

LoveReading Reader reviews of The Last Confession of Thomas Hawkins by Antonia Hodgson

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.

Gill Wilmott

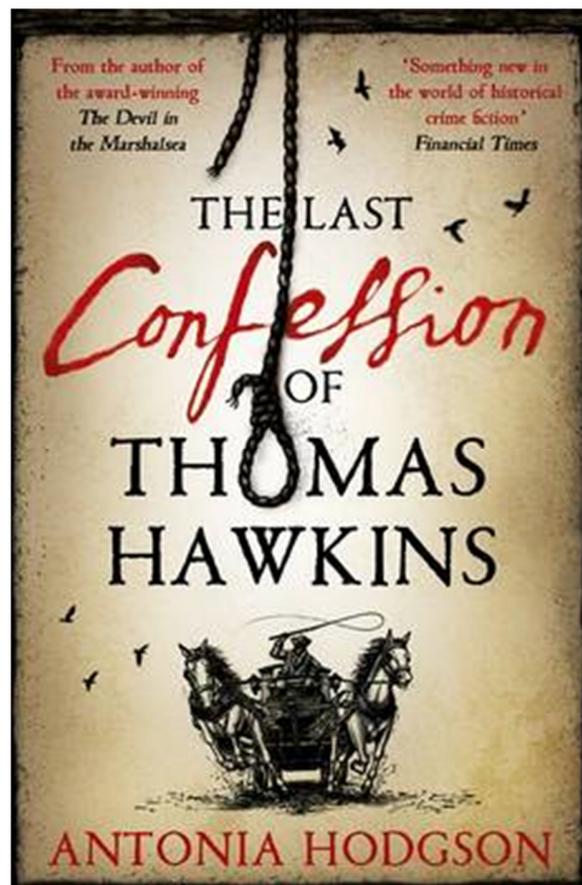
We first encounter Thomas Hawkins being dragged through the streets on his way to be hung at Tyburn. Not an auspicious beginning and indeed at first I found Thomas Hawkins rather annoying and not a hero I had much sympathy with. Nevertheless as the book progressed and better sides of his character emerged I warmed to him, and did hope things would turn out well - not that I would spoil it by telling you if they did or not!

Antonia has very cleverly taken a nugget of history and weaved her own extra characters and story around it. Indeed the characters in the book are very believable and draw quite a vivid picture of 18th century life for the common man & woman, plus some good vignettes of the nobility.

I particularly like the historical notes at the end which explain the above.

The book is a sequel to her debut novel 'The Devil in the Marshalsea' which started her tale of Thomas Hawkins. However although I have not read the first book this one stands alone as an excellent story.

All in all an historical mystery that I would definitely recommend.



Angela Rhodes

Based loosely on a real crime, in 1782 'The Last Confession of Thomas Hawkins', tells of Thomas, a young well to man, who is wrongly accused of murder, and how he has to find the real culprit, before the noose tied around his neck tightens.

"If" he hadn't said he would help Queen Caroline, "if" he hadn't told the most dangerous criminal in London he was bored and wanted adventure, and "if" he hadn't trusted the Queens maid, he would not be in this mess, thinks Thomas.

This is a follow on book from 'The Devil in Marshalsea' but is also a standalone book... and a great read, action, and dry humour, love it.

Edel Waugh - www.edelwaugh.blogspot.com

First of all I loved these characters!!! The main character Thomas is a loveable rogue living in some of the rougher areas of London in the 1800's. Where he lives crime is everywhere, friends look after their own and it's hard to know who to trust. Thomas is no saint, he likes the ladies of the night even though he is in love with a woman called Kitty who he lives with sometimes when she is in better humour with him, he drinks, he fights. A loveable bad guy any mother would urge you to stay away from. He owes a few debts that he has to repay and they are not of the monetary kind. By trying to pay off his debt it could see him hurt at the least or hung at worst. When trouble lands at his door he has no choice but to get involved, his instincts are put to work and he is a man on a mission! ***This was amazing! I felt like I was really in London during that time, the sights and smells, and the dismal criminal justice system.*** If you enjoy books based in London during this time in history then you will really enjoy this, Thomas makes a great main character and his sidekicks like Sam and Kitty are a likeable pair.

