

# Redlynch & District Local History Society

## How Old is Your House?

by Nigel Walker of the Wiltshire Buildings Record

A well-attended meeting heard Nigel Walker of the Wiltshire Buildings Record give a presentation, "How Old is Your House?" in which he emphasised that it is essential to place a dwelling in its context and not to consider it in isolation.

In order to do this, it is necessary to examine documentary sources such as deeds, probate inventories and photographs and to look at the way in which earlier occupants would have lived in the property as well as studying its architectural features.



The materials and methods of construction of both the roof and walls should be taken into account. A tiled roof with a pitch of 47 degrees or greater was probably originally thatched whilst the bond used in the brick work can suggest a building's age and the social pretensions of the owner, some bonds requiring far more bricks than others and entailing much greater expense.

Other features such as doorways and window frames can provide an indication of the period in which a house was erected, older doors have fewer panels whilst sash windows suggest an Eighteenth or Nineteenth Century date.

In the same way an inglenook fireplace was probably constructed in the late Sixteenth or early Seventeenth Centuries whilst a cast iron grate is likely to be of Victorian date.

The manner in which timber was cut is apparent from its surface, the marks left by a medieval adze, a cross cut saw used in a pit and a circular saw driven by a stationary engine all being distinctive.

The arrangement of the rooms suggests the way in which the original occupants would have lived and worked. In an early Seventeenth Century farmhouse there was a main hall which was a communal room with a kitchen attached although a private sitting room for the farmer's wife was added later.

The meeting concluded with numerous questions.

Our next talk is Mompesson House by Emma Jones at 7:30pm 2 May at Morgans Vale and Woodfalls Village Hall; all welcome.