

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

Parish/County: Henley-on-Thames

Owners: Catherine Hanley, No. 22,
David Durrant, No. 20

Street and House name: 20-22 Greys Road

Recorder & report:

Ruth Gibson

Date: 12.6.07



Listing grade and entry text: Grade II

'16/17th century timber framed buildings with colour washed brick infill. Old tiled roof, hipped at west end but coped gable end with corner pier and ball finial at east end. 2 storeys, 5 windows, mostly early 19th casements with glazing bars. Ground floor has 2 doors with small flat hoods on brackets. At rear; 1 story painted outshut'

NB. Listing entry is wrong with regard to the fenestration. There are 3 Yorkshire sliding sashes at ground floor level, and 3 casements at first floor level. This type of window was in use throughout the 19th century. There are 3 additional single light windows, inserted to light up the two staircases.

Known History: The building is located on the north side of Greys Road, within the historic parish of Rotherfield Greys. On the 1844 R.G. Tithe map it forms part of the property of

Richard Taylor together with a large U-shaped building, coloured blue, described as a yard and stables.

The house is coloured pink and divided into three units. These were let: No. 22 to Thomas Bucket & an other and No. 20 to Henry Harding & others. The building has apparently continued as two separate cottages, both of which seem to have been slightly enlarged by the time the 1878 O.S. map was surveyed.

Map ref., date of 1st map, type of plot: Shown as two cottages on first OS Map of 1878, as 3 cottages, slightly longer, on 1844 Rotherfield Greys Tithe Map

Type and use of building: Two semi detached cottages

Plan form/position in street: Parallel to street, one room deep with rear outshut

Description of external elevations:

Two storeys, with upper storey partly within roof. Two plank and ledge doors with short flat hoods on brackets give access via a step down (c. 1 foot from pavement level) into the building. There are 3 g.f. windows, all of the Yorkshire sliding sash type with 6 panes per sash (12 in total). The first floor has 3 casement windows just below the eaves with 4 panes each (8 in total). All first floor and g.f. windows are of the same pattern over the entire elevation and must therefore date from the time when the house was extended at both ends.

Three single light windows have been inserted at the stairs of each cottage.

There are 4 dormer windows in the rear roofs, which appear to have been inserted at different times.

Walling material: The house is of brick to first floor level and timber framed with brick panels above, but the framing stops short of the gable ends. The framing also does not show the posts of the trusses which originally marked the bay divisions. The timber studs which define the brick panels are regular and of narrow scantling and do not reflect the framing of the interior cross walls. The bricks are covered in thick masonry paint.

The western gable is unevenly rendered covering a projecting feature, indicating that changes to its surface have taken place; perhaps as a consequence of the demolition of part of the longer building, shown on the Tithe Map ? The rear outshut is built of brick and flint, also colour washed.

Internal walls: the timber frame consists of posts and tie beam trusses with queen struts to collar and clasped purlins. The primary timbers of the building appear to be of good quality and very adequate scantling and are used in the three primary trusses, numbered I, II and III on the sketch ground plan for identification purposes.

The central truss is the only one, which is not heavily painted or weathered and clearly shows the chiselled carpenters' marks II in four locations on the tie beam, principal rafter and queen

strut. Unfortunately the two other trusses are too weathered and heavily painted to allow detection of more carpenters' marks. But it is possible that they are Trusses I and III of the original building. (The present end trusses in both cottages are certainly of a later date, as their construction does not contain traditionally framed timbers) Some straight and curved braces between main posts and purlins in trusses I – III are also visible and are of good scantling. However, the wall frames below the trusses appear to be constructed of mostly second-hand timbers with signs of previous uses and of different scantling and very irregular shapes.

Roof : Pitched roof, gabled at east end and hipped at west end. Cat's slide roof for later lean-to at the back of both cottages. The roof trusses are of the tie, queen strut and collar type. The roof space above collar is not accessible; the purlins appear to be replacements or additions, but rest on the collars, as far as these are visible.

Roof covering: Clay tiles mostly, only the outshut of No. 22 has a covering of concrete pantiles.

