

# Editorial note

No one can claim any diminution of interest in the fortunes of urban history, at least in Britain, judging from the amount of published commentary on its status and condition during the last two years. Much of this was occasioned by the re-issue of the essays of H. J. Dyos in book form (*Exploring the Urban Past*, Cambridge University Press, 1982), and the publication of the memorial conference volume (*The Pursuit of Urban History*, Edward Arnold, 1983). These collected studies, along with recent contributions on the history of London government and politics, and on the history of housing, and the issue of further volumes of *Themes in Urban History* by Leicester University Press, have all been subjects of long and mostly thoughtful reviews, a number of them by scholars taking the opportunity to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the Dyos approach, how it has been faring and the post-Dyosian outlook.

The critical points in what has been quite an extensive academic post-mortem will be carefully noted and thought about by Dyos's followers, but it should be clearly said that the pessimism about the future as expressed by some reviewers is not shared at all by the Council members of the Urban History Group in Britain. On the contrary, there is much hope for the future as reflected, for example, in the review articles of Anthony Sutcliffe and David Cannadine, the former re-affirming the distinctive contribution of urban history, the latter re-stating the need for historians to study the totality of the city. There is a confidence also about the actions of the Council as a whole in seeking to generate new initiatives so as to continue dialogue with representatives of related fields of study in a more formal way, and to promote the publication of new work under the banner of urban history. The Council has formed two sub-committees for these interests, chaired by Martin Daunton and Peter Clark. Meanwhile, the Register of Research should have become available once again, and with the contents of this *Yearbook*, will bear testimony to the vitality of research and writing on the history of towns and of subjects located in towns – the eclectic mode of urban history which this *Yearbook* exists to foster and review not only for Britain but worldwide.

The editor was pleased to receive surveys taking the pulse of urban history in Australia and New Zealand, and to note how strongly it is beating in the former country especially. The methodological articles this year are concerned with new approaches to morphology (in the period before the Great Fire in London and the more recent past generally), occupational-cum-social structures via town directories, with an additional note on Canadian material, and a further commentary on the subject of urban decline in the later middle ages following on from the debate publicized in the 1979 *Yearbook*, which is now out of print. In this issue a further effort is made to ensure that proper notice is given to the work of urban historians of the early modern and medieval periods.

Since 1979 the membership of the editorial board has changed, although three of the present members have been there from the beginning. As it turned out, however, 1983 was the last issue not only for Derek Fraser, now in the United States, and Peter Clark, as was mentioned in that Editorial Note, but also for David Cannadine and Martin Daunton, both of whom have taken on new responsibilities with other journals. The editor is grateful for the way Cannadine and Daunton have added to four issues of the *Yearbook* with stylish reviews of articles and conferences respectively. He is pleased, needless to say, that the board has three new members this year. John Walton, Richard Trainor and

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Richard Rodger will extend even further the range of interests in urban social and economic history represented on the board over the years. The editor hopes, therefore, that this issue as presented by the reconstituted team will continue to be supported by subscribers. He continues to be interested also in receiving articles in keeping with the nature of the *Yearbook* – for example, bibliographical surveys, comparative studies, discussions of major themes, or of methodological issues and approaches, or of the use of historical sources. Intending contributors should contact the editor at the School of Education, 21 University Road, Leicester.