

Nos. 43 and 45 GRAVEL HILL,
HENLEY-ON-THAMES.

Owners:- Mr. and Mrs. S. Folland (No 43 'Old Basketmaker's Arms').
Mrs. A. Bowerman (No 45 'Basketmaker's Cottage').

LISTED BUILDING GRADE II:- "Probably C18. Prominent position facing down Gravel Hill. Timber framed eastern or main facade plastered, with gable. Old tile roof and brick stack. 2 storeys, 1 sash window in gable end and 2 below with central door. All sashes with glazing bars. Side or northern facade, red brick with exposed timber framing, 1 window and door under small flat hood. Gabled dormer above. Formerly 'Basket Makers Arms Inn'."



East gable No. 43.

North front Nos. 43
& 45 Gravel Hill.



This house is situated on the south side of Henley's medieval market place at the western end of the town. This market place was filled in mainly in the 18th and 19th centuries. Part of the house was used as an ale house between ca 1860 and the late 1970's, when it was sold by Brakspear's Brewery. The subdivision into two tenements probably took place sometime in the late 19thC. (see enclosed notes on previous tenants).

The oldest part of the house consists of a two-bay building, parallel to the street, its east gable facing down Gravel Hill. Although a timber framed building with large panels it now appears to be underbuilt with bricks up to first floor level in Bay I. The facade of Bay II has a brick covering with only the north-west corner post showing.

Access to No. 43 (Bay I) is through a small modern porch into a timber framed extension (Bay III on plan) to the south of the original structure. The back wall of Bay I is exposed here and shows considerable weathering. An empty mortice in the wall plate is visible in the door frame also confirming the original extent of the house.

The stack occupies the centre of the house with two fireplaces in the ground floor rooms. The fireplace in Bay I was probably rebuilt during extensive restoration work by the previous owners. The wooden lintel is a piece of re-used timber and the bread oven lintel does not represent the remnants of a former bread oven (verbal information by previous tenant Clara Hobbs). Bay II, however, appears to preserve original features in its fireplace. There are narrow bricks at the back to the right. A modern stair rises to the right of the fireplace.

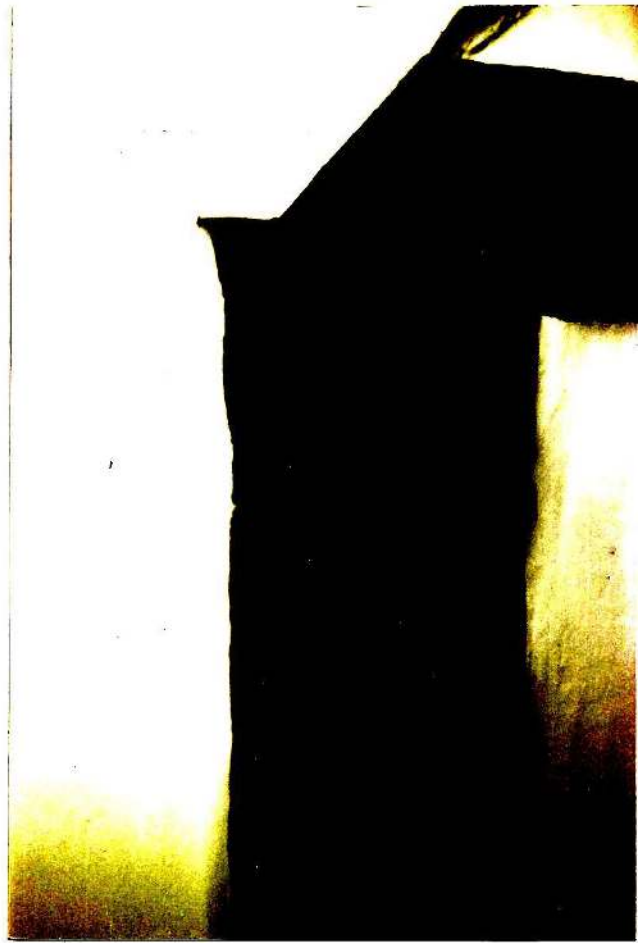
The joists in Bay II are wide and laid flat (average size 0.19m) whilst the ones in Bay I are narrower (ca 0.10m) and quite a few have been replaced.

