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Introduction

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THE HISTORY of British towns[1] is a very distinctive one in a European –
even in a world – perspective. Until the eighteenth century most of them
were small by international standards, yet in the nineteenth century
Britain became the first country in the world to urbanise, that is, to have more
than half of its population living in towns. The divide is neatly measured by the
1851 census, which showed (depending on urban definitions and boundaries)
about 54 per cent of English and Welsh people, and 52 per cent of Scots, town
dwellers. No one, therefore, questions the importance of British towns and
urbanisation in the last two centuries, and it is indeed possible to write British
history since 1850 from an urban point of view.[2] For the pre-industrial period the
subject has understandably seemed less important, since though southern Britain
at least has had towns for most of the last two millennia, for much of that long
period they were relatively small: relative, that is, both to contemporary continen-
tal cities, and to modern towns. Visitors from Venice judged late medieval London
to be the only important British city, while Patrick Collinson has described Tudor
towns (other than London) as 'small-scale Toytowns and Trumptons' compared
to the great imperial cities of Germany and the Netherlands.[3]

Yet if London stood alone in the first division of European pre-industrial cities,
other British towns were not therefore unimportant. They housed a substantial

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The section on Scottish historiography is by E. Patricia Dennison and Grant G. Simpson.

[1] 'Town' is used throughout these volumes to mean 'that sort of place which, however it was gov-
erned and however small its population, fulfilled the functions which are normally implied by the
modern use of the word "town" in British English, "city" in American English, *ville* in French,
Stadt in German, and *città* in Italian': S. Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe
900–1300*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1997), p. 157.

[2] Notably by P. J. Waller, *Town, City and Nation: England 1850–1914* (Oxford, 1983).

[3] D. M. Palliser, 'Urban society', in R. Horrox, ed., *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society
in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 132; P. Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant
England* (Basingstoke, 1988), p. 32.

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minority of the population (at least in England), larger than is generally believed. Though some writers have put the urban proportion of the population at only 5 or 10 per cent as late as 1500, the best recent estimates are considerably higher: up to 10 per cent in 1086, 15 or more per cent by 1300, 20 per cent in 1377, and after perhaps a fall in the fifteenth century, a return to about 20 per cent by 1524.[4] Furthermore, they were regular places of resort for the rural majority, whether for economic, social, administrative, judicial or ecclesiastical purposes, and 'it is easy to forget that . . . towns can often seem more important to those who visit them than those who live there'.[5] Nearly everyone, for instance, lived within easy reach of a market town by the thirteenth century, at least over the greater part of England. This volume is full of examples of the relationships between town and country in the middle ages, a natural feature of an island much of which was becoming commercialised as early as the tenth and eleventh centuries. Studying British and European urbanisation 'requires a lengthy look backward in time. The answers to many questions about the nature of contemporary European cities lie in the medieval period, not in the modern industrial era.'[6]

The work reviewed here, and in Volume II, should help to dispel any lingering 'suspicion that urbanization in the centuries before the period of classic industrial revolution is too petty for study'.[7] The importance of our theme – indeed of the theme of all three volumes of the *Urban History of Britain* – was justified long ago by James Tait: to trace urban growth 'from the advent of the town-hating Angles and Saxons down to these latter days, when five-sixths of the population of Great Britain are massed upon pavements' was, he said in 1922, 'a task worthy of the best powers of an historian of institutions'.[8] We might put this slightly differently now. One of the myths dispelled by modern scholarship is that the English peoples who invaded Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries were 'town-hating' folk, but none the less the collapse of Roman urban centres left them little opportunity to live in towns. Now we would perhaps emphasise towns as social and economic communities, and not think of them only as boroughs or institutions. Nevertheless, as a reminder of the huge growth of towns over nearly fourteen centuries, and the consequences it has entailed, Tait's programme can hardly be bettered.

