



# The Chilbury Ladies' Choir

*Jennifer Ryan*

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**The Chilbury Ladies' Choir** Jennifer Ryan

*Librarian's note: This is a previously-published edition of  
Kindle ASIN: B01FPH2N9I.*

The village of Chilbury in Kent is about to ring in some changes.

This is a delightful novel of wartime gumption and village spirit that will make your heart sing out.

Kent, 1940.

In the idyllic village of Chilbury change is afoot. Hearts are breaking as sons and husbands leave to fight, and when the Vicar decides to close the choir until the men return, all seems lost.

But coming together in song is just what the women of Chilbury need in these dark hours, and they are ready to sing. With a little fighting spirit and the arrival of a new musical resident, the charismatic Miss Primrose Trent, the choir is reborn.

Some see the choir as a chance to forget their troubles, others the chance to shine. Though for one villager, the choir is the perfect cover to destroy Chilbury's new-found harmony.

Uplifting and profoundly moving, THE CHILBURY LADIES' CHOIR explores how a village can endure the onslaught of war, how monumental history affects small lives and how survival is as much about friendship as it is about courage.

## The Chilbury Ladies' Choir Details

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Author : Jennifer Ryan

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# **From Reader Review The Chilbury Ladies' Choir for online ebook**

## **Brenda - Traveling Sister says**

3.5 stars.

The Chilbury Ladies' Choir is an endearing, uplifting and refreshing story about five members of The Chilbury Ladies' Choir who are left behind as the men go off to fight in the war. It's a story of grief, deception, struggles, romance and hope as the threats from the Nazi's reaches their village and shattering lives.

Through journals and letters we see how the women grow and change, forge a bond and draw strength from togetherness.

Even though I found there to be some dramatic plot lines, it worked for me as it added some mystery and romance to the story and I couldn't help but love the ladies of the chilbury choir and their stories.

All of Norma's and my reviews can be found on our Sister Blog:  
<http://www.twogirlslostinacouleereadi...>

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## **Cindy Burnett says**

4.5 stars

What a fabulous book! World War 2 historical fiction is one of my favorite genres, and Jennifer Ryan writes a beautiful story with a very entertaining cast of characters. Chilbury is a small town in England close to the coast on the eastern side. As the story opens in 1941, most of the men have been called up to fight causing the vicar of the local church to disband the choir until after the war. A group of women, lead by a spirited newcomer, rebel against the vicar's wishes and create The Chilbury Ladies' Choir. The effect of the choir on Chilbury and several neighboring towns is immense, and I laughed out loud and cried many times.

Jennifer Ryan tells the story in a series of journal entries and letters reminiscent of The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society, and that method is very effective in this novel. The only thing I would change would be to have one or two of the letter recipients write back. I wanted to know a little about them too. The Chilbury Ladies' Choir contains so many lovely sentiments and statements about both the war and life generally. I found myself highlighting many of them as I read on my Kindle so I could back and reread them. My only other comment is about the cover. I definitely choose books by their covers (at least that is what usually catches my eye), and I do not feel like this cover accurately depicts the book – it is very old-fashioned looking. Had I not read the summary and learned it was about World War 2, I would not have chosen to read this book.

I highly recommend this book. Thanks to Crown Publishing and NetGalley for the chance to read this ARC in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Thomas says**

This was a lovely story about so much more than the ladies' Choir in Chilbury, England. It is set in 1940, from spring to fall. The lives of the women of this choir are told through letters and diaries.

It is a village in the southeast of England dealing with war--bombs, rationing, men gone off to war, etc.

There are stories of unrequited love, schoolgirl crushes, unwanted pregnancies and more. The characters are believable--

a scheming midwife willing to arrange abortions

a precocious 12 year old girl with fantasies of true love

a widow still grieving over her husband, dead for several years

a flirtatious teen about to become a woman

the local lord of the manor, a nasty bully

and the new music teacher, choirmaster

All interact so well that I read this book in 3 days, reading the last 200 pages in one day.

Some quotes:

Funeral service "At the front, the Winthrops and their aristocrat friends were sitting all plumed and groomed like a row of black swans."

