

Book Club

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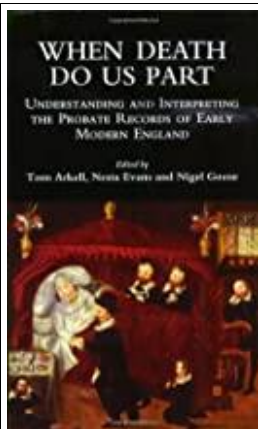
Abbreviations used:-

L.P.S. = Local Population Studies

U.P. = University Press

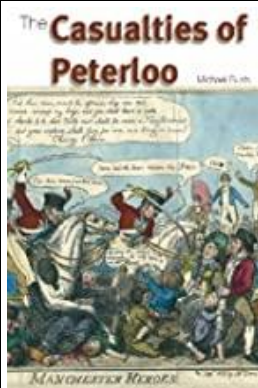
h/b = hardback

p/b = paperback



T. Arkell, N. Evans & N. Goose, eds, *When Death Do Us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England*, (L.P.S., 2000), p/b, £9-40.

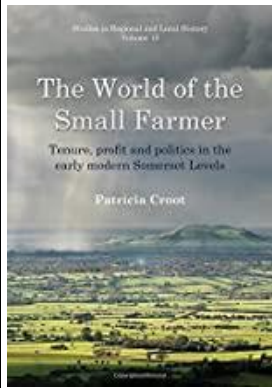
This is a classic study of a series of invaluable early-modern sources – wills, probate inventories, grants of probate, probate accounts and others. Probate records survive in considerable quantities and are useful for economic, social and demographic history, besides their obvious appeal to family historians. The book comprises 17 essays which describe how the “probate process” worked, and present both general discussions of the subject and case studies from many parts of the country.



M.L. Bush, *The Casualties of Peterloo*, (Carnegie Publishing Ltd, 2005), h/b, £10-50.

On 16 August 1819, an enormous crowd gathered on St Peter's Field, Manchester, in support of parliamentary reform and was charged by sabre-wielding yeomanry cavalry. It happened on a clear summer's day and in the full glare of publicity: in fact there are eight lists of the casualties, most of them drawn up soon after the event.

G.M. Trevelyan urged in 1922 that these should be published, but Michael Bush is the first person to put their contents into print, in the form of a consolidated list of all the casualties named in the original sources, with the information which each source gives about each person. This is the basis on which he analyses the events of a day which saw 654 people injured, including at least 17 killed.



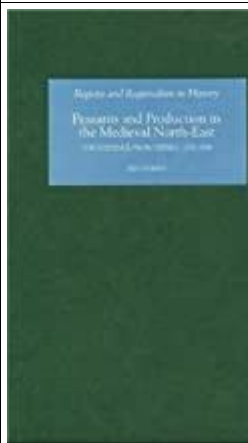
P. Croot, *The World of the Small Farmer. Tenure, Profit and Politics in the Early Modern Somerset Levels*, (Univ. of Hertfordshire Press, 2017), p/b, £13-25.

Patricia Croot's book presents a study of early-modern agriculture and society in the Brent Marsh area of the Somerset Levels, between the Mendips and the Poldens where there are lots of "moors" of the marshy kind which are a speciality of that part of the country. The author reveals that the small tenants there were not only surviving the changes of this period, but were actively contributing to them by increasing food production and growing new crops.



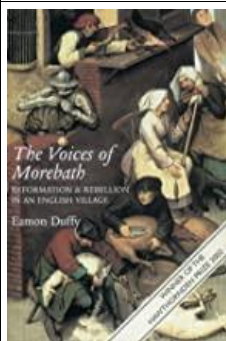
B. Cullingford, *British Chimney Sweeps. Five Centuries of Chimney Sweeping*, (New Amsterdam Books, 2000), p/b, £4-45.

Mention of chimney sweeps may conjure up the image of Mr and Mrs Pepys lying in bed and wondering what the dreadful noise next door could be, but they are neglected figures and Benita Cullingford's book is the first serious study of the world of adult sweeps and their "climbing boys". The reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* called it "An intriguing social history", and it was described as "A lively social history, full of meticulous research" in the trade journal *Fires and Fireplaces*, and they ought to know.



B. Dodds, *Peasants and Production in the Medieval North-East. The Evidence from Tithes, 1270-1536*, (Boydell Press, 2007), h/b, £14-00.

