



The Bones of Our Fathers

Elin Gregory

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Malcolm Bright, brand new museum curator in a small Welsh Border town, is a little lonely until – acting as emergency archaeological consultant on a new housing development – he crosses the path of Rob Escley, aka Dirty Rob, who makes Mal's earth move in more ways than one.

Then Rob discovers something wonderful, and together they must combat greedy developers and a treasure hunter determined to get his hands on the find. Are desperate measures justified to save the bones of our fathers? Will Dirty Rob live up to his reputation? Do museum curators really do it meticulously?

Answers must be found for the sake of Mal's future, his happiness and his heart.

79000 words.

The Bones of Our Fathers Details

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From Reader Review *The Bones of Our Fathers* for online ebook

Misty says

I L*O*V*E everything about this book! Great characters, Mal & Rob OMG!, the village, the archaeology part and the beauty of the discovery, the fact that it takes place partly in Wales (I've always had a fascination for Wales and its History). I really really enjoyed *The Bones of Our Fathers*!!!

Now I'm eagerly waiting for the Eleventh Hour's sequel!!!

Bibliophile says

4.5 stars. Kaje Harper placed this book on her Best of 2017 list, so I decided to give it a whirl. It's very British (in every way) and quite charming. Best read with a cup of tea in hand. Recommended. :)

Kaje Harper says

4.5 stars - This book is one of my favorite kinds of comfort reads - a realistic, lovely, gradually building romance about real people with flaws, in a setting with flavor, and some low-key drama. Mal is a PhD archaeologist who has moved to a small town to curate the local museum. He has only been there a couple of months, and has just noticed a very appealing, gay-and-out construction worker, when that man turns up an exciting historical find while doing a road excavation. The book follows the ups and downs of a relationship between two intelligent men who must learn to have more empathy, while the issues of local jurisdiction, small-town customs, ego, and historical preservation play out.

Rob is wonderful as Mal's foil - strong, sweet, and ardent about his heritage, quick to act, not always wisely. A man with friends and resources in this small town that Mal, as an outsider, doesn't have or understand. Also a man with difficult family he still cares about, and yet that doesn't ever swoop down into melodrama. Mal's slightly black-and-white views and his relative isolation (other than an excellent sister) make a good contrast.

I appreciated many of the ordinary touches, the mix of friends and other secondary characters, the low-key plot, the simplicity of how having the flu drops a stopper into the middle of life when you have no time for it. There are a couple of misunderstandings, but they come naturally from the plot and characters, not from relationship blindness. So while our guys could have talked to each other more, it felt plausible that they didn't. This was warm, fun, and an easy read. Not a book that punched me in the heart, in the way of my very favorites, but one I'll set aside for a comfort reread someday.

Optimist ?King's Wench? & MANTIES Champion says

3.5 Hearts

Cozy!

This little story will probably only appeal to some. It's very British which creates a great sense of place but I also found some of the lingo challenging.

However, it hit my opposites attract sweet spot with Rob being a burly construction worker to Mal's geeky museum curator. Rob's also cheeky and saucy which cracked me up; some of his innuendos were so cheesy they left me chortling. From the moment he sets eyes on Mal there is never any doubt that he'd like to show Mal his power tools. Mal is quite likable in his own rite. He's not as gregarious as Rob but he's passionate and genuinely a good person who's loyal to his friends and committed to his field.

The plot is straightforward and the story sort of meanders to a conclusion with some shenanigans along the way to add to the overall genial quality of the story. *The Bones of Our Fathers* is a slice of life with a cast of characters that lend to the coziness that is Pemberland. This story and these characters have charisma!

Pemberland is a quaint little town where everyone knows everyone and all their business because they've all lived there forever. Even though Mal is a newb he's welcomed into the fold and is soon knocking around the same haunts like a local, though his blossoming relationship with Rob probably greased those wheels a bit.

