



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Faculty of History

Medieval Economic and Social History Seminar,

The seminar will meet in the Walters Room, Selwyn College, at 5 p.m. on the following Wednesdays. All welcome.

29 January 2020

Spike Gibbs (LSE) and Jordan Claridge (LSE)

Waifs and strays: property rights and the redistribution of (un)wanted livestock in late medieval England

This paper contributes to debates concerning lord-tenant relations in late medieval England. Using qualitative and quantitative evidence gathered from court rolls and manorial accounts, we explore the rights of lords to arrest, impound, and sometimes claim stray livestock. As wandering animals could cause significant damage to a village's farmland, we argue that by bearing the costs of managing strays, lords provided a social benefit for tenants. Moreover, the 'strays system' provided a channel by which animals could be redistributed among the peasantry, and thus facilitated the exchange of livestock within the pastoral economy. Our findings support a narrative of a more positive relationship between lords and tenants characterized by cooperation over conflict, with seigniorial institutions helping to improve tenants' livelihoods.

12 February 2020

Daniel Curtis (Rotterdam)

From one mortality regime to another? mortality crises in late-medieval Haarlem, Holland, in perspective

This paper employs a large database of 10,360 deaths taken from registrations of graves dug and church bells tolled at Haarlem between the years 1412 to 1547 (the 'klok en graf') – one of the largest samples and longest series ever produced for mortality evidence in medieval Holland. The data reveals not one overarching 'medieval mortality regime' but distinct changes between fewer but severe spikes in the first half of the fifteenth century, and higher frequency of smaller spikes later on – especially in the period 1480-1530 – with a dampening down of mortality activity after 1530. A highly comparable early modern source has also allowed the mortality findings to be placed in a broader temporal perspective leading to the conclusion that mortality crises in the late Middle Ages in Haarlem were more severe than those seen in the seventeenth century.



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26 February 2020

Rhiannon Sandy (Swansea)

If you've got the money, I've got the time: reconsidering the cost of apprenticeship in medieval England

Apprenticeship indentures record the agreement made between a master and an apprentice, including the obligations of both parties. The apprentice is prohibited from certain behaviours, whereas the master usually undertakes to provide the apprentice with clothing, food, bedding and other items for all or part of the term of the apprenticeship. The level of provision the master is to provide changes over time, but what remains certain is that apprentices did not constitute a cheap source of labour. This paper will explore what apprenticeship indentures can reveal about labour conditions in fourteenth and fifteenth-century England, and the costs involved in taking on an apprentice.

Convener: Chris Briggs (cdb23@cam.ac.uk). The support of the Trevelyan Fund (Faculty of History) is gratefully acknowledged.

West Road
Cambridge CB3 9EF

Tel: +44 (0) 1223 335340
Email: mjw205@cam.ac.uk
www.hist.cam.ac.uk