

May 18 #1

Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press

"Dark Deeds in the Canon" is the title of the next Reichenbach Irregulars' conference in Switzerland, scheduled for May 31-June 4, 2019; their focus will be on Professor James Moriarty and Baron Adelbert Gruner. Details are available at their web-site <www.221b.ch>.

"Elementary" has been renewed for a seventh season. Its ratings continue to decline (it's the least-watched of all of the CBS-TV dramas, according to a story in the Wall Street Journal), but it's profitable nevertheless, thanks to revenue from overseas, syndication, and a deal with Hulu.

Sorry about that: the correct version of last month's newsletter report is: "Dark Places, Wicked Companions, and Strange Experiences" is the title of The Norwegian Explorers' next conference in Minneapolis, scheduled for Aug. 9-11, 2019, at the Graduate Hotel (the new name of the Commons Hotel), and there will be an evening reception on Aug. 8; you can enroll on their mailing list by contacting Julie McKuras <mike9750@aol.com>.

Watson's Tin Box is hosting this year's "Scintillation of Scions" on June 8-9, at the Sheraton Baltimore-Washington Airport. It is an entertaining gathering of both local and far-flung Sherlockians, and registration is now open <www.scintillation.org>.

"Sherlock Gnomes" was released in Great Britain and Ireland on May 11, and Odeon Cinemas promoted the opening with an offer to give every child "the chance to grow their very own mini garden with our flowering seed paper!" <www.tinyurl.com/yd4rjl69>. The children, of course, will need to provide their own garden gnomes.

And there's more promotion in Great Britain: Hovis has launched a "221b Bakery Street" campaign <www.tinyurl.com/y6uxacnz> <www.tinyurl.com/y8atl66j> that promotes their "Best of Both" bread loaves; prizes range from a family adventure in London to Sherlock Gnomes toast stamps.

The Sub-Librarians Scion of the Baker Street Irregulars will gather on June 24 in New Orleans, during the annual meeting of the American Library Association; Monica Schmidt will be their guest speaker (on "You Have Been on eBay, I Perceive: The Pathology of Sherlockian Collecting"), and more information is available from Marsha Pollak <mlpollak@icloud.com>.

Etchings by James Ensor, a member of the XX Group, the "modern Belgian masters" whose pictures "entirely absorbed" Sherlock Holmes (in "The Hound of the Baskervilles") were at auction this month at Christie's, and there's an interesting article about him at their web-site <www.tinyurl.com/yd6mlr28>.

Congratulations to Russell Merritt, who has received the Denver Silent Film Festival's David Shepard Career Achievement Award. Russell is a member of the board of the San Francisco Silent Film Festival, an adjunct professor in the Department of Film & Media at the University of California Berkeley, and a leader in the restoration of two important silent films: William Gillette's "Sherlock Holmes" (1916) and Carlyle Blackwell's "Der Hund von Baskerville" (1929).

May 18 #2 MYSTERY MOST GEOGRAPHICAL (Cabin John: Wildside Press, 2018; 349 pp., \$35.00) is the 13th Malice Domestic anthology, offering nice assortment of short stories and a foreword by Nancy Pickard (who received the Lifetime Achievement award at this year's Malice); one of the stories is Michael Robertson's "The Barrister's Clerk" an imaginative addition to his "Baker Street Letters" series about the London barristers who have their offices at Sherlock Holmes' address and are tasked with answering his mail. Wildside's web-site is at <www.wildsidepress.com>.

Also from Wildside: Christopher Redmond's ABOUT BEING A SHERLOCKIAN (2017; 250 pp., \$14.99) is a sequel of sorts to his ABOUT SIXTY (Dec 16 #5): Chris has edited an anthology of sixty essays "celebrating the Sherlockian community" and in his introduction he explains just how easy (or difficult) it can be to define just what a Sherlockian is; the essays are by a delightful mix of authors, old hands and newcomers, who describe with great enthusiasm the many paths they followed in becoming Sherlockians.



"He made the country down in Illinois," Lucy Ferrier said (in "A Study in Scarlet"); our postal service has issued a stamp honoring the 200th anniversary of statehood for Illinois.

