

Scots cunning and Swedish inspiration

Marcel Berlins enjoys shrewd detective work across the globe

Peter May follows his superb Lewis trilogy with an equally absorbing work, set partly on the same Hebridean isle and culminating on a tiny settlement in the middle of Canada's Gulf of St Lawrence. The 129 inhabitants of Entry Island (a real place) speak only English. Sime Mackenzie, a Montreal cop of Scottish origin, is sent to help the mainly French-speaking police investigate a murder. The obvious suspect in *Entry Island* is the dead man's wife. As he delves deeper, Mackenzie's inquiry (complicated by the fact that the crime scene investigator is his ex-wife, recently divorced amid much bitterness) reveals a link with his own ancestry: his family landed up in Canada after being viciously forced from their land during the Highland Clearances. Mackenzie's historical quest merges rivetingly with his 21st-century police work.

Dr John Watson was not, it seems, quite as dim as he's portrayed in the Sherlock Holmes stories. Robert Ryan (with the consent of the Conan Doyle estate) reveals his true mettle. *The Dead Can Wait* is in no sense a pastiche, but a seriously good, very readable, well-researched novel incorporating the First World War, detection and espionage. It is 1916. Watson has become an expert on the injuries and mental traumas suffered by soldiers in battle. The British are secretly developing a new kind of weapon. But, in its first test, seven men

Entry Island
by Peter May

Quercus, 534pp, £16.99
* £13.59; e-book £14.99

The Dead Can Wait
by Robert Ryan

Simon & Schuster, 463pp,
£18.99 * £14.99
e-book £38.39

Trouble Man
by Tom Benn

Jonathan Cape, 326pp
£12.99 * £10.99
e-book £13.59

Long Way Home
by Eva Dolan

Harvill Secker, 395pp
£14.99 * £12.99
e-book £15.65

A Darker Shade
ed. John-Henri
Holmberg

Head of Zeus, 331pp
12.99 * £11.69
e-book £7.99



LEAVING HOLMES Dr Watson, here played by Jude Law in 2009, is a brilliant lone detective in Robert Ryan's new novel

involved become insane, then die spectacularly. The sole survivor is rendered mute. Watson is commanded to discover the causes of the tragedy, but there are foreign spies around and enemies within.

Tom Benn's ultra-noir *Trouble Man* (as with his two preceding novels) depicts the criminal underbelly of Manchester with force and style. Good story, superior characterisation, convincingly bleak atmosphere. My reservation is that just about all the local dialogue — there's a lot of it — is spelled phonetically. Not just frequently used words ("ah" for I, "o" for of) or the dropping of "h" and "g" at the beginning and end of words, but virtually whole sentences. For example: "Ah feel it now n ah shunt cos am pissed." What's "nuva"? Another? My reading of *Trouble Man* was troubled. This is the first time in many decades of reviewing crime fiction that I've

had such a problem. I've a feeling that Benn is a terrific noir novelist. I wish that he'd let me confirm it.

According to the strident media of the moment, Peterborough is expected to be

In the first test of the new British secret weapon, seven men become insane and die

one of the main targets for the allegedly large numbers of Romanians and Bulgarians planning to come to Britain. It is either good luck or astute insight by Eva Dolan that her impressive debut, *Long Way Home*, is set in that city's shabbier suburbs, already teeming with legal and illegal migrants. An unidentified man is burnt to

death in a garden shed. DI Zigic, of Serbian ancestry, and DS Ferreira, born in Portugal, both of the local Hate Crimes Unit, investigate. Witnesses and suspects include an array of Eastern Europeans and British racists. The clever plot illuminates the social issues and personal despair that often accompany immigration to cities already suffering financial stress.

A Darker Shade is an entertaining collection of 17 short stories by Swedish crime writers, many of them familiar names. Stieg Larsson is there with an imaginative story he wrote aged 17; Sjöwall and Wahlöö describe meeting an unusually successful conman; Henning Mankell and Håkan Nesser jointly describe an unlikely meeting of their detectives. Contributions by authors less known to the British demonstrate the depth of the Swedish crime pool.