



Hereward: End of Days

James Wilde

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England, 1071. Five years have passed since the crushing Norman victory at the Battle of Hastings. The country reels under the savage rule of the new king, the one they call 'the Bastard.' The North has been left a wasteland villages razed, innocents put to the sword, land stolen. It seems no atrocity is too great to ensure William's grip upon the crown. And now he turns his cold gaze east, towards the last stronghold of the English resistance. After years of struggle, he will brook no further challenge to his power: his vast army masses and his siege machines are readied.

In their fortress on the Isle of Ely, the English have put their faith in the only man who might defeat the murderous invaders. He is called Hereward. He is a warrior and a master tactician - as adept at slaughter as his enemy and plans have been set in motion for a bloody uprising that will sweep the Norman king off the throne once and for all. But Hereward is missing. With their hopes of victory dwindling, can the English rebels find the leader who seems to have abandoned them before William the Bastard begins his final, devastating assault that will truly be the end of days?

Here is a tale of heroism and treachery and the bloodiest rebellion England has ever known."

Hereward: End of Days Details

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From Reader Review Hereward: End of Days for online ebook

William says

I knew nothing of Hereward before reading "The End Of Days" that I received from Goodreads. This is a fascinating book bringing to life a hero from Medieval England with all the battles, bloodshed and yes, even gore of that time. I would recommend the author add a glossary to this book to aid in understanding a lot of the terms we don't use today. It took time looking up a lot of words on google in order to understand what was being used and done with the archaic terminology.

This is an excellent read & I recommend it to all history buffs.

E.M. Powell says

This is the third outing for Hereward the Wake, England's eleventh century forgotten hero. Set in 1071, England is under the grip of the conquering Norman king, William. The hated William has secured power and control through his ruthless campaigns. Still holding out are the rebel English in the east. But their hero, Hereward, is missing and they are having to fight alone. William looks set to be victorious. Hereward of course returns and has to lead his outnumbered people against the Norman invaders.

Wilde portrays Hereward as a complex individual who has his own demons as well as those he fights. His conflict with his brother Redwald provides an extra layer to the unfolding drama and we share in Hereward's conflicted emotions. As well as the central drama of the fate of England, there are a number of other exciting sub-plots woven in. Secondary characters such as Deda, the Norman knight, and Rowena, a young English widow, are intriguing and credible.

Fast-paced and exciting, we are drawn into Hereward's world from the off. The battles are bloody and the boggy landscape is as treacherous as those who walk it. Having enjoyed this book so much, I will be seeking out Hereward's first two adventures and look forward to the next.

Note: I received a free review copy of this book via the Historical Novel Society. This review (or an edited version) has appeared in the Historical Novels Review

Milo (BOK) says

The Review: <http://thefoundingfields.com/2013/08/...>

"An excellent third entry in the Herward saga that promises to be satisfying, epic, and unputdownable – making it a must for fans of Historical Fiction." ~Bane of Kings, The Founding Fields

I've been reading Hereward since the beginning, and it's shaped up to be a really strong trilogy. The opening act, entitled Hereward, was superb – and the following novel, The Devil's Army, was likewise impressive and very strong for a middle act. And then came End of Days... which just blew me away – it was so, very awesome, and I could not put it down. Despite a few minor niggles here and there, which I'll explain later in the review - End of Days ends the third act on a high note, and makes this a must-read for lovers of historical

fiction.

"1071. Five years have passed since the Normans' crushing victory at Hastings. England reels under the savage rule of its new king, the one they call 'the Bastard'. The north has been left a wasteland – villages torched, innocents put to the sword, land stolen. Rats feed upon fields of the dead.

It seems no atrocity is too great to ensure William's iron grip upon the crown. Now his cold gaze is turning towards the last stronghold of English resistance. After these years of struggle, he will brook no further challenge to his power. His vast army is massing; his machines of war are being made ready.

In their fortress on the Isle of Ely, the English rebels have put their faith in one man – a warrior, a leader and a master of the art of waging war. His name is Hereward, and he has planned an uprising that will sweep the hated king from the throne once and for all.

But Hereward has disappeared – and with him, it seems, England's hopes of victory. Can this great hero really have abandoned his people? Time is running out, for King William is about to begin his final devastating assault that will surely mark the end of days...

