<u>Your task</u>: Read the article and answer the questions (page 10) in writing. I have included a short list of keywords. Please email me your answers by Friday 12th June. Thank you.

Just for the fun, I am also including another article, which I have always found amusing 😊. You will find this optional reading material on pages 11-13.

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"Portrait of Britain: AD1000", by Ann Williams (*History Today* Vol.50 Issue 3 March 2000)

Keywords:

Aethelred = King Aethelred II The Unready (978-1016)

Legal tender: a medium of payment recognized by a legal system, i.e. coins.

Emporia: a trading place founded by Romans

Alfred = Alfred the Great, King of Wessex from 871 to 899

Burgesses: town dwellers

Ann Williams describes the state of the island at a time when Anglo-Saxon culture was reaching its peak, while also politically challenged by the Vikings.

'The King went into Cumberland and ravaged very nearly all of it; and his ships went out round Chester and should have come to meet him, but they could not. Then they ravaged the Isle of Man. And the enemy fleet had gone to Richard's kingdom that summer.'
Brief though it is, this entry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the year 1000 is an epitome of the political history of Britain at the time. The king in question was Æthelred II, misnamed 'the Unready' (r. 978-1016), and seen here in a decidedly 'ready' mood. He was not indulging in mindless destruction for the sake of it, but furthering a process begun by his forebears: forging of a united kingdom of the English. A century earlier, his great-great-grandfather, Alfred, had defended the kingdom of Wessex from Viking assault and won the loyalty of all the English people 'except those who were under the power of the Danes'. Alfred's heirs, his son Edward, king of the West

Saxons, and his daughter Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians, overran the southern Danish settlements and absorbed them into a 'greater Wessex'. Edward's son, Æthelstan, conquered the Viking kingdom of York, and became the first 'king of the English' and Æthel-stan's brothers, Edmund and Eadred, consolidated his work. Edmund's sons, Eadwig and Edgar, ruled over an English kingdom which stretched northwards from the Channel to the Tweed in the north east and to Stain-more in the north-west. This kingdom was the inheritance of Æthelred, Edgar's younger son, who received it after the murder of his half-brother Edward the Martyr at Corfe in Dorset in 978.

The making of England was the achievement of the West Saxon kings. To the west lay the kingdoms of Wales, of which Gwynedd in the north and Dyfed in the south were the most powerful. Northward lay the lands of the Scots, a kingdom as recently-created as that of the English; it was ruled by the line of Kenneth MacAlpin (r. 840-58), who occupies a place in the history of Scotland comparable to that of Alfred in England. In fact Kenneth was not the first to rule both Picts and Scots, but it was his dynasty which destroyed the last Pictish kings, and imposed Gaelic customs and the Gaelic language throughout the kingdom of Alba. This united realm stretched northwards from the Clyde-Forth axis as far as the borders of Caithness, which was dominated by the Norse Earls of Orkney. South of the Clyde-Forth line lay the debatable lands. In the east, the region between the Forth and the Tweed had formed part of the old English kingdom of Northumbria; to the west, the British kingdom of Strathclyde extended southwards to include Cumbria (modern Cumberland, Westmorland and much of Lancashire).

In these regions the ambitions of the English and Scottish kings met and clashed. By the year 1000, the kingdom of Strathclyde was virtually an adjunct of the Scottish kingship, while Æthelred's father, Edgar, had ceded much of the disputed territory in the east to Kenneth II (r. 971-95). These set-backs did not prevent the English rulers from presenting themselves as 'overlords' of both the Scottish and the Welsh kings, though this ambition was rarely recognised. The borders of English and Scots remained unstable and hostilities continued. The picture was complicated by the presence of Norse rulers in Man and the Western Isles, often loosely allied to the kings of Viking Dublin;

Cumbria too had its share of Viking settlers. The early years of Æthelred's reign had seen a resurgence of Viking activity in the Irish Sea, and it was in response to this threat that the King attacked Cumbria and Man in the year 1000.

The dangers to Æthelred's kingdom did not lie only in the north. The land described in the Chronicle as 'Richard's kingdom' was Normandy, then ruled by Richard II (r. 996-1026). The 'enemy fleet', however, was not that of the Normans, but a Danish raiding-force which had been operating in England for the previous three years; it was to return in 1001. The willingness of the Normans to give aid and comfort to their Danish and Norwegian cousins had already provoked a reaction from the English; in 990 it took the despatch of a papal legate to establish 'a most firm peace' between Æthelred and Duke Richard's father, Richard I (r. 942-996). It was probably as part of a similar agreement in 1002 that Æthelred took the Duke's sister Emma as his second wife, but even this did not break the link between the Danes and Normandy.

