

# Mary Morgan

Award-Winning Romance Author

## *Welcome to* MARY'S TAVERN

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Learn about me, my books, enjoy photo galleries from my travels, view the blog, and stay up to date regarding news and events. I migrated many posts to this blog, and you can still access my long-time blog at <http://marymorganromancewriter.com>.

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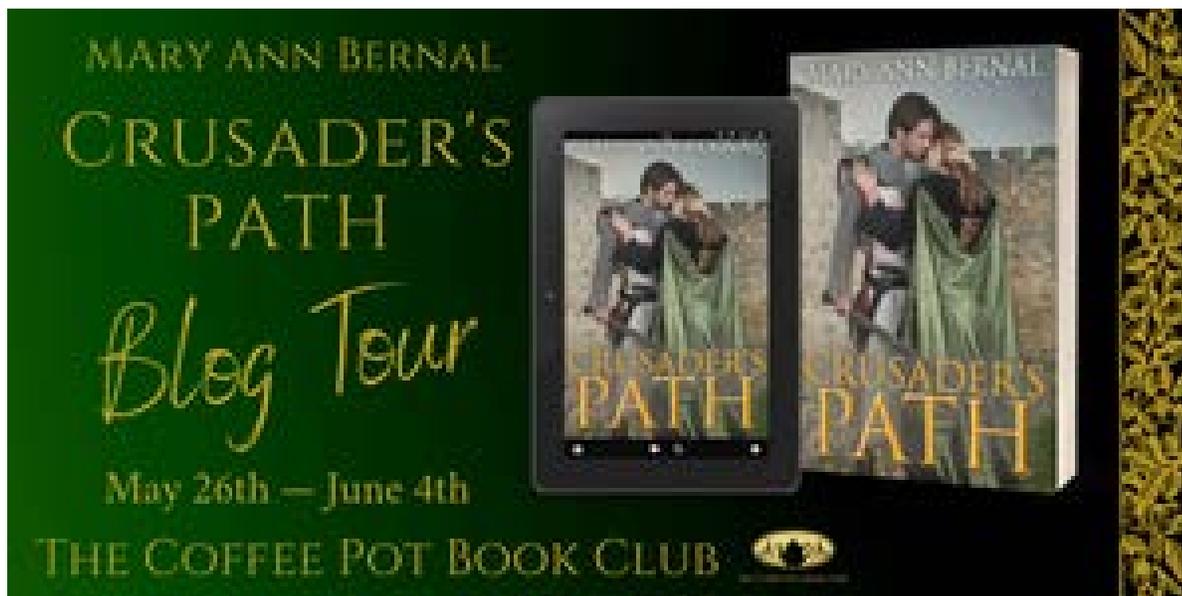


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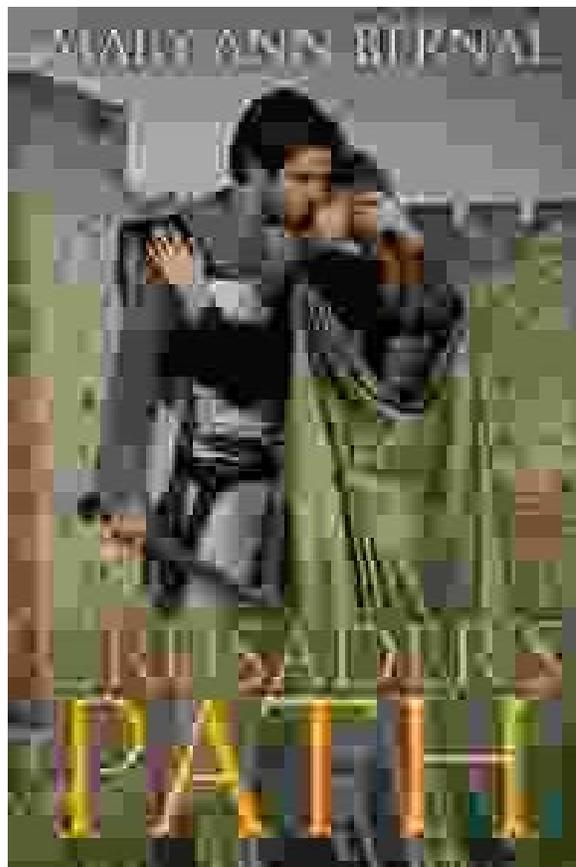
2 hours ago

5 min read

## The Coffee Pot Book Club Presents "Crusader's Path" by Mary Ann Bernal



Please make welcome the lovely Mary Ann Bernal to the Tavern! We're celebrating her new book release, *Crusader's Path*! Don't you just love the cover? It's stunning! I'm eager to read this fascinating story. The ale and mead are flowing, so grab a mug and let's take a look at Mary Ann's book...



