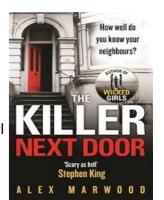
Reviews for Mobile Library Group Meeting March 2018

Alex Marwood - The Killer Next Door

In south London a group of very different people are renting rooms in the same house. They range from 'killer to 'victim' and their stories are all very different. It is almost a black comedy with man renting the flat at the top killing women and keeping their bodies preserved so that they can keep him company, the young gir runaway who is tough , brave and streetwise bonding with the female renters to eventually solve all their problems, one way or the other!



The landlord, Roy Preece is a truly revolting man, so his death was to be welcomed but I like Cher, Vesta, Collette and Hossein as they are all good people caught in traps of one sort or another.

The detail the author goes into about dead bodies is pretty revolting so I didn't find it an uplifting read! I think I enjoyed the Collette character the most as she was a loving person, fallen victim to witnessing a crime and having to keep running which kept her from people she loved.

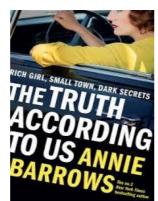
The storytelling and the narrative are involving as each character has their own background woven in much detail. It is a very clever book and every now and then the author strikes a comedic note. It was so deeply miserable I didn't really look forward to picking it up but that was fascinating in its own way and I am glad I kept reading it to the end as the author kept the surprises coming and it eventually felt optimistic.

I think the ending was quite possibly the only thing I liked as it was a happy one! Given the plot of the story this was quite a good thing to pull off.

Reviewer: Margaret H.

Annie Barrows – The Truth According to Us

There is an eighteen year old mystery at the bottom of the lives of the Romeyn family, and Willa, in trying to make sense. In her adolescent head, of all the knowing comments, sly digs and cryptic nods of the adults around her, finally uncovers the truth for her beloved Aunt Jottie.



The smart – sassy dialogue, is an absolute delight and entertains constantly, it is laugh out loud sometimes! The depictions of the small – town characters that inhabit this book, and the way they all 'go' is so sharply observed and lampooning, they all come alive. Layla Beck, who unwillingly joins this happy band, starts out being a spoiled bad girl at the top of the social tree but through her experience and involvement with Willas' father, the ultimate womanizer, Felix, is humbled and left without pride or vanity, very much older and wiser.

The deeply passionate love story of a Jottie and Vause, whose actions and intentions just before his accidental death is the engine of the novel. Jotties' pain inhabits every page and is so deeply heartfelt you cannot help but mourn her lost love.

Willas' search for the truth to help her aunt, comes at a great cost to her and cracks open the facade of her family. She retreats into the exhausted silence of a breakdown, the truth does indeed set them all free but it costs her, her father Felix.

All of it was just brilliant, the dialogue particularly and the good natured depiction of the Romeyn women, Jottie, Mae and Minerva and their amused disrespect for the pompous and self-important, small town folks is very entertaining. I think I liked the bravery all the women show in getting on with their lives as best they can and always putting a good face onto the world. It is that Willa feels so deeply and wants to know why, what are they hiding? They all love each other very much, in a completely unspoken way.

The end was satisfying in that Jottie is now at peace, knowing that Vause loved her, and was true to her and their love was not a lie. Felix, the chaos factor does indeed get his just deserts and one only hopes that Willa, with the love of her family, will recover. It starts with Layla Beck and ends wither too, a completely different person now and set on a much happier path for it.

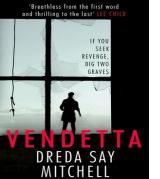
I have recommended to a friend.

Reviewer: Margaret H

Dreda Say Mitchell - Vendetta

'Two minds, two different crime scenes, one killer?' (it says on the cover)

A fast paced thriller with some human interest – but I guessed the plot and then rushed through the book. Not a lot to say – not my kind of thing really. Main characters, Mac, should have been dead by half way through he'd had so many injuries!

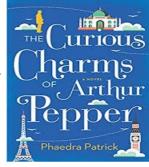


Fast paced, but full of detail I could have done without and too many injuries that would have been disabling if not mortal!! NO LIKES – ALL THE CHARCTERS SCARY!! Wanted to know what happened to the child Milos? No – I would not recommend to a friend.

