

**VERNACULAR BUILDINGS RESEARCH**  
**HENLEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL GROUP**

**Parish/County:** Henley-on-Thames, Oxon  
**Street and House name:** 16 Friday Street

**Owners:** Ian and Tracy Florance  
**Recorder:** Ruth Gibson  
**Site visits:** 4.3. and 6.8.2010

**Listing grade and entry text:** Gd II Late C 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>, painted brick façade, tiled roof  
(for detailed description see p. 39 of the DOE Greenback listing document)



**Known History:** This building is closely associated with No.14, apparently having been in the joint ownership of the Benwells, a large and wealthy local family from 1669 or earlier. In a will and inventory of William Benwell of that date reference is made to two houses in Henley, which are let to Thomas Burgies and Thomas Houlding. The title deeds of No. 16 refer to a will of 1738 which shows that William Benwell, the elder, of Rotherfield Peppard ( i.e. Cowfields Farm) owned ‘*two messuages, malthouse etc standing on the south side of a certaine street in the Parish of R.Greys, called Fryday Street*’. Those mentioned in 1669 and 1738 may be the same properties, but we cannot be certain.

Since No.16 is only separately mentioned in the title deeds from 1813 onwards one may assume that the *two messuages* mentioned in 1738 not only referred to what later became 14/16 but also to another property; maybe the one lost when Queen Street was built on the west side, or that adjoining on the east, which had clearly been attached to the gable wall of No.16. Since both were demolished without a record, we will never know what the buildings themselves might have told us, but more research into the Benewell family might bring answers.

All we know from the 1878 OS map is that No.14/14a was about twice its present size, probably very impressive with two, close studded, timber framed gables, like the surviving one. The map shows that it had a long rear range (the maltings often referred to ?) and a wide gateway to the yard; all now lost under the tarmac of Queen Street.

For more details see Hilary Fisher’s summary of documentary research of the deeds of No. 16 as well as A.Cottingham ‘The Hostelries of Henley’ under the ‘Black Horse’ and the ‘Plough’.

**Map ref., date of 1<sup>st</sup> map, type of plot.** Located in Friday Street south, formerly part of Rotherfield Greys parish. It is shown on the 1<sup>st</sup> O.S. map of 1878 on a small plot, the same as now, carved out of the much larger plot occupied by No. 14/14a. The map shows that the

principal building occupied a large plot and attached rear ranges to the south with two access gates from Friday Street. All of its western half was lost when Queen Street was laid out. It was a very sizeable property, probably built as a farm house, which is not unusual on this edge of settlement location.

**Type and use of building;** The building was a P.H until 1897; first called the Plough and later the Black Horse. It is now a dwelling house. See A. Cottingham 'The Hostelries of Henley' for more details.

**Plan form/position in street:** The building consists of 2 ¼ bays, built parallel to the street with a stair turret at the back as well as a rear ground floor room, built at right angles under a lean-to roof, which may pre-date the present front range. The building plan is trapezoidal, diminishing towards the back as the site boundaries and existing No.14 demanded. A strange, small cupboard extension juts out on the east side of the back room; this can also be identified on the 1878 plan and may be the remnant of a now vanished, adjoining structure.

**Description of front and side elevations (height, windows, entrances, shop front etc):**

The building is a tall, white painted brick building of two storeys and attic. The bricks are of standard 2 ½” width and laid in a mix of Flemish and English bond. It has an almost 1 m tall plinth, which accommodates a basement cellar under its west front room.

It is connected to No. 14 by a first floor room extension with square bay window; this room extends above the passageway between the two buildings and blocks an east facing bedroom window of No.14.

The central front door is reached by four brick steps. The east gable is tile hung, not a local tradition. This and a pier at the north east corner show, that the demolition of adjoining buildings in the 20<sup>th</sup> C. to make way for the new drill hall, caused damage to this gable, indicating that No.16 may once have been a longer building.



View of rear with the stair turret rising from the lean-to roof of the rear bay.

Adjacent to it is a large, three flue stack, which serves the rear room and the two east front rooms on both levels.

A further, stack is located at ridge level in the western bay, serving the former public bar.

The flat roof covers a modern bath room above a further ground floor extension next to the passageway.

**Description of rear elevation:** The ground floor of the rear of the building sits on level ground, despite the nearly 1 m high stair access from street level. There are no level changes within the building, which show that there is a quite substantial ground level rise between street and rear garden.

## Internal evidence

**Ground Floor:** This is accessed from steep steps leading from the pavement to the central doorway, which in turn opens into a small lobby in front of the steep, straight central staircase. A door to the right gives access to the west room, which must have once been subdivided into two, as a triangular, corner type brick stack with fire place juts into it. The room has vertical boarding up to dado height around its walls which includes the window recesses with their window seats. This is a very typical way of protecting the walls of much used rooms after the square, full height panelling of the C18<sup>th</sup> had fallen out of fashion. It is a strong indication that this was the public bar of the Black Horse and probably dates from alterations carried out by Brakspear's in the early-mid 19<sup>th</sup> C.



