



## Shadow of the King

*Helen Hollick*

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## **Shadow of the King** Helen Hollick

Book Three of the Pendragon's Banner Trilogy. Arthur - the boy who became a King, who became a legend. 500 AD, and Britain is at peace. But when King Arthur is missing, presumed dead, the vultures descend, vying for his throne. Chaos threatens in this evocative and powerful Arthurian legend retold by USA Today bestselling historical fiction author Helen Hollick.

## **Shadow of the King Details**

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Author : Helen Hollick

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## From Reader Review Shadow of the King for online ebook

### David says

I liked this book the best of the three. There was a lot more suspense than in the first two. Arthur is badly wounded in battle in Gaul and is presumed dead, so his family tries to move on. This is just the beginning of Arthur's trials and tribulations that lead eventually to the climactic end.

The characters are either very likeable or so nasty that you want to find a time machine and take them out yourself.

This series is one of the better Arthurian series I have read. Hollick's Arthur is no knight in shining armor. He faces temptations of the flesh, and follows them. He loves and hates and feels pain like any other mortal and defends his hard earned kingdom through both bravery and deceit. All in all, a great read.

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### Stephanie says

I really did love this series. Books that force research and leave a reader wanting to know more truths about the history behind the characters inspire me. It might be a while, but I will dive into more of Hollick's books, as this series has stirred my interests of British history beyond my normal Yorkshire and Batley interests. I think I said it before, but taking out the fantasy around King Arthur but leaving the bits of facts that have popped up in history are intriguing. Arthur's round table and an infamous stone even make an appearance in this series. :) I knew based on other reviews what would happen, there would be a definite end, but I was so pleased to have the suspense over the course of the novel and as each book did in this series, my attention was grabbed early on making the book harder to put down as the pages turned.

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### Monica says

I am so completely and thoroughly obsessed with this author right now. As you all know I am an Arthurian Legend obsessed nut, so I was so thrilled to get this book for review. SOOO thrilled. 'Shadow of the King' is the third book in the Pendragon's Banner Trilogy, and the copy I have is the reprint of this trilogy.

This whole trilogy is just beautiful, amazing, wonderful, and I could go on and on but you get the idea. I love how the author turns King Arthur into a man and then the King of legend. It's amazing to see the transformation in the characters and to read a story that shows King Arthur as he truly might have been as opposed to the magically enhanced version of the story that is so popular (nothing wrong with those either). The amount of research Ms. Hollick must have done is astounding because the detail in this book is wonderful. I highly recommend this trilogy to any Arthurian Legend nuts or anyone who just likes a great read.

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### Dark-Draco says

The last book in the trilogy tells of the last few years of Arthur's reign. It starts off with him leaving Britain to defend his land in France, but double crosses and miscommunications create chaos on both sides of the

channel. With no male heir with Gwynhafwr, but a number of illegitimate sons, grandsons, ex-wives and lovers, enemies and even friends all clamouring for a piece of his kingdom when he's gone, nothing can stay quiet and calm for long.

Sadly, I think this is the weakest book of the trilogy - don't get me wrong, I still loved it, but I just didn't feel the same about it as the first too. The story is a bit disjointed - it's a brilliant, plausible reason for our legend that Arthur will return to Britain whenever it's in need. But I found it a bit disjointed and things kept happening for seemingly no reason other than to awkwardly move another character into place for something else to happen.

Still, I have read and enjoyed this trilogy a few times now and may well read it again in the future.

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### **Jennifer says**

From My Blog...[return][return]Shadow of the King is the third book in Helen Hollick's Pendragon Series, which opens with King Arthur, his wife Gwenhwyfar and their daughter Archfedd living at Caer Caden. Arthur is now 33 and has been King of Greater and Lesser Britain for 11 years and while Winifred's second husband, Leofric, has passed away, she continues to remain a threat to Arthur even though they have been legally divorced for 13 years. Their son Cerdic has run off to his step-father's lands hoping to one day claim his rightful lands held by Arthur but Cerdic is not alone when it comes to plotting and scheming for the throne and the lands owned by King Arthur. Helen Hollick does a superb job in this third novel, picking off where her second in the trilogy, Pendragon, left off. Political battles replace the more physical battles of her previous novels. King Arthur is summoned to help the Romans and what he believes will be a swift trip for him and his Artoriani turns out to be not at all what it first appeared. To say much more would give away the surprises that lie in store for Arthur, Caer Caden, as well as the reader. Suffice it to say, Hollick once again has written a novel that not only engages the reader, but keep the reader busy thinking with all of the politics, scheming, and plot twists. Shadow of the King is an excellent book in its own right and a brilliant finish for the trilogy. The Shadow of the King is a wonderful rendition of Hollick's view of the final battle for Camelot.