Reviewer: Su R

Phaedra Patrick - The Curious Charms of Arthur Pepper

Arthur wife passed away, he was overcome with grief, whilst clearing out her things, he found a charm bracelet. This discovery of a hidden charm bracelet Had him curious about what each charm meant. He also wanted to know why he never saw his wife wearing the bracelet and why she had hidden it. This charm bracelet pulled Arthur out of his hermit slump and depressed states into adventures which he never dreamed of, as he traced where each charm came from and what their meaning was to Miriam, which led to a few surprises. Every adventure made him wonder what's wife life was like before she met him. He could not stop searching. These adventures made him feel guilty for he never took Miriam anywhere



Arthur was an endearing and sweet character quite charming .I enjoyed his adventures and was quite eager to follow his trail in the different countries and the people that he met. The book was a good read it was enchanting and uplifting. It certainly helped Arthur through the stages of grieving. What I liked about the book it was enjoyable I wanted to travel the globe With Arthur to those amazing adventurous places I was delighted to read this book. At first I thought it was a little dull But as I continued I found that I could not wait for the next adventure. I would most certainly recommend it to my friends and clients who are Experiencing bereavement.

Reviewer: Mrs O

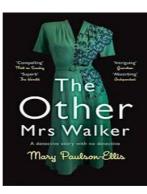
I found the story of Arthur Peppers' return to life after the death of his wife charmingly cosy. Although it is a shock to Arthur to discover the stories of his wife's early life, there is nothing unseemly or distressing there. It is just the adventures of a girl, full of life and curiosity, enjoying living her life as it came along. She lived a totally different life with Arthur, leading him to question if she was happy and happy with him. His subsequent investigations dig him out of the rut and mind set of his life, giving him an enthusiasm and optimism for life that had gone with his beloved Miriam. It is of course, fanciful, but it's just how you'd like to think life would work out with all the wrong turns in life being put right. Everyone is well meaning and even though they are living ordinary lives they see the light of possibilities through Arthur.

Eventually Arthur is also at peace with himself and the loss of his wife Miriam, he no longer doubts the reality of their happiness together and van move on with his own life.

Reviewer: Margaret H

Mary Paulson – Ellis – The Other Mrs Walker

The story of Margaret Penny, a twisting and turning tale of Edinburgh in 1929 – 2011, and her job at the 'Office for lost people', tracking down those who have been neglected and alone, and as it turns out, one of her own family! I like Clementine best – she got out and made good in America – I think!? So many plot twists that characters blurred and metamorphosed into each other's lives, a real page turner.



Good exploration of what it meant to be a female in 1930's Edinburgh up to present day. Very hard to follow and at times almost impossible to know who was who and what was what! But it did all add to the mystery. Yes it was a satisfying end, but still a bit too convoluted for me – a few more clues about Ruby and Clementine maybe – it all got so complex. Yes I would recommend to a friend.

Reviewer Su R

Mary Paulson – Ellis – The Other Mrs Walker

An old lady dies alone in a cold Edinburgh flat on a snowy night .A faded Emerald dress hangs in her wardrobe, a split glass of whiskey pools on the Floor.

A few days later a middle aged woman arrives back in the city, she thought she'd left behind, her future uncertain, her past in tatters. She soon finds herself a. Job at the official for lost people, tracking down the families of those who have died neglected and alone. Margaret Penny cannot yet know, is just how entangled her own life will become in the death of one lonely stranger.

Unfortunately I am unable to say which character I liked the most of the It was difficult to feel any empathy for any of the characters, as they in their Own way, had flaws which made them unlikeable The lives of the children incredible sad and their family and living conditions were described as seedy and grimy. Perhaps this was true in the time that they were raised.

I found it a difficult read because of the twist and turns of the plot and at times it was a little confusing in parts.

I particularly liked the links between the two families, although I had to concentrate on the characters .and at times I found it a little depressing. The ending I found confusing and it failed to answer my questions And was a little disappointing, and a times frustrated.

I am a little uncertain if I would recommend it to a friend because I found it a difficult read. Reviewer Mrs O

Annie Barrows – The Truth According to Us

It's 1938...... The disinherited Layla Beck (father a USA senator) is forced to join the 'Federal Writers Project' in order to obtain welfare payments. Her job is to record the history of a small West Virginian town, and she is to lodge with the (infamous) Romeyn family – one time owners of the local hosiery factory.

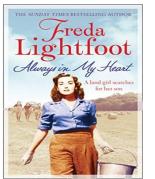
The characters are quirky, the tale is dark, but the story abounds with loving relationships and is sad, heart-warming and shocking. All the characters are explores in a way that shows up their flaws and their good natures too. An exercise in understanding the past and moving on in the present.