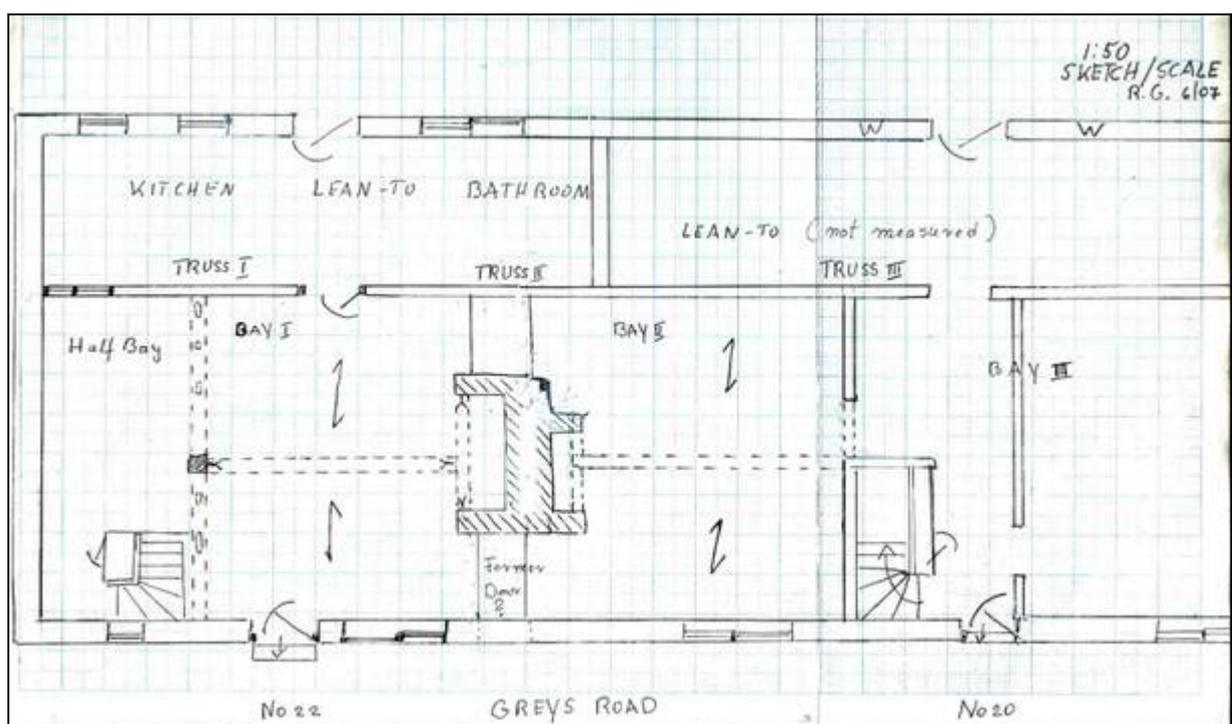
Chimneys: location on roof and materials: There is a two-flue chimney on the roof apex at a point between both cottages.

Internal evidence

Cellar: None, but there is a circa 1 foot step down into the building from the pavement.

Ground Floor: (see scaled sketch of lay out) Three bays and a half, central stack with F.P. in front of Truss II in No. 22. This is set back from the front wall sufficiently and could have once served a lobby entry before the building was enlarged and subdivided into two dwellings.

At No 22 the entrance door leads directly into the room via a step down. The ceiling timbers are exposed; the joists are narrow and machine sawn, but the axial beam is substantial and chamfered with lambs tongue stops at both ends. The former wall frame below truss I has been removed (empty mortises are still visible in the soffit of the transverse beam) making the living room substantially larger than the original one bay. This transverse beam is now supported by a stout post.



No. 20 is divided into entrance passage and staircase with rooms off on both sides. The wall frame of truss III is exposed at the staircase, showing heavy weathering and the use of some second hand timbers in the cross frame, but also the features of a traditional frame such as curved braces between wall post and tie beam. The axial beam here rests on a thick stub projecting from the brick work of the fire place.

