



Death on Blackheath

Anne Perry

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As commander of the powerful Special Branch, Thomas Pitt has the job of keeping Britain safe from spies and traitors. So there's no obvious reason why he is suddenly ordered to investigate two minor incidents: the blood, hair, and shards of glass discovered outside the home of naval weapons expert Dudley Kynaston, and the simultaneous disappearance of Mrs. Kynaston's beautiful lady's maid.

But weeks later, when the mutilated body of an unidentified young woman is found near Kynaston's home, Pitt realizes that this is no ordinary police investigation. Far from it. Is Kynaston—one of Britain's most valuable scientists—leading a double life? Is Pitt saddled with a conspiracy so devilishly clever that it will ruin him?

A baffled Pitt has never needed his friends more desperately, including his indomitable wife, Charlotte; his canny old colleague Victor Narraway; and his personal drawing-room spy, Lady Vespasia Cumming-Gould. But even these allies may not be able to save Pitt—or Britain.

Death on Blackheath Details

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From Reader Review Death on Blackheath for online ebook

Larraine says

A reader can always rely on Anne Perry for a little old fashioned Victorian melodrama. Pitt is no longer a common policeman. He is head of "Special Branch." Not everyone likes the fact that he was made head since his father was just a common gameskeeper. He and Charlotte who came from a wealthy middle class family have now been married for about 16 years. Their daughter, Jemima, is 15 and Daniel is 12. I wish the children were a little more fleshed out, but perhaps that's not Perry's interest. In this story, blood and broken glass is discovered on the kitchen steps of a well known scientist who is working on submarines, and his wife's personal maid is missing. It is the end of the Victorian era. The queen still reigns but not for much longer, and the world is changing - not for the better as far as many in government think. Then a body of a woman who may be the maid in question is found. It is horribly mutilated so it's hard to tell. Once again, Perry refers back to an earlier book, Resurrection Row, one that I haven't read. This is kind of an annoying trait of hers although this time it didn't take away from the story. I'm not sure I found the plot that convincing to be honest. To me it was more than a little convoluted. However, I do enjoy the relationship of Charlotte and Pitt. Charlotte didn't have a lot to do in this story. Her sister, Emily, was going to "play detective," but she really doesn't get to do much. It is Charlotte's observation that helps to solve the case. It didn't take long to read, and it took me a very different place for a while. I enjoy that in a book.

Antje says

Bereits zu Beginn hatte ich meine Zweifel, dass dieser Krimi funktionieren könnte, der im Viktorianischen Zeitalter spielen soll, aber von einer Autorin verfasst wurde, die erst 1938 geboren ist. Ich stoße mich daran, wenn eine Handlung in eine längst vergangene Zeit angesiedelt wird, indem hier und da oberflächlich einfließende politische und gesellschaftliche Umstände den historischen Rahmen konstruieren und der Handlung einen authentischen Anstrich verleihen sollen. Schön und gut, aber dann sollten jene Autoren bitte auch darauf achten, dass die Rede- und Denkweise ihrer fiktiven Figuren dort hinein passen. Dass die Frau, Schwägerin und Großtante des ermittelnden Commanders des Staatsschutzes auf eigener Faust losziehen und durch Beobachtungen und Gespräche zur Lösung des Falls beitragen, ist bereits unverzeihlich und schwächt den Roman in seiner Glaubwürdigkeit immens. Aber dass die Tante inmitten des spannendsten und überhaupt einzig packendsten Teil des Krimis einen Heiratsantrag vom ehemaligen Chef des Commanders erhört, schlägt dem Fass geradezu den Boden aus. Die Autorin hätte besser daran getan, die ganze Gefühlsduselei herauszulassen, sich auf kriminalistische Fakten zu konzentrieren und ihrem Commander mehr zuzutrauen. - Einzig allein das Cover des Buches ist eines Lobes wert!

Estibaliz79 says

Otra aventura más de Charlotte y Thomas Pitt que, en este caso, con un buen principio y un final que lo es solo un poquito menos, da demasiadas vueltas en el mismo sitio (apenas avanza) durante buena parte del desarrollo.

