

Sea of Wolves by Philip K. Allan

I AM NOT a particularly big person, well not tall anyway, but the only time I ever went into a submarine (at the submarine museum at Gosport in Hampshire) I felt claustrophobic and that was on dry land. It's all those narrow passages, watertight doorways, intricate obtrusive pipework and the feeling of being hemmed in with limited air supplies.

You might realise from my comments and the title of this historical novel that the wolves in question are Nazi U-Boats that were the scourge of the Atlantic Ocean during the Second World War when packs of them were let off the leash by Admiral Karl Donitz to wreak havoc with Allied shipping.

Author Philip K. Allan, evidently no stranger to all things naval, captures the anxiety-ridden life of a war-time submariner while counterbalancing the narrative with other leading characters in completely contrasting situations.

Allan has focused on the navy of Nelson's era in much of his previous writing but has decided to switch his focus and this is the first in a trilogy called *The Wolves: WW2 Series*.

The subject matter, The Battle of the Atlantic, was the longest and hardest campaign of World War Two. The statistics are frightening. Three thousand five hundred Allied ships sunk, over 35,000 merchant seamen lost, some 780 U-Boats destroyed with crew fatalities totalling over 27,000—three quarters of those in the whole Nazi submarine service.

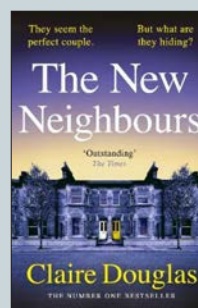
Pitting their wits against each other are Otto Stuckmann, the rookie commander of U-70, Leonard Cole, newly appointed first lieutenant on the corvette *HMS Protea* and crossword doyen Vera Baldwin back on dry land at Bletchley Park doing all things 'enigmatically'. Sorry could not resist the pun.

It's a fairly 'cat and mouse' scenario as you would expect with the action switching between the three central characters and the locations where they are working.

For those fascinated with this period of history it is a compelling and informative novel with excellent traction that has been well received by those who have studied the Atlantic War in some detail.

Up periscope: The definitive film about submarine warfare is usually regarded to be the German production Das Boot (The Boat), 1981, directed by Wolfgang Petersen and starring Jurgen Prochnow

Independently published



The New Neighbours by Claire Douglas

The 'For Sale' notice board comes down and the feelings of trepidation begin to kick in straightaway. Who are the new neighbours going to be? What will they be like? Will they be as friendly and helpful as Jo and Jeff who have just moved out?

At first all seems fine. Mr. and Mrs. Morgan are the new occupants. An elderly retired couple, he's a former surgeon and they look after their baby grandson one day a week.

To Lena, the chief protagonist of the novel, all appears fine on the surface but then while collecting some sound recordings to help her son with his school project, she chances on information which suggests malice aforethought.

Claire Douglas, a popular writer of crime fiction, comes from a journalistic background and her eye for detail is evident in a narrative that goes through more twists and turns than a corkscrew in a packed wine bar.

To be truthful, it is not an easy book to review as to reveal any more of the plot lines tends to give things away and it is better readers decide what side-tracks they want to follow and which individuals they align and sympathise with.

Fellow readers give the impression that it is rather a 'Marmite' book, you either love it or you hate it. Some have found the intricate plot lines and abundance of characters absorbing while others consider there is overwriting and unnecessary exposition not to mention a surfeit of convenient coincidences.

You can decide which and, for those who enjoy this level of suspense, other titles by the same author include *The Wrong Sister*, *The Girls Who Disappeared* and *The Couple at Number Nine*.

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