The bedroom above Bay I shows wide curved windbraces and a queen post's truss with clasped purlins in the centre of the house, behind which the stack rises. The east gable shows the position of a former low long window (ca 1.40m) cut into the tie beam. An exposed panel on the south side shows that the infill is of lath and plaster.

The upstairs room above Bay II, now divided into bedroom and corridor, into which the modern staircase rises, shows its original timbers in the west gable wall. The slightly cambered tie beam supports two queen posts and a collar, which clasps the purlins.

Some windbraces are also visible. The wall post at the southwest corner has a wide jowl (0.29m), the post itself is 0.20m wide. The wall plate was cut away here to make room for a door to a later bedroom extension, which allows one to see the mortise and tenon joint for the wallplate.

The most interesting feature of Bay II are the three girding beams which span the width of the building just 0.95m from the central tie beam. The space between the tie beam and these timbers is partially filled by the large brick stack, and it appears that they were especially inserted to support the stack or to provide a smoke bay, into which the stack was later inserted. Whilst the lowest girding beam supports the flat ceiling joists, the two higher ones show signs of having been connected by some kind of a timber screen. There are still two timber studs immediately to the right of the stack, one resting partially against the actual brickwork. To the left of the stack the underside of the highest *girding or* transversal joist has three round holes, spaced at ca 0.30m such as are usually found in wattle panels. Unfortunately the lower girding joist does not exist anymore in this particular place to check for matching holes.



Top of wall post with cut mortise and tenon joint.

The loft shows wide rafters without a ridge piece. A close inspection was not possible, but the rafters in Bay I appear darker than those in Bay II, and it is possible that this is due to smoke blackening from an open fire.

CONCLUSION (re-written and different from that dating from 1987)

A lobby-entry house of 16th C. date with large central stack and entrance lobby with the main door facing north onto the street. Possibly the eastern bay (Bay I on plan) was still built open to the apex like a traditional open hall, as its ceiling joists are late and narrow in contrast to those of Bay II. Here the joists are wide and flat laid, typical for late medieval work and original to the house, showing that it was built with an upper, probably heated, chamber from the start. The central stack may have replaced a smoke bay, but this cannot be confirmed on present evidence.

A bread oven was added to the south side of the stack, where a narrow staircase would have been located originally.

The outshut to the back of Bay I was probably added in the 18th C. with a cellar underneath, essential for the storage of food and of course beer. Further outbuildings in brick and flint were added and some demolished, as is the case in No. 45 where the ghost of a FP still exists within the west boundary brick work. No. 43 also has the ghost of a timber framed gable wall visible in the south wall at the rear above Bay III. Parts of a heavily weathered tie beam, queen post, collar and principal rafters survive. This is the outside gable wall of a former building of similar construction and age occupying the area where the corner of Havelock Terrace stands now.

A copy of this report will go to the Royal Commission, London and to the SMR at the Oxfordshire County Museum, Woodstock

Recorded by members of the Henley Archaeological & Historical Group.