From the sweeping hills of Argences to the port city of Cologne overlooking the River Rhine, Etienne and Avielle find themselves drawn by the need for redemption against the backdrop of the First Crusade.

Heeding the call of His Holiness, Urban II, to free the Holy Land from the infidel, Etienne follows Duke Robert of Normandy across the treacherous miles, braving sweltering heat and snow-covered mountain passes while en route to the Byzantine Empire.

Moved by Peter of Amiens' charismatic rhetoric in the streets of the Holy Roman Empire, Avielle joins the humble army of pilgrims. Upon arrival in Mentz, the peasant Crusaders do the unthinkable, destroying the Jewish Community. Consumed with guilt, Avielle is determined to die fighting for Christ, assuring her place in Heaven.

Etienne and Avielle cross paths in Constantinople, where they commiserate over past misdeeds. A spark becomes a flame, but when Avielle contracts leprosy, Etienne makes a promise to God, offering to take the priest cowl in exchange for ridding Avielle of her affliction.

Will Etienne be true to his word if Avielle is cleansed of the contagion, or will he risk eternal damnation to be with the woman he loves?

**Available at these online retailers**

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## A Message from Mary Ann Bernal

After having written The Briton and the Dane series, set in Anglo-Saxon Britain during the Ninth Century, I decided to leave Britannia for the Duchy of Normandy and the Holy Roman Empire, focusing on events leading up to the First Crusade in the Eleventh Century. However, I was interested in following the route of the armies heading towards Jerusalem. While stories about famous sieges, including Nicaea and Antioch, are recognizable, I wanted to write about the little-known assaults, the citadels in-between, the unheard-of battles such as the fall of Dorylaeum.

The Third Crusade continues to ignite the imagination with tales of Richard the Lionheart and his nemesis, Saladin, kept alive by Hollywood blockbusters. The same cannot be said about Pope Urban's fiery speech at the Council of Clermont in the Duchy of Aquitaine that launched his Holy War against the followers of Islam. But who was in attendance? A humble monk, Peter of Amiens, for one, among the thousands vowing to undertake the journey for the salvation of their souls.

But where to start, back in Britannia? Surely, there were other countries on the European continent to explore. Why not France? I did take four years of French in High School, after all. And the Norman William did conquer the island Kingdom of England.

In 1087, William the Conqueror died, leaving the Norman Duchy to his first-born son, Robert, while bequeathing England to his son, William Rufus. Since I wanted to explore the reasons why people chose to take up the Cross and fight for Christ in the Holy Land, I decided to learn more about Duke Robert of Normandy, who personally led his army to Jerusalem. At the same time, his brother, King William Rufus, remained in England.



William Rufus

Of course, sibling rivalry existed, with constant quarreling between the brothers, each coveting what they did not have, which created political difficulties on both sides of the English Channel. After years of fighting with little to show for Robert's efforts, other than draining the Treasury, the Norman Duke decided to join the armies of the First Crusade, albeit a little late, having borrowed the necessary funds from his brother to finance the

campaign.



Robert of Normandy

Duke Robert spent the winter months in Italy, not arriving in Constantinople until May 1097, leaving the city to join the Princes' Army currently laying siege to Nicaea.

Etienne, a nobleman from Argences, accompanied his overlord throughout the Duchy of Normandy and on the road to Jerusalem.