Great to read about small town West Virginia through the eyes of a city girl from Washington. Full of enticing, enigmatic characters. Slow starter, but more and more engrossing as it went along, becoming more complex, dark and interesting. Explores the complexities of family life in a small town setting in the depression. Yes a satisfying ending – it ends in compromise but with a continuing love story. Yes I would recommend to a friend.

Reviewer: Su R

Freda Lightfoot - Always in my Heart

Scullery maid Brenda, who was brought up in a Children's Home, met and fell in love with Jack Stuart, the son of the local landowner who lived in Trowbridge Hall in 1939. Because of Sir Randolph's controlling behaviour Jack decided to run away to Paris to be with his mother, taking Brenda with him. Once war was declared in France Jack started working for the French Resistance and inevitably got killed but not before Brenda became pregnant. Brenda had the baby Jack, but was the put



into an internment camp and spirited away by the Germans. Brenda left the baby with her mother-in-law. She eventually managed to escape with her friend Emma who was also interned. Once back home Brenda tried to find her son Jack believing that Camille and her mother-in-law would ensure Jack's safe return. Just like Cinderella there was an ugly but articulate sister-in-law who tried desperately to bad mouth poor old Brenda, and one has to say did succeed until Camille turned up with Emma and restored the equilibrium by bringing the Marriage Certificate and baby Jack's Birth Certificate, it all being rounded off by a French Resistance Medal given posthumously to Jack Stewart which is son collected at the French Embassy.

It was a bit light on detail. There are no real descriptions of the way they found their way across Austria and France before eventually getting to Spain and the UK. The story did touch on the difficulty women had in retaining jobs when the soldiers were demobbed but there was much more than was described. A nicely written piece. Could be a blockbuster but it has been done before. I think Suite Francaise was a more real description of what went on in France in the day but then it should have been so because it was written at the time. Nevertheless it was interesting to get the juxtaposition of the Italian lad Dino who has been interned in the UK whilst Brenda and Emma were having the same treatment doled out by the Germans in France. Did the Italians inter people? Not according to the account in 'Tea with Mussolini' although the ladies were under guard 'for their own protection!!'

I would not recommend to a friend – most of did not seem real to me.

Reviewer: Janet J

Janet Evanovich – Wicked Appetite

This is all about the adventures of Elizabeth Tucker (Lizzie to her friends) whose life is changed forever after she got scorched by Wolf (Gerwulf Grimoire) the evil looking guy dressed is black with very pale skin. Lizzie had inherited a house in Marblehead, just north of Boston and southeast of Salem from Great Aunt Ophelia. She was made aware that she had special powers which were needed. At the time Lizzie WAS Cup Cake Queen at Clara's bakery. She was the backroom girl and Gloria Blinkly, known as Glo, was the girl on the counter. Glo was interested in spells – particularly Ripple's



Book of Spells dated 1692 – although she has no knowledge and little experience of such matters. Clara Dazzle, the owner of the shop, was also known to 'dabble' in the art coming from a very old family in Marblehead.

The scene changes when Diesel moves in on the group saying he was there to protect Lizzie. A few heart-beats later Diesel had moved in to join the monkey and the one cat (7143) with power beyond the feline. The plot surrounds the finding of the 'stones'. There are some wonderful motors described in the novel and the way they screech into the lives of the four girls including Shirley More. It is hard to image the story anywhere other than America.

The sheer energy of the novel was infectious. Whether it was the Cup Cake spree or the boiler going 'AWOL' it really was like being on a treadmill which never stopped, starting at five thirty in the morning. Amazing what the author could do with six characters, a cat and a monkey. Obviously there is a bit of slapstick but it did not swamp the story. It was a good read with very little beginning, no middle and no end BUT it certainly caught my imagination. It was as if a task had been set whereby a story had to be written to include cupcakes, a witches broom and a house exploding. Really was fantasy. Really was a fantasy but more fun than Harry Potter and less entertaining than Harry Potter.

Yes I am glad I read this book – escapism at its best –

would I recommend to a friend - definitely not!!

Reviewer: Janet J

To be honest, I didn't finish this book. The reason being that I just found it too silly.

It misses the mark of for instance, the TV series 'Charming', it is a world away from Dan Brown and if it is meant to funny, it just isn't.

