



Netherwood

Jane Sanderson

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Two remarkably different worlds—one of wealth and privilege, the other of poverty and desperation—are about to collide in one shattering moment in this mesmerizing tale of high drama, forbidden love, and families fighting to hold on to what they have

Upstairs: Lord Netherwood, a coal baron, earns his considerable wealth from the three mines he owns. Supplying a bustling industrial empire with the highest-quality coal keeps his coffers filled—money he needs to run his splendid estate, Netherwood Hall, and to dress his wife and daughters in the latest fashions. And keeping his heir, the charming but feckless Tobias, out of trouble, doesn't come cheap.

Downstairs: Eve Williams, the wife of one of Lord Netherwood's most stalwart employees, cleverly manages her family's well-being on the low wages her hardworking husband earns in the mines. But when her ordered life amid the terraced rows of miners' houses is brought crashing down by the twin arrivals of tragedy and charity, Eve must look to her own self-sufficiency and talent to provide for her three young children.

And soon the divide between "upstairs" and "downstairs" is about to close . . .and neither world will ever be the same.

Netherwood Details

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Author : Jane Sanderson

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From Reader Review Netherwood for online ebook

Nightwitch says

[To be honest it read as somewhat disappointing when a love interest for Eve was introduced late in the novel. (hide spoiler)]

Maurita Kling says

Kind of disappointed in this book. It rambled on quite a bit in the beginning, then sped to an abrupt end! I also found the plot a little hard to believe- Everything went So Well for Eve!! And there wasn't much detail about Upstairs Relationships as I had hoped, either. The Recipes, however, are quite intriguing- but difficult!

Lucinda says

An exquisite historical novel that is compelling and beautifully written, oozing originality and sophistication.

Resembling 'Upstairs Downstairs' and 'Downton Abbey' this lush, cleverly crafted tale of ambition, greed and survival is simply stunning. Delicately interwoven and multi-layered, one glimpses life within a country estate through the eyes of those above stairs and below. A truly outstanding debut novel, which is greatly impacting, I am quite astonished by this wonderfully insightful historical masterpiece. Well researched and acutely realistic, this atmospheric action-packed story is vibrant, beguiling and highly readable.

Eve Williams is about to discover
how the other half
really lives...

Amid a distinctive era fueled by change, one plunges headfirst into the world of Netherwood Hall and its occupant's lives. Similarly to 'Downton Abbey' the Lords and Ladies and their position within society is exposed, as too are those servants and employees who being the 'cog in the machine' keep everything ticking over. The cost of maintaining a grand estate like Netherwood is not cheap, and so the coal mining industry plays a significant role in its financial stability...at the peak of the industrial movement. When the occupants collide in an almighty episode, it is the traditions of an ancient house that keeps everyone in check – including the stalwart and single-minded Eve.

Dramatic and exciting, this colorful tale of hardships and tribulations, orderliness and stability within an ever changing world is delightful. This certainly comes close to a true 'classic' within its genre, and as a huge fan of the television drama series, by Julian Fellows, Downton Abbey I was enchanted by this book. You get to sample the delights of this fine house and those memorable characters, each with their individual story to tell. I am most impressed by Jane Sanderson who captures every single detail with such sharpness, and sets the scene so perfectly that you can clearly visualize the clothes, the lavish furniture and even picture the gleaming silver.

*Extras : Recipes for an authentic taste of Yorkshire, Bibliography, reading group notes, Q&A with author

and a taster of the sequel to Netherwood!!

Lara Maynard says

Thankfully there are recipes for pork pie, Eve's pudding, drop scones and Yorkshire puddings and a few other dishes at the end of this book because all the cooking and food talk in this novel made me want to prepare them and try them out.

I also enjoyed the bits of Edwardian mining community life, and generally enjoyed the book enough that I'd read its sequel, Ravenscliffe.

