



The Windsor Knot

Sharyn McCrumb

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"Delicious. Delightful. A Royal entertainment."

Carolyn G. Hart

If forensic anthropologist and amateur sleuth Elizabeth MacPherson is to have tea with the Queen of England, she has to get married first. And in the space of five weeks, she plans to do just that. When an old neighbor receives word that her husband has died again, it's up to Elizabeth to determine just whose ashes the double widow has been cursing at all these years....

From Mystery Writers of America award winner Sharyn McCrumb, author of MacPHERSON'S LAMENT, and IF I'D KILLED HIM WHEN I MET HIM...

The Windsor Knot Details

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From Reader Review The Windsor Knot for online ebook

Heather says

2.5 Stars. The best way I can describe this book is "fluffy" and it's a quick read.

I don't know how many years it's been since I read the last book in this series and as a result I don't remember what happened in it. This book was originally published in 1990 so the series has been around for awhile!

I think I may have enjoyed this book more when I was younger. I didn't dislike it but it didn't really wow me either. Like I said, it's a quick, fluffy read. One thing I did really like about the book, however, is it was written in a time when writers really researched their subject matter and that definitely shone through in this book, but at this stage in my life also became a bit tedious as the Royal Family is not a subject with which I am obsessed.

The main character in this series, Elizabeth MacPherson, however, is obsessed with the Royal Family. So when her fiance, marine biologist Cameron, calls her from visiting his native Scotland to drop the bomb he's been invited to the Royal Garden Party as an honored guest for saving some seals, but she can't come because only spouses are allowed, she comes up with the obvious solution: move the wedding up by about a year and honeymoon in Scotland. Throwing together a formal wedding in THREE weeks shouldn't be a problem for Elizabeth's southern belle socialite aunt. (Nor should Cameron letting the Queen's people know he needs an invite for his bride-to-be).

The focus of this book was Elizabeth's wedding planning. (Who opens gifts and writes "thank you" notes BEFORE the wedding? Is that really a thing?) As I remember this series to be a mystery series (it even says "Mystery, #5" in the title), I kept wondering where the mystery was in this. It was introduced over halfway through the book when some random widow of some random dude who died 5 years ago got a call from the state of California to tell her he had died. Again - and for real this time. So whose ashes were on the mantle? Enter forensic anthropologist Elizabeth who spends about 5 minutes studying the ashes from the original death and declares it's not one, but several people who live in the urn.

This did make for an interesting concept: is crematorium fraud really a crime? (Or at least was it in rural Georgia in 1990, where it wasn't yet a common practice and the local sheriff's office didn't even have its own fax machine?). But when the crematorium owner is found dead, there's no doubt that was a crime! But amateur sleuth Elizabeth stays true to her vow not to get involved so she can focus on her wedding, leading her cousin, Geoffery, to kindly solve the murder for the cops. Given the small cast of extraneous characters, that ended up being pretty easy to figure out.

There were some parts of this book that made it feel really dated (Princess Diana still being alive was a big one as was Fergie and Prince Andrew still being married), but there were some other parts that also showed that the more things change, the more they stay the same - Elizabeth's other cousin Charlie, responding to an ad in the newspaper made me think of today's world of online dating, for example.

Sharyn McCrumb is one of my favorite authors so I'll definitely read the remaining four books in this series. This didn't have the humor of some of her other earlier books and it wasn't bad either but parts of it did feel like drivel after awhile.

Deirdre says

I found this a bit funnier than the others, but all of these books will have you laughing at some point. I am binge-reading this series and enjoying every minute.

Donna Mckeller says

This one kept me guessing until the end. The irony is I was as interested in the Gnome mystery as in the key story. You know it's a good find with the sub sub plot is as mysterious as the main story.

Marty says

A nice, short (200+ pgs) mystery with little blood – not even a murder until almost the end. This is the 7th or 8th book in this Elizabeth MacPherson series because when it opens, Elizabeth is about to get married. Elizabeth, an American, is studying to get her PhD in Forensic Anthropology, and is engaged to marry Scottish Dr. Cameron Dawson, a marine biologist who saved some seals from dying and has thus been invited to the Queen's Royal Garden Party in Edinburgh, Scotland. Currently he is home in Scotland on break from his teaching position in Virginia. The problem is that his fiancé Elizabeth is enraptured with the British Monarchy.... And the only way she could accompany him to the Garden party is if they are married. As you might guess, the wedding which had been planned to be in a year, now is to take place in 3 weeks. Can Elizabeth's Aunt Augusta pull everything together? Will there be complications? (of course, this is a mystery novel).... A fun quick read.

Cherie Bush says

Funny, charming and entertaining.

Charlene says

Unusual crime:

If the husband was just killed in a car accident in California, then whose ashes have been sitting on the mantle for five years, supposedly of the same man killed in a car accident in California five years ago?

Will the wedding ever take place? Will they get to see the Queen for tea at Holyrood?

karen whitney says

Good book

This is an interesting group of characters.