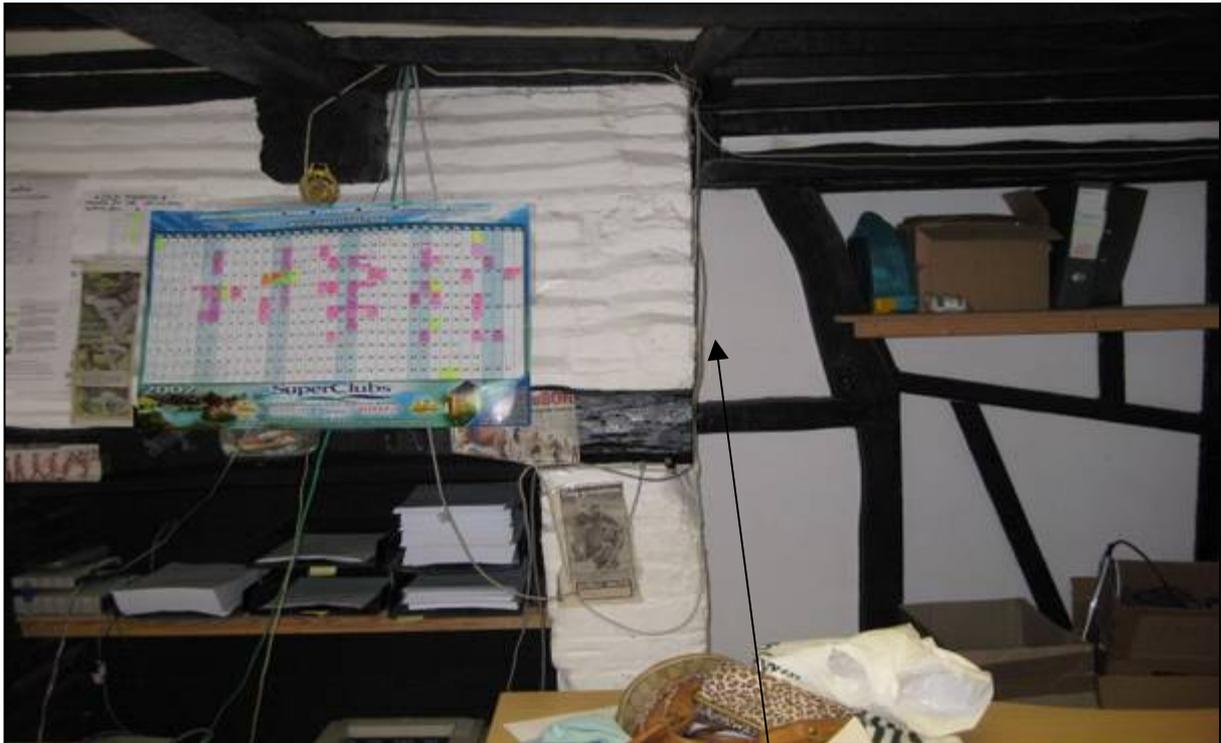


Fire places: (location and type) An axial stack with fire place built of narrow Tudor bricks is located in front of Truss II in No 22, but its rear, partly visible in No. 20 looks like a timber structure.

Was the original stack built of timber and daubed inside? And was the F.P.in No. 22 later lined with bricks and given brick jambs with timber bressumer to make it less of a fire risk once bricks were more easily available?

Closer investigation of the timber frame feature to the right of the stack in No. 20 would be very worthwhile, if it reveals signs of smoke blackening on the inside of the plaster and timbers we would have identified the first timber smoke hood in Henley to have survived.

The brick stack in No. 20 is clearly built against the earlier stack next door at No. 22, which seems to have had a timber rear hood.



Brick fire place in No. 20, apparently built against the timber framed back of the fire place in the neighbouring cottage No. 22. This timber hood (visible at the right of F.P) would have had a thick lime mortar render on the inside to make it fire proof and was apparently lined with bricks as soon as they became available.

At first floor level in No. 22 there is a shallow brick built flue attached to the rendered stack. The visible part of the flue is built of narrow Tudor bricks at the bottom with common bricks, laid on edge, above. Is this a later repair/alteration or just a way of making do when the stock of available bricks ran out? It is certainly an unusual feature.



Stairs: (location and type) The staircase in No. 20 is to the left of the entrance door accessed from a central corridor. It is a turned staircase with walk-in cupboard below, going up straight behind the wall timbers of truss III. The staircase in No. 22 is a very lightly constructed, turned, steep staircase, tucked into a corner of the half bay. Both appear to be of 19th century date.

Upper Floors:

In No. 20 the staircase leads to a small landing with bathroom and two bedrooms off it. The western room occupies a whole bay and the timber frame of truss II with its queens posts, tie and collar is clearly visible. Additional studs and new purlins appear to have been inserted, probably to either strengthen the existing roof or during a roof rebuilding (the loft is not accessible to investigate this further). The tie beam has been cut to make an opening between landing and Bay II. The framing at the east gable end of bay III is straight cut and of slight scantling; there is no tie beam, only a narrow collar; altogether the timbers show a different building method and later date than those of Bays I and II.

In No. 22 the small staircase gives access to the narrow half bay. Between it and Bay I is the substantial wall frame and truss I; both show heavy weathering as well as the use of some second hand timbers. The tie beam has been reduced in thickness to allow for a little more headroom, which however is still very inadequate. A purpose made plank and ledge door on iron hinges fills the low opening.

At the eastern end of the bedrooms rises the brick flue, which is attached to the large stack. Since it is only one brick thick it appears to have been constructed as an addition and improvement to the already existing stack. Inserted into the space between stack and north wall of the cottage is a small room, now a bathroom, formerly probably the access linking the two bedrooms. Part of Truss II is clearly visible here.

