

Better Holmes and Watson

The Granada Series Reviewed

THE ABBEY GRANGE
Adaptation: Trevor Bowen
Direction: Peter Hammond

Mr. Sherlock Holmes (Jeremy Brett) begins the adventure of *THE ABBEY GRANGE* by deprecating the literary skills of his good friend and companion, Dr. John H. Watson (Edward Hardwicke).

"Your fatal habit of looking at everything from the point of view of a story instead of a scientific exercise has ruined what might have been an instructive and even classical series of demonstrations," chides the Great Detective.

Later, investigating a murder case, Holmes is impressed by the mental agility of Mr. Viviani (Nicolas Chagrin), manager of the shipping office of the Adelaide-Southampton line:

"Mr. Viviani, your perspicacity astonishes me!"

"I assure you," smiles Viviani, "it is only through study of the good doctor's masterly exposition of your work that I now have any small capacity to reason."

"Really," murmurs Holmes. "You amaze me! Watson, are you taking notes?"

Point for Dr. Watson.

Theresa (Zulema Dene) attends to Lady Mary Brackenstall (Anne Louise Lambert), who has suffered grievous bodily harm in *THE ABBEY GRANGE*. Inspector Hopkins (Paul Williamson) has called in Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson (Jeremy Brett and Edward Hardwicke) on the case. **NEXT PAGE:** Holmes and Watson discover the missing loot in a nearby pond. *THE ABBEY GRANGE* was the first show filmed with Edward Hardwicke as Watson.

Coming after the astonishing events of *THE EMPTY HOUSE*, not the least of which was the return from the dead of the world's first consulting detective, *THE ABBEY GRANGE* (originally published in 1904 and collected in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*) might have been expected to be something of a letdown. The case has its points, but it contains nothing so extraordinary as Colonel Sebastian Moran's air gun or the sight of Mrs. Hudson crawling about the floor as she repositions a bust of her famous lodger.

Sir Eustace Brackenstall (played by Conrad Phillips, who represented Scotland Yard in 1960's *CIRCUS OF HORRORS*) has been brutally murdered. His wife, Lady Mary (Anne Louise Lambert) has been roughed up by the killers, who appear to have been the Lewisham gang, a trio of local villains consisting of Randall and his two sons. (Is it giving away too much to say that these baddies never actually show up in the story?) Lady Mary's faithful servant, Theresa Wright (Zulema Dene), corroborates her beloved mistress' testimony, and Inspector Hopkins (Paul Williamson) is inclined to believe them.

At first, Holmes is disappointed. To all appearances it is an open and shut case—that is, until the Master Sleuth



Jeremy Brett

uncovers a few telling clues, including a dog's gravestone, an unfrayed rope, three wine glasses, and a stationery log in a lake. Then, once again, "the game is afoot!"

Jeremy Brett actually speaks those famous words in this program, and charges them with a quiet intensity. Later, severely discomfited by Lady Mary's overly effusive appreciation of Holmes' detecting skills, Brett shows why he will always be considered one of the great portrayals of Sherlock Holmes.

THE ABBEY GRANGE is the first Granada episode directed by Peter Hammond, who makes a stylish job of it, and happily displays few of the baroque, reflection-obsessed excesses that mar some of his later work (which includes *THE MASTER BLACKMAILER*, *THE ELIGIBLE BACHELOR*, and three of *THE MEMOIRS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*' six episodes).

Alfred Hitchcock often claimed that he had cheated the audience in his 1950 film *STAGE FRIGHT* by showing a flashback that was a lie. (It is the killer who narrates the flashback, and, desperate to provide himself with an alibi, he lies about much of the action—which we, the audience, see dramatized on screen.) Helped immeasurably by Trevor Bowen's tight, clever script, Hammond manages to show just such a lying flashback in *THE ABBEY GRANGE* without once putting anything on screen that didn't actually occur. Like the entire program, it's a subtle but memorable achievement.

—Richard Valley