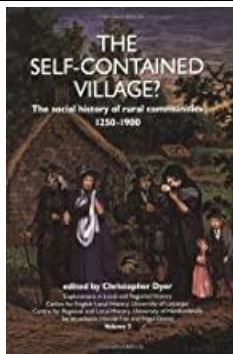
Sometimes there are curious differences between the sources used by historians in neighbouring countries. For example, French historians saw the potential of tithe records for economic and social history some decades ago but it has taken a long time for British ones to follow them. Ben Dodds is helping to redress the balance with a study of the fortunes of the late medieval peasantry based upon records of the tithes collected by Durham Cathedral Priory. He finds that the economy of County Durham was strongly affected by the Scots Wars long before the Great Black Death struck in 1349, and that, while the plague did help to create conditions for improved living standards, in other respects it ushered in a long period of "non-recovery".



E. Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath. Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village*, (Yale U.P., 2001), p/b, £8-40.

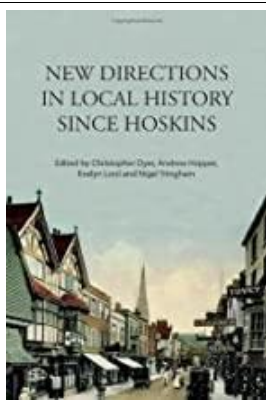
This fascinating story of life in a sixteenth-century Devon parish is told largely from its Churchwardens' Accounts. An edition of the Morebath Churchwardens' Accounts actually appeared in print a hundred years ago, and Eamon Duffy pays tribute to it but points out one important misreading which explains why the "Rebellion" in his title previously went unnoticed. This is local history as it should be written, and the excellent production of this book with lots of black-and-white illustrations, colour photographs and three maps, helps to explain why

Yale University Press is held in such high regard. This book won a major literary award, bringing its author the Hawthornden Prize in 2002.



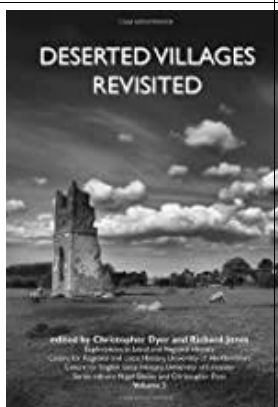
C. Dyer, ed., *The Self-Contained Village? The social history of rural communities, 1250-1900*, (Univ. of Hertfordshire Press, 2007), p/b, £9-70.

The book is a collection of studies by Christopher Dyer himself, Jane Whittle, Steve Hindle, Henry French, Ian Whyte and David Brown, with good illustrations and plenty of foot-notes. As its title shows, it is a long-term study, and it ranges around the country from the West Midlands to Cumbria and Norfolk, while some contributors do not restrict themselves to a single region or county.



C. Dyer, A. Hopper, E. Lord & N. Tringham, eds, *New Directions in Local History since Hoskins*, (Univ. of Hertfordshire Press, 2011), p/b, £11-00.

Besides its four editors, this book has no fewer than 15 contributors, and their 15 chapters present a wide selection of local studies. C.P. Lewis argues that the “great awakening” of English local history took place between the two World Wars, so often seen as a fallow period. Claire Cross's study of the reformation in a Salisbury parish will appeal to any reader of Eamon Duffy's books. David Hey looks at the careers of early-modern Derbyshire lead smelters and merchants, many of whose houses still survive. Stephen Counce examines questions of identity and politics in the post-1950 North of England. Paul Ell considers how the growth of material on the internet may affect the future of the subject.



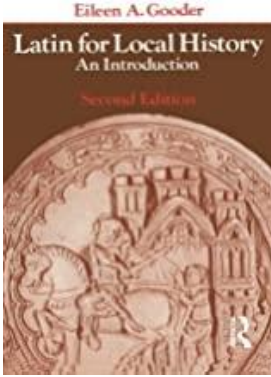
C. Dyer & R. Jones, eds, *Deserted Villages Revisited*, (Univ. of Hertfordshire Press, 2010), p/b, £9-70.

Deserted settlements are a common feature of the landscape in some parts of Britain. They used to be described as *deserted medieval villages*, and there was once a widespread belief that they had resulted from the Black Death. If the plague had killed a great part of the country's population and hundreds of places had been left without inhabitants, then wouldn't the two go together? Much more evidence is now available, and the truth has turned out to be more complicated and more interesting. This book presents the work of eleven contributors – archaeologists, geographers and historians – to bring the reader up to date with the help of their differing approaches to this phenomenon.

