
This study documents five and a half centuries of agrarian history of Ramsey Abbey in the county of Huntingdon from its foundation in the late tenth century to its dissolution in the early sixteenth. The first chapter focuses on the Anglo-Saxon period; then the book turns to the feudal elements of the post-Conquest period in terms of the structure of the abbey’s land holdings, their administration and their exploitation. In the twelfth century there was change: alienations, shifts in tenure, the introduction of crop rotation, fen drainage, forest clearing, rent changes, productivity increases, price rises. In general it was a period of growth. The study also looks at administrative developments, and their impact both on the economic life and the monastic life of the abbey. General prosperity in the thirteenth century gave way to longer and longer periods of depression in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. One chapter is devoted to a detailed study of the impact of the Black Death. Several chapters present and statistically summarize a wide range of data on both agricultural products and labour inputs. The rich records of the abbey make possible the extraction of data and the analysis of trends not possible for most other land holdings in England.

The study is enhanced by 72 tables, 11 appendices, two maps, and a detailed index.