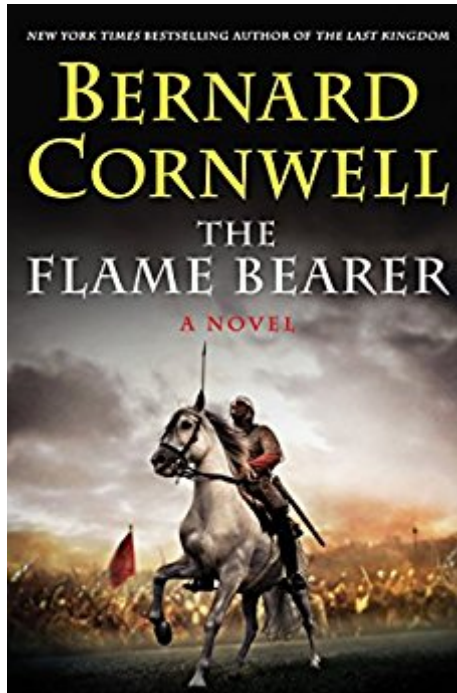




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The Flame Bearer (Saxon Tales Book 10)



Synopsis

The eighth installment of Bernard Cornwell's New York Times bestselling series chronicling the epic saga of the making of England, as like Game of Thrones, but real (The Observer, London) is the basis for The Last Kingdom, the hit television series. Britain is in a state of uneasy peace. Northumbria's Viking ruler, Sigtryggr, and Mercia's Saxon Queen Aethelflaed have agreed a truce. And so England's greatest warrior, Uhtred of Bebbanburg, at last has the chance to take back the home his traitorous uncle stole from him so many years ago and which his scheming cousin still occupies. But fate is inexorable, and the enemies Uhtred has made and the oaths he has sworn conspire to distract him from his dream of recapturing his home. New enemies enter into the fight for England's kingdoms: the redoubtable Constantine of Scotland seizes an opportunity for conquest and leads his armies south. Britain's precarious peace threatens to turn into a war of annihilation. Yet Uhtred is determined that nothing – neither the new adversaries nor the old foes who combine against him – will keep him from his birthright. Historical novels stand or fall on detail, and Mr. Cornwell writes as if he has been to ninth-century Wessex and back. Wall Street Journal

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Customer Reviews

Cornwell didn't surprise me with the quality of the writing, unpredictability of the plot or the depth of the characters. One of my favorite things about Cornwell's handling of this story is how all of the action is in the present but it is being told as a memory of an old man so he can drop hints about what's to come. How clever. I love a good story and I certainly love a great historical, action adventure. I mostly love the story though. This story doesn't have as much fighting action throughout it as the previous stories but it is filled with intrigue and plots. I love that too. I'm also impressed with how Cornwell conveys Uhtred's inner thoughts on war, fear, necessity and readiness and how perspective changes with age along with his pragmatism over the subject. It is a beautifully written, human story. I have a feeling that people who do spectacular deeds think similarly to the way Uhtred is depicted in thought and Cornwell does such a spectacular job of conveying that thought in such frank human terms that it reminds me why he is one of my favorite authors. I am also impressed with the amount of conniving and deception of other characters and the reader that Cornwell so skillfully pulled off. This story has an intricate and complicated but completely believable plot which completely suspended my disbelief and absorbed me in the story as I read. This is a great book and is hours of cheap (okay, inexpensive) entertainment. I highly recommend this as the best in the series so far.

If you are a fan of Bernard Cornwell, then you know how addictive his novels are. So The Flamebearer, book ten in the Saxon series, was eagerly anticipated. I am pleased to report that this had it all; thrilling battles, sea voyages, deception, laughs, etc., and best of all, Uhtred! I enjoy the television adaptation of Uhtred's adventures, The Last Kingdom (also the name of the first book in the series), and there is disagreement and even dismay among fans about the casting of Alexander Dreymon as Uhtred. In this book the voice of rough and tough, large and fair (as clearly described by Cornwell), Uhtred is very distinct. TV show Uhtred did not infiltrate my consciousness as I devoured The Flamebearer, much as I enjoy Dreymon's performance. Read the books! Watch the show! It's all great!

After nine books we finally arrive at the tenth book and Uhtred's long anticipated battle for his ancestral Bebbanburg. It's about time. The first books in Uhtred's saga is for my money the best books Cornwell has written the series have in the last installments grown more formulaic and even the historical base (Cornwell's hall mark) has given place for purely fictional events. Uhtred's increasingly marked aging is one of the few elements that feels fresh. Cornwell is in an obvious scramble to finish the story and tie the loose ends and accordingly a few semi-central characters are

dealt with in a rather off hand fashion. The race for the final battle works well, but I think I have read Uthreds description of a shield wall just about enough times....In the end Cornwell doesn't make it. The number of story lines to be finished are too many and Uthred will return....So will I, but may I suggest that it is the last ?I am more than ready for the Saxon tales to move on and see a young warrior come of age in the days of Sweyn Forkbeard, Canute and Wilhelm the Conqueror.

It took 10 volumes and most of his lifetime, but Bebbanburg is finally in Uhtred's grasp. But it is obviously not the end. Mr. Cornwell lets us know that more is to come. Cornwell puts such vehement hostility towards Christianity, and rather a lot of it, into Lord Uhtred's thoughts and words, that I have to wonder why. Of course a pagan follower of Thor and the old Nordic gods could be expected to be hostile to Christianity but Cornwell has put much more of it into this volume than is needed for the storyline. Those of us who have read the preceding volumes already know Uhtred's feelings on the subject. In the unlikely event that a newcomer to the series would begin with volume 10, there is still much more than is needed for that newcomer to understand Uhtred. This and other examples of similarities among the ten volumes of this series are beginning to make me a bit weary of it. Not enough to make me stop reading it but enough that I uncharacteristically delayed reading THE FLAME BEARER for some months after receiving it. Once I began, it did hold my interest enough that I read it in a couple of days. Cornwell still has a way with words, history and battle descriptions. He is a master of historical fiction and the English language.

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