

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

FACULTY OF HISTORY



West Road
Cambridge
CB3 9EF
Tel: (+44) 01223 335340
Fax: (+44) 01223 335968
<http://www.hist.cam.ac.uk/>

Quantitative History Seminar, Lent Term 2012
Supported by the Centre for History and Economics

Seminars will take place in room 101 in the Sir William Hardy Building, Dept of Geography starting at 12.45 and end at 2pm. Sandwiches and fruit will be available from 12.30

23rd January

Dr. Romola Davenport, University of Cambridge

***The transformation of the urban epidemiological regime in England,
1750-1850***

Early modern cities have been characterized as urban graveyards, incapable of maintaining their populations without a constant influx of immigrants. Urban mortality rates improved dramatically in England between 1750 and 1820, and urban centres became capable of self-sustaining growth, although mortality remained higher than rural areas until the early twentieth century. This paper will examine the first stage of the transformation of the urban mortality regime, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, using evidence from the workhouse and burial records of the large London parish of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. The workhouse admission and discharge registers allow the calculation of mortality rates using event history analysis, and provide evidence of dramatic improvements in survival rates amongst the metropolitan poor. Taken with existing evidence from Quaker family reconstitutions, the London Bills of Mortality, and the London Foundling Hospital, these workhouse data indicate that improvements in urban mortality extended across the social scale, and affected a wide range of age groups. The workhouse records have been linked to the parochial burial books, permitting examination of changes in recorded causes of death, and comparison with trends outside the workhouse.

12th March

Dr. Samantha Williams, University of Cambridge

How generous was the old poor law?

Historians have attempted to estimate the generosity or otherwise of the old poor law during the long eighteenth century. Between 1650 and 1780 the picture, for the south and east at least, has been fairly optimistic; in contrast, between 1780 and 1834 there was a 'crisis' in parish provision. This paper will assess the relative generosity of relief during this crisis in terms of the familial characteristics of paupers and the value of weekly pensions, occasional cash handouts, and additional extras in kind in two Bedfordshire communities.

Convenors: Cristiano Ristuccia, car37@cam.ac.uk; Richard Smith, rms20@cam.ac.uk;
Leigh Shaw-Taylor, lmws2@cam.ac.uk