



## The Somme Stations

*Andrew Martin*

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The Somme Stations plunges into the horrors of World War One trench combat. Stringer and his unit must undertake dangerous nocturnal assignments: driving the trains taking munitions to the front. Death is everywhere, as the trains travel through blasted surrealistic landscapes, and a single-minded military policeman continues to investigate a killing that occurred before the departure for France.

## **The Somme Stations Details**

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Author : Andrew Martin

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## From Reader Review The Somme Stations for online ebook

### Ipswichblade says

Another great story in the series

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### Debbie Spooner says

Im re-writing this review as it looks like previous did not save however I do know that I loved this book. I know several people have written that they did not like "The Somme Stations" but I loved every sentence of this book. Many parts are true because there was a Battle on The Somme and the soldiers did help in building the railways to use in the First World War.

I am a very sensitive person and like to know what happened to our men in this awful time.

The main character is Jim, a railway man, and is subscripted to fight in the War and he has to find who has killed one of the other soldiers before something nasty happens.

I liked the author's voice used in this novel and as this is the last one in the series I have marked them to be read at a later date. I have found that this novel could be read without reading the other ones.

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### Richard says

#### Not a bad story

Was not predictable and kept you reading waiting to see what would happen. I have the Stringer stories and would recommend them

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### Dirck de Lint says

Rather in the same vein as the initial book in the Jim Stringer series, we find the protagonist less of a detective than a tangential witness to events. This is not meant as a dig against the book; it's jolly good, with excellent characters and an unusual perspective on the happenings of WWI. I actually think it's my favourite of the bunch so far, and I'm quite looking forward to reading the next.

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### Chris Gillies says

An excellent book, a story about the horror of industrialised warfare, of the pals battalions that went to war and were butchered in the Somme. It reminded me in many ways of "A Covenant With Death" by John Harris, the casually brutal way in which death swoops in and is gone in a flash, leaving maiming and death

behind it. Mixed in that is a detective story that, in typical Stringer fashion, only gives you the vital clues just before the killer is revealed. Possibly the best of the Stringer books, although not the strongest of detective storylines in the books so far, but the atmosphere and depth of story is enthralling.

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### **Bernadette Robinson says**

This was a recent read for my local Library Reading Group and was met with not much enthusiasm from the members at all. Most found it boring with all the train information that it contained and some even gave up on it.

I gave this a 5/10. It wasn't a book that I would have readily picked up off the shelf myself. I like a good crime story and I don't mind the odd war themed book, but the railway side of this one didn't really do it for me at all.

This is the seventh book in a series that feature Jim Stringer a railway detective. It can be read as a standalone story though. I found the characters were well developed and felt that Andrew Martin must have quite a vast knowledge about railways, as the detail at times was very in depth. I did learn from this story the role that trains played in the First World War of which I knew very little. I also at one point thought that the word materiel had been spelt wrongly and that it should have been material instead. I was going to Google it when I got the chance but one of my fellow reading group members explained that it wasn't and what it actually referred to ~ The word materiel means the equipment and supplies in military or commercial supply-chain management. So, a forklift truck (which is equipment used in the supply chain) and a can of petrol (which is one of the supplies) would both be classified as materiel. In other words, materiel is the things a military force or a business needs to do its job (definition taken from <http://www.grammar-monster.com/easily...>).

The other thing that actually struck me, was the graphic description following a wartime incident where one of the characters had been hit and ended up being killed and dismembered. The following thought popped into Jim Stringer's head 'The leg was much lighter than I would have thought.' It really brought it home to me the horrors that the men fighting must have had to go through.

With regards to the crime that is committed and the fact that Jim Stringer has a hand in investigating, this seemed to be a supplementary story and not the main theme of the book to me. It was as if it was tagged on, with the book being in the Jim Stringer series. As I felt more emphasis was given to the railway and war than the actual crime.

If you're into First World War stories mashed with a lot of railway influences with a crime thrown in then this is the book for you.

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### **Cliff says**

The last time I met Jim Stringer it was 1911 and one of those glorious pre World War 1 summers when he had taken his wife on a short holiday to a village on the Thirsk to Malton railway (she would have rather gone to Scarborough!). Time has moved on in this book. As it opens, it is 1916 and Jim is in hospital recovering from an injury and about to be charged with murder. The story then reverts to 1914 and the

outbreak of war. Jim with a motley crowd of railwaymen from York joins a battalion raised from employees of the North Eastern Railway. We follow their progress until the summer of 1916 and the Battle of the Somme. What I particularly liked was the matter of fact way this is dealt with. They are a bunch of blokes doing a very difficult job, but there are absolutely no mock heroics. Death, even in a most ghastly form, is dealt with almost matter of factly. I found the description of the operation of the narrow gauge railways serving the front lines fascinating. I also liked Jim's description of the nightly bombardments as 'the hate' - without saying whose. There is also a description earlier of the line to Spurn Point lighthouse and a unique windpowered train. A good read both for railway enthusiasts and for readers of WW1 fiction.

