

Book Notice

Names Through the Ages. By Teresa Norman. Berkley (Penguin Putnam). 375 Hudson Street, New York NY 10014. 1999. Pp. 516. Paper. \$15.95.

Norman's earlier book, *A World of Baby Names* (Berkely Perigee, 1996), was an extensive listing of the more common given names found in major world cultures, with their origins and variants, and often interesting bits of historical and cultural information about early bearers of the names. The present book focuses on the evolution of names in the British Isles and the United States, specifically names in England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and the U.S., with a section on names in France for good measure.

Chapters within each section are arranged historically; the section on Ireland, for example, contains chapters headed: The Dark Ages to the Anglo-Norman Invasion, The Anglo-Norman Invasion to the Renaissance, Henry II to Henry VIII, The Revolt of the FitzGeralds to the Cromwellians, The Cromwellians to the Act of Union, and The Act of Union to the Present. Each chapter begins with an overview of the major political, social, and religious events of the period, followed by a selection of female, male, and surnames characteristic of the time, a large number of which are historical curiosities today (from the Reformation section who remembers Agalia or Ideny?). But it is useful to find in the same section Oprah and Nicol. Norman's introductory chapters are usually informed and provide useful context for the name lists, which are spare, consisting only of a source and first meaning.

While not a scholarly book *per se*, it is obvious that a great deal of research and scholarship went into its making. There is a substantial bibliography (more than 150 items) of mostly standard works on history, culture, and religion, as well as onomastics; all are reference books and no journals are mentioned.

I found this book very useful in providing a quick, accurate, and relevant overview of the major historical and cultural events which have shaped and in many case contributed to the stock of English names.

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