Scotland Yard’s Inspector Ian Rutledge brought the Great War home with him, and its horrors haunt him still. On New Year’s Eve 1919, he finds a brass cartridge casing, similar to countless others he’d seen on the battlefield, on the steps of a friend’s house. Soon there are more, purposely placed where he is sure to discover them.

Unexpectedly drawn away from London to a small Northamptonshire village, he investigates the strange case of a local constable shot with a bow and arrow in an allegedly spirit-infested wood. Here among the taciturn townsfolk, embroiled in a three-year-old mystery of a vanished young girl, Rutledge hopes to keep his own ghosts at bay.

But his stalker has followed him. And now the emotionally shattered policeman walking the razor’s edge of sanity must somehow keep his balance long enough to discover who is tracking him...and why.

My Personal Review:
I enjoyed this novel, as I do all of Charles Todd’s books about Inspector Ian Rutledge. The Rutledge novels are well-written, are replete with minutely researched post-Great War period details, and delineate a type of character - the psychologically wounded war veteran trying to adjust - not seen often in literature these days. All these things are to the good, and Todd has marked out an almost virgin territory that has me hooked as a fan.

But, what for many may be part of the appeal of these books has become a liability for me. I’m talking about the voice of Hamish MacLeod that resides inside Rutledge’s head. If Hamish in life was as bitter, abusive, and...
censorious as he is in Rutledge's mind, then little wonder he died friendless and alone. After eight times out with this unyielding and unfriendly presence, I find his running commentary tedious, irritating, and extraneous to the mystery.

Hamish's continued and unabated presence is also beginning to stretch credibility. If he is truly present, then Rutledge is insane and shouldn't be able to withstand the constant carping much longer, at least while continuing to solve emotionally taxing mysteries one after another. If he's a manifestation of Rutledge's guilt, then why doesn't this otherwise insightful and rational man consult someone and get some help in exorcising the ghost - an alienist (as psychiatrists were known then), or an Anglican clergyman trained as an exorcist, or his new almost-girl friend, the mysterious psychic Mrs. Channing?

Otherwise, A Long Shadow is up to Todd's usual standard. The characters are well-drawn, as is the depiction of English village life, with its class system, its insiders, its outsiders, and its endless gossip and secrets. The creation of the brooding presence of Friths Woods was a masterstroke, hinting at ancient, forgotten evils and England's pagan past. The woods' long shadow has affected the village of Dudlington more than its inhabitants know, just as it affects Rutledge who's combating a new enemy, an anonymous stalker.

While it's a wonder that Ian Rutledge stays so calm with Hamish gnawing away at him inside and an assassin lurking outside, I am also puzzled as to how much longer Superintendent Bowles is going to be allowed to persecute Inspector Rutledge. An interesting aspect of the series is that chronologically each mystery picks up after the last, weeks, sometimes days, after the other ends. Rutledge has shown an extraordinary degree of professional success in a matter of months since his return to the Force, capturing notorious murderers, ferreting out serial killers, solving crimes that were not even known to occur, and saving potential victims. In the real world, he'd be a celebrity, at least among his colleagues, not the passive victim of a petty tyrant and jealous superior who, among other things, seems to be on the take.

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