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Flodden , September 1513. Across a boggy valley, two armies confront each other. The Scots, backed by European allies, have superior numbers and the latest cannon to challenge a depleted English force. The English are furious and humiliated that they are not fighting alongside King Henry against their real enemy in France. The Battle of Flodden would prove one of the bloodiest ever fought on British soil, shaping Scottish national identity to this day. Sir Thomas Howard, shrewd but ancient, leads the English forces. Alexander, 3rd Lord Hume, bold but impetuous, leads the Scots. Isabella Hoppringle, Abbess of Coldstream, young and determined, struggles to keep her footing among the tides of violence. John Heron, Bastard of Ford, swaggering, violent, and disreputable, the black sheep of a good English family, finds profit while men die. Blood Divide sets us right at the heart of the action; the stink, sweat and fear, the curtain of red mist.

Blood Divide: A Novel of Flodden Field Details

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From Reader Review *Blood Divide: A Novel of Flodden Field* for online ebook

Annette says

Source: Free copy from Lion Fiction in exchange for a review.

Rating: 4 stars for very good.

Summary:

The Battle of Flodden Hill was originally called the Battle of Branxton.

The battle was between Scotland and England.

James IV was king of Scotland.

Henry VIII was king of England.

The battle was on September 9, 1513, in the county of Northumberland, England.

An "Auld-Alliance" was between Scotland and France. England was at war with France. Henry VIII was in France when the Battle of Flodden Hill took place. Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey was in charge of the English army.

My Thoughts:

My favorite point in *Blood Divide* is the use of several narrators. The narrators are English, Scottish, men, and women. I felt this added an expanse to the story, and it gave a variety of personalities and perspectives.

The battle scenes, including hospital scenes are realistic and graphic.

The different combat devices used in battle during this period are depicted and explained in story.

I loved reading about herbs and medical practices used for treating the wounded.

I love it when authors bring in human mannerisms. For example: characters who do not hear well and lean in to the other person. This is a minor point for some readers but I enjoy this. Characters have a voice, feelings, and often thoughts, but body language gives an additional human quality and realism.

LibraryCin says

In 1513, while Henry VIII was invading France, James IV of Scotland (who was married to Margaret Tudor, Henry's sister) decided to invade England from the north. This resulted in a battle at Flodden Field.

Overall, I'm rating the book "ok". I really like historical fiction, but I do tend to prefer stories from the points of view of women. This book was from a few different points of view (including one woman), which included POVs from both the English and the Scottish sides of the war. There were a lot of characters I had trouble figuring out, unfortunately; there were also multiple "I"s in the book, which made it harder, still (but there were headings for each section, so if you get a better handle on who's who than I had, it might be easier to follow). I did prefer the last 1/3 of the book and I did enjoy the one woman's POV a bit better. Sadler is a military historian, so he knows his stuff and he did provide a historical note at the end.

Sarah says

OK, it can safely be said that the author is an *authority* in this part of history, from looking through his other nonfictional books he's written on the subject matter. This fictional book just reiterates his mastery of

Scottish history and Scotland's relationship with England. The historical events leading up to the battle, the battle itself, and the horrors of the aftermath breathe with incredible life and detail. I swear I saw flashes of light on the blades, heard the roar of King James' massive cannon collection, and smelt the copper tang of blood on the air. The amount of research the author has done and the great pains he's taken to be historically accurate were very much appreciated by this reader, and I give kudos to him for that attention.

Yet, I think that attention to detail might have gotten in the way of the characters a bit. Now, that's not to say I didn't enjoy the struggle of John, Isabella, and the rest to survive this epic event of history and come out the other side triumphant. I especially enjoyed the look at Isabella during this struggle, as most of the story was about the boys. I felt connected to her as she struggled to endure the bloodbath of battle, the bodily fluids of the hospital arena, and the intrigues of spying for both sides. A mature woman of thirty who wasn't chained to husband and children nor a convent was also an intriguing point. I also enjoyed seeing John's role in this conflict as a Border Reiver and combat captain as well as Alec's as army leader and adviser to King James.

However, the sheer epic scale of the struggle and how the author portrayed it blocks out a lot of the character development that could have occurred. I almost felt like there was a wall at times between me and the individuals experiencing this battle; event after event, battle after battle would occur and the reader is swept into this maelstrom of activity that leaves one breathless. And while this isn't a bad thing in and of itself if it keeps a reader engaged with the novel, the amount of activity in this book almost separates the reader from the characters. I was itching something terrible for more of the intimate exchanges like between Alec and Isabella after the first skirmish and John's and Isabella's momentary interlude towards the end of the novel. A balance of those tender, dramatic moments with all the glory and guts would have been a nice change of pace for the novel over all.

While there are issues with the balance of story-telling elements, character building moments vs epic historical scenes, this novel is definitely an enjoyable read for any historical fiction lover. What characterization scenes there are make the reader appreciate the people involved in this epic struggle. The reader's breathe will be stolen by the sheer amount of historical detail included with this novel and the grand scale of the struggle and story. I definitely recommend this novel to anyone who enjoys Scottish historical fiction or historical fiction in general.

