



The Stone Arrow

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Stone Age England. The ancient, nomadic way of life is coming to an end; the agricultural revolution has begun. When the farmers of Burh attack the sleeping nomad tribe, Tagart is the only survivor. Twenty-five and heir to the chief, his sole inheritance now is his tribal honour – and it demands revenge. His ally is the forest itself: that, and his own ingenuity, courage and hunting skill.

The Stone Arrow Details

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Author : Richard Herley

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From Reader Review The Stone Arrow for online ebook

Ruby Stone says

I was lucky enough to get this free, having just finished The Penal Colony by this author, which I found excellent. Overall I found the book OK, but I never really got 'into' the whole plot and atmosphere for some reason. Usually I get drawn in to a novel, have favourite characters and locations etc., but it didn't happen with this one. There is no doubt that the book has been well-researched and it was interesting to have an insight into tribal rituals and customs, but I didn't find myself unable to put it down or motivated to stay up that extra few minutes every night to finish a chapter.

Robert says

This was a nice book. I did have a couple of minor problems with the writing but the story was well constructed.

I think that the author knows the details of the world the characters move through. I just wish he did not try to impart every detail to the reader in long paragraphs describing each and every plant in a clearing, etc.

I think that the character development could use some work also. The female characters are only background scenery.

Cat says

I enjoyed this so much more than I thought that I would

Set in Stone Age Britain , Tagart is the only survivor of the massacre of his tribe and family ..and he's out to seek revenge

The revenge is brutal and quite graphic in parts

Initially I felt sorry for him, then I started to dislike him as his revenge seemed to be going too far and displayed a total lack of conscience to his victims which included women and children . However , he becomes the good guy again in attempting to rescue the sister of a young boy slave

I've already downloaded the second part of the trilogy and can't wait to start reading it

A very enjoyable ,if graphic , read ??

Rick Brindle says

This is a story set in the stone age, in Southern England. The main character, Tagert, and hunter gatherer, is the sole survivor after his tribe is massacred by a village of farmers (nice twist). He seeks his revenge, and so the story develops.

This was a good story, perhaps a little too descriptive, and may have benefited from more dialogue, but that

seems to be Richard Herley's way.

Peter says

Set in Paleolithic times in the south of present-day England, this is a fast moving and engrossing 1978 novel with what feels a fairly realistic portrayal of a violent society and culture clash. A young forest dweller avenges the massacre of his tribe by some farmers. After that vengeance he is captured and then escapes from slavery in the flint mines.

Kevin says

I read this book straight through. I'm not an expert on Neolithic Britain, but the setting rang true.

This story is set 5000 years ago, as small farming communities are encroaching on the forests and bringing an end to the hunter-gatherer bands that have lived in the woods for generations. It is a story of ambition and revenge. It is very violent, but the author, to his credit, doesn't linger on the violence, or go into unnecessary detail.

The protagonist is sympathetic, despite being a barbarian.

The very beginning of the book struck me as a bit disjointed, but it settled down quickly. I liked it enough that I just bought the sequel, *The Flint Lord*, and I've already started reading it.

Brandi Stevens says

The *Stone Arrow* was his first novel, but his more famous book would be *The Penal Colony*, which was the basis for the 1994 film *No Escape*. However, *The Stone Arrow* did win the Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize and help build his reputation for action, historical, and science fiction writing. *The Stone Arrow* is the first in its trilogy and tells the story of a man named Tagart. In order to appease the god who sent a drought over their land, a group of farmers in the Britain of 5000 B.C. murders a tribe of nomads that live nearby; however, the chief's son, Tagart, survives and vows vengeance for his fallen tribe. This book was an intense and exhilarating ride. It was quick-paced, almost entirely action driven, and sometimes stressful. Tagart is a noble and cunning savage and at times he is too super, which takes away from the reality that Herley tries to create. Despite the small flaws, this book reveals some of Herley's strengths as a writer: immersive action scenes, wonderful vocabulary, emotion-evoking prose, and even a dry sense of humor. The readers spend more time focused on the setting and plot than inside the character's thoughts, which is plus for both the action genre and showing their feelings through actions than through descriptions. Interestingly enough, this book captures the struggle of hunter-gatherers and the superstitious society of the villagers. This book is recommended for readers who enjoy fast-paced action, historical fiction, and tales of honor, vengeance, and gore.

David J Sime says

Ok for a time filler, but I imagine I'll forget the novel within a couple of days

You're better off reading *Penal Colony* by the same author - a better constructed novel with decent characters and a sharper plot

John M. says

Hats off to Richard Herley for a valiant attempt to tell a Stone Age story. As befits its time, it is a simple story of revenge and the struggle for survival. I didn't find any of the characters sympathetic or likable, but I didn't expect to. Herley is obviously well familiar with the prehistoric archaeology of West Sussex, and that is what kept me going, more than the story itself.

I assume this book and its sequels are set around 5000 BC. Prehistory is, I think, a difficult field to write fiction in, because the use of writing to discuss characterize preliterate people inevitably creates anachronism, such as with references to "Germany" and "Normandy." I understand that these are meant to orient the modern reader, but in serving our minds it does a disservice to theirs.

Nevertheless, the story has a simple, driving line, avoided the ridiculous, and kept me entertained for a few hours. This book and its companions are what I call a transit read, good for a twelve-hour airline/bus/train journey or a hospital stay, otherwise passable.