Photo of dust-jacket

J. Etherington, *The Bonfire Societies of Lewes, 1800-1913. A study in nominal record linkage*, (L.P.S.S., 1996), p/b, £1-75.

We still have some copies of this second in the LPSS series of practical guides for students which were published in the 1990s. Jim Etherington shows readers how to go about the method of nominal record linkage, and how he used it in his study of the history of a well-known

	<p>celebration which still takes place in the Sussex town of Lewes. In doing so, he casts new light on elements of conflict and cohesion in the local community.</p>
<p>Photo of dust-jacket</p>	<p>E. Garrett, C. Galley, N. Shelton & R. Woods, eds, <i>Infant Mortality: A Continuing Social Problem</i>, (Ashgate, 2006), h/b, £35-75.</p> <p>This is a collection of studies published to mark the 100th anniversary of Sir George Newman's pioneering book <i>Infant Mortality: a Social Problem</i>. Fifteen contributors have approached the subject from many different angles. Most concentrate of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and, indeed, some of their evidence is very up to date. This would have pleased Newman, who was very much concerned with the problems he saw around him. But Richard Smith and Jim Oeppen have added a study of 26 parishes from the Cambridge Group's parish-register based family reconstitutions, and this takes the story back to the later sixteenth century.</p>
	<p>E. Gooder, <i>Latin for Local History. An Introduction</i>, (Longman, 2nd edn with corrections and additions 1979), p/b, £18-15.</p> <p>If you had the misfortune to be taught Latin at school by someone whose talents did not extend to languages, or did not learn it at all, then here is the remedy. Eileen Gooder works on the principle that her readers want to understand the Latin used in so many English records (especially medieval ones), so she ignores what Caesar and his soldiers did and begins with the verb <i>to give</i> and the noun <i>land</i>, and takes it from there.</p> <p>This is simply the best book on the subject, and it is remarkable how much useful and well-explained information it contains.</p>
<p>Photo of dust-jacket</p>	<p>N. Goose, ed., <i>Women's Work in Industrial England, Regional and Local Perspectives</i>, (L.P.S., 2007), p/b, £9-70.</p> <p>This is the book which grew out of the weekend conference which Christine Jones and Eilidh Garrett organised for the Society at the Charlotte Mason College in Ambleside.</p> <p>It includes the work of 13 contributors, most of whom were speakers at that conference but new ones have come along later, whose local studies range from the Staffordshire potteries to Corfe Castle, and from Edinburgh to Hertfordshire. It runs to more than 400 pages, with enough figures and tables to satisfy the most statistically minded, and a collection of maps printed in colour.</p>



N. Goose & L. Luu, eds, *Immigrants in Tudor and Early Stuart England*, (Sussex Academic Press, 2005), p/b, £17-45.

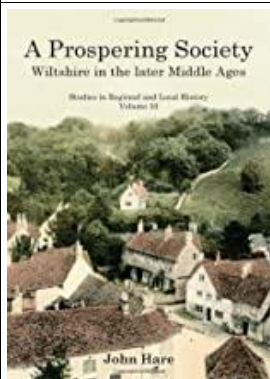
References to early-modern immigrants and their contributions to English economy and society come up again and again – didn't the Germans develop the mines in the Lake District and the Dutch give Canvey Island its sea defences? - but it has been a long time since anyone has attempted a connected account of a complicated story.

Nigel Goose and Lien Luu's book brings together the contributions of eight historians to reassess the impact of different groups of “aliens” on early-modern England, tracing where they came from, how they were received by and assimilated within host communities, and what connections they continued to have with the lands of their births.

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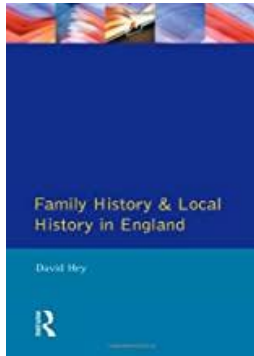
N. Goose & L. Moden, *A History of Doughty's Hospital, Norwich, 1687-2009*, (Univ. of Hertfordshire Press, 2010), p/b, £6-95.

Nigel Goose and Leanne Moden's book anchors this institution both in the world of early-modern philanthropy and in its Norwich surroundings. William Doughty was a merchant who left £6,000 in his will to establish an almshouse, and an impressive series of records enables its history to be traced through 320 years to the present day, for his Hospital is still a functioning institution and the book has many photos showing twenty-first-century residents at a variety of social events. The picture of “The Three Matrons” singing for them may remind readers of Mr Harding playing his cello for the old men in Anthony Trollope's *The Warden*, before they all got into trouble with the will of *their* founder.



