

Feb 18 #1

Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press

Malice Domestic has announced the nominees for this year's Agatha awards, which include Mattias Boström's FROM HOLMES TO SHERLOCK (best nonfiction). The winners will be announced at Malice in Bethesda on Apr. 29.

Sorry about that: in the last issue (Jan 18 #7) I noted that material from the Daniel Posnansky Collection already is turning up at eBay from people who bought large lots at the auction, among them Lewis Durbin, whose shop actually is at lewidurbi0.

"Worzel Gummidge" was a well-received British children's television series broadcast by ITV (1979-1981) that was continued in New Zealand as "Worzel Gummidge Down Under" (1987-1989). The series starred Jon Pertwee, and Howard Ostrom has discovered "Elementary My Dear Worthy" from the second series at YouTube <www.tinyurl.com/ybrkb378>. It's interesting to see Jon Pertwee as someone other than Doctor Who; Una Stubbs starred in the series as Aunt Sally, but doesn't appear in the Sherlockian episode.

Chris Redmond created <www.sherlockian.net> in 1994, and it's now managed by Michigan State University's WIDE Research Center; the web-site has been revised, and it's well worth visiting and exploring as a valuable resource for the ever-growing population of Internet-savvy Sherlockians.

J. M. W. Turner's iconic 1804 painting of the Reichenbach Falls seen twice in the BBC's "Sherlock" television series, at the end of the second season, and in the recent Christmas special, can be viewed on-line in full color at <www.tinyurl.com/hptv8q5>. If you like to know more about Turner and his work, Christie's has two excellent articles (one with an instructive video) on-line at <www.tinyurl.com/ydgxnh4> and <www.tinyurl.com/y7syojua>.

Mike Vagnetti has reported a new stamp issued by the Solomon Islands, in a set of four stamps that honor the 300th anniversary of the Grand Lodge of England (founded in 1717, it was the first Masonic Grand Lodge); the stamp shows both Conan Doyle and Holmes, and the others stamps show Ernest Shackleton, Winston Churchill, and Rudyard Kipling. Mike also reports that the American Topical Association has a checklist of Conan Doyle/Sherlock Holmes stamps, available only to members, with 63 entries. You can see the Solomon Island stamps in full color at Steve Trussel's excellent web-site "The Philatelic Sherlock Holmes" <www.trussel.com/detfic/sholmes.htm>. And Mike <mjvagnetti@gmail.com> would be happy to hear from anyone who has Sherlockian items (stamps and poster stamps) to offer.

BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH READS SHERLOCK HOLMES' REDISCOVERED RAILWAY MYSTERIES is a two-CD set from BBC Worldwide (2015, £11.78), offering four pastiches written by John Taylor.

"Yuukoku no Moriarty" ["Moriarty the Patriot"] is a Japanese manga written by Ryunosuke Takeuchi and drawn by Hikaru Mihoshi, reimagining the Canon "with Moriarty as the protagonist and exploring his motivation in becoming the greatest criminal Britain has ever seen." It has not been published as a book in English, but 16 episodes are available in English on-line at the Manga Rock web-site <www.mangarock.com/manga/mrs/serie-100056011>.

Feb 18 #2 The Bookseller has reported that "Sherlock Holmes: The Definitive Collection" (read by Stephen Fry) was Audible's best selling title in 2017; the set spent four month at the top of the Audible chart and was in the top 20 for 11 months since it was released in February 2016. If you don't have it yet, it is available at <www.audible.com> for \$85.26 (or free as a join-now premium).

In the last issue of this newsletter (Jan 18 #4) I wrote about someone who was nommed "whorl" (based on a belief that aliases used on the Internet are "noms" as in "noms de plume"). A query from a reader (actually, my sharp-eyed proof-reader) led to some on-line research that revealed that my belief was unfounded, and then to a query to people who are far more Internet-savvy. Thanks to Lyndsay Faye, I can now report that an Internet alias is called a "pseud" (as in "pseudonym").

Scott Monty's "I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere" blog offers two interesting items: one of them "Holmes & Watson 1916-2016" (an imaginative montage of film and television clips set to the song 'Something Good (Will Come from That)') <www.tinyurl.com/y8uyqgmg> and the other an interview with Ross Davies about "Boxes from Royalty" <www.tinyurl.com/y9y52p94>.