I also didn't get along with the style of writing, it is breezy and fast but smart-ass wearing. Maybe it is because I haven't read the Stephanie Plum books, but I really just didn't get it.

Reviewer: Margaret H

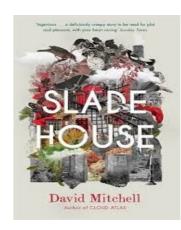
I can only apologise about this book!! Sometimes I see an author and a red cover and go oooh that looks good!! Janet Evanovich has been around a long time so I though let's give her a go, I often do not look at reviews so didn't realise how bad it was. I must be honest and say this is one of the worst books I have ever read. Sorry!! Jackie

David Mitchell - Slade House

Just past the Fox and Hounds, there is a house set back in Slade Alley of Westwood Road. It is situated about halfway down. Nathan and his Mum, Rita, are off to meet Lady Norah Grayer who is having a soiree with Rita as the guest of honour where Yehudi Menuhin just happens to be passing. They meet Jonah who is about the same age as Nathan. The man Rita asked the way was the last person to see either Rita or Nathan. Nine years later. 1988, a Detective Inspector Edmonds, Thames Valley Police found himself in exactly the same spot in Slade Road near the hidden door. He knocked on the door and was met by Mrs Chloe Chetwynd. They discussed security issues and eventually after entering the property the DI asked about Rita and Nathan Bishop because a chap named Fred Pink seemed to think he had seen them nine years previously. Chloe denied all knowledge saying no one of that name was linked with the property. Anyway after a couple of dates with Chloe, DI Gordon Edmonds finds himself face to face with a picture of Nathan on the stairs. The man is never seen again. It's 1997 and there is a meeting of the Paranormal Society at, guess where, The Fox and Hounds and they are all off to Slade Alley. The group are admitted and invited to join the party which going on in the house. Some come and some go but this is the last time that Sally is seen. Another nine years pass and in 2009 Miss Timms is meeting Fred Pink in the Fox and Hounds ---well and so it goes on. It's a great story and interestingly written especially if the idea of spooks and the movement of spirits and houses as well as people excite you.

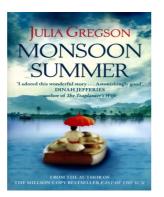
All these people were disappearing, and had been since 1899, but although lots of effort was made to find them the mystery continued with Norah and Jonah travelling through the centuries and decades and the mystery never really coming up on the radar. The question is can 'souls' move from one physical flesh to inhabit other physical flesh. The novel took me on a journey which had no map and no real finale. It was really different read for me and the author moved the reader along. Across yawning gaps with such ease that reality and the 'paranormal' became one and the same thing. On the whole it was a pleasure although I felt it unnerving, very much on shifting sands. No I would not recommend to a friend – because it seemed a very personal genre. Unfortunately the paranormal is something which is of little interest although the imagery was really good.

Reviewer: Janet J



Julia Gregson – Monsoon Summer

This is a story of Kit a young woman who worked as nurse during the war. She had almost completed her midwifery training when a tragic birth made her Gave up the course and went to live on a farm to assist in setting up a charity of sending midwives to South India. Kit met a young Indian doctor, they fell in love . Over the years Kit had always had a difficult relationship with her mother. Her mother disagreed with this relationship However Kit marries Anto and they Moved to India, India had dramatically changed after the war Kit and Anto had to overcome challenges of prejudices with Anto Wealthy family and bureaucracy. As Anglo



Indian herself She is later imprisoned for malpractice Kit struggles in a continent that is struggling to adjust after colonisation.

The Characters I particularly liked the most are the women who are trying To be trained as midwives under difficult and life threatening circumstances. I did not like Kit Father in law who was perhaps pompous and overbearing. What else stuck me about the book was primarily was the culture divide And how poor Indian women were treated in childbirth, and the position Of women within the Indian society. I liked the historical facts post independent period, and the mixed marriage between Kit and Anto how they tried to overcome the prejudices. What I liked most about the book the challenges and contrasts between the two cultures and the role of the midwives and the culture divide . I would most certainly recommend this book to a friend. A book I would like to read next East of the Sun. Reviewer: Mrs O

David Mitchel – Slade House

Couldn't wait to finish this book – sci-fi? Not my kind of writing – found it, self-indulgent and boring. Couldn't begin to explain the plot and characters. Sorry!

Nothing else to say.

