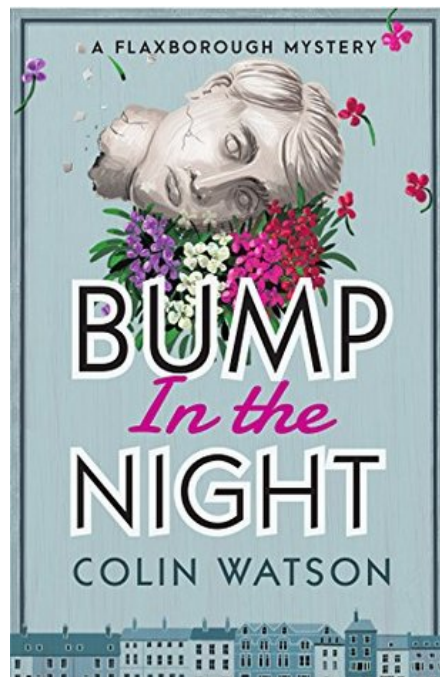




Bump in the Night

Colin Watson

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Tuesday nights have suddenly turned quite ridiculously noisy in the country town of Chalmsbury, where the good folk are outraged at having their rest disturbed.

It begins with a drinking fountain being blown to smithereens – next the statue of a local worthy loses his head, and the following week a giant glass eye is exploded. Despite the soft-soled sleuthing of cub reporter Len Leaper, the crime spate grows alarming.

Sheer vandalism is bad enough, but when a life is lost the amiable **Inspector Purbright**, called in from nearby Flaxborough to assist in enquiries, finds he must delve deep into the seamier side of this quiet town's goings on.

Witty and a little wicked, Colin Watson's tales offer a mordantly entertaining cast of characters and laugh-out-loud wordplay.

What people are saying about the Flaxborough series:

"Colin Watson wrote **the best English detective stories ever**. They work beautifully as whodunnits but it's really the world he creates and populates ... and the quality of the writing which makes these stories utterly superior."

"The Flaxborough Chronicles are satires on the underbelly of English provincial life, very well observed, very funny and witty, written with an apt turn of phrase ... **A complete delight.**"

"If you have never read Colin Watson - start now. And savour the whole series."

"Light-hearted, well written, wickedly observed and very funny - **the Flaxborough books are a joy**. Highly recommended."

"How English can you get? Watson's wry humour, dotty characters, baddies who are never too bad, plots that make a sort of sense. Should I end up on a desert island Colin Watson's books are the ones I'd want with me."

"A classic of English fiction... Yes, it is a crime novel, but it is so much more. Wonderful use of language, wry yet sharp humour and a delight from beginning to end."

"Colin Watson threads some serious commentary and not a little sadness and tragedy within his usual **excellent satire on small town morality and eccentricities.**"

"Re-reading it now, I am struck by just how many laugh-out-loud moments it contains. **A beautifully written book.**"

"As always, hypocrisy and skulduggery are rife, and the good do not necessarily emerge triumphant. Set aside plenty of time to read this book - **you won't want to put it down once you've started it!**"

"Colin Watson writes in such an understated, humorous way that I follow Inspector Purbright's investigation

with a smile on my face from start to finish.”

“If you enjoy classic mysteries with no graphic violence and **marvellously well drawn characters** then give the Flaxborough series a try - you will not be disappointed.”

Editorial reviews:

“Watson has **an unforgivably sharp eye for the ridiculous.**” *New York Times*

“Flaxborough is Colin Watson's quiet English town whose outward respectability masks a seething pottage of greed, crime and vice ... Mr Watson **wields a delightfully witty pen dripped in acid.**” *Daily Telegraph*

“**Arguably the best of comic crime writers**, delicately treading the line between wit and farce ... Funny, stylish and good mysteries to boot.

