



## **A Country Affair**

*Rebecca Shaw*

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Welcome to Barleybridge, a small village nestled in the Dorset hills of England, where sheep graze on the nearby slopes and everybody knows their neighbors. Young, inexperienced, and somewhat shy, Kate Howard arrives in this idyllic setting to embark on a new adventure and begin a job as a receptionist at the Barleybridge Veterinary Hospital. The busy practice sees creatures large and small, from pets to farm animals, and the staff she meets there is friendly and welcoming. As Kate learns the ins and outs of her job (from who to never let through on the phone to which dogs—and owners—need to be kept away from each other), handsome Australian vet Scott Spencer takes an interest in her and encourages Kate to pursue her dreams to become a vet herself. His advice is solid, and his charm is intoxicating, but Kate is well aware that she is hardly the only woman to fall under the dashing doctor's spell. Add to this the pressure of her longtime but rather dull boyfriend, Adam, who is not at all happy about her newfound aspirations to return to school, and Kate has some decisions to make, decisions that are growing more complex at every turn.

Tender, funny, and full of warmth and simple joys, *A Country Affair* is the perfect introduction to a delightful place and its witty and lovable inhabitants. Watch for the next two novels in Rebecca Shaw's Barleybridge series coming soon. You will want to return to Barleybridge again and again.

## **A Country Affair Details**

Date : Published May 23rd 2006 by Three Rivers Press (first published September 13th 2001)

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Author : Rebecca Shaw

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## From Reader Review A Country Affair for online ebook

### Julie says

A nice little read. Would have preferred more animal stories but still enjoyable.

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### Kaye says

A nice change from English murder mysteries. Reminded me of the Miss Read books.

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### Linda says

I love English novels, even simple stories like these. I am now reading the second in the trilogy and it is better. Probably because we know the characters more. It is about a veterinary practice in northern England, but more about the personal lives of the group practice. Don't you just love names like "Barleybridge"??

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### Shannon says

James Herriot faces no competition here! However, it is obvious that the author has read his books and pretty much lifted his feelings and expressions that helping to safely deliver a baby animal (especially a calf) is the highest experience a vet can have. Aside from a little imitative plagiarism, it was a fairly enjoyable read. I must say, it was not quite as trite as I thought it would be. Its setting is supposed to be modern-day England (published in 2001,) but it had a much more retro feel than that: the vets still washing up in buckets of cold water, etc! (Of course, it IS England, so maybe they do!)

Basically, it is a coming-of-age story about a 19 year-old girl named Kate who has just taken the job of receptionist/account specialist with an Animal Clinic after failing to get into Veterinarian school. The plot includes her tame boyfriend, a hunky Australian vet, her inconsistent father, her sweet step-mother and several other clinic characters. I forgot to mention that in addition to the James Herriot books, there are echoes of "I Capture the Castle." These similarities show up in Kate's youth and whole-hearted (and painful) foray into real love and in her arty, but supportive step-mother.

The book is clearly set up for a series, but doesn't really hold enough interest for me to pursue the sequels.

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### Bee says

I hate the rather cringeworthy names of the three books in this series, but I enjoyed this first one. A bit fluffy, but all in all a nice, light novel set in the English countryside. I'm going to read the other two in the series as well.

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### **Bonnie says**

This series was recommended to me by a coworker. I wasn't such a fan, though, and stopped 2/3 of the way through. I kept reading, but it kept getting less and less plausible.

The story is about a 19 year old girl who gets a job working as a receptionist in a Vet's office in a small town in England. The story focuses much more on the human relations than it does on the animals.

The story did have it's cute moments, for example, an elderly lady, who has recently lost her cat to old age, volunteers to care for abandoned kittens.

The part that bothered me, and ultimately made me quit reading was the main plotline: the girl's boyfriend, Adam, a stick in the mud, goes nuts when she tries to break up with him. In the scene where I quit reading, he forces his way into the house she shares with her parents, has a meltdown, her dad literally throws him out the door, and as he's laying there on her front porch, she discusses which wine would go best with dinner with her parents as if nothing has happened. The whole stalker boyfriend plotline felt out of place in this type of book, and it was clear that the author didn't know how to handle it in a believable way.

Two thumbs down.