Marjorie Lacy

I knew as soon as I saw the cover, that I would love this book! When I opened it and saw the size of the print, good and clear, I was happier still.

Books that tell you how the book will unfold in a Prologue, encourages me to read. This is a quick moving book - a page turner! Tom and Kitty's love story keeps getting interrupted by Tom's ability to find amazing adventures - some of them seek him out...

***Antonia is a superb storyteller**, I liked the fact that after the Epilogue, she included potted histories of the characters. Thoughtfully including a suggested list of books, for if we want to find out more.*

In every respect, a satisfying read. Waiting for the next one now.

Lynda DeFreitas

Thomas Hawkins is innocent so why is he on the way to the gallows at Tyburn for a murder he did not commit?

***An exciting read.** It grips from the beginning as Thomas Hawkins sits in the cart taking him to the gallows at Tyburn. He has his back resting against his coffin and is thinking about how he came to be in this predicament.*

The story is told in flashbacks from a document written mainly by Tom whilst in prison for the murder of his neighbour.

There are lots of twists and turns in this story and it is not until the very end that we find out if Tom survives the gallows or not.

*Based loosely on a true story concerning the king's mistress and her estranged husband, **the author uses real life characters and lots of research on the period to bring the novel alive and make it believable.***

I enjoyed reading this book and look forward to more by Antonia Hodgson.

Peter Baiden

Antonia Hodgson's well researched second novel, continues the story of 'Thomas Hawkins', but easily 'stands alone'.

Leading readers from the close, filthy, network of London's, early Georgian, slums, to the centre of Queen Caroline's (corrupt) Court. This is a fictional account of a true story.

We are introduced to greed; envy; lies; deceit; cockfighting; prostitution and murder, that encompasses a broad spectrum of the population.

Accused by a dishonest magistrate of his murdered neighbour's death, Hawkins sets out to clear his name. In his search for justice, assisted by a strange array of friends, he encounters falsehoods, cheating and a ride to the gallows.

The story is fast moving and clearly written by an author who loves her work; with an ability to maintain the reader's interest from the first to the final page.

Jennie Thrift

A brilliant trip back in time!

This was brilliant! I felt like I was on a school trip, being taken on a tour of London. You can almost smell, see and feel everything described and on top of that the story of Thomas Hawkins is fascinating.

I've already started recommending this book, even to people who aren't keen on the genre as it really is just great.

Sarah Musk

A boisterous story set in Georgian London. Thomas Hawkins and his feisty girlfriend, Kitty, are an attractive pair of adventurers in a corrupt but exciting age.

This is an often boisterous journey through mid-eighteenth century London. The hero, Thomas Hawkins, is about to be hung and the story is about how he came to be in that unfortunate position. Thomas is a typical, fun-loving, good-natured young man who, through recklessness and naivety, finds himself in dangerous situations. It takes a little while for the story to get going but once it does it progresses at breakneck speed - it is sometimes a little difficult to get a sense of the timescale. Does the story take place over a few days, weeks or months? I couldn't get a firm grip on that.

Otherwise I thought Antonia Hodgson portrayed Georgian London very realistically - the seamy underside, the brutal lives of the poor and criminal and the all-encompassing corruption. The encounters with Queen Caroline were particularly interesting - she was known to be a very intelligent woman who was suspected to be the real power behind her husband, the king.

I hope this is not the last we hear of Thomas Hawkins and his feisty girlfriend, Kitty. I think there are potentially lots of adventures in store for them in the service of the Queen and, for one, would look forward to reading them.

George Willmet

Heading for the gallows to hang for a murder of which he is innocent Thomas Hawkins still prays for a late pardon. As the tale of his many adventures unfolds the question is - will the pardon arrive?