Bump in the Night Details

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Author : Colin Watson

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From Reader Review Bump in the Night for online ebook

Madelon says

Replete with red herrings, BUMP IN THE NIGHT is the second book in the Flaxborough Mystery series. Originally published in 1959, it is another kinder, gentler, more polite police procedural where folks call each other Mister so-and-so or, in the case of policemen, by their rank as in Mr. Purbright or Inspector.

Once again, I am compelled to note that reading this series is much like watching BBC offerings like "Midsomer Murders" or "Father Brown." I have often commented that Midsomer is a really dangerous place to live. I'm beginning to think of Flaxborough in the same way.

BUMP IN THE NIGHT takes place in the town of Chalmsbury, one of Flaxboroughs many towns and villages, where a series of explosions have occurred flummoxing the local constabulary. Enter Inspector Purbright, from CID.

The locals of Chalmsbury are a tight knit lot. Everybody knows everything about everybody. There seems little ability to keep oneself to oneself. Watson paints a picture that comes alive in the mind's eye.

Although reference is made to the first book in the series, COFFIN, SCARCELY USED, there is no absolute reason to read it first. However, if you start at the beginning, you will have had the pleasure of meeting Inspector Purbright, and you will be familiar with his methods. I have always found reading a series most enjoyable when I read from end to end. It's like meeting a new friend and getting to know them over time.

The next stop on my journey of discovery is HOPJOY WAS HERE.

Tony says

Book two finished in record time, I am absolutely loving the Flaxborough series. Fantastically written, wonderfully engineered. Onto book three....

Kirsty 📚📖♥? says

This was just delightful. I love classic crime; detectives solving crimes without the tricks of modern day technology and this book gave me everything I wanted. There's a lovely sense of humour running through it.

I was surprised these were actually written in the 60s. Watson doesn't feel as well known as other authors of the time and that's a shame. There's a typical sense of Englishness about the book. It's set a couple of decades after WW2 and hosts a lovely and somewhat unique cast of characters.

It's a quick read. It kept my interest all the way through. There are so many twists and turns and it kept me guessing right until the end. Another writer to add to my ever growing to-read pile. Highly recommended

Free arc from netgalley

Sid Nuncius says

Bump In the Night is the second book of the Flaxborough series (after Coffin, Scarcely Used) and if anything I enjoyed it even more than the first. This time, a series of small nocturnal explosions destroys a drinking fountain, a statue and the like in Chalmsbury, and eventually Inspector Purbright is called in from neighbouring Flaxborough to investigate as matters become more serious.

It's a decent plot which maintains interest (although I'd spotted the culprit well before Purbright did), but the chief pleasures of Colin Watson's books are his wonderfully dry, witty style and his brilliant portraits of the characters which inhabit his small, fictional towns. People like the editor of the local newspaper, his over-eager, cliché-prone cub reporter, the local Councillors and others are quite brilliantly drawn and the reality beneath outward respectability is very neatly skewered. It is also worth saying that the book is about half the length of a typical modern crime novel and is all the better for it, in my view.

A couple of brief passages may give you a flavour. Purbright spends a night at a supposedly superior small-town hotel "where he had been ill-fed and insulted by a staff who behaved like émigré dukes," and later visits a room in a boarding house: "The room was as he had last seen it; tidy, ordinary, and wear the faintly depressing air common to all apartments, whether prison cells or bed-sitters, in which a man must share his dreams with his shoe brushes."

I have only recently discovered Colin Watson, but I am coming to regard him as a treat to be looked forward to. I have no doubt that I shall read the whole Flaxborough series as they are reissued, and I'm looking forward to them enormously. Very warmly recommended.

(My thanks to Farrago for an ARC via NetGalley.)

Gaele says

A series of small Tuesday night explosions are wreaking minor havoc in neighboring Chalmsbury: a fountain, a statue and a large glass "eye" in the town have been the targets. Pulbright has been brought in to solve the case, and there are no end to the potential culprits or charm in this story. Funnily enough, the chief of police in Chalmsbury is always away on a Tuesday - ostensibly at the civil defense center. But when the next explosion brings a death, and explosives are found hidden In the same place that the chief is....the questions abound.

