



## Hereward: The Devil's Army

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1067. The battle of Hastings has been lost; Harold Godwinsson is dead. The iron fist of William the Bastard has begun to squeeze the life out of England. Villages are torched and men, women and children put to the sword as the Norman king attempts to impose his cruel will upon this unruly nation.

But there is one who stands in the way of the invader's savagery. He is called Hereward. He is a warrior and master tactician and as adept at slaughter as the imposter who sits upon the throne. And he is England's last hope.

In a Fenlands fortress of water and wild wood, Hereward's resistance is simmering.

His army of outcasts grows by the day - a devil's army that emerges out of the mists and the night, leaving death in its wake.

But William is not easily cowed. Under the command of his ruthless deputy, Ivo Taillebois - the man they call 'the Butcher' - the Norman forces will do whatever it takes to crush the rebels, even if it means razing England to the ground.

Here then is the tale of the bloodiest rebellion England has ever known - the beginning of an epic struggle that will echo down the years...

## **Hereward: The Devil's Army Details**

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Author : James Wilde

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# From Reader Review Hereward: The Devil's Army for online ebook

## CuteBadger says

In 1067, following his victory at the Battle of Hastings, the Norman king is determined to impose his rule on the English natives. One man, however, rises to lead a rebellion and based in the impenetrable Fenland gathers a motley army. Hereward is determined that the English should stand to the last man to defend their country, but finds that there is much more to being a leader than fighting. The leader of the Norman army, nicknamed The Butcher, is equally determined to overcome, and with spies and double-dealing springing up on both sides, the war for England will be long and bloody.

I enjoy historical fiction, but my preference tends to be for something less violent than this novel. I totally understand that this era was brutal and that any writer portraying it must show his reader what went on, but this book felt to me like 80% violence, 10% plot and 10% characterisation. The violence in the book is graphic and frequent, but I didn't find it as shocking as I expected to as I had no connection to the characters and didn't really care what happened to them. This may largely be due to the fact that I haven't read the author's previous book on Hereward, or it may be due to what I felt was the lack of characterisation in the book. The characters seemed very black and white to me, and I didn't think that they developed during the course of the novel.

I also didn't feel that there was all that much plot. There are lots of battles and lots of milling about in the Fens, but though there are lots of incidents throughout the book, I didn't think that the plot had really moved forward by the end. I got a bit fed up of chapters opening with bloated corpses floating in the Fens – it probably only happened a couple of times, but it felt like more.

I get the impression that this book is the second in a trilogy and it felt a bit like a placeholder in which the author didn't want to use up too much plot in case he didn't have enough left for the last volume in his set. I have an antipathy to historical trilogy novels at the moment as I've read a few recently where enough material for perhaps two books is being stretched to make three, and where the first and second books don't feel finished, simply because the plot has to be left fluid enough for a sequel. After reading this book I didn't feel like anything had really happened in it as everyone and everything was pretty much the same at the end as it was at the beginning. The end of the book felt like it just stopped, rather than finished in a satisfying way.

It also seems like it's a boys' book. There are some women in it, but they are portrayed largely as overtly sexual beings or as witch-like with supernatural powers. There is also a male wish-fulfilment sub-plot with two beautiful and powerful women competing for Hereward's attention. I know that women did have a subservient role during the historical era portrayed in the book, but the novel's sketches of these female characters seemed old-fashioned to me and not something written in the 21st century.

There was one very small part of the book that I enjoyed – a bit of an aha! moment – but I can't go into that as I don't want to spoil it for anyone. Unfortunately that was the only part I did enjoy. I felt quite exasperated while reading it and so was glad when it was over. I won't be rushing to read the first or last books in the trilogy.

So, in short, very much not the novel for me, but other opinions are available and will probably be very different from mine. .

I received this book as part of the Transworld Historical Fiction Challenge.