Here is a heart-pounding tale of heroism, treachery and sacrifice – and the bloodiest rebellion England has ever known..."

As mentioned in the pull quote, End of Days is satisfying, epic, and delivers on several levels, and even though it may be predictable for readers who know the era well, Wilde does his best with what he's got and allows for a fast-paced, page-turning read – I for one, couldn't put it down, as the book explores several elements such as the characters, the action and the plot really well, allowing for an engaging read that is well worth checking out.

Hereward himself has undergone several changes over the course of this series, and from a man struggling to control his own direction in life, he pretty much ends up as someone far greater than the man at the beginning of Book One would ever have imagined himself to be – the leader of the English resistance against the Norman Invasion. Ever since the conclusion of The Devil's Army, I've been looking forward to seeing where Wilde takes the character, especially given what happened in the previous book. With a large chunk of responsibility now placed on Hereward as leader, this allows for the character to be fleshed out even further than he has been before, being presented as a well rounded, three-dimensional figure that you will remember for a long time after this novel. Whilst the secondary characters aren't as quite memorable, Harald Redteeth, Alric, Kraki, Guthrinc and the others, they still nonetheless play a key role in this book and gain a solid amount of page time.

I also liked how Wilde handled the main antagonist for this novel – William - yes, that William, known as the Bastard, and the Conqueror of England. Whilst he rarely, if at all featured in person in the first two books, End of Days ups the stakes considerably by not only putting him right at the heart of several of the most important scenes, but also setting the stage for a memorable confrontation between the character and our protagonist, Hereward. The interactions between these two characters when they finally meet in person is my personal highlight of the book, and really fulfils what the series has been leading to up until this point, making reading the third act really worthwhile, despite a couple of minor problems that I had with the book, as explained below.

Firstly, the book itself has a much more cinematic feeling than the previous two. This feels like a historical fiction equivalent of The Dark Knight Rises - to use one example, a big, bombastic blockbuster, particularly in the latter half of the novel – only without so many plot holes and less Batman, and every third act that's upped the stakes from its predecessors, and is filled with short, sharp chapters to keep the reader reading. I didn't really have any major issues with this approach, although some people might feel that it differs from

the previous two novels in this aspect. Also, another issue that I found – although I didn't notice this until after the book and probably would have remained ignorant of it if I hadn't had read the review in question, Harald Redteeth – mentioned above, labelled present-day Istanbul as Constantinople, and not Miklagard, as it would have been known as by the Vikings.

However, I didn't have any major problems with this book, and aside from a couple of niggles, it's pretty much superb. As readers of Hereward and The Devil's Army will be aware, Wilde knows how to write bloody, no-holds-barred action well, and he does so without mercy here – particularly in the latter half of the book, with a ruthless approach to battle sequences that are really entertaining. As I mentioned earlier, historical fiction fans will love this book – I couldn't put it down, and as a result, I'm left wondering, what can Wilde bring to the table next? His first three outings are a huge success, and it's almost certain – if he continues to write novels as strong as this one, then I'll pick it up for certain. Readers of the first two novels probably don't need this review to convince them to read the book, but if for some reason you're still on the fence about it – I can throw my full recommendation behind the book. Buy it!

VERDICT: 4/5

Hereward Series: Hereward, The Devil's Army, End of Days

S.J.A. Turney says

I have to say, of course, that I review this - even after three books on Hereward - as something of a layman. It's not an era I am familiar with, and I know little of Hereward other than vague connections between the name and rebellions in the days of the early English. By the time I got to the 3rd book, though, I have to admit it was pretty obvious that the series could not have a happy ending. Though I don't know the history of Hereward, I do know that William the Conqueror founded a dynasty of Kings and his rule passed from his hands into other legitimate successors, not the bloodied ones of East Anglian rebels. So to some extent the ending was a foregone conclusion.

That doesn't necessarily matter, of course. Gladiator is a great story. We all knew it had a doomed ending, but that made it no less poignant or exciting. Braveheart was a foregone conclusion, but still stirred the blood. The story of Spartacus can hardly have a happy ending, but that didn't stop Ben Kane writing a damn good tale about him. Because sometimes the doomed hero is the best tale.