From the local prankster to various eccentrics in the town, Pulbright is steadily interviewing, gathering facts and impressions, and working his way to a conclusion. Characters drawn with a sly, often surprising sense of the absurd, humor and a sharp eye for character abound – from overeager reporters to overly snobby hotel staff: no character is untouched by the keen wit and sharply clever prose. That is, in fact, the joy in these stories for the flow and language add to the reader's visualization and enjoyment, and in this one at least, the culprit was easy to suss out. Bringing the sensibilities of a Christie novel, the story is about uncovering a motive and reason, rather than focusing on the more salacious elements of gore, gunshots and fast-paced chases. If you enjoy a British murder mystery, particularly those that harken back to the 'good old days', this is a series to put on your shelf.

I received an eArc copy of the title from the publisher via NetGalley for purpose of honest review. I was not compensated for this review: all conclusions are my own responsibility.

Review first appeared at I am, Indeed

Elissa says

Columbo In England?

Why, I asked myself, does Inspector Purbright seem so very familiar? And it came to me finally that the unfailingly polite but politely insistent Inspector Columbo, as immortalized by Peter Falk, was very closely based on this character! The gentle humor and clever plots were also borrowed in style, if not in fact, from this same source. Of course, these Tales are not set in Southern California but rather in small village England with his own set of rules and mannerisms as modified by the post World War II era in which they are set. And author Colin Watson had a very good eye and ear for satire with a good feel for the proper turn of phrase. All in all, I found myself enchanted with this second in a series which absolutely stands on its own.

Elaine Tomasso says

I would like to thank Netgalley and Farrago for an advance copy of A Bump in the Night, the second novel in the Flaxborough series to feature Inspector Purbright, originally published in 1962.

The neighbouring town of Chalmbury is experiencing some strange events with various well known landmarks being blown up. As DCI Larch doesn't seem to be taking it very seriously the Chief Constable sends Inspector Purbright to take a different angle on these explosions.

I thoroughly enjoyed A Bump in the Night as it made me laugh out loud on several occasions. The plot is tricky enough to hold the reader's interest but it is the farcical nature of the initial scenario which brings the humour - the blowing up of a water fountain.

The plot premise was probably fairly ingenious and perhaps a bit risqué at the time of writing but can now be regarded as rather standard but it's well done and held my interest throughout. Mr Watson's skill lies in his characterisation and the humour he draws from their actions and reactions. I love the trainee reporter and his desperation to imitate his heroes at The Sun - it would seem that not much has changed there in 50+ years. It's delicious. The optician's revenge is another one.

Throughout it all the enigmatic Inspector Purbright chats to, rather than interviews, the main players and throws a strong light on middle England and its foibles. It is accurate and humorous without being malicious. As befits the fashion of the time we learn little of the inspector beyond he's pleasant, looks rather naïve and has blond hair.

A Bump in the Night is a pleasant step back in time which I have no hesitation in recommending as a good read.

Leah says

Skulduggery in Middle England...

Chalmsbury is normally a quiet town with at least a veneer of respectability. So it's a bit of a shock when the residents have their sleep disturbed one Tuesday night when somebody blows up the local drinking fountain. A prankster, is the general feeling, but when on the following Tuesday a statue unfortunately loses its head in another blast, people want the police to get to the bottom of it before more damage is done. The problem is the local Inspector is friends with the man the townsfolk suspect is responsible. So suddenly Inspector Purbright from the neighbouring town of Flaxborough finds himself drafted in...

Colin Watson wrote the twelve books that make up the *Flaxborough Chronicles* over a period stretching from 1958 to 1982, with this second in the series dating from 1960. Like many series, the books improve for the first two or three, hit a peak in the middle of the series, and then tail off a little towards the end, but even the less good ones are still way ahead of most of the competition. This one loses a little for me by having the action moved to Chalmsbury, which means that we don't see much of the regular cast of characters who appear in the ones based in Flaxborough itself. But it has its own cast of deliciously quirky characters to make up for that lack, and has the same sly and wicked wit, poking fun at the respectable middle-classes of Middle England.

