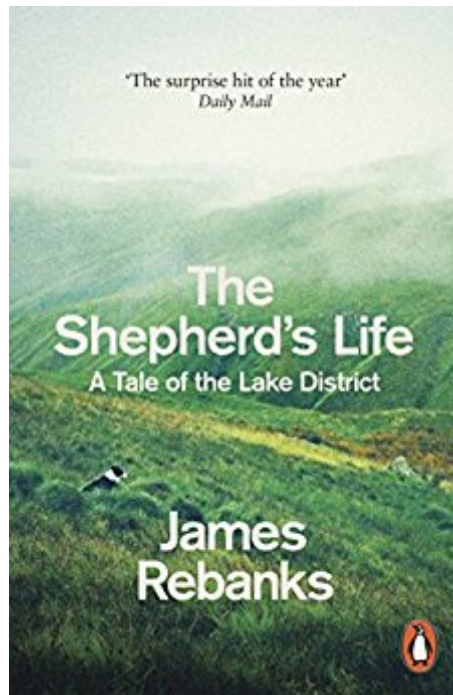




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The Shepherd's Life: A Tale Of The Lake District



Synopsis

From James Rebanks, the Herdwick Shepherd, comes *The Shepherd's Life*, a story of the Lake District and its people which could redefine the literature of rural life. Some people's lives are entirely their own creations. James Rebanks' isn't. The first son of a shepherd, who was the first son of a shepherd himself, he and his family have lived and worked in and around the Lake District for generations. Their way of life is ordered by the seasons and the work they demand, and has been for hundreds of years. A Viking would understand the work they do: sending the sheep to the fells in the summer and making the hay; the autumn fairs where the flocks are replenished; the gruelling toil of winter when the sheep must be kept alive, and the light-headedness that comes with spring, as the lambs are born and the sheep get ready to return to the fells. These modern dispatches from an ancient landscape tell the story of a deep-rooted attachment to place, describing a way of life that is little noticed and yet has profoundly shaped this landscape. In evocative and lucid prose, James Rebanks takes us through a shepherd's year, offering a unique account of rural life and a fundamental connection with the land that most of us have lost. It is a story of working lives, the people around him, his childhood, his parents and grandparents, a people who exist and endure even as the world changes around them. Many stories are of people working desperately hard to leave a place. This is the story of someone trying desperately hard to stay. James Rebanks is the Herdwick Shepherd, whose account of shepherding has a strong following on Twitter (@herdyshepherd1). His family has farmed in the same area for more than six hundred years.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is an engaging, unusual and beautifully written book. James Rebanks' deep love of his native English Lake District is not the romanticised 'adventure playground' or 'stunning landscapes' view taken by writers such as the guide book writer Alfred Wainwright or the poet Wordsworth. He loves the fells as they are the workplace of his farming family and have been for generations, they are the place on this earth to which he is tied - or 'hefted' in the native dialect. The book starts with the awakening of this realisation as a young, disillusioned teenager in a dysfunctional school, that what was his home and the site of hard graft was seen in a completely different light by others using the same landscapes for leisure. Moreover the cultural appreciation of these favoured ones seemed to outrank the manual work of his family and of those around him. James educated himself largely, and did so well at this that in his early twenties he gained admission to Oxford's Magdalen College, but this experience only deepened his view that the vital role of farmers was held in very little respect in the world at large. His work as a shepherd was seen to be secondary and of lesser value than his academic work; despite the vast depths of knowledge needed to successfully run a farm, particularly a hill farm. Born in 1974, many elements of James' Rebanks life as a shepherd now would be familiar to his ancestors hundreds of years ago, though his sheepdogs ride on a quad bike out to the flocks. Good weather is still vital for a hay harvest to provide fodder for the winter and starting work at the break of day is familiar. James also walks the line between powerful, lyrical description without ever becoming romanticised or over-sentimental beautifully.

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