J. Hare, *A Prospering Society. Wiltshire in the later Middle Ages*, (Univ. of Hertfordshire Press, 2011), p/b, £13-25.

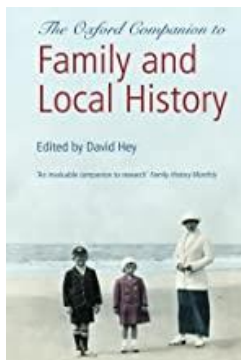
John Hare's book presents an up-beat picture of a local society in the period after the ravages of the Great Black Death. He stresses that his chosen period of c.1380 to c.1520 was “one of those periods in English history ... when growth and decline were to be immensely regional in character”, and presents Wiltshire as a county where both countrymen and townsmen adapted well to the opportunities which opened up after the disaster. Using a wide variety of manorial and non-manorial records, he argues that agriculture became more commercial and the cloth industry took off, producing a time of real prosperity for many local people. But it was not a period without problems, for the increasing dependence on the cloth trade put many into difficulties when exports fell.



D. Hey, *Family History and Local History in England*, (Longman, 1987), p/b, £19-45.

David Hey believed that family and local history were inextricably linked, and this rich and masterly book was written to encourage family historians to spread their wings and look at the history of the places where their ancestors lived. In particular, he wanted to introduce his readers to the economic and social history of local communities and the things which would have been of vital concern to their ancestors, such as occupations, housing and health.

The first illustration is a photograph of the author's own grandparents, but his subject is local communities spread across the whole of England and he takes readers through their history from the Middle Ages onwards, providing a wide-ranging history of English society and introducing many kinds of record which are available for research.



D. Hey, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Family and Local History*, (Oxford U.P., 2nd edn 2008), h/b, £9-75.

This is a one-volume encyclopaedia with entries written by teams of experts, and it is no surprise to find that the list of contributors (with brief biographies) is three pages long.

In this 2nd edition the alphabetical treatment of the subject has been bolstered by no fewer than 29 “thematic essays” which provide the reader with useful introductions to particular topics. These include “The Antiquarian Tradition” and “Population Levels and Trends” by David Hey himself, “Women Local and Family Historians” by Joan Evans, “Place-Names” by Margaret Gelling, “Landscape History: The Countryside” by Harold Fox, and “Folklore, Customs and Civic Ritual” by Charles Phythian-Adams.

The inclusion of these marks the largest single change to the 1st edition, which appeared in 1996 as *The Oxford Companion to Local and Family History*, but many other changes can be found, reflecting the growth of the subject and the growing amount of material available on the internet.

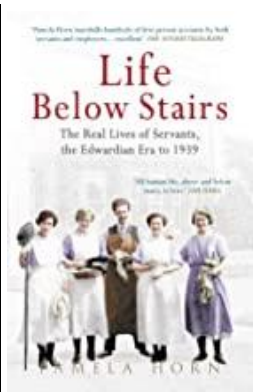
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E. Higgs, *Life, Death and Statistics. Civil Registration, Censuses and the Work of the General Register Office, 1835-1952*, (L.P.S., 2004), p/b, £8-10.

The General Register Office was the key institution producing demographic data in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century England and Wales. From its origins at the start of Victoria's reign down to the birth of the welfare state, it organised the census and used its results to produce statistics on population, occupational structure, and – in short – births, marriages and deaths.

Edward Higgs's book traces the history of the Office, showing how its work was influenced by the intellectual and political changes of the times, and, like all good histories of institutions, it also gives some fascinating insights into the people who worked for it.

A review will be found in *LPS 75*.



P. Horn, *Life Below Stairs in the twentieth century*, (Amberley Publishing, revised edn 2010), p/b, £5-90.

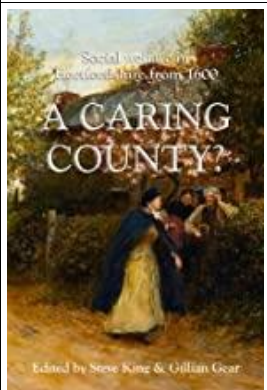
Pamela Horn is well known for her books on modern social history, and especially for her interest in those who were not the heads of households. “Life below stairs” is a subject of perennial fascination for modern readers looking back at a world where there were vast numbers of domestic servants, most of them women, and the phrase has provided an excellent title for her very readable book.

