

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

**Parish/County:** Henley-on-Thames, Oxon  
**Street and House name:** 77/79 Bell Street  
**Formerly:** The Bear, Rear South range

**Tenant:** MYSTIC WAVES  
Hristina Koleva  
**Tel No:** 01491-573362  
**Recorder:**  
Ruth Gibson  
**Date:** 24.9.09

**Listing grade and entry text:** Gd II  
*15-17<sup>th</sup> C. Timber framed building. Long rear range set at right angles, timber framed with brick infilling. Of 1, 1 ½ and 2 storeys.*



North elevation of 'Barn' and 'Stable' with lean-to roof behind.

The buildings here under consideration ( westwards from Truss A) are probably former service buildings attached to the south/west rear range of No. 77 Bell Street; they are now in use as a Hairdressing Salon. Here they are called the 'Barn' and the 'Stable' for identification purposes, although there is no firm evidence of their original uses when the Bear was an inn.

**Known History:** See *'The Hostelries of Henley'* by A.Cottingham. Documented as an inn since 1666 , when it was in the ownership of the Stonors. Detailed Inventory of the goods of inn keeper John Dolton of 1683 describes the accommodation as well as outbuildings such as stables, wash house, kitchen, brew house and others. When it was owned by Benwells & Brakspear an inventory of 1826 shows that it had 'numerous rooms, chamber over gateway, ... open and enclosed stabling for 78 horses, lofts, cartsheds, poultry houses, piggeries, granaries, wash, coal and wood houses, yards etc.' It ceased to be a PH in 1986; the last landlord being Edward Rudolph Pfyl. (A.Cottingham) and is no longer owned by Brakspear's.

**Date of 1<sup>st</sup> map, type of plot.** On the 1878 1<sup>st</sup> OS map the rear ranges are shown running back much further than they do today and there are two enclosed yards. The rear one is a large yard which extends over several properties to the north, including the now demolished Nos. 83- 85 Bell Street. It seems that the yard of 'The Bear' had been extended over the rear burgage plots of its neighbours to serve its growing need for accommodating the increased demands of trade and travellers.

**Plan form/position in street:** The two buildings are located at right angles to the street running east-west. 'The Barn' adjoins the west gable of Bay V d (see separate plan ) and shares its timber framed truss. It is a three-bay building. The 'Stable' adjoins its west gable, but built c. 1 foot away from it as a separate structure and at a later date.

**Description of front elevation:** The Barn is c. 9.85 m long, of 1 ½ storeys, divided into 3 bays by its wall posts and trusses. The Barn and the south chamber range of the former Bear share the same truss, as there is only one wall post visible on their north side ( Truss A on plan) and confirms that this is part of one long range, not a separate building. The roof line too is continuous. This roof is steeply pitched and covered in clay peg tiles. Both buildings are timber framed with brick infill and some modern brick work at the western end. Part of the western end of the 'Stable' was demolished to make way for Adam Court



The continuous roof and single wall post (Truss A on plan) show that the weather boarded and the timber and brick sections are very likely of one build. Neither external walling materials are original; this would very likely have been wattle and daub making up the panels between wall posts, studs and rails.

Some of the framing has been replaced/repared and the sill beam appears to have been raised. All windows are modern and it is not possible to say whether any replace earlier openings. The entrance has a wide plank door, which may have served a stable, but is unlikely to be original to the building. There is a narrow hoist opening under a gabled roof, now filled with a 20<sup>th</sup> window. This appears to be a later addition, as its timbers are of narrow scantling and may reflect the use of the building as a stable with hay loft during at least part of its life when the demand for stabling was particularly strong. ( verbal information relayed by Ms. Koleva from her customers confirms that the building had a loft over part of it when the large room was used for public entertainment)



Two north facing wall posts of the Barn ( Truss B on the left and Truss A on the right). Both show the 'scotch' or raising marks on their front faces, essential to stabilize the building with props whilst the timbers, prepared by the carpenters beforehand in the framing yard, were put up on site.  
 N.B. The 1438 hall opposite (Bays VI and VII on plan) has the same type of 'scotch' mark on its two wall posts.

### Internal evidence

**Ground Floor|:** The three-bay 'Barn' consists now of one large room and its framing is exposed from floor to apex. It measures 9.35 m in length by 4.88 m width ( both are internal measurements ). There is evidence of former vertical sub-divisions into 3 rooms following the bay divisions of the trusses, but no evidence of any horizontal divisions for an upper floor.

Of all the buildings at The Bear this one, despite many changes, alterations and adaptations to new uses during its life, allows us to see the whole structure without the interruptions of walls and inserted floors. The four trusses are very interesting, suggesting a change in carpentry design during the construction of this end of the long south range. ( See photographs on P.4)

The interesting element in the east wall( Truss A) is the single, central strut, also known as a crown strut, which occurs throughout the south range, as illustrated below, and also in the rooms above the carriage entrance, but in the 'Barn' it can only be seen in this gable. The next trusses of the 3-bay 'Barn', (Trusses B, C and D on plan) have the traditional queen strut construction, i.e. two studs supporting the collar. This is an excellent and unusual example of one building illustrating the cross-over between the two types of trusses.



The 'Barn', looking west at Truss C and Truss D beyond forming part of the west gable wall.

This photograph illustrates the traditional queen strut truss with the collar clasp~~ing the purlins~~.; tie beams and collars are slightly cambered.

