

NOTES OF A MEETING OF CANTERBURY ROTARY BOOK CLUB
held on 6th October 2016 at the home of Colin and Jennifer

1. Present: Viv, Gill, Jennifer, Colin, Tony, Caroline, Alan, Brian

2. Apologies: Georges, Peter H (who had read the book!), Dee

3. Book: "The Girl on the train" by Paula Hawkins. This is the author's first thriller and is written through the voices of 3 women, with time flashing forward and back as they take up their parts of the story. Essentially it is the story of Rachel, getting middle aged, who is divorced after valiant attempts to have a baby. Her ex-husband bought her out of the house which she loved, and has moved Anna, his second wife, into it, and they have a baby. The house backs onto the railway line along which Rachel travels everyday to work, and, in the same street is a similar house, occupied by a young couple about whom Rachel fantasises. Gradually it emerges that Rachel has turned to drink and lost her job - but still she travels on the train. One day she sees something odd at the home of the young couple, and subsequently it transpires that the wife - Megan, the 3rd narrator, is missing. The story proceeds with suspicion about responsibility for Megan's disappearance falling successively on different men until the exciting denouement when Rachel's ex-husband, Tom, is revealed for what he really is. Caroline and Georges found the book gripping at first, but found the middle a bit flat - and Caroline did not sympathise much with the drink problem. Viv enjoyed it, also found the middle a bit flat, thought it clever in the way suspicion moved around so that he didn't guess until the end who the villain was. At the same time that he read it, the trial of Helen was in full swing on the Archers, and Tom's manipulation of his wives has resonances in the Archers' tale. Gill wasn't able to put it down and didn't find it too long. Colin had been given it for Xmas, read it rapidly at first, and found its switching in time rather confusing. However, he had re-read it, finding it intriguing in the way tension was maintained until the end. He was puzzled by its being a best seller, and it was not a classic - but a good holiday read. He didn't want to see the film - too much blood on the floor. Alan thought it a good psychological drama, dealing very well with the alcoholism and nymphomania of Rachel. It was superbly constructed, showing the frustrations of the 30 odd year old. He particularly was intrigued by the way both Rachel and Anna lied to the police about Tom's (well deserved) demise - and the ingenious use of a corkscrew in achieving it. Tony was confused by the 3 narrators - in effect 3 witnesses - and missed the signals about Tom's guilt until the very end. The clue to Rachel's continuing to ride the train after she had been sacked was provided by Caroline, who opined that she had had a season ticket that she had not cashed in. All in all, a clever book and a good read.

4. Other reads: Viv - 3 thrillers - Camilla Ludos - "Ice Princess" - Swedish detective tale, Val McDermott "The Mermaid song" - seriously dark, Gerard Piretski "Critical Mass" - enjoyable - like Philip Marlow. Jennifer had been so impressed by the film "Swallows and Amazons" that she had read "Peter Duck", "We didn't mean to go to sea", "Being Six" and "S & A", all by Arthur Ransome. (There is a very interesting boating biography of Ransome by Roger Whardale - "The Nancy Blackett"). Colin - started to read "swallows and Amazons" also. We digressed to discuss Ransome and his time in Russia, where some say he was employed as a spy, and Colin was put in mind that one of the characters in "S & A" was always lying in wait. Tony had been on a long river cruise, taking lots of books. He had consumed "Green Rod" by Anne Enright - very enjoyable; "The House at the edge of the World" - Julian Rochester, which starts promisingly with a man being pushed off a cliff, "Number 11" by Jonathan Coe and a re-read - "Animal Farm" by George Orwell. Tony said he had not previously realised the animals were all based on real historical figures, including Stalin and, finally, "Where my heart used to beat" by Sebastian Faulks - not good. Alan had not read anything new as he had been very busy. He had passed straight from real child books straight to Biggles without passing through Ransome, but Diana used to live in Aylesford where Ransome also lived at one time. Brian - Francis Spufford "Golden Hill" New York in 1746 and a mysterious traveller from London with a bill of exchange for £1,000 - a really fast moving yarn with a very surprising ending. Jonathan Coe "What a carve up" - a very long literary equivalent of "Kind Hearts and Coronets" - but not nearly as funny, a now very nearly completed "Silk Roads" by Peter Francopan - well worth the effort to read for a novel view of history - and just started "Wish Lanterns" by Alec Ash - stories of 6 young people growing upon

China, the first generation not knowing the Cultural Revolution, but part of the one baby policy. Looks interesting.

5 Things done: Caroline - saw "The Deep Blue sea" (Rattigan) in London - excellent production with Helen Mcrory, Georgia O'Keefe exhibition at Tate Modern - lots of pics and photos taken by her boyfriend - and a good free show on "Consciousness" at the Wellcome Institute (Euston Road nearly opposite Euston station) - their shows worth looking out for. She had also been to Germany - interesting visit to Nuremberg including the court where the Nazi trials took place (informative commentary in English) and adventurous train ride to Bayreuth (reached eventually). Viv had been to the V & A for a most interesting exhibition on the engineer Ove Aarup (who worked with Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier) (while Pauline went to the underwear exhibition there). Gill - lots unremembered, but visit to the Jewish Cemetery in Canterbury, a day at Kew Gardens, 2 visits to "Bridget Jones' baby" had luckily been archived before she fell into a very deep hole on her bicycle, having to be rescued by 3 strong young men. Colin had been to the Turner at Margate to see the "Circle" show (ditto several others). He had particularly enjoyed the make believe goat on a stepladder, having persuaded its minder to set it off trundling slowly around its circular track, and a turntable covered in sand which was endlessly raked and flattened. Had also seen a transmission of "Deep Blue Sea". Alan - really good concert at Collier F hall by "Aurora" group of young musicians, a great flute and harp concert at St Peters by Antara Duo - Thomas Hancox and Rachel Wick - apparently attended by the entire Greville Hancox family. Tony - going to see the Woody Allan film "Cafe Society" at Gulbenkian and also "Miss Saigon". He had also been watching "National Treasure" starring ? Coltrane and Julie Walters on chan 4 - excellent - catch upon iplayer. Alan - concert with the son of Dave Brubeck and another with John Harler at the CF. A new statue of Chaucer is to be unveiled just off Best Lane (behind Patisserie Valerie) at 12.0 noon on 12/10/16. He had been to several shows at Marlowe— "Romeo and Juliet" - beautiful, "Shawsbrook Redemption" - very difficult to follow, "Relatively Speaking" - Alan Ayckburn very funny. Went to Downing College, Cambridge - Ai Wei Wei - fake trees that appealed much more than when he last saw them, concert given by Rachel Podgier, violin, at St Paul's Without and Sandy Toksteth talking to Gavin Essler.

6. For the diary : - 12th Oct 12.0 noon- statue unveiling - see above .

21 Oct 1.10pm St Gregory's - John Paul Eykns in concert with violinist - master class 2.30 = 4.30pm

7. DONM Thursday 24th November 2016 7.30pm chez Colin and Jennifer. Book - "Slowly down the Ganges" - Eric Newby - and if you've the inclination, have a go at "Wish Lanterns" - Alec Ash

LASTLY, many thanks to Colin and Jennifer for their hospitality - and showing us their wonderful inter-active TV