

Book Reviews

The plague reconsidered. A new look at its origins and effects in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, Matlock, Derbyshire, Local Population Studies, 1977, 8vo, pp. 145, £3.65.

There are eight essays and an introduction in this excellent monograph. It is concerned particularly with the demographic effects of plague and is aimed at the historian and general reader. General issues are dealt with in articles on 'Some medical aspects of plague' (Leslie Bradley), 'Current medical and epidemiological views on plague' (J. N. Biraben), 'Plague in Britain' (Christopher Morris), 'The geographical spread of plague' (L. Bradley), and 'Plague and the general reader' (Derek Turner). Specific epidemics are represented by case studies of those in Bristol (Paul Slack, who also provides an introduction), Eyam (L. Bradley), and Colyton (Roger Schofield).

The result is an exceedingly useful volume which will help to dispel the widespread ignorance and confusion about the history of bubonic plague. Areas of controversy are also discussed, so that this authoritative guide will allow greater understanding of a part of the overall history of plague, as well as stimulating informed investigations of it.

JOHN HATCHER, *Plague, population and the English economy 1348–1530*, London, Macmillan, 1977, 8vo, pp. 95, £1.75 (paperback).

Studies in economic and social history, edited by Professor M. W. Flinn, have earned a justifiable reputation, and this addition to the series is no exception. Basically it is an investigation into the demographic and economic history of England in the late Middle Ages, with particular emphasis on disease. It is a critical survey which offers new interpretations, and provides the student and scholar with a valuable analysis of a period characterized by a decline in population. This was due principally to disease, in particular bubonic plague, and thus to increased mortality not linked to living standards, rather than to declining fertility.

This is another example of the praiseworthy and welcome contributions being made today by social and economic historians to our knowledge of the effects of disease on the English people.

PAUL SLACK (editor), *Poverty in early-Stuart Salisbury*, Devizes, Wiltshire Record Society, 1975, 8vo, pp. viii, 183, £7.00. (Obtainable from M. J. Lansdown, 53 Clarendon Road, Trowbridge, Wilts. BA14 7BS).

Dr. Slack has brought together a remarkably useful series of documents, grouped under three headings: 'The poor'; 'Municipal orders and projects'; and 'Poor relief'. The first includes a register of passports for vagrants, 1598–1669, which reveals their surprising mobility, together with surveys of the poor for 1625 and c. 1635. The orders in the second part are projects for poor relief, and the third section lists overseers and workhouse accounts. An appendix reproduces a document of 1661 by John Ivie, who was a pioneer of municipal poor relief, and there is an excellent index.

This book reveals the enlightened attitude to the poor, which must have been more widespread than has been previously thought. This and references to medical problems make it, therefore, an important addition to provincial medical history, and it will, it is hoped, encourage scholars to deal with similar data from other parts of England. It deserves to be widely known.