Katri says

"North and South" meets "Downton Abbey" is what this book is like. I liked it quite a bit. Not quite 4 stars, but definitely more than just 3. It was well written. But there didn't seem to be any real climax or conclusion to the book. It's obvious there is a sequel, but I still feel like there should have been more of an ending that it had, but also more in the middle to warrant an ending. Plus there were a few pages of detailed sexual encounters that didn't need as much description as were given. Just a warning to any wanting to read it.

Elizabeth (Miss Eliza) says

*Special Content only on my blog, Strange and Random Happenstance during Downton Denial (February 2014)

Eve Williams and her husband Arthur live a hard but satisfying life. When Eve was growing up in Grangely never did she think that she would end up in Netherwood, married to a good man who worked hard in Lord Netherwood's mines, with three beautiful children, where a good meal on the table and a clean house would be her pride and joy. Though her life is about to be tested in many ways. The miners in Grangely have been trying to improve their conditions by unionizing and instead have been given the boot. Eve feels it's her duty to help those who haven't been given the opportunities she has. Eve and Arthur agree to take in a refuge, Anna, and her baby. Anna's husband has recently died and Anna is far from home, having fled disapproving parents in Eastern Europe. When Eve's world comes crashing down with the cave-in that kills Arthur, it is Anna who gives her the impetus to go on.

Anna tells Eve that she must do something. Eve must find a way to make money and save her family from penury, because there is no one else to do it. Buoyed by her family and friends, Eve opens up a pie shop in her front parlor, catering to simple Yorkshire fare. Drop scones, Yorkshire pudding, raised pork pies, the food of the common man cooked uncommonly well. And Anna and Eve do uncommonly well. They have a steady income and they are financially secure. But Anna, she has ambitions, she sees a bigger shop, a tea room, she has the entrepreneur in her bones and without Anna, Eve wouldn't be grabbing at life with both hands. Soon Eve's cooking comes to the attention of the great house and Lord Netherwood asks for Eve to cook for his son's coming of age party. This one job is the beginning of a life Eve could never have imagined. Cooking for the aristocracy and even the King! She might have lost everything when she lost

Arthur, but if Arthur could only see her now, she hopes he'd be proud.

While, I won't disagree with the books claim to be "Perfect for fans of *Downton Abbey*," I am after all a fan of *Downton* and thought this book was perfect, but I will also say that it is a little misleading. This is like a grittier Yorkshire version of *Upstairs, Downstairs*, where the "downstairs" encompasses not just those physically in the grand estate, but those under the protection and sufferance of the grand family in the village, especially those working for the family under dangerous conditions mining their coal seam. It took me awhile to get into *Netherwood* because of my erroneous expectations, but once I started to expand my view beyond the grand house I kept expecting to take center stage I realized how much more interesting a book about all these interconnected lives surrounding the house was. This gulf between the haves and the have-nots is more prominent because of the lower classes being not just downstairs, but down the mines. It expanded the traditional narrative of this type of manor house book and gave me a broader and more interesting canvas than I would have expected. From labor disputes to unions to downstairs skirmishes, this book was willing to not shy away from unsavory topics, much like *Upstairs, Downstairs* did in it's time with addressing real issues while also being entertainment, unlike a show like *Downton*, which only seems to cover issues like suffrage because it's a "period detail" versus an important issue.

There was hardly a character in this book I disliked, even the villains are perfectly villainous and therefore beyond censure. Even the young lordling who will one day be Lord Netherwood was lovable in his own drunken misspent youthful way. While Eve is the cooking virtuoso, I think Anna is the real genius, she sees the opportunities that others don't. You'd expect her to be this meek little widow caring for a newborn, instead she is like a general on a battlefield issuing commands, more pies here, tea room here, expand there, move move move. Each and every character is so vibrant and alive they become your friends and you don't want to leave them, luckily for me there are already two more books in the series. All my fictional friends in this book lead me to worry about them. I fretted about the dynamic between the family and the workers, because you see that there isn't any malice between the two, just misunderstandings. The uniqueness of the characters and their complicated lives made this book just stand out amongst others of its ilk as the pinnacle to which you must strive. In layman's terms, read this book now!

