

Famine and Scarcity in Late Medieval and Early Modern England

Surveying government and crowd responses ranging from the late middle ages through to the early modern era, Buchanan Sharp's illuminating study examines how the English government responded to one of the most intractable problems of the period: famine and scarcity. The book provides a comprehensive account of famine relief in the late middle ages and evaluates the extent to which traditional market regulations enforced by thirteenth century kings helped shape future responses to famine and scarcity in the sixteenth century. Analyzing some of the oldest surviving archival evidence of public response to famine, Sharp reveals that food riots in England occurred as early as 1347, almost two centuries earlier than was previously thought. Charting the policies, public reactions, and royal regulations to grain shortage, Sharp provides a fascinating contribution to our understanding of the social, economic, cultural, and political make-up of medieval and early modern England.

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Famine and Scarcity in Late Medieval and Early Modern England

The Regulation of Grain Marketing, 1256–1631

Buchanan Sharp



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To the Memory of Thomas Garden Barnes 1930–2010
Teacher, Mentor, and Dear Friend

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Acknowledgments

This book has been a long time in the making due to both the vicissitudes of life and my inability to say no when called upon by colleagues to take on all too many burdensome administrative tasks. It was only in 2010, when I retired after forty years of teaching at the University of California, Santa Cruz, that I had the time to try and make sense of a mountainous collection of research notes accumulated over many years. In writing a book that explores a topic stretching across the period 1256–1631 and beyond, I am well aware of both my temerity and my limitations. I am not a medievalist but an early modernist, although I have always had a deep interest in the middle ages. Moreover, I have never been comfortable with traditional historical periodization of the past, especially the dividing line at the date 1485 that demarks the late medieval period from the early modern in English history. The questions that interest me arise from my early modern focus on social policy and popular protest. My aim in this book is to push back into the late medieval period issues about the regulation of grain marketing that have long interested early modernists. By coming at the medieval period from a different perspective, I believe that I address important questions rarely touched upon by medievalists.

My thanks to Palgrave Macmillan for permission to reuse in Chapter 3 material that I first published in a chapter “The Food Riots of 1347 and the Medieval Moral Economy” in A. Randall and A. Charlesworth (eds.), *Moral Economy and Popular Protest: Crowds, Conflict and Authority* (Macmillan Press Ltd., 2000). My thanks also to Wiley for permission to reuse in Chapter 2 an article “Royal Paternalism and the Moral Economy in the Reign of Edward II: the Response to the Great Famine” that I first published in the *Economic History Review* 66 no. 2 (2013).

Along the way I have incurred a number of other debts. I am grateful to Steve Hindle who read the whole manuscript and provided much sage advice and to Bruce Campbell for his trenchant response to sections of the manuscript. I also want to thank the anonymous Cambridge University readers for their thorough and helpful comments.

Acknowledgments

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Finally, my greatest debt of all is to the late Thomas Garden Barnes to whose memory I have dedicated this book.

In 1961, I was an undergraduate majoring in history at the University of California, Berkeley, when Tom Barnes became my academic advisor. Little did I know then that my first meeting with Tom was the beginning of a transformation of my life. I was eighteen at the time, a recent immigrant from Scotland, and unclear what my academic goals were. Tom took me under his wing, saw things in me I did not see myself, and provided support and encouragement over the next forty-nine years until his death in 2010. Above all, he taught me paleography, diplomatic and how to do historical research, including the navigation of the medieval and early modern archives in the Public Record Office, now The National Archives. For that and much else, including numerous fishing trips west of the Golden Gate, I remain eternally grateful.

Abbreviations

<i>A Medieval Capital</i>	B. M. S. Campbell, J. A. Galloway, D. Keene, and M. Murphy, <i>A Medieval Capital and Its Grain Supply: Agrarian Production and Distribution in the London Region c.1300</i> (Historical Geography Research Series no. 39, 1993).
<i>APC</i>	<i>Acts of the Privy Council of England</i> , 46 vols. (London: HMSO, 1890–1964).
<i>Book of Orders</i> 1587	<i>Orders devised by the especiall commandement of the Queenes Maiestie for the reliefe and stay of the present dearth of Graine within the Realme</i> , 1586/87.
<i>Book of Orders</i> 1594	<i>The renewing of certaine Orders devised by the speciall commandement of the Queenes Maiestie, for the reliefe and stay of the present dearth of Graine within the Realme: in the yeere of our Lord</i> 1586, 1594.
<i>Book of Orders</i> 1595	<i>A New Charge given by the Queenes commandement, to all Justices of Peace, and all Maiors, Shiriffes, and all principall Officers of Cities, Boroughs, and Townes corporate, for execution of sundry orders published the last yeere for staie of dearth of Graine</i> , 1595.
<i>Book of Orders</i> 1600	<i>Speciall Orders and directions By the Queenes Maiesties commandement, to all Justices of Peace, and all Maiors, Shiriffes, and all principall Officers of Cities, Boroughs, and Townes corporate, for stay and redresse of dearthe of Graine</i> , 1600.
<i>Book of Orders</i> 1608	<i>Orders Appointed by his Maiestie to be straightly observed for the preventing and remedying of the dearth of Graine and other Victuall</i> , 1608.

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<i>Book of Orders</i> 1622	<i>Orders Appointed by his Maiestie to be straightly observed, for the preventing and remedying of the dearth of Graine and other Victuall</i> , 1622.
<i>Book of Orders</i> 1630	<i>Orders Appointed by his Maiestie to be straightly observed, for the preventing and remedying of the dearth of Graine and Victuall</i> , 1630.
CCR	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls</i> , 46 vols. (London: HMSO, 1892–1963).
CFR	<i>Calendar of Fine Rolls</i> , 22 vols. (London: HMSO, 1911–63).
<i>Chronica Majora</i>	H. R. Luard, (ed.), <i>Matthaei Parisiensis, monachi sancti Albani, chronica majora</i> , 7 vols. (London: Rolls series, 1872–83).
CIM	<i>Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous</i> , 8 vols. (London: HMSO, 1916–68 and Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003).
CLB	R. R. Sharpe, (ed.), <i>Calendar of the Letter-Books of the City of London 1275–1509</i> , 12 vols. (London: Francis, 1899–1912).
CPR	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i> , 54 vols. (London: HMSO, 1891–1916).
<i>Foedera</i>	<i>Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae, etc.</i> , 4 vols. (London: Record Commission, 1816–69).
LP	<i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII</i> , 23 vols. (London: HMSO, 1862–1932).
<i>Parl. Rolls</i>	C. Given-Wilson, P. Brand, S. Phillips, M. Ormrod, G. Martin, A. Curry, and R. Horrox, (eds.), <i>Parliament Rolls of Medieval England</i> , www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?pubid=1241 .
SR	<i>Statutes of the Realm</i> , 11 vols. (London: Record Commission, 1810–28).
TNA	The National Archives, London.