BOOKS I HAVE READ: OCTOBER 2015

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Two military biographies, one dreadful novel, one good novel, one amazing novel and book about running silly distances: my take for this month.

Category: Reviews

For some reason I found myself reading a couple of books about snipers this month. BothÂ Sniper in Helmand: Six Months on the FrontlineÂ andÂ A Sniper's ConflictÂ were cheap on Kindle (which is probably why I bought them). If you are interested in reading first hand accounts of conflict, then you might find these worth a look; but they won't be top of the list for people who don't read military history.

Sycamore GapÂ is a murder mystery set in the Northumberland Countryside. It's actually a follow up to Holy Island which I mentionedÂ here. The book is free on Kindle, so it doesn't cost you anything more than the time it takes to read it; but to be honest, I'd use that time to read something else. The first book was slightly bonkers, this one is way over the top and I won't read a third one, unless they pay me to.

Thirty years ago, Brigadier Sir John Hackett wrote a couple of future history books about the third world war. They were strong on politics and economics, but didn't have much by way of guns or explosions. Tom Clancy made up for this a few years later, with his take on what the third world war would look like: Red Storm Rising, which is my favourite of his books.Â Ghost Fleet: A Novel of the Next World WarÂ by Singer and Cole is an attempt to bring this genre into the post-cold war, digital era. It's a diverting enough novel which I enjoyed,Â even though the plot is rather predictable (untrustworthy enemy launch a devastating attack on the US, but the plucky Americans pull together and against all odds humiliate the bad guys). I'm not sure that I'd splash out on a paper copy but at 99p, it's a great buy on Kindle.

What can I say about Andy Weir'sÂ The Martian? Well, the novel is better than the film and the film was blooming brilliant! I loved this book. For those who've not heard about the story, it's effectively Robinson Crusoe on Mars; with a stranded astronaut having to work out how to stay alive until he can be rescued. There is a lot of hard science and a good few laugh out loud moments (there are also a few rude words). If you've seen the film, buy the book. If you haven't seen the film, buy the book!

This month, I rereadÂ So You Want to Run an Ultra: How to Prepare for Ultimate Endurance, a book I bought about a year ago. At the time I bought it, I didn't want to run an ultra (which begs the question of why I bought it in the first place), but by the time I'd finished reading it, I did. I'd encourage anyone to read this book; but be prepared for the impact it might have on your life.