Karen Murdock has noted Matthew Walther's "The Man Who Knew Everything" in The Week (Apr. 25) <www.theweek.com/articles/763465>; it is a review of Rebecca Tope's new SABINE BARING-GOULD: THE MAN WHO TOLD A THOUSAND STORIES. The many things he wrote about included the folktales of Dartmoor, and he's a very important character in Laurie R. King's THE MOOR (1998), in which he's visited by Mary Russell and Sherlock Holmes. Baring-Gould's grandson (William S. Baring-Gould), when he wrote his biography of Sherlock Holmes, used details from his grandfather's life in describing Holmes' early years. Sabine Baring-Gould lived at Lewtrenchard, near Dartmoor; his house now is a luxury hotel <www.lewtrenchard.co.uk> and you can visit his grave at the nearby Lewtrenchard Cemetery.

Alexander Orlov has reported a new adaptation of a Canonical story in which Holmes and Watson do not appear; an 18-minute video ("Violet") is available at Vimeo <www.vimeo.com/22871372>. There's also a Russian video "Seldon" <www.tinyurl.com/n4narya>, and the Indian film "Bees Saal Bad" inspired by "The Hound of the Baskervilles" <www.tinyurl.com/y894fae7>.

They're off and running: The Baker Street Irregulars' triennial running of The Silver Blaze at Saratoga Race Course in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., is set for Aug. 11. More information about the two-day excursion is available online at <www.bakerstreetjournal.com/silverblaze2018.html>.

SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE LOST RADIO SCRIPTS (Little Falls: Purview Press, 2017; 396 pp., \$25.98), edited by Ian Dickerson, offers twelve scripts written by Denis Green and Leslie Charteris [as Bruce Taylor] from the Rathbone/Bruce 1944 radio series "The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" (all of them from programs for which audio recordings are not known to exist); Dickerson discovered the scripts in Charteris' papers, and it's nice to have a chance to revisit the radio series. You can listen to Scott Monty and Burt Wolder's interview with Dickerson at their "I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere" archive <www.tinyurl.com/y82pbko9>.

May 18 #3 Martin Edwards' THE STORY OF CLASSIC CRIME IN 100 BOOKS (London: British Library, 2017; 353 pp., £25.00) (Scottsdale: Poisoned Pen Press, \$26.95) is a delightful companion to the "British Library Crime Classics" series that offers reprints of excellent novels and short stories; some of the anthologies include stories by Conan Doyle, and this book explores the history of crime fiction in novels published in the first half of the twentieth century (one of them, of course, is "The Hound of the Baskervilles"). The book also is available in a trade-paperback edition to match the crime-classics series. And Edwards, recently asked what he would have added as the 101st title, confessed that there already are 102 novels in his book.



Cub Scouting, part of the Scouting Program of the Boy Scouts of America, offers Cubs belt loops (instead of merit badges), and Kate Karlson has reported an interesting Code of the Wolf elective adventure loop. They're available for \$1.49 at your neighborhood Scout Shop, and on-line at <www.scoutshop.org>; search for [619939]. And yes, in February the Boy Scouts of America announced their new name: Scouts BSA, recognizing the decision to admit young women as full-fledged Scouts. The Cub Scouts program already admits girls; now older girls will be able to join Scouts BSA and have an opportunity to advance to become Eagle Scouts. One hopes that eventually the Scouts BSA will offer a Sherlockian merit badge.

Mattias Boström, who last month won the Agatha Award (best nonfiction) for FROM HOLMES TO SHERLOCK at Malice Domestic, has been nominated for an Anthony Award (best critical/non-fiction book) at Bouchercon; winners will be announced at Bouchercon in St. Petersburg, Fla., on Sept. 8. Mattias also has received Der blaue Karfunkel from the Deutsche Sherlock-Holmes-Gesellschaft at SherloCON in Saarbrücken, and the Tony & Freda Howlett Literary Award from the Sherlock Holmes Society of London.

THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES: ILLUSTRATED AND ENHANCED BY N. R. REEKIE (2017) offers an imaginative approach to the Canon: there are more than 300 illustrations, including his own Rapidograph technical-pen artwork, and the 352-page book is available at eBay for £24.99 <www.tinyurl.com/y79ollmr>.

The International Exhibition of Sherlock Holmes, now at the Houston Museum of Natural Science <www.hmns.org>, has some added material. According to the Houston Chronicle <www.tinyurl.com/y7k2vs47>, the exhibits now include the curved pipe Robert Downey Jr. smoked and the pocket watch worn by Jude Law, the pink suitcase from Benedict Cumberbatch's "A Study in Pink", and a costume worn by Lucy Liu.