The raids of Æthelred's time constitute part of the 'Second Viking Age' in Britain. Like England and Scotland, the kingdoms of Scandinavia were still in the process of formation. The kings of Denmark were the most successful; indeed the line of Denmark's founder, Harald Blue-tooth (958-87), temporarily ousted the West Saxons from England between 1016 and 1042. The competing kings of the north needed money and treasure to pursue their ambitions, and this was what England in particular had to offer, as the discovery of 60,000 English pennies of the period in Scandinavian coin-hoards vividly demonstrates. The English kings were unique at this time among the rulers of Britain in minting their own coins, the only ones which were legal tender within England. The quality of successive mintages, regularly changed from 975 onwards, gives eloquent testimony to the administrative competence of the West Saxon rulers. The composition of the coins themselves indicates the importance of English commerce, for the silver is not native to Britain but imported, largely from Germany. What the English exported in return we do not know, but wool and woollen cloth were probably as important then as later.

The contrast between England and the British kingdoms extends to the related area of urban institutions. Successful towns depend upon a

number of pre-existing factors: a relatively stable political environment; a settled population, living by commerce and manufacture as well as agriculture; a well-farmed hinterland to ensure regular supplies of food and raw materials; a network of trading contacts, whether local, national, international or all three; and a supply of coined money of an established standard. Neither the Scots nor the Welsh kings issued coins, though some from elsewhere are occasionally found in treasure-hoards of both regions, and this lack of a native coinage goes some way to explain the almost total absence of urban centres in Wales and Scotland. One of the few exceptions, Swansea in South Wales, shows its origins in its Old Norse name; like the towns of Ireland, it was a Viking foundation.

Even in England, the balance between urban and rural populations in the year 1000 (and for some time to come) was almost exactly the reverse of what it is today. About ninety per cent of the population lived and worked in the countryside, with only about ten per cent based permanently in towns. But throughout the tenth century and into the eleventh, English towns were growing in size and importance, and most of those which would be significant in later years were already in existence by the time of the Domesday survey in 1086. The earliest trading-centres were the emporia of the eighth and ninth centuries, mostly founded by or near deserted Romano-British sites, like Hamwic (Southampton), Eoforwic (York) and Lundenwic (London). Most lay in the south and east, indicating their connection with the southern trade-routes to northern Frankia, the Rhineland and Italy, and (in the west) to Brittany, south west Frankia and Spain. The trade of these years was mainly in luxury goods, silk, spices and precious metals. The emporia, being undefended, were badly mauled by the Vikings, and by 900 the survivors had either been fortified, or (as at London) had moved within the refurbished walls of the nearby Roman towns.

Alfred and his successors built a number of fortifications against the Vikings, some of which were, or became, towns; hence the modern word ‘borough’, derived from Old English burh, ‘a fortified, or defensible place’. As the West Saxon kings gradually conquered the Midlands and the north, they replaced any earlier administrative units with shires on the West Saxon model, each based upon, and named from a fortified borough (Worcestershire, Buckinghamshire,

Lincolnshire), which acted as the administrative centre of its region. Tenth-century law-codes restricted the practice of minting to towns, where it could be overseen by royal officials; for the same reason, all trade except for minor local barter had to take place in urban markets. The tenth century also saw a shift in the focus of English trade, to take advantage of the route running from Viking Dublin in the west to Scandinavia and thence via the Viking settlements in central Russia and the Ukraine to Byzantium and the Islamic Empire.

Towns were also important for ecclesiastical organisation. Some of the earliest English bishoprics were founded in places which had been Roman towns; Canterbury, Rochester, London and York are the obvious examples. Moreover churches, whether monastic or secular, could be considerable centres of population, for to the communities themselves (whether monks, priests or nuns) we must add the dependents who worked the church's land and provided the daily labour for the running of the community. In the non-urbanised areas of Wales and Scotland, such ecclesiastical communities might fulfil some urban functions. In England some towns originated in ecclesiastical settlements. At Peterborough, for instance, a monastery existed as early as the seventh century, when it was known as Medeshamstede, 'the homestead in the meadow'. The continuous history of both church and town begins, however, with its re-foundation as a Benedictine abbey, allegedly in 966. The second abbot, Coenwulf (r. 992-1006), is said to have surrounded the monastery and its attendant dwellings with a wall, after which the place became known as Peterborough, 'the fortified place of [St] Peter'.