(i) the identification and importance of towns

An issue to be faced at the outset is that of definitions: what are meant by a town, and by the middle ages? Whatever may be true of later periods, there are great

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[4] R. H. Britnell, *The Commercialisation of English Society, 1000–1500*, 2nd edn (Manchester, 1996), pp. 49, 115, 170; C. Dyer, 'How urbanized was medieval England?', in J.-M. Duvosquel and E. Thoen, eds., *Peasants and Townsmen in Medieval Europe* (Ghent, 1995), pp. 169–83.
[5] R. B. Dobson, 'The risings in York, Beverley and Scarborough, 1380–1381', in R. H. Hilton and T. H. Aston, eds., *The English Rising of 1381* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 142.
[6] P. M. Hohenberg and L. H. Lees, *The Making of Urban Europe 1000–1950* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), p. 1.   [7] Waller, *Town, City and Nation*, p. vii.
[8] J. Tait, *The Medieval English Borough* (Manchester, 1936), p. 358 (from a paper first given in 1922).

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difficulties in agreeing on an urban definition valid for all the centuries usually labelled 'medieval'. Over the long time span concerned, functions of 'central places' changed, and definitions valid for one century might not help for another. The functions later concentrated in multi-purpose towns were often separated in the early middle ages, with a royal centre in one, a major church in another and perhaps a market, mint or port in a third. 'A settlement growing up around a royal and / or ecclesiastical site in the seventh or eighth century should not be judged as non-urban by the criteria applicable to a later Saxon burh, just as these latter places should not be judged by the standards of later medieval towns'.[9] The literature is also confused by the relationship between places with a legal, and those with a socio-economic, identity, between 'borough' and 'town'; and if we adopt a socio-economic definition, as we broadly shall, there is the problem of evidence: criteria in terms of population, or of economic and social structure, cannot be applied in the precise and quantitative way that they can for recent centuries.

A definition is, fortunately, no more than an aid to thought: it has no intrinsic value. As Karl Popper has warned, 'a definition cannot establish the meaning of a term any more than a logical derivation can establish the truth of a statement: both can only shift this problem back'.[10] Nevertheless, a working definition may be helpful, and the one we have adopted here – at least for the high and later middle ages – is that of Susan Reynolds. The first part is functional: 'a town is a permanent and concentrated human settlement in which a significant proportion of the population is engaged in non-agricultural occupations . . . A town therefore normally lives, at least in part, off food produced by people who live outside it.' The second part is social: 'the inhabitants of towns normally regard themselves, and are regarded by the inhabitants of predominantly rural settlements, as a different sort of people'. This is, as she recognises, a loose definition, not because it is defective, but because definitions are human constructs and have unclear boundaries.[11] We are persuaded that such a definition as hers is a better aid to analysis than taking refuge in a 'bundle of criteria' (*Kriterienbündel*) of the kind favoured in some archaeological surveys, 'one of the less useful concepts that has come to Britain from abroad'.[12]

Our definition of 'middle ages' is that almost universally employed in Western Europe, and in North America, to mean the millennium, or thereabouts, between the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the Renaissance. It may seem

[9] J. Haslam, *Early Medieval Towns in Britain* (Princes Risborough, 1985), p. 6.

[10] K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, 4th edn (London, 1962), vol. ɪɪ, pp. 19–21.

[11] S. Reynolds, 'The writing of medieval urban history in England', *Theoretische Geschiedenis*, 19 (1992), 49–50.

[12] Carolyn M. Heighway, ed., *The Erosion of History* (London, 1972), p. 9; M. Biddle, 'Towns', in D. M. Wilson, ed., *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1976), p. 100; Reynolds, 'The writing of medieval urban history', 49.

superfluous to say that, but a surprising number of British scholars still define the middle ages as beginning in 1066, thus absurdly relegating the six centuries of the 'Anglo-Saxon' period to a kind of limbo. The middle ages are taken here to begin in Britain with the collapse of Roman imperial power around 409–11, though since that collapse seems to have entailed the almost complete disappearance of urban life, our story really begins with the revival of urban life in the seventh century. The other terminal date is the mid-sixteenth century, when the Protestant Reformation marks a decisive break in British urban life. The nine centuries we cover are, of course, only very imperfectly designated by the single term 'medieval': there were enormous changes over that time, and we have recognised this by dividing our chronological treatment into two, with the break at around 1300. It makes, of course, for very unequal time spans, but it can be justified not only by the imbalance in the surviving documentary sources, but also, and more importantly, by the major changes in British social and economic life at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It certainly makes for a better division than the Norman Conquest of England, which is a meaningless divide for Scotland and Wales, and which even in many aspects of English urban life marked no break at all.[13]