Ground floor, west room, partly divided by a later fire place, which has the foot print of a triangle. A typical way of introducing fire places into an existing building, found from the late 18<sup>th</sup> C. onwards. The front part of the room, with its stout boarding, would have been the public space, the rear room the bar area with access to the adjoining cellar stairs; see picture below of the divided stable door( top flap is folded up below the slope of the stairs)



Small glass panel peep hole

The cellar is accessed from a staircase between bar and east front room. The latter was very probably the private room of the publican. It has several features which point to this. There is a



small window in the top of the 2-panel door – for keeping an eye on the bar and cellar?; its walls have rectangular panels up to dado height, rather than the hard wearing vertical planking seen in the east room; it also has an attractive, C18<sup>th</sup> corner display cupboard set into the side of the chimney breast. The fire place is located within the main stack of the house between the east front and rear rooms. The central axial beam in the ceiling is chamfered with a stop at each end. Whilst the cupboard and panels can easily have been re-used from an earlier structure, the exposed ceiling beam seems to be in its original position and suggests a C17<sup>th</sup> date of construction.

The rear, east room is located at right angles to the front, under a sloping lean-to roof; it shows exposed wall plates on each side, which are rather crudely fashioned from roughly squared tree trunks, especially the west wall one, and were probably not meant to be seen or may indicate that this room was built as a service room, for storage or stabling. The shallow cupboard at its south-eastern end, which is 1.60m long by 0.60 to 1m deep and juts out beyond the east wall into the neighbouring curtilage indicates that No. 16 itself having been a longer building.



Very curvy west wall plate indicating lack of good quality timbers

East wall with exposed, straight cut plate; below are the doors to the external cupboard.

The kitchen and utility rooms on the western, rear side seem mainly brick and flint built, single storey and appear to have been added and changed at various stages. Certainly the lower part of the stair case turret would have been located here. A strange features is a small yard space, now totally enclosed, which might have been accessible from the passageway between both houses.

**Cellar:** This is a basement, rather than a cellar as half of it lies above ground with a delivery access directly from the street. It is 1.93m high, 3.45 m long and 2.95 m wide and its eastern corner is occupied by the brick relieving arch supporting the F.P. above. It has brick walls, of standard size bricks laid in English bond, a brick floor and brick steps with timber nosing.



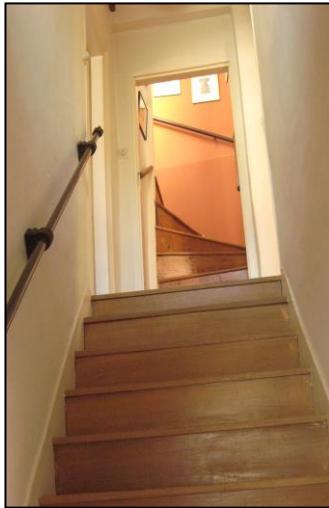
Bottom of cellar stairs

Brick stack relieving arch in the cellar

Barred delivery cellar opening

The cellar ceiling is supported by a heavily curved spine beam measuring some 24 x 26 cm with chamfered edges. It supports the ceiling joists, which are tenoned into its top. These are of varied sizes and probably second hand, at least in part. Although it is a solid construction, it indicates a shortage of good structural timbers.

**Upper Floors:** The first floor is reached by the straight staircase rising just inside the front door. In its character it is very much a no-nonsense stair, seen in Victorian houses and probably replaces an earlier one, such as the newel staircase, which is located in the rear turret and still connects the 1<sup>st</sup> and attic floors. This is very much a C16<sup>th</sup> /17<sup>th</sup> type of stair, which would normally have started at ground floor level and may well be the earliest surviving feature of this house, if it is in its original position.



Ground to 1<sup>st</sup> floor stair

Rear newel stair, 1<sup>st</sup> floor to attic

Attic landing in half bay

The east first floor room has a small fire place in the south wall, i.e it is part of the three flue rear stack. It also has an exposed axial beam, chamfered but with only one stop at the western end.

The west room has been subdivided into several spaces with later stud walls and a modern rear bathroom extension; some timber framing is visible at the western end where it joins the timber frame of No. 14. The shape of this room is governed by the large, triangular space of the stack, the substantial first floor bay window as well as the side extension above the passageway. This extension covers the formerly external east wall of the timber framed building including an ovolo moulded window, indicating that at the time this extension was built Nos. 16 and 14 were still in one ownership, i.e. no later than 1813 (see attached notes by Hilary Fisher).