Though the pre-Conquest towns of England fulfilled true urban functions of manufacture and trade, they were not cut off from the surrounding countryside. The burgesses (burhwaru) had their town fields, presumably given over to arable and market gardens, and some rural estates included urban property; the abbot of Westminster, for instance, had four houses in Colchester as part of his manor of Feering, Essex. This not only furnished a town house for the lord of the estate but also (and more importantly) provided access to an urban market. Most communities probably aimed for basic self-sufficiency; neighbouring settlements might share local resources like woodland (for fuel and timber), pasture (for cattle and sheep) or

marshland (wild-fowling, reeds for thatching, fishing). Some goods, however, had to be acquired by trade. One essential commodity was salt, whether produced by boiling from sea-water, or from the brine-springs particularly abundant in western England, exploited at Droitwich (Worcestershire) and at Nantwich and Middlewich (Cheshire).

It remains true that all the peoples of Britain at the first millennium lived in a predominantly rural society, and farming, whether arable or pastoral, was the main occupation. The climate was warmer and drier in 1000 than it is today, but subsistence farming was probably all most people could manage, and they were very dependent on the weather; a bad harvest, or an outbreak of disease among their animals could spell ruin. People too were at the mercy of infection, and plague was a recurrent scourge. One result was a high rate of infant mortality, though for those who survived childhood, life expectancy was not much less than it is now. The next period of danger was late adolescence, which claimed the lives of young women through problems associated with pregnancy, and of young men through fighting of various kinds; warfare was endemic throughout the Middle Ages, and in a society where most people (even slaves) bore arms, any disagreements were potentially fatal.

The population of Britain in the year 1000 cannot be estimated with any accuracy. England may have supported 2,500,000 people (the estimate is derived from the figures given in Domesday Book); Scotland's population was perhaps 500,000, and that of Wales probably less. The mountainous heartland of Wales seems to have been little inhabited and was more heavily wooded than it is today. Permanent settlements were confined to the coastal regions, at river-mouths, with access to the sea, or in the valleys, usually on the river-terraces away from the damp and ill-drained valley-floors. Scotland, too, was more heavily wooded than it is now, and with native deciduous, broad-leaved trees rather than conifers. As in Wales, the population was scattered in small and often isolated communities, with a concentration in the river valleys; most upland settlements were probably seasonal encampments for summer grazing. The best documented area of Scotland is Lothian in the south-east (a region formerly part of English Northumbria); here the primarily pastoral economy was accompanied by arable farming and characterised by

larger, village settlements. Far to the north, in Orkney and Caithness, the Earls pursued an independent path, their society and customs deriving from Scandinavia, rather than from British roots. Their settlements were dominated by the need for access to the sea by means of a suitable harbour or beaching-ground. The inhabitants lived not merely by farming, but also by fishing and hunting; and of course by sea-borne raids on their neighbours.

As for England, the countryside of 1000 would look very strange to our eyes, not merely because of the much smaller population and the obvious changes which time has wrought. The very pattern of settlement would seem different. We are used to seeing, at least in the broad swathe of 'Middle England', a network of villages, each with its group of houses clustered around a church, lying among its fields and pastures. Even in urban areas, like the outer London suburbs, such 'villages' can still be discerned among the enveloping Victorian terraces and modern housing estates. But English villages are in fact fairly recent phenomena, which were only beginning to assume their later form in 1000. Many people still lived in dispersed settlements, hamlets and farmsteads rather than villages. These early settlements can be traced only by very careful excavation, for, apart from the major churches, most buildings were constructed of wood which, unlike stone or brick, leaves little trace on the ground. Timber houses do not last as long as those built in stone; and, which is perhaps more important, they are also easy to dismantle and re-erect elsewhere. Both factors enabled settlements to shift their sites with relative ease, though usually within stable boundaries which in many cases still define the modern parish.

The processes which produced the 'classic' villages of middle England were many and various, but one of the significant factors is the nature of land tenure. In all the regions of Britain, the norms of society reflected rural concerns, especially the possession and exploitation of land. Money and moveable wealth (treasure, for instance) were not negligible as sources of prosperity; indeed lavish display was very important in signalling status, both among the lay aristocracy and for the Church. But land was more vital still. Possession of land conferred and demonstrated status; it was used to assess liability to renders and services and, among the English, tax; and it enabled its possessors to dispense patronage and influence. In all the regions of Britain, a three-

fold social structure can be discerned, encompassing nobles, free men and slaves. Gradations of wealth and status can usually be distinguished within the first two groups; the slaves, categorised as property, are set off from the others, even when there is little economic distinction as (for instance) between a slave-ploughman settled on a piece of land by his owner, and a dependent peasant holding land from his lord.