Note: Book received for free from publisher via NetGalley in exchange for honest review.

Jane says

Fascinating bit of Scottish/British history I knew next to nothing about. This well-written, vivid novel treats of the Battle of Flodden Field [1513]--Scots against English: precipitating event [or one of them] and strategy sessions, then on Sept. 9, 1513, course of the grisly, bloody battle itself and ending with the aftermath and post mortem [pun not intended].

It took awhile to become used to the author's style--alternating from English side/Scottish side. Each chapter consists of a letter from one important person to another and sections, each told in the 1st person voice of one of the characters. I like the different points of view: how each side sees the conflict. I am still confused as to the fact nobility had two names, which were used interchangeably: a personal name, then a title, e.g., Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey. The novel would use either so I was always referring to the Dramatis

Personae to keep people straight--no fault of the author's that the novel wasn't completely smooth for me. Of course, the UK still uses that system for her nobility.

Isabella, the abbess, was the by far the most interesting character, with the most personality; all the men, from whichever side, were bland and indistinguishable from each other in the way each different man talked and described events, never varying. The novel started slowly and built until the planning sessions and exciting battle itself and "taking stock" afterwards.

The cover was striking: a bloody Scottish flag.

Jessica says

Beautiful cover, and I have to admit the saltire is what first drew me to this book. Glad it did. This took a touch to adjust to the narrators, but you got used to it after a bit. The detail and battles were vivid and made you feel like you were back in the time experiencing it. As a history buff, this was a novel I really enjoyed.

I received a copy from NetGalley and the publisher in exchange for a review

Nancy says

I won this in a Goodreads giveaway.

A different approach to historical fiction. The author has a vast knowledge of the history and is able to blend in individual participants perspectives to make this a compelling read.

Alana Cheshire says

A thoroughly researched yet lethargic read, "Blood Divide" is the fictional account of the Battle of Flodden Field between the Scottish and English in 1513. The prose is clunky and has been inexpertly edited: the tenses change from past to present and back again within paragraphs, and at one point the King of Scotland is actually referred to as "tolerably tolerant." It is filled with rich historical detail; however, these descriptions rarely further the plot and result in the impression of reading a textbook rather than a novel. That said, the I found this information intriguing, and despite the issues in execution, the research done for this novel merits 3 stars.

Received through a Goodreads First Reads Giveaway

Erin says

Find this and other reviews at: <http://flashlightcommentary.blogspot...>

I knew I'd be reading John Sadler's Blood Divide the moment I stumbled over it. Being a sucker for Scottish

history, I'd love to say I was captivated by the premise, but I am honest enough to admit I'm shallow and my initial interest was in fact sparked by the cover art. I know it doesn't really matter, but somewhere there's a jacket designer who is happy their work is being appreciated so let's not debate my offering recognition as part of my review.

In terms of content, I loved how comprehensive *Blood Divide* felt. Sadler has an amazing understanding of the Battle of Flodden and tackles it from a variety of angles which is something I found particularly interesting. More often than not, readers enjoy a single perspective of any given event and I was pleasantly surprised to see an author tackle both sides of conflict from multiple points of view.

That said, I couldn't help wanting more from John, Thomas, Alexander and Isabella. I don't mean to split hairs because a lot of the material is really well-done, but I felt character development took a backseat to the politics and grim realities of war. I know I'm nitpicking and I don't mean to overly criticize, but there it is.

All told, *Blood Divide* is an impeccably researched piece that proved well-worth my time. Rough edges aside, it is a title I'd easily recommend alongside *Anvil of God* or *Sebastian's Way: The Pathfinder*.

Samantha says

The cover of this book immediately captured my attention, and I was drawn in by the promise of a detailed look at an often overlooked bit of Tudor history: the Battle of Flodden Field.

In 1513, while Henry VIII had his eyes on France, he sent trusted, if slightly aged, Thomas Howard to deal with their northern neighbors. As part of the centuries old debate of whether Scotland's king, at this point Henry's brother-in-law, owed allegiance to England. James IV answered a firm "no" by siding with French allies and preparing to attack his wife's homeland.

The Tudors applied their propagandist skill to these events and aimed to focus on Henry's lackluster French campaign because he is too vain to admit that Howard has compellingly outperformed him by wiping out most of the Scottish nobility, including king James IV, at Flodden Field.

This novel tells the story leading up to the battle and follows through to its aftermath. By using several points of view on both sides, as well as letters to and from those who are not present, the author gives the reader glimpses of each historical figure's intimate thoughts and fears throughout this bloody event. While this method achieved the objective of exposing the varied motivations and ambitions of those in charge, it also gave the novel a choppy feeling and made it difficult to become close to any of the individual characters. I especially dislike the use of letters as a form of storytelling; it just seems lazy.