Kitty, precocious 12 years old girl's diary "I like to see people as colors, a kind of aura or halo surrounding them, shading their outsides with the various flavors of their insides."

On starting a ladies only choir because all the men are gone "What will God think? one of the Sewing ladies piped up. He couldn't have intended women to sing on their own."

I rate it 4.5 out of 5 stars(rounded up to 5).

Thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for sending this book.

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## **Diane Barnes says**

I was a bit disappointed in this book. I looked forward to reading a WWII novel set in a English Village, an epistolary novel written from the viewpoint of the women left behind when the men went off to war. Let me say right off that it was a very good story with some intrigue, some mystery, and an unusual plot.

What bothered me was that the letters and journals seemed a bit contrived. I've never yet seen a journal that quotes entire conversations verbatim, with quotation marks. Most of the journal entries were written as straight narrative, which may have been a better way to connect the events.

The characters all seemed wooden and one-dimensional to me, more like caricatures than anything else. As a result, I could never feel close to any of them, with the exception of Sylvie, the 10 year old Czechoslovakia refugee. She didn't really fit into any mold, and came across as a real person.

The ending was a bit contrived as well, wrapping everything up very neatly with happy ever after for all.

I think what I'm trying to say is that I expected more depth from this novel, and it ended up being just a routine chick-lit, which is sometimes just fine, but not what I wanted right now.

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## **Kathryn says**

I was totally in love with this audiobook book. It is a debut novel by Jennifer Ryan - I can only say it was enthralling. Set in southern England in a small village in 1940, it examines the life of the people as they start

to face the reality of most of the men gone to war.

Up until now there has been a choir, but now with the men gone the vicar has cancelled the choir. But... soon the women are rallying around Prim the choir mistress and they are setting up their own group.

The story is told by four or five characters through letters and journals. However it is seamless and actually doesn't feel like letters and diaries. Rather the story told from different points of view. That's where the narrators come in, they do an amazing and outstanding work of bringing this book to life. By itself its a great story, with the narration absolutely brilliant. I see on Jennifer Ryan's website that the book has had the TV rights optioned by the makers of the makers of Downton Abbey. I sure have my fingers crossed that this will go ahead.

The characters are really interesting, they feel like real people, some of them are rogues and worse, one of them rather precocious but delightful, others kind and compassionate and already the war is changing many of them. The women are strong and resilient and were mostly a joy to follow, even the rogue amongst them.

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### **Roman Clodia says**

This comes with comparisons to The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society and The Summer Before The War: but the likenesses are superficial only (epistolary narrative, women in a home-front setting): Ryan is undoubtedly well-meaning but writes with the insight of a teenager - everything is writ large with very little subtlety or nuance, and it's ridiculously easy to see exactly how the various plots are going to work out from very early on. We even have to believe that someone high up in British Intelligence tells another woman whom he barely knows that a third man is a British spy and one of the best they have merely out of the goodness of his heart to help along a pair of star-crossed lovers...

The writing itself is bloated and full of similes that just bog it down: a morning is 'as wet as a slap round the face with a fresh-caught cod', mourners are 'sitting all plumped up and groomed like a row of black swans', and someone describes themselves as 'flustered as a bluebottle in a jam jar'.

There is a kind of cosy warmth about it all, to be fair, with some nice touches (Dunkirk happening in the background, for example) but overall this feels like a BBC Sunday teatime serial that needs some charismatic actors to bring the whole thing to rather cheesy life. Not for me, I'm afraid.

ARC from Amazon Vine

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### **Fran says**

"The Chilbury Ladies' Choir" is an epistolary novel providing a snapshot of the experiences of a group of mostly women during World War II over the time period from March-September 1940. Able bodied men have joined the war effort and the Vicar has decided to disband the choir saying that only a mixed chorus will do! Enter Primrose Trent, music professor. Prim restructures the choral music for women's voices only, the Vicar concedes defeat, and The Chilbury Ladies' Choir is born. Music is the salve that helps the town cope with loss of friends, spouses and the pain of unrequited love.