El quién es altamente predecible (aunque una no se imagina semejante grado de melodrama) y, por alguna razón, me ha parecido que la claridad de ideas y sentimientos, sobre todo en lo referente a los personajes de

Emily y Vespasia, brilla por su ausencia en más de una ocasión.

En resumen, no es mi favorito de la serie, pero tiene suficiente interés como para quedarse en el punto medio.

Paraphrodite says

This one was a bit all over the place. But I've come to the conclusion that Vespasia is a vampire as she's now younger than when the series first started, which is almost a 20 years time span. Now *that* is a mystery worthy of a Pitt investigation!

Andie says

What a disappointment! I love this series of mysteries set in late Victorian London and couldn't wait to grab this book as soon as it came out. However, this installment was truly sub-par. (And there will be spoilers here, so if they bother you, quit reading)

Thomas Pitt, late the head of Special Branch is called out to investigate what seems to be a minor incident - blood, hair and shards of glass discovered outside the house of Dudley Kymaston (an expert in naval weaponry) and the disappearance of Mrs. Kynaston's maid. At first it seems as though the maid has run off with her young man and that the blood and hair is the consequence of an ordinary mugging. But several weeks later a mutilated body is found in a gravel pit near Kynaston's house and a member of Parliament, Somerset Carlisle starts asking questions and one Edom Talbot on the Prime Minister's staff starts questioning Pitt's ability to solve the case.

Pitt, of course seeks advice from his old boss, Victor Narroway, and his wife's aunt, Lady Vespacia Cumming-Gold. They, along iwth his wife, Charlotte, seem to follow one blind alley after another until finally, after a second mutilated body appears, the deus ex machina literary convention is employed and we find out that the bodies have been stolen from a morgue by Somerset Carlisle to smoke out Edom Talbot who is passing British naval secrets to the Swedes as part of a plot to avenge the death of a young Swedish girls years before.

Sound like a mess? Well it is. By the end of 302 pages, I really didn't care who had done what. Please Ms. Perry, do a better job next time.

Kathryn Davidson says

The book opened well enough. Unfortunately, it quickly became as bogged down as the investigation. As the plot slowed to a trickle, the author resorted to melodramatic flourishes to try to maintain interest, which didn't resonate with me. I also didn't find the ever increasing call on honor as the ultimate dictate of how one could either predict and/or manipulate others as particularly persuasive. While the overall style of writing is not to my taste, there were two quotes from the book that I appreciated: 1) "The position he now held demanded ruthlessness, and therefore an ability to live with mistakes, to forgive himself and move on, not

allowing the memory of them to debilitate him." 2) Expect the best. Then you will not be filled with guilt when you receive it."

Judy Lesley says

How wonderful it is to return to an author I have enjoyed in the past and find that her work still has the high standards I had found in her previous books. Anne Perry has a long record of published novels but the quality has not diminished from my first experience with "The Cater Street Hangman" where she began the adventures featuring Thomas Pitt and Charlotte Ellison through to this latest book. Much time has passed over the course of these novels, but Perry has maintained a very realistic feeling of warmth, love, and regard between Pitt and Charlotte and the large group of friends they have made during the course of the investigations. This novel has Pitt calling on all of them in hopes of solving the questions of murder and disappearance which seem to evade his best investigative abilities.

Thomas Pitt is now the Commander of Special Branch investigators who keep a close watch on anything concerning the political welfare of the British government. When a lady's maid disappears it is indeed cause for the Special Branch to become involved because that maid worked in the household of Dudley Kynaston, a senior government official who is assigned to work with naval defenses. Kynaston is working on the new submarine systems which are expected to change the way war is carried out and his work is vitally important, especially for an island nation such as Britain. The body of the woman found close to the Kynaston home could possibly be the missing lady's maid, but how did she die and why was she disfigured after death?

Anne Perry was so successful in describing the biting cold and wet of this British winter that I kept making pots of hot tea to warm myself while I read. I appreciate the way she also puts so much thought into every character which appears in her novels and how they don't always act in prescribed ways, just in human ways. It makes them seem very much like real people. There are quite a few other Thomas and Charlotte Pitt novels and yet a reader new to the series could easily begin here and fully understand this story. I can't help but think that curiosity will then have them searching out previous novels because this book contains many references to cases which have been solved before. I found this novel to be completely satisfying and can definitely recommend it to anyone who enjoys a well written and well plotted novel augmented with a historical feel. I hope you will enjoy it as much as I did.

