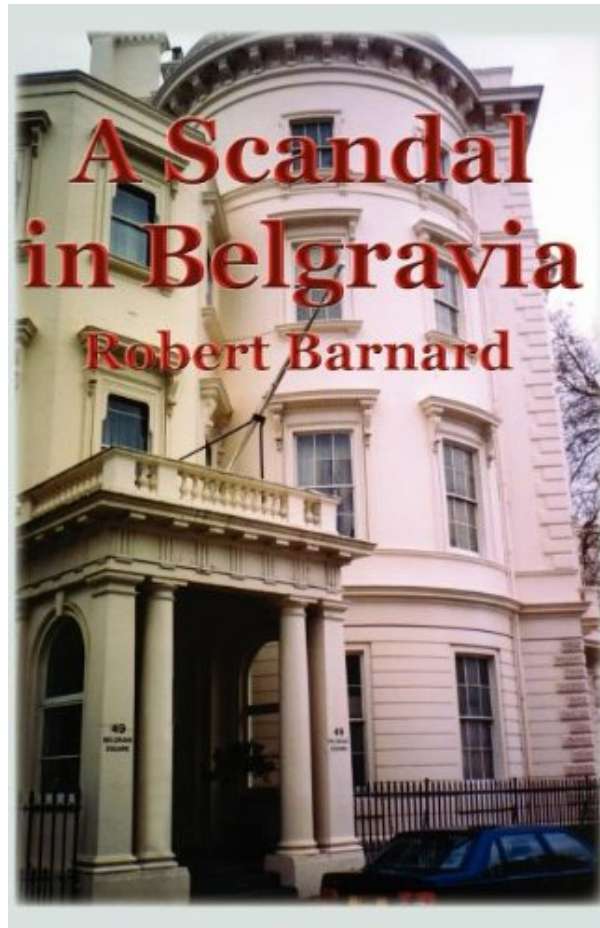
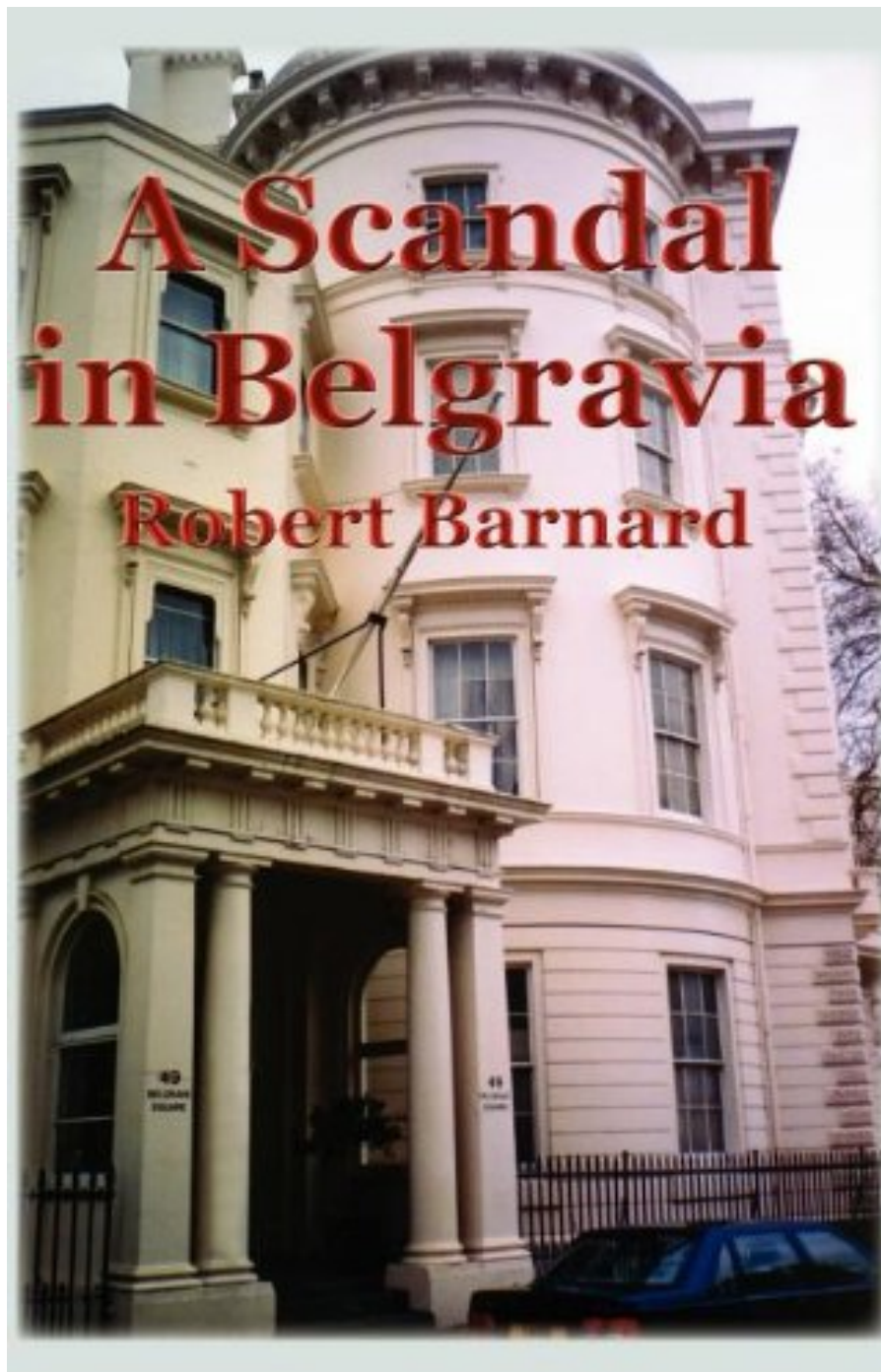


