



The Lost Soldier

Diney Costeloe

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This book was previously published as The Ashgrove.

In 1921, eight ash trees were planted in the dorset village of Charlton Ambrose as a timeless memorial to the men killed in World War One. Overnight a ninth appeared, marked only as for 'the unknown soldier'.

But now the village's ashgrove is under threat from developers.

Rachel Elliot, a local reporter, sets out to save the memorial and solve the mystery of the ninth tree. In so doing, she uncovers the story of Tom Carter and Molly Day: two young people thrown together by the war, their love for each other, their fears for the present and their hopes for the future. Embroiled in events beyond their control, Tom and Molly have to face up to the harsh realities of the continuing war, the injustices it allows and the sacrifices it demands.

The Lost Soldier Details

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Author : Diney Costeloe

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From Reader Review The Lost Soldier for online ebook

Erin says

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Originally published as The Ashgrove, Diney Costeloe's The Lost Soldier begins in 2001, during a public meeting over a housing development in a village called Charlton Ambrose. Rachel Elliot, a local reporter for the Belcaster Chronicle, is captivated when one of the local residents objects the construction plans as they'd necessitate the destruction of a memorial grove planted to honor the village residents who died during the Great War. Rachel takes it upon herself to learn more about the trees and uncovers a long buried secret of honor, sacrifice, tragedy, and enduring faithfulness.

Looking back on the narrative, I freely admit that elements of the modern story felt unnecessary. Rachel's romantic interest in Nick Potter seemed entirely superfluous in my eyes and the familial connection she unearths struck me as contrived, but Molly Day's history was so poignantly portrayed that I couldn't bring myself to rate the novel any lower than five stars. Her story surprised me on a number of levels and I loved how relevant her experiences become to those trying to understand her trials through modern eyes decades after they occurred.

Henry Smalley is a minor character, but one I grew very fond of over the course of the narrative. His journey is not chronicled in detail, but he is the kind of individual who exudes genuine compassion in an era when law and order did not bend to accommodate such sensitivities. Molly's life is irreparably altered by the conflict, but Henry finds new purpose in the carnage of the Somme and takes it upon himself to look after those left scarred in its aftermath.

There is something very human in this story and I appreciated how Costeloe's themes drew her audience into the narrative. The action depicted during the first day of the Somme Offensive is brutal, but I was intensely appreciative of the authenticity such detail lent the text. Beginning to end, the novel capitalized on the human elements of the war and I felt Costeloe's manipulation of the material bridged the gap between a century old conflict and contemporary readers.

I didn't have any expectations when I picked up The Lost Solider. Not one of the reviewers I follow had read the book and while I was intrigued by the subject matter, I wasn't entirely convinced it'd be the kind of war story that would hold my interest. That said, the novel surprised me and I feel it one I will recommending many times over in the years to come.

Sue says

Originally published as The Ashgrove, The Lost Soldier has been re-published to coincide with the ongoing commemoration of the 100th anniversary of WWI. One part of the story is told through flashbacks/old letters revealing events of 1915 and 1916, the lives especially of Molly Day, Sarah Hurst and many British soldiers. The modern, framing story is set in 2001 and concerns the above mentioned ash trees and their significance for one small village, the village where Molly and Sarah originally lived--a memorial for the young men lost in the Great War.

While there are some coincidences and a possibly contrived-feeling situation (minimal) the novel as a whole reflects the social milieu of the time and the horrors and futility of trench warfare of WWI as well as the difficult work of volunteer hospitals just behind the lines.

This is something that we, one hundred years later, need to remember. Our methods of war have been modernized, and certainly medicine is much improved, but in some ways it seems to me we are even more distanced from it, in spite of seeing scenes on the nightly news. It becomes more of a video game excerpt. While our methods have modernized, the physical, emotional and psychic costs on those who fight have not. They remain huge and something each of us must remember. These men--and now women--need support, ongoing.

A copy of this book was provided by the publisher through NetGalley in return for an honest review.

