



The Bell Ringers

Henry Porter

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In Henry Porter's novel, "The Bell Ringers," England in the near future appears largely unchanged. There are concerns over the threat of terrorism, the press is feisty, and the prime minister is soon to call a general election. But quietly and largely unknown to the public or even most in government things have become undeniably Orwellian: cameras with license plate recognition software record every car's movements; a sophisticated top-secret data-mining system known as Deep Truth combs through personal records and identifies petty criminals as well as those disposed to antigovernment beliefs. In the interest of security, the divide between private and public has crumbled, and freedom has given way to control. Once the prime minister's head of intelligence, and one of those who knew about Deep Truth, David Eyam suffered a fall from grace and then died in a terrorist bombing. Now his former lover has been named as the benefactor of his estate. But Eyam has left her more than just his wealth; she is also the heir to his dangerous secrets and unfinished business. Absorbing, eerie, and unsettlingly realistic, "The Bell Ringers" is a fearless work from a talented novelist at the top of his game."

The Bell Ringers Details

Date : Published February 2nd 2010 by Atlantic Monthly Press (first published January 1st 2009)

ISBN : 9780802119315

Author : Henry Porter

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Genre : Fiction, Suspense, Thriller, Audiobook, Mystery, Science Fiction, Politics

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From Reader Review The Bell Ringers for online ebook

Eldra says

A must read!

Larry says

Porter's "The Bell Ringers" first appeared in Great Britain as "The Dying Light." His earlier "Brandenburg Gate" ended with the people of East Berlin streaming into the light (both literal and figurative) of West Berlin with the opening of the wall. This novel examines a turn toward darkness by a British government intent on strengthening the control of the state at the expense of traditional civil liberties. The mechanism used by that government is a combination of wholesale data mining and behavioral prediction based on a growing intrusive knowledge of all aspects of people's lives. The 'bell ringers' of the American edition's title are a nonviolent resistance group dedicated to preventing the governmental actions. The book is very well written, its characters are compelling (even ones caught in the middle), its pace is suspenseful, and its stakes are enormous. (Read it along with Jonathan Raban's "Surveillance" for a double literary jolt of true danger.)

Judie says

The idea of The Bell Ringers is exciting and it started off that way, but as I read problems developed. It was all too pat and there were too many holes in the story to make even plausible. I don't want to spoil this book for others, so I won't go into what I thought were mistakes. Once I reached the two thirds mark, I was slogging through the book, not enjoying it. Others thought this a good read and I'm definitely in the minority in finding it trite.

Robert Starner says

Kate Lockhart attends the coroner's inquiry into the death of her former lover and close friend David Eyam, which includes video footage of the explosion in Colombia that caused his death. Eyam, a former head of intelligence in the prime minister's government had mysteriously fallen from grace and left England amidst a burgeoning scandal. What follows is Lockhart's quest to solve the mystery of Eyam's death and clear his name. It is also a meticulously detailed tale of high powered government figures manipulating and commandeering a democracy. Though Porter's characterizations are not fullbodied, his plot line is. The intrigue quietly builds throughout the novel and by the last one hundred pages, one is so thoroughly engaged and the reader finds the book unputdownable. The overreaching of government surveillance is one of the predominant themes explored in the novel as Lockhart discovers an electronic system that pervades and mistakenly exploits innocent people and their voice mail, email and electronic financial transactions. An absorbing read throughout though not at breakneck speeds that can typically cause confusion in trying to figure out entangling intrigues in this genre of espionage or espionage-like fictions.

Susan says

Published in the UK as Dying Light in August 2009.

An engrossing and thoughtful tale set in England of the near future. How much freedom will individuals surrender to the state to "feel safe, have food on the table and watch TV?" A political thriller of the highest order. By the author of Brandenburg Gate (2006).

Loved this and highly recommend it.

Annie Walker says

This book grew on me a little bit at a time. The characters are intriguing enough, but what really started to grab at me was the all too-familiar governmental structures/encroachment on privacy that pervades society now.

It truly was an eerie novel. I think the idea that fascinated me the most was the idea of how government courts (in this case- parliament, but could easily be congress or the Supreme Court) made massive decisions in the name of "caring for the people" without ever needing "the people's" consent. And the idea that so many people would rather give the government control of everything so that they don't have to make decisions/responsibility for the world around them. The truth in the theory that people are apathetic towards politics unless the government abuses them personally.

Frederick Bingham says

I listened to this one. The narration by John Lee was excellent.