She chronicles the long decline of domestic service and the attempts made to reverse this, especially after World War One when both government and voluntary agencies became involved in training servants. But perhaps the greatest strength of her book lies in its use of the recollections of many people who actually did these jobs.



R. Jones & C. Dyer, eds, *Farmers, Consumers, Innovators. The world of Joan Thirsk*, (Univ. of Hertfordshire Press, 2017), p/b, £11-85.

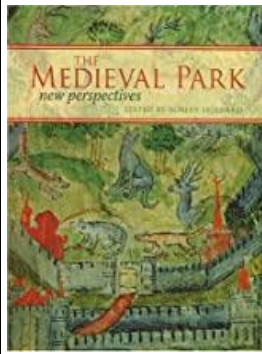
This book grew out of the conference held after the death of Joan Thirsk, the leading historian of English agriculture and rural society. The 13 distinguished contributors include Christopher Dyer, Jon Stobart, and our own David Hey, and their chapters provide many insights into rural society ranging from general surveys of English regions to studies of particular topics including spinning, the village shop, rural fashions, and that great staple of life in the North Midlands and North of England, the oatcake.



S. King & G. Gear, eds, *A Caring County? Social welfare in Hertfordshire from 1600*, (Univ. of Hertfordshire Press, 2013), p/b, £11-85.

How society looks after its members who are in need of help because of problems caused by poverty, sickness – both physical and mental – and old age is a subject of recurrent interest, and one which offers much scope to local historians.

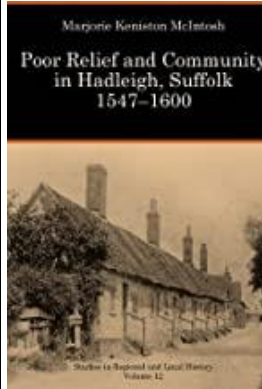
In this book Steven King and Gillian Gear have brought together the work of 11 contributors to take a wide-ranging look at the people and institutions of a single county. Topics include the care of the sick, pensions and parish workhouses in the time of the Old Poor Law, private asylums, certified industrial schools, and the last years of Captain Coram's famous Foundling Hospital, which moved to Berkhamsted in 1935.



R. Liddiard, ed., *The Medieval Park. New Perspectives*, (Windgather Press, 2007), p/b, £9-30.

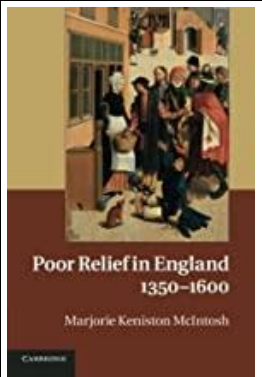
It is not very long since the study of medieval *deer* parks, as they used to be called, was quite a straightforward business. Armed with a set of tithe maps and an encouraging letter from L.M. Cantor, who had traced the boundaries of many of them himself, you walked down the high street of a Gloucestershire town and turned off to the left. After a couple of minutes, the countryside opened out ahead of you with a view of a long hedge on an earth bank, which turned out to be part of the boundary of a thirteenth-century deer park.

I can still recommend this activity, but the subject is now much more advanced and this book brings together the work of no fewer than 10 contributors. It divides neatly into two parts, the first comprising general studies, including S.A. Mileson on the sociology of park creation and Naomi Sykes on animal bones, and the second made up of case studies of particular counties, including Anne Rowe on Hertfordshire and Angus Winchester on Cumbria.



M.K. McIntosh, *Poor Relief and Community in Hadleigh, Suffolk, 1547-1600*, (Univ. of Hertfordshire Press, 2013), p/b, £12-30.

Hadleigh is a little town that stands several miles west of Ipswich and is one of the many places which used to be local centres for cloth-making. What marks it out as somewhere special is the elaborate and “unusually generous” system of relief which the leading inhabitants set up and ran to help their poorer neighbours who got into difficulties in the decades before the Poor Laws of 1598 and 1601. Richard Smith comments that, “McIntosh's ability to reconstruct the family circumstances and other demographic attributes of those receiving relief is unparalleled in any study of Tudor poor relief.”



M.K. McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England, 1350-1600*, (Cambridge U.P., 2013), p/b, £14-25.

