

Chapter 1 : Joan Coggin (Author of Who Killed the Curate?)

This book follows two story lines. The most obvious, of course, is in the title. Who, indeed, killed the curate? By the time you have finished the book, you will have the answer.

Joan Coggins is a Golden Ager - who knew? The book was a joy from beginning to end. Quote from the backcover: But the books are mysteries, so that makes them perfect. Actually this is an ultra-cozy, but loaded with charm and the little delights that writers of that era were so clever about. It turns out that Joan Coggin was not the most prolific of writers, she wrote four mysteries and then stopped. After the mysteries published from - , she wrote no more for thirty years and died in AND oh by the way, Christmas happens in the middle of it all. I mean, come on, what could be better? She is in her early twenties, he is in his early forties. It is love at first sight to the consternation of friends and family. From the back cover: However, since she is charming, endearing and utterly guileless, she is not faulted for her lack of brilliance. The villagers welcome Lady Lupin with open arms, thankful their vicar has at last brought home a wife even if she is not exactly what they had imagined for him. The setting is just right: Glanville, a charming village in the English countryside of Sussex, a warm and comfortable rectory with cozy nooks and crannies, working fire places and comfy chairs, the requisite English garden and an exhausting array of assorted villagers to keep things hopping. Andrew was not sure of their suitability, but he liked seeing her in them. Andrew burst out laughing, then he caught her up in his arms and kissed her until she had to recomb her hair and repowder her face. Andrew sighed as he watched her. When they say seven forty-five in Glanville, the mean seven forty-five. The curate in the title, Mr. I should like to see a missionary box in every home, I should like children to spend their leisure hours in reading lives of missionaries; I should like every boy and girl in the parish to grow up with the wish to be missionaries themselves. In fact, Lupin likes both women and is therefore most terribly upset with Diane is first suspected of poisoning Mr. She has a strong motive which you will probably deduce rather quickly. But almost everyone in the village sooner or later comes under suspicion for a brief moment, even Andrew! Brown wife of the town doctor, unable to keep her servants for long and always on the lookout for that rarity - an unemployed maid, churchwardens Mr. All very nice people, very respectable and not the sorts of people who would ever think of committing murder. But you know what Agatha Christie had to say about respectable people. Though the primary reason for liking the book is Lupin Lorrimer Hastings herself, with ambience a close second, not to mention the sorts of English village goings on that seem quaint and engaging and oddly attractive - at least to me.

Imagine her dilemma when the curate is murdered on Christmas Eve - luckily two of her most amusing London pals are on hand to help her solve the crime. There's more to "Lady Loops" than this precis suggests, though, all of it enjoyable and somewhat indescribable.

