

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

Parish/County: Henley-on-Thames, Oxon

Owner: Mrs. M. Farmar
in 2008

Street and House name:
46 Northfield End

Tel No:
Recorder:
Ruth Gibson

Listing grade and entry text: Gd II

'Early 19th century façade to earlier house. Painted brick with hipped slate roof. 2 storeys, 4 windows, mainly casements, some reproductions. At rear timber framing exposed in gable of 2-storey wing with old tiled roof'



19th century front, south/west elevation



Rear, north/east gable of back range

Known History: Only one and a half bay survive of the two-storey, rear timber framed building, but its tall, steeply pitched gable and traditional queen struts with king post to the apex indicate a building date no later than 1600. This means that the building existed at the time of the earliest surviving map of the area of c.1788. This is the Fawley Court Estate map, which shows the area of land between the old Oxford Road and the Marlow road as an elongated triangle. On it are some schematically drawn buildings together with the text: *Sir Thomas Stapleton, cottages and gardens*. The Stapletons then owned Greys Court and much land around the area.

This triangular patch had no built up road frontages unlike the south/western end of Northfield End, where this adjoins Bell Street on the east side of the road where the former Bell Inn and Denmark House are located. This open ground appears to have been part of the 'Waste of the Manor' and is in its status very similar to a patch of land at Assendon Cross. There deeds of a cottage go back to 1814 and refer to it as built on the waste of the manor of Bensington, also in the ownership Sir Francis Stapleton. It appears that research into the beginnings of this house and the other historic cottages may be uncovered through documentation of Greys Court and its landholdings in the decades around 1800, if they survive.

Map ref., date of 1st map, type of plot: The building is shown on the First OS map of 1878 very much in its present form, minus the modern extension built in 2005, which replaces some other structures shown on the map. The rear timber framed wing also had a narrow long extension, clearly marked on the map, which may have been an attached outbuilding.

Type and use of building: Dwelling house, formerly said to have been two cottages.

Plan form/position in street: Set back from the street behind a substantial garden, it occupies a corner site between the main road frontage, i.e. Northfield End and the narrow lane known as Bell Pit lane, which winds its way to the Marlow Road and which gives access to other cottages on this triangular plot of land between the two main roads coming into Henley on the north/west side.

The building consists of a three bay range facing the road and a rear wing of 1 ½ bays, at right angles to the front range. This is timber framed and very probably the survivor of a once larger building.

Description of front elevation (height, windows, entrances, shop front etc):

See List description. Although this is not just a façade as mentioned, but a three-bay brick range, which fronts the earlier timber framed building. The roof is hipped, of a shallow pitch and slate covered. There are chimneys at both ends.

Description of rear elevation: This elevation is dominated by the tall, steeply pitched timber framed bay of two storeys and loft. It sits at right angles to the front range. The timbers appear to be of rather narrow scantling, but all framing details are traditional. The framing consists of large, rectangular panels, straight braces to the tie beam; three queen struts from tie to collar with a narrow king strut rising from there to the apex. A large brick stack rises near the apex of this roof.

A lean-to built of brick has been attached to the south-east side under a long catslide roof. The roof is tiled with traditional red clay tiles.

Internal evidence

Ground Floor: The entrance door is located in a hall way in the three-bay front range. This accesses rooms on each side as well as a rear corridor, which lead to the staircase. The large stack of the rear range backs onto this corridor. Previously the stack would have probably served two or more fire places.

There is one brick fire place with timber bressumers in the rear g.f. room. Originally the stairs were located next to the stack in the form of a narrow winder stair and a small remnant of the stairs remain within the cupboard next to the stack.

The floor levels between the front and rear range differ, the latter being located at a lower level.

The present stairs ascend from the corridor of the front range. They split at the top and serve both parts of the house and their different floor levels.

Brick fire place in the timber framed rear range with timber bressumers over



Detail of latch in former stairway plank door



Door to former winder stair next to stack

Upper Floors: There are no particular features visible on the first floor. The different floor levels of the front and rear ranges confirm their different building dates.

Attic: Roof structure – trusses, special features if any: Only the rear roof was accessed. The traditional queen strut truss seen in the north/east gable is not visible in the attic as the inside is hidden under plaster. The existing roof structure consists of inner principal rafters, which support trenched purlins. The inner principals rise to a high collar, into which they are pegged. All timbers appear to be machine cut soft wood and probably represent a rebuilding of the roof after 1800.



Principal rafter and purlin

A long iron tie has been fixed between the timber frame of the north gable and the 19th century front range. (Carried out by the present owners – verbal information)

Conclusion and discussion of possible building date, datable alteration and additions:

A circa 1600 building date is stipulated for the rear range. The front range with its shallow slated roof and end gables is unlikely to have been built before the mid 19th century. The earlier building was probably longer, i.e. two bays or more served by a central stack.

It certainly existed in 1782 or 88 when the Fawley Court Estate map was drawn up and three schematically drawn rectangles, representing ‘cottages and gardens’ are shown on the plot, which was owned by the Stapletons, lords of the Manor of Bensington at that time.

The earlier building appears to have been a substantial timber framed building, perhaps a modest farm house or small-holders cottage originally, which later was altered and extended to serve the growing population of the town. Its location, set back from the road, unlike its later neighbours on the left and right, shows that the road frontage had not been defined at the time of its construction and that there was no pressure on building land, so it could be built as long as consent was granted by the lord of the manor, at times only after it had been erected. If that had been the case it would have been called a squatters cottage.