Rob and Mal have chemistry and while there are some sexy times they're not explicit with most being alluded to or fade to black. Their relationship evolves naturally with minimal but realistic conflicts that both men use their words to work through. Generally speaking, they fall easily into a committed relationship, have fun together and seem to be on their way to an HEA.

This is my first experience with this author and even though there weren't a lot of bells and whistles that I typically enjoy in my reads what I realized somewhere along the way was a growing familiarity with these characters that snuck up on me. It's a quiet story that packs a punch, a sneaky, ninja punch, but still.

Recommend to romance readers who enjoy low angst, cozy reads with humorous secondary characters.

A review copy was provided.

Anna Butler says

I mentioned in my placeholder that this was classic, funny Elin Gregory. It truly is one to be savoured, stroked gently with loving fingers and reread. Often.

The whole setup just shines with authenticity. Writers frequently forget that worldbuilding is just as important in a contemporary as it is in historical or speculative fiction. Not Elin Gregory. This is a textbook example of how to create a contemporary world and make it live and breathe. Gregory does this with immense skill and aplomb, immersing the reader in a small village in the Welsh borders as if taking you by the hand and pointing out each character, the local museum, the library, the pub... until you're convinced they're real people and real places. The sense of community is palpable. The sense of knowing, of belonging, is not only palpable it's now alien to the millions of us who live in cities where it's a miracle if you know your next-door-neighbour's name. Mal Bright comes from just such city. The community he joins is alien to

him, too.

When Mal takes up post as head of a small, local history museum, the last thing he expects is two finds that will change his life: one archaeological and of immense social and historical significance (I won't spoil the plot but let's just say I loved the twist here!) and the other the love of his life, Rob Escley, the local who's a virtuoso with a mechanical digger (back hoe, to those of you in the US). The slow unfolding of these two strands from their delicate intertwining is, quite simply, beautiful.

Because there is trouble in paradise. The archaeological find is on a building site, where much needed, affordable housing is needed to stop the haemorrhage of young people from the area—and boy, that is spot on in terms of rural politics and social pressures—and the dilemma of whether housing or archaeological find is the most important tests everyone involved. I know and understand the politics both at macro and micro level, from the librarian's jockeying for superiority to the British Museum swooping in to claim a major find. Politics like that were the meat and drink of my professional career and I actually revelled in those aspects. Very, very well done and a prime example of my comment above about how Gregory gets her worldbuilding so perfectly right. It's this sort of thing that imbues her story with its authentic air.

The real plot twist for me (small spoilers here) (view spoiler)

This is a lovely book. The characters are fresh and likeable, the world building is stellar, the plot fascinating. Do go and read it.

(I'll add a disclaimer here: I was sent a copy of the final book by Signal Boost for review, but I've loved this book since I first saw an early version of it in beta, and I loved it now it's finished and polished. Love that lasts, people. That's to be treasured, wherever you find it).

Antonella says

Well written, delightful story set in a small Welsh border town. I loved the wonderfully rendered small town atmosphere, Rob's openness, also about his sexuality and what he wants, the "archeological" plot and the connected mystery, the humour. Also the secondary characters are great, I couldn't help to fall in love with Mal's secretary Betty.

Chris, the Dalek King says

Ok. I know I said this last week, but I swear to god I did not do this on purpose. Again.

Oh, look, another book about English archaeologists! What are the odds? (I mean, seriously, what are the freaking odds that I would pick and then schedule, at random, three books about English archaeologists all in the same month? I'm just thankful that this one didn't involve any allusions to the impending World War III. Because I would have lost my shit, people. Lost. My. Shit.)

Settling into his new job as the museum curator in a small English town not far from the Welsh border, is not all glitz and glamour. But after the last few hard hits that Malcolm Bright's life has taken, the slow small town life is just the ticket. Plus he gets to get his hands dirty by acting as an archaeological consultant for the

housing construction happening just outside of the town. He doesn't expect much to be found, but you never know, and anything new to liven up the cluttered exhibits in the museum is more than welcome. And if he can get down and dirty with Rob Escley, a hot construction worker on the site, all the better. But when one of the construction diggers finds something no one expected in the ground, things get a whole lot more complicated for everyone.