The West Saxon kings of the tenth century ruled in close association with the greater nobles, the most important of whom were often from junior branches of the ruling house itself. They provided the reservoir from which kings drew their local administrators: sheriffs, estate managers, tax-assessors and the like. This service, since it was royal service, gave the holders additional status; it also gave them plenty of opportunity to amass wealth, in cash and treasure as well as land, as demonstrated by the numerous complaints which surface about the rapacity and corruption of the royal officials. One of the rewards of royal service was land, and in particular land granted by a royal charter or landbook. Such a grant not only gave the beneficiary a perpetual right of free bequest (the closest thing to 'freehold' which existed at the time), but also freed the land granted from all royal service except for military service and the more important judicial rights. On such land, known as bookland, all the exempted dues and services could be diverted by the beneficiary for his own benefit; henceforward he (or she) and his heirs could take the lesser judicial fines in respect of men who dwelt on their bookland. Moreover the services which those men had once performed for the king were now due to the hall of the bookholder, and their lands were appurtenant to the place where that hall lay.

The importance of such tenures in the formation of nucleated villages lies in the ability of the landlord to reorganise the resources of the estate around his own hall; from the late tenth century, such lords might divert some of their ecclesiastical dues (tithe) to the churches which they built next to their halls. It is likely too that the most dependent peasants of the estate, the slaves, cottagers and those who had no land of their own but had to accept land from their lord in return for labour services, would be persuaded or compelled to dwell around the hall and church; and that the arable fields would be re-organised and centred on the same nucleus. The villages of midland

England and similar settlements elsewhere in Britain are, it seems, intimately linked with manorialisation.

It was not the lay nobles alone who gained from the generosity of the West Saxon kings, but also the Church. The Scandinavian raids and settlements of the late ninth century had led to considerable disruption of the English Church. Many religious houses did not recover from the killing or dispersal of their communities. Even some episcopal sees, especially in the north and east of England, were temporarily abandoned and since it was the bishop's household which trained and educated new generations of priests, this adversely affected general standards of ecclesiastical competence. It seems, however, that standards had been falling before the main impact of the Vikings was felt. In the 890s, Pope Formosus complained that English bishops had failed to preach against 'the abominable rites of the pagans', though he admitted that this was being rectified, and King Alfred regarded the pagan incursions as God's punishment for a general decline in ecclesiastical discipline and learning.

It was Alfred who began the process of regeneration, instituting a plan of reform continued by his children and grandchildren. It had two main aims: to educate the general population in the practice of the Christian faith; and to restore the ideals of Benedictine monasticism. The success of the first is shown in the rapid conversion of the Scandinavian settlers to Christianity; the second came to fruition with the Benedictine movement of the later tenth century. Most of the great abbeys which remained influential until the Reformation were founded or re-founded in the decades on either side of the year 1000. The same period saw the establishment of monastic chapters, a peculiarity of the English Church and its adherents. On the continent, episcopal churches were staffed by secular canons, as indeed were most English sees; monks appear only in those houses directly associated with the tenth-century reformers (Canterbury, Sherborne, Winchester and Worcester). It is largely to the documentation produced by the scriptoria of the reformed monasteries and the monastic scribes who staffed them that we owe our comparatively full knowledge not only of the late Old English Church but of English society in general.

The Church in Scotland was greatly influenced by that of the Irish, which is understandable in view of the role of St Columba and his community at Iona in the conversion of the Scottish people, a role emphasised by the fact that it was from this area that the line of Scots kings came. This Irish orientation did not affect doctrine, but it did produce local variations in day-to-day practice, which often appeared odd to continental observers. The diocesan structure was not as well-organised as in England, and a characteristically Irish form of monasticism appears in some areas. South-west Scotland, however, was closer to Wales. By the tenth century, most communities in Wales were probably houses of secular clergy rather than monks, and those which were monastic followed customs laid down by the earliest Welsh churchmen (like St David) rather than those of St Benedict. As in Scotland, some communities were episcopal sees, and though there seems to have been no hierarchical structure of authority, St David's enjoyed (or at least claimed) pre-eminence. Though the contrasts can be exaggerated, the Churches of England, Scotland and Wales each had its own characteristic customs. It was only in the twelfth century that a newly-resurgent papacy imposed a degree of ecclesiastical uniformity throughout all Britain.