I've reported before (Aug 16 #2) on APOPO <www.apopo.org>, a company that trains giant African pouched rats to detect unexploded landmines in countries in Africa and Asia (the rats don't weigh enough to set off the mines, which can then be disarmed); the rats can also be trained to detect tuberculosis in mucous samples, and now they are in pursuit of smugglers who are shipping endangered pangolins from Africa to Asia, as noted in a recent report in the Washington Post <www.tinyurl.com/y724dwol>. Needless to say, APOPO welcomes donations from people who want to adopt giant rats.

Has anyone seen the new play "The Play That Goes Wrong" (2012) in London or New York or elsewhere? The Tampa Bay Observer, reporting that the play is due there in October, describes it as "a carefully chaotic comedy that has tickled audiences with farcical disaster visited upon the erstwhile production of a Sherlock Holmes-style mystery."

Mort Walker died on Jan. 27. A legendary comic strip writer, he was best known for creating "Beetle Bailey" in 1950 and "Hi and Lois" in 1954, and drew "Beetle Bailey" for 68 years, making him the longest-running artist in comic-strip history. His colorful web-site is at <www.mortwalker.com>, and this strip was published on Jan. 7, 2008:



Feb 18 #3 The Strand Magazine (the modern version edited by Andrew Gulli) continues to publish quarterly <www.strandmag.com>, and its on-line blog includes interesting posts such as Daniel E. Lambert's "Sherlock Holmes in Verse" and Bonnie MacBird's "The Risk of 'The Reveal': Tampering with or Augmenting the Legend of Sherlock Holmes".

Leslie Katz continues to make his Sherlockian scholarship available at the Social Science Research Network; his latest article is "Each Picture Told a Story: Photography in the Sherlock Holmes Adventures" and you can read or download it (and his other articles) at <www.ssrn.com/author=1164057>.



The Holmes Financial Solutions web-site features a silhouette of Sherlock Holmes in the logo, and the company was in the news recently when it was fined £300,000 by the British government for making 8.8 million nuisance robo-calls in 2015 and 2016 <www.tinyurl.com/y8c4o35v>. The company's solicitors are at work on an appeal. If you're bothered by robo-calls in the U.S., there is a solution: <www.nomorobo.com>. The company won a challenge set by the Federal Trade Commission, and its service is available without charge for landlines (if your service provider's compatible) and for a modest monthly fee for cell phones. The N.Y. Times ran an interesting article last year <www.tinyurl.com/m4v8mkv> on how you can reduce the number of robo-calls you receive.

Les Klinger has an interesting web-site, which offers a helpful list of errata in all three volumes of THE NEW ANNOTATED SHERLOCK HOLMES, with a link at the end that allows you to download a PDF that shows which errata have been corrected in various editions <www.tinyurl.com/ycztyf48>.

I've long described this newsletter as six or more pages of whatever gossip I find appropriate, much of it quite trivial, but most of it Sherlockian or Doylean, and anyone who wants to run a word-search on two large files with all of the text since March 1985 can now do just that, thanks to Steve Mason, who updates the compilation and makes it available for download from the Crew of the Barque Lone Star's web-site <www.tinyurl.com/ybxh2y2m>.

John Mahoney died on Feb. 4. He had a long acting career on stage, screen, and television, and was best known as Frasier Crane's father Martin Crane on the NBC-TV sitcom "Frasier"; he wore Sherlockian costume in the "Halloween" episode broadcast in 1993.

There have been occasional reviews of the new animated film "Batman: Gotham by Gaslight" that have mentioned its Sherlockian echoes. According to Den of Geek! <www.tinyurl.com/ydeuvdms>, there is good reason: Jim Krieg, who adapted the film, said in an interview that he grew up as a Holmes fan and "didn't want to leave any Sherlockian stone unturned," citing "A Study in Terror" (1965) as a favorite Sherlock Holmes vs. Jack the Ripper film, and executive producer Bruce Timm said that he watched "Gilligan's Island" all the time as a kid, and recalled the episode that had the Professor as Sherlock Holmes and the Skipper as Dr. Watson. If you've not seen that episode of "Gilligan's Island" series it's "Up at Bat" (1966), and there's a Sherlockian clip at YouTube <www.tinyurl.com/y8lp7qkc>, from the dream sequence that features Inspector Sherlock and Colonel Watney).