Though be warned, you will be hungry. And not just a little peckish, oh dear no, this book will make you so freakin' hungry you'll be wondering if you have a chance to find a place with pies nearby. Oddly enough I do have a sweet and savory pie shop less than a block away, but it is of dubious repute, so hungry I remained. You know, in some books, the talent or special quality that the hero or heroine has is so ill defined that you just aren't able to connect. That was so not the case here. Jane Sanderson described the cooking and Eve's abilities so well you just wanted to go to her house and eat. Plus, with all the food, this book certainly qualifies as a comfort read. There is something about comfort food and the safety of a kitchen that makes you feel safe and loved. Shows like *Pushing Daisies* or *The Duchess of Duke Street* knew this, as do Mrs. Bridges and Mrs. Patmore, by welcoming us into their kitchens, they welcome us into their hearts and they into ours. But the one thing in the entire book that entertained me more than anything else? The lovely idea of "Duchess sized servings!" The idea of basic pies and food but made as finger food so that it wouldn't be off-putting to those of delicate sensibilities and palettes. Too perfect, much like everything in this book. I gotta dash now, *Ravenscliffe* is calling me!

Kayla Beck says

When I was a teenager, I stumbled across Marion Chesney's *Poor Relations* series, and I devoured them. I've gone back to reread them several times over the years, and I've never been able to find a series that gave

me quite the same enjoyment. That is, until I found *Netherwood* by Jane Sanderson. It does not have the same lightness and swoony romance as the aforementioned Victorian-based novels, but it was an absolute pleasure to read.

Sometimes, I like to escape into the lives of ordinary people in history, and *Netherwood* provides me with just that in Eve Williams. She's the wife of a miner, mother of three, and nothing really extraordinary, except for her looks, as she comes from an even humbler background as what she married into. Though she is the heroine of the book, the story is told in an omniscient way where we get to see what is going on with other characters who interact with Eve at Netherwood. (And there are some wonderful characters - Anna being one of my favorites.) We are shown the mines, the goings-on in Lord Neverwood's estate, and what Eve's children get up to when she's not around. I think it successfully fleshes out all of the characters, as well as give us, the readers, the opportunity to luxuriate (as much as one can) in the Edwardian coal mining community.

Traveling to England really isn't in my budget right now, and I'm wary of time machines, so books like *Netherwood* are some of my favorite ways to escape to another place. After reading so much crisis and chaos in my beloved dystopian, fantasy, and science fiction novels, visiting the everyday normality of another place and time is such a welcome change of pace. I highly recommend giving it a try.

To satisfy FTC guidelines, I am disclosing that I received a copy of the novel from the publisher through TLC Book Tours in exchange for an unbiased review. It has in no way affected the outcome. All expressed opinions are awesome, honest, and courtesy of me.

QNPoohBear says

Eve Williams is content in her role as wife of one of Netherwood's colliers and mother to three growing children. She keeps her house neat and clean and her husband (and sometimes neighbors) well fed. Arthur Williams too is content; Lord Netherwood is a benevolent employer and Arthur has no reason to get involved in this union business his friend Amos Sykes is always going on about. Eve, however, is sympathetic to the striking miners at Grangely, another mine where she grew up. She knows about the despair and lack of hope in Grangely and wants to do something to help. First she helps move peoples' belongings and then the Methodist minister comes calling and asks the Williams family to put up a young widow and her baby. Eve knows she should help but where in the world will they put two more people and what about the extra work? Arthur readily agrees, earning the enmity of his son Seth. By the time the woman, Anna Rabinovich, moves in, Eve needs the friendship of the other woman more than ever. Through tragedy, the two women bond and Anna's ambition and keen business sense help propel Eve to heights she never dared dream. Soon she's embraced by the Earl and his family (though his heir's interest is in bedding her) and she's on a dizzying track to notoriety which will change her life forever. Meanwhile, Lord and Lady Netherwood have drifted apart. She has her gardens and social ambitions while he has his hounds and estate matters. The Earl and his Countess can agree on one thing: they have a problem with their children. Eldest daughter Henrietta aka Henry, is unmarried after 4 seasons, has a good head on her shoulders and plenty of compassion. If she were a boy, she would make an excellent Earl. Sadly, she's female and expected to look pretty and find a suitable husband. Henry's younger brother Toby is a ne'er to well who enjoys drinking beer at the local public house and consorting with the dairy maid and other willing women. Younger son Dickie shows up to luncheon in his tweeds and prefers horses to duty (like Henry) and baby Isabella, age 11, is a pert mix who is adored and spoiled by her father. When their world collides with Eve's, it may bring about the biggest changes in their lives they've seen in years.