We have attempted to balance the volume in terms of what is important – trying, certainly, to summarise established knowledge and recent research, but also to draw attention to problems and lacunae. We have also drawn extensively upon the evidence of archaeology and urban morphology as well as documentary sources, a procedure which is especially (though not only) important for the period before the twelfth century when documentary evidence for most towns is sparse. The point is worth stressing because a document-based approach dominated British medieval urban history until recently, to its considerable impoverishment.

We have also been concerned to envisage urban history in terms of people and places as well as institutions. It is unfortunate that Tait's brilliant *Medieval English Borough* (1936), like much other work published before the 1960s, is concerned so exclusively with constitutions and institutions: as H. M. Colvin has remarked, 'it is as much the failure to envisage towns as actual places as any defect of scholarship' that makes it 'so unsatisfactory an introduction to urban history'.[14] Carl Stephenson's *Borough and Town* (1933), to which Tait's book was partly a rejoinder, had at least the merit of a stimulating topographical chapter with plans, however much he was wrong – and Tait right – over the application of Henri Pirenne's insights to English towns. Helen Cam, in a perceptive and critical review of part of Stephenson's argument, commended him for

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[13] See e.g. S. Reynolds, *An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 42–3; S. Reynolds, 'English towns of the eleventh century in a European context', in P. Johanek, ed., *Die Stadt im 11. Jahrhundert* (Münster, 1995), pp. 7–10.

[14] H. M. Colvin, review in *Med. Arch.*, 6–7 (1962–3), 363.

asserting 'very rightly' that urban evolution 'must be approached from the side of topography'.[15] However, Tait's approach was reinforced by the work of F. M. Stenton, especially his massively influential *Anglo-Saxon England* (1943, 1947, 1971), with his 'literary approach which relied so little on illustrations, plans, or excavation reports'.[16] It has not been possible to illustrate this volume as extensively as we would wish, but we hope to have succeeded in reflecting some of the riches of archaeological and topographical work which have made us more aware of towns 'as actual places' over the past generation or so. Likewise, we must remember always that towns were communities of people, and we have drawn on as much evidence as possible to put townspeople into the centre of the story – not only the relatively well-recorded mayors and town councillors, but so far as possible the ordinary men, women and children they represented. However, we have also tried to avoid the excesses of some recent scholarship which is concerned so exclusively with people and places as to exclude the old, constitutional approach altogether. It is not possible to make sense of medieval towns without considering their government and institutions, their customs and by-laws. Boroughs, charters and guilds should not be excluded by the new urban history.

(ii) historiography: england and wales

It may help, as background to our present state of knowledge of medieval towns, to sketch the history of the subject. Some investigations of the urban past can be traced back to the later middle ages, including the civic chronicles of London, and the topographical descriptions of towns by William of Worcester in the 1470s, and by John Leland in the 1530s and 1540s.[17] Detailed descriptions of the urban fabric and its past came together first in Tudor London, with the conjunction of early drawings by Wyngaerde, a huge printed plan of the city, probably also by Wyngaerde (1553–9), and John Stow's *Survey of London*, begun about the same time though not published until 1598.[18] Many other histories of English towns followed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, usually with a medieval and constitutional bias, with at least 150

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[15] C. Stephenson, *Borough and Town* (Cambridge, Mass., 1933); H. Cam, *Liberties and Communities in Medieval England* (London, 1963), pp. 1, 3.

[16] D. Hill, 'The Saxon period', in J. Schofield and R. Leech, eds., *Urban Archaeology in Britain* (CBA Res. Rep., 61, 1987), p. 46.

[17] J. H. Harvey, ed., *William Worcestre: Itineraries 1478–1480* (Oxford, 1969); L. Toulmin Smith, ed., *The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the Years 1535–1543* (London, 1907–10).