Feb 18 #4 Janet Hutchings, the editor of Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, presides over a blog ("Something Is Going to Happen") that offers interesting contributions about "suspense, short stories, and the mystery-fiction scene," such as an interesting post last year on "The Last of the Kingdom of Romance: 90 Years Since the Publication of The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes" by R. T. Raichev <www.tinyurl.com/y9qoe374> and a "Report from Baker Street" by Steve Steinbock <www.tinyurl.com/y9bppzeh> about the 2016 annual dinner of the Baker Street Irregulars.

John Morris died on Jan. 25. He began his musical career as a concert pianist ("I didn't like practicing," he once admitted) and went on to composing and arranging for Broadway shows, and then for films, and his credits included the orchestration for "The Adventure of Sherlock Holmes' Smarter Brother" (1975).

"Rugger, Romance, and Sherlock Holmes!" is the title of an illustrated talk delivered by Roger Johnson this month during the Portsmouth Bookfest last month; if you're wondering how those three topics were combined in the same talk, it was subtitled "You Should Go to Blackheath First" and Roger suggests that "the importance of Blackheath in the life of Arthur Conan Doyle and in the career of Sherlock Holmes should not be overlooked."

Lakin & Marley Rare Books in Mill Valley, Calif., are offering the original Universal Studios script archives for the Rathbone/Bruce series, most heavily annotated; go to <www.tinyurl.com/y86rhapq> for detailed descriptions and commentary.

Further to the item (Dec 17 #3) on Tania Henzell's new Sherlock Holmes Tartan: the tartan will have an official launch party at the Physicians Hall in Edinburgh on Mar. 22; details at <www.tinyurl.com/yawvtmxxr>. Karen Ellery notes that you can inspect the official registration for the tartan at <www.tinyurl.com/y7twgdsq>. Lee Crow reports that there is an older Holmes tartan (from 1830); you can search the Register's web-site to find tartans for Watson and Moriarty and (likely) other Canonical characters.

For anyone who misses "Sherlock": "The Sherlock You Didn't See: Scenes--and Entire Episodes--That Never Aired" was the headline on a story at Digital Spy <www.tinyurl.com/yd99rmmh>.

The winter issue of The Magic Door (the Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection at the Toronto Public Library newsletter) celebrates the 150th anniversary of Canada as a nation, and offers Donny Zaldin's article "Arthur Conan Doyle and Canada: 1914 and One Hundred Years Hence" along with news from and about the Library and the Collection. Copies of the newsletter are available from Clifford S. Goldfarb, 22 Markdale Avenue, Toronto, ON M6C, 1T1, Canada <cgoldfarb@sympatico.ca>, and you can join the Friends at <www.acdfriends.org>.

"The Adventures of Sherlock Hound" was a delightful Japanese animated television series broadcast in 1984-1985, with 26 episodes (the first six directed by Hayao Miyazaki). Holmes is a red fox, Watson a Scottish terrier, and Moriarty a gray wolf, and it's nice indeed that all 26 episodes now are available at YouTube; search for [sherlock hound].

Feb 17 #5 George MacDonald Fraser noted in his introduction to a new edition of THE WHITE COMPANY and SIR NIGEL (Feb 00 #7) that John Ford was said to have had THE WHITE COMPANY in his sights at the end of his career, with John Wayne and Alec Guinness in mind. According to Wikipedia, the two novels were among Wayne's favorite books.

A GIFT OF SHERLOCK HOLMES: CHRISTMAS 1914: EDITION: THE VALLEY OF FEAR is a reproduction of what Ross E. Davies suggests might have been the true first book edition of the story (as he explained at this year's annual dinner of The Baker Street Irregulars). His book offers the text that was published in the Associated Sunday Magazines in newspapers in the U.S., which differs from the text that appeared in The Strand Magazine and then in books in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. in 1915. Ross has supplied a perceptive introduction, and he has kindly made an electronic edition of his book available on-line at <www.tinyurl.com/y83d3gvd>.

