

*'Most of the Cottages and many of the best houses had a large vault as large as a small living room, and this was used for years without being emptied. Others of the more respectable class would have a box about 3 or 4ft long and about 18ins deep. This would be used until full.'*²

When the manure had rotted well down it would then be spread on the fields. Well-rotted manure has little smell, but the fresh dung must have made an honest contribution to the miasma of the village and provided a perfect habitat for teems of flies and vermin of all types.

The provision of clothing

Tanning

From the mid sixteenth century a gradual growth in industrialisation could be discerned. Tanning now took place in tanyards by skilled workers. There was a ready market in Banbury for shoes, saddles, baldrics etc and many surrounding villages had their own tanyard. To tan a skin was to saturate it with tannin, which was obtained from coarsely powdered bark of oak and hemlock.

First the hide was soaked in lime for about two weeks to soften it, before being dehaired with a blunt knife.



Preparing the hides in a tanyard.

It was then soaked for 24 hours in diluted ammonia-rich pigeon dung to soften it further. Finally it was soaked in the tanning solution for up to four weeks. The skins were then hung up to dry before being 'dubbed' in grease – a mixture of cod-liver oil and melted tallow. The fumes must have been overwhelming!³

² R.B. Wood-Jones: *Traditional Domestic Architecture in the Banbury Region* (Manchester, 1963; 2nd edition, Wykham Books, Banbury, 1986).

³ C.B. Cartwright: *The Household Cyclopaedia of General Information* (London, 1881). Above illustration taken from this.