Through the use of journal entries, letters, and occasional notices, the lives of several residents are highlighted. Mrs. Tilling, a nurse with a quiet demeanor, finds her true voice while the misdeeds of unethical midwife Edwina Paltry play out. The antics of Venetia, a self absorbed older sister and those of awkward thirteen year old Kitty, a budding singer, are vividly portrayed as they share their thoughts and dreams through the written word. Mrs. B. a control freak and gossip, testy to all, will have to cooperate with the ladies since The Chilbury Ladies' Choir is determined to enter a choral competition. The choir provides a support system for these women. They raise their voices in mournful prayer, when needed, but sing of hope and recovery.

Stylistic use of documents and letters provides excellent character studies of the residents in this town near Dover. We view the growth of Mrs. Tilling and Venetia as well as the demise of Edwina Paltry. We applaud their successes and are tearful for their losses. "The Chilbury Ladies' Choir" by Jennifer Ryan was a most enjoyable read.

Thank you Crown Publishing and Net Galley for the opportunity to read and review "The Chilbury Ladies' Choir".

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### **Karen says**

A novel that unfolds via letters and journals? Yess!! I am a sucker for this type of book so snatched it up. And what a fabulous book it was. Jennifer Ryan's "The Chillbury's Ladies Choir" sits right up there with my other favorites written in this style. The letters and diaries truly felt authentic.

"There is a way of life here that I don't believe any war can crush, that will endure long after we're gone."

This story begins in an English village in the early days of World War II after the men of Chilbury have left to support the war effort and a village 'ladies only' choir is born. Chapters cover the next 6-months and alternate mostly via four distinctive female perspectives. Oh how I loved each of these characters and being privy to the more 'scandalous' events and domestic drama unrolling via their diaries and letters. The tone of the book is upbeat but there are plenty of sobering moments as the war disrupts and impacts their lives.

Jennifer Ryan has a wonderfully creative style of writing which celebrates the spirit and bonding of the women left behind during War.

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### **Marilyn C. says**

4.5 Stars

The ladies of Chilbury, England are not going to let the devastation of war hold them back, as most of the men in their small village have gone off to fight and the women are now left to support each other. The first thing they establish is The Chilbury Ladies' Choir, as they realize the power of music will not only help them get through the war, but help build a sense of community with the other townspeople.

This is an endearing story that is filled with friendship and camaraderie as the women lose loved ones and

face hardship, but use their choir time and music as a way to work through their pain and loneliness. However, this is not your typical war novel as Jennifer Ryan uses letters and journal entries to show how scandalous secrets are being kept and how romance has found its way into the village. The characters are well developed and you will even find yourself laughing out loud at times, but then you also feel their sadness as the war descends upon their little town.

This book is somewhat of a lighter twist on World War II fiction, but that doesn't lessen the enjoyment of this engaging story. This was a great debut and getting to know the ladies of Chilbury was time worth spent.

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## **Paromjit says**

This is a hugely enjoyable novel delivered through the medium of letters and journals. It is a quintessentially British story set in Kent about a community of women contributing to the war effort, trying to survive and live life whilst the world as they know it is crumbling around them. Helping them to cope with the grief and loss is the Chilbury Ladies Choir set up by incomer Primrose, despite the opposition of Mrs B. who thinks it a scandal to have a choir without men. Women are having to step in and do what men have done, they have no choice. The choir becomes important in providing a channel to keep their spirits up, channel emotional distress, provide support and personal development.

With warmth, wit and humour, the author gives us a wide range of characters with all the petty resentments, falling in love, tragedies and intrigue that beset any community. Mrs Tilling is a midwife, who finds herself digging deep into her emotional reserves to support others, expands her world view as she comes to see the humanity in others even when their actions may not appear to deserve it. The lightweight and flirty Venetia comes to be a revelation as her personal circumstances become dire. New relationships are cemented through billeting as with Colonel Mallard. The emotional intensity of the young can be seen through the eyes of the young, such as thirteen year old Kitty. We get a glimpse of the class system where characters like the Brigadier and the Viscount find their established power being undermined. We see what is happening in Europe through Sylvie, a young Jewish evacuee. Edwina struggles to keep her unsavoury secrets and keep her ill gotten gains. All the action takes place where there is a real and tangible fear that Britain might come under Nazi rule.

