



Earls Colne's Early Modern Landscapes

Dr Dolly MacKinnon

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The Essex village of Earls Colne boasts one of the most comprehensive collections of historical documents in Britain, and has been the subject of an intensive and ongoing research project to collate and computerise the surviving records. As such, Earls Colne is undoubtedly one of the most studied parishes in England. Yet whilst much is now known about the village and its inhabitants, little work has been done on the social relationships that bound the community together within its mental and physical landscape. As such, scholars will welcome Dr MacKinnon's investigation into the social, political and cultural world of early modern England as represented by Earls Colne.

The book provides a fresh approach to the study of the landscape of a seventeenth-century village by focussing on the relationships between political power and cultural artefacts. It examines how private, public and communal spaces within society were generated, gendered and governed, and how this was recorded and perpetuated in the records, names, and monuments of the parish and surrounding landscape. Yet whilst the 'elites' tried to represent a select social landscape through their control of the local records and documents, these attempts were always counterbalanced by the less powerful members of the community who occupied and contested these spaces.

By reconstructing the dynamics of Earls Colne through a careful reading and cross-referencing of the surviving documents, buildings and place names, this book offers a fascinating insight into how the sights and sounds of early modern society were imbued with the social relations of parish politics. As well as deepening our understanding of Earls Colne itself, the book offers historians the potential to revisit other local studies from a fresh perspective.

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