"Mr Hoole was the complainant, sir, but he didn't exactly report it. He just stood under where the sign had been and used bad language. I advised him to be careful and he changed to much longer words that didn't seem to give as much offence to bystanders."

The books are peculiarly suited to the '50s and early '60s – a time when class structures were still fairly rigid in Britain, and people were judged as much by their professional role as by their character, but when the first breezes of the winds of change of the later '60s were beginning to be felt. The joy of Watson is that he takes delight in letting the reader peek at the scandals hidden behind the lace curtains of the outwardly respectable. It's quietly subversive, and must have seemed even more so at the time.

In this one, the action takes place mainly among the shop and business owners of the town, and Purbright soon finds that most of them are willing to gossip about their friends and neighbours. There's a good deal to gossip about – everything from drunk driving to murky business dealings to marital infidelity goes on regularly, and everyone knows everyone else's business. The solution seems perfectly obvious from early on, so you can be sure that won't turn out to be the real one in the end. Underneath all the humour and light social commentary, there's an excellent plot, full of motives, alibis and clues, and it's not long before the destruction of property escalates to a death and a murder investigation. These books are a little too late to really count as Golden Age from a strict time point of view, but they have that feel about them, only with added hanky-panky. Often Watson makes an oblique innuendo and leaves it to the reader's mind to fill in the blanks, and I always imagine him winking cheekily as he does so...

"A somewhat impetuous man, Mr Biggadyke, by all accounts."

"Very likely. But that was no excuse for him going round and telling everybody that story about the Colonel and Bessie Egan."

"Ah, yes. And the spurs."

I can never think of these books without the word skulduggery coming into my mind – everybody, except Purbright, is always up to something they shouldn't be, but it's mainly mild naughtiness rather than outright badness.

"So you see the person I think the police ought to be looking for is someone here in the town who's been turned into an enemy of society – perhaps through being sent to jail for a crime he didn't commit."

"That ought to be a lot easier," Kebble daringly remarked, "than having to pick from all the

people in Chalmersbury who haven't been sent to prison for things they did commit."

A delight – books I revisit often and enjoy anew every time. They've been quite hard to get hold of for some time, so I'm happy to see that Farrago are issuing them as e-books. If you've never met Inspector Purbright, give yourself a treat – these books are guaranteed to chase the blues away...

NB This book was provided for review by the publisher, Farrago.

www.fictionfanblog.wordpress.com

Richard Derus says

Real Rating: 4.75* of five

It feels puling somehow to knock off a quarter star rating this quiet procedural that bears the same copyright date that I do. My weak little bleat of dissatisfaction is that I despise Larch and missed Purbright, who is nowhere to be found in the entire first half of the book.

But it's again an old-fashioned tale of morality and punitive cruelty, more so than the first Flaxborough outing. The central mystery is not, as one expects from Watson, the one he's assigned to solve on the down-low. When he does solve the central mystery, we're entirely justified to feel an impressed irkedness with Author Watson for so deftly connecting expectations and reality via quantum emotional metaphysics.

I'm so glad to be rediscovering these witty, wise forensic excursions into human nature's eternal turbidity. The great oceans of feeling that we're always immersed in do not give themselves readily to superficial knowledge; the urge to view surfaces as representative of entireties is one of humanity's most egregious idiocies. To look but not see is a cliché for a reason. To see but not understand is the same. This is, I think, a principal pleasure to be had from series-mystery reading: The sleuth, our avatar in story space, is always the one who either reaches or catalyzes the solution, and sees or causes Justice to Be Done. Thus is ma'at preserved.

It is small wonder to me that we, as a culture, love these stories so very much. Books, television series, comic books all tell us the same satisfying tale, that there IS Justice and it IS done and even when the suspended particulate matter in our emotional waters is the fecal material that's flowed downhill the originators can be found, blamed, and punished.