I became totally engaged with the characters and the pressures they are living under. I particularly loved Mrs Tilling and Prim, women who come to realise they have nothing to lose and can be exactly who they are and so becoming role models for others. In a sense, this is true to varying degrees for all the women. It is through the prism of loss that the women come to understand this and therefore learn to challenge traditional norms. This novel celebrates all that women did during the war and the role that music and the choir provide in inspiring, a route to express grief and providing succour. I think anyone who reads this will enjoy it. Highly recommended. Thanks to HarperCollins for an ARC.

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## **Diane S ? says**

Charming, delightful, alternating with heartbreak and life's realities in a small English village during WWII. With very few men left in the village, the women in the village decide it is their duty to keep things going, maintain normality as much as possible and this includes restarting the disbanded choir, with women only members.

I love reading books that are written as letters, journal entries, articles etc. I honestly don't think I would have had such a positive reaction to this book of done in straightforward pose, would probably have come off too syrupy or gossipy. This was the perfect form for this story. Just telling glimpses of everyone's lives, their feelings and a general understanding of what was happening in the village and believe you me there is quite a bit going to tell. Love affairs, pregnancies, a amoral midwife, births, death, love affairs old, grief over lives lost, sons and husbands sent to fight. Yet, it is a wonderful telling of women empowerment and their desire to keep the home fires burning.

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## **Malia says**

"Perhaps there is something good that has come from this war: everything has been turned around, all the unfairness made grimly plain. It has given us everyday women a voice - dared us to stand up for ourselves, and to stand up for others." -Jennifer Ryan, *The Chilbury Ladies' Choir*

This book had a little bit of everything I look for in a story. Beautiful writing, multi-dimensional characters, a wonderfully illustrated setting, and a dose of rich history. The story of the formation of the Chilbury Ladies' Choir during the spring and summer of 1940, is told through the voices of four very different women. I love a book told through multiple POVs, and in this case it was done perfectly. All characters' voices are developed to give a deep and rounded picture of who the woman is, and considering that this book is a normal length, that is quite a feat by the Jennifer Ryan.

Possibly my favorite part of this book was the way the author painted a picture of community in this small English village during the war. There is something so touching about neighbors, broken families, friends and even foes banding together in times that are so our of the ordinary. That being said, this book isn't cheesy or overly sappy. There can never be a completely happy ending in a book that deals with the Second World War (or any for that matter) but there is still a strong sense of hope that runs through the whole story, and for that and all the other above mentioned attributes, I think I can already say, even though it is only January, this will be one of my favorite books this year.

If you enjoyed books like *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* or *Letters from Skye*, I think you will love this as much as I did.

I won my copy of *The Chilbury Ladies' Choir* in a Goodreads giveaway, and have written what I think is a fair and fitting review. Thank you!

Find more reviews and bookish fun at <http://www.princessandpen.com>

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## Cheri says

4.5 Stars

***"NOTICE PINNED TO THE CHILBURY VILLAGE HALL NOTICEBOARD,  
SUNDAY, 24TH MARCH, 1940***

***As all our male voices have gone to war, the village choir is to close following Cmdr. Edmund Winthrop's funeral next Tuesday.***

### ***The Vicar***

Tuesday, 26th March, 1940"

The Chilbury Ladies' Choir, told through letters and journals, and "lists" of things, is a story set in a small village in England, as WWII ravaged the landscape, lives and changed an entire generation, and those that followed. A town with a few people trying to find ways to do what they can to improve life for their small corner of the world, whose enthusiasm is infectious and, to begin with, while their men are away fighting the war, decide to start an all-female choir – The Chilbury Ladies' Choir. You wouldn't think this would create such division, as though it were scandalous behavior.

There's plenty of charm, and also plenty of reminders that there is a war going on. War is always present, in little reminders, in one of the characters thoughts or another's actions.

