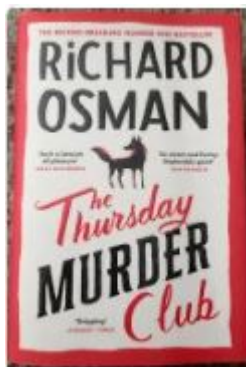


Richard Osman

The Thursday Murder Club

Alix

I enjoyed the beginning and then was second murder happened and took me by do not like detectives or murders. Enough the moment. . I ran out of time as usual and Not really my choice of book but maybe if I it right through.



beginning to get bored when the surprise. I liked the humour but sadness and drama in my life at had to skip through to the end.. had more time I would have read

Angela

As I frequently find, it took me a little while to get into the form and style of an unfamiliar author's writing, but I was quickly hooked and found myself fully involved in the doings of this cosy little retirement community especially the four main characters who are nicely drawn. The chapters are very short and this helped me keep track of the action as it came in bite sized chunks. Once engaged, I found this book a real page turner. Unexpectedly I also found myself harking back to our last month's book and reflecting that these fictional characters lived in a quite a luxurious and select set up for the retired. I thought the writing was engaging and I liked the rosy gentle tone and the moral stance which was present but non-judgmental and tempered with kindness. Given that I think some sort of moral compass is needed in a murder mystery, I enjoyed this warm approach to justice rather than law. Although the tone of the book is light, the many difficulties of life, old age and death were embraced and dealt with very sensitively. The story was a fun bit of nonsense, a pretty light read, and there were lots of dead bodies and threads to unpick, with a liberal sprinkling of red herrings. All quite a stretch of the imagination, but very entertaining.

Ann

I have to admit to a quite irrational dislike of Richard Osman; also he reminds me of “The Munsters”, but I don’t hold that against him. I heard snatches of this book read on BBC Radio 4 but found it difficult to follow, largely because I was occupied doing chores at the time and so somewhat distracted. Therefore, when it came to reading this book, I decided I would make notes to identify the characters in the book, because I find it difficult, these days, to remember who is who as I go through a book, especially if it is a detective story. As he introduces about two new characters each short chapter, the mind needed to be focused. So prejudiced as I was against poor Richard; armed with my list of characters, I found myself giggling enjoyably as I reached Chapter 2. I loved

the characters of the people living in the flats for the retired. I liked their air of independence and self respect. I could relate to that. They were 'not going to be 'shoved under the carpet like some minor embarrassment' (quote from TV comedy programme "Waiting for God"). The plots were convoluted but clever, I thought. I managed to follow, quite satisfactorily, who murdered who and why by the end. I liked the tidy way all the mysteries were solved and explained and the interesting stories revealing the need to leave the Garden of Eternal Rest in peace.

Although I knew what had happened to everyone in the book as I finished it, I don't think I can quite remember all the plots now, but then I have never had a good memory, sadly shades of mis-spent youth; I failed to train my memory properly! I enjoyed the book.

Anna

I was very much looking forward to reading this book - a change from recent reads, and a detective story, which I often enjoy. I leaped into it, and started wolfing it down, and then I pulled up, thinking I was being too hasty. One often finds that an easy to read book is deceptive - the skill with which it is written can disguise insights, apt descriptions, important facts, etc which one may miss by going too fast. So I stopped, went back to the beginning and started again. This was the right thing, as the book had seemed to be just a jolly romp, but then revealed more complex characters, and also a plot which turned on itself and kept on turning, keeping the reader guessing till the last page. Especially, I was very surprised to find many connections with "Being Mortal" - Atul Gawande's book which we read last time. Richard Osman never forgets that his main characters are elderly - or actually old! - and living on borrowed time. Coopers Chase seems an idyllic retirement village. The surroundings are beautiful, the flats and houses comfortable, the residents busy and sociable, good food and wine are on offer - how many of Gawande's patients would have loved a place like that?