Every effort to stop her failed and she became nationally infamous. The King - Louis XV - took a personal interest, partly because she caused unrest in an area of tension and potential revolution. Many explanations - mutant, prehistoric beast etc. Among all the popular monster mysteries she was unique - she left behind one hundred bodies proving herself real and guilty beyond doubt. We always laugh at what we secretly fear. A greater depth of information than has previously been available in English on her career is therefore offered - all based on recorded facts and including no fiction. You can drink more deeply of either at a price. Prowl on but do look over that left shoulder occasionally. She took only until the 26th to kill a girl at Thorts and prove the assumption wrong. Antoine as Le Loup de Chazes on 21st September but was seen at Marsillac on 26th, 27th and 28th of that month. She started a new two year killing career on 21st December, the shortest day of the year and a long Silent Night for little Agnes Mourges. The winter wind hid a very sharp bite indeed, and that Christmas cost Agnes more than the usual arm and a leg: Snowy New Year yielded, for example, the head of little Marie Jeanne Rousset of Milienettes, recognizable only by her staring eyes, everything else being cleanly gnawed away. One poor woman, over 60 years old, nick-named La Sarabande, after the triple-tempo Spanish dance, could find no grass for her cow - her only possession - because of the deep snow. She led it to a marshy area, where sometimes a little greenery penetrated through. She liked marshy areas because her agility and relatively light weight enabled easy escape from mounted pursuers, whom she often deliberately led into mires and left floundering. One father and son - Antoine and Jean Chastel, everyday countryfolk - were in fact imprisoned for it, possibly in the cellar, still to be seen, of an old school, in Sauges en route to the dungeons in Mende. Guess who ended up sitting on his horse stuck in the mud? The Chastels might have got away with it had they not threatened him with a gun when he complained. Another attack with an agricultural theme was that on a farmer, who rose early and started scything his wheat harvest by moonlight. He saw a movement coming towards him but the animal itself was hidden by the tall wheat stalks. He managed to fight her off with his scythe but on arriving home was unable to speak for four hours, being paralysed with terror. She paid for her bravery by losing face, throat and life. There was the mysterious case of the three women of Pompeyrac, going to church near the wood of Favart, when a dark man offered to escort them through the wood. They refused and before leaving he touched one of them with a fur-covered hand. Two women of Escures also on the way to church had a similar experience in an area where, unknown to them, she had just been seen by several people. This time they saw that the man accosting them was covered in fur only when his shirt blew open in the wind. As with all good monster murder mysteries, there has to be the wicked aristocrat solution. In this case he was supposed to have hidden among the nuns of the abbey of Mercoire, the abbess of which was known to take contributions from fugitives. There were also the two bodies found roughly re clothed after death. The relationship of these occurrences to Robert Louis Stevenson and Brothers Grimm is referred to later. Scarlet billows start to spread. Too many horrors, another being what happened to Madame Merle. On 21st June - the witches Sabbath, when the weather was warm enough for the naughtier country folk to dance naked round bonfires, she killed two people and savaged a third. Was this yet more evidence of her apparent sensitivity to Gothic atmosphere - she was often reported in places with supernatural associations - or did she just fancy a hot takeaway with no French dressing? Either way, she came back for seconds and thirds to go. Also in - her busiest year - the case occurred at Javols where a father, a tenant farmer of good reputation, was bound and imprisoned by the fiery Captain Duhamel for failing immediately to report an attack to the authorities. Many attacks remained unreported for fear of becoming involved with ponderous and ineffective bureaucracies, rather like on housing estates today. These records of sturdy porcine or feline beasts in addition to our rakish, wickedly graceful wolf-like lady are too frequent to ignore and add another dimension to the mystery. Another odd fact is that some measurements of distances between her footprints

