



Maids, Wives, Widows: Exploring Early Modern Woman's Lives 1540-1714

Dr. Sara Read

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Maids, Wives, Widows is a lively exploration of the everyday lives of women in early modern England, from 1540-1740. The book uncovers details of how women filled their days, what they liked to eat and drink, what jobs they held, and how they raised their children. With chapters devoted to beauty regimes, fashion, and literature, the book also examines the cultural as well as the domestic aspect of early modern women's lives. Further, the book answers questions such as how women understood and dealt with their monthly periods and what it was like to give birth in a time before modern obstetric care was available. The book also highlights key moments in women's history such as the publication in 1671, of the first midwifery guide by an English woman, Jane Sharp. The turmoil caused by the Civil Wars of the 1640s gave rise to a number of religious sects in which women participated to a surprising extent and some of their stories are included in this book. Also scrutinised are cases of notorious criminals such as murderer Sarah Malcolm and confidence trickster Mary Toft who pretended to give birth to rabbits. Overall the book describes the experiences of women over a two hundred year period noting the changes and continuities of daily life during this fascinating era.

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