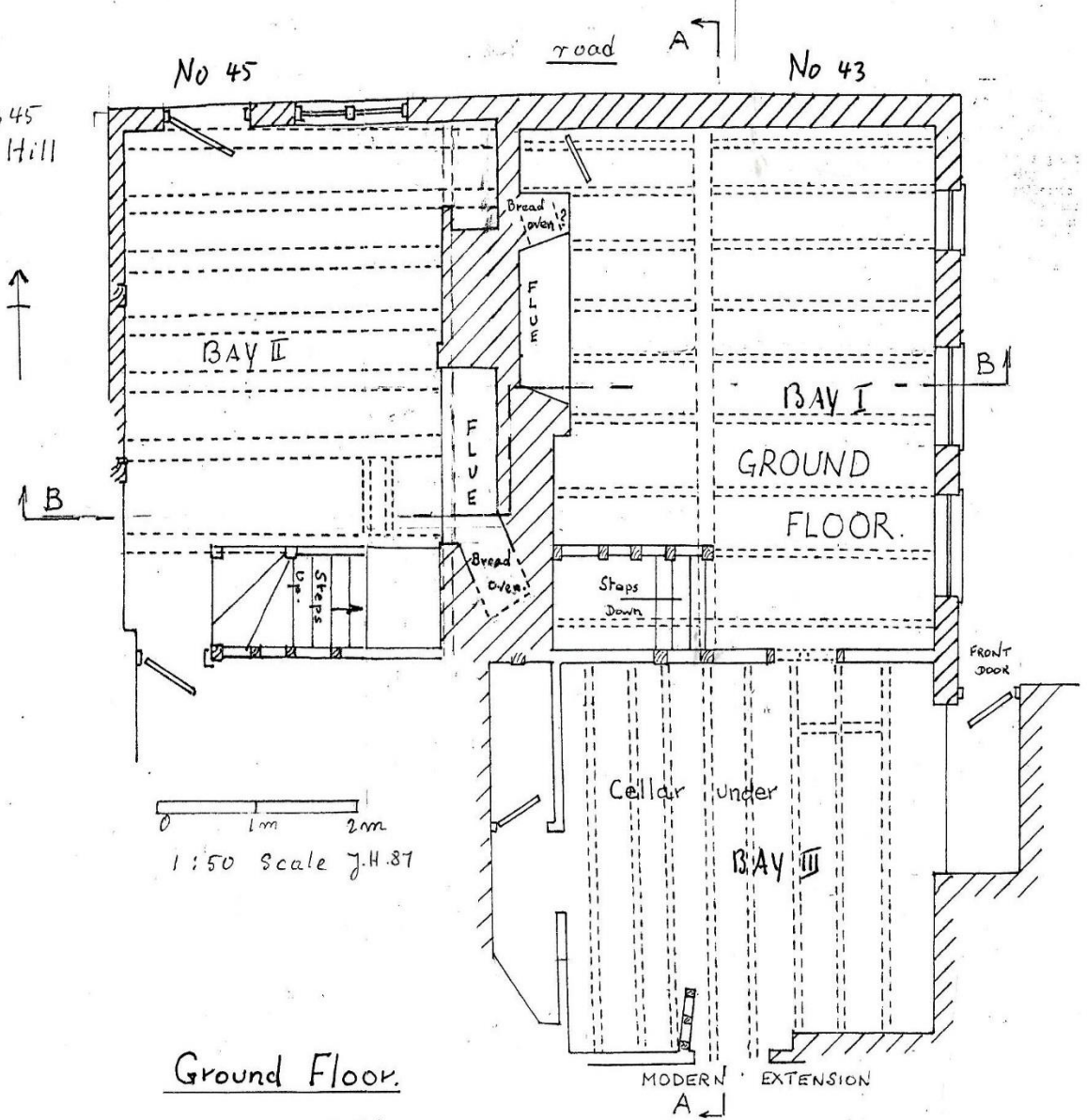
Photographs: S. Bromilow, R. Gibson

Drawings: J. Howard, W. Clenshaw

