

New Books December 2011

Non-Fiction



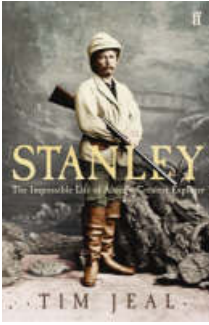
Fire Season by Philip Connors

'I've watched deer and elk frolic in the meadow below me, and pine trees explode in a blue ball of smoke. If there's a better job anywhere on the planet, I'd like to know what it is.' For nearly a decade, the author has spent half of each year in a small room at the top of a tower, on top of a mountain, alone in millions of acres of remote American wilderness. His job: to look for wildfires. Capturing the wonder and grandeur of this most unusual job and place, *Fire Season* evokes both the eerie pleasure of solitude and the majesty, might and beauty of untamed fire at its wildest. His time up on the peak is filled with drama. There are fires large and small; spectacular midnight lightning storms and silent mornings awakening above the clouds; surprise encounters with smokejumpers, black bears, and an abandoned, dying fawn. Filled with his reflections on our place in the wild, *Fire Season* is an instant modern classic: a memoir that is at once an homage to the beauty of nature, the blessings of solitude, and the freedom of the independent spirit.



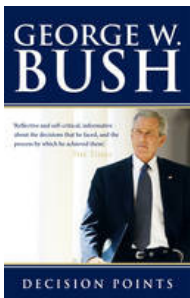
The Fortnight in September by R C Sherriff

A suburban family is on their annual fortnight's holiday at Bognor: man and wife, a grown-up daughter working for a dressmaker, a son just started in a London office, and a younger boy still at school. This book presents a day-by-day account of their holiday from their last evening at home until the day they packed their bags for their return.



**Stanley: The Impossible Life of Africa's Greatest Explorer* by Tim Jeal

Henry Morton Stanley, so the tale goes, was a cruel imperialist - a bad man of Africa - who connived with King Leopold II of Belgium in horrific crimes against the people of the Congo. He also conducted the most legendary celebrity interview in history, remembered in the words 'Dr Livingstone, I presume?'. Or so we think: but as the author shows, none of these perceptions is quite true. The reality of Stanley's life - even by the exceptional standards of the Victorian age - is yet more extraordinary. Rejected by both parents at birth and consigned to a Welsh workhouse, he emigrated to America, fought in the Civil War - on both sides - before becoming a journalist and then an explorer.



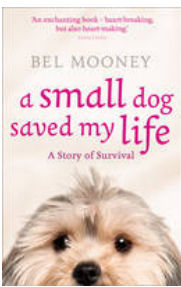
**Decision Points* by George W Bush

This is the memoir of America's 43rd president. Shattering the conventions of political autobiography, it is a candid journey through the defining decisions of the author's life. In never-before-heard detail, he brings readers inside the Texas Governor's Mansion on the night of the hotly contested 2000 election; aboard Air Force One on 9/11, in the hours after America's most devastating attack since Pearl Harbour; at the head of the table in the Situation Room in the moments before launching the war in Iraq; and, behind the Oval Office desk for his historic and controversial decisions on the financial crisis, Hurricane Katrina, Afghanistan, Iran, and other issues that have shaped the first decade of the 21st century. He writes honestly and directly about his flaws and mistakes, as well as his accomplishments reforming education, treating HIV/AIDS in Africa, and safeguarding the country amid chilling warnings of additional terrorist attacks. He also offers intimate new details on his decision to quit drinking, discovery of faith, and relationship with his family.



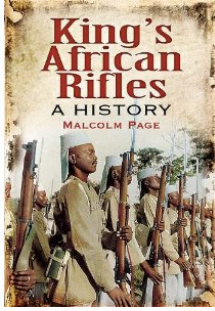
**Oranges and Sunshine* by Margaret Humphreys

In 1986 the author, a Nottingham social worker, investigated a woman's claim that, aged four, she had been put on a boat to Australia by the British government. At first incredulous, she discovered that this was just the tip of an enormous iceberg. Up to 150,000 children, some as young as three years old, had been deported from children's homes in Britain and shipped off to a 'new life' in distant parts of the Empire, right up until as recently as 1970. Many were told that their parents were dead, and parents often believed that their children had been adopted in Britain. In fact, for many children it was to be a life of horrendous physical and sexual abuse far away from everything they knew. The author reveals how she unravelled this shocking secret and how it became her mission to reunite these innocent and unwilling exiles with their families in Britain before it was too late. (Also published as 'Empty Cradles')