After I got over the fact that part of me decided that August was Archaeological Month without letting the rest of me know, and settled into this book, I was quite easily lost in the story and the characters. And since my last two books on this subject dealt with history and magic, it was kinda nice to see some more modern and real-world interpretations on how archaeologist work.

If you were to ask me what is most favortist type of Anglophile books, it would be the ones set in small towns. London seems great and all, but there is something about the way a well written small-town-England book just soothes me like a warm cup of tea. Which is also probably why whenever I read those books I find myself craving a damn cuppa like no ones business. *The Bones of Our Fathers* is a very well written small-town-England book. (And yes, I ended up drinking like three pots of tea while reading it). I really like how the main and secondary characters interacted in this book. We kinda get the outsider's perspective because Malcolm is a newcomer, but it is easy to see just how all these people work (or don't work) together. It is not all picturesque, but that is kinda what I like most about it. It has a very real feel. Plus nearly all the characters end up being almost as interesting as the two MCs.

The romance was a bit low-key, but I kinda liked it like that. Them trying to figure each other out before they rush into the ILUs seems to be rather realistic. And no matter what was going on with the plot, having them together in the scene was a guarantee that it was going to at least be entertaining.

While the "mystery" didn't end up being all that mysterious, I did find myself enjoying it nonetheless. Mostly that is just because I love Malcolm so much. He is such a great character. Plenty of flaws, but none of them are too egregious, and I'm a sucker for the more book-y types. I will say though that I was a little puzzled over why everyone was treating Malcolm so horribly at the end there. I get that they are naturally gonna be on the side of the hometown-boy, but even Malcolm's sister was being a bit of a shit to him. Rob kinda did a shitty thing, and everyone just shrugged it off and was all pointing fingers at Malcolm for his, I think, very reasonable reaction to finding out the truth. Guess that is one of the major reasons this one ended up hovering near the 4 star range, instead of a bit higher.

This book wasn't overly complicated, but it was very well written. This is my first book by this author, but I think I'll check out more of her stuff. This story knew when to be light, when to be sexy, when to be funny, and when to ramp up the tension. I really like authors who can do all that while not letting the plot get out of hand. For me, this is a definite recommendation, and a book I can easily see landing on the reread pile.

(And I swear to the gods, next week with be archaeologist free....*double checks calendar*...yep. No more bone-diggers for me!)

This book was provided free in exchange for a fair and honest review for Love Bytes. Go there to check out other reviews, author interviews, and all those awesome giveaways. Click below.

K says

4.5 stars

Sweet story of Mal, an archaeologist who has taken on the position of director of a heritage museum run by the local authority in mid Wales and is appointed liaison to a building site in case they turn up anything. While there he's oggled by digger driver, Rob, who he comes to know a lot better after a night in the local pub

when the dog turns up a bronze age cist housing the remains of two men there is interest from further a field which causes friction between the two men and their budding relationship

This is a cozy type story peppered with interesting characters and a good sense of location...

Natalie says

What an utterly delightful time I had reading this! Another new-to-me-author, Elin Gregory completely lived up to the glowing reviews I'd seen for other books. She transported this Florida lady into the middle of a small Welsh village and if it wasn't so cold, I'd move there. Malcolm, the new curator of the local museum, meets Rob, aka "Dirty Rob", a heavy equipment operator, during the opening of a housing development. Besides Rob, there's a rich cast of local residents, often related, all with a lifetime knowing each other's heritage, history, and current goings-on. Told entirely from Malcolm's viewpoint, with a character driven plot, he and Rob pursue one of the more natural, organically written romances I've read in a while. Mal is a rather typical academic type, wrapped up in his work, still plagued by memories of an unworthy ex and too often self-absorbed. But he's captivated by Rob's comfortable, open nature. Rob is the product of an unhappy home life, living in hope of a stable and brighter future, thinking he might find it with Mal. Betty, Mal's colorful receptionist at the museum, is his guide in navigating the complexities of village life. It's a learning process, as Mal has never experienced the tight-knit loyalties of friends sharing a common cause. After the unusual find at the development site, Mal calls in a friend to help with the archaeology and Harvey is far more able to fit himself into the pattern of village life.