[18] M. Holmes, 'An unrecorded map of London', *Archaeologia*, 100 (1966), 105–28; S. P. Marks, *The Map of Mid-Sixteenth Century London* (London Topographical Society 100, 1964); M. Holmes, 'A source-book for Stow?', in A. E. J. Hollaender and W. Kellaway, eds., *Studies in London History presented to Philip Edmund Jones* (London, 1969), pp. 275–85; P. D. A. Harvey, *Maps in Tudor England* (London, 1993), pp. 73–7.

being published between 1701 and 1800, and another 90 in the first two decades of the nineteenth century.[19]

Many early histories were antiquarian and uncritical, but the same period initiated real historical research on English towns, even if largely confined to legal and constitutional aspects. Thomas Madox's *Firma Burgi* (1726) is still of great value, while a century later the debate over municipal reform produced *The History of the Boroughs and Municipal Corporations of the United Kingdom* by Merewether and Stephens (1835), still useful despite its bias.[20] Victorian scholars discovered the social and economic dimensions of the subject, revived the serious study of townscape and topography which Stow had pioneered, and in some cases attempted what would now be called rescue archaeology. E. A. Freeman published good local studies (notably *Towns and Districts*, 1883), and launched a series of *Historic Towns* in 1887. His contemporary John Richard Green used town plans helpfully in his *Conquest of England* (1883), and we have his widow's testimony of a day spent with him in Ancona, where 'as was his habit, he made his way first to the Town-hall, and from the fragments of Greek and mediaeval carving built into its walls, from harbour and pier, from names of streets, and the cathedral crypt, he extracted century by century some record of the old municipal life'.[21] The quotation comes from Alice Green's own masterpiece, *Town Life in the Fifteenth Century* (1894), which has, astonishingly, 'not yet been superseded by a work of equivalent length and depth of treatment'.[22] By the turn of the century, major publishing enterprises were beginning to tackle the history and historical fabric of towns systematically, notably the Survey of London (started in 1896), the Victoria History of the Counties of England (founded in 1899) and the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (1908).

The true founders of medieval English urban history, however, were F. W. Maitland (1850–1906) and Charles Gross (1857–1909), both inspired in part by German scholarship. Gross developed his Göttingen doctoral dissertation into *The Gild Merchant* (1890), besides compiling a *Bibliography of British Municipal History* (1897): both are still standard works a century later.[23] Maitland published much on the legal and constitutional history of boroughs, including *Township and*

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[19] R. Sweet, *The Writing of Urban Histories in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1997), p. 9. Welsh town histories are generally later in date: the first known was written (but not published) *c.* 1669, and the earliest published examples are Newcombe's on Denbigh (1829) and Ruthin (1836): R. A. Griffiths, ed., *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales* (Cardiff, 1978), pp. 1, 2.

[20] C. Gross, *A Bibliography of British Municipal History* (New York, 1897), nos. 158, 79. Gross' *Bibliography*, reissued in 1966 (2nd edn., with preface by G. H. Martin, Leicester, 1966), is still the definitive guide to pre-1897 literature. G. H. Martin and S. McIntyre, *A Bibliography of British and Irish Municipal History*, was designed to supplement rather than supersede Gross; only vol. 1, *General Works* (Leicester, 1972) has yet appeared, and not the promised succeeding volumes listing post-1897 work on individual towns.

[21] A. S. Green, *Town Life in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1894), vol. 1, p. xiii.

[22] R. Holt and G. Rosser, eds., *The Medieval Town* (London, 1990), p. 2.

[23] C. Gross, *The Gild Merchant* (Oxford, 1890); Gross, *Bibliography*.