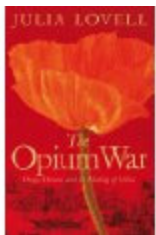
A Small Dog Saved my Life by Bel Mooney

In a memoir which mixes honest, personal revelation with literature, history, and self-help, the author tells the story of her rescue dog, Bonnie, who in turn rescued her when her world fell apart with the all-too public break-up of her 35-year marriage. This is an account of six years in her life, from when she first acquired Bonnie from a rescue home, through years of personal heartbreak and disappointment, and on to the happiness which she has now found in a new marriage and a new life, with the Maltese at her side all the way. This is a book about transformation and change, about picking yourself up and attacking life in the way that a small dog will go for the postman's trousers - and about celebrating life, much as your canine companion will always celebrate your return, even from the shortest trip.



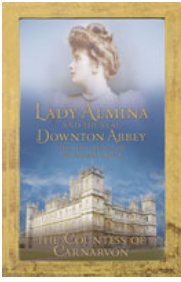
King's African Rifles: A History by Malcolm Page

Whatever one may think about the rights and wrongs of colonial rule, it is hard to deny that during the first half of the this century those African countries, which then came under British administration enjoyed a period of stability which most now look back upon with a profound sense of loss. Paradoxical though it may seem, one of the bulwarks of that stability was each country's indigenous army. Trained and officered by the British, these force became a source of both pride and cohesion in their own country, none more so than the King's African Rifles. founded in 1902 and probably the best known of the East African forces. In this, the first complete history of the East African forces, the author, who himself served in the Somaliland Scouts for a number of years, has had access to much new material while researching the history of each unit from its foundation to the time of independence.



The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams and the Making of China by Julia Lovell

'On the outside, [the foreigners] seem intractable, but inside they are cowardly...Although there have been a few ups-and-downs, the situation as a whole is under control.' In October 1839, a few months after the Chinese Imperial Commissioner, Lin Zexu, dispatched these confident words to his emperor, a cabinet meeting in Windsor voted to fight Britain's first Opium War (1839-42) with China. The conflict turned out to be rich in tragicomedy: in bureaucratic fumbblings, military missteps, political opportunism and collaboration. Yet over the past 170 years, this strange tale of misunderstanding, incompetence and compromise has become the founding myth of modern Chinese nationalism: the start of China's heroic struggle against a Western conspiracy to destroy the country with opium and gunboat diplomacy. Beginning with the dramas of the war itself, this book explores its causes and consequences and, through this larger narrative, interweaves the curious stories of opium's promoters and attackers. This is both the story of modern China starting from this first conflict with the West and an analysis of the country's contemporary self-image. It explores how China's national myths mould its interactions with the outside world, how public memory is spun to serve the present; and how delusion and prejudice have bedeviled its relationship with the modern West.



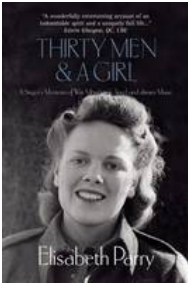
Lady Almina and the real Downton Abbey by The Countess of Carnarvon

Lady Fiona Carnarvon became the chatelaine of Highclere Castle eight years ago. In that time she's become fascinated by the rich history of Highclere, and by the extraordinary people who lived there over the centuries. One person particularly captured Fiona's imagination - Lady Almina, the 5th Countess of Carnarvon. Almina was the illegitimate daughter of banking tycoon Alfred de Rothschild. She was his only daughter and he doted on her. She married the 5th Earl of Carnarvon, at 19, with an enormous dowry. At first, life at Highclere was a dizzying mix of sumptuous banquets for 500 and even the occasional royal visitor. Almina oversaw 80 members of staff - many of whom came from families who had worked at Highclere for generations. But when the First World War broke out, life at Highclere changed forever. History intervened and Almina and the staff of Highclere were thrown into one of the most turbulent times of the last century. Almina was forced to draw on her deepest reserves of courage in order to ensure her family, the staff and the castle survived. This is the remarkable story of a lost time. But Highclere remains and in this book, Fiona weaves Almina's journey and those of her family into the heritage and history of one of England's most exquisite Victorian castles.



Spies in the Sky by Taylor Downing

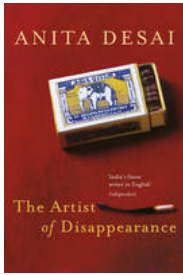
This is the little known story of the partner organisation to the famous code-breaking centre at Bletchley Park. It is the story of the reconnaissance pilots who took aerial photographs over Occupied Europe during the most dangerous days of the Second World War, and of the photo interpreters who invented a completely new science to analyse those pictures. They were inventive and ingenious; they pioneered the development of 3D photography and their work provided vital Intelligence throughout the war.