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### **Bob Harris says**

The Norman invasion, 1066. Reading books like this, historical English novels often involves finding ancestors. In *The Winter Warrior* I encountered two ancestors: William de Warenne (Varennnes), for whom there is documentation of him fighting with William the Conqueror, and Ivo Taillebois, nicknamed 'The Butcher,' for his ferocity in battle.

Wilde (pseudonym for Mark Chadbourn) overly romanticized his characters and dialog. Otherwise, an interesting read.

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### **Andy says**

Second in the series & we've moved a year forward to 1067 & the aftermath of William the Bastards conquest of England.

Starts exactly where the last book left of, in the Fens of East Anglia where the majority of the story is set & the hero & his crew are swiftly reintroduced & we're all caught up on whose who which is always good after a break in a series.

The story romps along & we find out what William The Bastard & his cronies have been upto along with Hereward, the pace is good, the historical fiction detail is sound..... but before you know it it's flatlining a bit as not a lot has really happened & we're around 150pages..... needs to pick up some.... need a battle..... can't be sitting around forever..... but there are none which does deter from the overall story however there is scheming & plotting a plenty with a fair few twists at just the right moment to keep the reader hanging in there & in the end it's a decent story. We also have leaps ahead in the timeline as the story progresses which again detract's us away from the daily fen mononity.

Its saving grace is that I like the Hereward character & those that have been built around him & i shall continue with the series for that reason alone & also to learn about a period of history (resistance to the Normans) that I'm not overtly familiar with, we all know about 1066 but certainly not the aftermath bar it was hard.

3.5 stars for me, just rounded up as its plusses outway the gripes although it's not as good as the first outing in the series.

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### **Speesh says**

'Hereward', James Wilde's first book in the Hereward series was a stunning debut. The power and verve of the writing, the impact and strength of the hero the story revealed, gave 'Hereward' an edge and a pulsating wildness that I hadn't felt from a book in a long time. As if the story, the book, had reached up and punched me in the face!

From the very beginning, James Wilde formed Hereward into a thoroughly believable and compelling character from the forgotten mists of English history. An action-packed, compulsive story that took no prisoners and a hero that then held a knife to your throat for the rest of the book.

Phew!

In general, this is a familiar period - 1066 and the aftermath - and one also recently vividly explored, from the Norman point of view, in James Aitcheson's 'Sworn Sword' and 'The Splintered Kingdom'. Here, James Wilde presents it to us afresh by concentrating on a (perhaps to most people) unfamiliar English hero - Hereward 'The Wake'. As the book jacket to the paperback of 'Hereward' puts it;

"The last Englishman. The first freedom fighter. The forgotten hero."

(According to Wikipedia, Hereward's 'The Wake' epithet; "meaning 'watcher', was popularly assigned to him many years after his death" So, whilst I can't say 'Hereward', without also thinking 'The Wake', no one here in these books, says "Hi Wake!" And he's certainly more of a do-er, than a watcher).

Right, so the question is then; after such an impressive start, can 'The Devil's Army' live up to the startling promise of its predecessor?

Yes. It can. It does. And then some.

Of course, because we're better prepared this time, because we know the main characters and we know the style, the second can never be as much of a surprise as the first one (in any series). So the writer has to perhaps work a little harder to keep it fresh, keep us interested and not re-tread old ground. Even if, like this, it is a 'to be continued' story.

With 'The Devil's Army', Hereward's character broadens, matures and takes on more responsibilities as the story progresses. He has to. He finds his inner rage tempered more than somewhat by the responsibility and pressures of the leadership that he hasn't exactly sought, but which has pretty much come to him by dint of the rebels and him realising there is no one else willing or able to take that leadership on. He realises that being a strong leader isn't just about training, leading warriors and the joy of battle, even though he might sometimes wish it were that simple. He needs to offer the people he says he is fighting for, something more than just a satisfyingly bloody fight and the chance of gratification through revenge.