Hereward book 1 was a strong story, and only dropped a star on my review due to the almost superhero-powerful nature of the protagonist. However, it was still a storming tale, and book 2 only improved matters, deepening the character and the plot together. Book 3 concludes the tale of Hereward's resistance to the Normans in great power, style and character. Indeed, by this time, the hero is such an excellent character and so absorbing for the reader that we truly care about him, which makes the doom of the ending we know is to come all the more powerful.

Despite going into the book with a sense of gloom as I thought I knew what must happen, I was constantly surprised by the fact that the English actually were winning! Hereward and his chums were bloodying the nose of the Conqueror and winning the fight. I had one of those moments where I wondered whether Wilde had diverged from clear history and done a Tarantino, Inglorious Basterds thing, having Hereward somehow win! And then everything went piriform as I expected it to from the start, but only due to unforeseen (and also unreported due to spoilers) circumstances. And even though towards the end of the book, it was once more obvious things could not end all hunky dorey, still Wilde had a number of surprises for me. Indeed, the ending really came at me out of the blue. Unexpected. And fab.

Basically, by this book, Wilde's writing style has really hit the perfect stride and his characters are now well rounded and believable, even the new creations. And that leads me to Deda. 'Nuff said. Deda should have a book of his own, James, as should Kraki. Bear that in mind, when thinking of your next project.

End of Days is full of action and bloodshed, subterfuge and trickery, murder and flight, treason and negotiation. Grit your teeth at the action in the swamps (as superb as it was in book 2). Wonder at the power of the Conqueror, who is every bit the match for Hereward. And love the book for what it is: a superb conclusion of a tale that should have been told long ago. It is, in short, a bloody marvel.

Rick Brindle says

So, in this, the third novel of the trilogy, Hereward's fight against William reaches its climax. Because, outside of the readers of these novels, not many people have heard of Hereward the Wake, and because almost everyone has heard of William the conqueror, I think we all know who will win in the end. Not necessarily a recipe for disaster; we all know how most Sharpe novels end.

So why was this only OK? Sad to say, the narrative style. Wilde's prose is ponderous and at times, irritating. He's trying to set the scene with his use of old style language and grammar, but most of the time it gets in the way of the story, and sometimes its just plain annoying. It definitely affected the pace and left the reader feeling that what could have been a fast, action story, is in fact dreary and over complicated. Names and places are also difficult to get your head around.

Some may think I'm picky, but historical fiction has really raised its game in recent years. To those of you out there who like Wilde's novels, fair enough, but for me, having read and thoroughly enjoyed Bernard Cornwell and Conn Iggulden, James Wilde really is the poor relation at the party.

Speesh says

Don't you just love it when things come together?

I go on holiday to the UK and pick up 'Hereward The End of Days'. Amongst other places, we visit friends who live in Ely. On my birthday, the 7th of August, unfortunately a few days after we returned from the afore-mentioned trip, James Wilde is in Ely doing a signing of 'Hereward End of Days'. On my return I finish Marc Morris' 'The Norman Conquest' before starting 'End of Days'.

Anyway...

It's never easy (I guess) writing a book based on a factual figure. Mainly because of those pesky facts. You can say 'this happened, then that happened, then this happened', but someone will always pop up who 'knows better' and takes the author to task, because he or she has played fast and loose with the 'facts' - as they see them. Luckily with Hereward - and the whole period really - the 'facts' as we have them are more than a little fast and more often than not, extremely loose. So there's actually plenty of scope for the imagination, even whilst remaining inside a framework of what we have been handed down as 'fact'. Whilst I disagree with the person making the argument; look at the recent controversy regarding the new theory as to where the battle of Hastings took place. We knew it wasn't Hastings. But now someone is suggesting it wasn't at Battle either. If you were in the non-Battle battle camp, you could say we know there was a battle and who the two sides were, but that's about it.

