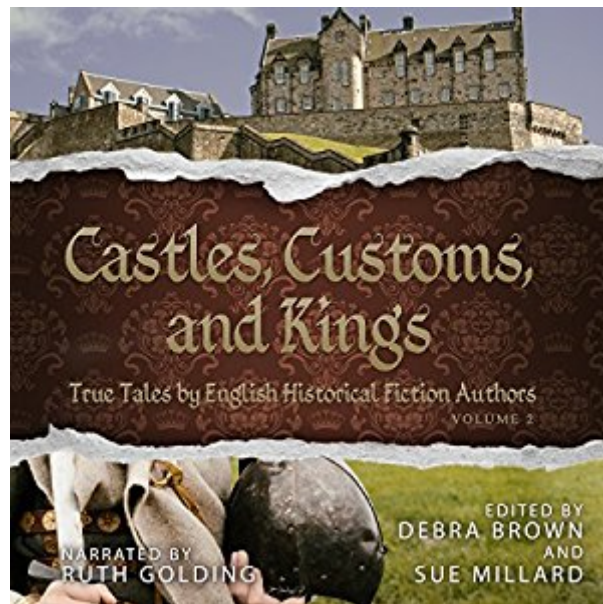


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Castles, Customs, And Kings: True Tales By English Historical Fiction Authors, Book 2



Synopsis

An anthology of essays from the second year of the English Historical Fiction Authors blog, this book transports the listener across the centuries from prehistoric to 20th-century Britain. Nearly 50 different authors share the stories, incidents, and insights discovered while doing research for their own historical novels. From medieval law and literature to Tudor queens and courtiers, from Stuart royals and rebels to Regency soldiers and social calls, experience the panorama of Britain's yesteryear. Explore the history behind the fiction and discover the true tales surrounding Britain's castles, customs, and kings. Volume two is a stand-alone book of essays that does not need to be heard in conjunction with volume one.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Have you ever wanted to know more about British history but you don't want to read a dry boring history book with data that you will never remember? Yes, me too. I love reading about British history, Tudor era especially. Castles, Customs and Kings Volume 2 is perfect, not only does it follow the first volume in that it kind of continues or actually contributes more to the reader. I have read both of the volumes now and equally impressed. The articles come from well known historical authors such as Sandra Byrd, Anna Belfrage, Nancy Bilyeau, Debra Brown, Stephanie Cowell and so many more. One of the things I liked about how the ebook was set up was the listing under each author's name for their websites, Twitter, Facebook and any other social media they contribute to. I think that gives the reader an insight into who their favorite authors are, all in one book. After the list of authors, about 50 of them, there is a section on the list of novels each author has written. Wow,

that is one long list of books to read. I went through the list and there are quite a few that I have read, but there are so many more to get to. The book starts off with Pre-Roman to Early Medieval Britain (pre-55 B.C.-A.D. 1000 to Victorian Era and the Twentieth Century), now that is a lot of history covered. Within each section, the articles range from a glimpse inside a Roman home, The London Tornado of 1091, the Making of a Medieval Queen and The Lady's Monthly Museum. Once you get through all that there is another section called Historical Tidbits across the Ages. We learn about some castles such as Leeds and the Palace of Holyroodhouse, Witches, Midwives and Childbirth to Beds and Bugs through the Centuries.

This beefy volume of articles about British history, ranging from pre-Roman to 20th century, is drawn from the fabulous English Historical Fiction Authors blog. I love books that come from blogs. At first blush, it seems counter-intuitive, buying a book with content from a free blog, but this volume proves how awesome the idea is. At close to 600 pages, this book anthologizes a whole year's content from nearly fifty authors, compiling their intriguing blog posts in chronological order. It's a welcoming format: I can dip into and out at my leisure, and a book like this begs that kind of languid reading. In her introduction, Brown writes this volume is meant to evoke "the soul of the past with personal stories and strange happenings", and it does just that. Each piece has a warm, conversational tone (so those expecting something deeply academic should look elsewhere). What I most enjoyed about these pieces is that they make up a love letter to the genre of historical fiction, as well as a behind-the-curtain expose of hard work and miraculous, plot-affirming surprises that bolster writers. It is that tone, excited and nerdy, that hooked me and kept me paging through these pieces. Even for eras I'm not typically fascinated by, there were still essays that intrigued me (like Nancy Bilyeau's article on Mary Shipton, Tudor prophetess). The group of participating authors is impressive; some of the names that I'm familiar with include Sandra Byrd, Anna Belfrage, Nancy Bilyeau, Patricia Bracewell, Stephanie Cowell, Christy English, and Deborah Swift. (You can see a complete list of participating authors at the blog.)

This year, a voluminous second edition, now in memory of M.M. Bennetts, was released and the collection edited by Debra Brown and Sue Millard. This is a very large book to read at 600 pages, but its size is what makes it a great well-rounded collection to purchase to have on your shelf for a time you want to read a tale or two or use for research. Due to my limited reading time, I couldn't quite get through all the stories in a few weeks, but I did get through many of them, reading a few every night, and I plan to continue on with that long after this review done. The essays

are absorbing and played right into my inquisitive, history loving mind in all the right ways and offer a wealth of knowledge on all various sorts of British history. Many are delightful, some sad, some useful, some funny, many adventurous, and all fascinating. It's easy to be swept away into lands far in time and place and to want to keep heading into the next essay after completing a former. The voices of these particular authors are very strong and captivating. Upon sliding to the first essay, I smiled to see the first was my friend Nancy Bilyeau's essay about her dream coming true in flying to England during the research for her Joanna Stafford historical suspense series. It was the perfect essay to begin with as it encompasses the feelings most historical and fantasy readers have had in regards to being entranced by the worlds of Kings and Queens (and the lot) in our teen years. Didn't we all wish to travel abroad? To see where the history happened we read about? It was fitting, her thoughts and evident enthusiasm, as this edition of Castles, Customs, and Kings is a way to do just that for those of us who can't get back to England anytime soon to revel in exploring the history.

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