I received this arc through NetGalley. The opinions expressed are my own.

Ira says

Three more books before I reach the end of this series.

After that the main character switch to Daniel Pitt, Thomas and Charlotte's son. Currently he still only 13 years old boy:) His book won't publish until November though and he will be a solicitor. The book setting will be 10 years after the last Thomas and Charlotte's book.

I think that's what I love about this series, the characters development.

It was 17 years since Thomas and Charlotte met in book #1.

Their lives had never been easy especially with Thomas's common background.

There was ups and downs with Thomas's career but one thing which never change, they still very much in love probably more and the story is getting better and better too.

So now I just enjoy it and wrote the big review in the last book in the series!:)

Sophia says

With each new installment to the series, I am always impressed by how carefully and deftly the author pays attention to not only the plot and the setting (and boy does she do a fab job with those), but also the humanizing of her flawed characters. Some characters come through the fire stronger and others as disappointments, but always interesting. By the end of the story, each significant character has become a mystery that is plumbed and then solved too.

And on a lighter note, I am always happy to reunite with Pitt, Charlotte, their children, Minnie Mae, Great Aunt Vespasia, Emily and Jack, Pitt's lieutenant Stover and his former commander Narraway. As they all work together and separate to help Pitt solve his cases, there is a glimpse into their personal lives.

In this episode, Pitt and Special Branch are called in because a murder occurs that may or may not have something to do with the professional life a man working on special secret work for the Navy. At first glance, it seems just another sordid murder for the local police to handle, but then little things start to stack up and become significant so that Pitt is forced to return to the matter. He then falls under the pressure of the Prime Minister's office to get it handled when somehow the case ends up becoming a topic of discussion in the House.

Meanwhile, Charlotte discovers that something is wrong between Emily and Jack and Vespasia discovers that she is not too old to be surprised by other people and also by her own feelings.

In the end, the case is very tangled and the danger does have far-reaching repercussions. Pitt and everyone else must all work together and fit together the clues they find to come to a solution.

This particular mystery was one that I found fairly easy to solve. I had the whos, whys, hows, etc early on, but it didn't make the story any less engaging for me. Part of the reason I figured it out was some of the characters were less subtle and drew attention to their actions and part of it was because it wasn't as complex as some of the plots in the series. I wouldn't say this is a complaint, but more of an observation. I found the focus on the human motive and behavior interesting enough along with the side stories to keep me reading with enjoyment.

All in all, I enjoyed this story that combined Pitt doing his old policework with his new responsibility of special services. Those who enjoy historical mysteries with an emphasis on historical accuracy, cunning plotting and well-drawn characters should give these a look-see.

The FountainPenDiva, Old school geek chick and lover of teddy bears says

I have said (and I believe this) that Anne Perry must have lived in the Victorian era. After twenty-nine volumes of her Thomas and Charlotte Pitt mystery series, she continues to prove me right. No one quite captures this age of manners and sins like this author. Ever since *The Cater Street Hangman*, I have been an ardent fan of this series, especially of the female characters of Charlotte, her sister Emily, the brave Gracie, and of course Great Aunt Vespasia.

It's been quite awhile since I've returned to the middle-class home of Inspector (now the commander of Special Branch) Thomas Pitt and his indomitable wife (and often co-investigator) Charlotte on Keppel Street. But I always know whenever I return, there will always be a complex mystery to unravel featuring the *creme de la creme* of English society--most of whom have secrets and sins they are willing to do anything to hide.

Perry herself often reminds me of a fictional Victorian cross between Woodward and Bernstein and Hedda Hopper. There's a certain amount of glee in Thomas Pitt exposing the hypocrisy of the so-called 'Gilded Age', a time of great promise and societal upheaval. Pitt truly cares as much for justice for the powerless as he does in solving the mystery. He's far too honest and not very schooled in drawing room banter and machinations. What began as perhaps the murder of a lady's maid (a crime which would normally be under the purview of the police) has morphed into treason by a high-ranking member of society that may jeopardize the security of the seas.

