

Murder on the Serpentine

Anne Perry

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In the history of Anne Perry’s bestselling Victorian mystery series, the stakes have never been greater than now—as a mission for queen and country places the future of the British Empire squarely in Thomas Pitt’s hands.

It is not the custom for the commander of Special Branch to receive a royal summons—so Thomas Pitt knows it must be for a matter of the gravest importance. The body of Sir John Halberd, the Queen’s confidant, has been found in the shallow water of the Serpentine in Hyde Park, bearing the evidence of a fatal blow to the head. At Her Majesty’s request, Sir John had been surreptitiously investigating Alan Kendrick, a horse-racing enthusiast who seems to have had an undue amount of influence on her son, the Prince of Wales.

Now Commander Pitt must navigate the corridors of power with the utmost discretion and stealth, for it seems certain that Sir John’s killer is a member of the upper classes. Aided by his wife, Charlotte, and her social contacts, Pitt seeks out the hidden motives behind the polite façade of those to the manner born—and uncovers a threat to the throne that could topple the monarchy.

With *Murder on the Serpentine*, Thomas Pitt nears a crossroads in his brilliant career—one that promises new challenges, both professional and personal, still to be met. But first, he and Charlotte must conquer the twists and turns of suspense master Anne Perry’s most cunningly crafted plot yet—to achieve their finest hour, or suffer their darkest.

Praise for *Murder on the Serpentine*

“For nearly four decades Anne Perry’s riveting detective novels have played out against the backdrop of the Victorian era. Fans of British royalty will delight in *Murder on the Serpentine*, which spotlights the woman this British author reminds us was ‘queen and empress of a quarter of the earth’ during her 63-year reign. . . . Perry writes meticulously laid-out police procedurals, and Pitt’s methodical investigation sets the novel’s early, steady pace.”—*The Washington Post*

“The mystery may follow familiar lines, but even newcomers are likely to be charmed by scenes that deepen Pitt’s family relationships. This entry’s main strength lies in the quiet, emotionally intelligent interactions among its characters.”—*Publishers Weekly*

“[Anne] Perry returns with another engrossing read brimming with superb period details and complex characters.”—*RT Book Reviews*

“Marvelous . . . Perry delivers once again by simply doing what she does better than anyone else—capturing the flavor, spirit and political temperature of Victorian-era London.”—*Bookreporter*

Murder on the Serpentine Details

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From Reader Review Murder on the Serpentine for online ebook

Pamela says

I always enjoy an Anne Perry book. This one had many details to follow, without the usual help. The queen requests Pitts help, after learning of her dear friends death. This started a long ,and crooked path, concerning spies, illicit affairs, children that were born on the,wrong side of the blanket, to the very wealthy, and more murder. I missed the usual banter between Pitt, and Charlotte, and they seem to walk on egg shells around each other. The pairing of Emily, and Charlotte together was great fun, but I missed her famous aunt. Narroway was not there to advise pit, so he had to reach out to other for help, and to discuss possible concerns. I thought it drug a bit, but was a steady read. I have read every book, and when I am twenty pages from the end, and the plot is,wrapping up, I am sad. The,end of the book was perfect..I will look forward to book thirty three.

Jeanette says

Having read many of these, maybe most- this one was, for me, an advancement and kept my interest all the way to the finish. Series fare and especially this Victorian period in England, they seldom do either. Most of the time Charlotte and Thomas equate to a 3 and a rather easy candy read after all is told. This one was more cutting and held more talk, less action, and yet sliced to a deeper layer within each individual featured. The Pitts, themselves- and their favorite couple who are "away" on the continent vacationing on a trek to Greece and Sicily (you hear more about V. & N. when they are gone then you did when they were present and complacent in the plot). The Pitt kids are background invisible totally in this, other than Daniel changing his language from Latin to German. But Charlotte's sister Emily takes nearly central stage. As do her clothes.

Because fashion and the highest classes feature first, second and foremost throughout this entire read. Including our Queen and her oldest male offspring, just a short time from becoming Edward VII. And one of the few particulars that I did NOT enjoy was that the reader is constantly reminded that Thomas truly belongs in the stables and not in the drawing room addressing the club men. Yes, we know he was a charity schooling case through his father's employer's patronage. That and Charlotte's constant need to prove connection and initiative within her marriage while apologizing for the form of it- those aspects are universal repeaters in this series. Not a bad thing for most, but for myself- I do not like constant reminders. We readers of series, are not that opaque. Or is it the word count per \$\$\$?

Regardless, this one is a 3 star for the first half and then just about page 160 or so it soars. It becomes not politico only, but also espionage and double agent worthy. And it had some twists that I didn't see coming at all, on top of it. It's a real plus for the entire read, to have this occur. In genre of copper, mystery, grit. or cozy- the who-dun-it, I find, is usually and almost always for me- the other way around. First half dishy, second half tricky and usually unimaginative. This one? No, exactly the opposite.

