

Research Directions

The Freehold Estate in Grimsbury was established in the heyday of the movement. It shared the dense allocation of lots, provision of church and pubs (!) which may have characterised the early days. Villa 'gentrification' was marginal and distinctly urban in character. Its residents were of the aspiring middle class who sought voting power as well as property. It was close to the associated town, developed steadily and provided a power base for a new urban influence. The 'two or three similar property' pattern is not so evident in other schemes and there were few opportunities for the park side gentrification evident elsewhere.

Banbury Freehold Estate, although locally instigated, was very much part of a national movement, as is evident from this note on a scheme contemporary with that of Banbury in another market town, Colchester:³²

'The Botanic Gardens east of the castle were to be sold in 1851, and by 1852 the National Freehold Land Society, which was affiliated with the Liberal party, had bought them and small plots had been laid out there in Castle and Roman Roads by T. Morland and C. Wilkinson; 72 lots were bought by builders, other craftsmen, merchants, and a few gentlemen, 41 of them from Colchester, the rest from the London area.'

Any search for origins, and for Banbury's typicality, will need to dig deep into the origins of the Freehold movement and into the land acquisition, design and ownership of the earliest Taylor-generated schemes. These were tightly-packed urban terraces, much improved in terms of layout and condition, but intended for urban workers who wanted to better themselves. In terms of research it is also likely that many of these early schemes will have suffered from wartime damage or subsequent urban renewal.

Rapidly, it seems, and with Metropolitan influence and national intentions, the process of Freehold establishment moved 'up market'. Tradesmen and professionals became more involved, villas infiltrated terraces and, in the case of Colchester, outsiders joined the aspiring local population.

The Freehold movement was a major political step in the mid-nineteenth century, generating a pattern of urban form which deserves recognition. Aside from being a residential area whose time for considered conservation

³² *Victoria County History* (1994) : 'Modern Colchester : Town development,' *A History of the County of Essex: Volume 9: The Borough of Colchester* (1994),pp.199-208. (Online) Retrieved 4:IV:2006 URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=21988>