This book was very different from what I was expecting. From the completely wrong description on the back of the book, I expected Downton Abbey fan fiction. The little bits of upstairs life is similar but the downstairs parts, which make up the bulk of the novel, are not at all similar. I really liked the setting of the Yorkshire coal mining town. It's obvious the author knew what she was writing about and did her research. The descriptions are so vivid, I can easily see it. I was fascinated by the culture of the town and how the people interacted with Lord Netherwood and how they felt. The story is more about labor history than anything else. I liked how the author had her characters represent both sides of the union issue. The descriptions of Yorkshire food are also incredible and there are recipes included. I gather that Eve's recipes are comfort food and the equivalent of serving pigs in a blanket or mac n' cheese. I really liked the business angle of the story too. I did not like the author's writing style. The third person head-jumping between many characters was jarring and made me feel detached from the action. Also, there are parts when i felt like the I was missing something because the action starts in the middle and then goes back to tell how the character got there. I couldn't really feel for Eve or anyone else because the writing style didn't pull me in. There are also two sex scenes I found vulgar and unnecessary. They are brief so don't let them stop you from reading the book.

Anna is my favorite character. She's amusing and ambitious. She provides the push Eve needs to maximize her potential. Her story is fascinating and she's a great character. I liked her better than Eve. Eve is a little too timid at first and then in the London section, which I hated, she does things that are so unlike her, it's hard to believe her personality changes that much in such a short time. I didn't feel her romance at all and didn't think it was necessary. It's introduced too late in the story to be interesting and Eve doesn't act like herself. I also found it strange that she is SO beautiful that every man who sees her instantly wants to sleep with her. That's just bizarre and detracts from the story. Henry is my other favorite character and I feel bad for her that she has such a keen mind but can't use it. She cares about the estate and the people and can't ever be Earl. My least favorite character was Toby. He's a stereotype of the typical young man of the period. I found him disgusting and in need of a good slap.

I give this book 3.75 stars. It should have been streamlined to focus on Eve and her coming into her own. Lose the romance and lose the upstairs plot and this would be a beautiful book.

Content warning:

Some language and violence

Two sex scenes that are vulgar and unnecessary. They are brief so skip them and don't let them stop you from reading the book.

Melanie says

This book takes place in the early 1900's in a Yorkshire mining village called Netherwood. It's the story of the people of the town and their interactions with each other. Teddy Hoyland is the current earl and his wife is Clarissa. Teddy inherited the mines so is the town's main employer. He is well liked and respected. Clarissa would like to associate with people in her own class rather than mingling with the villagers. They have three children, Tobias (Toby), Henrietta (Henry) and Isabella.

The story centers around Eve Williams. She is married to Arthur, a coal miner, and they have three children, Seth, Eliza and Ellen. She works hard to keep their home clean and her family happy. One day, though, tragedy strikes and everything changes. She meets Anna during this time and is surprised at how much she begins to lean on her. She also finds strength she didn't know she had and turns out to be quite the

businesswoman.

