



Warrior of Woden (The Bernicia Chronicles Book 5)

Matthew Harffy

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AD 642. Anglo-Saxon Britain. A gripping, action-packed historical thriller and the fifth instalment in the Bernicia Chronicles. Perfect for fans of Bernard Cornwell.

Oswald has reigned over Northumbria for eight years and Beobrand has led the king to ever greater victories. Rewarded for his fealty and prowess in battle, Beobrand is now a wealthy warlord, with a sizable warband. Tales of Beobrand's fearsome black-shielded warriors and the great treasure he has amassed are told throughout the halls of the land.

Many are the kings who bow to Oswald. And yet there are those who look upon his realm with a covetous eye. And there is one ruler who will never kneel before him.

When Penda of Mercia, the great killer of kings, invades Northumbria, Beobrand is once more called upon to stand in an epic battle where the blood of many will be shed in defence of the kingdom.

But in this climactic clash between the pagan Penda and the Christian Oswald there is much more at stake than sovereignty. This is a battle for the very souls of the people of Albion.

Warrior of Woden (The Bernicia Chronicles Book 5) Details

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From Reader Review Warrior of Woden (The Bernicia Chronicles Book 5) for online ebook

antony brennan says

Oh My God. This series is fabulous. The only complaint I have is that I want more, and I want it now. Compelling narrative, believable characters, and great writing draws you in to Anglo-Saxon Britain where life is hard and a battle is never very far way.

In this edition we continue to follow Beobrand and his sworn warriors through the ever evolving political landscape of the time. There is little diplomacy except that which comes at the point of a blade. You don't know who you can trust and the old gods still hang on as Christianity begins to spread it's wares.

I binge read this over two days. It's not enough, I can't wait for the next one. It's been a while since I felt I didn't want a book to end.

James Webb says

My favourite book in the series so far. Grim, gritty and full of the violence and bloodshed which comes with the vying for power of so many kingdoms. Beobrand is a steadfast and dour killer, hardened and numbed by years of death-dealing, but he still appears human. He has sadness, fear and regrets, which still echo down the ages to us. Matthew portrays this cleverly, even as the bodies pile up and rivers of blood flow on both sides. I eagerly await the next release!

Simon says

'Tis But A Scratch!

This series has always been action-packed and violent but this one moves up another gear and accelerates into almost non-stop carnage as the events within throw Beobrand and his brave warriors into fight after battle after duel. Harffy doesn't hold back as he puts his hero through just about every combat experience the Dark Ages offered. Especially once it gets going Warrior of Woden is pretty much breathtaking. There are pitched battles, old enemies as well as new ones and fresh oaths and the basest of treachery. Even Beobrand doesn't remain untouched and even his strongest of abilities and principles are tested to the limit and he descends further into darkness as a result.

Barnaby Edwards once again does an excellent job of the narration with a wide range of character voices and great description of the action. However, I bet even he probably allowed himself a wry smile as Harffy has his hero ape Monty Python with the Black Knight's most famous line - yes Matthew we do notice these things! Once again there is an excellent "historical note" which describes how history and fiction have been forged together to produce Beobrand's story.

The only thing that disappointed me about this book was getting to the end, knowing there is no more on Audible at the time of writing, though the author kindly promises more to come! If you liked the previous

books you're going to love this one. If you haven't read the others it's much better to start with the first book "The Serpent Sword" as there are a lot of continuing threads and arch-enemies that last for multiple books.

This is now becoming one of my favourite ever series!

Samantha & Richard Winton says

Best yet!

Fast paced and thrilling throughout, couldn't put it down. Great read and looking forward to the next one in 2019

Geoff Christer says

What a ride, highs and lows with battle and intrigue. Ended so abruptly left me saying " what, no, can't be " Well done Matthew Harffy

Stephanie says

"You know what other men are capable of. When the battle-lust is upon them and the joy of victory flows in their blood. You have seen too often the horrors of war. But you have always commanded us not to harm women and children, lord. We love you for your strength. You are a better lord than others and you have made us better men. Do not do this thing. You will forever regret it."

From Matthew Harffy's Warrior of Woden

I'm really not sure how it is that I have fallen so hard for a fictional warrior from Bernicia, a kingdom from 7th century Anglo-Saxon Britain. Beobrand is a huge warrior, a man who thrills at the blood and violence of war, who fights with a skillful blade, who lives to gain glory and renown for himself and his gesithas (his war band). Not really much like me, to be honest. I'd never heard of Bernicia before meeting Beobrand, and I don't know how to use a sword. And I don't have gesithas, unless you count my dog. Or my kids. Or my husband.

But really, to be honest, it's not his battle-glory that gets me. What I love about this character is not his strength, but his weakness. And after five books, Beobrand just gets better and better.

