

Welcome to CapeCodOnline.com Get Started

Subscribe Today. See our Special Offers. Current Print Subscribers, activate your online access.

Log In | Register | Subscribe 1 of 3 premium clicks used this month

Search CapeCodOnline.com

51° Forecast | Radar

ORDER YOUR PLATE ONLINE

NEWS BUSINESS SPORTS OPINION ENTERTAINMENT LIFESTYLE MULTIMEDIA COMMUNITY NEWS REPORTS VISITOR GUIDE MARKETPLACE

Mary Malloy taps medieval world for murder most foul

Photo 1 of 1 | View Enlarged Photo



By Joanna McQuillan Weeks
jweeks@s-t.com
November 06, 2011

ike Chaucer's Wife of Bath, Mary Malloy is an adventurous woman. She has hiked across England in the footsteps of the "Canterbury Tales" character and voyaged north to Spitsbergen, Norway, and in the South Seas.

A professor of maritime history at the Sea Education Association in Woods Hole who also teaches museum studies at Harvard University, she balances her academic career with a lighter pursuit: writing mysteries.

Her newest, "Paradise Walk" (Leapfrog Press, 286 pages, \$15.95), finds historian Lizzie Manning tracing the path of Chaucer's bawdy Wife of Bath. In the vein of Dan Brown's blockbuster, "The Da Vinci Code," "Paradise Walk" entwines fiction and history.

What begins for Lizzie as a research commission to find evidence of Alison the Weaver, who may have inspired Chaucer's character, becomes a quest riddled with intrigue and danger. Woven into this mystery with textile clues are the legends of King Arthur, the relics of St. Thomas Becket and King Henry VIII's brutal dissolution of the monasteries.

"One of the biggest challenges was to have a story based on 'The Canterbury Tales,'" Malloy says, because you can't expect most readers to be familiar with Chaucer's work. "There's so much in it that still feels so contemporary," she adds, citing its lustiness and vulgar humor.

The first Lizzie Manning mystery, "The Wandering Heart," dealt with medieval tales, the Knights Templar and naval history, springing from the research Malloy did for her Ph.D. dissertation at Brown University. The debut novel prompted Publishers Weekly to comment, "Malloy mixes history and fantasy with flair and delivers a wonderfully satisfying puzzler."

"Each took me about 10 years to write," says Malloy, since "the research takes so much time. ... I have to pick up the pace," she says with a laugh.

Most of the actual writing of "Paradise Walk" was done during a seven-week "Sea Semester" voyage from Tahiti to Hawaii, when Malloy tapped away on her laptop while she braced herself with one foot against a bulkhead in the sharply heeling SEA ship. Writing about the dewy English countryside must have provided a respite from the tropical heat.

Another of Malloy's facets is her interest in musical traditions at sea; she has performed the songs of American mariners at museums and colleges around the world. At one point in "Paradise Walk," she has Lizzie lustily singing "The Twa Corbies," an ancient English ballad, as she hikes through a sheep pasture.

"I always try to put a song in every book, so that I can sing it at book signings," Malloy says.

Our intrepid sleuth Lizzie, when excited or provoked, uses pretty salty language at times in "Paradise Walk." Asked if that is how academics, in her experience, express themselves, Malloy chuckles, "Oh, God, yes." Acknowledging that she spends "a certain amount of time with sailors," the author says mariners "would be startled in the fo'c'sle of a whaler" by some language that is heard on campuses today.

Text Size: A | A | A

Print this Article Email this Article

ShareThis

Meet Mary Malloy

When: 2-3 p.m. Saturday

Where: Titcomb's Bookshop, 432 Route 6A, East Sandwich.

Like CapeCodOnline.com? **SUBSCRIBE**

For all your home improvement needs:
ROOFING
SIDING
WINDOWS
DECKS
PORCHES
ADDITIONS
REMODELING

MAKE YOUR HOUSE A CARE FREE HOME

CARE FREE Homes Inc.
 508-997-1111 carefreehomescompany.com

Lime light DEALS

Current Price: \$25
 50% off

Core Computers
 Spend \$25 and Get \$50 For Apple/Mac Products and More!

BUY NOW!

Deal Expires: 2d:11h:37m

49 COUPONS ONLINE TODAY **MORE >>**

Bulkheads \$50 off Security Doors
Hart Construction

Online Special - 15% off Sunglasses & Eyeglasses
Sia Optical

Woman's Workout Company offers 50% off on ALL Advanced Health Systems Weight Loss System products!
The Woman's Workout Company

VETERAN'S DAY MANICURE SPECIAL

HOMES JOBS RENTALS