"Once he had been little more than a ravaging wolf, driven by rage and hungry for blood, shunned by all civilised folk. Now he was a leader of men who had been taught the value of friendship, honour and justice."

His resistance to William takes shape and he needs fighters. As they fight back against the Normans, so more come to him, willing to fight. But they also come with family and friends who need to be found place to live. And food to eat. Ely, surrounded by the almost impenetrable forests and marshes of the Fens, might offer Hereward protection and a place to centre his fight-back, but it comes at a cost. The people need to see results, not an occupying force. Resentment grows and surprisingly, Hereward often has his work cut out convincing them he offers a better future than William. At the time he most needs his people's help and support, Hereward risks alienating them.

"(Hereward) chose his words carefully, subtly reinforcing the notion that he was one of them, not an outsider who had seized control of their birthplace...They were scared; they yearned for a strong leader, a protector in these turbulent times, and they wanted to believe every word he uttered."

He needs to offer the civilised folk a future. But a safe, secure future that is also in the here and now. Unfortunately, some of the English have also come to the conclusion that this is what they want, more even than the restoration of their heritage. They have come to the conclusion that by mercilessly crushing their fellow Englishmen, the 'rebels' supposedly fighting for them, a stable future is exactly what William can not only offer them, but also deliver - even though it involves burning, killing, and even starving their fellow countrymen to death.

And yes, what of William in 'The Devil's Army'? King William the Conqueror (variously 'my Lord', 'The Userper', or 'The Bastard' - depending on how far away you are from him I guess), is a constant dark and menacing presence, in the country and throughout this book. The Norman Alpha Male. No one is bigger (literally), stronger, or more willing to go further - or sink lower - to get what he wants. He is clearly intent on living up to a perhaps more modern interpretation of 'The Bastard.'

And yet interestingly, on occasions James Wilde shows us that Hereward is also in danger of becoming just as ruthless and destructively determined as the man he is fighting to rid his people of. Hereward can surely see this and at times seems effectively powerless, forced both by necessity and circumstances, to stop it.

Hereward is of course the main character here, but other characters are satisfyingly developed as well. We learn more about his 'brother', Redwald. He is more of a courtier and politician than Hereward, but also an opportunist. His aims are murky, or at least not very clear. He sees much but says little. I don't trust him one little bit. And Alric the Monk, Hereward's companion and conscience personified, becomes a stronger character, while all the time demanding more and more of Hereward's respect. Being Hereward is not easy when you don't want to follow the sensible advice of someone who has your best interests at heart, and don't know that someone you have always trusted, can't be. The countryside of the Fens is wonderfully described and also plays a huge part in shaping both the resistance and the writing of the story. Almost a character in itself.

Add into the mix some huge surprises (that I certainly didn't see coming) and a final battle the like of which one comes across only very rarely - a violent, blood-soaked ambush and chase, with attack and counter-attack that is impossible to tear your eyes away from - and with 'The Devil's Army' you have powerful, evocative historical fiction writing of the very highest order.

And luckily for us, as they say in 'The 13th Warrior'; 'there are more...'

I may be getting ahead of myself here, but I really feel that just two books in, James Wylde has made the 'Hereward' series the one others will be measured against.

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## **Deb says**

### **Another rousing tale**

Invasion, betrayal, loss of home and hearth and the fight to regain it. Brutal, wrenching historical fiction. On to book 3

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## Milo (BOK) says

Original Post: <http://thefoundingfields.com/2012/07/...>

“Bigger, better and more awesome than its predecessor, Wilde manages to keep the reader hooked throughout the pages with his fantastic prose. A must for all historical fiction fans.” ~The Founding Fields

After reading and enjoying the first novel in the Hereward trilogy, *Hereward*, ([review here](#)), I was wondering if Wilde would be able to live up to the brilliant first novel. This is partly one of the reasons why although I had a copy of *The Devil's Army* for a while, I didn't get around to picking it up until recently as I thought it, being the second novel in a trilogy, would be a let down as second novels in trilogies are normally the most difficult to write. However, when I did get round to it – within the first few pages of reading *The Devil's Army*, I was hooked again, as Wilde proves that he can continue to impress with the sequel – and manage to make the sequel better than it's predecessor.