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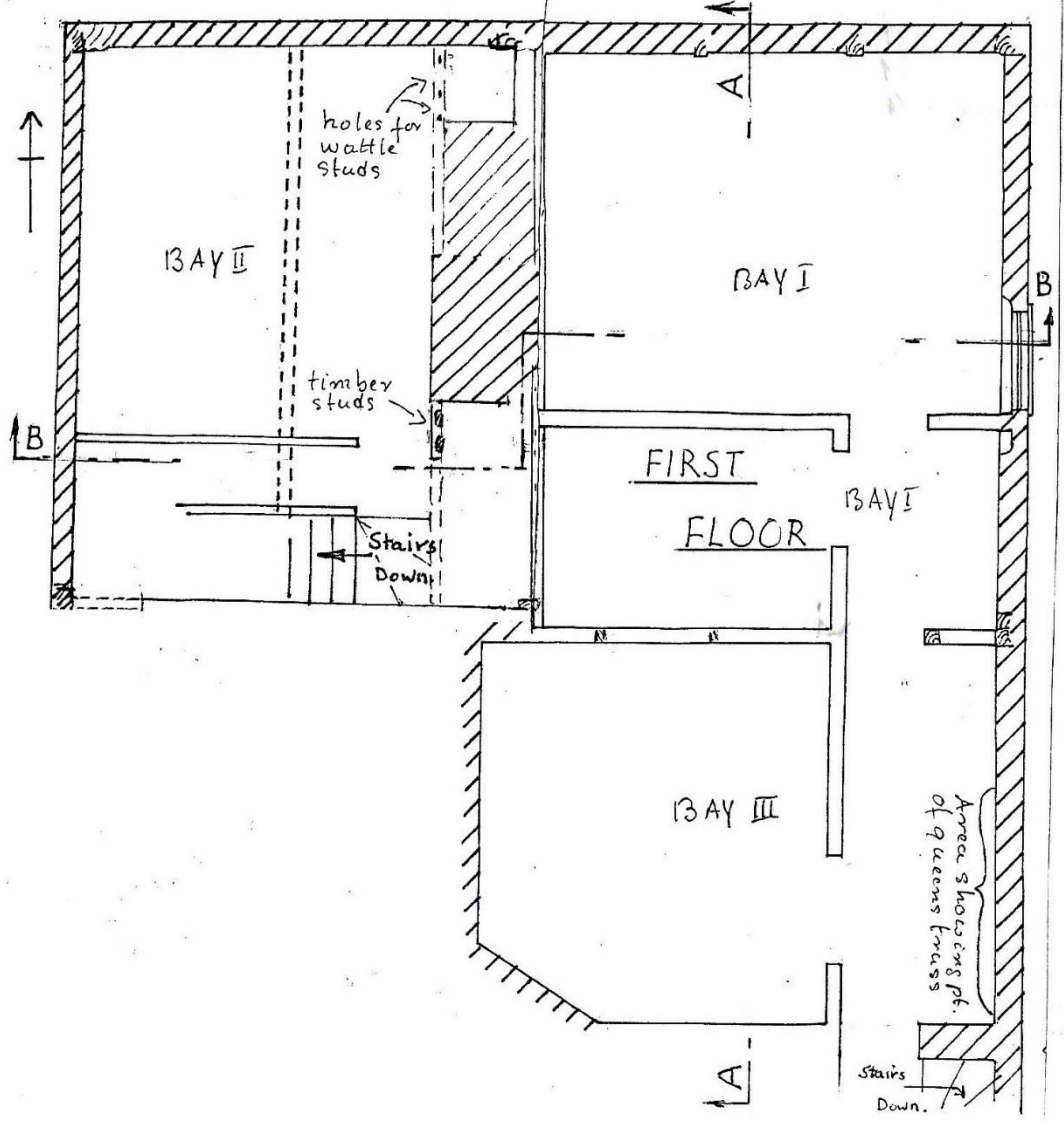
Nos 43 & 45
Gravel Hill

