GEOGRAPHIES OF ENGLAND

To what extent has a North–South divide been a structural feature of England’s geography during the last millennium and to what extent has it been especially associated with, and recognised during, particular periods in the past? These are the central questions addressed in Geographies of England, a pioneering exploration of the history of a fundamentally geographical concept. Six essays treating different historical periods – 1971–2000, 1918–1971, 1830–1918, 1750–1830, 1550–1750 and 1066–1550 – are integrated by their common concern with two geographical questions: first, to what extent is it possible for us today, as observers, to detect with historical hindsight a material or tangible North–South divide in England in those periods in terms of regional differences in, for example, population, economy, society and culture; and, secondly, how important was the idea of such a divide to the geographical imaginations of contemporaries, of the actors, in those periods? A concluding essay by the editors reviews the social construction of England’s geography and history and the significance of the North–South divide as a cultural metaphor. Geographies of England provides a learned and sustained examination of a theme of perennial interest. It will appeal to geographers, historians, sociologists, political scientists and all those seeking to understand the cultural composition of England today.

ALAN R. H. BAKER is a Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, General Editor of Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography, and the author of numerous books and articles on historical geography, most recently Geography and History: Bridging the Divide (Cambridge, 2003).

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GEOGRAPHIES OF ENGLAND

The North–South Divide, Material and Imagined

Edited by

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The specific origin of this book lies in the fact that one of us was struck some years ago by the broad similarity between the geographical distribution of wealth in England in the early-fourteenth century and that in the late-twentieth century. Developments in between, including the Industrial Revolution, appeared puzzlingly not to have upset that fundamental pattern. More generally, the concept of a North–South divide has featured hugely in the political and popular imagination but hardly at all in studies of the historical geography of England. This book seeks to address that puzzle and to correct that neglect. We are grateful to the individual authors for participating in a workshop to discuss the issues and for engaging in this collective project. The final stages of this book have benefited immensely from the meticulous copy-editing of Jacqueline French, whose help we have warmly appreciated.

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