The Politics of Commonwealth
Citizens and Freemen in Early Modern England

The Politics of Commonwealth offers a major reinterpretation of urban political culture in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Examining what it meant to be a freeman and citizen in early modern England, it also shows the increasingly pivotal place of cities and boroughs within the national polity. It considers the practices that constituted urban citizenship as well as its impact on the economic, patriarchal, and religious life of towns and the larger commonwealth. The author recovers the language and concepts used at the time, whether by eminent citizens or more humble tradesmen and craftsmen. Unprecedented in terms of the range of its sources and freshness of its approach, the book reveals a dimension of early modern culture that has major implications for how we understand the English state, economy, and ‘public sphere’; the political upheavals of the mid-seventeenth century; and popular political participation more generally.

Phil Withington is Lecturer in Cultural History at the University of Aberdeen. He is the co-editor of Communities in Early Modern England (2000).
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The Politics of Commonwealth

*Citizens and Freemen in Early Modern England*

Phil Withington

*University of Aberdeen*
For Cathy and Ellen
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All dates and spellings have been modernised.