Faouzia says

I would like to thank NetGalley, the publisher and author for a copy of this amazing book.

It is more like 4.5 stars.

The story starts in 1924 when 9 ash trees were planted in Charlton Ambrose as a memorial to the soldiers who fell during WWI, the strange one was that one of these trees was dedicated "To the Unknown Soldier" and nobody knows who planted it.

In 2001, these trees were threatened to be cut down. Most of the people had forgotten their significance. Rachel, a local journalist, starts a research to uncover the truth about the trees and this is how she unravels the mystery about the 9th tree and the story of a soldier Tom Carter and a brave nurse Molly Day, and their amazing story during the atrocities of the WWI.

I really loved this book. The way it was written was very good, and I liked how the story kept going on between 1915 and the present, how it was related, and the way the feelings and emotions of all the characters were displayed.

The characters were amazing, and in a way it showed the impact of war on different people, Tom the soldier in the line of fire, Molly, the nurse behind the lines and yet seeing another aspect of that damage, the nuns from the hospital taken away from their usual peace into this horror, Sarah, the squire's daughter and her brave choices and many others characters !!

It is the kind of book that makes you think a lot about many things, about life, love, choices and consequences, about the human cruelty and how from the destruction and suffering of the war sometimes comes love and friendship.

Some passages of this book were difficult to read, those that described the soldiers during the battles, the wounded when they were brought to the hospitals and all that suffering!

This story may be just fiction but those atrocities were real and it made the book closer to my heart!!

I really enjoyed it and I would recommend it to all my friends and I would certainly read more by Diney Costeloe!

Kman999 says

good set-up, but long lead up to big finish ... needed to be better written to maintain high interest ...

Michael Adamson says

Page turner

A fascinating story of two generations. Love can conquer all. I cried reading the the part of Tom being accused of desertion, and could not understand why men from his own country could shoot him . Well written great descriptions of life in France during the great war. .

Sophie (Blogger) says

The Lost Soldier is told in two different time periods, one being when World War One was happening and the other being years later. During World War One, many men were lost during the battle and many women looked after them when they were injured. In the town of Charlton Ambrose eight men who lived in the town lost their lives in the war, to remember them eight trees were planted in the town each dedicated to a man who lost his life fighting for them to be safe. One night, a ninth tree appeared no one knew where it came from or who it was in memory of but it was decided that it must be important and it remained with the rest of the trees never moving from where they were planted in 1921.

Fast forward to years later, a housing developer wants to knock down the trees to make the town more modern but they didn't take into account the trees. Many of the families who lost men in the war still live in the small town, some are not fussed about the trees but others are dedicated on keeping the memory of their loved one alive as that is all they have left of them now. Rachel Elliot is keen to find out the story and the men behind the trees to publish in the local newspaper hoping to stop them from going ahead with their plans to knock the trees down to gain access to the plot of land they want.

Rachel finds out the stories of some of the men who lost their lives that once lived in the town, one of these being Sarah Hurst's brother. Sarah along with Molly Day travelled to France to help the wounded in the war, working with the nuns to get them better either to go back to the front line or to get sent home unable to return to active duty. Part of the story is told through diary entries that Molly has made, telling of her time at the nun's house and about the men she meets. One in particular is Tom Carter, a soldier who Molly develops a bond with when he is recovering from his wounds.

I never saw the truth of the ninth tree, until I read it and then it put all the information that Rachel had gathered together. Each person in the story had some connection to each other and that's what made it even more heartbreakingly as no matter what happened, someone lost something during the war and in doing so changes the rest of their lives.

The Lost Soldier is a heartbreakingly story about loss, love and about honouring the people who fought for their country to keep their families safe. With its sweet love story and memorable characters, it is a story that I will never be able to forget for the rest of my life.

If I had to sum this book up in three words, they would be Heartbreaking, Loss and Touching.