I enjoyed this book! It was nice to read about a small village and the interactions and relationships that develop among the villagers. It's been compared to Downton Abbey but I don't really see that aspect. There's a reference to the Hoyland family feeling comfortable in the kitchen at Netherwood Hall but Eve didn't work there and the focus is on the town rather than on the relationships between the inhabitants of Netherwood Hall. It started slow for me as the stage was set and the characters introduced but once it started picking up, it was hard to put down. Their accents were kind of hard to read at times, too.

There are friendships formed but there are also enemies that are made. There are villagers I liked and ones that I didn't like. Eve's character shows a lot of growth and determination to keep going in the face of tragedy. She's likable and easily adapts to the situations she's thrown into. Her son, Seth, becomes difficult to deal with and she struggles with how to help him.

We do also get to know the Hoyland family. Toby can be a jerk and Henrietta is sweet. Henrietta wants to be involved more in her father's business, but being a female, that is frowned on. I enjoyed spending time in Netherwood and look forward to learning more about all of them!

Content: Two short sex scenes; mild swearing, including two uses of the "f" word.

Mel's Shelves

Jennifer Black says

This was a disappointing read. I think I saw it on a list of books to read if you like Downton Abbey. The blurb on the back promised tragedy and romance, though there was little of either. It was set in turn-of-the-century Yorkshire England in a mining town. It started slowly, with a lot of description of mining life, and an introduction of an enormous cast of characters. Eve was obviously the main character, and interesting enough to keep me going. Predictably, her husband dies in a mining accident and she goes on to open a cooking business to support her family. That was the first third of the book. Since the book cover promised romance, I assumed that Eve would be finding someone new, but I couldn't figure out from the characters who it might be. The characters went on with their daily lives without much of anything in the way of plot development. I began to wonder what the point of the book was. When Part Three of the book started, it became clear. This was a soap opera whose aim was to be a series. The author decided this would be a great time to introduce profanity and sex. Granted, there wasn't a lot and it was tamer than some things I've read, but it was completely unnecessary. Her editor must have decided that she needed to do something to "spice things up" since there otherwise wasn't a point to reading it.

There was plenty of melodrama, complete with a dastardly villain plotting against our heroine by the end of the book. There are a few compelling characters, including Eve, and her family. The rich family at Netherwood and many of the neighborhood cast are merely clichéd caricatures, though. There was nothing compelling enough to entice me to read the rest of the series.

Kristin Gleeson says

I read a review praising this book and for the section I did read I found it uninspiring and even laboured at

times. This novel is described as an 'upstairs downstairs' type set in the early 19th century in an industrial town and the characters are as wooden as the shoes that they wear on their feet.

Jen Pattison says

It was an ok read, I liked the Yorkshire setting as it's somewhere I know very well, though it was fitting that it is promoted as 'perfect for fans of Downton Abbey' as it makes the two glaring mistakes that Julian Fellowes makes that anyone interested in social history would be aware of. Firstly, the overly kind attitudes towards the working classes and the generosity to Eve; having met quite a few aristos, I can't believe that it could ever happen. Secondly, the big estates never employed local people as they did not want local people to have gossip about what went on in their stately homes.

Rachel says

For the first 40 pages or so, I thought oh dear it's a bit Catherine Cookson, but it began to win me over as the pages went by. I had a grandmother who was a mining widow like Eve who also sold her baking to make ends meet, later opening a small general store from her front room. So I warmed to the character of Eve and her struggles. I confess to a little irritation with Eve's beauty - why must heroines always be so gorgeous that every male character is alive with desire for them?

The plot lines of the final few chapters were good but a little sudden and I would have preferred the story to unfold more gradually. The ending came almost before I was ready for it, but maybe that's a good thing.

Overall, Netherwood is an undemanding, comforting, enjoyable read. Curl up in a comfy chair with a cup of cocoa and enjoy.

Anna says

Abandoned around page 80 - one giant yawn.

Glenys says

Well it's only a potboiler really but a very good one, like soaking in a hot bath or eating a box of chocolates. Downton Abbey with different characters, couldn't put it down.

