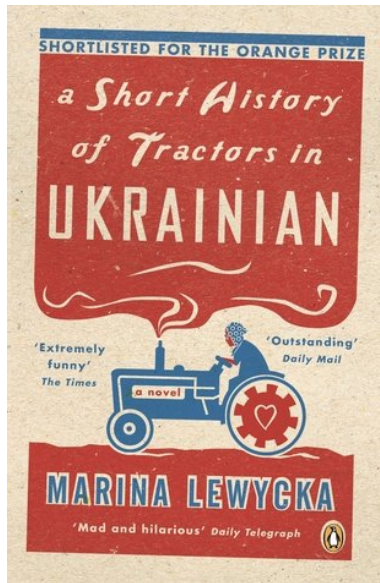


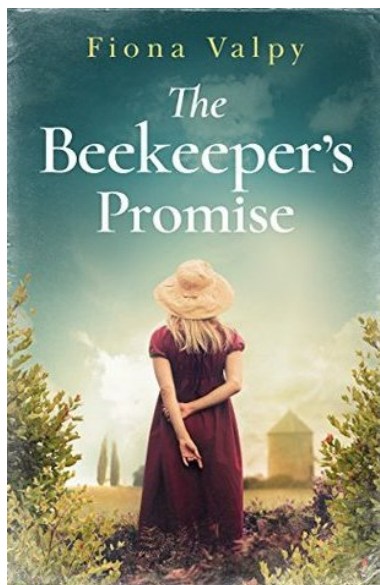
Book Reviews from The Readers

Belonging to **The Readers** group gives us an opportunity to read up to 12 books a year, most of which we would never otherwise have picked up. It allows us to get out of our genre rut and explore books modern and old fashioned which someone else has enjoyed. Some we like and others we don't and very few meet a unanimous verdict of approval. (Though there are exceptions such as Jane Austen's "Persuasion", which it seems everyone enjoys). The books usually generate all kinds of thought threads from the members, and lively discussions take place, where modern politics and trends are woven with personal recollections to illustrate the parts of the books that have stimulated the conversationalist.



A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian by Marina Lewycka, a wise, tender, and humorous story capturing the idiosyncrasies of family life. The story concerns an 84-year-old, recently widowed Ukrainian man and his intention to marry a divorced Ukrainian would-be immigrant who is nearly 50 years younger than himself. His two daughters must set aside their long-time feud to try to thwart him. The novel is a fun read, a family saga that shines with lively dialogue and witty comments on the reality of the lives of the central characters and reflects on aging and the needs and vulnerabilities of seniors and the challenges these present for the next generation to handle.

IP.

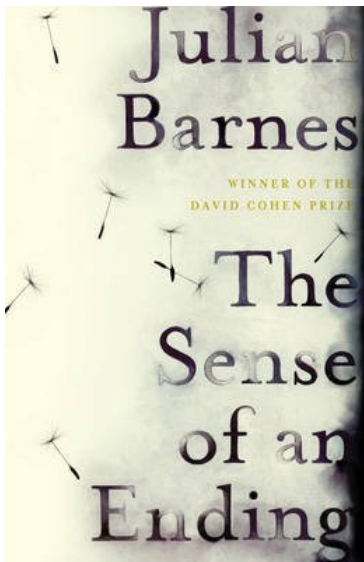


The Beekeeper's Promise by Fiona Valpy

This story is about resilience in times of hardship and difficulty, a relevant theme perhaps for us in today's strange conditions. It is the story of two very different women living at different times and how they overcome adversity. One is Abi who has been trapped in an abusive marriage but who in 2017 takes a summer job at a chateau in rural France and gradually regains her identity and sense of self as she learns of the story of Eliane, a young French woman who looked after the beehives at the same Chateau when war was declared in 1939. As France was invaded in 1940, her village, Coulliac, fell into the occupied zone, separated from Vichy France only by the river running beside the mill where she lived with her family but causing many difficulties and painful separation from her fiance trapped on the other side. The villagers have to cope with anger, fear, anxiety and

uncertainty, always in dread of what the occupying forces will do next, as well as serious food shortages 'dwindling supplies of the daily rations of bread, queuing at the butcher's shop to pick up a meagre square of horsemeat and queuing at the checkpoints where previously they had been able to go freely about their everyday business. This rather puts our social isolation and shopping difficulties into perspective. The book is an easy read with some exciting and some gruesome parts but overall I found it uplifting and encouraging.

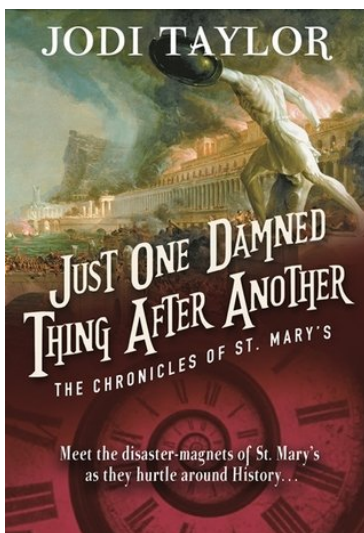
BW



The Sense of an Ending by Julian Barnes

This is one of my favourite books. I very much like Julian Barnes as a writer, his prose is so precise. He does not use twelve words when one is enough. As I was at University in the 1960s I can relate to the characters their attitudes and the way they behave. The film of the book is also extremely good.

KWE

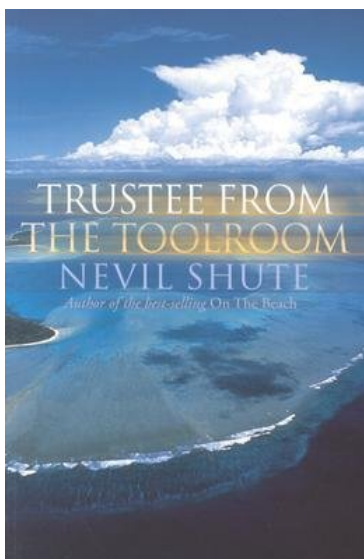


Just One Damned Thing After Another, by Jodi Taylor.

This is one for our chairman, Karen, as I know she likes Science fiction. Not that this is noticeably SF. The book swashbuckles its way gloriously across all the genres I can think of. It is a romance, a thriller, fantasy, SF; historical; humorous and a weepy. There is even a touch of sex romp! Above all, it is such fun – just what we need at the moment. Madeleine Maxwell goes for a job interview at St. Mary's Historical Institute. Only when she has been offered, and accepted, the post of historian, does she find that her job is to “investigate major historical events in contemporary time.” This is not to be referred to as “Time Travel!” The historians are there to observe and record, and never, under any circumstances, to corrupt their investigations by intervening.

Well developed characters, great plotting and a breakneck pace, this is a series for everyone. Just be warned – once you start you have to finish it, and there are 11 books, of which this is the first.

MM



Trustee from the Toolroom by Nevil Shute centres on a man with very little ambition, who is only truly happy when working in his workshop, making tiny models, which he describes in a magazine the “Miniature Mechanic”. His wife Katie works as a shop assistant. Keith and Katie, who are childless, agree be the guardian of their niece after her parents are killed. The story describes how an ordinary man can become a hero while pursuing a particular goal with single-minded doggedness. An excellent tale that also reveals through the language of the author the misogynistic and (by modern standards) non-politically correct attitudes prevailing at the time of writing.

IP