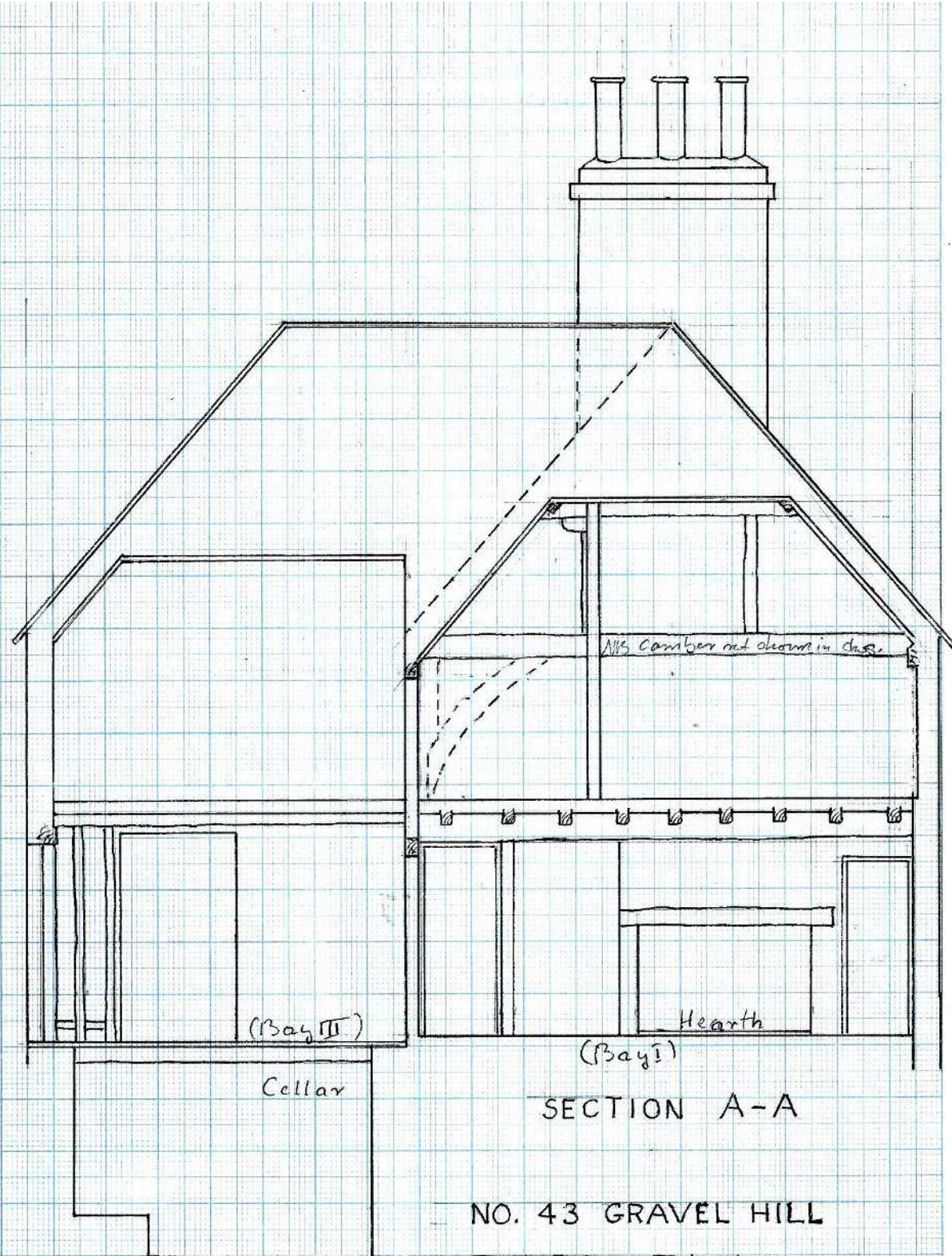


Ground Floor.

J.H./87

road





MS Camber not shown in detail

(Bay II)

Hearth

(Bay I)