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### **Jeremiah Peter says**

This book nearly killed my desire to ever read again. It was long, dull, and largely uneventful; much like life in an abandoned nunnery. I'm pretty sure Hollick realized this at some point, because the last third of the book felt as though she were simply trying to wrap up the story. It went something like this: "Some minor Characters died. Of Arthur's two illegitimate sons, the whiny wimp ran away. The crazy wimp tried to kill Arthur in battle several times but couldn't win until Arthur was old. Then Arthur died somehow. Probably because he wanted to. Guenhwyvar was old. The End." The first two thirds of the book went like this: "Arthur is sad because he lost a battle. He hid in the woods with his whiny wimp of a son and his half-sister/sometimes-girlfriend. Guenhwyvar found him because her story was not worth reading without Arthur and she craved the attention. Arthur was dull and briefly took on some of the wimpy characteristics of his whiny wimp son. That apparently improved because his wimpiness isn't mentioned after a while, but Arthur remained dull forever."

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## Amy Bruno says

The third and final installment of Helen Hollick's Pendragon's Banner Trilogy, *Shadow of the King*, finds Arthur and Gwen at Caer Caden, their kingdom in Britain. Arthur has been king for 11 years and though they are both still grieving over the deaths of their sons, they are basking in the love of their baby daughter.

Arthur is sent on a fool's errand to Gaul under the pretext of war, but this turns out to be a ploy to get him away from his kingdom, leaving it vulnerable to invaders. Namely, his uncle Ambrosius, whose ultimate goal is to bring Britain back under the fold of Rome. But, Ambrosius is not the only one gunning for Arthur's downfall and he again must prove that he is the Pendragon.

It's rare that you find a trilogy where all 3 books hold up against each other. There's bound to be one that's not quite as good as the others ....not so with this trilogy. I loved every one of them and I can tell you right now that I will be re-reading them again.

What I liked most about *Shadow of the King* was how we saw Arthur dealing with defeat for the first time and how he comes to terms with it. Hollick has a talent with bringing her characters to life – no one-dimensional people here – but I feel like I really got to know Arthur, faults and all and it made me love him even more. And who could not like Arthur's queen, Gwen, who is the quintessential heroine ...strong, courageous and fierce! And Arthur's band of Artorians are brave, loyal men who live to serve their King with everything they have. With their help, Arthur is able to shed his cloak of self doubt and return to Britain, to fight for his kingdom.

We meet up again with Winifred, Arthur's first wife who he set aside to marry Gwen. Still calling herself Lady Pendragon, she will do anything in her power to get the crown for their son Cerdic. This tenacious ambition of hers will ultimately lead to her downfall. Cerdic, who loathes his father, the Pendragon and who has made it his lifelong mission to kill Arthur and take his lands has teamed up with the Saxons and invades Britain.

There isn't one thing about this book that I didn't like. Hollick's writing is one of the best I've come across and her descriptions are so vivid that it seems as if there's a movie screen in front of you, playing out the scenes as you're reading. The characters emotions are very real and so relatable that you feel yourself empathize with them even if they are one of the villains! How I would love to see this novel on the big screen, but then again, I don't think anyone could do it justice. (besides your own imagination).

Now, for those of you that may be put off by the size of this book...don't be! It may seem huge, but with the chapters at 2-3 pages each it flows really quickly. I know I was so enthralled that I didn't even look at the page numbers. Well, that is until the end when I knew I only had a few left and then I was like NOOOOOOO and read really slowly until the last page, savoring every word like a priest savors meat before lent. Oh, and let me warn you – make sure you have some Kleenex handy and also, make sure your loved one isn't in the room with you, so that they can't make fun of you for crying about people you didn't even know! Heehee.

