Book Discussion

Sunday, March 21, 2010
10 AM

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society
By
Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows

January 1946: writer Juliet Ashton receives a letter from a stranger, a founding member of the Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society. And so begins a remarkable tale of the island of Guernsey during the German occupation, and of a society as extraordinary as its name.

Though it deals with a dark period in history, this first novel is an essentially sunny work. It affirms the power of books to nourish people enduring hard times—not so surprising, since Mary Ann Shaffer, who died earlier this year, had a long career as a librarian, bookseller and editor. Her niece Annie Barrows, a children’s author, finished the manuscript after Shaffer fell ill; between them, they crafted a vivid epistolary novel whose characters spring to life in letters and telegrams exchanged over the course of nine months shortly after the end of World War II...You could be skeptical about the novel’s improbabilities and its sanitized portrait of book clubs (doesn’t anyone read trashy thrillers?), but you’d be missing the point. The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society is a sweet, sentimental paean to books and those who love them.

The Washington Post - Wendy Smith

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