Conan Doyle wrote about the bare-knuckle boxer John Jackson, who appears in RODNEY STONE (Mar 18 #5), and there are other boxers in Conan Doyle's writings; one of them is William Abednego Thompson, known as Bendigo, who was honored in Conan Doyle's poem "Bendy's Sermon". According to the Nottingham Post <www.tinyurl.com/y8e6yydo>, a fund-raising campaign is underway to pay for a statue of Bendigo, who is buried in Nottingham. Alan Dance and David Field's novel BENDIGO: THE RIGHT FIST OF GOD (2016) is based on the life of "the most famous son of Nottingham since Robin Hood first ventured from the leafy glades of Sherwood Forest to taunt the Sheriff."

May 18 #4 Maria Konnikova, author of *MASTERMIND: HOW TO THINK LIKE SHERLOCK HOLMES* (2013), and then *THE CONFIDENCE GAME: WHY WE FALL FOR IT...EVERY TIME* (2016), began playing poker in late 2016 while working on a new book *THE BIGGEST BLUFF*, but she's earning so much in poker tournaments that the book likely won't be published until next year, according to a report in the N.Y. Post on May 3 <www.tinyurl.com/ya9m9wqn>; Maria's website is at <www.mariakonnikova.com>.



"A Strange Change Toy Featuring The Lost World" was made and sold by Mattel in the late 1960s, likely inspired by the film that starred Claude Rains as Professor Challenger (1960). There's a Wikipedia entry for the "Strange Change Machine" that describes the toy in detail: it offered pressed "shape memory" plastic figures of prehistoric animals, an "Expansion Chamber" with a heating element, and a "Compressor" (Wikipedia provides links to web-sites that have images and more information); it cost only \$1.50 in those good old days and seems to have been discontinued quickly because the toy was so dangerous to children who played with it. You can find it at eBay (for a lot more than \$1.50) and play with it now (carefully, of course).

The seventh running of the No Frills Silver Blaze will take place on Aug. 18 at Monmouth Park in Oceanport, N.J., and it's truly no frills: entrance fee \$5.00 (or \$3.00 for seniors), and bring your own food and drinks. The event is arranged by The Turf Builders of Baker Street, and more information is available from Peter McIntyre <pslpete@optonline.net>.

The Japanese eight-episode series "Miss Sherlock" (produced by HBO Asia and Hulu Japan) (Dec 17 #6) began its run on Apr. 27, and the series has a website at <www.hboasia.com/HBO/en-ph/shows/miss-sherlock>. You can watch the series (with English subtitles) at <www.dailymotion.com>.

Raymond C. Murray died on Apr. 8. He was a leader in the field of forensic geology (the use of soil and mineral evidence in law enforcement) and wrote two of the field's standard textbooks, *FORENSIC GEOLOGY* (1975 and 1992) and *EVIDENCE FROM THE EARTH: FORENSIC GEOLOGY AND CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION* (2004 and 2011), with due credit to Sherlock Holmes for his geological expertise; you can learn more about Ray's work at <www.forensicgeology.net>.

C. J. Carter-Stephenson's "Back of the Bookshelf" is a monthly podcast offering his narration of classic short fiction, and it was launched with Conan Doyle's "The Disintegration Machine" available in both video and audio <www.carter-stephenson.co.uk/botb.html>.

Congratulations to Andrew Jay Peck, who began his legal career in 1978 and was appointed U.S. magistrate judge for the Southern District of New York in 1995; he retired from the bench in February and has joined the law firm DLA Piper as a senior counsel, and you can read about his career in an American Bar Association article at <www.tinyurl.com/yck3l98q> (there's also a podcast interview). Andy was the winner of the Morley-Montgomery Award for the best article in *The Baker Street Journal* in 1972, joined the Baker Street Irregulars in 1973 (as "Inspector Baynes, Surrey Constabulary"), and plans to continue his pursuit of Sherlock Holmes (and the N.Y. Yankees).

May 18 #5 Ashley Polasek has edited A PLUM ASSIGNMENT: DISCOURSE ON P. G. WODEHOUSE AND HIS WORLD (Winch and Clutterbuck, 2018), the discourse being by Curtis Armstrong and Elliott Milstein; the book isn't Sherlockian but you can listen to the three of them talk about Wodehouse, and his enthusiasm for Conan Doyle and Holmes, with Scott Monty and Burt Wolder in a podcast at "I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere" <www.tinyurl.com/yau22ldl>.