Elizabeth says

Netherwood will appeal to anyone who enjoys fat, juicy sagas rich in period detail and peopled by strong, memorable characters from all social ranks of life. It's warm hearted but never mawkish, and some of the descriptions will make your mouth water I promise!

It's set in a Yorkshire mining village in the Edwardian period where lord Hoyland of Netherwood is the mine owner. The heroine, Eve Williams is a miner's wife thrown on potentially hard times by a tragedy, but with help from Russian Anna, (I loved her!), she embarks on a career to support herself and her family - which involves dealing with the Hoylands and venturing far from her comfort zone.

I guess it's on the same page as Barbara Taylor Bradford's A Woman of Substance but perhaps not quite as epic. Although it stands alone, it is set up for further episodes, and I am looking forward to the next outing.

5 stars at the high end of that mark.

Disclosure. I was given a copy by my publisher because I was on tour with Jane Sanderson and it rather helps if you've read your fellow author's novel! However, I only endorse books that I have really enjoyed (and usually have bought myself). You will NEVER EVER find me puffing books and giving quotes just to oblige publishers. This is about integrity to the reader and how I feel myself as a reader.

NB. I shall be buying a brand new copy of this to give my mum at Christmas because I know she will love it.

Tracy Terry says

A debut novel that was based on the author's own background, my favourite read of 2012 so far, I thought this a very honest novel..... the miners 'story' perhaps ringing more true to my ears than Eve's story.

Well plotted and with a tremendous wealth of characters, it dealt with some of the important social and political aspects of the time - not least of which being the divide between rich and poor and the fight for recognition by the trade unions.

Wonderfully descriptive, the author does indeed paint a graphic picture of life for both for the gentry as well as the 'common man' - her mention of the formal luncheon given for heir to the estate, Toby's (Tobias) coming of age will long remain in my memory as to how the various classes were kept at a distance

The squirearchy and gentleman farmers, for example, must not be expected to dine and drink with the professional classes, who in turn must be separate from the upper echelons of the estate workers who themselves might take offence at being seated among the miners.

Brilliantly written, you can feel the passion the author has for her characters, I'm so looking forward to the next book to see how they develop.

Bookworm says

Not a worthy successor to 'Downton Abbey' I'm always wary of books/movies/shows that get the comparison of "if you like X then you'll love Y!". It's not that the new product is necessarily bad in quality but sometimes I just end up building expectations that I really shouldn't. Even if years have passed I'll still find myself disappointed because the comparisons shouldn't be made.

And so it was here. The ratings aren't terrible but definitely not necessarily in the realm of telling me that it's

GOOD (and even high ratings or prize nominations/awards are necessarily an indicator of quality either). But the premise sounded something like DA and after researching various works I thought it might be something that would pass as a book version of the show. Not so much.

There is an upstairs/downstairs divide and the book mostly focuses on Eve, the wife of the estate's employees. She and her family suffer a terrible tragedy and Eve must find her way in this world without support to provide for both her family and a charity case. Meanwhile we also get the shenanigans of the upstairs family of Lord Netherwood, a coal baron. His son, Tobias, is a reckless young man who is clearly not ready to undertake further responsibilities of the house and the "upstairs" plots follows the family dynamics, Toby's exploits and the interactions between the upstairs/downstairs divide.

Other reviews say that it's very cookie-cutter and I think that's very apt. A lot of the characters are clichéd (woman must manage a household during a time when women usually had very limited prospects without a husband, the oldest son is a rake, the daughter is a spunk who is ahead of her time, etc.). I also think the book is just too long with too much padding. With my own personal bias I also hoped the book would be more equal or focus more on the "upstairs" family because I just found their stories more interesting. Eve was sympathetic but I wouldn't have chosen to give so much weight of the book's storyline to her.

There's perhaps an interesting tale here, but with the one dimensional, predictable characters with a boring story that could have been lifted from DA, it takes a talented writer to make it interesting. This wasn't. This wasn't going to be some grand sprawling epic but it does feel like an attempt to cash in on the DA hype without the clever writing or dialogue that kept the show going (not to mention these characters also don't have the benefit of spectacular actors to give them life).

