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This is a study of rural social structure in the English county of Essex between 1350 and 1525. It seeks to understand how, in the population collapse after the Black Death (1348–1349), a particular economic environment affected ordinary people's lives in the areas of migration, marriage and employment, and also contributed to patterns of religious nonconformity, agrarian riots and unrest, and even rural housing. The period under scrutiny is often seen as a transitional era between 'medieval' and 'early-modern' England, but in the light of recent advances in English historical demography this study suggests that there was more continuity than change in some critically important aspects of social structure in the region in question. Among the most important contributions of *A rural society after the Black Death* are its use of an unprecedentedly wide range of original manuscript records (estate and manorial records, taxation and criminal-court records, royal tenorial records, and the records of church courts, wills etc.) and its application of current quantitative and comparative demographic methods.

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*A rural society
after the Black Death*

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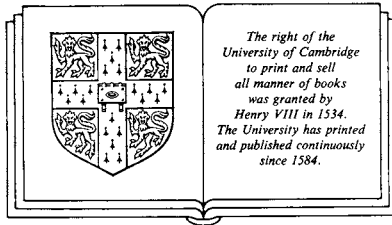
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A rural society after the Black Death: Essex 1350–1525

L. R. POOS

*Associate Professor in the Department of History,
The Catholic University of America,
Washington DC*



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Preface

The work represented in this book has spanned many years and two hemispheres, and my indebtedness for help and advice is correspondingly wide-ranging. Two institutions have provided complementary, equally congenial atmospheres to work in. My friends at the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure laid the foundations for my understanding of social-science history and unfailingly welcome my annual return. My students and colleagues at The Catholic University of America continue to point out that I always have more to learn.

I owe even greater debts to many individuals who have helped my Essex research along. Richard Smith first started me out on this path, and spent much time commenting on my research and text. Roger Schofield's keen editorial scrutiny likewise helped me avoid running aground upon many shoals. The book would have been less than it is without information and specialist insights generously provided by Jeremy Boulton, Bruce Campbell, Richard Helmholz, Anne Hudson, Ray Powell, Andrew Prescott, Steve Rappaport, Michael Sheehan, David Souden and M. C. Wadhams. The text has greatly benefited from close reading and commentary by Richard Britnell, Elaine Clark, Barrie Dobson, Christopher Dyer, Michael Gervers, Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran, Jon Wakelyn and Richard Wall. My mistakes remain my own.

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ries I have haunted, in particular the Essex Record Office, the Public Record Office, Westminster Abbey, and New College, Oxford.

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Abbreviations

BL	British Library, London
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
CALC	Cathedral Archives and Library, Canterbury
CCR	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls</i>
CPR	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i>
ERO	Essex Record Office, Chelmsford
GL	Guildhall Library, London
GLRO	Greater London Record Office
JRL	Joseph Regenstein Library, Chicago
LAO	Lincolnshire Archives Office, Lincoln
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library
NCO	New College, Oxford
PRO	Public Record Office, London
SJCC	St John's College, Cambridge
SRO	Suffolk Record Office
UCO	University College, Oxford
VCH	<i>Victoria County History</i>
WAM	Westminster Abbey Muniments
WRO	Wiltshire Record Office, Trowbridge