

Earlsdon Literary Magazine 184

The newsletter of the AVID Readers Group, based at Earlsdon Library

Next meeting: Thursday 10 March 8pm

Venue: Earlsdon Library

Book for discussion: *A Most Wanted Man*—John le Carré

A Very Short Discussion (but lots more to read)

Our January Book

***The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency*—Alexander McCall Smith**

The book is about Precious Ramotswe and the one-person private investigation company she sets up in Botswana. Each chapter in the book tells the story of one of her investigations. The reader soon realises that all mysteries will inevitably be solved but is still left wondering how, sometimes till the end of the chapter.

The AVID Readers agreed that this is an enjoyable, gentle, non-taxing and easy-to-read book. The simplicity of the writing in some ways masks the skill of the author in transporting the reader to the country of Botswana. We experience the heat, the sounds, the dark and the perils resulting from the wildlife.

Although gentle and humorous in many places, that is not to say that there aren't some moments of horror in it too: Precious suffered in an abusive relationship and one she tackles involves witchcraft and a severed finger.

Many readers were so taken with this volume that they hoped to read more of the

series – there are another fifteen books now (see below) – at some stage. However, those that had seen the (all too short) TV series based on the book agreed that the book was superior.

Ted Richards

- *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*
- *Tears of the Giraffe*
- *Morality for Beautiful Girls*
- *The Kalahari Typing School for Men*
- *The Full Cupboard of Life*
- *In the Company of Cheerful Ladies*
- *Blue Shoes and Happiness*
- *The Good Husband of Zebra Drive*
- *The Miracle at Speedy Motors*
- *Tea Time for the Traditionally Built*
- *The Double Comfort Safari Club*
- *The Saturday Big Tent Wedding Party*
- *The Limpopo Academy of Private Detection*
- *The Minor Adjustment Beauty Salon*
- *The Handsome Man's De Luxe Cafe*
- *The Woman Who Walked In Sunshine*

After that, we will be reading

Another book—yet to be chosen

But, whatever it is, we will discuss it on 7 April 2016

What to Read Next

Just in case you need any more

Before we leave Botswana to explore the rest of McCall Smith's extensive oeuvre, you might like to know that there is also a series of children's books featuring the young Precious: *Precious and the Monkeys*, *Precious and the Mystery of the Missing Lion*, *Precious and the Zebra Necklace* and *Precious and the Mystery of Meerkat Hill*. The first of these was available only in Scots (as *Precious and the Puggies*) for a year after it was published. They are quite short – I read the one about the lion in a layby on a road outside Assisi while our driver had a catnap, and still found myself with thumb-twiddling time. You can also get hold of *Mma Ramotswe's Cookbook*, although this is not entirely written by AMS.

The other series (I've read at least one in all of them, but nowhere near all!) share the quirkiness of the No. 1 Lady, but have different voices. The *44 Scotland Street* series is perhaps my favourite and particularly the precocious child (but a child for a' that) Bertie, who was suffering the attentions of his tiger mother long before the phrase became current. Like *Bridget Jones*, it started – and, in fact, continues – as a newspaper serial. I also liked the more grown-up *Sunday Philosophy Club* series, but they don't appear on the author's *Polygon* website which is more up-to-date than some pages on what I can only assume is *his own*. *Corduroy Mansions* is sort of *Scotland Street* transplanted to London: it shares the device of having parallel narratives about several main characters who share an address, but I haven't warmed to them all in the same way.

There are loads more – children's books (including several other series), short stories and stand-alone novels (not to mention his academic writing) – but it would get rather boring to try to make more recommendations since, looking down the titles on *Wikipedia*, it would just turn into a list of what I've read! Although I seem to enjoy everything he's done, my only caveat is the same one I made at our discussion: treat his books like After Eights because too many at one go can become rather sickly.

What's On

Central Library is 30

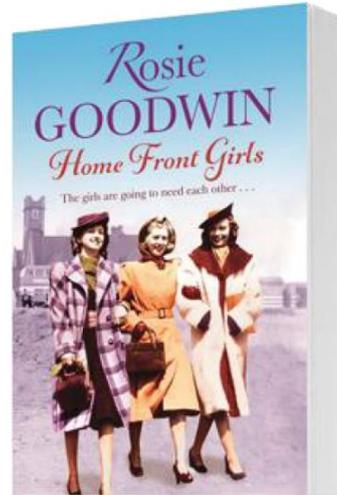
There will be a range of events in February to celebrate the 30th birthday of Central library (this must mean in it's current location!). One of the first is the visit from big-name local author Rosie Goodwin (see over).

Other events will no doubt be posted on the [Library Service Facebook page](#). However, they now have another – [Coventry Reads](#) – which they say 'brings together readers, writers and poetry groups across the city.'

If you have any other reviews or recommendations, tales of literary events, or anything else you think other AVID readers would find interesting, please send them to:

Catherine Fitzsimons
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Rosie Goodwin



"Goodwin is a master of her craft: she excels in writing about the complexity of relationships, the hardships of life, the ties of family and the joys of love and friendship. The perfect book for a cold winter's evening"
Lancashire Evening Post

Rosie will be talking about her extensive range of bestselling classic, contemporary and historic sagas at this fantastic free event!

Rated amongst the top 100 most borrowed library authors in the UK. Come early! All are welcome.

**At Central Library
Saturday 13th February 2pm – 3.30pm**

Contact Central Library on 024 76832314 or call in to your local library for information