Reviewer: Su R

SLADE SLADE BOULD SI David Mitchell Actor of GEORG MASS

David Mitchell - Slade House

What crackin' spookiness! I really enjoyed this book, it's got all the ingredients of ghost stories from far and wide, old and modern. Norah and Jonah Grayer are immortals, who fuel their being by unusual methods, they pick an 'engifted one' every nine years on the same day, beguile them into their lair, and eat their unfortunate souls.

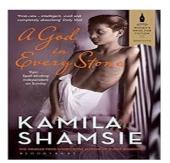
Along the way we enjoy ingenious devices to make this seem credible to the reader, lacunas, banjaxes, suasioners and onions! It took me back to my teenage years when I scared myself to death reading Dennis Wheatley and Edger Allen Poe! Hopefully I am right that the author doesn't intend us to take it all that seriously, but just enjoy a thumping good yarn!

It was well written, engaging to the last and full of surprises and good dialogue. Their vampire like existence and manipulation of reality was most entertaining. The end was half satisfying in that love always wins against evil, but might have been 'nice' if some of the victims were restored. However it didn't make much difference that they weren't, it was at the authors pleasure. Yes I would recommend to a friend.

Reviewer: Margaret H

Kamila Shamsie - God in Every Stone

I don't know where to start with this book, it is an education in itself, depicting the tragic and tumultuous events of the First World War, through to the lead-up to India gaining Independence from Britain and the events of the Peshawar Massacre. All of it deserves thoroughly researching so that you can fully appreciate that the author is writing about and how brilliantly well she does it.



The plot revolves around Vivian Rose Spencer, brave compassionate and determined. She nurses the wounded through WWI and picks up the threads of her earlier life as an archaeologist in India under the inspired tutelage of Tahsin Bey, when she is allowed to go back after a breakdown. There she becomes entangled with adorable and brilliant boy Najeeb and ultimately his brother Qayyum Gul, who lost an eye fighting for the British at Ypres. He also lost faith and ideals along the way. The story reaches back to Alexander and Darius and incorporates, quite casually, a wealth of detail and history which is so interesting. Vivian's heart is broken when she realises that in being patriotic and trusting, she caused the death of the man she loves. But she keeps chasing the dream he inspired her with. Attitudes and rejoices are deftly portrayed, seemingly without making judgements.

I thought the author's grasp of Britain, Indie, Europe and the Middle East and their political involvements was breath-taking. I loved all of this book, it is a truly magnificent novel. After feeling sure that the ending would be tragic as many of the other events, I was mightily relieved that the characters came through the catastrophic events relatively intact. Yes I would recommend to a friend.

Reviewer: Margaret H

Kamila Shamsie - A God in Every Stone

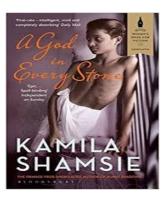
Set in the period 1914 – 30 in India this is an ambitious book telling the stories of emerging feminism, brotherhood and loyalty, anti-colonialism, massacre and war and many other issues of the time. Told by a young woman immersed in the past and held back by the times, but surround by western privilege and historical precedents.

Attempted a lot and covered much ground. Found it difficult and often boring to read although the subject was complex, personal and political. No, I did not find the end satisfying, it is an ongoing story. I would probably recommend to a friend.

Reviewer Su R

Kamila Shamsie - A God in Every Stone

The story is set between 1914 and 1930 and revolves around the search of a silver circlet around which fig leaves and fruit swirl coloured in green and damson swirl reflecting the wonder of the ancient world as Syclax begins his wondrous journey from the edge of the then known world. We begin our adventure to find the circlet in 1914 when Vivian Spencer is offered a place on the archaeological dig with Tahsin Bey in Labraunda, a place located in India as it was then, before