This is a national study which makes a major contribution to the long-term history of provision for the poor, looking at hospitals and almshouses, the history of begging, and the improved organisation of parish fund-raising in the generations before the Poor Laws of 1598 and 1601. (There is a review in *LPS* 90, Spring 2013.)

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M.E. Mate, *Women in Medieval English Society*, (Cambridge U.P., 1999), p/b, £9-75.

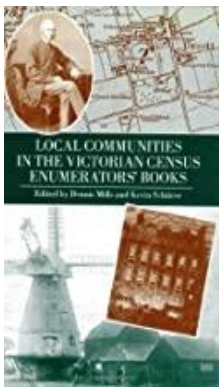
There are plenty of books on medieval women, but many restrict themselves to queens and saints. Mavis Mate provides us with something much better: the queens and the saints are still here, but the emphasis has moved strongly towards the lives and work of peasant and urban women whenever the evidence is good enough to allow this.

“Medieval” is defined in a long sense, the period covered being c.600 to 1530.



D. Mills, *Rural Community History from Trade Directories*, (L.P.S., 2000), p/b, £1-00.

Trade Directories are a neglected source which has many uses for studies of village communities between about 1840 and 1940. As David Hey said, people tend to dip into them for useful pieces of information, but this book shows how much they have to offer as part of wider studies, especially when used alongside census enumerators' books. Besides containing much about local trades and crafts, as would be expected, they shed much light on a world where many people had two or more occupations, putting together small things in order to make a living. And they can be used to trace the decline of the degree of self-sufficiency which villages once had, the interdependence between communities which had to share the services of craftsmen vital to all their economies, and the dependence of villages on the nearest town.



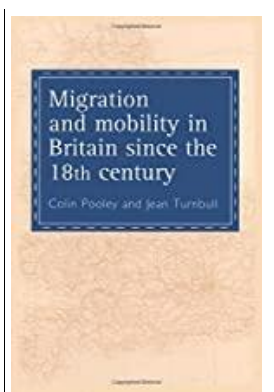
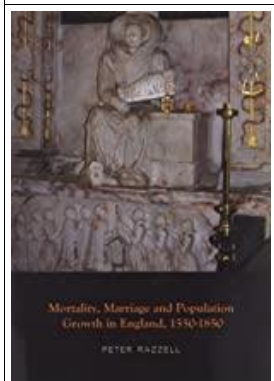
D. Mills & K. Schürer, eds, *Local communities in the Victorian census enumerators' books*, (Leopard's Head Press, 1996), p/b, £8-10.

This substantial book could be described as a kind of “best of LPS”, bringing together papers on census matters which had appeared in the *Local Population Studies* journal over the previous 25 years, each one of which was revised in the light of subsequent advances in knowledge. There are no fewer than 26 contributors, whose names will be familiar to many of our readers. The result is a paperback volume of 450 pages, packed with information and ideas.

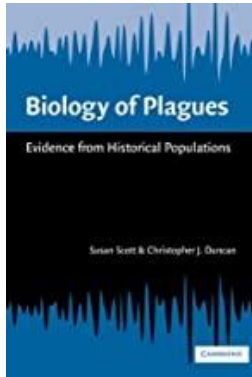
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Poole Borough Archives, *Poole Census 1574*, (Poole Borough Council, 1992), p/b, £4-20.

This is a fascinating example of a “local census”, published as a transcript made by I.K.D. Andrews. Nearly 1,400 people are listed, beginning with the names of the Poole men who had to defend Branksea Castle and the “masters Mariners and Seafaring Men”, with their ships, followed by what might be called the census proper, which proceeds household by household. Sadly, only the householders and some of their servants are named, not their wives and children. Why was it made? Ian Andrews raises the intriguing possibility that it is connected with a visit by Christopher Saxton, who began his survey of England that same year and came to Poole with a commission from Elizabeth I to make a “plot of the town”.