Borough (1898); he also encouraged Mary Bateson, who edited two volumes of *Borough Customs* (1904–6), while Gross' pupil Morley Hemmeon published the definitive analysis of burgage tenure (1914).[24] Bateson had also published an exemplary edition of the earliest Leicester records in 1899, a year which may be taken as initiating really reliable editions of borough archives, for it also saw publication of the first volume of Reginald Sharpe's *Calendar of Letter Books of the City of London*.[25] Others inspired to enter the field were E. A. Lewis, who published the first synthesis of Welsh burghal history, and Adolphus Ballard, who initiated a series of digests of urban charters, continued after his death by James Tait.[26]

The 1920s and 1930s were dominated by the rival work of Stephenson and Tait, already briefly noticed. It is unfortunate that Stephenson had invested much of his work in arguing for a late (post-Conquest) development of urban life in England, an argument Tait was able to refute, because the result was that Tait was perceived to have 'defeated' Stephenson, whereas both books still have great merit, and moreover Stephenson's is much the more readable.[27] G. H. Martin has commented that 'the subject is a difficult one, and Tait made it sound difficult'.[28] That may be why publication of Tait's book signalled, if it did not cause, a thirty-year period when relatively little of the first rank was published, apart from constitutional analyses by Martin Weinbaum.[29]

Little recognised at the time, however, serious work was beginning in medieval urban archaeology. In Oxford between the 1930s and 1950s important discoveries were made by R. L. Bruce-Mitford, E. M. Jope and W. A. Pantin, and other 'rescue archaeology', as it would later be called, was undertaken after 1945 on sites cleared by bombing, providing important medieval evidence in London, Canterbury and elsewhere.[30] Pantin became one of the founders of the Society

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[24] F. W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond* (Cambridge, 1897), pp. 172–219; F. Pollock and F. W. Maitland, *The History of English Law before the Time of Edward I*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1898), esp. vol. I, pp. 634–88; F. W. Maitland, *Township and Borough* (Cambridge, 1898); F. W. Maitland and M. Bateson, eds., *The Charters of the Borough of Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1901); M. Bateson, ed., *Borough Customs* (Selden Society, 18, 21, 1904–6); M. de W. Hemmeon, *Burgage Tenure in Mediaeval England* (Cambridge, Mass., 1914).

[25] M. Bateson, ed., *Records of the Borough of Leicester* ([London], 1899–1905); R. R. Sharpe, ed., *Calendar of Letter Books of the City of London* (London, 1899–1912).

[26] E. A. Lewis, *The Mediæval Boroughs of Snowdonia* (London, 1912); A. Ballard, ed., *British Borough Charters 1042–1216* (Cambridge, 1913); A. Ballard and J. Tait, eds., *British Borough Charters 1216–1307* (Cambridge, 1923).

[27] For a judicious appraisal of Tait and Stephenson, see Martin and McIntyre, *Bibliography*, pp. xxxvi–xxxvii.

[28] G. H. Martin, 'The English borough in the thirteenth century', in Holt and Rosser, eds., *The Medieval Town*, p. 32.

[29] M. Weinbaum, *The Incorporation of Boroughs* (Manchester, 1937); M. Weinbaum, ed., *British Borough Charters, 1307–1660* (Cambridge, 1943).

[30] W. A. Pantin, 'The recently demolished houses in Broad Street, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, 2 (1937), pp. 171–200; W. Grimes, *The Archaeology of Roman and Medieval London* (London, 1968); P. Ottaway, *Archaeology in British Towns* (London, 1992), p. 10.

for Medieval Archaeology (1956), as well as the author of the first modern study of town house plans in an early volume of its journal,[31] and it was partly owing to the Society that the serious study of medieval towns revived in the 1960s, accompanied by much topographical and archaeological work alongside the traditional documentary fare. Early fruits included M. R. G. Conzen's pioneering analyses of the town plans of Alnwick, Newcastle, Ludlow and Conwy, and publication of the first British volume of the *Atlas of Historic Town Plans of Western Europe* (1969); the first major urban excavation programme in Britain under Martin Biddle at Winchester (1961–71); Maurice Beresford's detailed analyses of planted towns in England, Wales and Gascony; and his catalogue, in conjunction with H. P. R. Finberg, of all known English boroughs.[32]