**Attic: Roof structure – trusses, special features if any :**

There are two attic rooms of 4.25 m length each with dormer windows to the front north elevation. These rooms are reached from a central landing, a narrow bay set between two roof trusses. These roof structures consist of principal rafters and purlins, which, where visible, appear to have been altered to allow for access throughout the roof space. The apex of the roof is hidden by a plaster ceiling throughout, which makes it impossible to assess further structural roof details.



Simple ledged plank doors give access to the two rooms. The somewhat crudely altered purlin with supporting strut can be seen in the picture on the right.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This is a building which leaves a great many question about its development unanswered. Whilst the 1878 map and its physical connection with No. 14, the still impressive remnant of a once much grander late Tudor house, show that it was part of the same property and subservient to it, its present form and pleasing appearance do not help to determine what it may have looked like originally.

No. 16 becoming a pub, or probably first an ale house, was very likely a consequence of it belonging to a wealthy farmer (the Bewells) and maltster, who very possibly also brewed on site, as was common practice up to the mid C18<sup>th</sup> after which specialisation started.

The fact that it ceased being a PH by about 1897 may have had something to do with Greys Brewery and The Anchor, the former Greys brewery Tap. This building, although dating from c. 1600, was given a substantial face lift as well as rear extensions at about that time. It was able to offer two bars, accessed from its central entrance lobby with probably a rear dining room or third bar. This may have rendered the small front bar at the Black Horse unviable and it became a house.

The earliest feature is the rear newel stair turret, built at the back of a single-pile house. Both point to a 16<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> C. house, which was subsequently altered and enlarged several times. It has other C16-17<sup>th</sup> features such as the chamfered and stopped axial beams, the three flue rear stack which has some narrow bricks.

It has C18<sup>th</sup> features such as the square panelling, 2-panel doors, corner cupboard and the fire place built across the corner of the west bar. However, this continued as a way of inserting fire places into existing buildings well into the C19<sup>th</sup>. The basement cellar must be contemporary as it has the brick support for this F.P. Its curvy tree trunk, used as the axial beam, must have been difficult to work, as a level floor surface was had to be produced for the room above. No medieval or Tudor carpenter would have used such timber. So what was there before this cellar was inserted and what lies below the rest of the house which has no cellars? The fact that the building stands nearly 1 m above the pavement strongly suggests that this late cellar replaces



something else. Was it a basement store/shop, accessed directly from the street? There are other examples of this in the town.

The brick façade and fenestration, including the first floor bay window look C19<sup>th</sup>, but painted brickwork is notoriously difficult to assess as its texture, colouring and pointing mortar have been hidden. The bricks appear to be standard 2 ½” in width, laid in mainly Flemish bond but with English bond between the windows and may date to the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> C.

I feel that the close physical relationship between the two buildings, as again illustrated in the photographs below, holds the clue to the past of the old Black Horse; but it still needs unravelling. Perhaps research of the Benwell family will eventually tell us more; after all they were the owners until Henry Benwell sold the property in 1796, by which time much of what we see today would have existed.



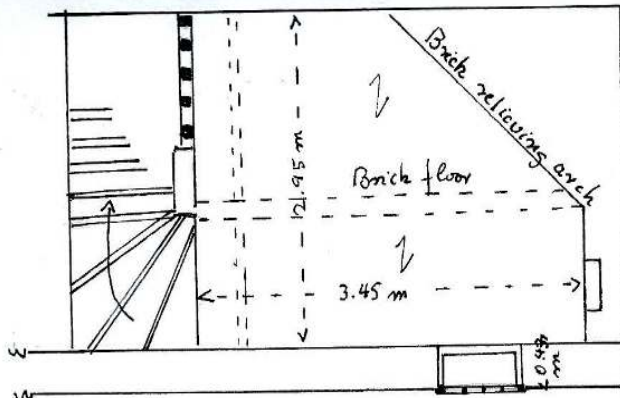
Passageway between Nos 16 and 14

Interior of passageway with the close studded timber frame and early C17<sup>th</sup> mullion window of No 14 on the left