Marko-Michael says

While I will admit that this was well written it is very difficult to say exactly what I think without giving away the plot. The hero (term used loosely) destroys an entire village and all of its inhabitant to satisfy a need for revenge, but when he has a chance to do some actual good and rid the world of someone who is truly dangerous to everyone he suddenly develops compassion? I don't buy it. I will not be reading the other books in this series.

Howard Brittain says

An imaginative, and sometimes brutal, piece of story telling set in a prehistoric landscape pretty well told. The character development is good but not great and an excessive amount of time is devoted to seemingly endless descriptions of the flora and fauna of the forest surroundings. However its shortcomings are counterbalanced by its originality and it's worth a read.

Douglas Cook says

Novel of early tribal Britain. I was a little underwhelmed, but it looks like the next book in the series might

be more interesting.

Prologue

Tagart came out of the woods and stood facing the broad downhill sweep of the cereal field. The feeling of openness seemed strange and sudden after the embrace of the trees; he sniffed at the smell of the evening, almost cloudless now after the storm, a soft wind coming off the sea, bending the stunted ears of barley, fluttering the leaves of hazel and whitebeam. A hundred yards away the labourer stood upright and leaned on the handle of his mattock. He had only just become aware of another's presence; yet Tagart had heard the man at work minutes ago, from the depths of the wood, whose floor he had traversed without so much as the snap of a twig.

Herley, Richard (1978-05-15). *The Stone Arrow (The Pagans)* (Kindle Locations 5-10). . Kindle Edition.

Matthew says

Overall, this was an easy read set in a time period that I personally find very interesting. Herley does a magnificent job of capturing the struggles of ancient people moving from a life of hunting and gathering to a more settled, agricultural setting at the very beginnings of civilization. The overall story is a simple one, reflecting the struggles between cultures seen on a grander scale in modern society. The author does a good job of weaving in religious superstition into the story, which helps push the story forward rather than being a simple crutch on which the fight between Tagart/Tsoaul and the villagers of Burh is based.

The one thing that seemed a touch out of place, or almost haphazardly forced in was the inclusion of the slavers and the Flint Lord. For a man that had been as influential as the Flint Lord seemed to have been in the region, he is amazingly missing for the first half of the story until suddenly his traders show up in Burh. I would have liked a bit more of this back story revealed on a more gradual basis, perhaps through the actions or speech of the villagers. As it was, it did add a twist to story that was beginning to be a bit linear.

It is clear, as well, that Herley has studied this time period well and is very familiar with the subject material, which is a good thing. Unfortunately, the author gets trapped in a bit of listing from time to time, giving out all the various plants that the peoples eat, or the fungi growing in the forest, or the local fauna. However, this was not a terrific distraction from the overall story, just a mere annoyance.

Overall, this is a nice, easy read and quite enjoyable. Though it is a tale of revenge and fighting, there is not an overabundance of blood and gore. A solid book, no doubt, but hopefully the author will build on his story and improve in the subsequent novels of the trilogy.

Benjamin Duffy says

This book was an exhilarating ride, to say the least. It was smartly paced, almost entirely action-driven, and so brutal in spots that I think it would have to be trimmed somewhat to qualify as a rated "R" film. And, incidentally, "this could be made into a very good movie" is what I found myself thinking over and over again. If Auel's *Clan of the Cave Bear* and Crichton's *Eaters of the Dead* were able to make the transition from (speculative) historical fiction to successful films, this book probably could.

The book immediately plunges the reader, as do so many of Herley's books, into the day-to-day world of people in another time and place. His skills at research and description allow him to do this more convincingly and more immersively than most writers, and his natural knack for pacing and self-editing allows him to do so without allowing the essential storyline to bog down. He's clearly a author in love with story and place, rather than with his own language.

While *The Stone Arrow* was a fast, exciting read, it doesn't quite stand up to the quality of Herley's later works, such as *The Penal Colony*, *Refuge*, or the incomparable *The Tide Mill*. That's because *The Stone Arrow* shows only some of Herley's many strengths: while his amazing vocabulary, powers of research, economy of words, and manifest love of nature are on full display here, his ability to sweep the reader through the full spectrum of human emotion is not, nor is his delightfully bone-dry sense of humor. While the book is nominally written from a third person omniscient perspective, the narrative eye spends relatively little time inside the characters' heads, preferring instead to focus on action and setting, showing how the characters must be thinking and feeling through their deeds.

Those observations are not necessarily fault-finding - this book strikes me as the work of a talented twenty-something writer out to make a big first impression, and that it certainly does! As it is, I'm now excited to sit down to *The Flint Lord* and *The Earth Goddess*, the two remaining books in this trilogy. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in pre-historic fiction, anyone who has read and enjoyed any of Herley's later works, or anyone who just wants to sit down and read a ripping tale of honor, vengeance, and ingenuity, with a *Rambo*-level body count.

Linda says

I recommend the book to historical fiction readers and to others who just want to read a book that is nicely 'put together.' The author's writing mechanics were excellent, and his pick up timing was just where it needed to be. The story was set in present day England at the time when nomads still roamed the earth, when pods of farmers were settling down, and when the mining industry was taking its hold on civilization. These three groups did not mix then any better than they mix now.

The problems begin over a dog killing that erupts into vengeful killings between the nomads and the farmers. In the midst of the nomad and farmer revenge war, Tagart, the one nomad left standing, is captured into the mining slavery business. Tagart, relieves himself and another slave from their bonds thereby causing the third skirmish. How these three entities think and act make the book a trip you do not want to miss.

Thank you, Mr. Herley, for a good read.
