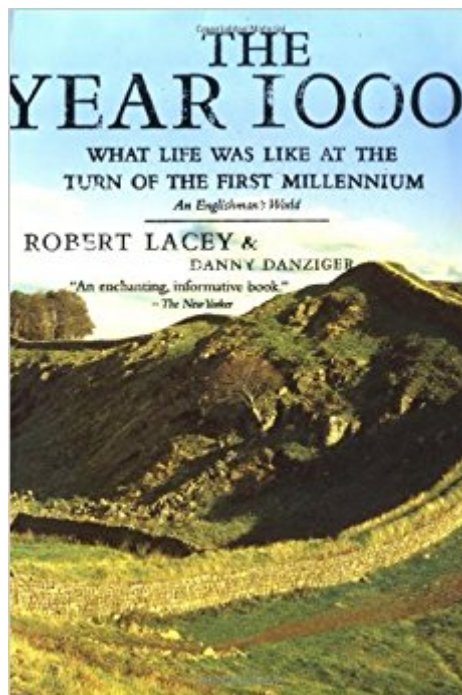


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The Year 1000: What Life Was Like At The Turn Of The First Millennium, An Englishman's World



Synopsis

As the Shadow of the Millennium Descended Across England and Christendom, it Seemed as if the World was About to End. Actually, it was Only the Beginning... Welcome to the Year 1000. This is What Life was Like. How clothes were fastened in a world without buttons, p.10 The rudiments of medieval brain surgery, p.124 The first millennium's Bill Gates, p.192 How dolphins forecasted weather, p.140 The recipe for a medieval form of Viagra, p.126 Body parts a married woman had to forfeit if she committed adultery, p.171 The fundamental rules of warfare, p.154 How fried and crushed black snails could improve your health, p.127 And much more...

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"August was the month when flies started to become a problem, buzzing round the dung heaps in the corner of every farmyard and hovering over the open cesspits of human refuse that were located outside every house." Although daily dangers were many, housing uncomfortable, and the dominant smells unpleasant indeed, life in England at the turn of the previous millennium was not at all bad, write journalists Lacey and Danziger. "If you were to meet an Englishman in the year 1000," they continue, "the first thing that would strike you would be how tall he was--very much the size of anyone alive today." The Anglo-Saxons were not only tall, but also generally well fed and healthy, more so than many Britons only a few generations ago. Writing in a breezy, often humorous style, Lacey and Danziger draw on the medieval Julius Work Calendar, a document detailing everyday life around A.D. 1000, to reconstruct the spirit and reality of the era. Light though their touch is, they've done their homework, and they take the reader on a well-documented and enjoyable

month-by-month tour through a single year, touching on such matters as religious belief, superstition, medicine, cuisine, agriculture, and politics, as well as contemporary ideas of the self and society. Readers should find the authors' discussions of famine and plague a refreshing break from present-day millennial worries, and a very stimulating introduction to medieval English history.

--Gregory McNamee --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Offering a delightful, often astonishing portrait of everyday life in Anglo-Saxon England in the year 1000, this wonderfully earthy chronicle, while timed for the end of this millennium, distinguishes itself from the sea of millennial titles by focusing on the end of the last one. Lacey (Sotheby's?Bidding for Class), a popular British historian, and London-based journalist Danziger (The Orchestra) focus on aspects of daily living. The Anglo-Saxons, a practical, self-contained, fervently superstitious people, were 99% illiterate, yet their language would become their most widespread legacy. Bristol was a slave-trading port, and the use of "bondservants" was a basic underpinning of the rural economy (the Norman invasion of 1066 would replace servitude with feudalism). There was no sugar, but honey was so valued that it became a form of currency. Personal hygiene was almost nonexistent, and most adults died in their 40s. Engla-lond, as the country was called, endured the best and the worst of times, enjoying unmatched prosperity but also falling prey to Viking raids, a menace that King Ethelred (the Unready) exacerbated by paying protection money. The narrative is organized in 12 chapters?one for each month?plus a closing chapter assessing the Anglo-Saxon legacy. Prefacing each chapter is a nimble, remarkably modern-looking, secular drawing of laborers' activities reproduced from the Julius Work Calendar, probably created by a cleric working in Canterbury Cathedral around 1020. This is a superb time capsule, and the authors distill a wealth of historical information into brightly entertaining reading. Agent, Curtis Brown. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