But even here, reality breaks in. The Willows is the nursing home attached to Coopers Chase, described with chilling accuracy: "...quiet beige corridors, with dim strip lighting....Willows was a prison from which no escape was possible. Where release could mean only one thing". Penny, a former leader of the Thursday Club lives here, unresponsive, while her husband stays with her every day. Her best friend Elizabeth, who has taken over the Club, is slowly losing her husband to dementia. When she can't sleep she wonders if they have already disappeared: "Elizabeth clings on a little tighter and holds on to the day as long as she is able."

There is a beautifully described scene between Ron and Ibrahim, two Club members, when they have met one evening to discuss the second murder. Their conversation broadens and goes on late:"Two old men, fighting against the night."

There are many more insightful examples to quote, but to do so might unbalance what I want to say,

which is that the overwhelming impression is of fun and optimism and is sparkling entertainment. I look forward to reading the further adventures of the Thursday Murder Club!

Chris

This book could be described as a bit of a lark. Though it is taking place in a modern setting, for some reason I see it in black and white like an old film along the lines of *Arsenic and Old Lace*. Four friends in an upmarket retirement village try to solve unsolved murder cases from the past for fun and meet in the Jigsaw Room, appropriately enough. Elizabeth has an intriguing but unnamed past with international contacts, Joyce, a retired nurse, Ibrahim, a psychologist and Ron, a union organiser. A real life murder nearby sets in train a twisted and humorous plot, the story is well told and slowly revealed, the characters become more interesting and you admire their positive style! Forget that it's all rather unlikely and enjoy the ride. A good read.

Doreen

This book was not to my liking and I rather resented the time I spent reading it from beginning to the end. I am not a television fan of Richard Osman and I rarely choose to read crime novels. That said, I found the story line trifling and the characters unconvincing. The plot wandered aimlessly around in circles and eventually left me uncaring as to whoever did what to whoever. I didn't find the book amusing in any way and I certainly would not read anything else Richard Osman writes.

Jean

There is one word to describe Richard Osman's first novel, 'Thursday Murder Club' and that is; CONVOLUTED!

I admit that I've never been particularly drawn to crime novels, but, obviously, Osman is addicted to this genre, from Agatha Christie onwards- -.

Yes, there is a certain British charm here, and 'Thursday Murder Club' is 'both deft and daft!'

I'm familiar with the North Downs and the Kentish Weald which provides an added interest to the novel. However, pretty though Kent is, I had to smile about the so-called 'hills', having grown up in beautiful Northumberland and the Border Country where there are real hills and rivers.

To be fair, Osman's plot is both original, and funny at times. It will have a special appeal to the older generation, some of whom will relate to life in an up-market retirement village. In the novel, a select group of residents gather in the 'Jigsaw Room', between 'Art History' and 'Conversational French' groups, to investigate unsolved murder cases that Kent Police are too incompetent to prosecute themselves. The developer, Ian Ventham, described as a brash, vulgar man with a red grand piano, wants to turn a chapel and nuns' graveyard into eight new flats. Elizabeth, the group's

prime mover, comes across as a scary ex-teacher who terrifies everyone but who gets you an A grade and cries when you leave! I can't fault Osman's character descriptions and appreciate some of his amusing remarks; i.e. Ventham was looking at the 'over-sixties' who had Waitrose money, as future residents of 'Coopers Chase' (the retirement village) , perhaps in ten years time!

Another witty remark is his reference to the clinking of wine bottles and the repeat prescriptions being transported over the grid into the home by the many delivery vans. I also appreciated the modern day content, e.g. his allusions to 'WhatsApp' and Sainsbury's. However, I found his very short sentences, constant use of dialogue and the frequent changes from first person, (Joyce's diary) to third person, mentally exhausting, and, for me, there are too many characters. I think that we can expect a sequel, as Osman has left some loose ends dangling at the conclusion of the novel.

Margaret

I loved the characters and the way the story was cleverly woven with humour.

In a retirement village, four unlikely friends meet up once a week to investigate unsolved murders. But when a brutal killing takes place on their very doorstep, **the Thursday Murder Club** find themselves in the middle of their first live case. It was a complicated plot line as the friends and the police are trying to uncover the murders of at least three people in the end with plenty of twists and turns and red herrings. Although the novel is far fetched Osman could be forgiven because it kept us guessing but the end is spoilt somewhat as he appeared to be getting all the facts together as if trying to fill a half pound container with a pound of ingredients.

