

All This and Kathryn, Too. Thank You, Sherlock Holmes!

by David Stuart Davies

EDITOR'S NOTE: We feel most fortunate in having been able to induce Mr.

David Stuart Davies to bring you the following message.

As most Sherlockians and Jeremy Brett fans will know, Mr. Davies is the renowned British author who has brought us, most recently, his definitive Jeremy Brett compendium, *Bending the Willow*.

In addition, Mr. Davies is well known for his earlier works, which include *Holmes of the Movies*, *Sherlock Holmes and the Hentzau Affair*, and the famous account of Sherlock Holmes vs. Count Dracula, *The Tangled Skein!*

In addition, Mr. Davies provides an excellent example of a little-recognized aspect of the Sherlock Community, i.e., what might be called, "Sherlock Holmes and the Cupid Connection!"

You see, Mr. Davies met his wife, Kathryn, through their mutual interest in matters Sherlockian.

We personally know of at least two other couples whose romance, and subsequent nuptials, were wrought through mutual dedication to matters Holmesian.

Paul Herbert, the leader of our own Cincinnati based scion, The Tankerville Club, met his wife, Barbara, through their joint participation in a Sherlock Holmes seminar (Barbara Herbert, by the way, was honored by being named "The Woman" at the Baker Street Irregulars' meeting in January of 1996).

And there is Meredith Granger and his wife, Dr. Toni Morris, whose acquaintance blossomed into romance and marriage through their mutual activities with The Illustrious Clients of Indianapolis.

Our congratulations to all those whose ardor, and subsequent matrimony, hath been wrought through Mr. Sherlock Holmes — and our profound thanks to Mr. David Stuart Davies, who took time from his busy schedule to provide us with the following essay.

I first encountered Sherlock Holmes in the school library.

As fate would have it, the Basil Rathbone series of films was being televised at the same time.

The potent combination of Conan Doyle's prose and Rathbone's performance as The Great Detective ensured my life-long love of Mr. Holmes and his world.

While I was at university studying English, I wanted to write my final thesis on Conan Doyle.

I was told in no uncertain terms that ACD as an author wasn't "important enough" and I would have to choose someone else.

As a reaction to this judgement and as an antidote to reading some of the dry and pompous tomes for my studies, I began writing an article on the films of Sherlock Holmes.

The article grew — and grew.

It eventually became a book and was published in my last year at university as *Holmes of the Movies*.

A revised and revitalised edition is planned for next year.

After completing my university education, I set out upon a career of teaching.

The demands of this job kept me away from writing for nearly 10 years.

Then I met Kathryn! In 1987, I responded to a request — published in "The District Messenger," a newsletter of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London

— from a Miss K White to meet with Sherlockians living in the North of England.

The purpose of the meeting would be to form a small Sherlockian society in the North.

There were three of us at that first meeting.

Kathryn had already come up with the society's name, The Northern Musgraves, which is based on a reference to a branch of this family in The Musgrave Ritual.

K and I set about producing publications and setting up meetings.

We produced two newsletters — Spring and Autumn — called "The Ritual," and an annual journal called "The Musgrave Papers."

There was a very positive response to our efforts.

Our membership grew.

And after a few years we felt the need to form a committee to help run The Musgraves, so we formed The Consultancy, a group of fine men and women who help share our burdens.

In all honesty The Musgraves have gone from strength to strength and we now average around 400 members, with many residing in the United States of America.

Dear Peter Cushing, our first Honorary Member, designed our logo, and of course fellow Hon. Members, Jeremy Brett and John Bennett Shaw, were staunch supporters.

With the formation of The Musgraves, my creative juices were stimulated once more and I began writing my first Holmes novel, *Sherlock Holmes & The Hentzau Affair*, which was published in 1991.

Since then I have published a second Holmes adventure, *The Tangled Skein* (1995), which I am pleased to say received many good reviews.

Among my other smaller works, perhaps the most successful and the one that is closest to my heart is *Fixed Point*, a play which deals with the life and death of Sherlock Holmes.

One notable Sherlockian (I will spare his blushes) says he cannot read the final pages without crying.

I am currently working on my third Holmes novel, *Sherlock Holmes & The Book of the Dead*, which Calabash Press will be publishing within the next 12 months.

However my most recently released volume is *Bending The Willow: Jeremy Brett as Sherlock Holmes*.

I was privileged to meet and talk with Jeremy many times and I hope the book gives a clear insight into his playing of Sherlock Holmes and the fun and traumas he experienced in those years when he shouldered the Great Detective's mantle.

Something else happened during those formative years of The Northern Musgraves.

I fell in love with the nicest person I know.

Thankfully my affections were reciprocated, and Kathryn and I were married at Easter this year.

And then there is Skelington Bones, Sherlock Holmes' comic book alter-ego.

I love writing the Bones stories because it allows me to take the elements from the Holmes stories and exaggerate the potential farcical characteristics within them.

Conan Doyle was a comic writer and had a fine sense of the ridiculous.

Consider the reference in "A Case of Identity" to the fellow who "had drifted into the habit of winding up every meal by taking out his false teeth and hurling them at his wife...."

Wonderfully comic and bizarre — the kind of aspects I hope to inject into my Bones stories.

Of course, dear Skelington is a ghost hunter and this gives me another strand to play around with.

I hope there is at least one serious shivery moment in each tale.

I include many sly Sherlockian references within the text and I am slowly building up a cast of Sherlockian alter-egos.

Already we have the landlady, Mrs. Headstone, and Bones' friend and chronicler, Doctor Jonas A. Wartsanall.

I am planning to introduce Bones' smarter brother, Maestro Bones, in a future outing.

These books are an antidote to the strained serious pastiches one finds on the shelf.

They're like "the Marx Brothers meet Conan Doyle."

As a full-time freelance writer I welcome all writing challenges, and it is pleasing to report that, having been associated with "The Sherlock Holmes Gazette" since its conception, and having recently

been its contributing editor, I am now sitting in the editor's chair, ready to pilot the publication to greater heights.

