

(Free download) London in the Age of Chaucer (Centers of Civilization)

London in the Age of Chaucer (Centers of Civilization)

A.R. Myers

*DOC | *audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF | ePub*

DOWNLOAD



READ ONLINE

#3908757 in Books University of Oklahoma Press 1972-03-01Ingredients: Example IngredientsOriginal language:English #File Name: 0806109971236 pages | File size: 44.Mb

A.R. Myers : London in the Age of Chaucer (Centers of Civilization) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised London in the Age of Chaucer (Centers of Civilization):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Chaucer's LondonBy M. A NewmanWhile I am a fan of the books that make up the Centers of Civilization Series, this work, London in the Age of Chaucer is one of the weaker editions. While it contains many useful bits of information, it is not clear to me what the author intended in writing this work and what in particular he was trying to say.London in the late 14th-early 15th century was a mere shadow of what it is today. It's population consisted of around 40,000 inhabitants (placing it behind other European capitals such as Paris and Naples) and around a square mile. The expansion that would mark the West End and beyond would not occur until the 17th century. In Chaucer's day it was a city of narrow streets, poor sanitation and a frequently discontented populace. The mark of a successful king in the 1300s-1500s was if he kept the inhabitants of London on its side. Henry IV and Henry V did. Edward II, Richard II, and Henry VI did not.The source of London's wealth, as it would be for several years. was the pivotal role the port of London played in the continental woolen trade. This serves as a jumping off point for discussion of the various guilds that contributed so much to life in London during Chaucer's day. While this discussion is interesting, the author, A. R. Meyers does not really have much to say after all is said and done other than to provide a detailed discussion of professional guilds and parish guilds and how the guild market was very much a "joiners" one in the period in question (provided one could afford the entry fee). Meyers also devotes a great deal of attention to the economic life of London which probably would be appropriate if Chaucer were a rich merchant (he was in all fairness the scion of a family much involved in the wine trade), rather than a court

official. Meyers appears uninspired by the comings and goings of the political life of the time except in that it concerns the city of London. As a person who moved in high court circles whose comings and goings inspired some of Shakespeare's most famous plays, the world of high politics rather than city government would have been a central feature in Chaucer's life. This feature of the landscape is sadly lacking in this work. But what is really missing from London in the Age of Chaucer is Chaucer. While it is true that very little is known about him, what few facts are available are given short shift and this probably more than anything else disappointed. While this book devotes a great deal of attention to the landscape of London, its government and the social life of London, there is very little of the discussion of high or low culture found in the series and not much to place the age in any sort of context. I was actually hoping for more from this book than was there. While this is a good book to explore certain central topics, it is not as comprehensive as it might have been. While worth reading I think that there may be other books that deal with these topics more thoroughly.

Fourteenth-century London was noisy, dirty, and disorderly, but also prosperous, proud of itself, and full of life not yet dispersed to distant suburbs. It was described in 1326 as a "mirror to all England," and indeed it was. Trade was growing and the guilds were making their influence felt. If justice was not tempered with mercy, at least the law courts were open to the citizens. Fine churches, palaces, guildhalls, and other buildings were constructed, and fire laws were enacted. Sanitation was a monstrous problem, and twice during the period the Black Death wreaked its havoc, but Londoners persevered. The author deals with London life in all its varied aspects during the time of Chaucer—customs, laws, social conditions, trade, and general conduct of the city government. London was the magnet of society and fashion, a city of pollution and violence, yet a city of wealth and churches. It was also still a city where a man knew his neighbors and often even lived in the same house with his employer. As Chaucer walked the London streets, whether as a member of the royal household, as controller of the port of London, as clerk of the king's works, or simply as a resident above Aldgate, he would have met plenty of people he knew. He may well have met the originals of the prioress or the wife of Bath, the merchant or the sergeant-at-law, the physician or the summoner, or the host himself, Harry Bailey. London had enough variety, importance, and cohesion to have encompassed them all.

About the Author A. R. Myers is Professor of Mediaeval History in the School of History, The University of Liverpool, England.