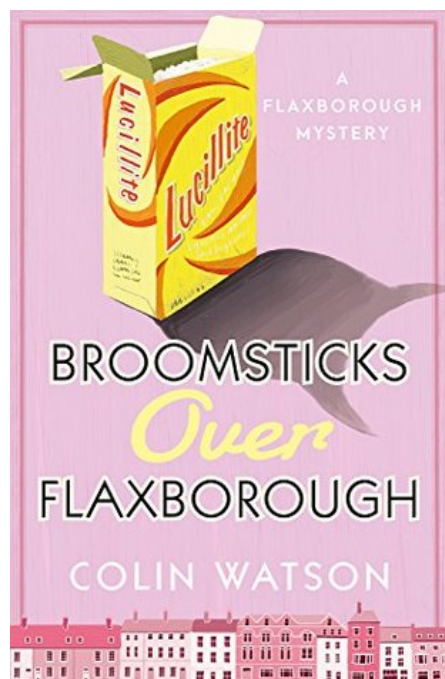




Broomsticks Over Flaxborough

Colin Watson

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As Miss Lucilla Teatime often remarks, there is no lack of entertainment in the delightful town of Flaxborough.

What could be more wholesome than the Folklore Society's quarterly "revels", with dancing, a bonfire, and a quaffing bench? Well-upholstered matrons and town worthies enter most enthusiastically into the spirit. So it's unfortunate when a younger woman, the freethinking Edna Hillyard, goes missing that night.

Then the manufacturer of "Lucillite" (gives your wash lightness, brightness and whiteness), filming a promotion locally, is dismayed to find a gruesome bull's head ruining his key scene, while desecrations take place in the church, and the press begins reporting on Black Magic and a Town of Fear! Are **DI Purbright** and his team really battling against evil forces?

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 ...

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Broomsticks Over Flaxborough Details

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From Reader Review Broomsticks Over Flaxborough for online ebook

Elaine Tomasso says

I would like to thank Netgalley and Farrago for and advance copy of Broomsticks Over Flaxborough, the seventh novel to feature Inspector Purbright, originally published in 1972.

There are strange goings on in Flaxborough like the folklore society's revels and young women walking the streets in fancy dress. The young women are part of a promotional campaign for washing powder and the folklore society is really a coven. Inspector Purbright is not too worried about either until a young woman, Edna Hillyard, goes missing, closely followed by the local supermarket manager.

I thoroughly enjoyed Broomsticks Over Flaxborough which has a good mystery and some excellent satire on business speak and paganism. I'm not sure if it was my mood but I found some of the detail in the plot difficult to follow, fortunately I got the gist. The novel depends much more on small details than the previous ones so I loved the fact that it is the unassuming Sergeant Love who cracks the case.

I must admit that I thought that unintelligible business jargon was a modern invention but obviously not as Mr Watson has produced pages of such gibberish. It is extremely amusing although, after repeat reading, I'm still not sure I understood it. What I will say is that he has captured the pretension perfectly. His other target is paganism. The thought of middle aged, middle class ladies and gentlemen cavorting in the nude (or in most cases, semi-nude as modesty prevents a full unveiling) brought tears to my eyes but he doesn't stop there as there are ideological differences within the group. Laugh? I couldn't stop. Mr Watson has a fine, nuanced eye for the foibles of English life which he brings to the fore in this novel.

Broomsticks Over Flaxborough is a good read which I have no hesitation in recommending.

Niken Widyastuti says

Another good book in the Flaxborough series. This time, the town seemed to be under black magic spell. Lots of disturbing appearances, though the town folks didn't look like they notice them. What was really happening? A very enjoyable story of witchy scenes, full of humor and wits. A bit dragging here and there, but overall was a good read.

I was provided a complementary copy by the author / publisher through NetGalley, but this in no way influenced my thoughts or opinions.

Caitlin Gemmell says

This was my first Colin Watson book and it did not disappoint. It was a charming whodunnit type of mystery, imbued with a heavy dose of humor. It was the perfect light, chuckle out loud sort of read.

It was amusing in part because of the setting. This book was originally published in the 1970s and as such it contained a lot of outdated ideas—primarily the antiquated and erroneous views on witchcraft. The author

kept referring to members of a folklore society as witches, satanists, devil worshippers, and practitioners of black magic. Other than his lack of research into what distinguishes a witch from a satanist, the author wrote an excellent book.

I would definitely pick up another of his books when in the mood for a well-written mystery.

Sid Nuncius says

This is another very enjoyable instalment in Colin Watson's Flaxborough chronicles. It's perhaps not one of the very best, but it has Watson's characteristically brilliant dry wit, excellent writing and comic but rather penetrating characterisation.