Debauched, dirty and dangerous, that was London in 1728 and Thomas Hawkins loved it. More a village than a city, everyone seemed to know all about everyone else. Tom was a country bred gentleman now living the life of a gambler and drinker in the seedier part of the city, supported by his feisty lover Kitty. Trouble is never far away and Tom seems to attract it more than most. He becomes involved in a murder where he is implicated and struggles to clear his name. His adventures take him from St. James's Palace to the slums of St. Giles where he has dubious allies in both camps. He literally battles his way around the city trying to locate the murderer and clear his name encountering many scoundrels and villains along the way. Every turn, however, seems to complicate matters and not solve them. All the while his main concern is to protect Kitty who, against his wishes, is determined to do her bit to help.

Will the pardon arrive in time to save him? Has he managed to protect Kitty?

The tale rattles along at a good pace and the action is gripping and exiting.

The graphic detail lets you know how London was back then with crime and corruption everywhere. *Knowing who was a friend and who an enemy appears to have been very tricky.*

Jo-anne Atkinson – www.pluckedhighbrow.wordpress.com

The return of the rakish anti-hero from 'The Devil in the Marshalsea'. A clever, twisty book from an author who has burst onto the historical fiction scene.

Thomas Hawkins is about to be hanged for murder. He says he didn't commit the crime but the mob don't believe him. Thomas is a gentleman but he is a gambler who lives in sin with a woman of property. Linked to a gang leader, Thomas becomes involved in a plot to try to help the King's mistress but who can he trust – right to the end.

Hawkins is the anti-hero of Hodgson's first novel, 'The Devil in the Marshalsea', and he makes a return here. Set a few months later this book picks up the story as Tom finds it difficult to settle down and therefore gets involved in more plots and machinations. This can be read as a standalone book as well as a sequel. Hawkins is a well-written character and the cast around him are as believable as many of them are grotesque.

Hodgson has a rare talent of being able to truly immerse the reader in time and place, her research and application of the knowledge she has gained about 18th

*Century London is superb. The story is clever, twisty and with enough set-pieces to excite without going over the top. In fact many events are based on true fact and Hodgson has used these to weave a fictional narrative. **The first novel was excellent, this one is brilliant and I eagerly await the next.***

Ann Peet

Well written historical mystery tale with lots of atmospheric detail and engaging characters.

Part rollicking adventure story set in 1720s London, part intriguing murder mystery, this is an atmospheric and compelling novel.

Tom is in prison waiting to be hanged for murder. In flashbacks, as he writes his testament, we see him becoming embroiled in a plot at the Palace and investigating a murder. The plot is ingenious but what makes it such a good read is the bringing alive of the squalor and stench of some of the worst parts of London and the engaging characters. Tom is a lovable rogue type and there is a lot of humour in his first person account of his misadventures. My favourite though is his feisty girlfriend, Kitty.

It is a great page turner as we wait to see if Tom will be hanged and whether he will discover the murderer. The story romps along at a good pace yet manages to include many well researched details of that period from life at the Royal Court to the horrors of prison.

A well written, thoroughly enjoyable historical novel.

Katy Noyes

Standalone or as part of the series, this historical murder mystery is full of period detail, rascals and rogues and a tense ride to Tyburn...

Thomas Hawkins is enjoying his liberty after spending a fraught time in the Marshalsea debtors' prison, and has started to build a life with Kitty, owner of a risqué bookshop. But, as has happened to him before, events around him force him to become involved in dark and deadly goings-on that threaten his own life.

We see from the opening that Thomas is on his way to Tyburn to be hanged - but what has brought the amiable (though a chancer, a gambler and a drinker) and rather decent young man to this end? Snippets of his journey to the noose are interspersed with his story, which will include another bloody murder and a mystery.

It's a grand journey into the nefarious underworld of 1720s London. There are characters from the first book, and lots of new ones to loathe and respect alike. A particular villain is well-drawn and absolutely repugnant.