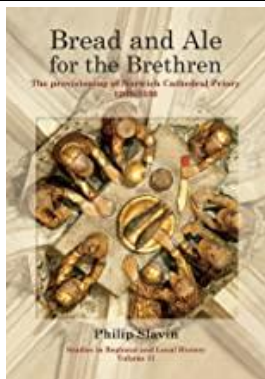
	<p>C.G. Pooley & J. Turnbull, <i>Migration and mobility in Britain since the eighteenth century</i>, (Routledge, 2003), p/b, £25-35.</p> <p>Colin Pooley and Jean Turnbull's major study of migration over the past 250 years is very much an LPSS kind of book, as it presents the results of a project which involved collecting information on where ancestors lived from members of 80 family history and genealogy societies in all parts of England, Scotland and Wales. This produced a sample of the life histories of some 16,000 people for detailed analysis, and the authors have presented their results in this 400-page book with numerous figures and tables providing plenty of statistical information, many maps, 40 pages of appendices, and a full bibliography. A number of diaries and life histories provided supplementary information, including people's accounts of <i>why</i> they were migrating.</p>
	<p>P. Razzell, <i>Mortality, Marriage and Population Growth in England, 1550-1850</i>, (Caliban Books, 2016), p/b, £7-00.</p> <p>Peter Razzell is well known for his radical views on the development of English population and society. In his new book, <i>Mortality, Marriage and Population Growth in England, 1550-1850</i>, he argues that the population growth of the eighteenth century was not driven by increased fertility, which was actually <i>falling</i> at the time, but by a decline in <i>mortality</i> after diseases had become less virulent and plague had disappeared. In an England which was free of continental Europe's recurrent wars and heavy taxes, population growth stimulated the development of capitalism and the changes which would bring about the Industrial Revolution.</p>
<p>Photo of dust-jacket</p>	<p>R. Schofield, <i>Parish Register Aggregate Analyses: the Population History of England database and introductory guide</i>, (including CD-Rom), (L.P.S., 1998), p/b, £4-20.</p> <p>E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield's famous <i>The population history of England, 1541-1871: a reconstruction</i> was based on the evidence of baptisms, burials and marriages recorded in the registers of 404 parishes. This little booklet provides an introduction to their database, with sections covering the arrangement of the data, its quality, and how it can be used. Parishes are listed both alphabetically and by counties, and are shown on a map. The accompanying disc includes the data collected from all 404 parishes.</p>
<p>Photo of dust-jacket</p>	<p>K. Schürer & T. Arkell, eds, <i>Surveying the People. The interpretation and use of document sources for the study of population in the later seventeenth century</i>, (Leopard's Head Press, 1992), p/b, £5-00.</p> <p>Someone once suggested that the <i>LPS</i> journal might publish a series of articles about important later seventeenth-century sources and the problems of their interpretation, and the idea grew into this study of the Hearth Tax, Compton Census, Poll Taxes and Marriage Duty assessments.</p>

Nine contributors discuss how the surviving records can be used to look at – amongst other things – the social structure of the City of London, the household composition of King's Lynn, the distribution of nonconformity in Devon, and regional variations in household structure. There are also critiques of the work of the great pioneer Gregory King.



S. Scott & C.J. Duncan, *Biology of Plagues: Evidence from Historical Populations*, (Cambridge U.P., 2001), h/b, £42-25.

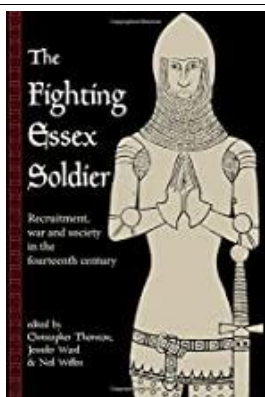
The authors challenge the identification of some of the fearful outbreaks of disease which struck between the Black Death in the fourteenth century and the “disappearance of plague” 300 years later as bubonic plague, using a combination of epidemiology, molecular biology and computer modelling. LPSS members will be particularly interested in their studies of events at Penrith in 1597-98, in the London plagues of the seventeenth century, at Eyam in 1665-66, and at Marseilles in 1720-22.



P. Slavin, *Bread and Ale for the Brethren. The Provisioning of Norwich Cathedral Priory, 1260-1536*, (Univ. of Hertfordshire Press, 2012), p/b, £13-95.

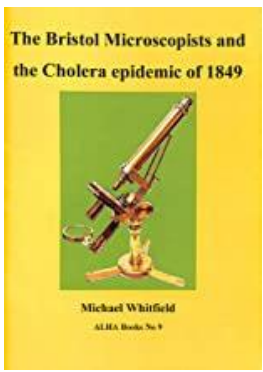
Many late-medieval lords began to rely on the market for their own supplies of food, but the monks of Norwich Cathedral Priory still relied on grain from their own estates, and Philip Slavin argues that in a world of harvest failures and volatile prices they were sensible to do this. Besides studying grain production and the market, his book shows what happened in their own mills, bakery and brewery to turn the raw products into the “bread and ale” of the title, and how meat, fish and other things were added to the monastic diet.