From my reading of Marc Morris' 'The Norman Conquest', it seems like the 'histories' of the period we have

were either been written a long time after the event, or a long time after the event and to an agenda. Most often because someone paid someone else to write a history and the 'history' reflects that. You're not going to pay for something you don't like. Not now, not in the 11th Century. Even if they weren't paid, writing a long time after the event and writing from the point of view of one side or the other from the conflict, is going to colour your 20/20 hindsight. The problem as I see it as well is, even if an un-biased, contemporary history suddenly popped up now, no one would believe it. Because it more than likely wouldn't fit the 'facts' as we now believe them to be. As I said, the facts surrounding Hereward are more than a little vague. And while you may not like some of the ways James Wilde has Hereward interacting with other historical figures, unless you are going to come with incorrigible facts stating the opposite or different, you can't - in my book - take James Wilde too much to task for what in his books, he has his Hereward say and do. And this is meant to be fiction, after all. I don't remember James Wilde suggesting these books should be taught in school history lessons. Maybe I missed that. Again, from my reading of Marc Morris' *The Norman Conquest* (admittedly the only history of the period I have read (so far), but it would seem Mr Morris has written his after reading a whole lot more than me, so I'll go with the theory of 'why have a dog and bark yourself?' on this one), James Wilde does at least - with 'Hereward End of Days' - stay in line with the 'facts', such as we have them. Even to the seemingly unlikely meeting with William towards the end - oh, come on, it's flagged all the way through and was written about by a Monk in the 12th Century, so it's hardly a plot spoiler. As Marc Morris puts it;

"...the monk of Ely who wrote the *Gesta Herewardi* in the early twelfth century did so with the clear intention of defending the honour of a defeated people. Hereward is presented as not only heroic but also chivalrous, a worthy adversary for his Norman opponents. The underlying message of the *Gesta* is that the English and Normans could coexist on equal terms. Indeed, in this version of the story, Hereward and the Conqueror himself are eventually reconciled."

Both the character of Hereward and the book are more restrained, more subdued than (in) its two predecessors. Hereward in 'End of Days' is no longer the whirlwind of death and destruction we met in the first book. Well, he is, but he realises if left to career out of control, the death the whirlwind would inevitably lead to, would be his own. So Hereward has had to mature somewhat. He has to be older and wiser and he finds that with maturity comes change and responsibility. He has to realise it's not just about him and his anger any more. Whilst earlier in the series he cared nothing for himself and his actions, now he is responsible for much more than just the lives and future of his close friends and companions - he's also responsible for the hopes and indeed the hope for the future, of all the English. That is, what's left of them after William has been travelling through his green and conquered land. The 11th Century prophets of doom might say the days that are ending are those of mankind itself, but in reality, while once Hereward - 'the last Englishman' - dreamt of leading a rebellion that would save the English from the Norman tyranny and conquest, he knows that in order to defend the honour of a soon to be defeated people it must instead be the end of his rebellion's days.

'End of Days', brings to a thoroughly satisfying conclusion the various strands begun in the previous two books. Hereward's vicious, scheming adoptive brother and his seemingly implacable and sworn psychopathic enemy, the Viking 'Redteeth', get what's coming to them, whilst the addition of the character of the Norman knight 'Deda' is an excellent way of further blurring the difference between Norman war machine and the old English ways. One that sets the scene for how England developed under Norman rule. But once again one of the strongest characters in 'End of Days' are The Fens themselves. The ancient, mysterious lands that give the rebels an almost impenetrable fortress in which to gather strength and from which to fight back, are a constant source of comfort, concealment and the fitting place to make a last stand.

We're almost certain Hereward existed, but we ALL know he didn't win. He didn't free the English people and he didn't send the Normans packing. He lost. And that has surely been James Wilde's biggest challenge all the way through this series - to make a compulsive, compelling story from a set of circumstances we already know the basic facts of. A challenge he rises to admirably. I thought many a time while reading this,

it was a similar situation to (for example) books like 'The Day of The Jackal'. You know the 'Jackal' doesn't succeed, but it's still an incredibly thrilling, heart-pounding story all the same. As is Hereward's. Half of me, while reading the book, still hoped Hereward would somehow succeed. Even though I know he didn't. See? That's good writing.

This conflict could never be a battle amongst equals and William as we know, thanks to much greater resources, comes out on top. The English and Normans might be able to coexist on something approaching equal terms, but Hereward and William cannot. Though I did feel that on some occasions, James Wilde was actually showing us that Hereward and William were essentially very similar. Both leaders equally beset by treachery and treason, betrayal and seemingly implacable enemies. Sometimes it feels like the only people Hereward can trust to be consistent in what they say, are his enemies. In contrast to William though, Hereward can at least trust them to try and kill him from the front, in daylight. Hereward in the end recognises that he and William can't coexist on equal terms and so after their reconciliation, he has to go bravely into that good night of history and myth.

