



The Heirs of Owain Glyndwr by Peter Murphy

The Heirs of Owain Glyndwr is based around a court case of a bomb plot. The plot was to plant a bomb in Caernarfon Castle during the Investiture of the Prince of Wales in 1969. It starts in the court room but then goes back to the beginning and when the plot was first started, so you know they were unsuccessful in their attempt from page 1 but how the story pans out is brilliantly written and has a wonderful twist thrown in.

You are introduced to the characters as they meet each other and you are instantly drawn in to their life and start to gain an idea of each of their personalities. But it is written in such a way that means you have to use your imagination a bit, like there is still a little mystery surrounding each one, which the writer is purposely keeping hidden. The author has written the characters in such a way that you can't help but like them. He explains their views on Wales and Welsh Nationalism in such a way that you can understand their concerns and their national pride. On the other hand it shows you just how easily national pride and xenophobia can quickly escalate into the realms of violence and bomb plots, which is frightening.

The way the author writes about the characters getting to the stage of starting to make a plot and how the plans for the building and planting of the bomb is described, pays a great deal of attention to detail. It is also written in such a way that allows the twist in the story to come as more of a shock because of it.

How the twist is revealed, how that affects the story is very interesting and is handled very carefully. It goes into great detailed and changes a lot about what you thought you knew and understood about the story and characters.

RealReaders

Totally independent book reviews

I thoroughly enjoyed the book. I found it engrossing and read it in one day. I couldn't wait to find out what happened and it certainly wasn't a disappointing ending. This was the first book I have read of the Ben Schroeder series of books, I will certainly be going back to read the others.

Jo Kirk

With a completely open mind, I started this book with no knowledge of the author or the previously featured character - lawyer Ben Shroeder. Also, Nationalist demonstrations and "troubles" in Wales in the sixties were also an unknown quantity which made it even more interesting.

Everything centres around Caradog, his sister Arianwen and friend Dafydd who want to "Free Wales" from the English. Whilst not wanting to involve Arianwen in their rather naive plot to bomb Caernarvon Castle at the time of the Prince of Wales's Investiture they were not very well organised. Things went wrong and the trio were arrested en route for the Castle. Although they had managed to enlist the help of Arianwen's husband Trevor he had disappeared that evening. The subsequent trials follow in great detail, bringing lawyer Ben Shroeder into the picture but it's a while before a sting in the tale brings events to a conclusion.

An informative, rather drawn out read but one that was quite enjoyable and gave a real insight into the Welsh attitudes towards their country and its language even today. I would recommend it.

Jan Kirk

I chose this book as it is set in North Wales where I used to live. And I found as I read it that that significantly biased my view of it. However my opinion did become a little more balanced as the book came to its conclusion.

The story is about a foiled plot to blow up Caernarfon Castle in 1969 during the Investiture of Prince Charles. I instantly fell in love with it as it referred to streets and buildings I knew, included some of the Welsh language and I could easily picture where it was all set. I understood the author's explanation of the Welsh people and their passion for their heritage as I'd experienced it myself. I was also amazed at his accuracy even down to the dialogue, how perfectly he captured the unique way the Welsh speak English. It did leave me wondering however that had I not had this

connection then would I have enjoyed the book so much. And sadly my conclusion was no.

Peter Murphy writes from the criminals' point of view, giving some background to the story and then later when the case gets to court he includes a lot of this history into the lawyers questioning and so it feels very repetitive and therefore a little boring. Very early on I got the feeling there was a shock coming and I actually predicted it. And so it felt like I was just waiting for the shock to be revealed and the court, so to speak to catch up to what I as a reader already knew. I also had to keep reminding myself that the book is set in 1969/70 as the dialogue and characters very much reflect this. I am sure court is not like this now! There was also an attempt at some romance, which personally I didn't connect with.

It began well and grabbed my attention very quickly. I felt that familiar fiction addiction earlier on than I normally would. I was similarly very happy with the way it ended and felt it finished on the right note in the right place with all my questions answered. It is part of a series of 3 other books that follow one of the main characters, a lawyer in the story and I would be interested to read the others in the series

I did enjoy the book and I am sure the Welsh people would approve of it too. It was interesting to read about their feelings towards the Investiture and other events from their perspective.

Lisa Cox

This is the fourth title in the ever more impressive legal series featuring barrister Ben Schroeder. This one is based on a real historical background: the investiture of Prince Charles as the Prince of Wales on 1 July 1969 at Caernarfon Castle.

On the eve of the investiture Arianwen Hughes is arrested for driving near the castle with a home-made bomb in the boot of her car. She also has her young son seat-belted in the back of the car. Also arrested are her brother Caradog Prys-Jones and their friend Dafydd Prosser (aka Dai Bach). Arianwen's husband Trevor Hughes would also have been arrested for being implicated in the plot to plant a home-made bomb in the castle with the intention of causing maximum injury and death on the morning of the investiture as a protest against what is seen as yet another insult to the Welsh nation by the English. The problem is that Trevor has disappeared without trace.

