

A single house history in isolation can reveal very little of the history of the community as a whole. However, when several house histories are available for a whole group of neighbouring properties, it becomes possible to look for similarities and trends, and also for exceptions and anomalies - for example, the ways in which the community as a whole was affected by national events (such as the Napoleonic Wars), or by advances in agriculture or technology (enclosure of the common fields, the arrival of the railway, piped water etc). Social distinctions within the community may also show up - ways in which families copied each other, or sought to demonstrate their perception of their own level in the society. The ways in which the village society functioned can also be studied - for instance, how many had lodgers, how many kept servants, how many auxiliary trades and industries existed within the village (eg dressmakers, carpenters, blacksmiths, innkeepers, cobblers and shoemakers, food shops), who owned the land, how many lived in rented accommodation, how many worked on the land - the list of possibilities is endless.

### **Building up a history of the evolution of a village**

By the time that individual histories have been prepared for a group of houses in a village, there should be sufficient material to enable analysis of the evolution of the village itself.

Certain common trends will almost certainly have appeared by now - for instance:

- several houses with date-stones covering a relatively short period, indicating much building/re-building over this period
- evidence in several properties of changes carried out at the time of new turnpike roads, canals or railways
- evidence of changes in the function of some buildings - e.g., former barns in the village centre that were converted to living accommodation after Enclosure of the common fields in the 1770s
- evidence of re-construction using new materials - e.g., stone to replace previous timber-framed structures, brick to replace cob
- evidence from house deeds and other sources that the owners of several of the properties were similarly affected by the post-Napoleonic economic depression

Some of these characteristics will be the result of changes that occurred at national level - such as war and economic depression - so we should expect to see similar results for **all** local villages. Others relate to more localised events - such as the arrival of the canal in Crick, and the railway in Kilsby, whereas in Barby neither canal nor railway came directly through the

village - and these factors might be expected to lead to differences in the evolution of neighbouring villages.

Some specific instances are listed below, under the heading 'Observing Trends and Anomalies'.

## Reference Material

**Useful reference books (especially the first item in the following list):**

- 'Period House Fixtures and Fittings, 1300-1900', by Linda Hall, 2005, obtainable from [www.countrysidebooks.co.uk](http://www.countrysidebooks.co.uk)
- 'Traditional Buildings of Britain', by R.W. Brunskill, 1981, obtainable from [www.orionbooks.co.uk](http://www.orionbooks.co.uk)
- 'Houses and Cottages of Britain', by R.W. Brunskill, 1997, obtainable from [www.orionbooks.co.uk](http://www.orionbooks.co.uk)
- 'Medieval Housing', by Jane Grenville, Leicester University Press 1997

## Online database of Listed Buildings:

The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments, working with English Heritage, has built up an archive of descriptions for all listed buildings. If you are investigating a property that is listed (or that you suspect might be listed), you should start by searching their online database (at <http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/>) to see what descriptions are already available.

Bear in mind, however, that many of these surveys and descriptions were based only on an external viewing, and in most cases no internal survey of the building was carried out - so use the data with caution, and be prepared to extend and/or amend it during your own more detailed investigation.

## Observing Trends and Anomalies

This sub-section is ongoing, and will be updated and extended as results are obtained from the

studies on individual properties.