Linda says

Another one from the UK. I think I've read so many books about WWI — both fiction and non-fiction — that it is hard to surprise me, even with a mystery. I figured out the two big mysteries early on which made the story drag. Costeloe is not a bad writer but not a great one by any means. When the first sentence of the book used the word "clinging" and the second sentence used "clung" I almost stopped right there.

Ali Bookworm says

Oh my....what a read! The first one I have read from this author but at one point I had to put down as I was crying. It is the type I love modern day intertwined with the past. Very fitting that I read around Armistice but its a lovely read for any time. There are some poignant moments but it is a lovely story that will remain in you hearts. Well recommend.

Dannielle Potts says

Quite Possibly, My New Favourite Book!

Couldn't Put This Down! I Have A Diney Costeloe Book On My TBR Pile But It Never Grabs My Attention. Picked This Up From The Library & Purely Based On The Cover, Its Not A Book A Would've Read But This Is Why I Always Read The Blurb And Straight Away, I Knew I Would Enjoy It.

The Descriptions Of The War Conditions In France Made This Book Very Real And That's What Got This Book 5 Stars From Me. I Fell In Love With The Story Of Tom And I Couldn't Rest Until I Knew What Had Happened.

Tissues Are Very Much Needed For Anyone Who Attempts This Book. Brilliant Plot & Author *X*

Grace says

Once I got use to the detailed writing style, I began to enjoy the book. With the 100th anniversary of the 1914 beginning of WW1, there are now quite a few historical novels featuring both real and fictional women serving in WW1. In 1915, Molly, a young English housemaid, escapes domestic sexual assault by volunteering to work in a French convent hospital. In 2001, Rachel, a young reporter, discovers Molly's diary and letters, while writing a story about a WW1 memorial ash grove threatened by development. This book is well researched and examines the many social and cultural issues WW1 women volunteers faced while serving in the war.

This is a good book to read about WW1 from the human rights perspective and the impact of war on subsequent generations. This is an excellent addition to WW1 historical fiction libraries.

Hayley Noble says

It has been a long time since I picked up a book set in the war time era, but it is by far one of my favorite genres to read about. However, I have read very few about WW1, and this book was beautifully done. Initially, it took me a good few days to get into this book, I just couldn't get a feel for it. Its set in modern day and in WW1, and I never really liked the present day parts, I understood why they were there and they were a good narrative to the story, but it was all a bit wishy washy for my taste. However, for the parts set in WW1, I was hooked. Costeloe wrote them in such a way, that I got truly suckered into the story, and it was heartbreaking. She really does make you feel immersed in that time, and we all know from history how horrible it was.

This book is worth a read, and although not an easy read, is well worth sticking with it.

Julia Wilson says

The Lost Soldier by Diney Costeloe is a marvellous contemporary and historical novel being set in both the first world war and 2001. It is a remarkable novel as facts are woven into fiction. It is the tale of a lost generation of men in the futility of war.

Every man killed in battle had a name and a face. "He may be unknown but he gave his life as surely as did the others." Journalist Rachel searches out the story behind the unknown soldier in the ash grove memorial. Diney Costeloe shows the horrors of war. The soldiers were little more than boys. They fought for our freedoms. They left behind their lives and their loves. They faced horrors. They had to live for today as tomorrow was uncertain. "We have to live for now... there may not be a tomorrow."

The novel intertwines the soldiers stories with the girls they left behind - namely in the novel Sarah (the daughter of the lord of the manor) and her maid Molly. War makes the pair equals and shows them to be made of strong stuff as they journey to France to nurse the wounded and the dying.

Life at or near the front was not glamorous. It was hard. Diney Costeloe brilliantly portrays the horrors of war - the sights and sounds can be 'seen' and 'smelt' through her descriptions. The horrors are really bought to life for the reader.

The subject of faith arises in the story as part of it is set in a convent in France. Rituals, prayers and belief in God are important for the Catholic nuns. Sarah too, embraces their faith "I've handed my problems over to God and He knows what to do about them." Molly, on the other hand, finds God hard to believe in. "Is there a God? Where is He in this ...war?"

