



Satan in St Mary's

Paul Doherty

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1284 and Edward I is battling a traitorous movement founded by the late Simon de Montfort, the rebel who lost his life at the Battle of Evesham in 1258. The Pentangle, the movement's underground society whose members are known to practice the black arts, is thought to be behind the apparent suicide of Lawrence Duket, one of the King's loyal subjects, in revenge for Duket's murder of one of their supporters. The King, deeply suspicious of the affair, orders his wily Chancellor, Burnell, to look into the matter. Burnell chooses a sharp and clever clerk from the Court of King's Bench, Hugh Corbett, to conduct the investigation. Corbett - together with his manservant, Ranulf, late of Newgate - is swiftly drawn into the tangled politics and dark and dangerous underworld of medieval London. Will Corbett be able to find the truth before London is overrun by the Pentangle? The first thrilling book in the acclaimed Hugh Corbett series.

Satan in St Mary's Details

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Author : Paul Doherty

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From Reader Review Satan in St Mary's for online ebook

LJ says

SATAN IN ST. MARY'S (Hist. Mys-Hugh Corbett-England-1284) - G
Doherty, P.C. – 1st in series
Headline, 1986, UK Paperback – ISBN: 0747234922

First Sentence: A savage, cold wind had sprung up just after dark.

Simon de Montfort, considered traitor to the king, is dead but his supporters, many of whom are thought to be practitioners of the black arts, still exist and are thought to be associated with the Church of St. Mary le Bow. Lawrence Duket committed murder and took sanctuary in St. Mary's only to be found hanged as an apparent suicide.

Clerk of King's Court Hugh Corbett has been summoned by Edward I's Chancellor Robert Burnell to investigate the death.

That this book is based on an actual event was particularly appealing to me. Doherty makes this period come to life. As we travel around London with Hugh, it felt as natural as were he taking taxi's in present day.

The story, however, I found weak. The basic plot was good and interesting, but the execution was awkward. The protagonist would uncover information but not share it with the reader, which was annoying rather than enticing. The villain was evident very early in the story so I had little sympathy with Hugh figured it out.

As to the characters, we were given just enough information to understand who they are but I still didn't feel I knew them. Ranulf, Hugh's sidekick, is appealing and adds lightness to the story where Hugh was rather unsympathetic.

I liked the book well enough that I will read more, but mainly because of the history.

Mckochan says

Cheesy fun.

Maze Branch Oak Park Public Library says

Donna led this discussion on 03/04/14.

We had a large group -- at least 12 people -- to discuss this and others in the Hugh Corbett series. Most were very impressed with the writing. We wondered whether the grittiness of this book (as compared with the first two we read in this series) was because this was a male author (and the first two were female). King Edward I and his chancellor appear regularly in these books.

Ingrid says

I really enjoyed that and I look forward to reading more of Paul Doherty's books.

Scott says

I'm torn. I did like the story but did I really like the story? I'm thinking this book is a 3.5.

I read this right on the heels of reading *Doomsday Book* . While *Doomsday Book* took place 100 years in the future regarding *Satan in St Mary's* , they did fit together nicely.

I did fall into the plot quickly and moved right along in its current. I only slowed down once and the assignable cause more than likely was my own: I was out fairly late the proceeding night. Either Paul Doherty had been planning to turn Hugh Corbett into a series right from the start or he was just a little clumsy with his character development. The main conflict ended a few chapters before the end of the story, which was fine; nevertheless, the shield created by my willing suspension of disbelief did shimmer a little. For me, this distraction is where the other half point that would have made this a four was lost.

This is a fun read and if you are unlike me and do indeed have an attention span larger than an apricot, can finish it in one sitting.

Recommended. I would definitely read this again. I am curious to see what happens to Hugh in *The Crown in Darkness* . Also this is not a bad way to spend one's time waiting for the next Matthew Shardlake novel to be written. There will be another Matthew Shardlake novel; right, C.J. Sansom?

Heather says

3.5* I figured out most of it early on, and the bad guys were obvious. I did like how the author created this mystery from actual documented events.

Desislava Filipova says

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Lissa Notreallywolf says

Having exhausted my previous series of medieval noir mysteries I have turned to an older series, that recalls my former enthusiasm (Crispin Guest). And there are many parallels, with an investigator with a difficult past and his knavish apprentice. The time period for this series is Edward I, somewhat earlier, and the

characters at this point are less endearing. We get some of the domestic details of their lives together, and hunger isn't an issue for Hugh, and Ranulf is a good deal older. So let me dispense with the comparisons, and discuss the book.

Hugh Cobbett is a clerk who investigates for King's Court, having been awarded the position for his service in fighting the Welsh rebels. He acquires an aide, Ranulf, who was in line to be hanged for theft by paroling him. Ranulf is a lusty lad, but Hugh is getting his pleasures from an innkeeper, Alice. They investigate the death of a man in Saint Mary Le Bow, proclaimed to be a suicide, but actually the victim of murder. He was assisted in his departure by a coven of witches who have treason and rebellion on their minds. About a third of the way through I wondered about the historical accuracy of this, but I was assured when I read the author's biographical information on the back flap of the dust cover. He helpfully provides the text of his inspiration at the end of the book, so one is reassured. I found the intersection between unconventional religion and rebellion interesting after I got over my credulity problems. I enjoyed the fact that our 'detective' has a past, his wife and daughter dead of plague, his soul seared by the War on the Welsh, but his body left living if scarred.

