



Warlord's Gold

Michael Arnold

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Autumn, 1643. As an increasingly bitter war rages across England, Captain Innocent Stryker leaves Oxford with orders to recover a lost treasure, vital to the success of the Royalist cause. But a seemingly simple mission to the remote Scilly Isles is soon jeopardised, for enemies lie in wait. A formidable Parliamentarian agent has been sent ahead of Stryker's force, intent on defeating Royalist plans. Feared by ally and enemy alike, he is a man whose determination is only matched by his hatred for Stryker.

The quest for the gold takes Stryker across storm-ravaged seas, through enemy territory and finally to the Royalist stronghold of Basing House. And it is there that Stryker will face his most dangerous challenge yet.

Warlord's Gold Details

Date : Published July 3rd 2014 by Hodder & Stoughton

ISBN : 9781848547605

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Format : Hardcover 480 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Civil War, English Civil War, Fiction, War, Military Fiction

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S.J.A. Turney says

So this is book five in Mike Arnold's civil war series and I've been reading and reviewing since book 1. What can I say that I haven't already said?

This series is promoted as the 'Sharpe of the Civil War'. In truth, though I love my Bernard Cornwell series, we are rapidly approaching the point where dear Captain/Major/Colonel Sharpe is actually the 'Stryker of the Napoleonic Wars'. For me, Captain Innocent Stryker has now become one of the quintessential characters that define modern historical fiction. Macro and Cato, Alan Dale, Valerius, Hatton & Roumande, Two-knives, Raven, Jack Lark, Orm... and Stryker.

Arnold was unpredictable, I feel, in his first three books, in that though each one was an engrossing and riveting read, they varied between books that were breakneck action, complex hunts, character-driven pieces and so on. By book 3 he had largely hit his stride of combining every stunning aspect into one novel. Book 4 (Assassin's Reign) was a superb masterpiece of the genre and showed that he had crested the wave and could be relied upon to keep up the standard in every way. Book 5 confirms that.

Warlord's Gold not only hits the spot in every aspect of historical fiction, it is also Arnold's tightest, well-resolved and yet most wide-ranging plot yet. Our story begins with two distinct threads (ignoring bad guys that we know are going to converge with one or the other), with Stryker in the Scillies and Forrester (my personal fave character) heading south from Oxford on a special mission. For a lot of the book I presumed this was going to be the way of things, with two stories being told concurrently, each with their own heroes, villains and plots. And yet Arnold seamlessly joins them during the tale, bringing them together into a siege situation the like of which a lover of Zulu would enjoy.

Enough on the plot and writing style. Suffice it to say, the plot is extremely well-crafted, while the writing style is so comfortable and enticing that it is easy to get lost in the tale. Even with a busy life and demanding children, I finished the book in 3 days.

Since my era of choice is Rome, this Civil War series teaches me something with almost every chapter, and I come away after a Mike Arnold book more insufferably knowledgable than ever I was before. Even just in the use of language (sotweed, dragoons, lobsters and so on.)

But for me, no matter what else good I can say of this series, Arnold's strength that makes him stand out among peers is his characters. He is capable of creating such vivid characters that even half-way into their first scene the reader can thoroughly visualise them in their head. Stryker and Forry are prime examples of this, and carry from book to book, with Stryker being easily one of the top 3 most memorable characters in the whole genre for me. But even one-shot villains or supporting characters in these books are so vivid and clear that they steal the stage from one another at every turn. In fact, I would go so far as to say that Arnold creates the most impressive complete nutcases in the literary world! In this particular book we meet a thoroughly disreputable and enjoyable smuggler-turned-privateer, a misshapen vengeful lunatic (though you might know him), a zealous Balkan killer, a reluctant military commander with the heart of a lion and more. It really is a treat to read in terms of character.

The less said about the plot the better, for fear of spoilers, but it will be giving nothing away to those who have read the first four and have seen the book's title that this one revolves around Cade's missing treasure

and its recovery. In fact it is something of a race between two parties to deliver the gold to their opposing masters, with action all around the south coast this time, ranging from Basing House in Hampshire to the Scilly Isles. One thing for sure is that you cannot predict the path of the plot, so don't try.

In short, Arnold has become a master of his art, and this book just shows it. This review is redundant for anyone who's read the rest of the series. If you've read books 1-4, you've had book 5 on pre-order anyway, I'm pretty damn sure. If not, then you've not read any of these. WHY???? Go out and buy them all at once. Don't waste time where you might have to wait for the next book to be delivered. Take my advice and get them all now.

A thoroughly absorbing masterpiece that deserves to hit the top and stay there.

Jim says

Like a very fine wine, the longer it goes, the better it is, and the 5th outing of Captain Innocent Stryker is not only a full body adventure of the Civil War, it has now become a smooth well developed series that now walks beside another class act that of Sharpe. They need to change the sticker on the cover from the Sharpe of the Civil War to Stryker the main man of the Civil War. Once again Michael Arnold has produced a cracking adventure that has you in the heart of the action, we're you can smell the gunpowder and hear the battle cry's as Stryker, Forrester and Lisette come up against a old foe from the past, a foe who has a passion to reap revenge on our heroes, and comes very close to achieving his goal. Michael Arnold brings his passion for the period on to the page and along with great research has produced another gem to sit along side the other four gems in the series. I can not wait for the next outing of Forrester, Lisette and the main man of the Civil War Captain Innocent Stryker.

Stephen says

really enjoyed the latest in the civil war series and felt there was more depth in the characters as the series has gone along.

Kate says

Without doubt, this is my favourite English Civil War series and Warlord's Gold is a fine addition to it. Above all else, it is a thoroughly enjoyable and thrilling adventure but what sets it above and beyond are the characters of Stryker, Lisette, Stryker's men and those of the men they must face. Fabulous!

Fraser Cook says

Another stormer! Can't wait for the next one!

Jeff Frane says

Arnold has Stryker back where he belongs: in a swashbuckling adventure filled with evil-doers, gold and blood. Volume #4 had me worried that Arnold had lost his sense of adventure and fun, sticking his protagonist in a necessarily dull siege but Warlord's Gold is much more like it.

The Civil War has begun to turn away from the Royalists as The Parliament slowly gains the advantage and the inevitable regicide. There is a lot of history left in the Civil Wars, however, and Michael Arnold can spin this story out for years. Which I hope continues to be a good thing.

David says

Book #5 in Michael Arnold's 'Civil War Chronicles', this picks up not long after the end of the previous (Assassin's Reign), with Stryker and his men off to retrieve a treasure from the Scilly Islands for the cause of King and Country.

Of course, agents of Parliament are also after the same treasure.

Meanwhile, Stryker's friend Capt Lancelot Forester is also sent deep into Parliamentarian held country in order to shore up the will of an outpost that is still holding out for the king ...

Surviving shipwreck, imprisonment and torture, the two distinct plot strands (Stryker and the treasure/Forester' mission) eventually mesh at the defense of Basing House, in another enjoyable entry in the series.

Neil Mullins says

Good continuing story

Another good chapter about Stryker. Like the writing lots of good characters. Only niggle was Tainton and the way he was always able to sidestep Stryker and friends sometimes to easily but at least he finally got his comeuppance