Sharon

I was bought this book for Christmas so read it at the beginning of the year and just had a quick look through it again this month. One thing that interested me was the setting of the retirement community. It reminded me of the film Quartet, though murder does not feature in that. (It is a good film though, if anyone hasn't seen it.)

At first the writing seemed quite simple, though engaging enough and I found the actions of the police officer quite implausible. Then the story began to take twists and turns and did keep my attention. I enjoyed the development of the main characters, for example the reader learns a lot about Joyce through the writing of her diary. The small details of the daily lives rang true and were often amusing and tragic by turns. Richard Osman is very talented and I am sure will write more novels. This one was both moving and enjoyable to the end.

Stephanie

This is a very easy read set in an upmarket retirement village in the Kent countryside. The village is on the site of a former convent and there is a nearby cemetery where nuns who had passed away were buried. The residents of the village are initially very content with their lives which centre around the beautiful facilities in the village, a number of activities organised to keep the old dears happy and the Thursday murder club set up by a small group of the residents including a former police inspector who managed to get hold of files of unsolved murder cases. All was chugging along very happily until the mercenary owner of the village wanted more income and decided to build on the cemetery and thus began a series of events in which an extra body was found in one of the graves, a couple of murders occurred, missing criminals from previous times were found etc. The local police seemed somewhat at a loss but the members of the Thursday murder club, set about solving the mysteries in their very own ingenious way exploiting the advantages of being elderly and being quite shameless in their methods of extracting information especially from the hapless police.

It is a funny, comfortable read although towards the end, as more characters were introduced, it became rather confusing. The final solution was impossible to deduce from clues laid down earlier in the tale so frustrating from that point of view.

I loved the irony of u3a members reading about old folk in a retirement village. Our time may yet come!

William

Since recommending this book for inclusion in our schedule I have discovered that it has received a very mixed reception despite becoming the fastest selling adult crime debut since records began. In contrast with last month's offering: Atul Gawande's reflections 'Being Mortal' I admit Osman's offering is rather shallow by comparison, the difference being exaggerated by their juxtaposition in our schedule. I know we have an eclectic programme but the polarization couldn't have been greater.

Members' reviews of the March selection were so erudite and articulate demonstrating a level of critique that reflected our forum as a theatre of philosophers.

Prior to reading Osman's novel I was informed that it was set in an affluent area where Waitrose vans deliver wine and repeat prescriptions.

This was accompanied by a wide spectrum of opinions on the book ranging from 'brilliant' to 'bordering on the ridiculous' with an 'obscure and undemanding plot'.

However, I enjoyed reading 'The Thursday Murder Club' although its premise of octogenarians collaborating with, and at times outwitting, the police could be construed as a rather unlikely

conception. I thought that the characterisation was excellent, interesting personalities whose perspectives within the plot were a revelation.

The book doesn't attempt to reflect the crafted eloquence of other volumes, nevertheless I appreciated many of the descriptive and humorous elements, for example:

'Ron's big frame hints at the physical power he must once have had. The chassis is still there, like a bull-nosed truck rusting in a field'.

'Karen Playfair, from up on the hill, is coming to give us a 'Cooper's Chase Breakfast Masterclass' talk on computers. The last newsletter said she's coming to give us a talk on tablets and that caused some confusion, so they had to print an explanation this week.'

The denouement was somewhat extreme but the author confronts the reality of life in our twilight years: the comfort and benefits derived from association, and employing vehicles to maintain the the health of mind and body.

The eulogies featured on the book's dust jacket include: 'Such a beacon of pleasure' (Kate Atkinson); 'Gripping' (Sunday Times); and 'Diabolically clever';

'I absolutely loved it' and 'A wonderful mystery' by critics I have never heard of.....

As this volume was included on my recommendation, I apologise to members who found it too improbable and unorthodox even for fiction that reinforced the negative impressions held and look forward to hearing their opinions with some trepidation.