I wasn't able to get the 3rd book on kindle so didn't read it and skipped to book 4. I think that I lost some of the details but still was able to follow along.

Sarah says

I can't believe this was an Edgar Award winner, but I might even have given this book 4 stars if it weren't for one major plothole: Charles Chandler tries to get married before Elizabeth to get the inheritance from their great-aunt, except that she is not Elizabeth's great-aunt. Elizabeth's mother Margaret is sister to Aunt Amanda, and Amanda's husband Dr. Chandler is the son of "Captain Grandfather" Chandler, who is the brother of the dead great-aunt. If anything, the old lady is Elizabeth's great-aunt-in-law, but is Amanda had married any other man, there would be no relationship. Unless, of course, Amanda and her husband are first cousins, which seems to be legal in Georgia, according to <http://www.cousincouples.com/?page=st...>, but that's too icky to think about. I don't know how the editors missed that, but it is an easy-to-fix problem that could have been fixed by changing the grandfather's last name to whatever Amanda and Margaret's maiden name is, and he would be an official grandfather to all the cousins involved.

Once again the mystery is solved by Geoffrey, and wrapped up really fast at the end, and Elizabeth is indifferent to the whole thing, having practically no involvement after she answers the question of what's inside the urn.

***Update 4/7/12 - I have finally started reading the first book in this series, "Sick of Shadows," which says that Amanda and her husband Robert are indeed second cousins. It would have been nice if that was mentioned again in this book to clarify for those who haven't read the whole series in order, or forgot, since it is only mentioned pretty briefly.

Suzanna says

Elizabeth gets married in this book from the series, and while her fiance still feels a bit flat and underdeveloped to me, she was more like herself in this book and the general feel of the novel was light and fun. My favorite of Elizabeth's cousins, Geoffrey, played a larger role than he usually does, and that was a bonus. (He reminds me of Val Kilmer's Doc Holliday in Tombstone.)

I liked this book better than Paying the Piper, but it still won't be one of my faves by this author. It was fun, and made some interesting connections in the storyline. There was a lot of trivia about the British Royals in it, which is not terribly interesting to me, but others might enjoy that aspect more.

I did find it a bit disconcerting when some new characters entered the novel after more than 100 pages in, and at first there was no rhyme or reason to the introduction. Eventually they were tied to the main storyline and they were essential to the plot, but it felt odd that they weren't a part of things sooner.

Overall, an entertaining read.

Alycia says

A little disappointed. Thought it would be more about the mystery. However, the majority of the book revolved around the wedding, the mystery didn't even come into play until almost 2/3 of the way through the book. It ended abruptly, didn't give much clues as to a mystery. The book basically said "here is a dead body, well look here is the murderer" the end. The writing was good, I was interested, but it was under the category mystery and was more of a silly wedding novel.

Elizabeth Kennedy says

Fun, short book in the Elizabeth MacPherson series depicting her crazy relatives and a garden gnome preparing for Elizabeth and Cameron's wedding. There is also the mystery of how someone died twice and who out of a pair of sisters is actually dead. Fun distraction, recommended.

Jerry B says

Wedding Plan Machinations Dominate Very Light Mystery

It's amazing how reminiscent is this book of Margaret Maron's Deborah Knott series, in which Judge Knott usually presides over a light mystery as an excuse for 250 pages of southern folksy chit chat. In "Knot", it's the same thing with the leading lady, Elizabeth MacPherson. Liz is a forensic pathologist, a profession apparently in vogue given the Kathy Reichs series of books and TV show "Bones". However, MacPherson is really little more than an amateur sleuth whose plying of her trade in this book lasts about five minutes while she informs an enquiring mind that an urn full of ashes is a mix of human and animal bone fragments that appears to be the leftovers from a crematorium. The only excuse for a mystery is to be found in why another character was misled into thinking her husband was dead, only to have him show up at a morgue in California some five years later (again!). It turns out a frustrated travel agent turned crook was providing false disappearance proof (ashes) for people who wanted to get lost from their current lives. Meanwhile, two-thirds of the book is about MacPherson's pending marriage on five weeks notice (a year early) in order to attend a royal tea in England.

While the writing style was charming enough, even frequently witty, the almost total lack of a plot, the complete superficiality of the characters, and the "who cares" reaction all that engendered did little to endear either the author or her work, assuming this one is representative, to this reader. The "Cat Who" books by comparison are probably more entertaining and just as meaty, read that "fluffy!" While we won't chalk this up as a complete waste of time, it's really a stretch to consider this a mystery. We'd say this might be a good choice for those that find Janet Evanovich just a little too intellectual!!!

aPriL does feral sometimes says

Elizabeth MacPherson is a feather-brained shallow woman who nonetheless becomes peripherally involved in nearby murders. She is a teacher and is studying forensic anthropology for her graduate degree. However, to her dead bodies are similar to rocks; her real passions are her Scottish boyfriend, Cameron Dawson, and the English Royal family. When he calls from his family home in Scotland to Elizabeth in Virginia to tell her of an invitation from the Queen to attend a garden tea party at the Palace of Holyroodhouse, she is thrilled. However, she is not invited since only spouses can attend. Elizabeth and Cameron are only engaged, but not due to marry for at least a year! Elizabeth is not going to have this - so she immediately sets everything in motion for a wedding in three weeks. Only one person can accomplish this. Aunt Amanda Chandler, who we met in book one of the Elizabeth mystery series, is called into action. Since she is 100% southern belle, this turns out to be as easy as managing her mansion. The Dawsons will fly over from Scotland, the wedding will occur, then the couple will return to Scotland for the party with the Queen.

