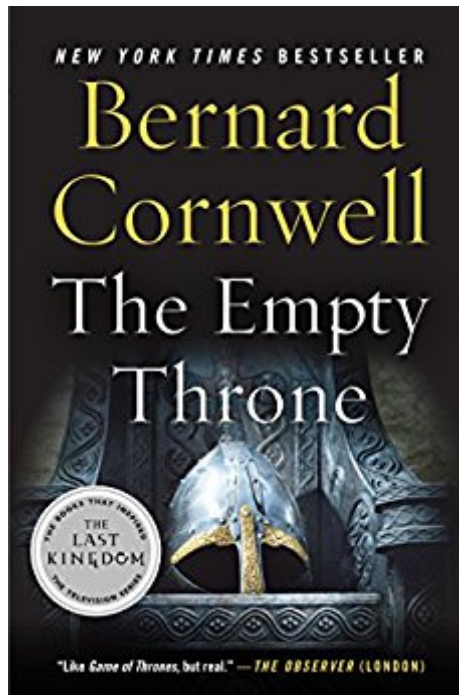




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The Empty Throne: A Novel (Saxon Tales Book 8)



Synopsis

The eighth installment of Bernard Cornwell's "The Saxon Stories" — a New York Times best-selling series chronicling the epic saga of the making of England, "like Game of Thrones, but real" (The Observer, London) — the basis for The Last Kingdom, the hit television series. Britain, early tenth century AD: a time of change. There are new raids by the Vikings from Ireland and turmoil among the Saxons over the leadership of Mercia. A younger generation is taking over. Ælfel the red, the ruler of Mercia, is dying, leaving no legitimate heir. The West Saxons want their king, but Uhtred has long supported Ælfel the flaed, sister to King Edward of Wessex and widow of Ælfel the red. Widely loved and respected, Ælfel the flaed has all the makings of a leader — but could Saxon warriors ever accept a woman as their ruler? The stage is set for rivals to fight for the empty throne.

Book Information

File Size: 1845 KB

Print Length: 325 pages

Publisher: Harper; 1 edition (January 6, 2015)

Publication Date: January 6, 2015

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00JOFTW8I

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #16,424 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #100

in Kindle Store > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Historical > Military #110 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > British #141 in Kindle Store > Literature & Fiction > British & Irish > Historical

Customer Reviews

First, this is a good book. Now I have to also say it is much slower than most of the rest and a bit more predictable since you'll know the writing style, the characters and the story by now it won't be

difficult to figure out what will happen with the plot. There are twists within the plot's scenes that I can say I didn't see coming. Overall though this is a good story and I'm glad I read it. The beginning did concern me in that it didn't seem to coincide with the foreshadowing the author has provided throughout the series. I can't let on more than that but I will say that the concern was the kind a reader has over the characters they've grown attached to. There were certainly no problems with the story and, as usual, Cornwell does a masterful job of weaving history into his fiction. The characters are great, well developed and believable. The story was well told. I recommend this book but I suggest you start at the beginning with the first one and read on. This is hours of inexpensive entertainment.

This pains me beyond words to give my favorite author anything less than a 5 star review, but this was not what I'm used to reading from Cornwell. Where were the battles? And the names were so close in spelling to each other that it was a difficult read. I felt I was reading a narrative of events instead of being engrossed in a great Cornwell novel. I couldn't wait for this book and finished it feeling very disappointed. I hope the next in the series is back to his style of intense scenes and battles.

I have read all of the Uhtred of Bebbanburg books. I enjoy reading them because of the way that Cornwell makes historical eras come alive for a modern reader. The last few books have been rather formulaic, following a fairly predictable trajectory and rehashing the same themes. Cornwell throws in one twist at the beginning of this one, starting with a prologue that is told in first-person point of view, but you realize that it is the perspective of young Uhtred, the son of our Uhtred. It appears that Cornwell is handing the story over to the young heir, who will continue his father's legacy. However, after the prologue, the narrative shifts back to old Uhtred, and barely mentions young Uhtred the rest of the story, although he accompanies his father on every step of the journey. Old Uhtred seems strangely oblivious to his son's presence, although he is now a proven warrior, and Uhtred clearly feels that his ability to continue fighting his way across Britain is coming to an end. In this book, Uhtred is focused on ensuring the succession of Lady Aethelflaed to the Mercian throne, and securing Mercia from new threats originating in Norse-held Ireland. In his efforts to achieve these goals, he relies mostly on the counsel of his old companions, like Finan and Sihtric, not bothering to include his son. He is also concerned with passing on his lessons in statesmanship and political calculation, but the object of these lessons is young Aethelstan, King Edward of Wessex's supposedly illegitimate son, but whom Uhtred knows is legitimate, and schemes for him to

become king of Wessex after Edward.

Cornwall is without doubt THE master of historical fiction. He has created two of the greatest fictional historical characters; Richard Sharpe and Uthred of Beddenburg. I'm torn over which is my favorite but I give it (by serpent breath's edge) to the fearsome Saxon. My one and only complaint is that now I must wait for the next book. I bought this the day it was released but waited to read it as I knew I'd be eagerly anticipating the next book. This takes off right where The Pagan Lord ended, Uthred has defeated Cnut but was gravely injured in the battle. Will he survive to keep defending Aethelflaed or will the series be continued with his son? I cannot wait until the next book. I guess I'll have to check in on Sharpe in the meantime.

This is one of my all-time favorite series, and I devour each addition as soon as I can get my hands on it, even though I usually hate violence, explicit sex, and crude language, all of which occur regularly in this book. The first thing to attract me to the series was the fact of its being historical fiction, especially since it's about the Viking era of history in Britain which we're not taught about in school. The series is centered on a Saxon male who was captured by Vikings as a boy and raised by those Vikings because his crooked uncle refused to pay the ransom on him so that the uncle could be rid of him and take control of the city for which the protagonist, Uthred, should have inherited from his dead father. He ever after wears a small hammer, symbol of Thor, and prays to him when he is in need of help in combat. Sometimes he prays both to the Norse gods and the Christian God, just to be sure. He always wins either way, but the fierceness of his prayers is interesting. In fact, just about everything about him is interesting, and his intelligence, skill, and grace are to be marveled at. He meets all kinds of people, good, plain, humble people, brave and loyal people, hypocritical people, and downright traitors. He is always an enemy to the evil people and oddly, ends up fighting on the side of the Saxon Christians, most of whom do not do him justice. His cursing or swearing could give Shakespeare a good run for his money as it is creative and inventive and sometimes terribly cruel. But he is always just, although his standards might be a little different from most of the ones we claim to hold. The books are entertaining, have a good continuing plot which always brings up unexpected consequences and problems, some of which should prove impossible to get past were there not always a god waiting in an overhead machine to rescue him.. I don't care if the plot is not always completely logical as long as Uthred wins, which he always does. The characters are full, the setting is completely built, and the plot never slows down. In the last couple of books, Uthred keeps talking about his getting old so that he isn't as fast or strong

as he used to be; he is, after all, at least over 40. But he's had a hard life. And he still has to get all the way back to the city he should have inherited,Bebbenburg. I can hardly wait for the next book.

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