Since 1970, research and publication in all of these areas has advanced apace. Colin Platt and Susan Reynolds provided the first scholarly surveys of English medieval towns for a generation, closely followed by Ralph Griffiths and others for Wales; [33] their work helped to inspire an increased output of monographs on individual towns, editions of urban records and more recently some excellent surveys incorporating much of the new archaeological data.[34] New research has been inspired by a series of lively debates about major issues: the extent of urban continuity in the post-Roman period; the nature of revived town life, including the role of *emporia, burhs* and minsters; the relationship of 'feudalism' and towns; the nature of urban communities; the role of women; the existence of urban oligarchy; and the extent of late medieval urban decline. The last controversy, though probably irresolvable, led to very fruitful investigations. Surviving medieval buildings have been thoroughly described in comprehensive inventories of Salisbury, Stamford and York,[35] though regrettably such inventories have now been discontinued; and an Urban Morphology Group at the University of Birmingham is building on Conzen's work. And the growing body of archaeological data is now

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[31] W. A. Pantin, 'Medieval English town-house plans', *Med. Arch.*, 6–7 (1962–3), pp. 202–39.

[32] M. R. G. Conzen, *Alnwick, Northumberland* (Publications of the Institute of British Geographers, 27, 1960); M. R. G. Conzen, 'The plan analysis of an English city centre', *Proc. of the I. G. U. Symposium in Urban Geography, Lund 1960* (Lund, 1962); M. R. G. Conzen, 'The use of town plans in the study of urban history', in H. J. Dyos, ed., *The Study of Urban History* (London, 1968), pp. 113–30; *BAHT*, I: M. Biddle, 'The study of Winchester: archaeology and history in a British town, 1961–1983', *Proc. of the British Academy*, 69 (1983), 93–135; M. Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages* (London, 1967); M. W. Beresford and H. P. R. Finberg, *English Medieval Boroughs* (Newton Abbot, 1973).

[33] C. Platt, *The English Medieval Town* (London, 1976); Reynolds, *English Medieval Towns*; Griffiths, ed., *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*; I. Soulsby, *The Towns of Medieval Wales* (Chichester, 1983).

[34] E.g. Ottaway, *Archaeology in British Towns*; J. Schofield and A. Vince, *Medieval Towns* (London, 1994).

[35] RCHM (England), *Ancient and Historical Monuments in the City of Salisbury: Volume One* (London,1980); RCHM (England), *Salisbury: The Houses of the Close* (London, 1993); RCHM (England), *An Inventory of Historical Monuments in the Town of Stamford* (London, 1977); RCHM (England), *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York* (London, 1962–81).

increasingly being synthesised, not only in excavation site reports, but also in works setting the finds in surveys more accessible to the urban historian, including fine surveys of the buildings, furnishings and artefacts of London, Winchester and Norwich.[36] It is therefore a lively and developing subject at the time of writing, though by the same token it is not an easy time to take stock.

(iii) historiography: scotland

The nineteenth century bequeathed to us a series of studies of individual towns. Many tended to be strongly antiquarian in approach, and at times rested on scholarship which was unduly influenced by local patriotism. More valuable in the long term has been the work of the Scottish Burgh Records Society, which between 1868 and 1911 produced twenty-six volumes of record material, much of it on Edinburgh and Glasgow and the Convention of Royal Burghs. The nineteenth-century tradition produced massive results in an elaborate study, on which he had been working since the 1880s, David Murray's *Early Burgh Organisation in Scotland*.[37] This had the merit of displaying considerable grasp of the archival, constitutional and topographical evidence, but his approach to his subject was diffuse, and his theory of origins, that burghs evolved from pre-existing agricultural communities, was based more on assumption and analogy than on evidence.

The sparseness of early evidence, and some failures of clarity on the part of earlier writers, left the field open in the mid-twentieth century for a strong concentration on constitutional aspects. A useful short survey appeared in W. Mackay Mackenzie's *The Scottish Burghs*. As the title implies, he saw 'burgh' rather than 'town' as the principal element of the subject, and dismissed the David Murray approach with the crisp opinion that 'the key-word to the burgh is creation, not growth'.[38] W. Croft Dickinson's magisterial introduction to the early records of Aberdeen analysed the Scottish burghs as a whole, but concentrated heavily on the royal burghs and touched only occasionally on the economic background.[39] Further constitutional attention was applied in the valuable and accurate handlist of Scottish burghs by George S. Pryde.[40] By this era the history of Scottish medieval towns had come to be viewed in a strongly institutional light.

