

Some House History Initiatives

The comments on the previous page explain why the work to record and copy old deeds is more important today than it has even been. In response, some initiatives have been undertaken at a local level

- In Kilsby, a long-term study has been under way for the last 10 years or more, to document the histories of the village's oldest houses, by analysis of surviving property deeds, study of wills and other documentation about the owners and occupants - plus detailed examination of the properties themselves, both as they are today and via old maps and photographs. Information in the deeds is expanded by details from parish registers, Enclosure Awards, Land Tax returns, Land Surveys, census returns, wills etc., many of which are held at the county record office. This in turn permits educated guesswork about the dates at which changes were made to the fabric of the buildings.

- In Crick, a similar long-term study is currently under way to record and analyse the property deeds for as many of the village's old buildings as possible. The project involved preliminary discussions with property-owners, to explain the value and importance of preserving and recording old property deeds (using the work done in Kilsby to illustrate the detailed historical picture that can sometimes be built up for a property); many of Crick's inhabitants now appreciate the relevance of such an exercise, and they have generously made their house-deeds available to be digitally photographed and recorded. Deeds for about 35 properties in Crick have already been digitised, and further sets of deeds are already in the queue; the project will run for several years to come.

- A few individual properties in other nearby villages - Braunston, Long Buckby, Barby - have been incorporated into the above exercises for Kilsby and Crick, as the opportunities arose.

- In Potterspury, an experienced local historian has made a study of several of the oldest houses, linking present-day observations to data held in old maps and other documentation to build up a history of the properties over almost 300 years.

- In Blisworth, a similar exercise is under way, to build up a picture of the village over the centuries with reference to the evolution of its buildings. This too is being led by a dedicated local historian.