Sunnyside Royal Asylum**, Montrose, where Charles Altamont Doyle spent his last years. See www.dundee.ac.uk/archives/a-thb.htm.

Lynn Gale tells me that the fate of **Undershaw**, Conan Doyle's former home, will be decided at a meeting on 9 June, which may be online at www.waverley.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=944. You can see the current sad state of the building on video at www.saveundershaw.com. It's hoped that the campaign will feature on BBC 1's *The One Show* at 7.00 pm on 7 June.

The Society needs a team of eight to play the Poor Folk Upon The Moors at **Croquet** on 13 June in Exeter. Friendly accommodation can be arranged with a Moors Person the previous night if required. The plan is to meet for lunch before playing, and enjoy tea & prizes afterwards. The dress code is relaxed, except that Victorian hats are required. £12.00 covers lunch, tea and plasters if things get out of hand. For further details, please contact the Society's Croquet Captain, Charles Miller at charlesnmiller@bigfoot.com.

The conference **Sherlock Holmes: The Man and His Worlds**, presented by the Baker Street Breakfast Club at Bennington College, Bennington, VT from 24 to 27 June, should be great fun. Full details are at www.bakerstreetbreakfastclub.com/conference-and-info.pdf.

Our Canadian member **Patricia Wagner**, like her husband Harry a veteran of the Society's Swiss jaunts, died on 6 April. **Thomas A Stetak**, head of Mrs Hudson's Lodgers of Cleveland, died after a short illness on 12 April. In 1990 Tom Stetak received the BSI investiture 'The Head of the Police at Cleveland'.

Periodicals received. *The Baker Street Journal*, Spring 2010 (Steven Rothman, 220, West Rittenhouse Square, #15-D, Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA; subscriptions, PO Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, USA). *Canadian Holmes*, Spring 2010 (**The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Mark & JoAnn Alberstat, 46 Kingston Crescent, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, B3A 2M2, Canada). *Communication*, no. 298 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). *Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections*, March 2010 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). *Ineffable Twaddle*, May 2010 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *Mayday Mayday*, May 2010 and June 2010 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). *The Moor: Magasin för Sherlockianer*, July 2010 (**The Baskerville Hall Club of Sweden**, Anders Wiggeström, Byggmästarvägen 29, 168 32 Bromma, Sweden). *The Passengers' Log*, 22 May 2010 (**The Sydney Passengers**, Rosane McNamara, 4/2a Merlin Street, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089, Australia). *The Petrel Flyer*, Jan/Feb 2010, Spring 2010 and June 2010 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). *The Scion*, Spring 2010 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP).

And *Scuttlebutt from the Spermacti Press*, April 2010 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

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