



Information Received

E.R. Punshon

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Description

In his London townhouse, city magnate Sir Christopher Clarke is found lying murdered. At the other end of the house his safe hangs open and rifled, and earlier in the day he had visited his solicitors in order to make a drastic change in his will. Later it is discovered that there has been fraud connected with the dead man, and this is but one of the many complications with which Superintendent Mitchell is faced. Fortunately he has the assistance of young Constable Owen, a talented young Oxford graduate who, finding all other careers closed to him by the 'economic blizzard' of the early thirties, has joined the London Police force.

Information Received is the first of E.R. Punshon's acclaimed Bobby Owen mysteries, first published in 1933 and the start of a series which eventually spanned thirty-five novels.

This edition features a new introduction by crime fiction historian Curtis Evans.

Information Received Details

Date : Published June 1st 2015 by Dean Street Press (first published 1933)

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Author : E.R. Punshon

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C.J. says

The opening sentence of "Information Received" is a whole 10-line paragraph. Each chapter has a title, with a pretty lines-&-leaves archway above it. Welcome back to literature before Hemingway & Hurston, when English (like Greek) comprised separate written & spoken forms. In its prose, in its lofty country-house & Lincoln's Inn settings, in the distinguished personages who inhabit them, & even in the feudal friction between ranks in the police force, "Information Received" is as vivid a showcase for the British class system as "Downton Abbey."

Unwrapping the layers of E. R. Punshon's prose to find his plot (and quite an intricate and fast-moving plot it is) can feel like forking through the filo in a spanakopita. What 21st-century publisher could resist red-penciling this first sentence of Chapter VIII, The Heiress?:

"Not without a certain emotion, for it seemed to them both it might be the solution of the mystery that was approaching them. the veteran Superintendent, the youthful constable, watched as Peter came quickly across the hall."

As with a good spanakopita, though, flavor triumphs over form. This is, after all, 1934. Though the characters are all white & mostly male, they're distinctive & interesting, & there's plenty of dialogue -- informal spoken English -- to keep them (& the reader) zipping along. Halfway through the book we even have a sort of car chase, at the breathtaking speed of 40 mph. From the first hint of mystery on p. 1, when Sir Charles Clarke's lawyer baffles him by delivering a stranger's gift of 2 theatre tickets, we careen through a suspenseful classic-English landscape of fraud & embezzlement, romance & betrayal, burglary & murder.

I enjoyed "Information Received" enough to devour it in one sitting. I'm not sure it would have been as much fun to step in & out of Punshon's world & re-acclimate all over again. And although I'm curious to see what Constable Bobby Owen & Superintendent Mitchell get up to next, I doubt I'll seek out the rest of the series: as with Downton Abbey & Harry Potter, one thrilling episode is probably enough.

Karen says

I really love the era of classic British mysteries and I had never heard of E.R. Punshon before so this was a real treat. Interesting characters and a very complex puzzle to solve. The ending was a disappointment, but otherwise, I enjoyed reading this and look forward to reading more from Punshon. Bobby Owen has the makings of a great detective!

Pamela says

This Golden Age mystery is the first in a long series featuring Bobby Owen. Owen has joined the police as a last resort, having gained only a pass degree from Oxford, and finding no other suitable jobs open to him. He happens to be on the spot when Sir Christopher Clarke is found shot dead in his billiard room, and comes to the attention of Superintendent Mitchell who is called to investigate. Clarke's safe has also been broken into,

and some diamonds and important documents are missing. Hoping for a possible move to CID, Owen throws himself into assisting Mitchell and following up his own hunches as well.

This mystery contains lots of the elements you would expect to find in an example of the genre - family secrets, mysterious strangers, sinister lawyer - along with a twisting plot covering robbery and murder. The budding professional partnership between the garrulous Superintendent Mitchell and the eager young recruit Bobby Owen is charming and amusing.

The plot tension builds to an exciting confrontation, but the method the author then chooses to reveal the whole solution is a bit long winded and flat (although the solution itself is satisfying enough). Still, it was no worse than some of the 'detective in the drawing room' summing up scenes used by other GA authors, and overall didn't spoil my enjoyment. I would just have preferred the drama of the confrontation to be carried on a bit further.

I'll definitely be reading on to find out where Owen and Mitchell go next, and if all the books in the series are as good as this one, there's a lot of fun ahead!

Wend says

4.5* A new author to me, enjoyed more than I was expecting.

Lorena says

Learning that this author was highly recommended by Dorothy L. Sayers gave me the nudge to give this series a try. There are some very promising elements in this opening book, and I'm interested to give some of the subsequent titles a try.

S Dizzy says

An intriguing start to what I hope is an interesting series. I liked the main characters and the mystery was engaging.

Leslie says

3.5*

Rebecca Norton says

Enjoyable old mystery

I love the old mysteries. No vulgar words. Not explicit sex. Just a good old fashioned mystery. That's what this book is.

Eric says

Please start reading this wonderfully well-written series. After tackling a few randomly, I am now making my way through them in order. They can be read and enjoyed as stand-alone but then you miss the development of Bobby as a detective and later his relationship with Olive. I cannot understand why these so literate works of detection have fallen out of favour and bless Dean Street Press for reviving them with the help of Curtis Evans.

Leila Mota says

Punshon is another author I've recently found out when I decided to follow the thread left by the British Library Crime Classics. It was the best idea to reissue "forgotten" books/authors. I knew and liked Agatha Christie, but I had no idea there were many other good/interesting authors of detective fiction. I consider myself hooked. Some authors are better than others, and E. R. Punshon is my current favorite. I'll keep following Bobby Owen.

Susan says

Published in 1933, this is the first in the series, featuring Constable Bobby Owen. Bobby Owen is a young man who emerged from Oxford in the depression of the early thirties and, looking for a career, has joined the police force. Disappointingly, so far, he has been mainly helping old ladies cross the road, or giving directions. However, he finds himself on the spot when Sir Christopher Clarke is found murdered in his London home - while his safe has been robbed. Just that day, Sir Christopher had visited his lawyers to collect some paper for a Trust he was responsible for, while planning to change his will. Now he lies dead and there are plenty of motives, and suspects, in this interesting mystery.

Owen may not have the best degree and be just a lowly constable, but he is keen and, before long, is very involved in the investigation, being run by Superintendent Mitchell. Indeed, so often is Owen on the spot, that Mitchell drily bets his colleagues that the young constable will be on the scene, at one point in the story. I liked both Owen and Mitchell and the author sets a good scene, with lots of potential for his main character to progress. Indeed, Dorothy L. Sayers herself gave this a great review, and who am I to argue with the creator of the great Lord Peter Wimsey. This is a series I look forward to continuing with anticipation.

Kathy says

I love this Golden Age mysteries. I had to buy this one but some of the later ones are free.

Sandy says

Excellent start to a long series.

Chris Burland says

I enjoyed this book until the murder reveal (i.e. the letter) which I thought was too convoluted and used for padding the novel's length.

Andrea says

First in a series with an Oxford educated police officer (starting here as a constable). Bobby Owens is more hardworking young man than brilliant Oxford don, but he's got enough personality to at least make you want him to succeed.

There's two intersecting crimes in the story that seem fairly obvious on their own, but certainly confuse issues together. Will check out further entries in series.
