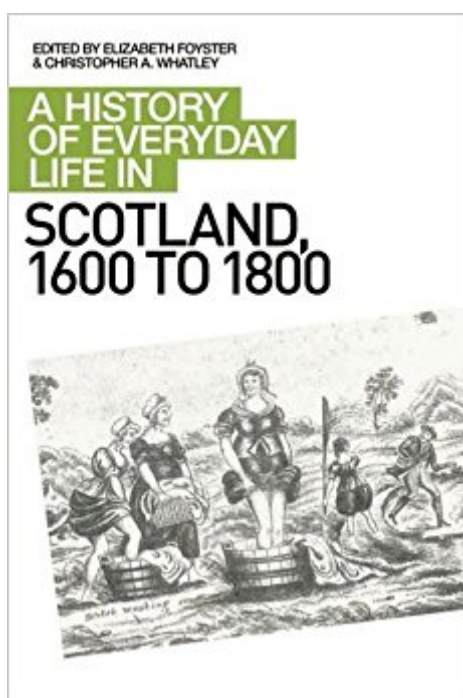


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A History Of Everyday Life In Scotland, 1600-1800: A History Of Everyday Life In Scotland, 1600 To 1800 (A History Of Everyday Life In Scotland EUP)



Synopsis

This book explores the ordinary daily routines, behaviours, experiences and beliefs of the Scottish people during a period of immense political, social and economic change. It underlines the importance of the church in post-Reformation Scottish society, but also highlights aspects of everyday life that remained the same, or similar, notwithstanding the efforts of the kirk, employers and the state to alter behaviours and attitudes. Drawing upon and interrogating a range of primary sources, the authors create a richly coloured, highly-nuanced picture of the lives of ordinary Scots from birth through marriage to death. Analytical in approach, the coverage of topics is wide, ranging from the ways people made a living, through their non-work activities including reading, playing and relationships, to the ways they experienced illness and approached death

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Book review: A History of Everyday Life in Scotland 1600-1800 Premium Article 05 April 2010 By TC SMOUT A History of Everyday Life in Scotland 1600-1800 Edited by Elizabeth Foyster and Christopher A Whatley Edinburgh University Press, 352pp, GBP24.99 NOTHING in history is more difficult to uncover than everyday life. The epics of kings and politicians rest on sources ranging from the registers of the state to the memoirs of sycophantic courtiers. The records of the church are voluminous and formaADVERTISEMENT. The records of trade and industry are left in ledgers. Great events that are not everyday, especially wars and disasters, have their chroniclers. But the routines of ordinary life are elusive, often unrecorded, and the historian often has to approach the

task obliquely and persistently, aware there will be lacunae and difficult judgments to make. This book is the first of a series of four that will try to uncover the routines of our pasts, and it chooses to do so in the 17th and 18th centuries when Scotland was first wracked with civil and ecclesiastical war, then bolted into union with a powerful neighbour, then wracked again with rebellion and rapid economic and social change. We know a lot about all those themes. What we know less about are everyday things like food and clothes, smells and noises, travelling, rejoicing and courting, working and relaxing, believing and doubting. In 11 chapters, this book tries to explore some of this territory, aware that there will be gaps that cannot be filled, yet using a variety of sources and approaches to illuminate the routines and peculiarities of our pasts. Because it is an edited volume, it lacks a single tone and some chapters are more satisfying than others. But you cannot read it without learning a lot; it is entertaining, surprising and instructive. Take, for example, the all-male Highland funeral of the 1720s, where an English observer found "pyramids of plum cake, sweetmeats and several dishes, with pipes and tobacco". When it was over the men took the remaining sweetmeats away in their hats and pockets, "which enables you to make a great compliment to the women of your acquaintance". Flirting with funeral leftovers is probably a lost art. Or the advertisement for the Saracen's Head in Glasgow in 1754, which commends the 36 bedchambers "none of them entering through another, so there is no need of going out of doors to get to them" and all the beds "very good, clean and free from Bugs". This speaks volumes about expectations. The essence of history, of course, is change. How different did everyday life become in Scotland over these two centuries? Up to around 1750, the answer seems to be that it was not so different from what it had been in 1600; food was still based on oatmeal (up to 37 ounces a day) and clothing was mainly woollen and of dark colours. White was for the wealthy, because it showed you could afford to have your clothes washed by someone else. By 1800, things had improved marginally for the poorer classes and more so for the middle classes and the rich: more meat was eaten by most people, potatoes had arrived, more linen and cotton were worn and soap was more available. In terms of belief, Sabbath observance still reigned supreme though there was a shortage of places in kirk for the urban poor. Witches and fairies had been relegated from being the living imps of Satan to becoming mere superstitions in remote country places. Work was more controlled and onerous, but also more regular and better remunerated: the industrial workforce at this stage of factory development depended heavily on women and children, but so did rising household earnings. This is a book with ambitious coverage, with chapters on rural life, architecture, birth, death and marriage, illness, food and clothing, literacy and education, keeping order, belief, travel and work. One chapter by Elizabeth Foyster deals with smells, sound and touch. It is particularly full of unexpected insights,