SCANDAL IN BELGRAVIA, A (MISSING MYSTERIES) BY ROBERT BARNARD



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From Publishers Weekly

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England. He and Proctor were friends, not lovers, and worked together at the Foreign Office. Then, 30 years ago, at the height of the Suez crisis, Timothy was murdered--according to the police, by his Scottish pal Andrew Forbes, who took off for Spain and was never tried. Here, Proctor is haunted by a feeling that Forbes may have been innocent and sets out to find the truth. The search takes him to Forbes's sister, to Los Angeles, where his own son and grandson live, and finally to Wycliffe's aristocratic family and his still-living father. What he discovers is a shocker--and there's another yet to come. The reader may doubt the ability of Proctor and other characters to recall in detail 30-year-old conversations and events, but Proctor's story is quietly engrossing all the way to its jolting conclusion. -- Copyright ©1991, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

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Peter Proctor is a retired British MP attempting to write his memoirs to stave off boredom. Unfortunately they seem to be creating more problems than he anticipated, and not just of the writers-block variety. Peter keeps getting sidetracked by the death of his friend Timothy Wycliffe, which occurred thirty-odd years before. Tim was allegedly beaten to death by his boyfriend in the posh neighborhood of Belgravia, but the case was never solved. A fascinating look at British society during the 1950's and it's evolution to current times. It's not only brilliantly written, but fast-paced and intriguing as well. A must read for anyone who enjoys a good mystery!

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Most helpful customer reviews

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

One of Bernard's Best

By A. Anderson

The other Bernard Best is *The False Inspector Dew*. It is fabulous.