Attic: Roof structure – trusses, special features if any Not accessible above collar level

Building date, datable alteration and additions:

The architectural evidence tells us that it started as a two-bay timber framed building, as both the east facing and west facing timbers of Trusses I & III (see plan) are very heavily weathered. This early part could date from around 1600. The weathering on the former outside timber framed walls shows that the building was extended at both gables some considerable time after its first construction.

No. 20 was given a circa 5 m extension for an entrance passage, a stairway and an extra ground floor and first floor rooms. No. 22 was only extended by half a bay – some 2 m – under a hipped roof, or is this part of the third cottage, which was reduced to make way for a passageway giving access to the back, as shown on the 1878 O.S Map? At the time that map was surveyed the two cottages appear very much as they are now of the same depth (6.60 m) and length (14.50 m) long only with a more substantial garden, than is the case now. Unfortunately the adjoining U-shaped yard and stables have disappeared below the entrance to the Greys Road car park and any historic connections one might have gleaned from them have been lost.

The primary timbers of the building appear to be of good quality and adequate scantling and are used in the three primary trusses. The end trusses in both cottages are certainly of a later date, as their construction does not contain traditionally framed timbers. However, the wall frames

below the three main trusses appear to be constructed of mostly of second-hand timbers with signs of previous uses and of different scantling.

The question is was it built as two or even three cottages, or one house or did it start off as an outbuilding such as a stable/barn and converted to residential? The fire place and stack appear to have first only served the g.f. room of what is now No. 22, with the brick fire place on the back of it in No. 20 apparently a subsequent add on. Therefore, it may have been one cottage first of the lobby-entry plan type (i.e. a central doorway into a lobby in front of the stack) and only later subdivided and enlarged.

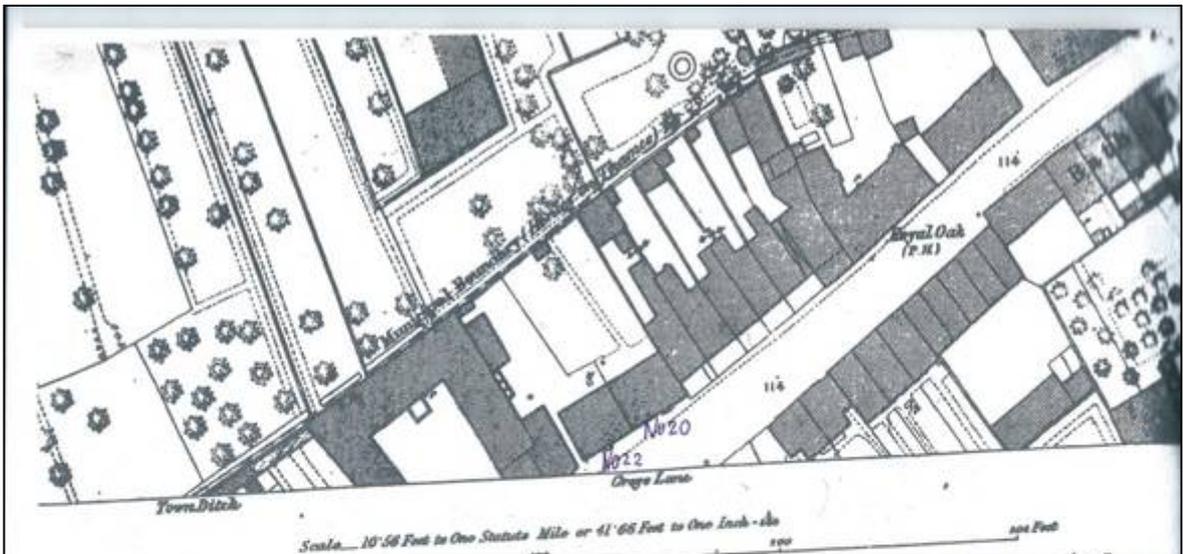
Conclusion: Originally a building of two bays with a stack, probably a timber one, inserted in the western bay, later lined with narrow 2” bricks. A later brick stack was inserted in the eastern bay. Both spine beams, which are substantial, rest on the masonry of the stacks and therefore indicate that the upper floor ceilings were inserted together with the stacks, although the narrow, machine cut joists seem rather late, but may replace earlier ones. Both stairs are probably mid to late C 19th.