I ended up buying the sequel at the same time because they were bargain books but in retrospect I should have stuck to my usual wait and see. I'll skim through the sequel to see how it ends but I'd say skip this one. Library if you're interested but I wouldn't rush out to read it.

Tizire says

No dudo en recomendar Netherwood a los amantes de los buenos dramas de época: me ha parecido una novela entretenida y bien contada, con una protagonista de bandera y algunos secundarios inolvidables, de esos que merecen un libro sólo para ellos.

¡Puedes leer mi opinión completa en la reseña que he hecho en mi blog!

<http://eladofriodemialmohada.blogspot...>

P.D.R. Lindsay says

This novel is one of the reasons why I am uneasy about the current traditional publishing world. 'Netherwood' is a pleasant read, a good story, with some engaging characters, but it feels strongly that the novel is meticulously planned to a recipe, a recipe for a commercial success. Indeed the second novel in the series, 'Ravenscliffe' is already written and due out in September. What worries me is the way the novel is

so balanced, that's what makes me suspicious. 'Upstairs Downstairs' and 'Downton Abbey' have been carefully analysed and their successful elements used as a plot outline. I wondered if the author's agent had been making suggestions, because the opening section of the novel, about a working class mining family and their community, is very well done. This part is based on the author's own family's experiences. It's when we get to Lord Hoyland and his family that things seem a little clichéd, all the more so because of the vividness of the working class characters. I could 'hear' the agent telling the writer that she had a good story about the miners but should add the Edwardian upper class to her novel, to make it bigger and more like 'Upstairs Downstairs' as that would help sell the book. I was also uneasy about the way the novel is put together. It's written in sections as though the author and editors were thinking of ease of conversion into a TV or film script. The novel feels contrived, a deliberate concoction, and although all fiction is a concoction, it shouldn't feel like it as you read it.

The plot of 'Netherwood' is centred around Eve Williams. Eve is a working class girl who has worked very hard to leave her poverty ridden childhood behind. She marries Arthur, a good honest man, a miner who works in one of Lord Hoyland's pits and has a nice house to go with his job. She keeps a clean house, educates her children and when tragedy strikes she must find a way to pay the rent and feed the family. Now the book's blurb goes on to say that Eve is 'about to discover just how the other half really live...by the twin arrivals of tragedy and charity...Eve must look to her own self-sufficiency, and talent, to provide for her three young children. And it's then that 'upstairs' and 'downstairs' collide in truly dramatic fashion...' Tosh, absolute tosh Collide indeed. It's blurbs like these which so irritate me, and any sensible reader. Stick to the plot, blurb writers please.

Eve and Arthur had promised to house a young widow, Russian émigré Anna Rabinovich, and her daughter for a short time, and it is Anna who points out Eve's marketable skill is her talent as a baker. Eve and Anna begin a business which brings Eve into contact with Lord Hoyland and the wider world. Her baking skills take her from her own kitchen to being the owner of Eve's Puddings and Pies in Lord Hoyland's restored Mill house. By the end of the novel she has his support and patronage.

Whilst I enjoyed following Eve's adventures I was less interested in those of Lord Hoyland's family. They were rather predictable, the snobbish and extravagant unloving wife, philandering son and heir, good but plain older daughter, spoilt brat of a younger daughter, pleasant middle son. However the author is not interested in writing about class warfare. The Hoylands are described with the same interest and detail as Eve and her family. And, although there is some mention of the rising Coal Miners Union and the dreadful life of a coal miner it's certainly not a focus point of the novel.

Judging by the reviews most people have enjoyed 'Netherwood' and are looking forward to reading more about the characters in the second book in the series, 'Ravenscliffe'. If you enjoy gently paced sagas and like 'Downton Abbey' you will enjoy this novel. For me, I need more bite, social comment and less contrived planning.