If I were born in England in the year 1000 I would be a farmer because that was the default occupation in those days. With famines ever lurking, food was the issue for most people. And if I had no land to farm I would have to submit myself to a landowner, voluntarily, to be a slave. Because the only alternative was starvation. Mine would be a short life of hard labor and exposure, for others. I would try to keep warm in winter by burning wood or dung, if I could get them. And I might have fleas or worms. I would not be able to read or write, but could communicate orally in English, such as it was then. I could not afford to own even one book. I would have only one name, no surname. I would live by saints' feast days and the church calendar, like the

neighbors. I would know nothing of the world beyond a few miles of my home, but would live in fear of invasion by armies of thugs. And I would have to behave myself, lest I be mistaken for the Antichrist who was expected to arrive with the millennium. Typically, there was a gallows on the edge of town. Such was England, or Engla-lond, in the year 1000. This book is a fascinating glimpse into the past, derived from contemporary documents such as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, the Julius Work Calendar, monastic rules, wills and legal documents, even bawdy jokes and poems. Plus archaeological findings. It makes me appreciate the comforts I have now, but it was not all bad then. Their world was quiet, unpolluted, and not overpopulated.

At one time or another growing up, most of us have thought how it would have been to live in a castle or be able to travel back to an earlier time. Samuel Clemens, known to many as Mark Twain, created *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* with that theme in mind. Many readers recall doomsday soothsayers of the late twentieth century and their predictions of mass electrical outages, food shortages as the time turned from Dec. 31, 1999 to Jan. 1, 2000. fears from our increasing dependency on computers. Others pointed to scriptural passages from the Bible or other traditions predicting the beginning of the end of the world. In the year 999, there were predictions and fears as well. Most of the populous illiterate, relying on religious leaders to guide but often scared them by warning what was to come for as the end of time drew near. Plagues were a constant threat, as were invasions from the several directions on hamlets living throughout this island. Life itself was tenuous and often brief. Starvation an ever present threat. Many infants didn't survive beyond their first year. Sanitation, water purification, illness prevention were over 900 in the future. Life was rough, shelter was primitive, weather harsh, and often what attempts that were thought to cure, most often made medical conditions worse. The land we know of today as Great Britain, most difficult month for starving to death was July! Because of its agrarian culture, the first of two harvests was preserved for their most precious possessions, farm animals. throughout the cold months. The second harvest was for humans. it was this planting which was often destroyed or not as abundant as the first. Invaders took food, killed or enslaved the young and hardiest of the population in a hamlet and demanded possessions. Attempts to gather under the lord or one who owned the land on which peasants worked was the only option for survival. The authors of done exhaustive research; the result is a highly informative book. It includes word derivation language changed over centuries. Most fascinating was English cultural history as invasion and tradition altered the landscape and the conquered people who adapted what they were

forced to adopt. I hope you'll take time to read this enchanting book and absorb information found in it. After all, we Americans share its common language, though we too have very much adapted what we've adopted.

The book chapters and topics are set up to correspond to the months of the year, detailing what life was like during that time and in particular that month. For example, March was the beginning of spring and the equinox, what did they inherit from the Romans, Vikings, and Anglo-Saxons besides the names of the towns and their calendar. July was hay month and goes into harvesting the crops, the weather, and how the monks not only prayed but carried out certain agricultural tasks themselves. December talks about the breaking with the past and beginning anew. Overall I enjoyed the book, it was not too heavy but such is its design. It was written to ask the questions about everyday life and habits that conventional history books often ignore. It paints a picture in one's mind by merely giving the reader a feel for the time not a starched compilation of tedious facts. As a history buff, I found it a light yet interesting read. If you are looking for a more thorough historical chronicling of the time, this is not the book for you.

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