[36] J. Schofield, *Medieval London Houses* (New Haven, 1995); M. Biddle *et al.*, *Object and Economy in Medieval Winchester* (Oxford, 1991); S. Margeson, *Norwich Households: The Medieval and Post-Medieval Finds from Norwich Survey Excavations 1971–1978* (East Anglian Archaeology 58, Norwich, 1993).

[37] D. Murray, *Early Burgh Organisation in Scotland, as Illustrated in the History of Glasgow and of Some Neighbouring Burghs* (Glasgow, 1924).

[38] W. M. Mackenzie, *The Scottish Burghs* (Edinburgh, 1949), p. 14.

[39] W. Croft Dickinson, ed., *Early Records of the Burgh of Aberdeen, 1317, 1398–1407* (Scottish History Society, 1957).   [40] G. S. Pryde, *The Burghs of Scotland* (London, 1965).

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In the last quarter-century physical evidence has been given much greater attention, an approach stimulated by the work of urban geographers such as Ian Adams, and by George Gordon and Brian Dicks' *Scottish Urban History*.[41] Nicholas Brooks and G. Whittington were, moreover, pointing a way forward, with their article on St Andrews, for assessments of town growth by the use of documentary, cartographic and archaeological evidence.[42] Archaeological investigation, also, in early towns commenced in Scotland in the early 1970s, albeit at first on a fairly small scale. The steady stream of excavations which has followed, especially in Perth and Aberdeen, and the resulting published reports,[43] have contributed vastly to knowledge of the subject: buildings, possessions, pottery, diet, health and other topics have been illuminated on particular sites. It is, perhaps, inevitable, if regrettable, that syntheses are slow to appear in print, as archaeologists generally prefer to build up from minutiae rather than attempt 'the big picture'; a general overview of urban archaeology in Scotland would be welcome.

The Scottish Burgh Survey Series, funded by the then Scottish Development Department, produced some fifty reports on the archaeology and history of individual towns. The historical research of Anne Turner Simpson and the archaeological overview of Robert Gourlay and Sylvia Stevenson were not, however, closely intermeshed. Two perceptive short surveys, by A. A. M. Duncan and G. W. S. Barrow, emphasised the stimulus of trade and the need for a good location as fundamental to early urban activity, and viewed the crown's grant of privileges to a community as a comprehensible but formal part of the process.[44] Elizabeth Ewan then attempted to fit the urban archaeological material with the documentary evidence for towns as a whole.[45]

Michael Lynch's 'Whatever happened to the medieval burgh?' pointed to a new approach to urban history, and in 1988 the entire subject was given a notable stimulus in a set of essays on *The Scottish Medieval Town,* edited by Lynch, together with Michael Spearman and Geoffrey Stell,[46] a volume which both summarised current ideas and pointed the way ahead towards areas requiring investigation. Spearman's contribution on Perth, for example, was the first published topographical analysis

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[41] I. H. Adams, *The Making of Urban Scotland* (London, 1978); G. Gordon and B. Dicks, eds., *Scottish Urban History* (Aberdeen, 1981).

[42] N. P. Brooks and G. Whittington, 'Planning and growth in the medieval Scottish burgh: the example of St Andrews', *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers*, new series, 2 (1977), 278–95.

[43] J. C. Murray, ed., *Excavations in the Medieval Burgh of Aberdeen, 1973–81* (Society of Antiquaries Monograph Series, 2 (1982); P. Holdsworth, ed., *Excavations in the Medieval Burgh of Perth, 1979–81* (Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Monograph Series, 5, 1987).

[44] A. A. M. Duncan, *Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1975), chs. 18, 19; G. W. S. Barrow, *Kingship and Unity* (London, 1981), ch. 5.   [45] E. Ewan, *Townlife in Fourteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1990).

[46] M. Lynch, 'Whatever happened to the medieval burgh?', *Scottish Economic and Social History*, 4 (1984), 5–20; M. Lynch, M. Spearman and G. Stell, eds., *The Scottish Medieval Town* (Edinburgh, 1988).