The subdivision, side and rear extensions, as well as the fenestration, probably all date from the early to mid 19th century, when the population explosion brought about the subdivision of many older buildings. It is possible that this building started as an outbuilding, such as a stable or barn and represents an early conversion to residential. The somewhat sub-standard quality of many of the timbers of the wall frame indicate the use of second hand materials for some of its construction. Since they are also quite heavily weathered on the outside of Trusses I and III they appear to be original to the building, showing a shortage of good building material, which is already documented in the late 16th century.

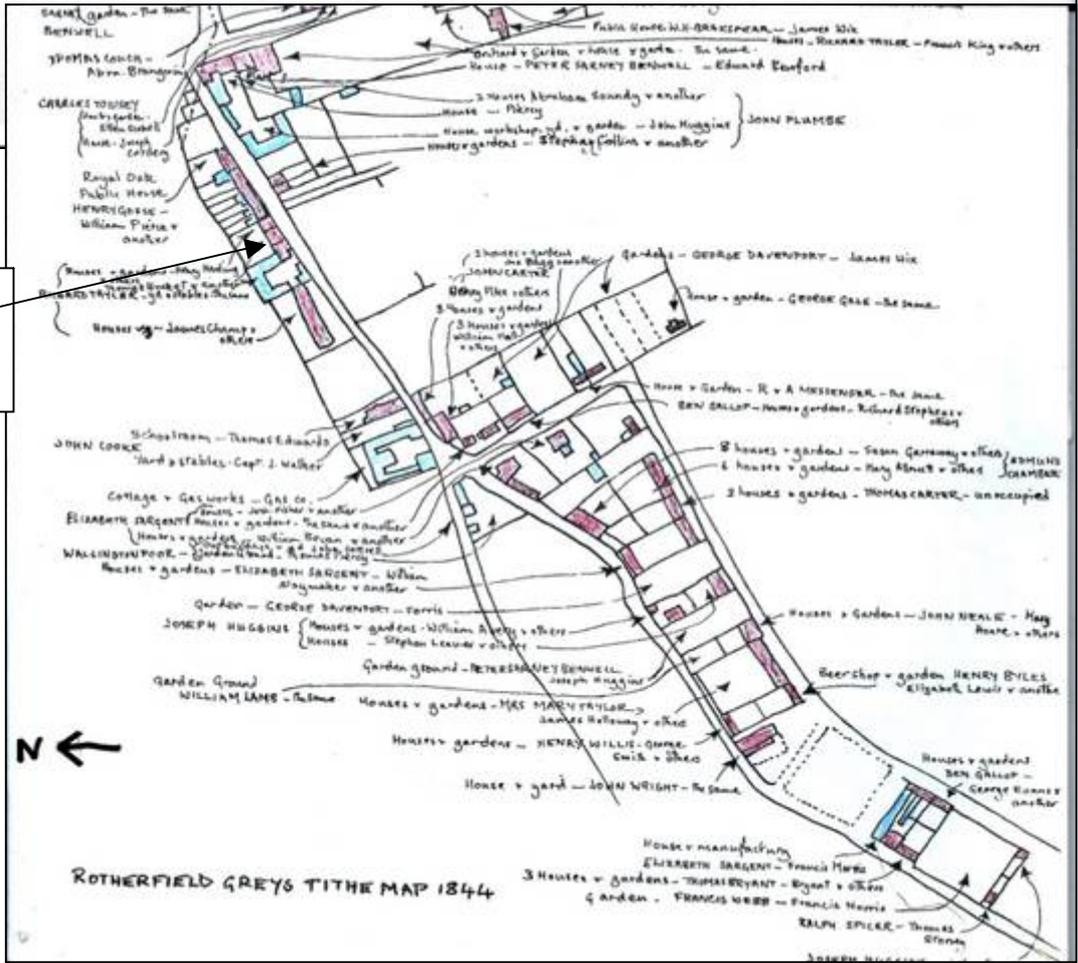
None of the timbers in the south front elevation appear to be part of the original structure, since they do not reflect the original bay divisions one would expect in a timber framed building.

The probably most exciting feature of the house is the timber fireplace, if indeed this is the case, as this would be an unusual survival of a type of fire place, which went out of use and was replaced once bricks became more generally available, especially in towns, where the fire risk was greatest.

However, this building was part of a farmstead, very much on the outskirts of the town, in fact occupying a sliver of land on the north side of Greys Road, south of the Town Ditch, which marked the boundary between Henley and the parish of Rotherfield Greys. Therefore this must have been a rural location, part of a farmstead, when it was first built, and as still indicated on the 1844 Tithe Map.



1878 OS Map, showing Nos 20 & 22 next to a large courtyard building, now Greys Rd car park entrance.



Richard Tayler: yard & stables. 2 houses & gardens