Of course, I must spare a few words for another of my all-time favourite heroines, Vespasia Cumming-Gould. She's amazing, and unlike many authors who are youth-obsessed, Vespasia, who was considered one of the foremost beauties of the age, has a graceful maturity even Queen Victoria might have envied. She's still the mistress of the drawing room, of the intricate dance between manners and morality, able to dispense wisdom and advice easily over tea.

Barbara says

I received this an uncorrected proof from the publisher. As a devoted reader of both Anne Perry series, I was delighted to read her latest in the Pitt series, *"Death on Blackheath"*. Thomas Pitt, now in charge of Special Branch, has not lost his special way of maneuvering in a criminal investigation between the upstairs & downstairs of living in Victorian England. The story contains murder, espionage, revenge and treason and with the help of Stoker, his steadfast partner they begin to look into a case of possible blackmail against Dudley Kynaston, who may be privy to top secret naval warfare. There may be more to the case than initially appears, even though two dead bodies are found in the gravel pits near Kynaston's home. Stoker works overtime to get to the bottom of them, while Pitt gets a dressing down by his superior Edom Talbot. As is always the case, Pitt's wife Charlotte, her sister Emily, and the indomitable, Lady Vespasia are on hand to help find clue and aid Pitt with the investigation. In the end Pitt, must call upon his brother-in-law, Jack Radley to assist in fleshing out the culprit. Vespasia's old friends Victor Narraway & Mr. Carlisle appear as well, though I did find the doings of Carlisle a bit hard to swallow and can't imagine Pitt, would really let him get away with it. In the end there's a satisfying conclusion, love in the air and maybe wedding bells?

David Kinchen says

BOOK REVIEW: 'Death on Blackheath': Special Branch Commander Thomas Pitt Faces His Greatest Challenge

Readers of Anne Perry's Thomas and Charlotte Pitt novels have come to expect twists and turns and red herrings by the bushel full, but her newest entry, "Death on Blackheath" raises the bar in this respect. And that's a good thing, because much of the charm of these Victorian era novels is the clash of personalities in a world threatened by competing empires.

Pitt has been challenged before by people who don't believe he has the right credentials or the gravitas to head the country's Special Branch, the agency that was created to protect the country from foreign and domestic terrorism (it was originally called the Irish Special Branch).

He's the son of a gamekeeper, and he lacks the army or navy service that is deemed vital to men who head the agency. Through ability and success in solving crimes, he rose through the ranks of Scotland Yard and was named Special Branch commander, replacing Victor Narraway, who was removed from the post and elevated to the House of Lords in the wake of a corruption scandal. Pitt retains his ties to Narraway and in this novel, those connections prove to be invaluable.

At first there appears to be no need for Pitt to be involved in the disappearance of a maid in the household of Dudley Kynaston, except that Kynaston is a high-ranking scientist working on naval weapons, especially submarines. The time of the novel isn't specified, but I'm guessing it's 1898 or 1899, near the end of the reign of Queen Victoria, when Europe's empires were engaged in power struggles that in 1914 boiled over and started the Great War, later known as World War I.

There are signs of a bloody struggle outside the Kynaston house on Shooter's Hill in Blackheath, the area of southeast London adjacent to the Greenwich Observatory (for more on this scenic area of London: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blackheath>...) today better known as the start of the London Marathon.

What would normally be a case for Scotland Yard -- the blood, hair and shards of glass evident of a struggle outside the Kynaston home and the disappearance of the family's beautiful maid Kitty Ryder -- becomes a case for the Special Branch, with Pitt and his trusty right-hand man Davey Stoker becoming involved because of Kynaston's national security work.

When a mutilated woman's body is found in a gravel pit not far from Kynaston's house, speculation begins that the scientist might be involved in what might be the murder of the unidentified woman who may or may not be Kitty.

Questions are asked in the House of Commons and the pressure on Pitt becomes more intense as Home Secretary bureaucrat Edom Talbot, who becomes an instant foe of Pitt, pressures him to solve the case as quickly as possible. Following the advice of Narraway, Pitt manages to contain his anger at Talbot.