And if you are of the fashion and trend crowd- this one gushes with Charlotte borrowing clothes from her fashion plate sister (getting around the weight and height differences explained too). And it ends with everybody having to get dressed to the teeth for the tour de force.

So do not forget your gems, jewels, furs (despite it being the end of summer) and fresh flowers are absolutely required hair wear.

Good progression to the family and extended household help picture too! But I wanted to hear a little more

about their former maid's new marriage and family. One middle class and upwardly mobile married young establishment coming up sometime in #33 or #34?

You really got to hand it to her, even with the numerous redundancies of "connection" and introducing new progressive features into the picture all the time (we are on the verge of Charlotte doing the suffrage starve soon?)- she can really pour out these plots. Or no, it will probably be an anorexic Jemima starving for the vote?

Queen Victoria in her last couple of years must have really been beyond miserable. In reality, she had to be.

Jenny says

Murder on the Serpentine is book #32 in the Charlotte and Thomas Pitt series. I have read couple other books by Anne Perry, and I did not like them. However, I enjoy reading Murder on the Serpentine, and I will go back and read another book from this series. Readers of Murder on the Serpentine will follow Commander Thomas Pitt and his wife Charlotte to find out who killed Queen Victoria's friend killed on the Serpentine. I enjoy the way Commander Thomas Pitt use his knowledge as a policeman and head of Special Branch to help his son who was protecting someone else who was cheating in class but took the blame.

The characters of Murder on the Serpentine was brilliantly portrayed and entwine with each other by Anne Perry. Reading Murder on the Serpentine, you will learn about the intrigue in high society in London during Queen Victoria time. Also, about the problems that you encountered when you change to a different law enforcement agency. I recommend this book.

Roman Clodia says

I've dipped in and out of this series when I've wanted something light but not unintelligent to read but this books seems to have lost the plot.

A man is found dead on the Serpentine and Queen Victoria herself asks Pitt to investigate. With swirling rumours of sexual scandals, past affairs and blackmail, we look set for a deliciously louche look at the oh-so-proper Victorians. Sadly, not so.

Most of the book is taken up by Pitt's agonising over his lower-class upbringing, crises of conscience over whether he should really be head of Special Branch and ruminations over how much he loves his wife... She, equally, ponders how she's now middle-aged and excluded from his public life but manages to wangle her way into the case anyway with the help of her sister, Emily.

Somewhere in all this is a good story about politics and the Boer War, but it's drowning in people's inner monologues, all of which get extremely repetitive and go round and round in circles, to the point where I just wanted to scream at the book to just get on with it!

If all the personal agonising were stripped away this would be a very short book: I'm not sure that I'll be revisiting this long-running series again.

Kathy says

This book bored me and I've made the decision to not read further. After all, #32 in a series is rather taking it a bit far when interest was lost quite some time ago.

Susan Johnson says

3.5 stars

I have read the Pitt series for years now. I haven't read them all but most of them and enjoyed them. Aunt Vesepia is my favorite character and she was missing from the book. She was on her honeymoon trip with her new husband, Lord Narraway, and the book was missing her unique flavor. Still it's fun to catch up with old friends.

Pitt is summoned by Queen Victoria to investigate the death of Lord Halberd who was doing an investigation for her. He was checking out one of the Prince of Wales friends, Kendrick. The Queen wanted to find out more about Halberd's death and, of course, about Kendrick. As the head of the Special Branch, Pitt sets out to investigate.

Here's what I didn't like about this book:

1. Charlotte is so whiny. She wants to be involved in the investigation and Pitt tries to keep her out as it is State Business and not entertainment for Charlotte. She was down right annoying.
2. Pitt just goes on and on about the morality of his position. What things will he do to accomplish his mission? Please. He's been at the Special Branch now for years. These problems should have been ironed out by now. Stop it. It goes on and on.
3. Pitt is a blabbermouth. On his supposedly secret mission, he involves his brother-in-law, Lord Causeway, his sergeant, and eventually Charlotte who involves her sister, Emily. I'm not sure I want him protecting state secrets.

What I did like:

1. I love the Pitts and the depiction of the times in that era.
2. The introduction of a new agent who looks to be fun.
3. The mystery itself was quite fascinating. It's nice to see how betting on horses can lead to trouble in the Boer War.

I'll keep reading this series but, please, give Charlotte a life of her own.

Thanks to Net Galley for the book in exchange for a fair review.

Ira says

I don't know what to say except thank you Ms. Perry for wrote such a wonderful series ???.