***"List of things to make note of before someone  
leaves for war***

*The shape of their body—the blank cutout  
that will be left when they're gone.*

*The way they move, the gait of their walk, the  
speed at which they turn to look.*

*The crush of smells and scents that linger  
only so long.*

*Their color, the radiance that veils everything*

*They do, including their death."*

There's so much about this that makes it clear that it's a story from another time, another place, and I loved that the things that characterized the time and place seemed so naturally to belong then and there.

There's much about the haves vs the have-nots in this, as one wanders through these lives in this village, there are those who do not want, and there are those who know little else but want and need.

***"The opulence of the room was dazzling, with the floor-length blue silk drapes, the majestic portraits of repulsive forebears, the porcelain statues, the antiquity, the inequity."***

War is hell, as the saying goes, places and people are damaged, destroyed, annihilated. So much devastation all around. One thing that brings light to these people are these women who have the courage to do things previously unheard of for women. Sing, yes, in an all-women choir, but it goes beyond that with so many

men gone, the women have had to keep their town, their country running. And they learn a lot along the way about themselves. And as more courage is found, and more women are enjoying contributing their time and efforts, there's another light growing stronger, bringing to light some deep, dark secrets, as well.

*"Music takes us out of ourselves, away from our worries and tragedies, helps us look into a different world, a bigger picture."*

So many of my friends loved this, and they wrote wonderful, very convincing reviews. I added this a while back, what seems like long ago, and have been waiting for my turn to read it since then! So glad I finally had a chance to read it, and so grateful to my goodreads friends, and goodreads for this forum to help determine which books to read.

Many thanks, once again, to the Public Library system, and the many Librarians that manage, organize and keep it running, for the loan of this book!

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## **Margitte says**

*First funeral of the war, and our little village choir simply couldn't sing in tune. "Holy, holy, holy" limped out as if we were a crump of warbling sparrows. But it wasn't because of the war, or the young scoundrel Edmund Winthrop torpedoed in his submarine, or even the Vicar's abysmal conducting. No, it was because this was the final performance of the Chilbury Choir. Our swan song.*

*...It was the funeral of Edmund Winthrop, the Brigadier's despicable son who was blown up in a submarine last week. Only twenty he was—one minute a repulsive reptile, the next a feast for the fishes.*

*...Beside her, that foreign evacuee girl looked petrified, like she'd seen death before and a lot more besides.*

And so begins a novel, with Miss Edwina Paltry's letter to her sister (quite a fitting surname given the different meanings: small, meagre, trifling, insignificant, negligible, inadequate, insufficient, scant, scanty, derisory, pitiful, pitiable, pathetic, miserable, sorry, wretched, puny, trivial, niggardly, beggarly, mean, ungenerous, inappreciable, mere).

The fictional tale and characters are based on the real diaries and journals which were written during the first year of WWII in Britain for an organization called Mass Observation. They published a newsletter in which the hearts, minds and souls of the ordinary citizens were shared.

The epistolary character of the novel is the result of the author's commemoration of these writers, and the stories her grandmother shared about the war. Four main narrators share through their diaries and letters the funny, racy, touching or terrifying events in Chilbury during 1940, leaving the reader in the midst of a richly textured novel populated by the citizens of the fictional village of Chilbury.

The main narrators are:

**Miss Edwina Paltry** - in letters to her sister:

Brace yourself, Clara, for we are about to be rich! I've been offered the most unscrupulous deal you'll ever believe! I knew this ruddy war would turn up some gems—whoever would have

thought that midwifery could be so lucrative! But I couldn't have imagined such a grubby nugget of a deal coming from snooty Brigadier Winthrop, the upper-class tyrant who thinks he owns this prissy little village. I know you'll say it's immoral, even by my standards, but I need to get away from being a cooped-up, put-down midwife. I need to get back to the old house where I can live my own life and be free.

Mark these words: her little scheme would have her flustered like a bluebottle in a jam jar in the end.

**Kitty Winthrop** - in her diary - thirteen years old: she saw people as beams of a rainbow, and her eighteen-year-old sister, Venitia, as simply a vile beast.

I like to see people as colors, a kind of aura or halo surrounding them, shading their outsides with the various flavors of their insides.