The scene quoted above is a perfect example of why I love him so much. He is dark and brooding, most definitely complex, but there is a deep conviction of integrity about him which, even when he feels he's lost himself (and this happens to him quite often), he is drawn back to the reality of his humanity like a lodestar. Even if it takes the defiant reminder of one of the men who should serve him without question. Beobrand never seems to forget the most important things.

In this 5th book of the Bernicia Chronicles, Beobrand faces some of the biggest challenges of his entire life.

There are many times the outcome of these challenges seem bleak and hopeless. Harffy definitely keeps the tension of the plot and pacing going through this book. Yet somehow, as Beobrand always manages to do, he crawls away from the edge of disaster, scraping and clawing his way, surviving for another day. And somehow he does it with his humanity still intact. Even if it is a near thing.

I feel like I'd be repeating myself drearily if I go on and on about just how much I love Harffy's Bernicia Chronicles. Because I would. I say it with every review. This book is no exception. To be honest, when I started reading it, I wondered if he could keep delivering, over and over. Would this one keep my interest like the ones before it, or would Beobrand's magic finally sputter out? When I finished it, would I find myself bereft over the loss of Beobrand and his faithful gesithas who have become like another group of friends in the last couple of years? At least until the next book anyway.

I needn't have worried. Matthew Harffy once again delivered, and with the completion of the book, those familiar waves of sweet melancholy washed over me. I felt delightfully bereft after I'd finished, making me smile, because it's a sure sign that the book was a good one.

Over the course of five novels, I have grown to love this huge warrior from a very distant past, a man whose culture and society is so different from my own, whose world would scare me to death if I were to somehow be transported back to it. And yet Beobrand has become like family.

Full of non-stop action, palpable tension, and danger, there is plenty in *Warrior of Woden* to keep the thrill-seeker occupied. And for those of us who enjoy the deeper elements of character development and the examination of the human condition, it will not disappoint. *Warrior of Woden* is a gut-wrenching, blood soaked, follow-up to *Killer of Kings*, and as always, once Beobrand and his gesithas set out to serve their king, heroism follows along with heartache very close behind.

Speaking of heartache, this book packs a wallop. Keep the proverbial tissues handy. And if you aren't prone to eye leakage, you should still be careful: you might just get a little something in your eye.

See my review of *Cross and the Curse*, *Blood and Blade*, *Killer of Kings*, and *Kin of Cain* at www.stephaniechurchillauthor.com.

On a side note, I happened to be reading a book by Mike Loades called *Swords and Swordsmen* at the time I was reading *Warrior of Woden*. Loades is a historical weapons expert and military historian, and his book *Swords and Swordsmen* chronicles the major developments in the sword's design, manufacturing processes and methods of use from Ancient Egypt to the American Civil War. Chapter 3 discusses the patterned sword of King Raedwald of the East Angles, a sword very much like Hrunting, Beobrand's sword (which, incidentally, is the name of the sword wielded by Beowulf, the hero of the tale of the same name, and the inspiration for Harffy's books). I didn't know I could geek out about the forging of swords until I read this book! But apparently I can. Who knew?

For more information about *Swords and Swordsmen*, check out this video, or take a look at the book here.

Speesh says

I must admit it took me a while to get a good grip on this one, despite a quite excellent opening section. I worried that Beobrand was going to sulk all the way through and the book was going to be a one-

dimensional, pessimistic "*o gods why have you forsaken me?*" tour round the northern hotspots of Anglo Saxon Britain.

Until...

...the second half leaped into life and suddenly the first half made sense! If you're me that is. Matthew himself (no less) has mentioned that I seem to read into his work things that even he wasn't aware of. That's good, from my point of view. Perhaps as it should be, him all taken with the muse and writing what he feels is right, maybe not even aware of why. Looking behind that and finding out (maybe) what the subconscious was trying to say, is where my pleasure with reading books (especially ones) as good as this, comes from. Face it Matthew, you might not realise it, but it's there.

So, the book seems to me then, to deal with contrasts. As I began to say above, starting with the two halves of the book, the second giving the first meaning. It's then about the conquest of the new Christ religion of the Lords and Priests and the Old Ways of the ordinary people, the peasants and the warriors out in the countryside. They're trying to make sense of their life and the events their masters are making and trying to interpret the 'signs' they see - white doves and black ravens - as meaning one thing, or the other, good or bad. Whether to leave it to fate or do they dare to try and change their wyrd? We find out there are arguments for, and against. It deals of course, with the peace they all dreamed of, and the war they most often saw as the route to that peace. Do you follow your head, or your heart? Sense, or sensibility? Beobrand's blind rage is satisfying, for an instant, but is it sensible? It's about concentrating too much on what is close and missing and seeing the big picture. As they lived so close to danger in this time, it's about the fragility of life and the certainty of death. Can those two live together, or must one always come out on top?