Diney Costeloe shows that life goes on even in the midst of war. There can be love and laughter and friendship.

Camaraderie was key to survival. The Pals regiments meant the men were united by their home towns already. They would go to extraordinary lengths to help their comrades.

There are some difficult topics such as both child and domestic abuse. These were swept under the carpet at the time. The topic of single mothers was raised too. They were shunned at the time which seems horrifying to the modern reader.

Diney Costeloe is a marvellous author who writes fabulous stories that speak to my heart. She presents hard hitting topics as well as educating the reader with some historical facts. I always love her books and can recommend The Lost Soldier.

May we never forget the sacrifice of all those brave servicemen and women who gave their lives and continue to give their lives for our freedom.

At the going down of the sun, we will remember them.

Bev Walkling says

This is the third novel I have read by Diney Costeloe that is set in a time of war. Originally published under the title The Ashgrove, this book is set partly in the present day and partly during the Great War. Rachel Elliot, a local reporter is seeking to understand the background history of a grove of Ash trees that were planted as a living memorial to eight soldiers from the local community who gave their lives during the Great War. A ninth tree was secretly planted in memory of "the unknown soldier". A construction company is interested in getting rid of the trees to allow construction of a new project, Some community members are adamantly opposed while others stand to benefit financially if the project goes ahead. In researching the memorial, Rachel learns that she too has a connection to the memorial and sets out to save it and uncover the mystery of the ninth tree.

Many portions of the novel are set in the past and told through flashbacks or reference to letters and journal entries. These particularly fascinated me. At the beginning of the book was reference to a project which I won't name for fear of spoiling the story but it gave me a clue as to where the story might lead. In the time of the war, we learn of Sarah Hurst, a headstrong young woman who decides against all parental approval that she wants to head to France and nurse the soldiers. To make it more acceptable in her father's eyes, she inveigles her maid Molly O'Day into joining her. For reasons of her own, Molly is happy to be leaving the local community, and her skills as a maid prove very useful when taking care of the sick and wounded. The two girls head to the convent at St. Croix in France, where Sarah's aunt is a nun. They make themselves very useful as the wounded pour in and they develop a friendship which crosses the societal barriers of the times. Sarah was raised as a Catholic and feels right at home in the convent while Molly has a Protestant background and looks askance at some of the religious practices of the nuns.

Life begins to get more complicated when a relative of Molly's arrives as one of the wounded very close to death. In mutual grief with his best friend Tom, Molly falls in love. Love in wartime seldom runs smoothly and indeed a crisis arrives in their relationship which ends up keeping them apart. How and why will be discovered when one reads the book.

As a reader I felt I really grew to know and understand the characters. I was moved by their struggles and by the horror of war. Tom was a soldier involved in the beginning of the battle of the Somme and events that happened at Beaumont Hamel. I have visited that area and seen the trenches, heard about how many died so uselessly and it made this story all the more real to me.

The author has clearly done an incredible amount of research which has paid off in a realistic story of war and the long term consequences it can have on individuals. AS the story of the past met up with the present day efforts of Rachel Elliot, the reader learns all the answers to the mysteries of the Ash Grove. This book is a stand alone novel but is also a prequel to the author's subsequent book - The Sisters of St. Croix.

Spencer Broadley says

With good luck, I managed to win a copy through goodreads.com - I don't do a plot synopsis as this easily

available.

I found the book very much a tale of conflict, and also a reminder of those that fell in the 1st World War. Being a current day story, the insights and obvious research into that war have payed dividends. I am only 47!! but found the descriptions of the war and people involved in it very moving and thought-provoking in this day-and-age of seemingly mindless wars.

The characters in present day are highly believable and intertwine in the story fantastically.

I was slightly unsure about the morality that exists, but, in effect, I would recommend the book to anybody - for that reason I would give 4.5 stars (but goodreads only allows full stars!), but decided on 5 stars as it was an immensably good book/story/well-researched.

Kinsey Crosby says

Amazing ❤?