Set a few years in the future, this is the story of Kate Lockhart, who returns to England from several years in the US to find it transformed into a police state. Her old friend and lover has apparently been killed in a terrorist attack in Columbia.

It's a realistic depiction of where technology and current trends are taking us. It's gone much further in the UK than in the US, but still pretty scary.

Hilary says

Slower going than other books in the genre, the story built slowly and in a compelling fashion, though with less "must read NOW" than normal. This book reveals the possibility of a modern 1984, where surveillance can be continuous, telecomms monitoring compulsory, and privacy only a theoretical concept, with corruption going all the way to the top in government.

If you're a governmental conspiracy theorist you'll love it. If you don't read much sci-fi or political scare

fiction you should probably read it to keep your mind open to possibilities of abuse by the state. I know I'm going to consider some of these issues more carefully in future.

Katie says

In my opinion this book was totally ruined by all its egregious typos. This usually doesn't bother me THAT much--I understand the financial limitations of publishing companies these days and the need to cut back on editing staff, but this book was truly ridiculous. It was clearly just a first draft that had not even been run through automated spellcheck. I laughed out loud when the author thanked his editor in the Acknowledgements, because there was clearly no editing done.

Anyway. If you really like political thrillers, you might still get something out of this book, but for me this book was a loser. The plot twists weren't all that exciting and it just didn't grab me.

Sara says

A highly intelligent, quiet and very frightening thriller.

England in the near future is rapidly approaching a total police state--all phone, internet and travel is monitored on every citizen, false terror plots are created by the prime minister to suspend all rights, and a small group of truth-tellers (The Bell Ringers) fights to restore democracy.

In an afterword, the author says that as of 2009, when he was concluding the writing, all of the laws highlighted in the novel already existed on the books--waiting to be implemented. England was already moving towards a universal ID card.

Coincidentally, sales of George Orwell's 1984 have spiked in the last couple of weeks, apparently because of the revelation that the US government monitors all phone calls, and email.

Yep, it's a damn scary world.

Stanley says

A remarkably prescient novel given it was written in 2009, long before the Edward Snowden revelations in 2013

It is set in a near future England and deals with the loss of civil liberties through the state's ability to bring together data on us from different government databases, emails, phone calls, number plate recognition systems et al, and highlights the very real worries for democracy contained in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004

(Copied from my review under the book's original title - The Dying Light)

Marie-Lynne says

Read it under the title "the dying light"

Didn't like it as much as his other books

Mikejencostanzo says

One of the associations I have with a fun week at the beach is a good mystery. One year it was Dorothy Sayers, another year, Dorothy Gilman. This year's beach read was an impulsive choice, veering slightly off-course into the political thriller genre. I was not disappointed.

The Bell Ringers, set in Britain, is how one man imagines a corrupt government could get away with collecting and ultimately misusing data about its citizens. We're talking drones, spy cameras on every corner, tapped phone lines. Nothing is private.

So, I sit back, wiggle my toes in the sand, and settle in for an engaging, but highly fictitious read. Until author Henry Porter throws down the gauntlet in the "Afterward" of his novel. (Causing me to spill my martini). Each of the laws enabling his fictitious government to accomplish their sordid ends currently exist in Britain.

And if the United States news of summer 2013 is any indication, perhaps much of the technology currently exists too. See [here](#) and [here](#), for the juicy details.

--Jen

Dave says

An excellent book by an author who never fails to please. I simply couldn't put it down and finished it in one day. It was an amazing read!

The concept of citizens trading freedom for safety is not restricted to Great Britain. It frequently seems as if this disease has infected the entire Western World... although here in Canada we seem to have been spared the worst of these excesses, there is no question that we heading in that direction.

As a political science teacher I just wish I had the budget to order a class set of this novel because I would love to make it a part of my curriculum.

Katy says

This is one fantastic political thriller! It is as timely as today's news. It is about the growth of the "surveillance state" that has come to characterize western democracies in the past twenty years or so. From tracking cars with license plate scanners, to hacking personal e-mails, to identity theft, to CCTV in our cities, in our subways, at traffic intersections, in shopping malls to digital health records, municipal and national

governments know a lot about us, and can easily learn more. This book takes these facts of modern life and asks what if a government in the name of national security were to use advanced data collection software to spy on its own citizens and use that information...but wait, isn't that what the Edward Snowden revelations are all about? This book is set in Great Britain where these techniques have already been in place and the prime minister is about to take the final steps to insure absolute control. Can he be stopped? Read it and find out. This well written and carefully plotted novel will definitely make you think twice before you give any information to anyone in any format.