Cellar

SECTION A-A

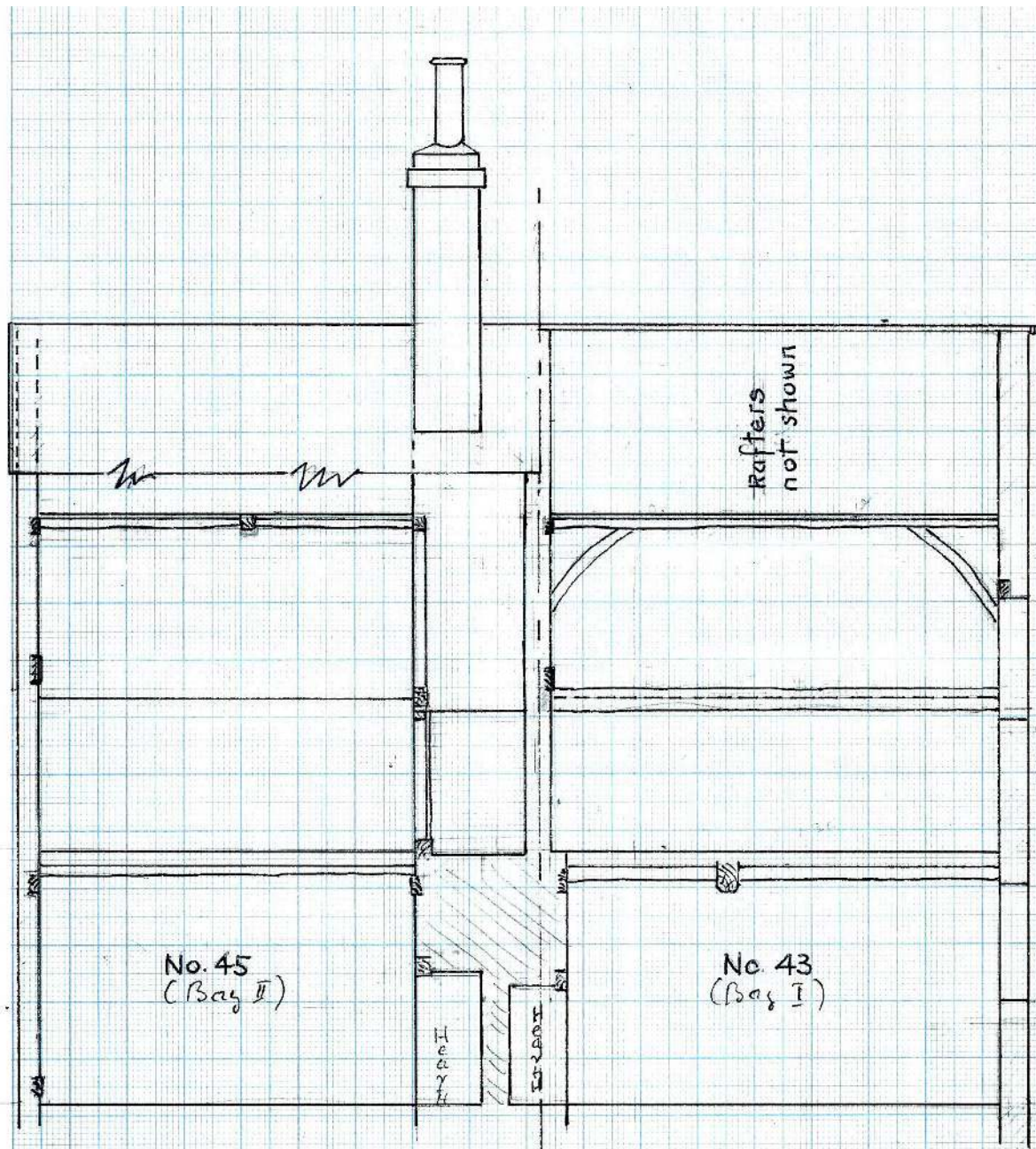
NO. 43 GRAVEL HILL

HENLEY ON THAMES

SCALE 1/50

w.c.c. 1/88





No. 45
(Bay II)

No. 43
(Bay I)

