

## **The House at Riverton by Kate Morton – July 2011 – Review Score 5.5**

Riverton Manor was a grand English country house. The family within led a privileged life with all its finery and glittering society parties of the times. In addition the house held mysteries and secrets of its own. Love, loss and tragedy are played in fascinating turn surrounded by ghosts of old memories as the last tragedy is revealed in its final pages.

The story is told by Grace Bradley once a housemaid at Riverton. Set in the 1920's we move with Grace as a young girl of 14 to an elderly woman of 99 by way of flashbacks. The story begins with the knowledge that Grace's life is to be dramatised by a film company and Grace meets the young girl who is to play her part.

Although the novel has a ponderous beginning our interest is kept by the descriptions of shell shock as the soldiers arrive home after the First World War. Also much time and space is given to the topics of the emancipation of women and the fading position and wealth of the aristocracy. This background is interwoven with the relationships between the sisters whilst Grace looks on.

This text is Kate Morton's first novel. She is an Australian who had to undertake much research to equip herself of the knowledge of England during this period. Several members of the Book Club did not like the anachronisms which arose throughout the novel for example the use of 'tights' and not stockings when talking of women's hosiery. Yet this is a small price to pay for a plethora of well researched material running through the novel. Overall the group gave the novel a score of 5.5.