Occasionally, Robert Bernard writes a book that ambles along, telling a story by a fairly distant narrator who is propelled by curiosity to look into a tangled set of facts. *The Scandal in Belgravia* is the most successful of Bernard's approach--the sort of book you are sorry to finish--and the narrator is not removed. Belgravia is an area of London where the well to do and -- at one time --the literati, lived. Usual conventional mores war with the individuals who have a different point of view. Our hero has worked for the government his whole life (a former minister)and is the picture of respectability. He becomes interested in a death, and the tangled set of facts, and as he investigates, he changes. It is too easy to give away the plot and its "Gee, I should have seen it coming" ending. It is hard to ask you to take on faith that this cleverly plotted, carefully unfolded novel is a gift to any reader who enjoys the understated English approach to mystery and human psychology. It helps, but is not required, if you know a bit of the Profumo scandal [government minister found supporting a prostitute] which shattered the public view of the English government as more morally pure than yours and mine. You do have to accept that, once upon a time, a scandal was a bad thing that brought down careers and ruined that most valuable of commodities: respectability. (A point of view that is rapidly becoming archaic.) If you like an English mystery, you will love this one.

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Politics, Mystery, History, and Brits!

By Ms. Antoinette P. Burnham

This is a very worthwhile little mystery read, very much like being in Britain in the company of political and government sorts without any special consideration being given to explain the asides to us silly colonials.

Anglophiles might enjoy this more than general mystery readers, and it helps a lot to be familiar with the

history of the 50s and 60s in Britain. Even so, the characters are well-delineated and the situations speak for themselves, so fear not.

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful.

A masterful tour-de-force!

By kellytwo

A SCANDAL IN BELGRAVIA is a very different sort of book, even for an author of Robert Barnard's excellent capabilities. Written in first person, it is narrated in a most engaging and chatty style by a former politician, Peter Proctor, who is (as are most retired politicians) working on his memoirs. But Peter Proctor was not just any politician, to be sure. He didn't rise very high, although he did achieve the status of senior cabinet minister, as well as being an MP for several terms. What sets him apart, however, is that, when his career began in the Foreign Office, in the early to middle 1950s, England was trying to get itself back on the right foot again, after struggling through the War, only to find itself engaged in the massive blunder that was the Suez crisis. Proctor had already resigned his post in the F.O., but was still shocked and unhappy by the brutal death of his friend, Timothy Wycliffe. The bigger mystery is why this death received so little press coverage. Tim's death also causes a monumental 'writer's block' in the mature Proctor, who decides to investigate the still-unsolved crime for himself. The book takes us back and forth in time, as Proctor exercises his memory as well as himself while digging for the facts.

Of course, it was Suez that occupied so much newspaper space, but still, one would have thought that such a shocking death, and one with such a propensity for scandal and gossip, would have rated more than the occasional one sentence it did achieve. For Tim was very open (for that time) about his homosexuality, and that was obviously the motive behind the murder. At that time, such behavior was very much against the law, and was an imprisonable offence. To be sure, Tim was the grandson of a marquess, but still--

Not at all impressed with himself, Proctor is by turns still naïve (cocooned, he calls it), prescient, dogged, and most of all, a man at ease with himself. A man who, thirty-five years earlier, could have a good friend who was homosexual, while still being very hetero himself.

It would appear that a young man, employed as an electrician by the BBC, Andrew Forbes, was labelled as the murderer, but everyone who will speak to Proctor, discounts that possibility. When Proctor travels to the US to, with any luck, confront Forbes, he finds himself believing the story he is told. Tim was alive, although battered, when Forbes left him.

With the help of his children, his researcher, old friends, and others, Proctor pulls away the layers of concealment to expose the perpetrator of the crime. By the time you've made the journey with Proctor, you'll definitely wish for more politicians in his mold, regardless of whether Whig or Tory, Labor or Conservative, Republican or Democrat. I promise you won't soon forget this book, especially the final few pages. Guaranteed to make the hair stand up on the back of your neck!

Robert P. Barnard has written a slew of books. To me, the only thing any one of them has in common with any other one, other than being a very enjoyable reading experience, is the marvelous writing accompanied by a very shart wit. The wit usually presents itself in different ways, depending on the plot and the characters, of course, but it is still ever-present. Hardly surprising, then, that he's won so many awards. They're all well-deserved.

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