Medieval & Renaissance City
Purpose

• Why look at Medieval & Renaissance cities
  – They contrast with our present-day cities
  – Contemporary city has its origins in these western cities
London C19th office building
• London, St Pancras Railway station
• C19th
• Manchester UK:
  – John Rylands library
• C19th
• Gilbert Scott
Victorian Gothic

- Medieval gothic was fashionable in Victorian Britain
- Victorian art often celebrated the medieval:
  - Sir Walter Scott
  - The Pre-Raphaelites
- Why?
American Gothic
Canadian Gothic
The Renaissance

• What was it?
  – A “rediscovery” of the learning of the classical world?
  – Rediscovery of rationality, urban creativity?
  – The resurgence of urban commercial relationships?
  – An invention of C19th historians?
C19th Historians

• Western urban history interrupted/disrupted by the collapse of the Roman empire
  – “The Dark Ages”

• Medieval urban revival
  – Christian cities, gothic architecture
Western Europe

- Collapse of Roman Empire (c. 450 CE) interrupts urban history in Western Europe
- Cities shrink, some vanish
- Long-distance trade shrinks
- Local warlords take over: feudalism
Feudalism

• Western Europe controlled by nobility, Church
• Rural peasants controlled by landowners
  – Church
  – nobility
• Nobility provides military protection
• Emphasis on rural subsistence
Feudalism

- A coping mechanism for
  - social and economic disorder
  - natural disasters (Volcanic eruption of 519 CE)
Eastern Europe, Middle East

- But Urban tradition continues
  - Byzantine Empire
  - Muslim cities
Revival of Western Cities

• Linked to re-emergence of long-distance trade with Eastern Europe, Middle-East
• Boom in full progress C12th, C13th
• Via cities in
  – Northern Italy
  – Flanders, Rhineland
  – Northern Germany
• Bruges, City Hall
• Bruges, bell tower
• Louvain, Belgium: Town Hall
Tallinn, Estonia
• Rostock, Germany
Urban Economy

• Mercantile urban economy begins to transform the whole of society
• Rural landowners want to make money in a market economy, not control peasants
• Cities outside the feudal system
• Cites a place of strangers, foreigners
Medieval & Renaissance Cities

• Dense populations
  – easy target for infectious disease
• Most were small
• Built as walking cities
Jerusalem, Old City

- Covers 1 sq km
- Population of 20,000
- Ancient site, re-worked by Romans
- Rebuilt in medieval period
- Ottoman walls
• Jerusalem: a divided city
• Old city divided into ‘quarters’:
  – Jewish
  – Muslim
  – Christian
  – Armenian
• Herod Gate
Urban Form

• In Europe, chief institutions at city centre
  – market
  – cathedral
  – merchants halls

• Important & wealthy citizens want to live close to city centre
Tallinn
York UK: Merchant Venturer’s Hall
Urban Form

• Social status like a Donut:
  – High status in centre
  – Lower status outside
City Walls

• Define the city
• Protection in war
• Security from bandits
• Customs & tariff barrier
• Ornamental symbol of city
Carcasonne
Bristol
• Swearing in the Mayor of Bristol
• Ricart’s Kalendar, 1479
St John’s Gate, Bristol
St John’s Guild Hall, Bristol
Smith: 1568
River Avon, Courage Brewery, Bristol
St Peter’s Church, Bristol
Housing

- Complex household structure
- Different “classes” under one roof, in one household
  - merchant, workers, servants
- Work/retail/residence blurred
Burgage yard, Bristol
Florence
Florence

- Important city of northern Italian renaissance
- City state
  - able to evade control by nobility, Pope
- Boomed on long distance trade
Florence

- Economic boom: C12th & C13th
- Economic decline: C14th
  - but flowering of architecture, art, mathematics etc.
Florence

- Small, dense, city
- C14th: 95,000 people in a 20 minute walk
  - 30,000 people/km²
- Inner city Toronto today: 10,000 people/km²
Medieval & Renaissance Cities

• Different from now:
  – Small and dense

• Similar to now:
  – Complex social patterns, complex use of space
  – Importance of long distance trade
  – Cities were centres of cultural change and innovation
INBOX

IMPROVETH THY PENIS SIZE
REDUCETH DEBT
CVT PRICE ELIXIR
WENCHES ONLINE NOW
EXPANDETH GIRTH AND LENGTH!
GET PAID TO HUNTETH
RE FUNNY JAPES LOLETH
IMPROVE THYNE CREDIT RATESTH