Shown most often as an inner battle between calm and anger, Beobrand is the personification of all those struggles. He is revenge, he is darkness, he is death. His shields might be black, and the Walesic shields white, but to those around him, he is their main chance for light, life and hope. He might be one of the biggest warriors in the book, but he can be brought to his knees by the smallest, his son.

Christianity has almost conquered Britain in Beobrand's time, but - thankfully for juicy stories like this - not quite. Despite Christianity being the religion of his Lord, Beobrand decides he needs to be the wrath of the old god(s) if any of those he cares about are going to survive.

I can't take all the credit (I could, but I'm not going to), but I do remember pondering if Matthew shouldn't touch on the people's reaction to the Roman ruins they presumably saw all around them. Rather than just a passing mention of 'giants' as many books do. Here, the Roman ruins play a very important part in the last few scenes, and for that I am especially grateful.

Warrior of Woden is a surprisingly easy book to jump straight into (I try and read these later volumes in a series, as if I am a new to the whole series reader - and would it work for them? It would). The book obviously revolves around Beobrand's inner and outer struggles, but that doesn't mean the other characters are makeweights. They've been growing stronger as the series has progressed, achieving new levels of solidity and warmth as both plot-drivers in their own right and as foils and counter-weights to Beobrand's often melancholic moods and internal strife. I was this time struck by the clarity and directness of Matthew's writing that - you know it - along with Messrs May and (hopefully) Lofthouse, has clearly got the Old Guard of Hist Fic writers worried.

Warrior of Woden is constantly in action, flowing south and north, from the high-born to the lowly, it's full of breathless action, near misses, close shaves tension and suspense. You never really get a chance to calm

down and try and guess what's coming over the horizon next. While I still think he could do with lightening (Beobrand) up a bit and maybe making a bit more of the positives there must have been to life in the 7th Century, it is in the end a beautifully balanced book, that kicks like a mule. Or is it a black (or white) stallion?

Best Book Blog: Speesh Reads
Fantastic Facebook: Speesh Reads

Dilys Guthrie says

Another amazing book. Unable to put it down!

Heather says

Ok, I went into this book blind as a bat. I had no clue this was book number five (5) in a series. To be honest, I would have never read this until I read the first four (4) books. I never feel that I can give a good review without reading the entire series. I still feel that since I do not know the entire backstory of the characters I can not give a review of the story line since I do not know what happened beyond the hints that the author gave in this book.

For what I can tell you though, is this book was quite interesting though there were parts that left me confused though I think that they would have been cleared up if I had read the first four (4) books. The author has researched his subject and the story line does make me want to read the first four (4) books.

I enjoyed the characters and they were well written. Though I think there is a love triangle or something that is going on between the wives of the leaders, but again I am not sure as it would be in the back story. You can read this book as a stand alone, but if you are anything like me then you may get confused with some of the characters reactions and attitude with each other.

If you like historical fiction then I do recommend the book, but I would start with the first one before this one. The reading order goes:

The Serpent Sword (The Serpent Sword (Bernicia Chronicles #1)
The Cross and the Curse (Bernicia Chronicles #2)
Blood and Blade (Bernicia Chronicles #3)
Killer of Kings (Bernicia Chronicles #4)
Kin of Cain: A Short Bernicia Tale (Bernicia Chronicles)

I would read these before reading this one. That way you know what is going on in the back story and how the characters relate to each other.

Hollie says

I was given the honor of reading Warrior of Woden pre release. This novel sets itself apart from the Bernicia

Chronicles series (which I read twice) with constant and fast moving adventure, battles, honor and treachery unlike other stories.

The humanism and strong emotion felt from not only the protagonist but just about every character makes you have real feelings for each one. At times I felt so wrapped up with the folks in this story that I couldn't put the book down for fear of their lives!

I'm not one to give away spoilers and typically don't become so emotionally invested in a character but the main character, Beobrand is a man that could very well have lived and had this story in his life. The historical years of Beobrand and his adventures are treacherous and full of great Kings that bring war and destruction to Britain constantly, making it sometimes difficult to decide which side to take in quests where so many were killed. The author is gifted at bringing those relentless battles into a fantastic story...a true bard. I look forward to the next in the series and it cannot come soon enough!

Matthew Harffy gives even Cornwell a run for the money with such great storytelling. If you liked The Last Kingdom, you will love The Bernicia Chronicles! In fact, this series would make for excellent television! I especially appreciate the editing and lack of grammar/spelling mistakes as well as the acknowledgement at the end of Harffy's books...well met?

Reuben Chadwick says

What can I say?

Yet again, another great book by

Mr Harffy.

I for one will follow Beobrand to the ends of the earth.

nicola faux says

Fantastic read

Being submerged in beobrands world in this latest book in the series was like coming home, it was so good to be back again, it was like a roller coaster of emotions following Beobrand and his hearth warriors through both battles for their king and personal, fantastically written and eagerly await the next in this series.