The period setting is vivid and well chosen for the corrupt mystery of the murder, with lots of detail (and notes at the end about the real characters and setting) that brings it to life beautifully.

Thomas is a great narrator to read along with - he's by-and-large a sympathetic young man. A bit of a rogue but with a truly good heart, who does the right thing even at his own expense. Kitty is a very strong (at times annoyingly so) female lead, and they make a winning couple.

The story ends on a note that leads the reader to expect a further story from Hodgson about this time period and with familiar characters (and with a potential new sidekick), which is fine by me. I like the period setting, enjoy Hodgson's plotting and mysteries, and will definitely read another by her.

Pam Kennedy

Loved this book can't praise it enough.

This is one of the most atmospheric books I have ever read. I loved every word of this book it is brilliant. *Thomas Hawkins, well what can I say about this lovely rogue, he is lovely. I cannot remember how many times when he was in a predicament that I thought keep your mouth shut Thomas but he never did. I hope that he has lots more adventures, if so I will be there. I never liked this period of history before, it's different now though.*

Katie Hoare

The story is set in 1728 and loosely based on actual events is about Thomas Hawkins, who is a man who does not mix necessarily with the right people, and the first time you meet him he is on the way to the gallows at Tyburn. This journey to the gallows at the start, and then in part throughout the story, is told in the third person, but the part of his own confession is set in the first person.

The reader is made to feel that they have been transported back to the period, and are introduced to some very interesting characters, those who are near to him and brief meetings. This is well written and a good read with some really good descriptions.

Evelyn Love- Gajardo

*I hadn't read 'The Devil in the Marshalsea', the previous book about the same characters, but that didn't matter, as this is a standalone book. The period detail is so realistic, the book almost feels like it was written at the time in which it is set. The book moves at a fast pace with lots of twists and turns, and the characters are all convincing. The story is loosely based on real events, with real historical characters mixed in with fictional characters giving the book an even more realistic feel. **I would highly recommend this book- a great read from start to finish.***

Keith Currie

Half a Rogue: the last words and testament of Thomas Hawkins found guilty of murder most dreadful in the year of Our Lord, 1728, his sins and his errors.

'I confess that I am a gambler. I confess that I am over-fond of liquor and low company. I have wasted many nights in taverns and brothels and cannot say that I regret it.... I confess all these things. But I swear upon my soul, I am not guilty of murder.' These are the final words of Thomas Hawkins as he stands upon the scaffold awaiting the drop. The thing is that no-one deserves to hang simply for being a rake and that appears to be the fate in store for Tom Hawkins.

The novel is the sequel to 'The Devil in the Marshalsea', which I have not read, but on the basis of this one, certainly plan to do so. Set in London in 1728 there are a number of plots going on: Hawkins is living with Kitty Sparkes, the owner of a bookshop, whose clients generally ask for literature kept under the counter. Local moral puritans want the shop closed and Hawkins arrested. Then the murder of a close neighbour occurs and Hawkins falls under suspicion. In the meantime he has been employed as an agent by Queen Caroline to solve a problem in rather higher society. Add criminal gangs and corrupt aristocrats and Tom is swept out of his depth and towards the hangman's noose.

*The novel is a terrific adventure story, full of larger than life characters, a narrative that stretches credulity but just remains on the right side of credibility. Tom Hawkins is really an innocent, duped and exploited, but protected too, by those around him. As the street-wise boy, Sam Fleet says; this 'half-rogue' would have made an excellent parson. **This is a most enjoyable read, filled with twists and turns, satisfying to the very end.***

Susan Mooney

A step back in time to 1728... London Streets, Dark Alleys & even darker Characters are what makes this an absolutely riveting read

Is he innocent?

This man that heads to the Gallows!

Thomas Hawkins life takes a turn for the worst when he is accused of Murder.

Now on his way to the gallows, Hawkins has to hope & pray that he is able to prove he didn't commit the crime.

A thoroughly enjoyable read, that is full of sight, sound & colour.

10/10. Loved it from first chapter.

Twitter address @truckermercedes