So, the 'End of Days' would also seem to be the end of James Wilde's Hereward books. That is of course presuming it is just a trilogy. Hereward has been fresh and riotously entertaining. An in-your-face, unforgettable meeting with one of English history's original 'forgotten' heroes. James Wilde has succeeded in turning Hereward into a vital, living, breathing, death-dealing, honest, fallible, believable human being. A worthy adversary for William and the Normans. My attention and anticipation has been held fast all the way through, by glorious, addictive story-telling and good old-fashioned, can't turn the pages fast enough, reading enjoyment of the finest kind. I do hope the good Mr Wilde can somehow find a way to keep Hereward going in some form or other. The character of the knight Deda would seem to offer some positive avenues, though would possibly take him into areas already occupied by James Aitcheson's 'Tancred'. The legend of Hereward has it that he either went into exile or carried on with his rebellious ways in the Fens or, a number of other possibilities. He didn't die at the end of his struggles to rid England of the Normans and there is certain evidence for his exploits in hiding being the template for the later Robin Hood legend, so there might be scope for further novels.

But, maybe it is best to let Hereward end his days here and remember him the way he was.

The fact is, it's sure not going to be easy not having another Hereward book to look forward to.

Rebecca says

This third and final book in the epic Hereward trilogy is truly, honestly, cross my heart MIND GRIPPING and EDGE OF YOUR SEAT reading - guaranteed 100%!

Not least due to the reader being plunged into the camp at Ely to learn that not only is order disintegrating and brutal random murders are being committed but HERWARD IS MISSING! Is all lost?

From there it goes onto the best, most well plotted, jaw dropping roller coaster of a ride as the reader follows the several key point events that allow certain characters to rise and others to fall as each fights hard for what they most want - be it revenge, power, riches, honour, to complete a fateful oath or even just simple survival.

Soooooo much happens in this one book that I can not possibly mention any of it for fear of spoilers.

But I will say this - if you have read the first book and liked it, if you have read the second book and loved it, you **MUST READ THIS** out of PURE HONOUR to not only the character of Hereward and his epic life but the masterful telling by James Wilde.

Mikeslinky says

Overall I really enjoyed this book. It did take a few pages at the beginning to get to grips with all the characters, mostly due to some of their names. I did wonder if it would have been easier if I'd read the first two books! After that, this book took me on a journey to Norman England, a period I have not really experienced in my reading much previously. Hereward himself had a quiet confidence of a great leader in public but all the self-loathing and doubt these strong individuals always seem to have. I like how his friendship with the priest Alric wasn't always be driven by religion and the pair seemed to have a very deep respect for each other. I loved how there were prominent women characters, not always seen in historical fiction involving war. I'm especially glad to see that after the agony of losing her husband in such a brutal manner that it seems Rowena will find a new love.

The story has a few twists and turns, although I think that Hereward's brother could have been a little more devious and plotting. He seemed to stop short of really putting together a plan to get to Hereward. Loved the Vikings characters and how Wilde conveyed how at the time there would have been a real mixture of peoples following the unsettled period this country experienced at that time.

Wilde's description of Ely and the surrounding bogs was great and really transported me back in time at certain points during the book. I also like how he seemed to change his style of writing in certain points bring in phrases that seemed almost old English in nature.

Will now have to go back and read the first two Hereward novels!

Frederick Tucker says

James Wilde is as good as Bernard Cornwell

Tony Parsons says

1071, 5 yrs. have gone by since King William the Bastard & his band of Normans' invaded Hastings. Villages are now lay as wasteland. Land & other valuables have been stolen. Rats get more than they bargained for as they run rampant over the number of dead corpses. On the Isle of Ely Hereward the Wake (Mercia) is picked to lead a band of warriors against the King. Turfrida is his wife) & Redwald is his brother.

What about all the heroes & their battles?
Will times have changed in 1072?

Thank you for the cool postcards.

I can't get enough of this era in history.