M.J. says

Now what I was expecting (in a good way) - full review to follow.

Overall Book 5 is far stronger than Book 4 and it doesn't do what I thought it would do (in a good way).

For nearly 50% of the book, Beobrand is a much happier character than we've seen before. I thought this was an excellent evolution of his character, but sadly it doesn't last and soon he's moaning as much as in the previous books. This is one of my biggest problems with the series. Beobrand is just not very likeable and I find that hard in a series focused on him and where he's supposed to be the hero or even the anti-hero. He just isn't heroic enough for my liking, and will clearly never be. He seems genuinely unhappy with his lot in

life - unhappy with his not-wife, his son, his king, his hall, who he's killed before, who he hasn't killed before, his horse - it would be nice if he was happy about something! :)

As to the story itself, it's a very 'Northumbrian' interpretation of events in Britain at this time - there is no attempt to offer anything other than the version of events as given by Bede and other sources, which means that poor old Eowa gets very short shift. This is a shame as there was definitely scope for betrayal and double-dealing here, but because the story is about Beobrand, the possibilities are not explored. In fact, the major players of the period are so distant as to almost be missing from the story completely - the story we get could have been written anytime, anywhere, it is not truly about events in Britain at the time - a shame really when the events themselves are so significant. It would have been good to have a stand-off between Oswald and Penda - a real grudge battle, but instead, Penda is never actually encountered, only his actions. The 'real' (and I use that with caution) events of the period are simply the background to the story - even as a warrior of the king, the focus remains firmly on Beobrand at all times.

Where events are specifically directed at the period, there is a lack of clarity - they are fighting the Welsh and hate them and yet Cynan is Welsh, and one of Beobrand's trusted gesithas. Penda is a pagan and reviled as such for this (especially for his blood sacrifice) - and yet Beobrand is pagan as well with his hammer necklace etc. This might pass many people by, or it might annoy. I just found it confusing.

Yet if I overlook all those problems, the book is stronger than previous ones in the series. It could have been great but it doesn't quite make it because of the issues listed above and because many of the battle scenes are a bit disappointing. Maserfelth - the great battle - becomes a bit of a rugby scrum, and it is the later, smaller ('made-up') skirmishes, that are written with more flow and clarity. As I said, it's as though events in Britain are there only for Beobrand to ride through/stamp through and glower through, and essentially much of the last half of the book is setting up events for future books.

It will be interesting to see what happens with Penda, for Penda, whether he is the 'Warrior of Woden' or not, is going to be around for a very long time to plague and terrorise the kingdom of Bernicia.

A firm 4/5 - the series is getting better but a few issues remain.

David Baird says

I'm going to be honest from the start..this book killed me..my heart feels as shattered as Beobrand's. So much happens in this book not only to excite you but also to crush you.

This series continues to go from strength to strength and it shows real skill by the author to keep the series going with such exciting plots.

So what is in store this time for Beo? Well war is fast approaching and Oswald must march to stop Penda's advance.

Lets just say things don't go the way Beo would like but he does get to show what he's made of and he certainly makes sure the enemy remember his name.

What this tale really does well is show the growth of Beobrand. He's older now.. his connection with men stronger but as the book goes on you can really see how events have taken a toll on Beo. He's tired of this life but peace seems to be something he will never know.

I really enjoyed the addition was ÁstÍgend. I won't spoil it for you but he stole the show for me, his character shining above others easily.

I also loved the development of Cynan the once thrall who really shows his worth to his lord and there's a little side story with him that plays out that really give him some depth.

Ok so let's get down to it..yeh this author holds no favourites and characters will die.. and you know it isn't going to be pretty. It hit me hard this time..it was a death I didn't see coming although I knew it could always happen to anyone. The great thing about Harffy is how he uses death to build on the emotional side of his characters which helps you form a connection with them.

Another cracking tale that really knocks you for six. Brutal has always been my word of choice for The Bernicia Chronicles and I stand by that.

David says

Okay, I finished this fifth book in this excellent series and the quality of the writing and storytelling just gets better and better. There are a lot of very bloody battle scenes, as in earlier books, but this is the Dark Ages and subtlety is not on the menu. Beobrand has sworn his oath to Oswald and goes off to war with him. Oswald is a Christian and not a warrior but his army is strong. Their enemy is Penda of Mercia, who wants to rule Bernicia as well as most of the other kingdoms. Penda is also powerful and when the two armies meet - well, let's just say the outcome is something you need to read for yourselves. I don't want to give anything away here.

There are scenes in this book that rip my approach-avoidance psyche to shreds. I do not want to know what I fear may be about to happen while at the same time I cannot stop myself from reading on. It is that kind of book.

There will be a sixth book but not until mid-2019. I don't know how I can face the emptiness and darkness of the next few months without Beobrand.