RealReaders

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What makes this novel so impressive is Peter Murphy's attention to detail and his authentic portrayal of the case in court. It is like reading a transcript of a real court case with the presentation of all the evidence and testimony and cross examination of all the witnesses. The result is a surprising gradual building up of tension and excitement as the case unfurls and the plot makes its progress to its denouement.

Ben Schroeder has built up a reputation for being a successful barrister of seemingly lost causes but defending Arianwen Hughes may prove to be his greatest challenge yet. Her case seems hopeless in the face of overwhelming evidence but she is adamant of her innocence and all knowledge of the terrorist plot. Obviously I cannot reveal any more for fear of spoiling things (even under cross examination!) but I can assure readers a thrilling ride along the way as you immerse yourself in an intricate but always accessible plot. You might also pick up the odd Welsh word or phrase (or two).

Highly recommended.

Ray Taylor

This novel tells the story of four Welsh nationalists, apparently responsible for plotting to detonate an explosive device during the Investiture of Prince Charles as Prince of Wales in 1969. The opening of the novel shows how the four friends (two of whom later marry and have a child) come together as a group and how three of them come to find themselves on trial in London on a charge of conspiring to cause explosions.

The majority of the novel is concerned with the trial itself, from its opening to the pronouncement of the verdicts. If, like me, you find the minutiae of legal proceedings utterly fascinating, you will love this book for that reason. The account of the trial is minutely detailed and provides a deep insight into the workings of the criminal justice system circa 1970 and the characters who work within it.

The reader is so drawn into the trial as it unfolds that one almost forgets that there is a very important unanswered question hanging over the proceedings. That question is: why are there only three defendants on trial? Where is the fourth member of the group? The answer provides a marvellous twist at the end of the story. No spoilers here, but anyone finding the legal labyrinth of the trial rather heavy going would be well advised to keep going. The trial section of the novel may

not be the fastest-paced writing ever, but it sets the stage beautifully for a great conclusion.

The novel also provides a thorough exploration of nationalism and the relationship between England and its immediate neighbours. I think these issues are more usually considered in terms of Ireland or Scotland, but this novel examines them from the Welsh perspective. It raises the question of England's involvement (or interference) in Welsh culture, language, land ownership and politics. Whatever your views on Welsh nationalism, these issues are worth exploring, especially in light of the devolution movements and referenda of recent years.

The whole is a cleverly plotted, well-written novel, and I shall certainly be seeking out more of Peter Murphy's work. Definitely recommended.

Katheryn Thomas

I was drawn into this book and really enjoyed thinking about Wales and the people of Wales in a different light. I felt sympathy towards their gentle Nationalism. The characters in this book were well developed and I felt personally involved, I did not see the twist coming. I would whole heartedly recommend this book, I felt I learnt about a time in our history which I had not considered before and was sad to leave the characters behind. I will read more books from this author. This is part of a series however I have not read any of the others and I still really enjoyed this book - it is a standalone success.

Karen

There is a slow build up in this novel that at the end had me gripped. Because of it being set in 1969 at the Investiture of the new Prince of Wales there is an element of the historical but recent enough to feel old fashioned.

Arianwen Hughes is arrested with a bomb in the boot of her car on the eve of the investiture. All is not what it seems and the only person who can be called in her defense her husband Trevor has disappeared without trace.

Now the real meat of the novel is the court case. Will this be Ben Schroeder's greatest challenge yet? Also on trail are Arianwen's brother Caradog and friend Dafydd the evidence against them is damning.

RealReaders

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This was my first read by Peter Murphy but I am now a fan. This novel is a must read for anyone who relishes a good courtroom drama. This story also has the advantage of being a mystery suspense with a wicked twist in the tale that I didn't see coming.

An excellent read.

Jane Gilman

Arianwen Hughes, her brother Caradog her husband Trevor and a friend Dafydd are implicated in the plot to place a bomb in Caernafon Castle. Ben Schroeder is representing Arianwen trying to get to the truth of the case. Her husband Trevor has vanished & with him the key to her defence... This is told in both present time during the trial in 1970 and flashbacks to the events leading up to the incident in July 1969.

A well researched and thought out book. If you like court room based novels then this is an excellent read. You feel sympathetic towards the characters, especially Arianwen who appears to have been drawn into the case against her will.

I have never read any by this author before but understand that this is just the latest of his novels featuring Bed Schroeder and the cases he is involved in, so if you enjoy this book then look for his other novels as well.

Debbie Patrick

I found this a wonderful, gripping, courtroom drama. A timely tale, given the current world situation of radicalised cultural/religious nationalists feeling the need to bomb targets, it was believable. I found the characters well drawn and true to life - some I sympathised with, some I despised, but all believable and true. There was sufficient intrigue that I wanted to read the next chapter, and the next, to find out where the plot twists were taking me. I won't reveal any twists etc, but buy this book - it's an easy and enjoyable read.

Cadizzy