It should be noted that the book is only one of the many items available at <www.rossdavies.org>; click on "Maps and misc." and "Sherlockian toasts" to find links to interesting Sherlockian (and non-Sherlockian) material. You can also click on "Green Bag" and then on "Almanac & Reader" to be able to read the 2012 edition (which honored Rex Stout and Nero Wolfe); the 2015, 2016, and 2017 editions were thoroughly Sherlockian and Doylean.

DOUBLE TROUBLE IN BUGLAND, by William Kotzwinkle (Boston: David R. Govine, 2016; 244 pp., \$14.95) is a colorful sequel to his TROUBLE IN BUGLAND (Jun 83 #2), again illustrated by Joe Servello, and offering further adventures of Inspector Mantis and his companion Dr. Hopper.

Holmes and Watson appear to be taking over the MCU . . . that's the Marvel Cinematic Universe, which was launched with "Iron Man" in 2008 with Robert Downey Jr. as Tony Stark, and included "Doctor Strange" in 2016 with Benedict Cumberbatch as Stephen Strange, and now there's "Black Panther" with Martin Freeman as Everett K. Ross (kindly reported by Samantha Wolov).

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine's web-site <www.tinyurl.com/y76whnjf> has much to offer, including a new web-only column "Stranger Than Fiction" by Dean Jobb; his February column ("We Hear of Sherlock Everywhere") calls attention to four recent Sherlockian and Doylean titles.

Congratulations to Maggie Schpak, who received the 2018 Distinguished Service Award from the Costume Designers Guild. Maggie handcrafts the colorful raffle prizes for the Dr. John H. Watson Fund at each year's birthday festivities in New York, and at her Metal Arts Studio in Los Angeles makes items for major films and television series <www.tinyurl.com/y8m7zwze>; you can see her in the photo gallery at the web-site.

Reported by Howard Ostrom: Ernie Kovacs and Hans Conried in deerstalkers in "Private Eye, Private Eye" (an episode of "The U.S. Steel Hour" broadcast by CBS-TV on Mar. 8, 1961); the spoof of detective stories is included as a bonus disk with the first 1,000 copies of "Ernie Kovacs: Take a Good Look: The Definitive Collection" (available from Shout! Factory for \$64.97). One hopes that the episode will be available eventually at YouTube; but in the meantime you can see them with Edie Adams at <www.youtube.com/y842v4cq>.

Feb 18 #6 IN THE SHADOW OF AGATHA CHRISTIE: CLASSIC CRIME FICTION BY FORGOTTEN FEMALE WRITERS: 1850-1917, edited by Leslie S. Klinger (New York: Pegasus Crime, 2018; 356 pp., \$26.95) was reviewed in Publishers Weekly as a "stellar" anthology and a "must-have volume for classic crime fans," and includes Carolyn Wells' "The Adventure of the Clothes-Line" (a 1915 burlesque that features Sherlock Holmes as the president of the Society of Infallible Detectives) and Baroness Orczy's "The Regent's Park Murder" (about the baffling murder of a man who had won at cards, published in 1901, two years before "The Empty House").

Paul D. Herbert ("Mr. Leverton, of Pinkerton's") died on Feb. 16. He was excellent high-school history teacher, an energetic and wide-ranging collector, the founder of the Tankerville Club of Cincinnati and its only official secretary, and a delightful Sherlockian who was awarded his Investiture from The Baker Street Irregulars in 1977 and their Two-Shilling Award in 2004; he also for twenty years was the BSI's Dr. Watson, presiding over the Dr. John H. Watson Fund, which offers financial assistance to Sherlockians who might otherwise not be able to participate in the birthday festivities in New York.

THE SECRET OF THE COTTINGLEY FAIRIES, by F. R. Maher (Charleston: CreateSpace, 2017; 96 pp., \$20.53), offers a speculative explanation for the famous hoax. The author also presides over the annual Legendary Llangollen Faery Festival in Wales <www.northwalesfaeryfestival.com>.

Further to the report (Oct 17 #4) on the competition set by the Folio Society and House of Illustration for artwork for THE SELECTED ADVENTURES AND MEMOIRS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, there were 450 entries and 24 finalists. Samples of the finalists' imaginative submissions were published in full color at the web-site of the Guardian on Feb. 5 <www.tinyurl.com/ydgobmfz>, and the winners were chosen by a panel of six judges that included Helen Dorey as their Sherlockian expert. The \$5,000 commission to illustrate the book and design the binding was won by Max Löffler <www.tinyurl.com/y7r8d93k>.

