



### **Why write historical fiction?**

Geo-political history engages one's mind; social history grabs one's heart.

Historical fiction lets me place representational, fictional characters in the tapestry of a real historical era. That gives me the creativity to envision what living during that time might have been like for various groups of people.

I have always been fascinated by what happens when one culture attacks and conquers another. Dramatic changes occur, social order is upended, and all involved suffer the consequences. Living becomes very different for everyone involved. I want to explore what that might have been like.

### **What inspired you to create your main character, Lady Margaret?**

In 1993 I was invited to join a local chapter of the Society of Creative Anachronisms ([www.sca.org](http://www.sca.org)), an “international organization which is dedicated to researching and recreating the arts, skills, and traditions of pre-17th-century Europe” (their words). By the time I created Lady Margaret's persona and back story, I realized I was too busy to join the group. But my thoughts of her would not leave me.

After decades of researching and reading for my own pleasure about the Anglo-Saxons and the early years after the Norman invasion, I decided to place her in that era in a short story, which grew and grew. The next thing I knew I had a novel, then a sequel, and then a trilogy.

### **Why did you name your main character Margaret?**

I named her after Princess Margaret of England (1930-2002). While the rest of the world followed Queen Elizabeth II of England, I followed Princess Margaret. I admired her feistiness and her struggle to live her own life within the confines of the royal family.

## **You choose to write about England in the decade between 1096 and 1105 AD. Why?**

William the Conqueror's son, William II (William Rufus) 1087-1100 AD caused much of the trouble his younger brother Henry faced when he became king in 1100. As I researched Henry, I concluded he was the rightful father of the English people. He fought his entire reign to create a new country, a new people, but his first years were the most dangerous.

## **How was 1096 to 1105 AD such a dangerous time for King Henry?**

Three factions were fighting for power. The Catholic Church wanted to control whoever was king. The Norman conquerors' hold on the country was firm, but they were fighting each other and the crown. Many Saxons still dreamed of driving out the Normans and retaking their land. Henry was trying to hold the country together.

## **Why did you weave Lady Margaret, your main character, into Henry's first years as King of England?**

My Lady Margaret represents both sides of the social order of the time. She is a transitional figure with one foot in Norman society and the other foot in the Saxon one.

Born a Norman lady of rank, Lady Margaret is party to the privileges of her station. Even so, women of that era were property—owed by their fathers and husbands as they owned a horse or cow. When Margaret is cruelly reduced to servitude and forced to live among the Saxons, she realizes their lives are devastatingly harsh. She has to bargain and fight her way back into Norman society.

I structured the prequel and trilogy to show her struggles and eventual successes:

Lady Margaret's Disgrace (prequel) - She is reduced to servitude.

Lady Margaret's Escape - She bargains with the royals in order to escape the life she has been forced to live.

Lady Margaret's Challenge - She wins land and coin, but few Norman men want her.

Lady Margaret's Future - The king and queen help her find a new life.

## **Do you really think King Henry would have replaced his queen just because she could not provide an heir?**

Why not? The subtitle of the trilogy is *Henry's Spare Queen*, because Henry needed an heir. If Queen Matilda could not provide one, I believe he was prepared to replace her if need be. I envisioned Lady Margaret as one of his possible candidates. King Henry was both a realist and pragmatic. To King Henry, having an heir to hold England and start a dynasty was more important than the woman who bore his son.

## **What took you so long to get your stories written?**

I spent 21 years reading, researching, imagining, and developing Lady Margaret's story. In 2014 I found a writing partner who writes young adult science fiction. We paired up and used the model of the National Novel Writing Month([nanowrimo.org](http://nanowrimo.org)) to start our first books. With her encouragement I became a writing machine! I knocked out 65,000 words, the first draft of Book 1 and the start of Book 2 in 31 days. That's about 2,100 words a day. After I drafted the contents of Book 3, my writing partner convinced me to write a prequel. My next steps have been to edit and re-edit, learn about the publishing business and start a social platform.

## **Why not just read a history book about King Henry?**

I want to know what life was like for the citizens during other times; that's social history and a rich source of information and an untapped wealth of possibilities for story telling. I care about peoples' lives during a specific era—how they lived, what they suffered, in what ways they triumphed over adversity, and how their lives have affected our lives today.

Few history books adequately portray what life was like for the average person. Geographical and political events interest me only in relation to the lives of the people affected by those factors.



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