There's a race horse named Sherlock Holmes, and the [Melbourne] Herald Sun had a picture of him <www.tinyurl.com/y7gn68v8> winning a race at Flemington; the chestnut gelding, born in Ireland, is doing well in Australia, and you can see video of him winning the race at <www.tinyurl.com/y82nl5og>.

The Practical, But Limited, Geologists (also known as The Friends of Sherlock Holmes) met to honor the world's first forensic geologist with drinks and dinner at Carnegie's, in the Peery Hotel, in Salt Lake City on May 23, during the annual meeting of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, welcomed by members of The PsiKeys of Sherlock and The Avenging Angels. Our next meetings will be on Nov. 7 in Indianapolis, and on May 22, 2019, in San Antonio.

There is a definitely-firm and reliable rumor that there's a third Robert Downey Jr. "Sherlock Holmes" film in the works. According to the Hollywood Reporter (May 7), Warner Bros. and Village Roadshow Pictures have announced that "Sherlock Holmes 3" will open in theaters Christmas Day in 2020. All that's needed now is a script and a director and a start of production.

Further to the item about Grace Humiston, a lawyer-turned-investigator in 1917 who was known as "Mrs. Sherlock Holmes" and was featured in a recent episode of the NBC-TV series "Timeless" (Mar 18 #3), Rachel Kaufman wrote about the episode at the Smithsonian blog <www.tinyurl.com/y9pys2oa>.

Sundance TV plans an eight-episode international drama series based on Umberto Eco's THE NAME OF THE ROSE, starring John Turturro as the Franciscan monk William of Baskerville, Damian Hardung as Adso of Melk, and Rupert Everett as inquisitor Bernard Gui; the book, set in Italy in 1327, nevertheless was nicely Sherlockian.

It's a bit late for this year, but in plenty of time for next year: Sherlock Holmes Day is celebrated on May 22. It's an event established in 2013 by the forum and games site Gaia Online, and there's much more information available on-line at <www.daysoftheyear.com/days/sherlock-holmes-day>.

Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss and Benedict Cumberbatch celebrated Sherlock Holmes Day on-line with video and audio teasers for their "Sherlock" series at the BBC America web-site <www.tinyurl.com/y92csyc3>.

Margalit Fox's CONAN DOYLE FOR THE DEFENSE (New York: Random House, 2018; 352 pp., \$27.00) has the subtitle "the true story of a sensational British murder, a quest for justice, and the world's most famous detective writer," and it's a carefully-researched and well-written account of the Oscar Slater case; the author has discovered new and interesting information about the case, and she offers a convincing explanation of why the police and the government were so determined to convict an innocent man.

May 18 #6 English Heritage has announced that Peter Cushing will be honored with a blue plaque at his childhood home in Croydon; the announcement was made on May 4 (Star Wars Day) and the plaque will be unveiled in July. Roger Johnson has noted that May 4 also is Reichenbach Day (when Holmes and Moriarty fought to the death in Switzerland); Cushing was Sherlock Holmes in "The Hound of the Baskervilles" (1959), a BBC television series (1968), and "The Masks of Death" (1984). He also played Conan Doyle in a television film "The Great Houdinis" (1976).

For those who may be wondering why May 4 is Star Wars Day (May 18 #1): the celebration was created by fans of the series, who happily say "May the 4th be with you." The announcement was made on Star Wars Day in recognition of Cushing's memorable performance at the Grand Moff Tarkin in the first "Star Wars" film in 1977.

Reported: Leslie S. Klinger's *IN THE SHADOW OF AGATHA CHRISTIE* (New York: Pegasus, 2018; 356 pp., \$25.95) is subtitled "classic crime fiction by forgotten female writers: 1850-1917" and offers 16 stories that include Carolyn Wells' 1915 Sherlockian burlesque "The Adventure of the Clothes-Line".

Fans of Scooby-Doo will welcome the news that "Scooby-Doo and Guess Who?" is being developed for a 2019 launch on Boomerang's digital-streaming service; episodes of the animated series will feature characters such as Batman, the Flash, Wonder Woman, and Sherlock Holmes.

When in Middlesbrough (in North Yorkshire): the Orange Pip Market, a monthly artisan food market is on Baker Street <www.orangepipmarket.com>; it was founded in 2014 and named for the Sherlock Holmes story. You can also stop in at the local pub The Twisted Lip <www.thetwistedlip.co.uk>.