Highly Recommended!

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## Marianne says

Finally finished the trilogy. I'm actually kinda sad. Not only has the trilogy finished, but Arthur the scummy, manwhoring, cruel, bullying immoral bastard also died. It's wrong that it makes me sad, but I couldn't help but be somewhat attached to him, faults and all. It helped that he was mostly faithful in this book - I say mostly, there was the one exception but apart from that he wasn't as repellent as normal. The book starts with him taking a foolhardy mission to Gaul and getting stuck there for a year while Gwenhwyfar and their daughter Archefeld are back at home. The war wages and Arthur gets word about Gwen being sick and not expecting to live and he's wrecked and heads off to the battle (not before sleeping with his taken whore again right enough - gotta love Arthur) where he is badly injured and his men, believing that he is dead leave him behind as they go home. Morgaine who followed Arthur is the one who convinces the men to leave him with her, but then taking advantage of his weakened state and mental frailty since the defeat she conspires to make him stay.

In England Gwen is distraught and with the death of their sons in the last book she finds Arthur's uncle trying to exert his influence on the country and one of his tasks is to try and force her into marriage to try and curb her potential influence over the country. She tries to resist, until finally settling on marrying Arthur's cousin, Bedwyr but even with the knowledge that she cares for him, she can't fully commit to marriage and chooses to join a Holy house instead until word reaches her that Arthur may indeed be alive. She goes to try and reclaim him but Arthur's changed and at first resists until he realises that he's been drugged by Morgaine. Finally breaking free of her influence he takes Mordred and rejoins his wife where they fight to reclaim the country back.

I really loved this book - it spans around thirty years and we get to see the true bond between Arthur and Gwenhwyfar as she coaxes him back to greatness and fights alongside him, shoulder to shoulder and as his equal in every other battle. The fights are brutal and the description of what happened to poor Ider (Gwenhwyfar's most loyal guard) and Archefeld's husband and child are truly horrific. Even Winfred's end at the hand of her own son was brutal (although it was hard to be overly sympathetic) but it didn't feel gratuitous. It was horrific and difficult to read, but it fit in the context of the times.

I loved that like so much in this story that it harped back to earlier legends although without Merdraud being the villain, just a foolish boy who was ultimately looking for his place and never being able to find it. (Although, ngl - I was almost hoping for the Mordred pulling Guinevere off her throne and beating her scene from some legends just because I wanted to see this Arthur's reaction - although I can imagine. When Mordraud kidnapped Gwen, Arthur nearly killed him so there was little chance he would have let anything else pass.) He didn't bring about Arthur's end, but he did die beside him and I was pleased for him. Ultimately after his mistakes he found his peace at long last. I think the fact that Cedric (Arthur's son to Winifred) won in the end makes it hard to forget. Ultimately any story on Arthurian legend is going to end tragically but the fact that it ended with them defeated like that and Cedric taking over the throne was hard to read. At least Arthur lived to an old age, and he died in Gwenhwyfar's arms which seemed fitting, because it was always about them. Everything, everyone else came and went but in the end it was always about them.

\*sigh\* I'm going to miss this series and I'm looking forward to being able to read it again in the future. I imagine it will get many re-readings in time.

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### **Elaine Coupler says**

In many ways this third in the Pendragon trilogy was as satisfying as the first two but I had some issues with the writing. The author's sentence structure is careless at times and downright confusing at other times. A little more clarity would have been good. I did like the way she used phrases that conjured up history and made it seem like I was right back in the fifth century. At other times these seemed to intrude. Always there is a decision to be made as to whether the language should be of the period or of today.

I liked Hollick's imaginative way of looking at Arthur and Gwenhwyfar; sometimes their relationship frustrated me but it was very believable.

The whole idea of Arthur being dead was effective and led to Gwenhwyfar going to Less Britain on her own quest. Showing the effects of his tumultuous life on Arthur was very interesting and I liked the way it all unfolded. The novel is just so real. The characters have flaws, bad things happen to good people and the mythical Arthur and Gwenhwyfar are forever expunged. I enjoyed these three books very much and was glad when I found each succeeding one. Well done, Helen Hollick!