I did not receive any type of compensation for reading & reviewing this book. While I receive free books from publishers & authors, I am under no obligation to write a positive review. Only an honest one.

A very awesome book cover, great font & writing style. A very well written 11th. Century Medieval military

adventure book. It was very easy for me to read/follow from start/finish & never a dull moment. There were no grammar/typo errors, nor any repetitive or out of line sequence sentences. Lots of exciting scenarios, with several twists/turns & a great set of unique characters to keep track of. This could also make another great 11th. Century Medieval military adventure movie, or mini TV series. Bloody & gory what more can you ask for. There is no doubt in my mind this is a very easy rating of 5 stars.

Thank you for the free Goodreads; Pegasus Books; ARC; paperback book
Tony Parsons MSW (Washburn)

Linda Humberstone says

Thoroughly enjoyed this book as I did the others. In this Hereward needs to be more of a strategist than ever and nearly thwarts William but of course we know that wasn't going to happen and what the end would be for the English. It is nice that not everyone is killed off and there are little cameo stories going on as well throughout the story, which are not too silly or romantic. There is a good believable description of the fight for Ely and, as in all battles, it must have been dreadful for the defenders.

John Hanscom says

4 1/2 to 5. Absolutely engaging. The only suggestion: the book is full of archaic terms from battle and Medieval English society. A glossary would be handy, so it is not necessary to keep checking a dictionary. Nevertheless, reading this book is like watching a movie, and it is HIGHLY recommended.

Sonny says

Nice read. Hints of the beginning of the Robin Hood legend.

David says

In this third installment of the Hereward saga, our hero is desperately trying to save the survivors of the Norman Invasion, not to mention himself from his own demons. His brother has turned against him and many of the people he was close to have been killed by William the Bastard's army. Dark days are indeed upon him. Hereward doesn't simply turn tail and run but instead chooses to face off the seemingly unbeatable Norman army. At first his plans succeed in holding off the enemy, but in time cracks begin to appear in the English defenses. I won't divulge anything further so as to not spoil it. As in the first two books, this one has blood, gore and violence aplenty. Those of you who like Cornwell's "Uhtred" series, or enjoy Dark Ages fiction, will definitely like this series. Five stars.

Beorn says

If I had to pick one word or phrase for it, it would be work in progress. This reads quite like what you'd imagine a draft sent to a publishers would read like rather than the finished beast.

The titular character, Hereward, is barely a supporting role in his own book. In fact the most memorable things to have happened him so far is him infiltrating the enemy camp and nearly getting caught. Not once, but at least twice. It could easily be said that his antagonist Harald Redteeth has far more attention during the book than Hereward, even though he only crosses paths with Hereward on a couple of occasions.

The dialogue seems more noticeably melodramatic than it did in the previous two books and with at least one minor bug bear of the Northman Harald Redteeth using the place name Constantinople not Miklagard as the Vikings called it.

You can tell from the chapter lengths that this was written with a far more cinematic approach - short, sharp chapters to keep the audience's attention ticking over; some chapters only two or three sides of text each - rather than a literary book that seeks to suck you in and rivet you with detail.

As is always the way when it comes to (relatively short) series of books, you find yourself comparing an instalment to it's predecessors. Where the opening book, simply self-titled, was an engrossing, fascinating even incendiary book that completely sucked you into the whole situation and setting, this on the other hand feels almost like a slow day going through the motions to finish off the story and close the loop rather than go out with a bang.

There's none of the tangible menace, danger or fist pumping action elsewhere in the series, precious little bloodshed, hardly any open battle between the combatants - only two small inconsequential incidents in the first half of the book - and not a great deal to keep you reading beyond the fact you've made it this far you owe it to yourself to finish.

The conflict does pick up towards the last third of the book with the key set-pieces though there are a few niggles even there that frustrate a little - namely Hereward spends most of the book determined to kill Redwald only for it to be Alric who does it at the twilight end of the story. It's probably intended to be ironic or poetic that it's Alric who kills Redwald in the end but it doesn't feel that way, it just feels like it's taking one more story shaping death away from Hereward, much like Deda killing Asketil.

Overall, as far as quality goes this series has turned into somewhat of a wedge with the opening book being so appealing to me only for it to slowly inexorably slip away with each subsequent instalment.