Me—purple, as brilliant and dark as the sky on a thundery night

Mama—a very pale pink, like a baby mouse

Daddy—soot black (Edmund was also black, but black like a starless sky)

Mrs. Tilling—light green, like a shoot trying to come up through the snow

Mrs. B.—navy blue (correct and traditional)

Henry is a deep azure blue, to match his eyes.

**Silvie** - in her diary - the much younger Jewish evacuee from Czechoslovakia with her terrible secret.

**Venitia Winthrop** - in her letters to the vicar's daughter, Angela Quail.

**Mrs. Tilling** - in her journal - a nurse and the local billeting agent.

Two male voices appeared in their own letters as well.

**Flt. Lt. Henry Brampton-Boyd** - the most sought-after bachelor in the village. He had many a nasty nail out on dainty little ladies' fingers and a lot to answer for. Even Elsie the parlour maid got her head around something.

**Colonel Mallard** - in his letters to his sister Mrs. Maud Green. He arrived as curmudgeon old Mr. Bear, and left as snuggly Mr. Toodles, well .... sort of. Life would drastically change for him in Chilbury, that's for sure.

Miss Primrose Trent from London moved into Chilbury to become the Professor of Music at the Lichtfield University. She revived the choir, now deprived of all the men who went off to war. The Vicar Quail was convinced that all the oxygen and *raison d'etre* left town with the men. The women would prove him wrong. The choir gave women their voices. The voices they thought they never had. And therein lies the charm of this story of courage, endurance, resilience and hope.

The peripheral characters brought much more color to Kitty's rainbow. They read like the Chilbury telephone directory, but what a wonderful, unbelievable, atmospheric tale they all brought alive.

I'm not going into the plot or storyline. It is for the readers to discover and enjoy through the picturesque prose.

GREAT READ!!! Just absolutely BEAUTIFUL!

## RECOMMENDED

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### **Liz says**

Reminding me of The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Society, this book is written as a series of letters, journal or diary entries. As opposed to a single writer, here we have a variety of writers of all ages and stripes. Starting at the beginning of WWII, the village is dealing with the absence of most of its men. The vicar disbands the choir as it lacks the necessary tenors and basses. But here comes a new music instructor to the nearby University and she forms The Chilbury Ladies' Choir. "It is time for us women to do what we can as a group to support each other and keep our spirits up." As someone who has sung for years in a choir, it's a true sentiment. There is something uplifting about making music with others. In fact, she is spot on about all things involved in singing- that moment before coming in on a note when singing a capella, the fear of the solo or the community from singing together.

Ryan does a great job of fleshing out each character. And there are some real characters here. Kitty's writing does seem very grownup for a thirteen year old but that's a minor quibble especially because Ryan does capture the girl's crush on Henry perfectly.

This novel manages to blend humor, warmth, sorrow and depth all within its pages. The book is based on her grandmother's stories of a choir she sung in during WWII and the freedoms women had because of the war.

For those who enjoyed The Summer Before the War or the tv series Land Girls or Home Fires, I would recommend this novel. A full five stars!

My thanks to netgalley and Crown Publishing Group for an advance copy of this book.

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### **PorshaJo says**

How could you not like a book that uses the word 'higgledy-piggledy' in it....multiple times. The Chilbury Ladies Choir is quite the fascinating read. A different take on WW2 and how people survive during this time. Don't get me wrong, any book on WW2 and the horrors is difficult to read. But this one, I found both sad and fascinating, heartbreaking and funny.

The story is told over a series of letters, newspaper articles, and journal entries and switches back and forth between these and various characters. You learn of the various people in the town of Chillbury. There is the wicked Edwina Paltry and the story of how low one person can sink. Or the saucy tart Victoria Winthrop, who changes, even grows-up during the war. Or bossy Mrs. B and her know-it-all attitude. Then there is the war, the bombings, the lives lost and during this time, the folks of Chillbury. Most of the men have gone off to war and it's up to the ladies in town to stand up and prove that they CAN do it. Such as to start an all female choir, enter a singing competition, become pall bearers, and show how brave they are.