It's an addictive fiction. It's an enjoyable denial mechanism. And this one is especially delicious.

Linda Baker says

Things are generally peaceful in the country town of Chelmsford until one Tuesday night when a municipal drinking fountain is blown up. On succeeding Tuesday nights, a statue of a local worthy loses its head in an explosion, and a local oculist loses his treasured premises sign which features a giant glass eye. Oddly enough the chief of police in Chelmsford is always away on Tuesday nights at the civil defense center. The town has its prime suspect, prankster and almost universally disliked Stan Biggadyke, a longtime friend of the police chief. When a life is lost in the next explosion and explosives are discovered missing at the civil defense center, the Chief Constable calls in DI Purbright of Flaxborough.

Filled with sly humor and well-drawn portraits of the various eccentric inhabitants of Chelmsford, Bump in the Night is a delightful classic mystery. Knowing that Colin Watson was a career journalist makes the character of the eager cub reporter, Len Leaper, even more enjoyable. Len's idea of being a midnight sleuth makes for some hilarious scenes.

The Chelmsford Chronicles are perfect, quick reads for fans of classic mysteries. Thanks to Farrago Books, both for bringing them back and for providing me with an advance copy; also thanks to NetGalley. The opinions are my own

Sally says

What a marvelous idea it was to re-release this series. Those of us who did not read it the first time around can now experience the joy of visiting Flaxborough, and I'm ready to visit for a long time.

Bump in the Night is the second in the Flaxborough Mystery series by Colin Watson. The time is around 1957 or 1958. The place is the English village of Flaxborough and the surrounding countryside. We are back with Inspector Purbright, who cleared up that brothel and butchery business last year, but first we have to spend some time in the nearby town of Chelmsbury with the very unpleasant Chief Inspector Hector Larch and a cast of very quirky characters. A lot of quirky characters. Most of whom are not very likeable. For example, one prominent fellow is described as the kind of guy who would "Give her a nice smile, and then slowly pull her head off like a prawn's, and wouldn't fall out with you until he's got a grave dug ready." Hmmm.

We start right off with Councilor Oswald Pointer, Chelmsbury wholesale wine merchant, calling the police, with more than a little attitude, to report the loud noise he's just heard. Desk Sergeant Worple retaliates by being as unhelpful as he can be - you can just hear it in your head - you've either been there or done that. And Pointer, being the (un)likeable chap that he is, gets his petty little revenge after hanging up on the police by slamming his wife's bedroom door to scare her, and then pretending to be asleep when she comes to tell him she heard something.

Things are blowing-up in Chelmsbury on Tuesday evenings - a drinking fountain, a sculpture, an optician's hanging eye, and a bloody head blown off. And there is a real mystery here, not just a bunch of goofy people blowing up silly objects. Things get serious and sinister and dangerous and Inspector Larch isn't having much luck solving the mystery. So Inspector Purbright from Flaxborough is brought in to figure out who in Chelmsbury is a murderer.

But solid as the plot is and as engaging the mystery, it's the words, the words, the words that hook you and keep you hooked. Colin Watson seemed to be a firm believer in why use just one word when several will do. The way he wrote, there is no such thing as too many words. The town is populated with run-of-the-mill characters - wine merchant, haulage broker, optician, jeweler, theatre manager, newspaper editor and reporter, park keeper, as well as some not so run-of the mill: the rhymist, the chronic confessor, the genially promiscuous woman, the fit thrower, and the kleptomaniacal housekeeper. The vivid descriptions of their quirks and slightly mad, slightly dangerous interactions and practical jokes produced images that made me smile and chuckle and laugh out loud.

Just picture this: "Dignitaries: One end's so like t'other it's a wonder that when they take their hats off they're not run in for indecent exposure." "His hands clasped behind him looked like a pair of courting Flamborough crabs." "Alderman Arnold Berry was no longer regarding the wide world with that straining-at-stool

expression that denotes, in the convention of public sculpture, a man of high but unpopular principles." "His reasoning was conditioned by regular absorption of the Daily Sun." "Marriage with the light on, he decided, would be rather awful." I could go on and on, but you want to read these books for yourself and enjoy these deft turns of phrase for yourself.