Thirty Men and a Girl by Elisabeth Parry

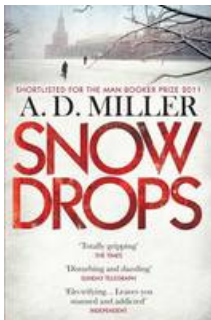
The author had just left school, planning to study French and German literature at Oxford, when war was declared on her eighteenth birthday, 3rd September 1939. She was already having singing lessons with Mark Raphael in London, and a chance audition with the Staff Band of the Royal Army Medical Corps led to her becoming soprano soloist with them and singing in hundreds of variety shows and classical concerts until the war ended. In 1947 she launched and ran the Wigmore Hall Lunch Hour Concerts for young musicians returning from the war. She also auditioned for Benjamin Britten's newly formed English Opera Group, was taken on as an understudy, and found herself unexpectedly singing a principal role, Lucia in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* when the Viennese soprano she was covering had a row and departed for Vienna in a cloud of dust. She found herself singing for a Glyndebourne First Night and Third Programme Broadcast, working with great artists like Kathleen Ferrier, Peter Pears, Joan Cross and Ottakar Kraus, and of course Britten himself. She left the EOG to start up her own small touring company along with a pianist friend in 1950. They survived a bitter struggle with the Arts Council to establish themselves successfully, and toured for fifty-six years, the first company in England to take classical opera on a reduced scale, fully costumed and produced and sung in English, all over Britain to audiences and schools who otherwise had no chance of hearing opera live. She started to climb at the age of forty, and became a passionate mountaineer and traveller during her holidays, which led to a second career as a successful lecturer. In 1973 she was awarded a Diploma of Commendation for Distinguished Achievement in *The World Who's Who of Women*.

Fiction



The Artist of Disappearance by Anita Desai

This is made up of three novellas. Set in modern India, but where history still casts a long shadow, the stories move beyond the cities to places still haunted by the past, and to characters who are, each in their own way, masters of self-effacement. In "The Museum of Final Journeys" an unnamed government official is called upon to inspect a faded mansion of forgotten treasures, each sent home by the absent, itinerant master. As he is taken through the estate, wondering whether to save these precious relics, he reaches the final - greatest - gift of all, looming out of the shadows. In "Translator, Translated", middle-aged Prema meets her successful publisher friend Tara at a school reunion. Tara hires her as a translator, but Prema, buoyed by her work and the sense of purpose it brings, begins deliberately to blur the line between writer and translator, and in so doing risks unravelling her desires and achievements. The final story is of Ravi, living hermit-like in the burnt-out shell of his family home high up in the Himalayan mountains. He cultivates not only silence and solitude but a secret hidden away in the woods, concealed from sight. When a film crew from Delhi intrudes upon his seclusion, it compels him to withdraw even further until he magically and elusively disappears...



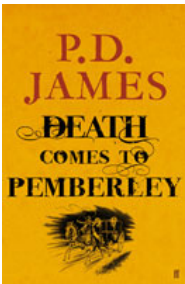
Snowdrops by A D Miller

Snowdrops. That's what the Russians call them - the bodies that float up into the light in the thaw. Drunks, most of them, and homeless people who just give up and lie down into the whiteness, and murder victims hidden in the drifts by their killers. Nick has a confession. When he worked as a high-flying British lawyer in Moscow, he was seduced by Masha, an enigmatic woman who led him through her city: the electric nightclubs and intimate dachas, the human kindnesses and state-wide corruption. Yet as Nick fell for Masha, he found that he fell away from himself; he knew that she was dangerous, but life in Russia was addictive, and it was too easy to bury secrets - and corpses - in the winter snows...



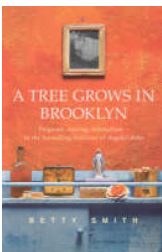
The Painted Lady by Maeve Haran

'This is my tale and I will leave you to tell whether it be high romance or tragedy.' Sixteen-year-old Frances Stuart arrives at the Restoration court to find her innocence and beauty are highly-prized commodities, envied by the women and desired by the men. Before long, King Charles II falls passionately in love with her and will stop at nothing to make her his mistress. But Frances is no conventional court beauty. She is determined to make her own choices in life, and to be with the man she loves. Can she overcome the dangerous pitfalls of the King's obsession, the Queen's jealousy, and the traps set for her by the King's notorious mistresses, and make the life she wants for herself? Set against the drama of the "Great Plague" and "The Fire of London", "The Painted Lady" brings to life the vibrant and decadent court of Charles II and in Frances Stuart discovers a passionate young woman prepared to fight for her own destiny.



