

TRACING THE HISTORY OF YOUR HOUSE, STREET OR NEIGHBOURHOOD

INTRODUCTION

This document suggests a basic process to research the background to your house, street or neighbourhood and identifies sources of information and help available.

The process can be likened to “detective work”, a “logical process” with similarities to a scientific process. You are looking for “clues”. From these you can create some theories and then set out to prove them and reach conclusions. Because we are often dealing with incomplete information, there is a limit to the precision. It is satisfactory to have a “high probability” that a conclusion is correct, when it is supported by as many verifiable facts as possible.

To support the process here, there are helpful hints available from <http://www.house-detectives.co.uk/intro.htm> where you will also find details of “Tracing the History of Your House” by Dr Nick Barratt.

There is also a guide on the Centre for Bucks Studies website: http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/archives/house_history/index.htm

Many of the houses in and around Gerrards Cross were built in the last 100 years and for this period there are modern records, which have been researched by GX2006. The GX2006 website www.gx2006.co.uk will give you access to GX2006 and other information sources and “research tools”. If you do not have online access, the Gerrards Cross Library, in Station Road, can provide help and guidance. The basic research process follows:

DEFINE YOUR RESEARCH

First priority is to decide what you are interested in? Is it the history of your house? Are you interested in the Architect? Is there an Original Plan & Design? How the house has changed or what it was called in the past? Perhaps you wish to find who lived there? Where did they come from and what about their family?

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

What do you know already? Do you have **title deeds and conveyances** for the house? Have any of your neighbours or their families been at their house for a long time and what can they tell you.

The new book, “**A History of Gerrards Cross**” by Julian Hunt and David Thorpe will provide general background to the area and specific background to your neighbourhood. This can be purchased at the Exhibition and at the Gerrards Cross Bookshop

'**A Historical Atlas of Gerrards Cross**' edited by David Thorpe and Julian Hunt documents the research of the GX2006 Project with detailed maps and analysis of the development and people of Gerrards Cross.

SPECIFIC RESEARCH

If you have them, review the **Title Deeds**. Title History and Conveyances and identify previous owners and dates of transactions.

The Land Registry has **Title Deeds** for every property. These are summaries of the legal documents for the house, which are often held at the Bank or Building Society. Sometimes your solicitor will hold a file of documents, but as the historical documents are not a legal requirement, many of these old documents have been thrown away. However, maybe your immediate neighbours have documents that can be useful. The “**covenants**” that were defined 100 years ago for the land and buildings around Gerrards Cross may still apply and can constrain development, but they also specify the early owners of the land and first purchasers of specific plots or properties.

If you do not have paper records, download the **Title from the Land Registry** <http://www.landregisteronline.gov.uk> . The “Charges Register” gives dates of covenants and typically gives the owners of the land and the first purchaser. Look for other “name and date” information

Kellys Directories and Directories of Gerrards Cross are available from 1903 onwards and show who lived where and when. Up to 1940, these are available in searchable PDF format on the GX2006 website.

Starting from your house number and name today, look through the historic directories of Gerrards Cross at the entries for your street noting the position of your house in relation to others in the street. Some houses may retain the same name for some time historically. Look for the name of the original purchaser of the property in the earliest Directories.

Consult the “**Atlas**” for your road and area for general and specific information about neighbourhoods and houses.

GX2006 have researched and catalogued the **Planning Applications** made to the Eton Rural District Council up to 1937 and the Amersham Rural District Council up to 1925.

This **catalogue** is available at www.gx2006.co.uk in searchable PDF format and sorted by date of planning application, by owner, by architect, by builder and by address. Start with the “by address” version and look at the roads in your area. (NB. sometimes the entry you need is in an adjacent road.) Some of the properties have already been identified but many require your own research. It is quite likely that the original purchaser’s name will not appear in the planning database as many houses were built by developers who made the application and subsequently sold to the “original purchaser” Also many houses were built and then rented, so the Directories may show “occupier” rather than “owner”. Search the “by architect” and “by builder” may show if the “owner” was an architect or builder. Then check out against the “by owner”, was this person, owner of a number of properties?

By combining the above sources, GX2006 has produced some “**working tools**” to show the relation between: “**People, Houses and Streets**” as searchable PDF documents at www.gx2006.co.uk.

Specifically look for original purchasers names in the “People” database. This may connect with the house names, streets at which this person lived and when (according to the Directories). Or in reverse, if you have a **series of house names**, look to see if this connects with any resident’s names and dates.

If you can identify the original planning application, (or a subsequent enhancement application), **Microfiche records** of all Planning Applications are held at South Bucks District Council at ‘Capswood’, Oxford Road, Denham, Bucks UB9 4LH 01895 837200. The microfiche you want is indexed at SBDC by the same number and date in our planning database.

Once you establish that there is a plan, **Original Plans** are held at the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies, County Hall, Walton Street, Aylesbury, Bucks HP20 1UU. Telephone: 01296 382587. Book in advance. For residents in the Chiltern District Council area, the records of the Amersham Rural District Council are also in Aylesbury but these records are limited. There are Register Entries for Planning Applications but for example there are no original plans before 1920 and only selective plans after this date.

Census Information for 1901 is available from <http://www.1901censusonline.com/> and on subscription from www.ancestry.co.uk and others. This provides information on the individuals and family connections of early residents.

HELP

Online: If you are having difficulty in your research, perhaps you would like to email: info@gx2006.co.uk with your question(s). These emails will be visible on the website www.gx2006.co.uk so that if a member of the “Community” has useful information they can contact you via the website to offer advice and suggestions.

The **Library:** has supporting resources and librarians may be able to help with your questions.

RESULTS

When you have achieved some results you can summarise along the following lines: Names of Residents (and owners), with dates, names of the house, any planning application numbers. You may also have found out more about the people who lived in the house, the architect and builder, which could all be recorded.

SHARING WITH OTHERS

The GX2006 team put together a large amount of information. However, this is only the beginning. When you have done your research, perhaps you would be willing to share it with others. If so send an email with the results of your researches to: info@gx2006.co.uk We are going to experiment in gathering the results of community research and showing this on the website to help others with their researches. Please make clear the current address of the property. Information will be stored on the website and shown by street. Your name, email address and telephone number will not be shown unless you authorise this.

CONCLUSION

We hope that you enjoy this research process and that you achieve satisfaction from your results. If you do, please let us know by email to: info@gx2006.co.uk

One of the objectives of GX2006 was to discover the houses built in Gerrards Cross after the Railway came. We hope this research and your own will help to make visible the “Heritage” represented by these old houses, many of which are attractive and beautiful. It is for individual owners and groups in the community to “save” these properties from the demolition squad to preserve the Heritage and retain the charm that will give pleasure to future generations and continue to make Gerrards Cross a desirable place to reside in the future.