Bill Crider died on Feb. 18. He was an author, a critic, a columnist, and a reviewer, all in the mystery field; Janet Hutchings, the editor of Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, described him as a superfan and a perfect fit for the magazine's Blog Bytes department. His stories included three Sherlockian pastiches, and his web-site <www.billcrider.com> nicely shows how wide his interests were.

"Blossom Detective Holmes" (an animated mini-series that's seeking funding at Kickstarter) features two teen-age girls: Skylar Holmes and Jamie Watson; details (and video) at <www.tinyurl.com/ya46os5a>.

IMAGINATION THEATRE'S SHERLOCK HOLMES, edited by David Marcum (London: MX Publishing, 2017; 388 pp., \$34.95), is a collection of 15 scripts from "The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" (the long-running radio series produced by the late Jim French from 1998 to 2017). The scripts for the pastiches were written by Jim French and other authors, and provide a welcome opportunity for those who enjoy radio drama to see what goes into creating entertaining programs. The MX web-sites are at <www.mxpublishing.com> and <www.mxpublishing.co.uk>.

Feb 18 #7 Theatrical news: Ken Ludwig's comedy "Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery" is running at the Warehouse Living Arts Center in Corsicana, Texas, through Mar. 3 <www.warehouselivingartscenter.com>. And it's due at the Fallon House Theatre in Columbia, Calif., Aug. 31-Sept. 30 <www.sierrarep.org>.

Jeffrey Hatcher's "Holmes and Watson" is running at the Kinetic Theatre in Pittsburgh, Pa., through Mar. 4 <www.kinetictheatre.org>. It's also scheduled at the Norris Center in Naples, Fla., Mar. 21-Apr. 20, 2019; web-site at <www.gulfshoreplayhouse.org>.

Steven Canny and John Nicholson's comedy "The Hound of the Baskervilles" is running at the Wells Theatre in Norfolk, Va., through Mar. 11; web-site at <www.vastage.org>.

Simon Williams' "The Hound of the Baskervilles" is on at The Mill in Sonning Theatre in Sonning Eye, Oxon., until Mar. 17 <www.millatsonning.com>.

C. P. Stancich's "Sherlock Holmes and the Spinsters of Blackmead" is being performed at Theatre Suburbia in Houston, Tex., through Mar. 24; web-site at <www.theatresuburbia.org>.

The East Lynne Theater Company's will be touring Craig Wichman's radio-theater production of "Sherlock Holmes' Adventure of the Speckled Band" will tour in New Jersey in March <www.tinyurl.com/ya6busq8>.

Ken Ludwig's "The Game's Afoot, or Holmes for the Holidays" is scheduled at the Town Theatre in Columbia, S.C., Mar. 2-18 <www.towntheatre.com>.

C. P. Stancich's new play "Oscar Dove: Letters to Sherlock" will premiere at the Mary Miller Theatre in Lafayette, Colo., Mar. 2-24; their web-site's at <www.tclstage.org>.

Vince Staddon's "The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes" will be performed at Baker Street West in Jackson, Calif., Mar. 2-31 <www.bakerstreetwest.com>.

Peter Birch's new "The Sign of the Four" will be performed at the Garrick Theatre in Altrincham, Manchester, Mar. 5-10 <www.altrinchamgarrick.co.uk>.

Broadway RDF will perform "Murder in the Casbah" (1945) in their "Old Time Radio Hour" at the Swedish Crown Restaurant in Lindsborg, Kans., Mar. 8 and 10 <www.broadwayrfd.org>.

John Nassivera's "The Penultimate Problem of Sherlock Holmes" will be performed at the East Cleveland Theater in East Cleveland, Ohio, Mar. 23-Apr. 8 <www.eastclevelandtheater.org>.

"The Hound of the Baskervilles" (by R. Hamilton Wright and David Pichette) is scheduled at the Shaw Festival Theatre in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., on Aug. 1-Oct. 27 <www.shawfest.com>.

The Spermaceti Press: Peter E. Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD
20817-4401 (301-229-5669) <blau7103@comcast.net>