

## Reviews of books

Editors:

VANESSA HARDING and KATY LAYTON-JONES

School of History, Classics and Archaeology, Birkbeck College, London, WC1E 7HX

School of Historical Studies, University of Leicester, Leicester, LE1 7RH

**Matthew Davies and James A. Galloway (eds.),** *London and Beyond. Essays in Honour of Derek Keene.* London: University of London, School of Advanced Study, Institute of Historical Research, 2012. xviii + 373pp. 28 figures. 23 tables. Bibliography. £40.00.  
doi:10.1017/S0963926813000059

One of the pioneer volumes in the handsomely produced new Institute of Historical Research Conference series, this book serves as a fitting tribute to one of the most influential urban historians of our time. Derek Keene has pioneered new methodologies of topographical reconstruction; he has brought together the disciplines of history and archaeology; he has nurtured the Centre for Metropolitan History and encouraged practitioners to ask big questions and to make comparisons across conventional chronological boundaries.

Several essays build on the foundations of previous projects of which he was either the principal researcher or (in his capacity as director of CMH) a key facilitator, testimony to their rich 'after-life': their contribution cannot be measured within the conventional five-year cycles. Margaret Murphy draws on the methodology established by the 'Feeding the City' project to examine the impact of Dublin's demand for food and fuel on its hinterland. Richard Britnell uses Samantha Letters' *Gazetteer of Markets* to return to some of his earlier work on the chronology of market foundation and persistence, looking more closely at the period before 1200 and showing that many of the markets previously assigned to an unknown date before 1349 were most likely founded in the twelfth century. Some of the preoccupations of the 'Skilled Workforce' project emerge in Rob Iliffe's fascinating excavation of Samuel Hartlib's network among London's inventors and artisans, and in Anita McConnell's discussion of locational factors in the manufacture of scientific instruments. Vanessa Harding draws on the tenement histories originally created as part of the 'Social and Economic Study of Medieval London' to shed light on the characteristics of Cheapside households in one of the more obscure periods of London's social history, the early sixteenth century, to determine the degree to which the peculiar characteristics (low numbers of children, but large household groups with numerous servants and apprentices, and a tendency for accommodation to be shared between people of diverse ages and relationships) observable in the better-documented later seventeenth century were already apparent: to a considerable degree they were. It was also under Derek Keene's supervision that work began on the parish of St Botolph Aldgate,

the fruits of which are only now being realized in the 'People in Place' project. In their essay, Philip Baker and Mark Merry acknowledge their debt to one of Derek's scintillating but regrettably unpublished papers. By a meticulous analysis of the churchwardens' expenditures on the poor in the seventeenth century they are able to shed much light on the social dynamics of the parish and the life experiences of the poor. It is a piece rich in insights (for example on the relationship between pauper apprenticeship and adoption practices), though some of the findings, for example on the lack of gender distinctions among the recipients of relief, need to be tempered by the recognition that only a partial picture can be obtained through the churchwardens' expenditures: the overseers (whose accounts do not survive) probably accounted for just as much spending, and there would have been many more pensioners, and possibly many more women among the recipients.

Several of the essays explore the relationship between urban communities and the state. Matthew Frank Stevens shows the marked degree to which the Court of Common Pleas was a Londoners' court in the fifteenth century, thereby concurring with Derek Keene's view that state institutions in England were shaped by Londoners' concerns: state institutions had a secondary role in a metropolis whose primary function was the generation of wealth. Matthew Davies takes a *longue durée* approach to the complex relationship between the city of London, the crown and the guilds, and shows that for all the tensions, there was more accommodation than in many continental cities. Maarten Prak, in a characteristically ambitious and wide-ranging contribution, calls into question some of assumptions both about the prevalence of oligarchy in European towns (there was more popular engagement, whether through elections or petitioning) and about the greater effectiveness of centralized polities in mobilizing resources: he sets out a more complex model in which the nature of the connections between local politics and the state apparatus are a key element. The two nineteenth-century contributions (by Richard Dennis in a case-study of Victorian urban improvement, and Carlos López Galviz comparing transport planning in Paris and London) perhaps fit less easily with the volume as a whole, but they both show the ways in which the state's involvement with metropolitan concerns was shaped by ideological agendas that might conflict with local interests.