Most of you love In Death series right? And knowing In Death series still going strong after the first time published around twenty years ago, guess what? This series started in the 70's there is a gap between book 1 and book 2 but after that Ms. Perry consistently publish this series once a year and she end up this series with

a high note, where Queen Victoria herself recognised Thomas Pitt loyalty to her and the country. A gamekeeper's and a laundress's son becomes Sir Thomas Pitt.

It has been twenty years story between the first book and this one, from a mere inspector who tried to catch a thief or murderer to Commander of Special Branch, at present time he was like the top guy of MI5.

But you know what I love about this series? His relationship with Charlotte, I couldn't find a hero more loving and excepting his wife as she is like Thomas, oh scratch that, beside Roarke ?? and he never ever wanted to change her 'weird' behavior. Well, I mean she is very outspoken for 19th century woman and often embarrassing her family because of that, lol.

Let me tell you, this is not a romance series but I feel more romance in here between Thomas and Charlotte and other supporting casts than many books labels as historical romance, I mean romance ok, not sex scenes lurking, heh ?.

And the mystery is awesome too, Thomas is not a Victorian's Mr. Bond, lol. He wasn't Sebastian St. Cyr but he has his own way to solve the crimes and Charlotte always there helping by his side:)

So, I'm sad this series ended but I understand, and I can't wait to start their son Daniel Pitt's story. Thomas and Charlotte still there but I guess as supporting casts now:)

♥?♥?????

Lela says

Back on Track

The last couple of books in this series were a bit disappointing but this one reminded me why I read Anne Perry novels! The story is good with a tight plot. The fictional characters feel real and of their time. I truly loved the portrayal of an old Queen Victoria in her black clothes and broken heart. The Prince of Wales was as dissolute as one expected. After maybe too much soul searching and breast beating, Thomas remains himself and gets a wonderful reward! There is much left unexplored so the outline for the next installment should!d write itself. I can hardly stand to wait!

Jessica Robbins says

For complete review check out my blog at <https://booksaplentybookreviews.blogs...>

Sophia says

Commander Thomas Pitt gets set onto his latest case by none other than the queen herself. This quickened my interest and had me eager to be along with Pitt and Charlotte as they hunted down the truth. Pitt's case is two-fold. He must determine if a death of a man in a pleasure boat was accident or murder and he must find out what the man knew about one of the Prince's rising star friends.

Murder on the Serpentine was more quiet and cunning rather than heart-stopping intensity. I loved how it returned to the feel of the older books for this middle-aged husband and wife detecting team. In the last several books, Pitt's cases were getting away from team detecting because Charlotte couldn't help with spies and anarchist issues, but this one took things back into the world that Charlotte and her sister Emily know well- drawing room and garden parties where the real clues are to be found among the aristocracy.

It was also reminiscent of the early years of their marriage when they had to work to make a class-difference relationship and two strong personalities with stronger opinions really work as they solved Pitt's cases. In this one, Charlotte is having a mid-life crisis moment of 'does he still love me? See me as attractive?' and 'have I become boring and predictable?' Pitt is having his own crisis involving conscience as he must determine if the ends justify the means with the 'good of the many outweighing the needs of the one' sort of thing with his position of Commander of Special Branch. It was interesting exploring these personal plot threads alongside the actual mystery.

Now if there was a part that was a wee bit disappointing- and I do mean minor- it was that the actual murderer and reason came out well early of the end. This was on purpose and happened well after much work was done to find the truth, but I missed that never knowing feeling and big twists to give me the aha at the end. This one becomes more a thing about how to get the perpetrator particularly since things must be kept discreet with the royal family involved.

As is always the case, this book was loaded with authentic historical detail on high Victorian society, British world affairs like the fear and warmongering between the Boer Wars, the rising power of Germany, and the latter days of Victoria's reign. Neat to see the forensics and ways of police work at the time for Pitt's part of the story and also fascinating to get Charlotte's side as she navigates drawing room afternoons with other ladies and attends a woman's club for women serious about women's rights.

This author's gift is allowing the reader to get to know the cast of characters through and through with their strengths and flaws so motives and actions become as intriguing as the mystery itself which is rolled up with these character studies.

In summary, this was another grand installment and I loved that fun surprise at the end of this one and look forward to seeing how it will affect the future books of the series. While, I think a reader could pick up any story in the series and enjoy it as a standalone mystery for the most part, personally I recommend getting them in order because the series is very much about the characters ongoing stories that carry through and there will be multiple references to the past and other regular characters. Either way, I can recommend these who enjoy a strong character-driven and historical authentic feel to a husband and wife detective series.

I received this book from Net Galley in exchange for an honest review.

Glen says

Apparently the last book before the series goes in a new direction, focussing on the next generation during the Edwardian era.

A nobleman is mysteriously drowned in The Serpentine, and Her Majesty asks Pitt to look into the matter. He finds the nobleman was sticking his nose into very unpleasant business indeed.

Not bad, if a bit indirect in prose.