This book makes a valuable contribution to the history of diet, for it reveals that there were no fewer than 7,600 calories available for each monk per day. While some was given to servants and the poor, this figure adds to the growing evidence that some medieval monks were very well fed indeed – in fact, too well fed for the good of their own health.



C. Thornton, J. Ward & N. Wiffen, eds, *The Fighting Essex Soldier. Recruitment, war and society in the fourteenth century*, (Univ. of Hertfordshire Press, 2017), p/b, £13-25.

Christopher Thornton, Jennifer Ward and Neil Wiffen's book takes a wide-ranging look at its subject, using many kinds of document to explore the impact of the Hundred Years War on Essex, the parts played by the gentry and by members of gangs (not always different people at this period), the recruitment of soldiers and how they were shipped overseas, and how the Peasants' Revolt comes into this business.



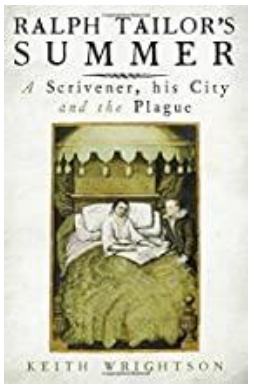
M. Whitfield, *The Bristol Microscopists and the Cholera Epidemic of 1849*, (Avon Local History & Archaeology Books No.9, 2011), p/b, £2-25.

Bristol was one of the crowded nineteenth-century cities which were at risk of cholera. Michael Whitfield's little book examines the scientific response to one of these outbreaks, as the members of the newly-formed Bristol Microscopical Society brought science to bear in order to combat the disease. This is No.9 in the series of "ALHA Books" published by Avon Local History & Archaeology, and covering the South Gloucestershire and North Somerset area.



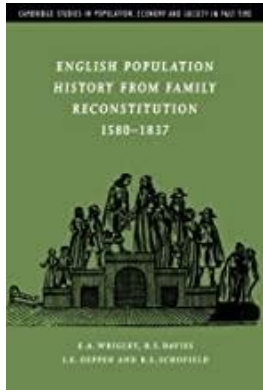
S. Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle under the English Poor Law, 1760-1834*, (Boydell & Brewer, 2011), h/b, £32-50.

Social welfare, increasingly extensive during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was by the first third of the nineteenth under considerable, and growing, pressure, during a "crisis" period when levels of poverty soared. This book examines the poor and their families during these final decades of the Old Poor Law. It takes as a case study the lived experience of poor families in two Bedfordshire communities, Campton and Shefford, and contrasts it with the perspectives of other participants in parish politics. Poor relief might have been relatively generous but it was not pervasive – child allowances, in particular, were restricted in duration and value – and it by no means approximated to the income of other labouring families. Poor families must either have had access to additional resources or else have led meagre lives.



K. Wrightson, *Ralph Taylor's Summer: A Scrivener, his City and the Plague*, (Yale U.P., 2011), h/b, £13-00.

The city is Newcastle-upon-Tyne, which in 1636 suffered a devastating outbreak of plague in which between 40 and 50 per cent of its population died. "Ralf Taylor, Notarie Publicke" was a young clerk who stayed there throughout the epidemic, and the many wills and other documents which he wrote out for its victims form an important part of Keith Wrightson's evidence, though he has also made use of many other sources. The story is presented as "microhistory", tracing local events in great detail in a way that prompts wide-ranging questions about sources and their interpretation, and the result is, in many ways, a book which might have been written for LPSS members. (There is a review in *LPS* 90.)



E.A. Wrigley, R.S. Davies, J.E. Oeppen & R.S. Schofield, *English population history from family reconstitution 1580-1837*, (Cambridge U.P., 1997), h/b, £42-25.

This is the companion volume to Wrigley and Schofield's famous *The population history of England, 1541-1871: a reconstruction*, and it applies the technique of family reconstitution to 26 parishes. Three long chapters present a wealth of information about the workings of nuptiality, mortality and fertility. Some findings confirm what was known before, such as the sharp fall in the age at marriage in the mid-eighteenth century, but a much more complex picture emerges. We can now see, for example, that adult mortality and infant and child mortality diverged sharply in the first half of the eighteenth century when the prospects of adult survival improved greatly while infant and child rates remained high.

Interestingly, the authors conclude that there was very little difference in our ancestors' demographic behaviour from one part of England to another: when it came to matters concerning birth, marriage and death, local cultural differences counted for little.