

Thanks to everyone who submitted a review for our latest round of Book Club recommendations. We really do love to hear what you have to say so please keep your comments coming!

Mrs England by Stacey Halls:

Sue told us that she popped this in her bag for a mini break but once she started reading it, she couldn't stop! She explained: "I wanted to know what would happen next. I've not read historical novels since I was a teenager (a long time ago now!) and I loved the description of the England's Edwardian marriage. Who was really guilty of hiding Ruby's letters? I think it was Charles England and he planted them in Lilian's room.

"The children were delightful and I felt sorry for Decca being sent away to school and the forced marriage of her parents was sad too.

"I enjoyed Ruby having to confront her own demons to stop history repeating itself, not expecting it at all.

I found the book utterly compelling and gripping. I've now got her other two novels from the library."

Sandra also found it a little slow to 'get going', but added: "Once I got into it, I found it quite complex and I began to wonder who really wasn't 'quite right'. Was it Mrs England or was it her husband? At times I was convinced that Mrs England was mentally ill and that her actions and behaviour were due to her illness, but then I wondered if she was perfectly sane, but devious. Likewise, my opinion of Mr England switched from him being a protective husband to an abusive one.

"It's understandable that Ruby May's awful childhood experiences influenced the way she perceived the situations that she found herself in and the way that they influenced how she dealt with them.

"I thought that there were some unanswered questions, but maybe I just missed the answers. The bandages covering the circular burns on Mrs England; were they self-inflicted or caused by her husband? Also, the strange smell that Ruby smelt; was it something being burnt or was it drugs?

Nearing the end of the book, with Mr England dead and Mrs England at last free of the abuse that she had endured for so long, I felt that the mystery surrounding Mrs England had been solved, only to be thrown into disarray again by the final paragraph.

"Overall, I enjoyed this book and would consider reading another novel by this author."

Alison added: "A really good read. Ruby is an interesting character and I enjoyed learning about her Norland Nanny experiences. She was a girl with strength and fortitude which she needed in spades. I felt so sad she missed out on such a great opportunity to go to America, but the pressure on her to provide for her family was such a responsibility. Her new post was filled with horrid, unwelcoming people and there was a definite Gothic feel about the book once she took up this new post. I guessed that there was a good reason Mrs England acted she did but the whole story was a surprise. It had a very satisfying ending and I cheered for the England family and for Ruby at their release from the absolute tyranny of being a woman, penniless and dependant on the whims of men and society."

Chris said: "I really enjoyed "Mrs England" which had me wondering if it was going to be a very different story such as Jane Eyre, Turn of the Screw or a Barbara Cartland romance. So happy that it all turned out different and that they got away with it."

Sounds intriguing!

The Heron's Cry by Ann Cleeves:

Ruth said she enjoyed this but it took her a while to get into the story and the characters. She added: "It is similar to her other books but obviously in a different landscape and south rather than a northern environment. I might read more of the series as she writes more."

Chris had already read the first book in the Matthew Venn series and declared: "this one was a treat", adding: "I thought the ending was a bit overcomplicated, and this author does seem to like to break up families. It is the same in the Vera and Shetland series."

Sheila felt the author's background as a probation officer "must have provided a depth of source material for the characters in the story." She added: "Inspired by her work I wanted to know more about the main character Detective Matthew Venn, I have just purchased "The Long Call" which was written before "The Heron's Cry." I wasn't surprised to find that the author spent most of her childhood in North Devon and a reunion with an old school friend led her to create a new character in Matthew Venn. I now look forward to reading more mystery and intrigue in this book, and also her delightful descriptions of the beautiful Devon countryside."

Alison also appreciated a book set in a part of the country she lives in and loves – adding that the author went to the secondary school 200 yards up her road!. She commented: "I read the first book in the series and enjoyed it but this is much better. She has fleshed out the main characters and I found DI Venn more believable. Cleeves' writing style is easy to read and fast paced, I didn't immediately guess the murderer and there were plenty of twists and turns, and red herrings. Can't wait for the next one in the series."

Orchard by Benedict Macdonald and Nicholas Gales:

Sandra said she enjoyed reading this book, commenting: "I found it easy to read and could be picked up and put down without any real need to finish a chapter or reach a certain point."

"I loved the descriptions and could visualise the wildlife going about its activities throughout the different seasons. Although some of the wildlife was described in detail, some was not and I think readers who didn't know what a particular bird looked like, would be unable to visualise and fully appreciate what was being described in the text."

The current owners of this land are clearly dedicated to preserving the orchard. Hopefully, subsequent owners will do the same, in order to preserve it for future generations to come."

Alison was not impressed with this book, stating simply: "I ordered the book from the library, read a few pages, gave up and took it back!! Really not my sort of thing at all."