By including Abbess Elizabeth as one of the points of view that we are introduced to, the author exposes the wonders of modern Tudor era medicine. Attempting to save those she can and ease the pain of the many that she cannot, Elizabeth's character demonstrates the burden of those who must clean up after the noblemen who decide to go to war.

Thank you to NetGalley and Lion Hudson Publishing for my copy of this book. Opinions expressed are my own.

Jo-anne Atkinson says

The border between England and Scotland has long been disputed, the nobles of each side know who they support but the border reivers are less loyal. With Henry VIII away fighting an expensive and not very successful campaign in France, his brother-in-law James IV of Scotland sees his chance to invade England. Bolstered by a crack troop of Swiss infantry and a mighty collection of cannon, the Scots take a number of border strongholds before being challenged by the English under the command of Sir Thomas Howard. The ensuing battle settled the situation for this generation and is long remembered by the Scots.

Sadler is an eminent historian who has tried to bring a human side to this battle by telling it from various viewpoints. At first this is a little confusing, particularly as many of the participants have similar names. However there is a narrative from the Scots, a narrative from the English and two other, more interesting ones: John Heron, a bastard son of nobility, whose fight with one of James' lords was given as the reason for the scottish invasion, and Isabella Hoppringle, the lay abbess of a priory near Coldstream. Both of these are genuine historical figures and their perspectives allow the development of ideas about the actual brutality of the fight on ordinary men and the role of medics and women in 16th century warfare.

The battle scenes are superb, with details of both the horror of battle and the gruesome aftermath. Sadler's knowledge comes to the fore with descriptions of tactics, weapons etc. Less successful are the attempts at romance!

William Kulhanek says

Excellent historical novel

Great book well written even though at times a little too much.
But I loved it, Great and interesting history of the Scottish English border During Henry the eighth time.

Margaret says

This a other reviews can be found at justonemorechapter.com

There are a number of books out there that deal with the reign of Henry VIII, however I have yet to find one that deals with the Battle of Flodden in 1513 in such detail. Told from the POV of various key characters Blood Divide tells the story of this bloody battle from before, during and a little afterwards.

With rich details the author created very realistic battle scenes showing the raw effects of this war and not just the physical ones. With these different views it was evident that the author did his homework in writing this book.

Written with lengthy chapters that included letters as well as various points of view I did find it a little choppy at times. However it was a learning experience as I was unfamiliar with the actual battle and some of the characters involved. as well as the political feel during that time period.

Patty says

It took me a little while to get used to the rhythm of Mr. Sadler's writing – I will admit that up front – but once I did I found myself fully engrossed in this tale of the battle of Flodden. This was a fascinating time in history; Henry VIII had just taken his throne and was full of his power. He wanted to fight France and take back what he felt was England's, ie: France. James IV in Scotland was an ally of France so was committed to supporting it against Henry – and he wanted to prove to the world that his country was more than just a country of rough barbarians. He was young and thought he knew it all and wanted the “glory” of war. Henry and the bulk of his army headed off to France leaving the Howards to fight with what they can muster against the whole of the Scottish army.

This is more than a book about a battle as Mr. Sadler develops some lesser known characters such as the Bastard of Heron and Isabella Hoppringle – people who lived during the time but are not so well known to history. In this story they are much larger players and very fascinating. Mr. Sadler has really fleshed them out and despite John Heron's reputation he becomes almost likable – almost. He's still a bastard literally and figuratively. But he is the one in some ways driving the story.

The book is extensively researched and Mr. Sadler includes so many details yet the book is never dull. In fact this is one I'll keep on my shelf for a second read. I suspect it will be even better on a second read. It is deep and rich look at a singular battle in English and Scottish history.

Diana says

Copy received from Historical Fiction Virtual Book Tours for an honest review

First, I have to make a couple of confessions. One I'm still a newbie to the historical fiction community so the The Battle of Flodden was new to me. I had a little bit of a hard time wrapping my mind around what the battler meant and how it fit in Scottish and English history. Although I knew of the contentious relationship between England and Scotland this story really gave me a very well rounded understanding. One I did that I really began to enjoy the story. Isabella was a fantastic character. I really enjoyed reading about her and she added to an already enjoyable story. I don't know why I didn't expect the vivid descriptions in the story, they took me a little by surprise but it made the scenes all that much more realistic. I also wasn't expecting the cliffhanger ending but I really liked it. The Tudors are always fascinating to read about and Henry VIII is never boring. Sadler really showed his blood thirsty side in this story. The difficulties of establishing political relations, the very fragile line of death and triumph .

Amy says

2.5 stars (Average). As a Scot and an historian, I really, really wanted to love this book. (Absolutely love the cover!) From the outset, however I felt overwhelmed by facts instead of story. With a degree in medieval history myself (including a thesis written about Medieval Scotland), I know this history extremely well as it is; what I was hoping for here was a good STORY. Unfortunately, I just never felt drawn into the events and characters' lives; rather, I was consciously aware of the author's historical knowledge and detail on every page. Great as history; not so great for me as an entertaining story.

