

BAKEWELL AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

This to this in 60 years



On 24th April 2019 Bakewell and District Historical Society was treated to a most interesting talk by George Challenger on “The Alternative Histories of Bakewell's Old House” now known as The Old House Museum. George a member of B&DHS since 1970, was chairman 1980-3, chair of museum committee 1983-1992 and 2000-15, and project leader for a major development project at The Old House in 2010. Over the years George has compiled records of all the articles about OHM and has collected all the photographs of its demise and rebirth, so he was the ideal person to guide the audience through the various historical eras of this the oldest house in Bakewell.

Really the story begins at the end as it were when in the 1950s Charles Bradbury, a local builder with a sense of history, was allowed by the owners, Bernard Harrison, his sister Violet and their agent, John Marchant Brooks, to examine the building, the council had put a demolition order on the southern part of the property under the slum clearance law. Bradbury whose mother had lived in the middle part found several bits of evidence of the original Tudor house. On the strength of these finds he urged the agent to get the demolition order lifted, which was successful. Bakewell and District Historical Society was formed in 1954 and began slowly to restore the house and delve into its secrets.

Originally it was thought that the first build was T shaped and included the houseplace and the room beyond. Now the thinking is that the original building consisted of the four southern rooms being built in 1534. The next set of four rooms was completed towards the end of the 16th century.

George talked of finding the original agreement between Ralf Gell and the Dean and Chapter of Lichfield Cathedral in 1535, the possibility of a priests' hole (more likely a garderobe) in one of the upper rooms, and the results of various digs around the foundations over the years and the structure of walls showing evidence of windows and doors. Arkwright's conversion of the property into 5 then 6 tenements to house mill workers in 1778 was highlighted; there are surviving metal windows and a Victorian staircase.

What a wonderful insight into the history of this precious old house and the effort to trace and record that history for posterity. Thank you George.

The next meeting of the Bakewell and District Historical Society is on May 22nd 7.30pm at The Friends Meeting House, the subject is “The FitzHerberts of Tissington” All are welcome