As evidence mounts that seemingly implicates Dudley Kynaston in an espionage conspiracy and murder, Pitt needs the help of everyone, including the dogged investigator Stoker; his wife and confidante Charlotte; his sister-in-law Emily Radley and her husband Jack, who is considering a post with Kynaston; and his key to

London's drawing room gossip, Lady Vespasia Cumming-Gould.

Even with all these people providing information, the case baffles Pitt. Only through the kind of meticulous investigation work that distinguished his career in Scotland Yard can Pitt hope to unravel the tangled web facing him. Even this might not be enough; sheer luck may play a role.

"Death on Blackheath" sets new high standards for a Thomas and Charlotte Pitt novel. It has a complex and rewarding plot and outstanding characterization and even involves important events in Sweden, making it a book that fans of Stieg Larsson's "Dragon Tattoo" trilogy will find interesting.

James says

It's always a risk coming into a series blank. Obviously Charlotte and Thomas Pitt have 28 previous novels of history, shared experience, and more importantly, detectiveness and crime-solving exploits. Consequently, you're always wary of that tightrope the author must walk of balancing assumptions about what the reader can figure out for themselves against trying to be careful not to annoy the loyal readership with endless recaps and explanatory reminiscing. But, with a title of *Death on Blackheath*, there was no way I couldn't jump in and see what this was all about: (view spoiler).

And Perry walks that tightrope well. I didn't feel that I was being spoonfed the history of my two protagonists, but there were enough hints that I was comfortable working out key parts. Obviously Charlotte and Thomas used to be a detective double-act – as well as being husband and wife – but with a recent promotion to commander of Special Branch Thomas seems to be feeling he has to make more of a go of it alone in this novel. Charlotte is very much relegated to a supporting – kitchen – role. Her previous usefulness only hinted at. Replacing Charlotte is a (again presumably) new sidekick: Stoker. We know he's new because we get a little too much introspection from the two men. Both of them have numerous internal monologues where they ruminate on what great judges of men they are and then using that skill to explain to us what's going on in the psyche of the other. It's a novel exposition technique, but it got tiring pretty quickly and felt false.

Charlotte and her sister both felt underutilised. There were hints that they were both better detectives (and characters) than they were allowed to be in this book. But, I'm putting this down to the new role for Thomas and the introduction of the new sidekick: Stoker. Hopefully their potential is explored more in either earlier, or later novels. Equally, *Blackheath* – the village or the heath – doesn't really get the billing I was hoping for. A body in Shooters Hill, a couple of bodies in some stone quarries around Blackheath, but nothing actually on Blackheath itself. The title starts to feel a little like an oversell.

My advance copy had some interesting turns of language. For example, just on the first page we find a body in the areaway of a Blackheath house. I didn't even know what an areaway was, and had to look it up. Turns out it's a sunken entrance to a basement or passageway, but it's North American English, so I would be surprised to find one referred to in a house in Shooters Hill. That said, I'm not sure what we would call them in England. Further down the same page is the first of many jarring uses of the word 'gray' instead of 'grey'. Our English narrator seems to have some sort of American English learnings. It's important to remember that this was an advanced copy, so an eagle-eyed editor may well have marked these already – or maybe it's only me that's irked by these little things...

But, my few niggles aside, it's a fun genre novel, and the characters are all well drawn and I would expect them to stand up to the kind of dragging out that a series like this demands. If you like these kind of

historical crime series, this certainly seems like a good one. And while I'm not going to rush out and pick up the rest of the series myself, I certainly wouldn't turn one away if it fell open in my lap. Recommended if you like this kind of thing...

Sally Smith says

The premise of this book was ridiculous. An MP has heard that a high-ranking Naval officer is selling secrets, so he grabs a couple of bodies from the morgue and plants them near the officer's house to raise suspicion? Why not just contact the head of the Special Branch and tell him what you have heard?

Tex says

There is no mistaking Anne Perry's style. She approaches the Victorian era as though it is current day and delivers daily living by deeply thinking adversaries. It's exactly the way I like to learn my history--by making it an integral part of a story. In this one, Pitt is confronted by the death of a ladies maid--or is it? Charlotte and her sister Emily play their parts in their limited roles as wives of men in different social strata. Great-aunt Vespasia is her commanding best (in a role that Dame Helen Mirren could knock out!).