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Questions:

1. Why were the English kings unique in the late Anglo-Saxon period?
2. What does the quality of late Anglo-Saxon mintage show? (2 ideas)
3. What factors are necessary for urbanisation? (6 key points)
4. How important was the rural population?
5. What source can we use to learn about late Anglo-Saxon towns?
6. According to late Anglo-Saxon law, where were coin mining and trade allowed to take place?
7. Name four functions of late Anglo-Saxon towns.
8. What was the size of the population in Britain around the year 1000?
9. What did the countryside look like?
10. From what social group did local administrators come from?
11. What was the reward for royal service?

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Optional Reading Material

"1066 and all those baby names", by Megan Lane, *BBC News Magazine* (4 August 2010)

Norman names such as William, Henry and Alice have been popular for 1,000 years. Why did the English copy their invaders?

The date 1066. William the Conqueror. King Harold with the arrow in his eye. Soldiers in those nose-protector helmets.

But many people will struggle to come up with more than these sketchy facts about how the Normans invaded England and overthrew the Anglo-Saxons on one bloody day almost a millennium ago.

But it was then the seeds were sown for the English language as it is today, including names.

"If you ask where did the Normans come from and what was their impact, most people run out of steam pretty quickly," says historian Robert Bartlett of the University of St Andrews.

"It's not like the Tudor era, which people are much more familiar with thanks to TV dramas and historical novels."

Further wreathing the 11th Century in mystery, says Professor Bartlett, is how unfamiliar the names of the Anglo-Saxon protagonists are to modern ears - Aethelred, Eadric, Leofric.

By contrast, the names of the Norman conquerors quickly became popular, and remain common to this day - William, Robert, Henry, Alice, Matilda.

As these French-speaking, wine-drinking, castle-building conquerors swiftly took over England and intermarried with Anglo-Saxon women, it was not just newborns named in their honour.

"The ruling elite set the fashion and soon William was the most common male name in England, even among peasants. A lot of people changed their names because they wanted to pass in polite society - they didn't want to be mistaken for a peasant, marked out with an Anglo-Saxon name."

Look at baby name league tables today, and the Old English name of Harold languishes far below the French-derived Henry in popularity. William, meanwhile, was the second most popular name for boys 200 years ago, the most popular 100 years ago and has held its place in the top 10 in England and Wales since 2000.

In Scotland, where the fiercely independent rulers invited Norman lords in but refused to assimilate in the way the English had, the name William maintains a respectable mid-table result at number 34 (20 places above Robert in the most recent baby names list).

- For a long time after 1066, English boys were named after William the Conqueror
- William means 'resolute protector'
- Other Norman-era names like Alice and Robert remain popular
- But not Norman itself, except as surname

Surnames may reveal your family history

It soon became necessary to distinguish between all these Williams and Roberts, and so the Norman tradition of surnames was adopted. As well as family names derived from one's occupation, surnames with the prefix Fitz date from Norman times.

"Fitz comes from the French 'fils', meaning 'son of'. So Fitzsimmons once meant 'son of Simon' and Fitzgerald 'son of Gerald," says Prof Bartlett, whose own first name Robert is solidly Norman in origin.

And it is a legacy of the Normans that modern English has many words with similar meanings, as French words were assimilated into everyday language. The same goes for the long-standing association of all things French with the upper classes, and all things Anglo-Saxon with coarseness.

"Pig is English in origin, pork is French. Sheep is English, mutton is French. Cow is English, beef is French. When it's in a cold and muddy field covered in dung, it's named in English. When it's been cooked and carved and put on a table with a glass of wine, it's referred to in French."

“When it's in a muddy field, it's named in English. When it's cooked and served with wine, it's named in French.”

Robert Bartlett

Norman history

Not only was there an almost immediate impact on English names and language, the landscape changed rapidly as the new Norman elite set about building stone castles

and churches across the land - robust defensive structures like nothing seen before on these shores.

And just as few traces of the less permanent Anglo-Saxon structures remain today, the same goes for Old English.

"English was scarcely written down in this time - writing acts as a brake, and a language that isn't written down changes much faster. The grammar simplified, case endings were lost, and many French words were absorbed," says Prof Bartlett.

Within 150 years of 1066, English had changed almost beyond recognition. "Just think of pre-Norman texts such as Beowulf or Anglo-Saxon laws - you must study Old English to be able to read these. But by the time of Chaucer or Shakespeare, it's a lot more familiar."

Even their names are reassuringly familiar (and Norman in origin) - Geoffrey and William.