Bump in the Night was even more satisfying, if possible, than Coffin Scarcely Used, the first book in the series, because this time I had learned the drill: look for clues, pay close attention to the people, and even closer attention to the words.

I received a copy of Bump in the Night from NetGally and Farrago Books. I loved it, highly recommend it, and am starting Hopjoy was Here as soon as I submit this review.

Venetia Breakwell says

Procedural crime novels from a different era; I'm so pleased that I fell across this character driven series!

Lis Carey says

The town of Chalmersbury experiences a series of explosions that blow up monuments and landmarks, and the small town's police force is making no progress. Flaxborough loans DI Purbright to conduct an investigation - one perhaps less hampered by being personally connected, for good or ill, to every possible suspect.

Police chief Hector Larch is married to Hilda, daughter of Councilman Pointer. Local haulage magnate Stan Biggadyke is having an affair with Hilda, and last year, had a car accident that killed a young woman. Biggadyke's long history of malicious pranks includes having tormented Barrington Hoole, local optometrist, since their school days.

And Larch, sadly, thinks aggressive bullying is the way to question suspects and make them spill what they know.

What most of the town doesn't know is that Larch attends weekly civil defense training in Flaxborough, where he teaches explosives handling. A supply of explosives has gone missing, more than enough to account for the explosions so far.

Purbright takes lodging in Chalmersbury, and sets about piecing his way through gossip, innuendo, colorful local stories, adultery, and hidden secrets, to find the culprit.

This is a police procedural series from the late 1950s and early 1960s. It has a slower, gentler pace, with an arch sense of humor lurking in the corners. (What my Mom called a British sense of humor. What my Dad, and I, and the Irish/French side of the family called, "how we make jokes and cope with stress.") It's enjoyable, pleasant reading, when you want to engage your mind rather than looking for a more emotional read.

Recommended.

I received a free electronic galley from the publisher via NetGalley.

Suzanne says

First published 60 years ago in England, the Flaxborough Chronicles feature Inspector Purbright in the quiet town of Flaxborough. In his second adventure, Purbright is sent to the nearby town of Chalmsbury to look into a series of bombings. First a memorial water fountain was demolished in an explosion, then the head was removed from a statue with another bomb, and an antique optometrist's sign was blown to smithereens. Who could be doing this and what are their motives? The local police chief doesn't seem too motivated to solve the crimes, but a delegation from the town council has him request help - and Purbright comes to town.

The characters are almost caricatures of small town life. There are adulterous wives, odd political alliances, local gossips, and even a young reporter with dreams of breaking a big story. The Inspector walks a carefully balanced path through all the secrets, innuendoes, and finger-pointing among the town's residents. As an outsider, it is hard for him to know which details might prove important to the case and which will send him off down a rabbit hole. Is it relevant that the police chief is the son-in-law of a council member? Do the ridiculous practical jokes of the trucking company's owner play into the explosions? It seems that the more the police uncover, the less hope there is that any of it will tie together and help them close the case.

Readers who enjoy Miss Marple and mysteries set in small English towns full of eccentric residents will welcome having this series drawn to their attention.

I read an e-book provided by the publisher through NetGalley.

Bam says

Bump in the Night is the second book in the Flaxborough Mystery series being republished by UK publisher Farrago. It was originally published in 1960 and is quite a nice little glimpse into British village life of that era. Colin Watson (1920-1983) had a delightfully fun way of writing, spearing each of his often stuffy, pompous characters with incisive descriptions. The mystery in this police procedural keeps you guessing right up to the end, which I quite appreciated. A fun, quick read with humor and heart.

Many thanks to Farrago and NetGalley for providing me with an arc of this delightful old chestnut of a detective story. I hope you bring back all twelve!