I started this one ages ago and life got in the way. So I decided to switch to the audio recently. I loved the narration and the different voices and accents. And a bonus....choir music was included at the most perfect

times. I did have a few nitpicks with this one though, hence the lower rating. I didn't care for the audio narration where it would indicate a male spoke. Sometimes the narrator, usually female, would do this odd voices for say, gruffy older men. And the precocious child Kitty, narrating into her journal, who at 13 used phrases that no 13 would know what they mean (the sirens were blistering, her talk of the black market). But those are minor items. Overall, an enjoyable read and one that I'm glad I finally finished.

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## **Carolyn says**

This is a lovely, warm, often humorous story about a small village in England and the social changes it undergoes during WW2. Chilbury in Kent is largely made up of women now that the men have gone off to war and the story is largely brought to life through the means of journal entries and letters written by the women. When the vicar disbands the church choir because there are no male voices left, a newcomer, Miss Primrose Trent (Prim) announces that she will start up a choir just for women to help keep their spirits up and so the Chilbury Ladies Choir is born.

I love the way the characters evolve as the war goes on. They are beautifully written with love and affection. Not all are pleasant and some have nasty secrets. Mrs Tilling, a WWI widow whose son is off fighting, is the local nurse and the one who changes most, transforming from a shy, mousy woman who always defers to others to a confident woman in charge of her own life and prepared to speak up for others. Along with Mrs Tilling, the two sisters, 18 year old Venetia and 13 year old Kitty tell much of the narrative. Venetia about the artist in the village and her attempts to ensnare him and Kitty about her singing lessons with Prim, the choir, the doings of her beastly sister Venetia and her adventures in the woods and fields with their Czech evacuee, 11 year old Sylvie.

Grief and heartbreak do come to Chilbury during the war along with the rest of the nation and the Choir serves to support the women and give them some moments of joy and beauty. A wonderful read if you enjoy a heartwarming story about women discovering their own strengths and a very accomplished debut..

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## **Annet says**

*Notice pinned to the Chillbury village hall noticeboard, Sunday 24th March, 1940: As all our male voices have gone to war, the village choir is to close following Cmdr Edmund Winthrop's funeral next Tuesday - The Vicar*

Lovely book! For the really good and relaxing read, great story, five stars! Sort of a feel-good book with both sad and happy events.... Great and colorful story buildup with each chapter written from the point of view of one of the book's main characters. Central roles for a number of women in the village of Chillbury who decide to go on with the village choir, women only, in absence of the men out to war...

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## **Jan says**

"Music takes us out of ourselves, away from our worries and tragedies, helps us look into a different world, a bigger picture."

The Chilbury Ladies Choir sang their hearts out!! It was a song of joy, strength , and resilience as they bonded together in a steadfast Home Front!!

The story takes place in the English village of Chilbury, in 1940. The Vicar declared that the choir be disband because the men were off to war. The Ladies of the choir rebelled and formed their own choir~The Chilbury Ladies' Choir.

Their story is told through letters, diary, and journal entries. Their voices were a mix of personalities with their individual strengths and weaknesses. Mrs Tilling, a timid widow and nurse; Edwina Paltry, a conniving midwife; Venitia, a self-centered flirt; Kitty, her younger sister who loved to sing; and Silvie, a Jewish refugee.

This delightful story is full of intrigue, romance, war, blackmail, and plenty of action to keep you enticed!

It was wonderful to see the way the ladies came together to help each other and the town. They found strength in themselves, and hope, support, and joy from each other!

The choice of music the choir sings is very inspiring, and it was as if I could hear the beautiful music and feel the JOY of it!!

The author did a wonderful job of bringing the character's personalities to life! They were very interesting and well-drawn. These amazing women tell the story of what it must have been like to live through this time of war.

I loved this story! It was one of HOPE!!

I give this book 4 stars! And recommend it to all!

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### **Sabaa Tahir says**

Read this book over a couple of months because I didn't want it to end. Such detail, such heart, and some excellent village intrigue and cabal, all set against the backdrop of World War II. One of my favorite adult books of recent memory. Jennifer Ryan is going to be an auto-buy for me from now on.

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