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### **Jennifer says**

You're reading the last book of a really good series, and you try and go slow, but it's good, so you speed through it and then you have that letdown one experiences when the series is done. I'm sure others know the feeling I'm talking about.

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### **Carey says**

Though it has been a struggle, Arthur and Gwenhwyfar have somehow managed to put their lives back together after the deaths of all three of their sons. Their small daughter and sole surviving child, Archfedd, is their joy and the kingdom of Britain their solace and responsibility. But they never can seem to agree when it comes to Arthur's decisions about the ruling of it.

An urgent summons for assistance from across the sea in Gaul arrives and Arthur, against Gwenhwyfar's pleading, cannot resist the promise of action. Despite the fact that his absence will leave Britain without a leader, he is restless and drawn to the excitement that battle brings.

The summons is a trap. After prolonged delays the battle is finally fought and Arthur is killed, as was intended by the plotters all along. Chaos and despair reign across Britain, there will never be another King like Arthur. As the fate of an entire nation hangs in the balance, those who loved him must try to pull together to save the island nation from being torn to pieces by those hungry for wealth and power.

As I've said before, this series is one of my very favorites. I read it years ago, in the 1990s, it played a large part in the development of my love for historical fiction. It doesn't get done any better than this! If you like historical fiction that comes alive, is thoroughly researched, smart and intricate, this is the series for you. Helen Hollick is, in a word, excellent. I can't recommend her or her novels any higher, they are simply the best. If you haven't read them yet, you are MISSING OUT!!!

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## **Malacima says**

It is always a risk to try to write a new take on the Camelot legend. I gave this trilogy the 4 stars because this is one of the few books about King Arthur who has no magic, fantasy, and very little mythology and the efforts the author has invested in reading various chronicles and wants to portray Arthur as the real person who lived according to his time. I can't say anything about the historical accuracy (who can?) but as a work of historical fiction, I enjoyed it. A novel full of adventure and love story between King Arthur and Gwenhwyfar. The book is written from a modern point of view, although it contains Welsh and Roman names and other stuff suitable for that time. Personally, I really don't like it when authors bring up religions in books but it was necessary in the book to be added to understand some things. This is a novel about King Arthur based on various theories about him, but written with the imagination and artistic freedom of the author and as such you should read it.

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## **Elysium says**

3.5 stars

Arthur is planning to go fighting to Gaul for Rome yet all isn't well in his kingdom. His uncle Aurelianus Ambrosius wishes to bring back old Roman ways and his son Cedric is starting to become a real problem. Discovering treachery in Gaul, Arthur comes to realize he's very close to defeat for the very first time on his career.

This is the final book of the trilogy and I've loved watching Arthur's and Gwenhwyfar's relationship through. It wasn't easy marriage but I loved seeing how they managed to make it work despite everything. Arthur is still a bastard at times but we see more humane and emotional side of him in this book. And I noticed there was no mentions of his women towards the end. I'd like to think he spent less time womanizing but I'm most likely just dreaming. He might be asshole most of the time but I still liked this realistic version of him.

It was great seeing Bedwyr and Ider again. Poor Bedwyr nearly got what he wanted...

The book started little slow and the parts during Arthur staying away from Britain dragged little bit but when he returned the book got lot better. Surprisingly I think the middle book was the best and for me didn't have any dragging parts.

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## **S.S. says**

This is a great end to a trilogy focussing on the life and times of King Arthur. I do like how Helen Hollick writes - it's so descriptive and you really can imagine the scenes as they're unfolding, almost like you're there. I do love stories about King Arthur anyway, so was bound to like these books; I still like the fact that Helen Hollick painted him as a flawed hero rather than a saint! I know I will be reading this book (and indeed the others in the trilogy) again.

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### **Lucienne Boyce says**

So here I am at the end of the Pendragon series and it's hard to tear myself away. There are a few very special books/series which you wish would never end, and for me the Pendragon trilogy is one of them. As with the first two books, this is notable for its lyrical descriptions, especially the close observation of nature – a bird in a hedge, the changing colours of dawn and dusk, the mists around Glastonbury Tor. It all conveys a sense of something eery about the British landscape with its standing stones and ancient graves. I particularly liked the way Arthur's absence drives the story, and how that absence foreshadows the ending. A magnificent trilogy.

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