1067. The battle of Hastings has been lost; Harold Godwinsson is dead. The iron fist of William the Bastard has begun to squeeze the life out of England. Villages are torched and men, women and children put to the sword as the Norman king attempts to impose his cruel will upon this unruly nation.

But there is one who stands in the way of the invader's savagery. He is called Hereward. He is a warrior and master tactician and as adept at slaughter as the imposter who sits upon the throne. And he is England's last hope.

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So *Hereward* was the novel that focused on the events leading up to the Battle of Hastings, the most famous battle in England's history, and now *Hereward: The Devil's Army*, looks at the aftermath of that titanic battle, and how it changed England as a nation. William the Conqueror is now in command of the English throne, and resistance is crumbling. Hereward is labelled as an inspiration for the legends of Robin Hood, and is described as England's last hope, and is an amazing character. He's different from when we were first introduced to him at the beginning of Book One, and has changed greatly, and is now a leader of men. His character has developed fantastically well, and it will be interesting to see where Wilde takes the character in the upcoming third novel.

The action sequences in *The Devil's Army* are great as Wilde showcases the struggle between the English resistance and the Norman Oppressors, they're well written, and very bloody, and the final battle is nothing short of epic, and throughout the novel, you get the sense that no character is safe – not even Hereward – thus increasing the tension and making the reader want to root for The English over the invaders.

The pace is top-notch, moving breathtakingly fast, ensuring that there isn't a dull moment in this novel. There are plenty of twists to keep the outcome unpredictable as possible, and by the end of the book you will only be left with wanting to find out what happens next. The Devil's Army has made Wilde one of my favourite historical fiction authors, up there with the likes of Simon Scarrow, Bernard Cornwell and Ben Kane (even if they are all the only historical fiction authors that I have read so far – they're all awesome), and Wilde has really managed to bring life to the bloody aftermath of the Battle of Hastings.

Hereward himself is the book's strongest character, and you're not likely to forget his name in a while. Alric the monk is back, and his storyline that weaves throughout The Devil's Army is just as enthralling as Hereward's. I'm struggling to find a flaw with The Devil's Army, as it does everything that Hereward does, and then some, the action scenes are bigger and well-written, making it an enthralling read from beginning to end. Historical fiction fans, or anyone who's enjoyed Hereward, will find themselves enjoying this novel like I did.

Verdict: 4.5/5

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### **Linda Humberstone says**

A really good follow up to 'Hereward', the first book in this series. There is a lot going on and Hereward proves how clever he is time after time. You get a good sense of what it was like at that time to live and hide in the Fens and how dangerous and frightening it could be, especially to the Normans.

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### **Sud666 says**

A superbly written book about the effects of the Norman Invasion of England in 1066 by William the Conqueror. Well written and historically accurate, told from the English perspective. It sheds light on the historical figure of Hereward, a Mercian warrior who fought the Norman invasion. If this is a period of history that interests you and you want a good read that is a page turner this is the one for you. Look forward to reading all the books in this series. Highly recommend it.

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### **Frederick Tucker says**

Awesome!

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### **Douglas says**

Better than the first one the story is now established and there is a lot of intrigue. The only thing i'd say is that the story gives a lot of notice before any of the twists.

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## **W.H. Cann says**

What can I say other than: An excellent sequel to Hereward book 1.

This is by far better than the first, with more intrigue and scheming. The plot thickens and the pace remains quick and enticing. The story is rich and gripping, making it a good read that is hard to put down. An excellent addition to my bookshelf, which will certainly be read again.