Nancy Springer's *THE CASE OF THE GYPSY GOOD-BYE* (New York: Philomel, 2010; 176 pp., \$14.99) is the sixth and last in her pleasant series about Enola Holmes, the 14-year-old younger sister of Mycroft and Sherlock; she's hiding from them in London and solving mysteries on her own. All of the books are available in trade paperbacks from Puffin (\$6.99), and the series has been in the news because Legendary Entertainment has signed the British actor-model Millie Bobby Brown to star in and produce feature films based on the series. There's more information about Enola Holmes, and Nancy Springer, at the author's web-site <www.nancyspringer.com>, and about Millie Bobby Brown at Wikipedia and elsewhere on the Internet.

Overwatch, a team-based multiplayer first-person shooter video game developed and published by Blizzard Entertainment <www.playoverwatch.com/en-us>, allows players to purchase "skins" that change the outfit or color scheme of the players' heroes, and one of the anniversary skins offers McCree the opportunity to dress in a Sherlockian costume that also fits support hero Ana; you can see Ana wearing the skin, and explore Overwatch, at the DBLTAP web-site <www.tinyurl.com/ydbeqats>.

BRAIN GAMES is a series of puzzle books, and their *SHERLOCK HOLMES PUZZLES* (Morton Grove: Publications International, 2017; 198 pp. \$12.98) has more than "100 cerebral challenges inspired by the world's greatest detective" (standard puzzles, with many tied to the Canon).

May 18 #7 Patricia Morison died on May 20. She had a long career both as a singer (she starred in "Kiss Me Kate" on Broadway in 1948 and then in "The King and I" on Broadway and on tour) and as an actor (in films and on television) and is best-known to Sherlockians as the evil Mrs. Hilda Courtney in Basil Rathbone's "Dressed to Kill" (1946).

The new block-buster film "Avengers: Infinity War" stars Robert Downey Jr. (Iron Man) and Benedict Cumberbatch (Doctor Strange), who have both played Sherlock Holmes, but there are no allusions to that in the movie. According to Comic Book Resources <www.tinyurl.com/y97dbj44>, directors Joe and Anthony Russo believed that jokes about the character connection would have been "too obvious."

The East Haddam Stage Company, which is based at Gillette Castle in Connecticut, will be on tour with its radio drama "Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Speckled Band" in the fall <www.ehsco.org>.

Stephen Dietz's "Sherlock Holmes: The Final Adventure" is due at the Morris-Jumel Mansion in New York, N.Y., June 8-24 <www.morrisjumel.org>.

Ray Crew's new play "Sherlock Holmes and the Avenging Angels" is scheduled at the Elementary Theatre in Cape May, N.J., June 21-Sept. 29, during the Sherlock & Shakespeare Festival <www.capemaymac.org>.

Jeffrey Hatcher's "Holmes and Watson" is due at the Alley Theatre in Houston, Tex., June 22-July 22 <www.alleytheatre.org>; at the Indiana Repertory Theatre in Indianapolis, Ind., Sept. 25-Oct. 21 <www.irtlive.com>; and at the North Coast Repertory Theatre in Solana Beach, Calif., Oct. 17-Nov. 11 <www.northcoastrep.org>.

"The Hound of the Baskervilles" (a new dramatization by Tim Churchill and Catherine O'Reilly) is scheduled at the Stoke Repertory Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs., July 31-Aug. 4 <www.stokerep.info>.

The Ghostwriters' "Adventures of the Improvised Sherlock Holmes" is scheduled at La Belle Angèle in Edinburgh, Aug. 2-26 <www.improvsherlock.com>.

Richard Lavin's new play "Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Impaled Whaler" is due at Tudor House in Lake Arrowhead, Calif., Aug. 10-25; website at <www.tudorhouseentertainment.villas>.

Ken Ludwig's "Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery" is scheduled at the Krevsky Center in Harrisburg, Pa., Sept. 7-16 <www.theatreharrisburg.com>.

Charles Marowitz's "Sherlock's Last Case" is due at the Huntington Avenue Theatre in Boston, Mass., Sept. 28-Oct. 28 <www.huntingtontheatre.org>.

"Sherlock Holmes and the West End Horror" (dramatized from Nicholas Meyer's novel by Anthony and Marcia Milgrom Dodge) will be performed at the Little Lake Theatre in Canonsburg, Pa., Oct. 11-27 <www.littlelake.org>.

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