Every thread and twist of the plot is balanced; the romantic elements, villager shenanigans, the shifting events around the unearthed treasure, and all mixed with subtle informational details of running a museum and an archaeological dig. I was engrossed in this, rooting for Mal and Rob, and the village residents desire to keep the historical find, with its ancestral significance, for themselves. For those looking for steam, it's quite minimal in this story, because it just wasn't needed to make this tale more complete. I'd recommend this to almost anyone. It's a warm, if not always tender romance, with a focus on family and friends, seasoned with humor and a light touch of suspense. You don't need to be an archaeologist to find lots to treasure in this one!

ARC was provided to me by the publisher via Hearts On Fire Reviews for an unbiased review

Mari Cardenas ~ Bayou Book Junkie says

5 Stars!!!

Once upon a time, back when I was trying to decide what to study in University, I had two top career choices: Law and Archaeology. While I ultimately decided to follow my dad's footsteps and become a lawyer, I've always loved Archaeology and everything historical-related, so I was in heaven while reading *The Bones of Our Fathers* with all the descriptions for the find and its care.

I absolutely adored Mal and Rob. They just fit so well together despite being opposites. And while there was an instance in which I sided with Mal, at least until we were given all the pertaining information, I really loved how Ms. Gregory handled that particular hurdle. The chemistry between Mal and Rob was off the charts and even if the heat level of the book isn't all that high, it was more than enough to see and feel their connection was more than just physical.

I loved all of Rob's friends and Harvey and Zoe, they were such a close-knit community and they were there for each other when they were needed.

This was such a delightful read! From the main to the secondary characters and the interesting storylines to the exciting descriptions and the promise of a HEA for Mal and Rob, I just couldn't get enough. This is my first book by this author, but I can assure you it won't be the last. Her writing was amazing and vivid and engaging. Highly recommendable!!!

*** Copy provided to Bayou Book Junkie for my reading pleasure, a review wasn't a requirement. ***

Annette Gisby says

I stayed up way too late to read more of this. I made the mistake of starting to read it in bed and I had to stop reading only because my eyes were drooping with tiredness.

Mal and Rob were both very well-drawn characters, very realistic with their own quirks and flaws and even though sparks flew between them from their first meeting, they didn't just jump straight into bed. They even went on dates first, which was a refreshing change. If you're looking for lots of sexy times, this probably isn't the book for you. Most bedroom scenes are fade to black.

The town of Penbury really came alive in the book, with its small town politics, everyone knowing each other, or being related to them as well. Mal is a bit of an odd fit, but eventually he comes to love it as much as Rob does and is soon included with the locals.

It was wonderful to watch Mal and Rob's developing relationship and to be honest, you didn't really need any sex to make the book better, the romance is there first and foremost.

A well-written story, with humour and romance and great characters that you really feel you get to know as the book goes on. Mal's assistant Betty is a perfect foil for Mal's more sedate pace. Betty only really has two speeds - fast and faster. I loved her!

There's a good balance with the plot and romance. Despite a little bit of angst, it's a fun story and will make you smile. It's sweet and light and the perfect story to cuddle up with in an armchair on a rainy day.

I couldn't love it more and you'll be rooting for Mal and Rob to get their happily ever after.

Lauren says

5 stars - The Bones of Our Fathers was such an unexpected gem! This one very nearly passed me by, too, and I'm so glad that it didn't - I'm a History graduate and I worked in a Museum for a few years straight out of University, and so the blurb caught my eye and I was so intrigued, but also unsure of what to expect. It quickly became apparent that I had found a new favourite... I LOVED it.