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### **Reina Williams says**

I went into this thinking it had been recommended by a fellow Miss Read fan, but A Country Affair doesn't have the wit and gentleness of either Miss Read or James Herriot (which would be the two most likely comparisons). I read it and liked it, but all the characters expressed views that seemed overly stereotypical and made some choices that seemed ridiculous. Maybe I went into this with too high hopes, wanting to find a new-to-me English country village to read about--my search will continue.

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### **Linda C says**

When Kate Howard doesn't get the chemistry grade she needs to get into veterinary college she takes a job as receptionist/bookkeeper at the Barleybridge Veterinary Hospital. Her controlling boyfriend, Adam, wants her to forget becoming a vet and marry. She decides to break with him and get tutoring in chemistry to try again. But Adam proves to be difficult to get away from. The story also revolves around other people working at and visiting the vet hospital and their families. Several subplots are very humorous and a couple are very poignant. Great animal situations, reminiscent of James Herriot's books.

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### **Barbra says**

The 1st in the Barleybridge series. As good as the Turnham Malpas series. Did enjoy it.

Back Cover Blurb:

It is Kate's first day in her new job, and she is more apprehensive than she thought was possible. But there is no time for nerves, and her anxieties soon vanish as she finds herself flung headlong into the hectic world of the busy vet's practice and the clients who visit it.

But it's not just the animals who win Kate's affections: the staff are friendly and welcoming, particularly Scott, the Australian, whose wicked sense of humour and enthusiasm for life Kate finds hard to resist, despite his rather colourful reputation.

Before long, Kate begins to feel there are other changes she wants to make in her life - and her boyfriend, Adam, is not at all happy about it. As Kate struggles to cope with Adam's increasingly erratic behaviour, she realises she must make some very difficult decisions....

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## **Kim says**

2.5 stars

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## **Lelia Taylor says**

A Country Affair  
Rebecca Shaw  
Three Rivers Press, 2006  
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Trade Paperback

I'm an addict when it comes to the heartwarming sort of small town story, the kind that involves a large cast of characters living unremarkable lives but you can't help wanting to know what's going to happen next. You know the kind of books I mean, Jan Karon's Mitford, Ann B. Ross's Miss Julia, Thomas Kinkade's Cape Light, Jennifer Chiaverini's Elm Creek Quilts. The geographical setting doesn't matter too much, although I prefer North America or the UK and, if animals are involved, I like it even more. James Herriot is one of my favorite writers and I never tire of his Yorkshire Dales veterinarian stories so, when I came across this book, I settled down for what I was sure would be a comfortable read. It didn't quite make it but it came close.

Kate Howard has just taken a job as a receptionist in a large veterinary practice in Barleybridge, a picture-postcard English village where life is generally charming. Most of the novel revolves around the doings of the people, not so much about the animals, and I missed that. I didn't like all the characters but that's okay as it would be a bit too sappy if everybody was likable. Still, one of the vets commits a fairly cowardly act and Kate herself is a tad too naive. I reminded myself, though, that she's just nineteen so she's allowed to be a bit immature.

I didn't dislike this book but I didn't wholeheartedly like it either. Rebecca Shaw is a bestselling author in England so I'll be reading the next in the trilogy to see if Kate and everybody else in the village will grow on me.

Recommended with reservations.

Reviewed by Lelia Taylor, November 2009.

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## **Deb says**

Kate Howard has failed to gain a place in vet school due to a poor chemistry grade. Instead she goes to work as receptionist and bookkeeper at a busy veterinarian practice in a small English village. When her boyfriend starts pressuring her to marry, and as she gets acquainted with her co-workers (especially the dashing

Australian vet), Kate decides to try again to enter vet school. This is a gentle story - no mystery, no murder, although there is a scary stalking-- and it was a cozy read. This is the first book in a trilogy about Kate. I will look for the next one.

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### **Norma says**

I quite like Rebecca Shaw's books. A nice easy read.

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### **Rrshively says**

In spite of the fact that the title has the word "affair" in it, this is not about a steamy love affair. In this case it means "happening" and tells what happens when a young woman takes a job as receptionist and accountant at a vet clinic. It includes her possessive, dull boyfriend, a handsome Australian vet, the stories of the animals and their owners, and the lives of the people working at the clinic.

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### **Belle says**

A wonderful depiction of a country village veterinary clinic, encompassing all the various clients and their animals as well as workplace dynamics and the usual amount of chaos that accompanies every vet clinic.

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