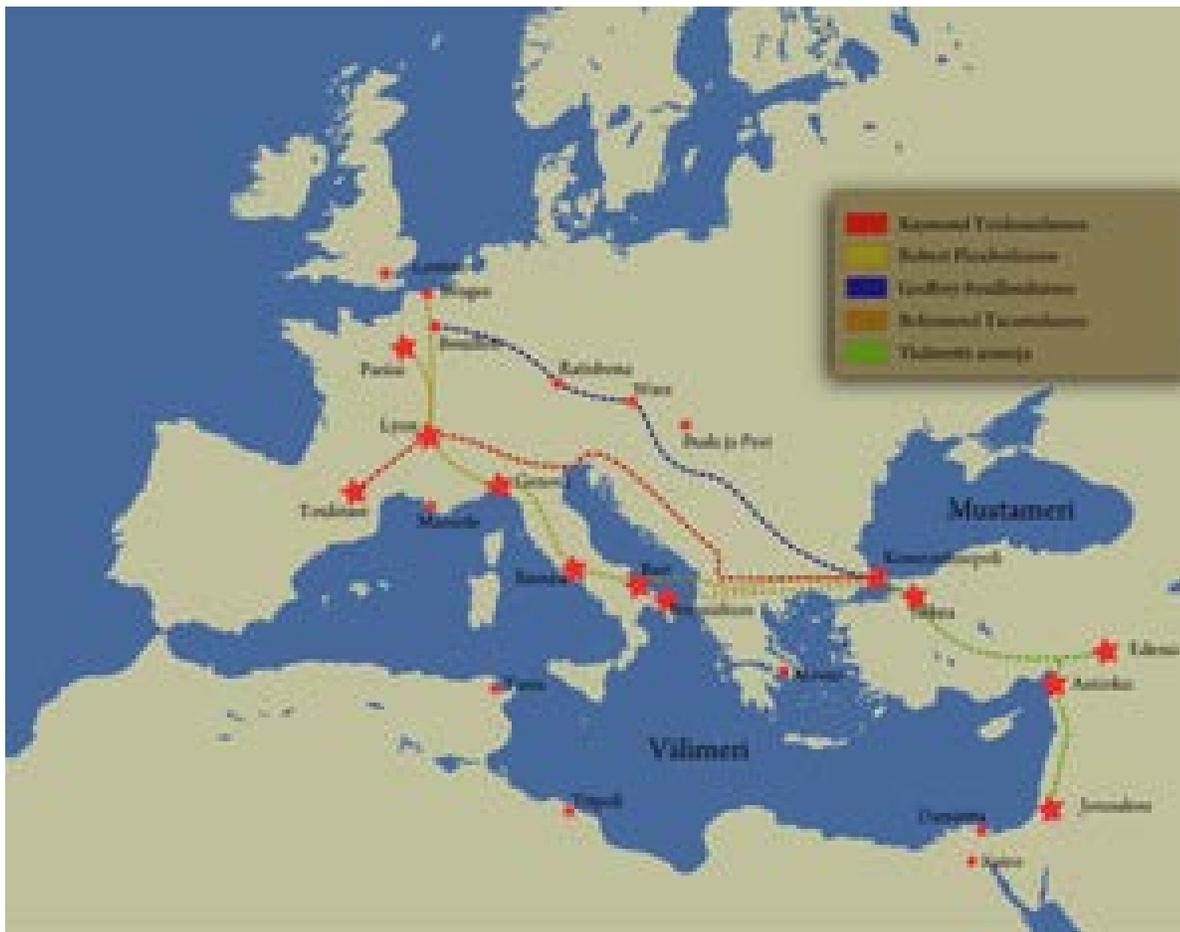
## Peter the Hermit preaching the First Crusade

Peter the Hermit, however, had a different path, collecting followers for his Army of Peasants as he made his way to the city of Cologne in the Holy Roman Empire. He would follow the Rivers Rhine and Danube on his way to Constantinople arriving months before Pope Urban's sanctioned Princes' Army.

Avielle, a commoner living in Cologne, joined Peter's Army after hearing him speak in the market square. She was a healer afflicted with Leprosy.

Infectious diseases have been documented since Biblical times. Although Leprosy is treatable today, the stigma associated with the contagion still exists. Society isolates people afflicted with communicable infections. Jerusalem did have a leper hospital before and during the First Crusade, which eventually led to the founding of the Order of St. Lazarus, consisting of warriors stricken with the contagion.

My two main characters meet in Constantinople. At this point, the sins for which they seek redemption remain at the forefront. Neither Etienne or Avielle could forgive themselves, seeking salvation with pure hearts.



Map of the First Crusade - roads of main armies

Duke Robert of Normandy's Army joined the Princes' Army at Nicaea. Before the armies reached Antioch, they stopped at Dorylaeum. When the troops finally reached the impregnable walls of Antioch, they settled in for a lengthy siege. With winter approaching, Duke Robert left the blockade to thwart Turkish invaders at the port city of Laodicea. He did not return to Antioch until spring.

Antioch was not easily won, but the armies still had to travel through Syria and Lebanon on their way to Jerusalem. What happened at Marre and Arqa is not widely known. But atrocities did occur. The barbarity struck fear into the heart of the enemy, a blight upon a movement created in the name of God.

As we know, history tends to repeat itself, as seen by the numerous wars throughout the centuries. Placing living, breathing characters into historical events, brings the past alive. Crusader's Path delves into the mindset of men and women living through a violent age. Their hopes, dreams, and fears mimic our thoughts and feelings. We are not so different from those who came before us. The realities of warfare should not be romanticized. Hatred of the outsider triggered the First Crusade. Unfortunately, Holy Wars continue through this day.

## Meet the Author



Mary Ann Bernal attended Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, NY, where she received a degree in Business Administration. Her literary aspirations were ultimately realized when the first book of The Briton and the Dane novels was published in 2009. In addition to writing historical fiction, Mary Ann has also authored a collection of contemporary short stories in the Scribbler Tales series and a science fiction/fantasy novel entitled Planetary Wars Rise of an Empire. Her latest endeavor is Crusader's Path, a story of redemption set against the

backdrop of the First Crusade.

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Spotlight New Release

4 views

The Coffee Pot Book Club Blog Tour

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