From the very start, I fell head over heels for the writing, the characters, and the beautiful setting. From the moment they met, I fell in love with the interactions between Mal and Rob. Their connection felt so real, which is why I loved it so much. It wasn't all insta-love, crazy animal sex and uncontrollable passion. Instead, we got a much more wonderful, grown-up and realistic relationship. Rob was a delight because he *wasn't* perfect, and he was such a genuine "what you see is what you get" guy. He made me smile with his playful banter and his flirting, and the affection he felt for Mal was PERFECT. One of the characters describes Mal as "the best thing that's ever happened to Rob" and that *totally* squeezed my heart, because Rob's been trampled on a bit by life and his own family, yet he's still such an honestly wonderful man, and while Mal doesn't come along and wave a magic wand and fix everything in Rob's life, he is *there* for Rob, and that's what counts.

The setting for this story was very charming and I could picture it all so perfectly in my head. The town allowed for such an interesting array of secondary characters, and it was nice to meet so many different characters who really were fundamental to making this story so special. In particular, I loved Betty, Gary and Harvey. And Morris, of course! Plus I also come from a small town like this one where everyone knows everyone, and so I found it very entertaining to read because some of it I could really relate to, and it was also wonderful to see the whole "small communities coming together" side of things that I find so uplifting.

The main plot of the story - the archaeological find and the nature of it, and the (mild) dramas that ensue - were very interesting and kept me reading until the end. It was all very well done, and I suppose the subject matter could be a bit "boring" in other contexts for some readers, but I found it so well written and fascinating, which I'm convinced other readers will agree with.

I'll admit to not having read other work by Elin Gregory before. I'm genuinely baffled as to why not, because her writing was really very good and the story was just so well put together. At the end, all I wanted was to see Mal and Rob's future, to see them together maybe 5 or so years down the line, to see their HEA in all its glory.

I am certainly a sucker for a HEA, and I'm not sure if this one classes as a HEA but it is definitely a very strong HFN. The HEA is hanging there, so close, and I fully believe that Mal and Rob get the happiness they both deserve!

I've rated this one 5 stars, and it is much deserved. I've even added it to my "favourites" folder on the Kindle because I can absolutely see myself revisiting this one in the future.

***I was provided with an ARC of The Bones of Our Fathers from Signal Boost Promotions in exchange for an honest review.

Lisa The Novel Approach says

3.5 Stars

I enjoy books which take place in small towns where everyone knows everyone and is all up in each other business, and *Bones of our Fathers* definitely delivers that with all kinds of shenanigans and a variety of interesting characters with the charm I have come to expect in stories with this particular setting.

This was a low-key, slow and steady paced romance involving Mal, a newbie Museum curator and hired archeology consultant, and Dirty Rob, the construction worker. During a new development Rob stumbles upon a Bronze Age cist, which then becomes the center of attention as the town gets swept up in what it means for them, and struggles to keep the find.

The relationship is leisurely paced with low heat level. It progresses naturally with flirting, dating and getting to know one another. They have little misunderstandings and differences of opinions (mostly because Mal is so new he doesn't fully understand the significance of family and friends in a small village, and how it all operates—where everyone is connected to everyone else), and eventually the two find love. It was all done charmingly, and both MCs complement each other in behavior. Rob is an extrovert with strong feelings about heritage. He is a little rash in his decisions, acting without always thinking first, but his actions are based on the best intentions and often in defense of someone he cares about. All in all, Rob follows his heart, first and foremost, and I love characters that mess up, but it comes from a genuine place. Mal is more logical in thinking; he thinks things through, analyzes situations and outcomes, his head oftentimes fueling his decisions. It balances each other out.

For my fully Californian self, it did take me a while to get into the writing style because it's full-on English, and many of the terms and dialogue were a little rough for me to understand. Which is also why I am not positive where the village is located, since the connections seem to be both English and Welsh and it was confusing for me. Granted, I have read enough English-based books that I had at least some comprehension of what was happening, but other times it wasn't the easiest thing for me to follow, and more than likely some of the subtler humor went right over my head.