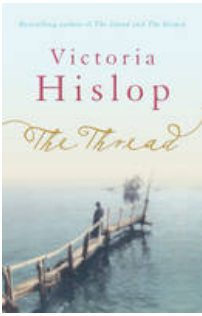
Death Comes to Pemberley by P D James

The year is 1803, and Darcy and Elizabeth have been married for six years. There are now two handsome and healthy sons in the nursery, Elizabeth's beloved sister Jane and her husband Bingley live nearby and the orderly world of Pemberley seems unassailable. But all this is threatened when, on the eve of the annual autumn ball, the guests are preparing to retire for the night when a chaise appears, rocking down the path from Pemberley's wild woodland. As it pulls up, Lydia Wickham – Elizabeth's younger, unreliable sister – stumbles out screaming that her husband has been murdered. Inspired by a lifelong passion for the work of Jane Austen, the author recreates the world of *Pride and Prejudice*, and combines it with the excitement and suspense of a crime story.



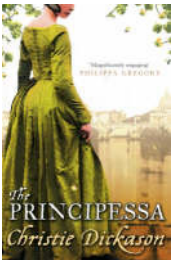
A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith

Francie Nolan is a Brooklyn girl with a Brooklyn name and a Brooklyn accent. Her family are brave, devoted immigrants, struggling to survive and rise above the squalor, poverty and violence that surround their tenement home.



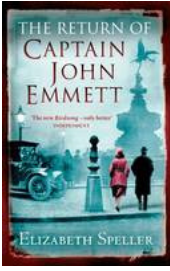
The Thread by Victoria Hislop

Thessaloniki, 1917. As Dimitri Komninos is born, a devastating fire sweeps through the thriving Greek city where Christians, Jews and Muslims live side by side. Five years later, Katerina Sarafoglou's home in Asia Minor is destroyed by the Turkish army. Losing her mother in the chaos, she flees across the sea to an unknown destination in Greece. Soon her life will become entwined with Dimitri's, and with the story of the city itself, as war, fear and persecution begin to divide its people. Thessaloniki, 2007. A young Anglo-Greek hears his grandparents' life story for the first time and realises he has a decision to make. For many decades, they have looked after the memories and treasures of the people who were forced to leave. Should he become their next custodian and make this city his home?



The Principessa by Christie Dickason

Robert Cecil, Secretary of State to James I, has a problem. He owes a vast and secret debt to the Prince of La Spada, who is dying and has called in the loan - and Cecil cannot pay. Even worse, he has staked as security, without royal authority, the King's Great Pearl. To Cecil's surprise, the Prince will agree to a hostage but he wants Cecil's firemaster: Francis Quoynt, the best in his dangerous business. Cecil immediately seizes the chance, for Quoynt also serves as his spy. La Spada is a wealthy, beautiful Italian city-state - the gateway of Europe. Whoever controls its mountain passes also controls the flow of intelligence and much of the trade from the Middle East. As his mind disintegrates into fantastic obsessions, the Prince makes his treacherous illegitimate son his heir which thwarts the deadly ambition of his daughter, Sofia - the Principessa. Sofia is young, seductive, wily and recently widowed. Already a blooded player of politics, she could outdo Lucretia Borgia in the lethal game of survival. Which she must now play to save herself and her beloved state. As unpredictable as gunpowder, will she choose to seek Francis's heart, or his life? Or both?



The Return of Captain John Emmett by Elizabeth Speller

1920. The Great War has been over for two years, and it has left a very different world from the Edwardian certainties of 1914. Following the death of his wife and baby and his experiences on the Western Front, Laurence Bartram has become something of a recluse. Yet death and the aftermath of the conflict continue to cast a pall over peacetime England, and when a young woman he once knew persuades him to look into events that apparently led her brother, John Emmett, to kill himself, Laurence is forced to revisit the darkest parts of the war. As Laurence unravels the connections between Captain Emmett's suicide, a group of war poets, a bitter regimental feud and a hidden love affair, more disquieting deaths are exposed. Even at the moment Laurence begins to live again, it dawns on him that nothing is as it seems, and that even those closest to him have their secrets ...

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Many thanks for donating books to the Library, making them available for others to enjoy and also enriching our collection.