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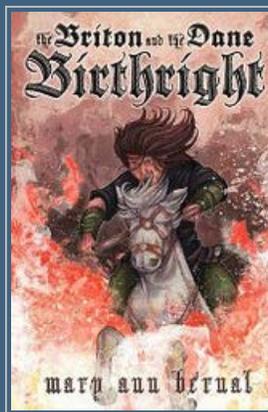
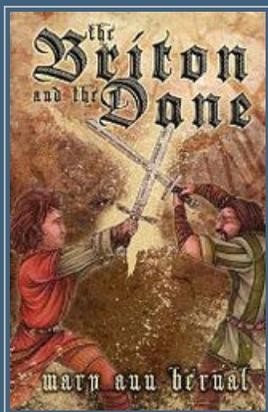
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Mary Ann Bernal - Author Interview

09/12/2011

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I would like to thank Mary Ann Bernal, author of The Briton and the Dane series, for stopping by and taking the time out of her busy schedule to answer a few questions for her readers.

Christine: *How do you find the time to juggle work, family, writing, and/or everything else you do?*

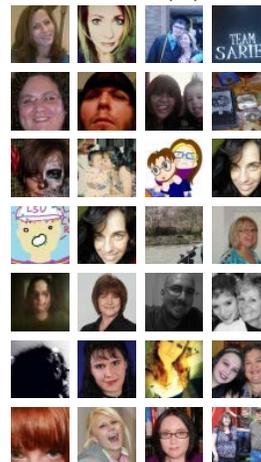
Mary Ann: Since I am an extremely organized person, it is not very difficult to stick to a schedule. My first priority is to my family, everything else falls into place. I try to write at least a few hundred words a day, but have burned the midnight oil when necessary to finish a thought process or chapter.

Christine: *Everyone has their own story, how did you stumble into a writing career?*

Mary Ann: I fell in love with medieval England after reading Sir Walter Scott's "Ivanhoe" in my sophomore year of high school, but my interests soon turned towards the Dark Ages when the formidable Vikings harassed the civilized world once Hollywood released such blockbusters as "The Vikings," "The Longships," and "Erik the Viking." Add to the mix "Alfred the Great," "Prince Valiant," and "King Arthur," and an incurable romantic anglophile was born.

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As time went on Hollywood changed its venue of period movies, but I found solace with the many British programs being aired on our local PBS station. With the advent of BBC America and History International, I was able to find great documentaries such as "The Dark Ages," "Life in Anglo-Saxon Times," "Dark Age England," and "Viking Exploration," to name but a few.

During this time, Erik the Viking was hovering in the cobwebs of my creative mind, waiting to escape oblivion, waiting to tell his story, waiting and waiting and waiting, but it was not until 2008 that I was able to find the time to devote to fulfilling my lifelong dream of writing my Erik the Viking story, and "The Briton and the Dane" trilogy was born.

Christine: *What would you say inspires you the most when you are developing a new story line?*

Mary Ann: I enjoy period books, movies and television miniseries, especially those titles relevant to my specific interests. The recent "Spartacus" series has me toying with the idea of exploring the lives of the ancient Britons during the Roman occupation, and the legacy left by the glorious Roman Empire on this conquered nation.

Christine: *Tell us about your book series...*

Mary Ann: The Briton and the Dane series bring to life the tumultuous ninth century, when the formidable Vikings terrorized the civilized world. The epic adventure runs the gamut of deception, treachery, intrigue, and complicated relationships during a time of war and conquest in Anglo-Saxon Britain.

Christine: *How long did it take to write?*

Mary Ann: The manuscript, including multiple edits, was completed within a nine to ten-month timeframe.

Christine: *What was your inspiration for the book?*

Mary Ann: I have been inspired by the writings of Sir Walter Scott, Frans G. Bengtsson, and Thomas B. Costain, to name but a few, and period movies released by Hollywood and European filmmakers.

Christine: *Do you have plans to release more books in the near future? If so, tell us about what you have in the works.*

Mary Ann: "The Briton and the Dane: Legacy" is scheduled for a 2012 release. Since "Legacy" is the final installment of the trilogy, my plan is to write another trilogy, and "The Briton and the Dane: The Beginning" is in the early stages of development.