This time, some of Flaxborough's most respectable citizens are indulging in paganism and licentious "rites," when one of their number disappears and a mystery develops involving various of the town's worthies. Watson uses this as always to puncture pomposity and to poke fun at the self-deluding grandiosity of many of his characters, while taking well aimed sideswipes at advertisers and their nonsensical jargon, the behaviour of the press and, of course, "devil-worship" and its associated pretensions.

It's a lot of fun, but the absurdity of the subject matter, oddly, makes this a little less amusing for me than some of its predecessors. Also some of Watson's rather dodgy attitudes to women are rather more to the fore here, which I found a little uncomfortable in places, and Miss Lucy Teatime makes only a brief appearance, which is a slight disappointment. Nonetheless, Watson's style is always a joy and the redoubtable Purbright and Love remain a unmitigated pleasure as characters.

If you're not familiar with Watson, this may give you a flavour of his style, as the slow-witted Chief Constable Chubb is informed of the identity of a suspect. " 'But he's...' Mr Chubb was about to say 'vice-chairman of the Conservative Club' when he remembered his inspector's perverse inclination to disregard the relevance of social lustre to a presumption of innocence. 'But he's married,' he said instead." If you like that, you'll like Colin Watson's books.

Broomsticks Over Flaxborough isn't an absolute favourite Flaxborough Mystery, but it's still a very enjoyable read and warmly recommended.

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

Dan says

Fantastically funny! The seniors bus tour into the countryside to identify the flowers they find there is hurt-your-sides reading. One passenger on the bus is an elderly woman who knows all the "country names" of the otherwise innocent flowers and her identifications nearly destroy an untermensch healthy, but prissy young man who is providing the Proper Names of the flowers. Don't blame me if you suddenly develop health problems.

Suzanne says

A local folklore society turns out to be the cover for a coven of witches. After a recent celebration at the home of a coven member, an empty car is found and the owner is missing. Where has the driver gone? And where is the owner of a local store, who also hasn't been seen since that night? As the missing person investigations begin, police discover that members of the coven are not willing to discuss any helpful details of the celebration and even act as if being questioned is a persecution rather than an investigation.

The missing woman was a coven member, but the store owner was part of a local philanthropic group. Could there possible be any connection between the two disappearances? Everyone tries to help - the local pastor, the energetic Miss Teatime, and all the constables. But the town has also been overrun by a group of young ladies in white costumes doing a door-to-door campaign for a detergent and there will even be some commercials filmed with local folks participating. Could any of the people working on the add campaign have something to do with one or both of the missing persons? As usual, Purbright keeps working the case from all angles until he finally sees how the pieces fit together.

Those familiar with Flaxborough from previous installments in the series will recognize Purbright and other recurring characters, including Miss Lucy Teatime. Set in an English village in the mid-twentieth century, the novels all deal with crimes investigated by Purbright and the rest of the Flaxborough constabulary in a methodical and respectful way. There are no computers or rogue agents picking locks to find evidence, just a patient gathering of facts and fitting them together.

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

Verity W says

Witchcraft problems for the gang in Flaxborough. I didn't like this as much as I liked the last one, but it was still a lot of fun and a clever mystery. And as an idea for a mystery it wasn't really one that I've seen a lot of in British cozy crime-type series.

Eric says

Wonderful! What more could the discerning reader wish for?

Here we have witchcraft, drink, drugs, sex, abduction...and murder. All wrapped up with some delicious satire at the expense of marketing campaigns and "ad-speak"... and an ending which took me totally by surprise.

This is Colin Watson at his sharpest and best, neatly skewering the higher echelons of respectable Flaxborough society and gently roasting them on a barbecue fuelled by wit.

This is a most enjoyable and entertaining read and as fresh now as on original publication in 1972.

Thank you to NetGalley and Farrago (Prelude Books Ltd.) for the digital review copy.

Julie says

A coven of witches in Flaxborough is having secret meetings and different businesses are being targeted with supposed curses. After one late-night celebration, a man and a woman disappear. Inspector Purbright and his team have to sort out what is really going on.

Funny and interesting. Written in the 70s.

chris - australia says

I bought this book because I enjoyed the one I had read previously. Unfortunately, this one didn't live up to the promise of the first. I found it too silly to be readable. The dialogue with the Lucillite cast was overlong and got lost in it's own conceit. The plot moved slowly with too much toing and froing. I gave up reading because in the end I didn't care how it turned out.

Jennifer says

It's been a couple weeks since I visited Flaxborough and I just had to check and see what Inspector Purbright is up to. Well, he certainly has his hands full in this story with witches and Lucies and dead store managers. Once again, Colin Watson does not disappoint. When Edna Hillyard disappears and Mr. Persimmon is found dead, both after a night of dancing with the local witches' coven, Purbright and Sgt. Love and hot on the trail of the culprit. Miss Teatime is also making herself useful with some inside knowledge into local going-on. And because it's the 60's there are Lucies going door-to-door asking questions. I'm not going to say any more about the Lucie's because you really need to read the book and experience them for yourself. This is book 7 in the series and one of the best so far. Any of the books in this series will make a great summer read.