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### **Sarah says**

Another enjoyable chapter in the adventures of Jim Stringer - Steam Detective, this time set during the First World War. Not having read much about this part of our history I cannot say whether it was true to life; I'm planning to wait for my father's verdict on the book as he is an avid reader of fiction and non fiction about the First World War. If I had one big problem with the book it was the ending which seemed a little rushed, with Jim jumping to conclusions that he'd apparently been nowhere near solving for most of the story, which I found frustrating. I've never been a fan of the sudden integral piece of evidence appearing right at the end of a story, evidence that the hero seemingly has known about but chose not to share with us, the reader, until he/she tells us who the killer is. Other than this niggle, I thoroughly enjoyed this book. If you enjoyed previous Jim Stringer stories you should enjoy this book and I look forward to the next instalment.

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### **Nick Rennie says**

This was the first book I had read in Andrew Martin's series of novels about railway detective Jim Stringer. It tells the tale of how Stringer and others who work on the train network in York join up for service in the First World War.

The story gives an insight into how battalions of amateur soldiers were formed from communities and pitched into the horrors of trench warfare on the Western Front.

There are tensions in the group and not everyone gets on.

When one of the men dies and is presumed murdered while they are preparing to travel to France, the mystery unravels as the battalion goes into battle.

Martin creates some colourful characters and reveals the challenges the Army faced in creating a railway to deliver munitions to the front lines.

This is a hugely enjoyable thriller and whets the appetite for other books in the Jim Stringer series.

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### **Les Wilson says**

I can recommend all in this series of books.

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### **Peter says**

I probably wouldn't have read this if I'd known it was part of a series, but it was very readable without having

read the rest of the books.

An odd mistake during Tinsley's confession - Tinsley says "Apart from anything else, I suddenly had this very bright cap badge – because you know how Tinsley would go at it with the polish." He's talking about Harvey's polishing, not his own. P252, I think.

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### **Rob Kitchin says**

The Somme Stations is the seventh Jim Stringer railway detective series and the first I've read. It can certainly be read as a standalone. The strength of the book is in placing the reader in the lives of a small group of men as they go through their training and onwards to the frontline, and the historical detail concerning the use of miniature railway system to transport ammunition and supplies along the front. The lead character is rather unassuming character and relatively uncharismatic, which I found a somewhat welcome change to some detective series. He is surrounded by a motley crew of characters that are well penned. Where I had problems was with respect to the plot. The book has a ponderous start and a weak end. In fact, with the exception of the time on Spurn Head, the time in Blighty (the beginning and end) felt flat and listless. The ending in particular didn't work for me. At one point, one of the characters said something like, 'You worked it out from that?', pretty much as I was thinking the same thing. The mystery element relies on unlikely coincidences, an unlikely confession in terms of location (where an entire carriage of men can potentially overhear), and leaps of imagination, and it's hard to believe that Stringer suddenly developed a Poirot-like mind. I also think the book would have also been stronger if it had been written in the third person. It would have allowed the narrator more scope to describe and explain both the main plot and to contextualise the First World War. Overall, the bulk of the book, especially the time in France, was an engaging and informative read and made the book worth reading; it was just a shame that the mystery wasn't quite up to scratch.

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### **Sharon Cook says**

This is seventh in a series but the first one I have read so you can read it as a stand alone novel. If it hadn't been for the reading group I wouldn't have picked this book as I'm not a great fan of either war stories or railways but I have to say I was pleasantly surprised.

I found the characters very well drawn and genuinely concerned for them as the story progressed. The description of both the war and railways seem to also be well described in that I felt I had a good idea, and easily picture, the locations discussed.

Generally a good story with good characters and pace.

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### **Sarah Hearn says**

It took me a long time, most of the book, to get into the story. I wasn't wild about the narrative technique the author used. Still, it was, in the end, a pretty good story.

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## Michael says

### Review from Badelynge

The Somme Stations is Andrew Martin's seventh book featuring Jim Stringer. The series usually follows Stringer's investigations as a Detective at the York office of the North Eastern Railway Police. This one though takes place during the First World War. It begins after most of the events in the book have concluded with Jim's wife writing letters to a friend as he recovers from injuries sustained during his time in France and with a murder charge hanging over him. How we got to this point is recounted in first person by Jim himself, beginning with his enlistment and followed by his war service, the tone being very like an extended letter home or a personal memoir. It's colourfully written with language authentic to the time and location, though thankfully it doesn't try to annotate the local accents. I'm a northern lad myself, of the red rose variety rather than the white, but even so books that insist on putting accent onto the page do become tedious fast unless the writer is something of a genius. The writer here keeps it simple. He builds the ensemble characters/suspects competently, choosing to focus on their little quirks and eccentricities to quickly establish the who's who. It's well done and something a bit different. Stringer retains no police rank in this book and gives a suspect's point of view to the investigation which takes a while to get started and then simmers quietly in the background as Stringer's regiment is trained, goes to France, including that fateful day, July 1st on the Somme, and later establishing a network of light railways, ferrying ammunition to artillery emplacements. Even without the mystery element to the story, the fictional war memoir is very well researched, amusing, poignant and authentic sounding. Add to that the author's obvious love for all things relating to steam locomotion and you have an unusual addition to the crime fiction genre.

The Somme Stations will be published in the UK on the 3rd of March 2011.

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