

The Landscape of Occupations in Pre-Industrial Britain and Continental Europe, c.1400-1750

Call for Papers



**Two-day workshop
8th — 9th April 2014**

**University of Exeter
Streatham Campus**

**Hosted by:
The Centre for Medical
History,
University of Exeter**

**Please send abstracts of
no more than 300 words
via email to Justin Colson
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by 2nd December 2013**



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Occupational identity and the economic activity of individuals have seen growing attention from historians and historical geographers over the past thirty or forty years. While earlier generations of historians, including Postan and Tawney, addressed occupational structure as an aspect of the general structure of agricultural and industrial production, researchers are increasingly focusing upon the question of economic activity from the perspective of the individual. It is increasingly recognized that occupational identity was neither definite, nor fixed. How did households combine economic strategies in response to opportunities, challenges, and natural cycles? How did economic and occupational identity change throughout an individual's lifecycle? Indeed, how did occupational identity actually reflect economic activity?

Large research projects as well as individual researchers are making important contributions to these debates from macro and micro perspectives, ranging from large scale demographic work to detailed prosopography. Exeter's 'Medical World of Early Modern England, Wales and Ireland' is assembling ever greater contextual detail around the lives of practitioners of medical occupations, including much evidence of shifting identity and surprising diversity of activity. Many other projects are constantly adding to this complementary range of data, but only when both micro and macro research is brought together can the questions surrounding early modern occupational identity be addressed.

This two-day workshop is designed to bring together papers addressing any of the following four themes:

Individuals, Economic Activity, and Developments in the Early Modern Economy

- How can demographic data capture the complexity of occupations?
 - Can we see realistic reflection of occupation, or a mark of status or aspiration?
- Occupational specialisation is often seen as characteristic of the early modern economy, but is this reflected in occupational labels and sources available to us?
- Historians also see the early modern economy as characterised the growing scale of businesses and workshops. How can this be reconciled with growing specialisation?

Gender and Occupation

- How can female economic activity be captured in the pre-modern period?
- How can historians address the varied and variable economic strategies employed by medieval and early modern households when demographic sources concentrate on male occupations?

Guilds, Colleges and Occupational Identity

- It is often argued that in the early modern period, traditional guild-based identities became ceased to reflect the actual economic activities of individuals
 - Can membership of guilds and professional bodies, such as the medical colleges, accurately reflect the practice of that individual?

Rural and Urban Economic Lives

- Economic developments, such as specialisation and professionalization, have traditionally been associated with the early modern period are associated with cities and urban growth, but how did new occupations interact with rural contexts?
- How did the growth of rural industries, such as the new draperies, affect relationships of wealth and development between towns and the countryside?

Sessions will be structured around pre-circulated papers, and presentations of five minutes, to allow maximum time for discussion.