Land and Credit: Mortgages and Annuities in the Medieval and Early Modern European Countryside

A one-day symposium: Monday 13 July 2015, 09.30 – 17.30

The Chadwick Room, Selwyn College, Cambridge

BOOKING NOW OPEN!

The fee for the workshop is £25 (£15 for students; please contact the organiser when booking). This fee includes lunch and refreshments.

There will be a dinner in St Catherine’s College after the workshop, cost an additional £35 per delegate.

Online booking is available here.

The subject. Mortgages and other transactions in which loans were secured on land were widespread throughout the countryside of medieval and early modern Europe. Such transactions allowed agriculturalists to access significant amounts of capital, and were therefore important for economic development. Over the last twenty years there has been a great deal of research done on markets in land and credit in preindustrial Europe. In spite of this, the literature dealing specifically with mortgages and other forms of secured credit remains surprisingly fragmented. The aim of this workshop is to pool existing knowledge about medieval and early modern mortgage lending, to begin to explore key research questions (below), and to identify an agenda for the future study of mortgages in this era. We will approach the topic from a number of different angles: economic, social and legal.

Research questions. Research done to date suggests that in England mortgages were relatively rare before the second half of the seventeenth century. Was this in fact the case, and if so, what explains this pattern? To what extent were tenurial changes important, in the sense that it was easier to establish a mortgage on certain types of land and property than others? Were rules about, and attitudes to usury and interest crucial in restricting the extensive use of mortgages before the seventeenth century? Or were changes in mortgage law most crucial to this shift? Mortgages seem to have been particularly concentrated in certain localities in the medieval period; why was this? Looking more broadly, mortgages or equivalent arrangements seem to have been more widespread in different parts of continental Europe in the middle ages than they were in England. Again, was this in fact the case, and if so, why? Should we be focusing on differences in land tenure, or differences in the systems of land registration in the different regions? Why did different forms of annuities – renten, rentes, censal, etc. – emerge in medieval France, Spain, and Germany, but not (as far as we can tell) in England in the same period to any great extent? How did these annuities work, and were they the same in their aims and effects as classical mortgages? More broadly, we hope that the original papers presented at the workshop and the ensuing discussion will generate new evidence about issues such as the length of loan terms, the character of the parties to mortgages, rates of interest, the size of loans, and the possible uses of mortgage finance.

Provisional Programme

09.30 Coffee & Registration

10.00 Welcome and Introduction
10.10 Chris Briggs (Cambridge): ‘Mortgages and the English peasantry, c.1260-1350’

Antoni Furió (Valencia): ‘Annuities in late medieval Valencia’

François Menant (ENS, Paris): ‘Mortgages in the Lombardy countryside in the time of the communes (end 11th century – 1348)’

11.40 Coffee

12.00 Michael Limberger & Nicolas De Viljder (Ghent): ‘The use of perpetual annuities in rural Brabant in the 15th and 16th centuries’

Imogen Wedd (Cambridge): ‘Mortgages and the yeoman in 17th century Kent, England’

13.00 Lunch

14.10 Jaco Zuijderduijn (Leiden): ‘Foreclosures foregone : debt recovery in a village in 16th-century Holland’

Juliet Gayton (Exeter): ‘Mortgages raised by rural English copyhold tenants 1555-1705’

15.10 Tea

15.30 Elise Dermineur (Lund): ‘Rural credit markets and mortgages in 18th-century France: changes and challenges’

David Waddilove (Cambridge): ‘Social norms and mortgages in early modern England’

16.30 Break

1645.-17.30 Round-table discussion, introduced and chaired by Craig Muldrew (Cambridge)

19.30 Conference dinner

All welcome. For further information, please contact the organiser, Dr Chris Briggs: cdb23@cam.ac.uk

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