Unexpectedly, a local woman, Clarine Mason, finds out from a phone call that her husband died in a car accident in California. The problem is he *already* died in a car accident in California five years previously! She has his cremated remains sitting in front of her. Opening the lid of the vase, she determines that there are definitely bones in there. Who died?

As before, Geoffrey Chandler, Elizabeth's cousin, becomes curious about the situation. He conducts an investigation while Elizabeth and Amanda turn the house upside down preparing for the wedding. The police also explore various leads after confirming that this time Mason did die. Obviously a fraud has been committed and perhaps a murder as well. The next steps are to search newspaper records for obituaries and a visit to the local crematorium. But instead of answers, they find a recently created corpse on the floor of the office.

I've actually put more emphasis in my review on the murder than what is present in the novel. These Elizabeth MacPherson books (now Dawson) are not really cozy MYSTERIES, but are **COZY** mysteries. The stories are full of humor and situational comedy skits, with a lot of fun deriving from eccentric relatives and small-town animosities. Elizabeth, an incredibly regular and normal, if shallow, person with a touch of Southern Belle, doesn't really solve anything except in handling family and friends and her own domestic or social disruptions. This series is literally the most lightweight of summer, or family holiday, reads I've ever come across, not counting Romances, where some parts of these seem to tread. The Virginia sunlight is blindingly pure of shadows. The writing skill of the author is good and there is no harm in spending a few hours with Elizabeth and her friends. These early books have varied in style and temperament while the author develops the character (In my opinion, I've never had a series character shift quite so much though, as well as the tone of the writing, but it all appears to be settling into a typical cozy genre, with a small dollop of murder in a separate dish).

Kate says

"...Sharyn McCrumb has now written the novel that Elizabeth MacPherson-watcher have been waiting for: Elizabeth is getting married. How and why is typically outrageous, in a mystery of Southern manners and small-town mayhem that is laced with the mordant humor that has become McCrumb's singular trademark.

"Racing to complete her doctoral research in her specialty of forensic anthropology, Elizabeth MacPherson's

summer is totally booked -- until her Scottish fiance, Cameron Dawson, calls from across the seas with a once-in-a-lifetime surprise. A local hero and marine biologist, Cameron has been invited to tea with her Majesty the Queen (along with 8,000 close personal subjects of the crown!)

"However, there is one caveat: no friends or fiances may accompany the invited, only spouses. Elated, Elizabeth knows how to solve *that* small problem -- she and Cameron will simply get married immediately. Royalty enthusiast that she is, planning a large formal wedding in five weeks is the *lease* she can do for the chance to hobnob with the *other* Elizabeth.

Meanwhile, in between Elizabeth's fittings and flowers, local widow Clarine Mason receive a strange phone call. Her dear husband Emmet has died, she is told, on a highway in San Diego. How sad. Strange, too, thinks Mrs. Mason, as her errant Emmet died five years before. And she's got an urn filled with ashes to prove it.

"So when the sheriff arrives with an ornate vase, Elizabeth wishes she could thank him for the wedding present. Instead, she puts her expertise to work in a study of Emmet's ashes, which turn out not to be Emmet at all. Just who those ashes once were is what Elizabeth must discover -- if tartan bridesmaids' dresses, scones with tea, and all the accoutrements necessary for the joining of two noble clans don't bury her first."
~~front & back flaps

I cannae fathom out what Cameron stays with that woman, much less marries her. When she's being the level-headed forensic anthropologist she's fine, normal. But she lurches off into giddy schoolgirl mode so often that it's just maddening! Imagine insisting on pushing the wedding ahead a year, and demanding that it be formal as well!

Aside from all the wedding hoopla (was this a mystery or a romance? A mysterious romance? A romantic mystery?), it's a charming little mystery. Emmet J. Mason, dead twice over in an auto accident in California. Very clever plot. And then there's the traveling garden gnome ...

This book feels like a bridging argument to me. The author needed to get Elizabeth over to Scotland, and this was a dandy way to do it. I would have preferred a mystery in Virginia, and then the wedding, but that's only me, being the curmudgeon again.

Katherine Clark says

This is 3 1/2. I love this series, and this is a fun book. It is the one that made me want to go back and revisit even earlier ones, and maybe a few I didn't get to? And it reinforced that for me the best character is Geoffrey Chandler. I think the reason I didn't care much for Paying the Piper was his absence. Anyway, I love these books and will be ordering the entire series.