showed she could make leaps of over 28 feet on level ground. If true, this weighs in favor of the athletic build rather than the stocky one. Reserve judgment on this point. One child died and Madame Jouve herself was injured - the King gave her a reward of livres. The incident was vividly described thus; "The skin of his skull was falling to the right, his cheek was torn, his lip and nose torn away to the root, he died within 3 days. The floor of one meeting hall collapsed from the sheer weight of people crowding in, trying to organize a hunt for her. There was the case of the girl, her little brother having been snatched from her, who bravely rushed into the wood after him and found him peacefully lying there on his back, apparently intact but in fact lacking liver, entrails and blood. The little boy who, on 21st July went to fetch the family cows from their walled meadow near the village of Auvert and simply never returned. There has always been a question mark over his policy. Of the boy himself nothing was ever found. Beast or human criminal that time? Enclosed meadows were particularly dangerous because the drystone walls - similar to those of the Lake District - with their mossy covering camouflaged her perfectly before she pounced. Jumping down from the top of walls and rocky outcrops was one of her favored methods of attack, especially dangerous to those tending flocks who had built their fires up against them for a little more shelter from the Margeride mountain winds. At least they died warm. However, she was much more wary of cows, which were sometimes found spattered with the blood she had spat at them. Her lack of fear of fire, dogs and people, especially women and children, but fear of cattle are strange but consistent features. One struggle against her is particularly clearly recorded by the Curate of Besseyre. This point merits careful thought by the conspiracy theorists. They were the ones tending the lonely mountainside flocks in ones or twos, whereas the men did the heavier work in the farm fields, often in groups and armed with spades, scythes etc. In March to June there were 14 attacks by her within 6 miles of Paulhac. Incidentally, the old village concluded its history tragically, being burned by the German army in Reddish brown with dark ridged stripe down the back. Last seen by people mostly now dead. If she approaches you please leave behind a signed copy of this poster. There were specialist wolf, boar and bear hounds plus as many echelons of trackers, hunters and master-hunters as NHS management grades but wasting less money, having no computers. Contemporary pictures of the fight still exist, some simple, some stylized, as one would expect. One fresh body was found lying out in snow with no tracks or footprints round it at all. Grim facts and bloodless human body parts prove her existence, even if the more lurid tales are suspect. The resulting neglect was sufficient to tip the scales of such a fragile economy into a decline. Louis XV and his court took her very seriously. Problems arising from the Antipopes in Avignon and the Great Schism of to still echoed and the city was not annexed to France until Unlike the curvy courtesans she never embraced the fleshy King, who died from smallpox - a million little bites instead of one big one. Certainly people exploited her for political purposes but equally certainly there was a real dreadful entity conveniently there to exploit. You never know, she might be canonized one day. Often two or three versions are recorded of stories about her life and presumed deaths. There is more than one version of the Loup de Chazes story itself. One states it as genuine, another as fraudulent. Why would they destroy one of the most famous relics in all France unless it was, as many suspected, a fake or, X File style, something people were not to know about, like the hieroglyphics on wooden tablets discovered in at the bases of the giant statues on Easter Island? She did not know this so carried on killing. Can you be completely impossible and yet exist? Certainement, if you are French. Diagrams of its deformities, for example of the jaws, still exist. If it was the solution it was almost certainly contrived and not the whole story, the remainder of which is said to involve human elements and various collusions. It was not his elegant style and cost him the best excuse ever to miss church on Sundays. Suspicion falls on others. This involved tale has already created a semi-fictional novel and more arguments than Liverpool Council. It is for smoky camp fires on long nights. Keep an open mind. Julien in and he writes about hearing of its whereabouts from a woman on a train. He met her by chance, having entered her carriage because he feared she might be molested by two unruly soldiers. Bait was sometimes scattered round the traps. The bait was often unburied carcasses, or parts, of her victims, left out in spite of protests from priests wanting early and decent burials. She never fell for it. Another supporter of poisoning, at least for a time, was M. The chief poisoner was a M. With his assistant he was particularly busy during April and May , buying live dogs, then poisoning them with very big doses to provide ready-poisoned carcasses. The regional Governor, St. Priest,

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finally ordered operations to cease because so many innocent domestic and other animals were dying, including the dogs providing the poisoned carcasses that killed even more dogs. A serious matter for the mountain shepherds to whom loss of their partners could mean starvation. Elaborate traps, decoys and ambushes proved equally ineffective.

Chapter 3 : Who Killed the Curate? (Lady Lupin, book 1) by Joan Coggin

When Lady Lupin turned her back on the gay society life to marry the Vicar of Glanville, she didn't expect she'd have to turn detective in this comic detective novel first published in England in and set at Christmas

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Lady Lupin Lorimer Hastings, the vicar's loopy young wife, can't quite keep the details of her husband's job straight, but when his curate is murdered by poison, she turns her scatterbrained sights.

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By the way, although Who Killed the Curate? was published in , it is set "like many other WWII-era novels, in pre-war times, at Christmas, This must have made it a perfect choice for war-weary readers in search of pure, joyful escape, and it's still a perfect choice for a Christmas escape.

Chapter 9 : Who Killed the Curate? : Joan Coggin :

Joan Coggin was born in in Lemsford, Hertfordshire, the daughter of the Rev. Frederick Ernest Coggin. Her mother, who was the daughter of Edward Lloyd, founder of Lloyd's Weekly London Newspaper, died when she was eight, and the family moved to Eastbourne, where Coggin lived until her own death in