The author is a historian who makes one error, but it is biological, so I suppose he can be pardoned. Ravens (and crows) don't have yellow beaks, except on the cartoons.

Spoiler Alert: It's sad that he can't keep Alice, but then she has rooked him from the start, by giving him a flute that touches the memories of his dead family. I wonder if her beauty can quite quench the many objectionable things she has done in his heart, but gladly this is not how the plot works out.

Mitch McCrimmon says

I am new to historical fiction. I was motivated to seek this one out having recently read the 5 novel series by CJ Sansom set in Tudor England, beginning with "Dissolution". Paul Doherty has written a series of 17 historical novels set around 1300 in England. His main protagonist is Hugh Corbett, an official of King Edward's court who is repeatedly sent by the king to solve some crime or other. The first one, "Satan in St Mary's" is set in London but others are set in different parts of the country as well as London. They are mostly around 200 pages and easy to read with a good combination of interesting characters, real history and suspense. I enjoyed this first one sufficiently that I have now read the first 12 of 17 in the series. Some are naturally better than others. The best ones involve political intrigue with the king's French enemies and spies. "Satan in St Mary's" revolves around murders committed by a cult of sort, supposedly with satanic links.

? Irena ? says

3.5

In short, *Satan in St Mary's* is a medieval murder mystery that turns out to have more layers than the protagonist knew or expected. The readers know it's about treason, plotting against the crown, Satanic rites and so on, because you get scenes with the antagonists too. Well, a couple of meetings actually, but it's enough to know more about it than the man sent to investigate the whole thing.

I liked the way the world is described. The 1200s London is a filthy and dangerous place - maids throwing "he ordure and rubbish of the night so the scavengers or rakers could clear it away", "'roaring boys', gangs of ruffians", secret brothels, people being murdered in the street and left there and so on.

The protagonist Hugh Corbett is a clerk from the Court of King's Bench and he is sent to investigate a suspicious suicide. He isn't given many details. I mostly enjoyed the way he went about it. Mostly, because

he was a bit distracted by a woman at one point.

The other side isn't really hidden that well. I mean, the reader knows a lot of things way before Corbett discovers them, but overall the story is pretty good. Being the first in the series, I think it does the job of attracting a reader quite well. I will continue with the series.

Andrew Doohan says

And so I met Master Hugh Corbett, a clerk in the court of the King's Bench, who is entrusted with a special mission by England's Chancellor, a mission which draws Corbett into the world of intrigue, treason and the black arts.

As the author, Paul Doherty, notes in his *Author's Notes* some of the characters are indeed historical characters, and some of the events that form the meta narrative for his novel did, in fact, take place, and this level of historical authenticity adds to the overall appeal of the fictional narrative - at least for this particular writer.

The narrative is engaging and maintains a good pace throughout the novel, without losing anything along the way. This is a good example of the 'historical mystery novel' that I am intrigued by and which, as you can tell from recent reviews, feature heavily in my reading list at present. I hazard a guess that this book and this series will provide many good stories as I work my way through the adventures of Master Hugh Corbett.

ron btdbttsawio says

This is the first in a series of medieval mysteries. I've probably read them all except maybe the last one and found them to be quite enjoyable.

I would also recommend the Sorrowful Mysteries of Brother Athelstan by the same author.

Shawn Thrasher says

I guess I had read this once before, ten years ago; I had deja vu several times while reading it this time. My previous Goodreads review was one word: "Fun!" I also originally gave it four stars. I didn't come away from the mystery this time with the same impression this time; I'm downgrading four stars to three, and "Fun!" to "Engaging." The Satanic Cult - I don't think this a spoiler, because Satan is in the title, and the cult's coven gathers in the first chapter - was one of the lamer parts of the book for me; what I found engaging was the description of London during King Edward I's time - dirty, dangerous, dank, dark, disgusting. I also thought Hugh Corbett and his sidekick Ranulf were strong detectives, although the whodunnit was definitely easy to solve (of course, I'd read the book before, so maybe the whodunnit had stuck subconsciously in my head?) . Doherty lays the trail with plenty of red herrings though. As historical murder mysteries go, this one was pretty good.

Tracey Allen at Carpe Librum says

After reading Paul Doherty's recent novel *The Cup of Ghosts* (see blog entry dated 17 June) I was extremely eager to read his first medieval mystery featuring Hugh Corbett. The plot wasn't as exciting as *The Cup of Ghosts*, the incidental descriptions of medieval life kept the pages turning at a rapid rate. I love this genre, and it's enough to keep me wanting to read the remaining 13 novels in this series.

I'm looking forward to seeing how his style of storytelling develops over the ensuing novels. Hopefully one or two will find their way under the Christmas tree for me...

Lorraine says

I wished to read the first book in which Hugh Corbett is introduced, and *Satan in St. Mary's* by P. C. Doherty accomplished this for me. What a fascinating character! Also the author's knowledge of London in 1284 is unbelievably realistic. It just jumps off the page. Hugh is assigned to investigate a death at St. Mary Le Bow Church, but he is sent on assignment with no pertinent information in which to assist him, and he is doing this alone. Hugh realizes after awhile that he needs to 'hire' someone to literally watch his back. Thus, I got to meet Ranulf atte Newgate who becomes Hugh's new assistant. Ranulf's last name indicates where Hugh 'found' him, but his streetwise ways become extremely helpful to Hugh. A great introduction! The author knows his material and uses fact to enhance his presentation of Hugh Corbett, Royal Clerk. If one is 'into medieval', this book is for you.

Loved it!
