

## DUNTON BASSETT: A VILLAGE HISTORY

by Dunton Bassett Local history Group

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This delightful publication is an excellent example of what can be achieved given interest and application by a village heritage project. It reflects not only the investment in time and effort of each contributor but also the co-operation and team work between group members of the Dunton Bassett History Group.

The book covers the development of the village with contributions concerning its early and medieval period, although much of the book covers themes which mainly are rooted in 19th and 20th century history. These include church, school and social life against a background of changing national trends, and in this respect is a microcosm of what has affected villages and village life over the centuries.

The book also gives a strong sense of community involvement. The 'Dunton Dig' carried out by Vicki Score of the University of Leicester Archaeological Services, reports not only the involvement of the local adult community, but also participation by pupils of the school.

Another charming feature of the book is a table showing who lived in various parts of the parish in 1796 and showing its present location. Thus a house and orchard owned by Christopher Holyland in 1796 is now 3-7 Bennett's Hill. This must tickle the curiosity of anyone moving into the village, and perhaps act as a stimulus for them to become involved in digging up more history!

Included in accounts of the social life of the village is the number of pubs that have come and gone over time. Local histories often ignore this aspect of village life which has offered a social centre for centuries. There are also accounts of sports clubs and friendly societies that acted as sickness and burial associations for the poor before the advent of the welfare state.

Important and influential developments such as the coming of the railways and motor transport and the growth of industries in the village are covered. The impact of the two world wars is recorded and sprinkled with reminiscences of the lives of evacuees, memories of prisoner of war camps and the sacrifices made by local men in the armed forces, remembered in the war memorials. There are also accounts of the growth of local societies, such as the horticultural society, which make up the fabric of village social life.

The last part of the book includes a section on oral history where locals recount how their world has changed. The Twigdon family, for example, who lived in the village for centuries, but brought new fangled inventions such as mechanical roundabouts, picture shows and elaborate travelling organs. There is also a guided walk through the village, which would be of great interest to the newcomer and the visitor to Dunton Bassett.

The book is an intriguing combination of approaches to local history incorporating chronological and thematic developments, as well as recorded memories, archive searches and the recording of buildings. Reading through the book one is impressed by the amount of time and effort given by members of the Dunton Bassett History Group. Their efforts have been ongoing since the 1980s and display a devotion and dedication worthy of the heritage industry now so much part of the fabric of local history. As the authors state at the end of the book, 'what fun it has been!'