Most of this story is character driven, so there are a lot of secondary characters with little quirks and interactions. It's one of my favorite things about stories in small town settings, the people in the village and their connections drive the story more so than the archeological dig; though the cist and its excavation adds a little bit of angst and a dash of mystery, it wasn't the focal point. I adore the setting, and the author did a fabulous job of creating a charmingly dysfunctional group of family and friends whose interactions kept me engaged.

At the end I felt a little let down though, and I'll do my best to explain. Mal being the newcomer is sort of on the outside but is learning how it all operates, and while somewhat being accepted. I love reading a character learning to navigate his new life, watching them fall in love with the town and become part of those connections, eventually finding they are home. Generally, in this trope, the people pull through in the end, showing the newcomer what it truly means to belong, and I love it. I've also come to expect it, which is why I was let down. I didn't feel it really happened that way here, IMO. Even though he was liked by the people, it was clear Mal wasn't really one of them. Since everyone is in everyone else's business, pretty much the whole population knows when Mal and Rob's relationship hits a stumbling block—one that the people of Pemberland helped create once the pieces all come together. Unfortunately for Mal, the town takes Rob's side. What sucks more is that it seems they do so, probably without even knowing Rob's side of what

happened, or bothering to even figure out Mal's perspective. All they see is Rob upset and they flock to his defense. Poor Mal gets the lectures, and the "tough love" speeches, and is treated somewhat crappily, if you ask me. Was Mal perfect? No. But, I personally understood where Mal was coming from, and since I am very much like Mal, IMO his actions were more-or-less justified based on what he knew and what was going on around him. I would have had a similar reaction, but no one tries to look at anything from his standpoint, leaving him feeling as though he screwed up. They backed up their own, and Mal clearly wasn't one of them—at least not yet. That left me with a bit of a sour taste, to be honest.

Despite my negative reaction towards how it all gets resolved, and the actions of the townspeople, most of the story was that feel-good, lowkey comfort read which kept me engaged. If you love fully fleshed out, character driven stories set in small town, complete with cute banter, sweet MCs, and an interesting backstory, give this one a shot.

Reviewed by Lindsey for The Novel Approach

CrabbyPatty says

Elin Gregory creates an engaging community of souls in the small Welsh border village of Pemberland where everyone knows everyone and most can trace their lineage back to the 1300s or thereabouts. Mal Bright is the new curator of the museum ... sorry, the Pemberland Centre for Heritage and Culture, and when a Bronze Age cist (burial container) is unearthed in a field during excavation for a new housing project, Mal is called to authenticate it.

The cist appears to be the final resting place for two men who apparently died of battle wounds and were placed together in the cist in a lover's embrace. What follows is a tug of war between the British Museum and the locals who want to keep "the bones of their fathers" close to home and there is a lot of intrigue surrounding the discovery, who actually owns it, where it should be displayed, etc.

There is a rich cast of secondary characters here and an equally rich history of the small village and the strands that connect everyone. Mal finds love with a villager, Rob, and their relationship is fun, flirtatious, low-angst and most of the sex is off-page but you can really sense their connection and chemistry.

I enjoyed this story, although at times the slow leisurely pace of the story annoyed me (while I know other readers may disagree). The historical discovery really intrigued me and I wished there were more details and more follow-up. While I enjoyed *Bones of Our Fathers*, it was a near-miss for me personally and I give it 3.5 stars. But, I loved Elin Gregory's *The Eleventh Hour* and will definitely read more by her.

I received an ARC from the author in exchange for an honest review.
Review also posted at Gay Book Reviews - check it out!

Alison says

This is a lovely, well done story and I really enjoyed it. Elin Gregory's writing is full of charm and quiet humour and realism. The characters, plot, and setting are all superb. I loved how all the characters really

came to life. This is a story about a small town and there's a large cast of secondary characters and they're all interesting, everyday people. The archaeology details were fascinating and I loved that Malcolm's interesting job was such a big part of the story. This is book is a delight.