Rafters
not shown

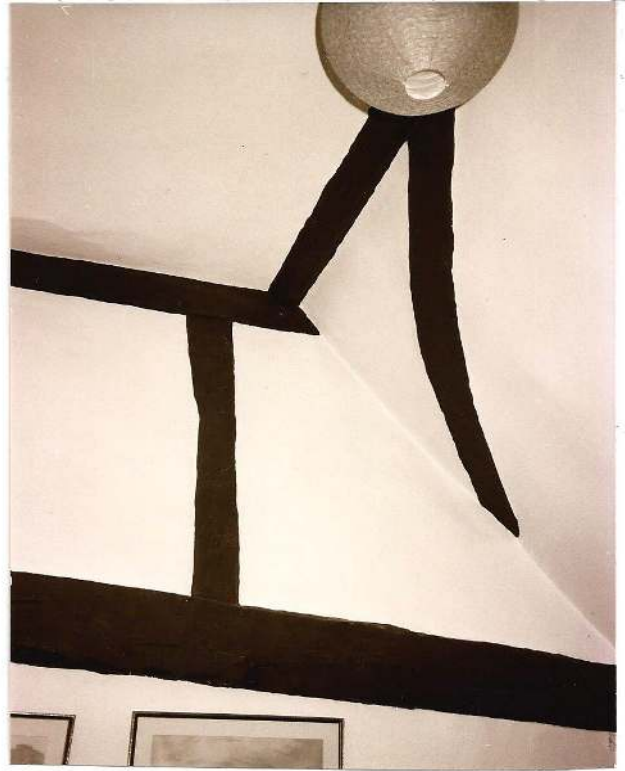
SECTION B-B

NOS. 43 & 45 GRAVEL HILL
HENLEY ON THAMES

SCALE 1/50



wcc 1/88



Truss in west gable, BAY II showing cambered tie, queen's posts & curved windbrace



BAY II, ground floor, showing large wall panels, low sill and wide ceiling joists



Studwall, BAY II, note former dooropening Central Truss with Girthing Joist at 1m distance in front



Fire place

No. 45



Gravel Hill, east gable of 'Old Basketmakers Arms'



1st floor, west wall, lath & plaster panels

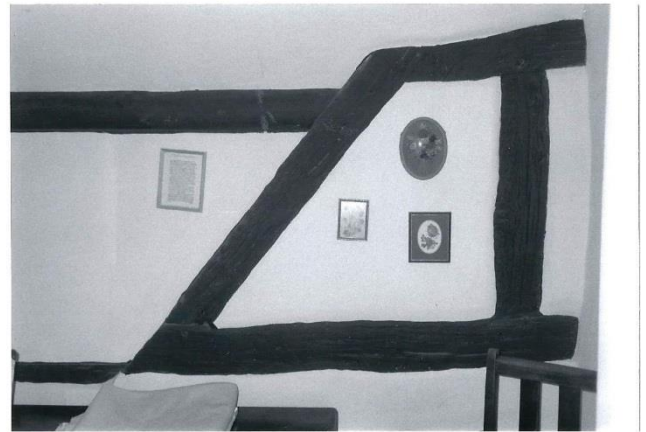


Large panels in ground floor
West wall

No. 43



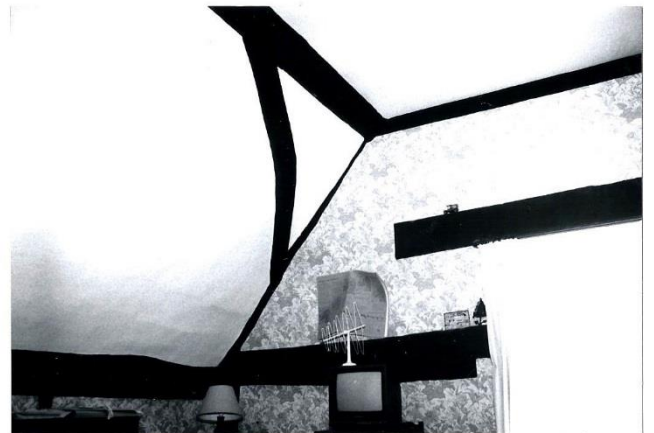
Cut through south wall, BAY 1st floor



Remains of queens truss on east wall of BAY III



Ground floor, BAY I



No 43 1st floor, BAY I