
CMH NEWS

The Newsletter of the Centre for Metropolitan History

Institute of Historical Research, University of London

No. 3 August 1993

This is the third of our annual newsletters, designed to keep you up to date with the Centre's activities between our Annual Reports, which appear in January.

The Centre has had a difficult year so far, suffering four successive burglaries. The theft of computer equipment, the inevitable slowness of the insurance claims and replacement delivery times, and then the further theft of some of the replaced items has led to infuriating delays in finishing work on schedule. Extra locks and security devices seem to have no effect. We have accepted the University's offer of safer accommodation within Senate House and shall move in as soon as possible. Mail addressed via the Institute will find us, but from 1 October 1993 the official address will be: Centre for Metropolitan History, 3rd Floor, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU.

NEWS OF PROJECTS

Feeding the City

After an intensive spell of archive work, involving visits to castles, cathedrals, schools and colleges as well as local authority record offices, Jim Galloway and Margaret Murphy are editing their database and analysing their material on the period after the Black Death. The monograph they wrote with Bruce Campbell and Derek Keene, *A Medieval Capital and its Grain Supply: Agrarian Production and Distribution in the London Region c.1300* was published this summer, as was their *Kentish Domesne Accounts up to 1350: a Catalogue* (edited with Olwen Myhill). Details of both publications are enclosed with this newsletter.

Metropolitan London in the 1690s

Janet Barnes and Craig Spence are preparing an atlas of London in the 1690s using the data collected for this project. The atlas will contain maps and text illustrating the city's infrastructure, social and economic structure, land use and cultural geography at that period, and is to be published in 1994 by the London Topographical Society with Scholar Press. Craig Spence gave a paper on computer mapping at the History and Computing conference at York University earlier this year, and he and Janet presented a joint paper to the Institute's Pre-industrial England seminar in May.

Bibliography of London History to 1939

The home straight is in sight for the Bibliography. Camera-ready copy is due at the publishers in December, and the finishing touches are being put to

the editing before the mammoth task of indexing really begins. We have been lucky enough to obtain a little assistance towards publishing costs from the Corporation of London and the Scouloudi Foundation. We hope this will help to keep the sale price at a reasonable level. Library Association Publishing is to publish the volume early in 1994. The public access database copy is still available in our office and is used frequently. Recent enquiries have ranged from the subject of commercial travellers in London, via food in the early modern period, to air raids in the First World War. Once the bibliography is published, Heather Creaton hopes to start work on a new one covering London 1939-45.

Skilled Workforce

The team has been involved in a busy schedule of research and writing, and contributing papers to various seminars and conferences associated with the project's wider research and funding network, the Achievement Project. A collaborative series of seminars at the Museum of London has been looking at the surviving artefactual remains of the diverse products of the metropolitan skilled workforce. This proved very popular, bringing together historians, museum curators and archaeologists in a way that has provided new insights and approaches to the historical study of material culture. We have also drawn up a revised outline of the book which will be the final product of the project, due to come to fruition at the end of next year. Research has continued into various innovating sectors of metropolitan economy and society, including dyeing and cloth finishing, scientific instruments and shipbuilding. The team is preparing contributions on the role of educational institutions in the metropolis to the Achievement Project network meeting to be held in Baltimore this October. We have also held a series of informal seminars at the CMH with the postgraduate bursarians attached to the project.

David Ormrod has been a Visiting Fellow at the Institute this year and has been working closely with this project. He has contributed in various ways to the activities and meetings of the Centre.

Scientific Instrument Makers' Workshops

Anita McConnell started work in January on her study of the organisation and location of scientific instrument makers' workshops from 1780-1820. She has been using a wide variety of sources, including some from abroad, and has found much valuable and hitherto unused material. Several of the firms were supplying

large and complex astronomical instruments to observatories all over Europe, necessitating elaborate packing and travel arrangements.

NEW VENTURES

Meetings and discussions have begun concerning an ambitious new project which we hope to establish at the Centre. It would examine **mortality and disease in the metropolis** over the period 1850-1920. Having established the trends, the aim is to explore the connections between them and local conditions in various parts of the city. Environmental and social conditions, infrastructure and sanitation, health care provision, standards of living, legislation, and the interest and effectiveness of local power structures are all factors to be considered. In common with the country at large, and with many cities in Europe and North America, London experienced a dramatic fall in mortality and morbidity rates at this time. The reasons are still far from clear, and this project would set out to investigate them.

We had hoped by now to be well under way with our planned project on **London Cases in the Court of Exchequer**, sampling eighteenth-century Exchequer records for their London commercial content. Sadly, in spite of every effort, we were unable to raise funding for this promising study. Tony Trowles is preparing an article describing the source and its uses for London history based on the short pilot study he was able to make. We hope this will draw the attention of social and economic historians (and others) to this rich collection of little-used material.

A small **multi-media database** is being established as a means of recording the proceedings of the seminars being held at the Museum of London as part of the Skilled Workforce project. Containing text and images of artefacts, documents and maps it is hoped that in the longer term the database will be developed as a teaching and research tool for London history.

FORMER STAFF AND PROJECTS

Bernard Attard, formerly of the stock jobbers' project, is now a lecturer in Economic History at the University of New England, Armidale, Australia. He is coming to London for two months from December, and will be based at the CMH as a visiting scholar.

Tony Trowles, who worked for four years on the London bibliography project, is now Assistant Librarian at Westminster Abbey.

Justin Champion, now teaching at Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, has been visiting us frequently to finalise publishing details of *Epidemic Disease in London*.

Jon Lawrence, formerly of the Counting House to Office project has recently been appointed Lecturer in the History Department at Liverpool University.

CONFERENCES

Our joint conference (with Spencer House and the Royal Academy) on 'The Aristocratic Town House in

London' was held in July and proved a great success. There was considerable competition for the limited number of places available and many people had to be disappointed. We hope that a selection of the papers will be published in due course.

Our planned joint conference on 'London and the Regions' (with the Conference of Regional and Local Historians), scheduled for September, has unfortunately had to be cancelled through lack of support. This is disappointing as it had been planned well ahead and publicised as widely as possible. We do not want to lose the promised papers, and have asked the speakers to consider giving them at seminars or submitting them to the *London Journal* instead.

The Centre is collaborating with the British Institute in Paris, the Université Paris-Sorbonne and the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris in arranging a symposium of London and Paris. It will take place in Paris on 10-11 December 1993. The aim is to survey the current state of knowledge about the two cities over a period of two thousand years, to promote thinking about their future in the context of long-term development, and to enable historians and other scholars in each city to get to know their counterparts. A small number of places will be open to subscribers, please contact us if you are interested.

VISITORS

Many visitors have called at the Centre recently, including historians from the Netherlands, Hungary, Portugal and Canada, as well as plenty from nearer home. Among our visitors this spring was a Russian librarian interested in setting up a local history database for St Petersburg.

We are used to receiving postal enquiries at the CMH but a recent batch came as a novelty to us all - an entire class of primary school children wrote to Derek Keene to tell him about some pots and bones their teacher had dug up in her cellar, and to ask him to date them! The Centre's fame must be spreading...

SEMINARS

The spring term seminars took as their theme 'the art market' and 'social policy', and were very successful. A programme for the next academic session is enclosed with this mailing.

PUBLICATIONS

We have added several titles to our list of publications recently, order forms for some are enclosed and a fuller list appears in our yellow information leaflet.

MAILING LIST

Subscription renewals for the academic year 1993-4 are due in October. A form is enclosed and we hope that you will wish to stay in touch with us over the next year.