



BOOK CLUB REVIEWS APRIL/MAY

We only received a couple of reviews this month – perhaps due to the improvement in the weather, people are preferring outdoors activities? However, we know that your books are a staple in your holiday plans so we shall carry on.

Alison told us she really enjoyed **The Pull of the Stars by Emma Donoghue**. She said: “Many aspects of it rang bells for me. I trained in a London hospital that had Nightingale wards and the description of the hospital felt quite familiar. I was a midwife for a number of years so I identified with this but found the differences from my own career fascinating. The author had clearly done lots of research, the characters were well rounded and the environment was vividly painted. It was a very sad story and Bridie’s death was painful although I did wonder what her life would have been like had she lived. The nuns seemed to have an enormous hold over her.

“The one aspect that felt a little unreal was that of Dr Lynn - would she have been allowed to work there given that she was already well known to the police? There were lots of parallels with the Great Flu/Covid situation as well as the severe shortage of staff, equipment etc.

“All in all an excellent and thought provoking novel and highly recommended.”

Alison also enjoyed **Small Pleasures by Clare Chambers**. She stated: “This was a great read. When I read the synopsis I wasn’t sure if I’d like it but it gripped me from the beginning. Jean was an immensely likeable character - what a rotten life she had. Needy mother, frustrating career and little joy in her life. I was so pleased she found happiness albeit briefly with Gretchen’s husband. Gretchen’s story also caused an improvement in her working conditions in that her male colleagues seemed to start recognising her worth. Her editor was a very sympathetic character and I was relieved she had him as a friend. Gretchen was an interesting character - very likeable at first but as time went on we witnessed her character being slowly revealed - like peeling an onion. She was actually quite selfish, particularly when she left her husband and child for her female love. The idea that she could resume her married life where she left off after all the hurt she caused was staggering - but also very childish.

“This was a well constructed and well written book. The author managed to make the reader feel Jean’s frustrations - leaving her mother for a couple of hours which always seemed to bring recriminations, guilt at caring so much for Gretchen’s family, helplessness at Gretchen’s hospital results. We were left knowing how she might

feel at the death of her one apparent chance of happiness. An excellent read, easy to get into and highly recommended."

Barbara added that she loved the book from page one. She said: " I must admit that I forgot about the newspaper cutting in the very beginning until nearly the end and then it dawned on me. It was moving and sad but somehow it was the right ending. Interestingly it was quite similar to the ending of 'A single thread', maybe I just like those books about single women finding happiness however fleetingly.

"I thought the attention to detail and sense of time and place were absolutely superb. I could feel the Kent suburbs and smell the smog. Well yes I can remember the smogs but I grew up in central London. It was so evocative of that time though, Jean's bus journeys, the little houses with neat gardens just the whole feel of the novel was so powerful and emotional.

"I enjoyed the story as well and Jean's investigations but what really made such a profound impression was the feel of the book and the characters of Jean, her mother and the husband (sorry I have forgotten his name and I lent the book to someone)."

We will release information about our next round of recommendations shortly.

Sherry, Lucia and Debbie