



The Oxford Companion to the Year: An Exploration of Calendar Customs and Time- Reckoning

Bonnie Blackburn, Leofranc Holford-Strevens

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What are the halcyon days? On what date do the dog days begin? What is Hansel Monday? How do Chinese, Muslim, Mesoamerican, Jewish, and Babylonian calendars differ from Christian calendars? The answers to these and hundreds of other intriguing questions about the way humans have marked and measured time over the millennia can be found in *The Oxford Companion to the Year*.

The desire to set aside certain periods of time to mark their significance is a transhistorical, transcultural phenomena. Virtually all cultures have marked special days or periods: the feast day of a saint, the celebration of a historical event, the turning of a season, a period of fasting, the birthday of an important historical figure. Around these days a rich body of traditions, beliefs, and superstitions have grown up, many of them only half-remembered today. Now, for the first time, Bonnie Blackburn and Leofranc Holford-Strevens combine this body of knowledge with a wide-ranging survey of calendars across cultures in an authoritative and engaging one-volume reference work. The first section of *The Oxford Companion to the Year* is a day-by-day survey of the calendar year, revealing the history, literature, legend, and lore associated with each season, month, and day. The second part provides a broader study of time-reckoning: historical and modern calendars, religious and civil, are explained, with handy tables for the conversion of dates between various systems and a helpful index to facilitate speedy reference.

The Oxford Companion to the Year is a unique and uniquely delightful reference source, an indispensable aid for all historians and antiquarians, and a rich mine of information and inspiration for browsers.

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