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## **P.E.R. Sprague says**

It was an interesting read. The Norman conquest is my third favourite period and culture. But I am always on the side of the Normans. So it took a while to switch my POV and allegiance over to the English. Ha. His book is a great mix of fiction and history. Wilde painted the scenery well, and the historical feel shone through. It was easy to picture myself in the 11th century.

As I did enjoy most of the characters, a few were rather one dimensional. Harald Redteeth was the stereotypical angry Norse, thirsty for blood. The Butcher was just the archetypal villain. There wasn't much depth to those characters, and I had trouble remaining interested in their part of the story. But the characters within Ely were all interesting and I loved the struggle of trying to live in the settlement in peace, yet prepare for war. Godrun's betrayal of the fox was a shocking surprise to me. But once it happened I realized that it was entirely in her character and added depth. Wilde did M excellent job in developing her character and demonstrating the horrible struggle inside her to do what was needed for the greater good. Even the defilement of her own body.

I only wish he would have made that much effort on the Norman characters. William the Conqueror is an important historical figure, but he was only portrayed as an angry, bitter, grown child.

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## **Becky Cresswell says**

details are a bit off - William the Bastard was probably not as old as 50 in 1069, and to my knowledge although he was a big man, it was mainly muscle and not fat.

I liked this less than the first one for different reasons (hated his portrayal of Harold Godwinsson in that one), and failed to like any of the characters.

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## **Paul says**

1067. The battle of Hastings has been lost; Harold Godwinsson is dead. The iron fist of William the Bastard has begun to squeeze the life out of England. Villages are torched and men, women and children put to the sword as the Norman king attempts to impose his cruel will upon this unruly nation.

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I read the first Hereward novel back in June 2011 and I hold the book solely responsible for re-igniting my interest in historical fiction. I knew that a sequel was due at some point this year, it made it on to my most anticipated list for 2012, and I've been looking forward to picking up the story from where book one left off.

Over the intervening years, between books one and two, Hereward has become a leader of men. His guerrilla campaign against the Normans continues to slowly gain ground, but certain aspects of this leadership weigh heavily on his shoulders. He comes to appreciate more and more that the responsibility of command comes with its own burdens. Desperate times call for desperate measures and he is forced to make some truly difficult decisions. As the line between good and bad starts to blur, Hereward gets insight into the tough choices that a leader has to make. The right decision is not always the popular one.

In direct contrast to the thoughtful, introspective qualities that leadership has taught him Hereward still sometimes displays maniacal aspects to his character (they tend to appear when he is forced into a corner). He can be a man of extremes, and at times exhibits an almost gleeful blood lust that borders on the psychopathic. His family and friends just about manage to keep this berserker rage in check but some of my favourite moments are when he gives into his inner demons and the red mist descends. It strikes me that Hereward's quest for peace in England is mirrored by his journey to find some sort of inner peace for himself.

Though his power and influence are in evidence throughout the novel, King William remains on the periphery for much of the story. He appears on a number of occasions but it his lords and lieutenants who are tasked with bringing Hereward to justice. A particular favourite is Harald Redteeth, a viking mercenary ,who is obsessed with besting Hereward in combat. Redteeth is haunted by the spirits of his fallen comrades and I think it's fair to say his grasp on reality is tenuous at best. Though Hereward is loath to admit it, he and Redteeth are cut from the same cloth in many ways. They share a similar code of honour the results in some unexpected twists in the story.

Events build toward a satisfyingly bloody climax and the final few chapters contain a number of jaw dropping moments that will set things up nicely for the last book in the series. This is a gripping read that blends historical elements with fast paced action and has the odd betrayal thrown in for good measure to create a top notch adventure. The Devil's Army succeeds in making that trickiest of jobs, being the second part of a trilogy, look effortless. I'm already looking forward to the final pay off. The only question I need answering – how long do I have to wait until I can read it?

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**Alan Conner says**

## **Hereward 2**

Another great story, looking forward to the next instalment The End of Days and whether Harald Redteeth gets his wish to fight Hereward.

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