Patty says

This is the 32nd Thomas and Charlotte Pitt book. That in itself is an amazing feat. I must say that I have not read these books in a while but I do enjoy them. This one was particularly enticing. They are mysteries so I won't say too much about what is happening. Just know that Thomas is asked to find out just who murdered a very nice and well liked gentleman. He is commissioned by the Queen herself. Oh...that would be Queen Victoria! Her request is top secret and Thomas is a bit obsessed with all of the mystery surrounding this death. Everyone really just wants it to "go away" but Thomas is unlikely to let that happen. Thomas always has help from his lovely and very perceptive wife...Emily. In this case he is keeping information from her but she is quietly helping her anyway.

Characters were rich and interesting...storyline was really good...readers who love quaint English mysteries should love this one!

Trina Burgermeister says

I've read many of the Ann Perry Thomas Pitt novels and have loved them all. One of the things I appreciate most about her writing is that she is always bang on with the details of the period – the dress, the manners and mannerisms, divisions among the social classes and the restrictions between the sexes, just to name a few.

In this story, Thomas is pulled in by none other than the grieving Queen of England herself, and then sworn to secrecy ... to all. This leaves Thomas out on his own, unable to rely on his usually trusty tired and true colleagues and network of friends and family. However, Charlotte, Thomas' wife, knows her husband far too well. After an abnormally fast invitation to and attendance to a social event, one Thomas would ordinarily avoid, Charlotte notices Thomas is in investigator mode, and that he's worried. Knowing she can't ask, and he can't tell anything about a case in his new role, she's left contacting her sister Emily as a way back into the society role to gain access to people who might have information about the death of a very dear friend of the Queen, Halberd, under unusual circumstances.

Thomas and his small crew determine that there was indeed foul play on the Serpentine and that Halberd was likely the victim of murder.

The trail is complex, the story intriguing and the characters delightful and true. It is always such a pleasure to travel back in time on a thrilling adventure of mystery and discovery with Ann Perry.

A very special thank you to the Publisher, Ann Perry and to NetGalley for providing an advance reader copy – much appreciated!

eyes.2c says

Death and intrigue in high places.

In this novel Pitt finds himself undertaking a mission for Queen Victoria. One that could have grave consequences for the Prince of Wales and the future of the monarchy.

We meet some interesting new characters along with old friends.

A boating accident on the Serpentine, 'a decorative stretch of water that curved across the middle of Hyde Park.' In the dead of night of a trusted and favoured courtier of the Queen's--Sir John Halberd drowns. This leads to Pitt being called before the highest figure in the land. His task, to discreetly continue the inquiries Halberd had undertaken for the Queen and to discover the truth behind the boating 'accident.' It seems embroiled in the affair is Delia Kendrick, a former mistress of the Prince of Wales and now wife to one of his closet friends.

For me a huge part of the intrigue of this novel lies in the emotional and psychological struggle that Pitt has to come to terms with. We see him wrestle with his conscience and ideals as he fully assumes the mantle of Commander of Special Branch. Trying to formulate the ways between honourable behaviour and necessity for the good of all. A very rocky path.

Victor Narraway and Vespasia are out of the country. Normally Pitt would consult Victor when the action moves into the upper stratosphere of high society. Now Pitt has to rely on his own resources and Victor's notebooks.

Looming on the horizon is the possibility of a second Boer War. Murder, suicide and gun running are in the mix.

Charlotte cannot enter so readily into Pitt's cases--these are now concerned with State secrets and anarchy. She does however do what she can.

I find her inclusion into the Lady's Club and murmurs of the suffragette movement interesting. Ah, if that came to pass that could open up a whole lot of possibilities, even conflicts for Pitt and Charlotte. But I digress!

Another fascinating addition to the Pitt collection.

A NetGalley ARC

Cynthia says

I can't believe this is episode number 32 of the Thomas and Charlotte Pitt series...and they keep getting better. Thomas is enjoying, I use the term with tongue planted in cheek, his promotion to Commander where he's no longer on the police force but in charge of handling evermore volatile crimes that affect the countries relations internal politics and England's standing worldwide. Any misstep he or his staff make could have serious impact. Sadly, due to the nature of the crimes he can no longer share his investigations with Charlotte or at least not officially but knowing Charlotte that does not keep her from deducing who and what is involved and how she and her sister Emily can "help", it also leaves Pitt feeling isolated.

I don't want to give away any specifics but this book had me pondering how Perry's writing can be characterized. There aren't any bangs or whistles or carriage crashes that take place yet her mysteries are serious and deal with realistic events. And even though they entail lots of details of the Pitt's home life they sure cant be called cozies. They're rather a blend of the two styles, the realism of still timely issues and the strongly character driven plots has kept me coming back for the last thirty years of Perry's writing.

Thanks to the publisher for providing and e-copy.