JoAnne McMaster (Any Good Book) says

There are a group of people in Flaxborough who consider themselves witches and warlocks (but are probably in reality just wanting to have regular orgies) under the guise of a folklore society...

When a couple of schoolboys find an abandoned vehicle with womens' clothing inside they anonymously call the police. What is discovered is that the car belongs to a missing woman and during the investigation it is discovered that this woman was the mistress of a Mr. Persimmons, who has also become missing. At first the police simply think that they have run away together, but then the body of Mr. Persimmon is discovered and a mysterious mask washes up in the river that makes DI Purbright rethink his initial conclusion...

A local reverend calls the police because there have been desecrations in his church and when they arrive they find odd things - corpses of a frog, a mouse, and what appears to be an effigy of the poor reverend. They also discover that the reverend is part of group of four men who are concerned with the seemingly satanic worshippers and trying to help those that have been affected.

But it is from an unlikely source - one of a group of women who are working for a company promoting "Lucillite" - a product that makes your wash the brightest it's ever been - that gives them the break they have been looking for and it's not too long after that, with the help of intrepid Sergeant Love, that Purbright is able to put the clues together and find the truth of the matter..

Again we visit the village of Flaxborough where this time the mysterious goings on of a group of devil worshippers is about to be discovered. It is only when a young woman disappears and the body of a man is discovered that brings things to the attention of the police, and their activities are about to be laid bare for all of England to see.

Purbright delights me. He is an intelligent man who, with the help of his faithful Sergeant Sid Love and his other officers, manages to glean bits and pieces of information and put them together in a truly impressive manner. This time out they are searching for a coven that has apparently committed murder and are brazen enough to believe they can get away with it. Unfortunately, they don't count on the resolute DI Purbright, who is as good a detective as they come.

It is indeed a pleasure reading about the investigation and how thorough Purbright's crew is; at the end he masterfully creates what is nothing more than a coordinated raid on some of them to bring out the murderer into the open, and I was truly surprised by the result. It is always satisfying to see the unexpected become the truth.

When the book was finished and everything came together nicely, the tale was absorbing and written well; my only disappointment is that the author is deceased and when I am done with the series there will be no more. Highly recommended.

Vanessa says

An extremely enjoyable Flaxborough mystery that is substantially enlivened by Miss Lucilla Teatime, who is quickly becoming my favorite flim-flam woman of all time, and the vague whiffs of sulfur that emanate from a folk society/coven that has been at work in Flaxborough. The mystery, as per usual, takes a back seat to the towns people and the invasion of such by a detergent campaign. Mr. Watson has an obvious good time skewering advertising generally and ad-speak in particular, not an especially vanguard topic, sure, but his enjoyment seeps off the page. One of the funnier entries in a gentle series. A strong recommend.

I received an ecopy from the publishers and NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Bam says

The seventh book in the Flaxborough mystery series opens with a Walpurgis-night Revel (May Day Eve), a festive orgy of wild abandon put on by the Flaxborough Branch of the Sabbath Day Conservation Society--an innocuous-sounding name for a coven.

The next day a young woman is reported missing. Her car with her clothing inside is found in the woods near where the festival was held. Soon word spreads to the national press: "Common to every report was the use of the words witchcraft, black magic, mass, sacrifice and cult. In three cases, nude and orgy had been incorporated as well. Satanism was offered by the Dispatch, while the Express daringly added necromancy."

I always enjoy the wry humor of these books, as well as Watson's descriptive writing style. The mystery itself is pretty interesting but I thought a complicated addition to the plot of a 'detergent advertising campaign' just muddled the waters rather than adding much to the mystery. It seemed to provide an excuse to bring Miss Teatime into the story once again and fill out the length of the story.

This British police procedural was originally published in 1972. Farrago Books UK is in the process of republishing the series. Many thanks to the publisher and NetGalley for granting me access to an arc of this mystery for an honest review.

Anjana says

As compared to the next book in line, this has a more innocuous title but is more risqué than its title leads us to believe. There are some cringeworthy moments in terms of men misbehaving, more than the previous books of the series. In this particular tale, the women are not blameless either. All that aside, the case at hand is very strange. It has ?people with unknown plans in secret societies, missing people and others who know more than they are revealing. There are also these women selling laundry detergents whose entire attitude borders on sinister. It has its moments but it does not rank among the funnier ones of the series. I have three more books to read. Stay tuned for those reviews since I think I might find them more hilarious. Inspector Purbright and Sidney Love continue their banter. It was hard to follow this case because there seemed to be more going wrong than first meets the eye. This is a series that continuous perusal throws up sudden gems so I shall keep the hunt going.

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