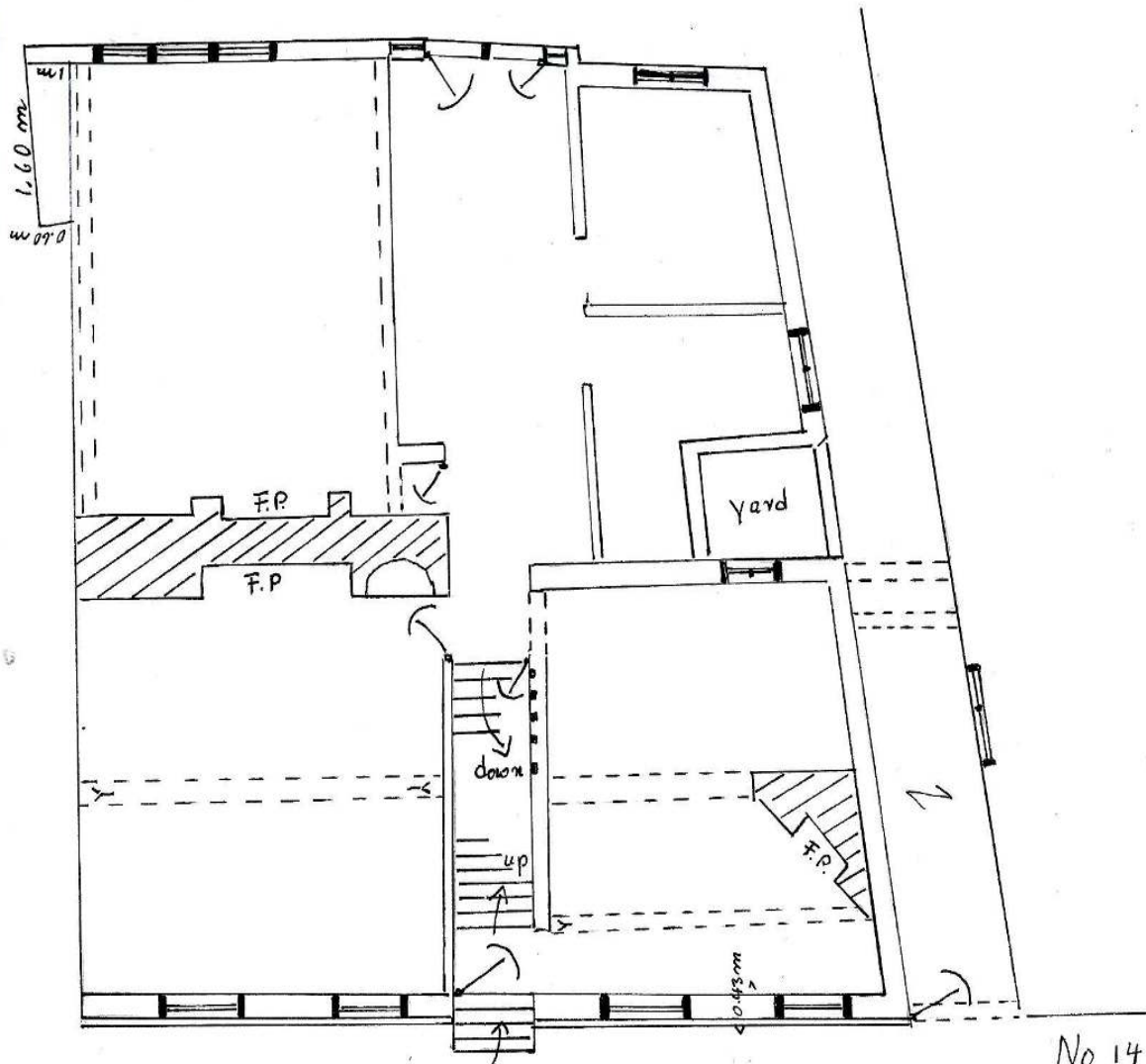
**No 16 Friday Street  
Henley-on-Thames**

Annotated sketches of ground  
floor and basement cellar

- not drawn to scale -



Basement Cellar under west front room  
1.93 m high



Ground floor plan  
above 0.96 m brick plinth  
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G. floor looking east to living room. NB simple square p...



Georgian corner cupboard next F.P. east front room 0...



Lambs tongue stop in ceiling beam 015



lean-to roof and small side piece, now a cupboard - s...



Newel stair in rear stair turret 023



Plank cupboard behind inserted corner FP 017



Rear view of 14a and 16 Friday Street 4.3.10 002



Rear view. N.B stair turret rising at back of front rang...



Repaired purlin in west attic 020



Stair turret and main stack 4.3.10 003



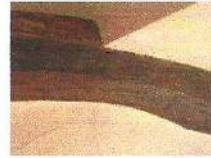
Straight stair behind front door, newel stair above 010



1st floor looking east across landing. 025



1st floor, rear west room where it joins No. 14a 024



16 Friday Street 4.3.10 009



16 Friday Street 4.3.10 027



16 Friday Street 4.3.10 028



19th C. beaded plank panelling in west fr. room...



Attic cross wall 021



Attic landing 022



Attic purlin 019



Basement window 026



Ceiling beam disappears into corner F.P. wall 014



Cellar door 4.3.10 018



Corner F.P. in west front room 011



Corner FP with niches in west fr. room 013



East back room, cupboard door open 4.3.10 005



East front room 007



East front room ceiling beam stopped 008



East wall, prob. altered when adj. bldg. was removed 031



Flying freehold over 14 Friday Street 4.3.10 029



Front door c 90cm above street level 030

## No 16 Friday Street, photographed 4<sup>th</sup> March 2010

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