Christine: *If you could live within the pages of your book (fantasy becomes reality) would you? and why or why not?*

Mary Ann: Time travel works for me, but I would prefer to spend the day visiting, and sleep in my own bed at night. I am too much of a 21st Century person, used to life's little amenities; however, more importantly to quote from the Declaration of Independence: "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," was nonexistent in the Dark Ages, and I fear I would have issues if my freedom was threatened.

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Christine: *When did you start writing and what inspired the attempt?*

Mary Ann: My love of writing and dabbling in poetry prompted me to enroll in writing workshops once I graduated from college. I am probably dating myself, but the Erik the Viking commercials had a profound effect on my creative mind, reminding me that I needed to tell my story. So this "bucket list" item remained on the list for a few decades, but I never gave up on the dream.

Christine: *Did you have to do any research while writing your book(s)? If so, how much time was put into research and what were your topics of research?*

Mary Ann: Research is very time consuming, but well worth the time, because if one is writing historical fiction, the author must have accurate facts or lose one's credibility. I did extensive research on Alfred the Great, the Benedictine Order, the Viking Expansion, the Papacy, and Dark Ages to name but a few. Initially I spent about six months researching my genre, but I continue to expand my database.

Christine: *Is your long-term goal to become a working author and give up the day job or are your books more of a hobby that you like to share with people?*

Mary Ann: It is very difficult for new authors to break into the business, especially in today's economy and the digital age of book publishing. My goal is to get my story "out there" so that others might enjoy not only the story but the history that inspired the series. History can be fun but unfortunately the "interesting stories" are set aside, and any student will tell you that dates and facts are "boring." My novels weave in historical facts, shedding light on how people reacted to the changes in their world, breathing life into an otherwise string of words in a history book.

Also, unless you are Stephen King or Michael Crichton, revenue from book sales will not pay the mortgage. Speaking engagements is where the money is, and until the new author builds a following, I would not recommend quitting one's day job.

Christine: *What is your favorite genre of books and why?*

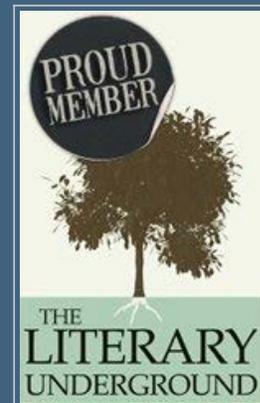
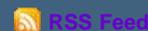
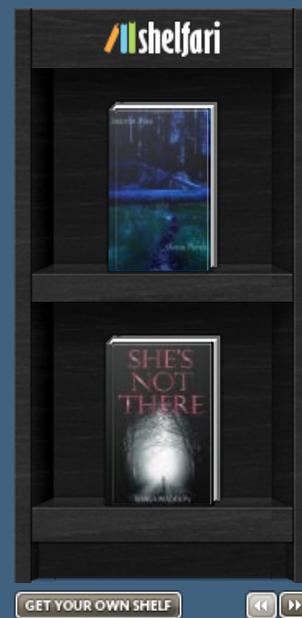
Mary Ann: Historical fiction is my favorite genre. What better way to learn history than through living, breathing characters? Author research gives the reader interesting tidbits that never make the school's history books. For instance, the Vikings are portrayed as dirty barbarians, but in reality, they did bathe and combed their hair, and used twigs to remove particles of food from between their teeth.

I would like to thank my fellow [Literary Underground](#) author, Mary Ann Bernal, once again for stopping by and filling us in on her writing career, her books, and dispelling some myths about those very intriguing Vikings!



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Easy Links for All Reviews,

Timothy Bowen →

09/12/2011 16:27

great interview! Going to have to check out her books

Reply

Ryan O

09/12/2011 16:35

Great interview!

Reply

Carol Parker

09/15/2011 06:36

Enjoyed reading the interview. Keep writing, I love your stories!!!!

Reply

Christine M. Butler →

09/24/2011 08:32

I use a random line picker to choose the winner of the free e-books each week from the comments on each post. This week's winner was Ryan O!

Congrats Ryan - I will contact you via Facebook so you can choose your book!

Thanks,
Christine

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