Derek's metropolitan history is a house with many mansions. The collection is a fitting tribute to that eclecticism. His sensitivity to archaeological evidence and his concern to pay proper attention to material objects are evident in the contributions respectively of Chris Dyer (which deploys archaeological finds and much else to show the depth of peasant engagement with wider markets) and Peter Stabel (which discusses the relative lack of oriental goods in the fifteenth-century Netherlands, incidentally warning us against the uncritical use of visual evidence). Derek Keene's interest in exchanges between England and her continental neighbours is reflected in Erik Spindler's dissection of what he calls the 'portable' communities of alien merchant and seamen, whose presence in a particular location might be transitory, but who nevertheless exhibited strong signs of communal identification. Catherine Wright's meticulous essay investigates the charitable activities of the Dutch community in the later seventeenth century, locating it within what is known of the wider metropolitan culture of charity; although not its primary purpose, there are some incidentally fascinating sidelights on alien assimilation.

Many of the essays, it will be evident, share Derek's commitment to comparisons between cities or across conventional chronological boundaries. But not all of them do, and that is as it should be. The variety of approaches evident in the essays reminds us that the work of comparison must build on detailed empirical investigation with terms, categories and methodologies precisely defined, and in this respect the collection is exemplary.

**Ian W. Archer**

Keble College, Oxford

**Ben Dodds and Christian D. Liddy (eds.)**, *Commercial Activity, Markets and Entrepreneurs in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Richard Britnell*. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2011. xv + 256pp. 1 plate. 7 figures. 13 tables. Index (of people and places). Bibliography (of the writings of Richard Britnell). £55.00.

doi:10.1017/S0963926813000102

This festschrift in honour of Richard Britnell's distinguished career in the social and economic history of pre-modern Britain begins with 'An appreciation' contextualizing Britnell's career within an evolving academia, and providing an historiographical framework for the volume. Not surprisingly, in light of this sensitive beginning, this festschrift is more successful than many in presenting a thematically cohesive body of research, most of which will be of interest to the historian of small towns and their rural hinterlands. In part, this cohesion is achieved because many of the essays in the volume are, or contain significant elements of, revisionist writings regarding areas of social and economic history addressed in Britnell's own work. For example John Hatcher's opening chapter, 'Unreal wages' reassesses and revises downward both the extent to which the English peasantry would, in reality, have benefited from increased wages of the post-plague era, and the supposed 'early modern plunge' (p. 23) in wages and standards of living. This chapter, one suspects, will become standard reading for students of the late medieval peasant economy. John Langdon's succeeding contribution, 'Minimum wages and unemployment rates in medieval England', while a narrow case-study, conveys revisionist elements in its attempt to establish 'a basal or lowest wage' (p. 25) for skilled and unskilled workers, including occasional labour and 'reserve' labour of women and youths.

The next two chapters – Derek Keene, 'Crisis management in London's food supply, 1250–1500'; John Lee, 'Grain shortages in late medieval towns' – deal with civic responses to late medieval and early modern grain shortages. Keene's discussion is wide-ranging and authoritative, offering a new series of wheat prices for London and drawing on comparable crises/responses abroad, while Lee's essay is a case-study revisiting the crisis-induced 1520 Coventry census of residents and food supplies. Both essays suggest that civic authorities felt a growing need to be seen to respond to food shortages. Similarly, John Davis' essay, 'Market regulation in fifteenth-century England', comprises a single-document study regarding 'assizes' of sixteen urban trades, and suggests a 'symbiotic and hybrid' (p. 104), royal and local, process leading to trade legislation. Mark Bailey's