

The Woman with the Red Hair by Clive Tuckett

4 stars

Good old-fashioned Gothic thriller

Set in Cornwall just after the end of the first World War, the story traces the Frobisher family who owns Frobisher Hall set in the wilds of Bodmin Moor.

Harry Frobisher returns to the estate a very different man than he left; blinded and scarred by a grenade and traumatised by the horrors of war, he has come to claim his inheritance, the estate left by his murdered parents.

On leaving the train Harry and his friend Benson come across Inspector Edwards from Scotland Yard who has missed his connection. Benson is down to investigate the murder of a young girl on the moors.

Harry receives a warm welcome from the servants but merely a lukewarm response from his younger brother William. Mr and Mrs Travis, the estate manager and housekeeper, together with Dr Treave from Amble Lodge the local mental hospital, join the brothers for dinner, an uncomfortable affair.

When Harry awakes the next morning, he finds that Benson has left without saying goodbye. William clearly resents his brother's return, but that doesn't wholly account for his disturbing behaviour. This becomes more erratic when the young maid, Susan, claims to have seen the ghost of Morag Donaldson who was accused of the murder of Lord and Lady Frobisher and was incarcerated in Amble Lodge.

It seems that the family's paths are to cross again when Inspector Edwards arrives to interview them about the murdered girl.

This is a really enjoyable novel with suspense aplenty and lots of ingenious sub-plots. Few of the 'cast' is entirely what they seem, and this makes for a healthy dose of mis-direction.

A well-constructed and compelling read which wouldn't have shamed Agatha Christie!

*Pashtpaws*

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review.