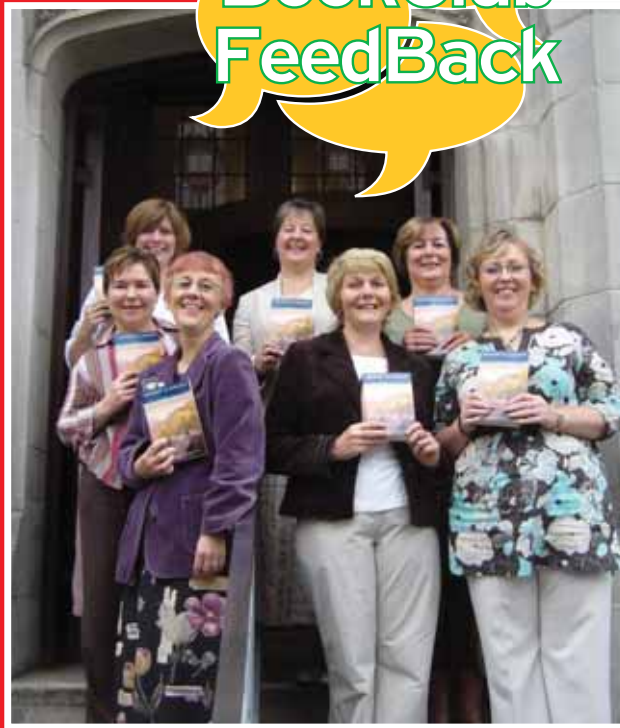


BookClub FeedBack



When copies of *Blue Slipper Bay* arrived at Chapters Book Club in Merthyr Tydfil, none of its members had come across Wendy K. Harris before. But now, one book in, and they are hungry for more!

Chapters Book Club started up just over a year and a half ago, based at the Central Library in Merthyr Tydfil. We meet every four weeks and have read many different types of books, not always enjoyed and not always finished by some of us!

We read a variety of titles, from many different genres. For example this year we have read family sagas, horrors and thrillers and there is always lively and interesting discussion during our meetings.

Blue Slipper Bay was a bit of an unknown quantity when we began. Our previous reads were based on recommendations from other library staff and none of us had encountered Wendy Harris as a writer before.

Reading this book made several of us immediately want to book holidays at the Isle of Wight, simply to undergo some of the magical tranquillity the book offered. It was one of the few titles we have discussed that we all agreed had been a worthwhile read.

The atmosphere and descriptions of the Isle of Wight made us almost believe we were there, and the characters of the story pulled us into their world so much so that many were sorry to see the book end.

How important is the location in the novel?

Several members of the group had visited the Isle of Wight and all agreed it was a beautiful island. The descriptions in the book of the usual attractions of Osbourne House and Blackgang Chine were written about so beautifully, those of us who hadn't been there are thinking of booking our next holidays there! We all wanted to book a week at Blue Slipper Bay, sneak over to Kym and Edie's for a fish and chip supper, have a bowl of pasta in Rachel's Café or just wander around the gardens at Wraith Cove Hotel. This haven of peace and tranquillity on offer in the book lent itself to a restful read, despite the complex feelings and situations often being written about during the novel.

Does the island help or hinder Sophie, Jill and Nick's chances of building a new life?

Wiggle your toes in the warm, comforting sand of Blue Slipper Bay, find healing in the soothing hands of Marguerite or the honest words from the old sea dog Neptune. Take a journey of journeys to the depths of your soul and discover what you really and truly want from life. This sums up the island and the book.

Throughout the book it was difficult to imagine another island or setting having the same impact on the characters' lives. The beauty and charm of the island eventually wins over each of the characters and the setting lends itself easily to the different requirements of each of the main characters.

For example, Sophie, the main character, had come to the island to escape from the philandering Lothario Peter, only to fall back under his spell later in the book and almost be persuaded to return to his cheating arms. She was an interesting and vulnerable character that needed help and guidance. This was provided by richly drawn, colourful islanders who could be easily visualised by the reader. She was needy and raw from the hurt she had received, only to discover late in the book that her best friend Jill had deceived her with Peter. Jill blamed this on her bohemian upbringing and her need for self destruction. Sophie's sister Audrey has schemed to get her

reunited with Peter but even she eventually fell under the spell of the island.

The love interest Nick was slowly revealed as a man with a terrible secret. He vowed to be honest with Sophie as she did to him. Although it was distrust of their true feelings, lack of self worth and lack of honesty that nearly made them lose each other. He benefited from the island's therapy, raged at the moon and eventually faced his demons head on. There are soulful descriptions of his thoughts, feelings and the pitiful regret of knowing that he had to take some responsibility for the murder of his wife and unborn child. His lack of honesty with Keri, his wife had left her exposed to the violent underworld of drugs in which he roamed. She had paid the highest price for his bravado and now, despite travelling the world for spiritual healing he found the healer lay within himself. The island healed both him and Sophie but in doing so captured them forever. It did not let people go easily.

What is the relationship between the past and the future?

The island's tranquil backdrop allows the characters the time they need to reflect and ultimately come to terms with their pasts. It begins with a group of people, some of whom have had major relationship and commitment problems in their lives. Through their connections with each other and in cases regression to the past it is through this they find the strength to move forward. Each of the characters found hope and strength to find a new future.

How do Nick, Jill and Sophie cope with their problems, together and individually?

Nick, Jill and Ash all began by keeping their secrets, and not confiding in one another. Each tried to solve their problems in isolation without the support that each could offer the other. A metaphor of the whole book was found in the setting of

the Wraith Cove Hotel as a tangled overgrown garden. This garden was slowly but surely sorted out by Nick and friends to reveal its former beauty and this teamwork shown was echoed in the characters' relationships which were tangled and unruly and where they found

they needed each other to help them sort it out and move on.

In Conclusion...

Blue Slipper Bay was a moving story with a strong moral ending. It taught us as readers all about how we needed to face our demons before being able to conquer them, as it is only when they are conquered that we can move forward. No one in the group had read anything by Wendy Harris before, but it was a title we enjoyed. It was a gentle, rolling, restful read which engaged us all as readers - no mean feat we can assure you! Thoroughly enjoyed and now being recommended to others - in our opinion there can be no greater accolade for an author than for a reader to say they loved it.