like the way in which a traveller could have been led blindfolded round a town and still known where he was by the smells and sounds of different quarters harbouring the tanners, dyers, butchers, bakers, brewers and hammermen, all concentrated in different quarters. Edinburgh, as a city, smelt vile, but Glasgow by contrast was commended, in 1669 famous for "sweetness of air" and a century later for the way its markets for fish and meat were "constantly kept sweet and neat" by channels of water. What was it like being ill in the past? Helen Dingwall has a particularly illuminating account of the impact and practice of medicine (both official and folk), covering most aspects except dentistry, at least sparing us that vicarious agony. Pain and illness were a social leveller, equally inflicted on rich and poor, without much relief that money could buy. Medicine in towns was more likely to attract professional doctors and pharmacists than in the country -- there was said to be only one "medical man" for 50 miles north of Aberdeen at the start of the 18th century. Remedies were mainly herbal everywhere, and directed at relieving symptoms rather than curing disease. There is much here that is fascinating. Some things irritate. It is sad to see the dreary modern use of "the 1600s" and "the 1700s" in place of the 17th and 18th centuries. If one is told that witch persecution flourished in the early 1660s, one knows it was between 1660 and 1665. If one is told, as here, of struggles between church and crown "during the 1600s" one has to know in advance if it means between 1600 and 1609 or in the wider 17th century. There are inevitably omissions as well. Little is said, in dealing with education, about school routines. How long were school days, what were the routines of learning, how and how frequently were children punished? It would have been interesting to learn about external horizons, too; was not Aberdeen, for example, closer culturally and commercially to the Netherlands than to Glasgow? But this is a book full of insights and genuinely pioneering. We can look forward to the following volumes. -- T.C. Smout

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A valuable addition to a growing historiography of ordinary, everyday life. -- Alexandra Logue, University of Guelph International Review of Scottish Studies

Book review: A History of Everyday Life in Scotland 1600-1800 Premium Article 05 April 2010 By TC SMOUT

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NOTHING in history is more difficult to uncover than everyday life. The epics of kings and politicians rest on sources ranging from the registers of the state to the memoirs of sycophantic courtiers. The records of the church are voluminous and formal. The records of trade and industry are left in ledgers. Great events that are not everyday, especially wars and disasters, have their chroniclers. But the routines of ordinary life are elusive, often unrecorded, and the historian often has to approach the task obliquely and persistently, aware there will be lacunae and difficult judgments to make. This book is the first of a series of four that will try to uncover the routines of our pasts, and it chooses to do so in the 17th and 18th centuries when Scotland was first wracked with civil and ecclesiastical war, then bolted into union with a powerful neighbour, then wracked again with rebellion and rapid economic and social change. We know a lot about all those themes. What we know less about are everyday things like food and clothes, smells and noises, travelling, rejoicing and courting, working and relaxing, believing and doubting. In 11 chapters, this book tries to explore some of this territory, aware that there will be gaps that cannot be filled, yet using a variety of sources and approaches to illuminate the routines and peculiarities of our pasts. Because it is an edited volume, it lacks a single tone and some chapters are more satisfying than others. But you cannot read it without learning a lot; it is entertaining, surprising and instructive. Take, for example, the all-male Highland funeral of the 1720s, where an English observer found "pyramids of plum cake, sweetmeats and several dishes, with pipes and tobacco". When it was over the men took the remaining sweetmeats away in their hats and pockets, "which enables you to make a great compliment to the women of your acquaintance". Flirting with funeral leftovers is probably a lost art. Or the advertisement for the Saracen's Head in Glasgow in 1754, which commends the 36 bedchambers "none of them entering through another, so there is no need of going out of doors to get to them" and all the beds "very good, clean and free from Bugs". This speaks volumes about expectations. The essence of history, of course, is change. How different did everyday life become in Scotland over these two centuries?

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Elizabeth Foyster is Senior College Lecturer and Fellow in History at the Clare College, University of Cambridge
Christopher Whatley is Professor of Scottish History at the University of Dundee

An excellent informative guide on daily life. An invaluable resource for me, as I write historical fiction.

I was hoping for a lot more. This is a collection essays with very little stitching. Information can be teased out of it.

A good book for the basics on Scotland during this period.

Well written detailed history

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