partition. Viv's father, as her guardian, had to agree to the trip but as he had no sons and Viv was expected to fulfil the role of being the pride of the family he encourage her to go. Her mother was less than enamoured with the idea but the view of a wife was of little importance in the day. There were wonderful descriptions of Labraunda and the way Viv felt about the leader of the group. The team consisted of both men and women, Germans, British, Americans and Turks but before outbreak of war this presented few problems. However with the team disbanded and all the nationals returned to their homeland at the beginning of World War I the dig was abandoned. On her return to the UK Viv volunteered as VAD nurse, tending to young men who have came back from barbaric was exhausted and wanted a more positive life and so returned to India, going to Peshawar where Tahsin Bey felt the circlet would be found. Before she sailed she spoke to people form the War Office about information she had heard regarding the view of Tashin Bey and the loyalty of the Americans to the Turkish overlords. Viv, as a twenty three year old returned to Peshawar in 1915 travelling in a carriage with a wounded Indian soldier Lance-Naik Guyvam Gul. Viv promised her father she would return home by Christmas. Strangely she met Guyyam's brother Najeeb a young lad who acted as her guide. The woman started to teach Najeeb about ancient Greek as well as English history. This did not end well and in November 1915 she returned home without any hope that the dig would ever start. Fast forward to 1928 when Najeeb,, now the curator of the museum, wrote to Viv asking her for help and money to resume the dig to look for a fairy tale really. However on 23rd April 1930 there was a gathering of a Indians in Peshawar and one of the British soldiers shot into the unarmed crowd killing one hundred and five unarmed Indians. The official report numbered those killed as thirty. A big cover-

In this year we are commemorating the suffragettes so the position of women is quite relevant. Viv's mother was somebody who seemed to be a normal parent with concerns about her daughter but her views were totally bypassed. The Brits in India at the time were not particularly secure and soldiers were being returned to Europe so the situation where a women was able to be an archaeologist seemed a bit outside the realms of belief so it wold have been interesting to get a look at the broader picture. Nevertheless this is a novel that really held the readers interest. It was interesting to see how the Empire was manipulated for the benefit of the few. The British that in cahoots with the upper echelons of Indian society, they could dominate a country the size of India with very few men to ensure that the rule of law ensued. The story embraced the Muslims and the Pathans but said nothing about Sikhs or Hindus. This was united India which embraced many religious groups which considered themselves to be Nationalists. Perhaps Peshawar was a totally Muslim City but this is unlikely. The enormity of the history seemed to get lost in the uprising of 23rd April 1930.

It was a very good read and very interesting.

Reviewer: Janet J

Julia Gregson – Monsoon Summer

Set in 1947, after the partition, Kit who has met and married an Indian doctor in England, travels to a small village in India to live with his large and wealthy family. She is a nurse and not quite qualified midwife and this the story of the enormous difficulties she encounters (even though she is Anglo Indian herself) at this difficult time in a continent struggling to adjust to the ruling itself after years of colonisation by Britain. Primarily for me, it is about women and how they survive and grow amidst tradition and prejudice.



Great to get an insight into this time and place and how to a family would struggle to look after its members and embrace new challenges and ways of working. I liked the way it tackled difficult subjects but read very easily and explores the individual stories and feelings of the family members.

Yes it was a satisfying end, because it starts to find a way forward for the family, for women and for new ways of viewing and treating mothers and midwifes. Yes I would recommend to a friend – possible more by this author.

Reviewer Su R

Julia Gregson – Monsoon Summer

It's not long since India gained independence and there is a great deal of anti – British and anti –Indian felling in the air. Despite this, a young girl, daughter of a mixed race Indian mother, falls in love with and marries a spectacularly handsome Indian doctor and leaves her mother and friends in Oxford. She goes with him to his home in Keralau and hopes to become a midwife for a charitable foundation created by her godmother Daisy for purely altruistic reasons. This is a very bad plan. Doomed to failure I would say. And indeed, cultural differences are too wide to span on every level, not the least being that midwives are regarded on the same level as prostitutes, something her high caste in-laws are horrified at. It goes from bad to worse, to even worse. The home is burnt down, Kit is prosecuted, and the 'happy' couple are in continuous fighting with the powers that be, legal and social.

The descriptions of the beauty of India are wonderful and beguiling, but the endless tussle between English and Indian is a situation that was bound to go bad and does. Kit's glamourous mother Glory dies and Kit gets to meet her father, a weak and watery character who jilted her mother. All in all, I did not find this an uplifting story, the unkindness and bad tempered rivalry, betrayal and unhappiness did not make it a happy read for me. No one can win, and no one does. There were not really any likeable characters, granted, they are realistic but who wants that?!

It's a wonderful insight in to the unusual times of independence which I was never taught about. So have found much of interest to ponder on there. The feeling that whichever way Kit turns there is no one she can really trust. Even her husband is struggling. Social differences are the hardest of all to solve I think and this book is about all of that. I always am predisposed to liking a happy ending, this goes some way towards that but considering the deep trouble she is in, I found it hard to believe that they could just bribe their way out and that Kit still wants to be a midwife (Aaargh?) I would not recommend this book to a friend.

Reviwer: Margaret H