The only difference between this truss and truss A is that the single crown strut has now been replaced by the two queen struts, the rest of the truss and roof structure with its coupled and pegged rafters and curved wind braces mirrors that of Truss A.



L. h. picture: Part of the east gable with fire place of the 'Barn' (Truss A and Truss B in the foreground). Note the central post which rises to the tie beam. Above it another central strut rises to the collar, also known as a crown strut. All other narrower studs are part of the wall infill, which support the wattle and daub panels.

R.h. picture: Looking west in the flat of the south rear range, Bays V b and c. Here the cambered tie beam with its short arch braces and central crown strut are impressive features, unfortunately cut off by the modern ceiling, but originally designed as a large, open to the apex, built to impress. - Both roofs have wide, curved wind braces.

It is very likely that the framing exposed in the 'Barn' also forms the west wall of the long lodging range, now the adjoining 1<sup>st</sup> floor flat. Unfortunately here the timber frame is hidden under a coat of plaster and the brick work of the stack, which appears to have also served the first floor kitchen of what is now the flat 77a. - The important evidence for the shared wall frame at A, however, is the single wall post evident outside ( see above )



Fireplace inserted below eastern truss. This is part of a 2-flue stack, which also serves the first floor flat ( Bay V d). The central brick hearth is a 20<sup>th</sup> C. addition. On the left is the former access, now blocked, to the south lodging range, now the g.f. entrance to the flat.

On the r.h. side is a close-up of the timber bressumer which has a chamfered and stopped lower edge. Its face has been hacked back and one can see the chisel marks. This was probably done to get a key for plastering when exposed timber and bricks had become unfashionable in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The bricks are c. 2 ¼” thick and may be of 17<sup>th</sup> C. date.

**Description of ‘Stable’ :** It adjoins the ‘Barn’, but was separately built. It is of single storey with attic and outshut to the north. Although it appears now mainly brick built it has some timber framing in its walls and retains its timber roof trusses. The eastern end seems less altered retaining some older brick infill. It consists of 2 ½ bays and is 9.50 m long and circa 5.25 m deep; the half bay appears to have been cut off and the gable is now breeze block built. This confirms the former much longer outbuilding shown on the First OS map. The ground floor has been subdivided with modern partitions; however the attic retains its original roof structure.



The trusses have heavy section tie beams and are 10" wide by 6" deep ( 5cm by 15cm), supporting two narrow queen struts, which in turn support cambered collars (7" by 3 1/2" – 18cm by 9cm ) which clasp the purlins. Both purlins and principal rafters are unusually narrow measuring 6" deep by 4" (15cm by 10cm).

The common rafters are pegged and the traditional carpenter's marks can be seen on several of them.



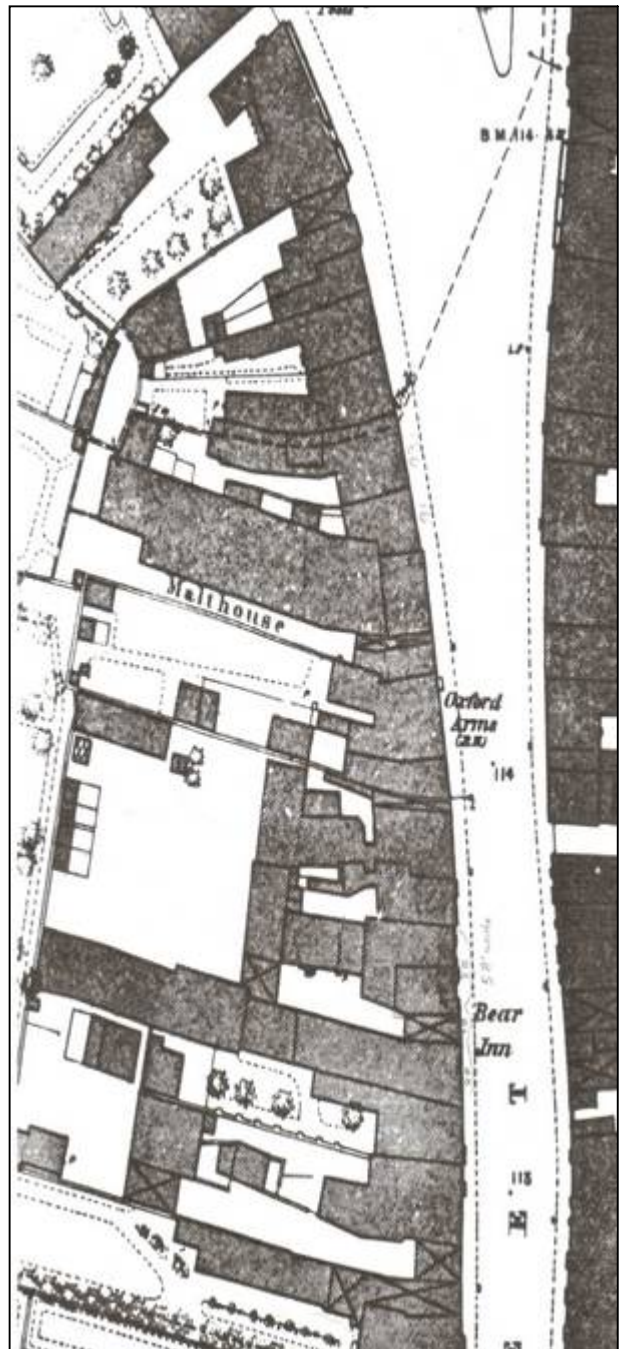
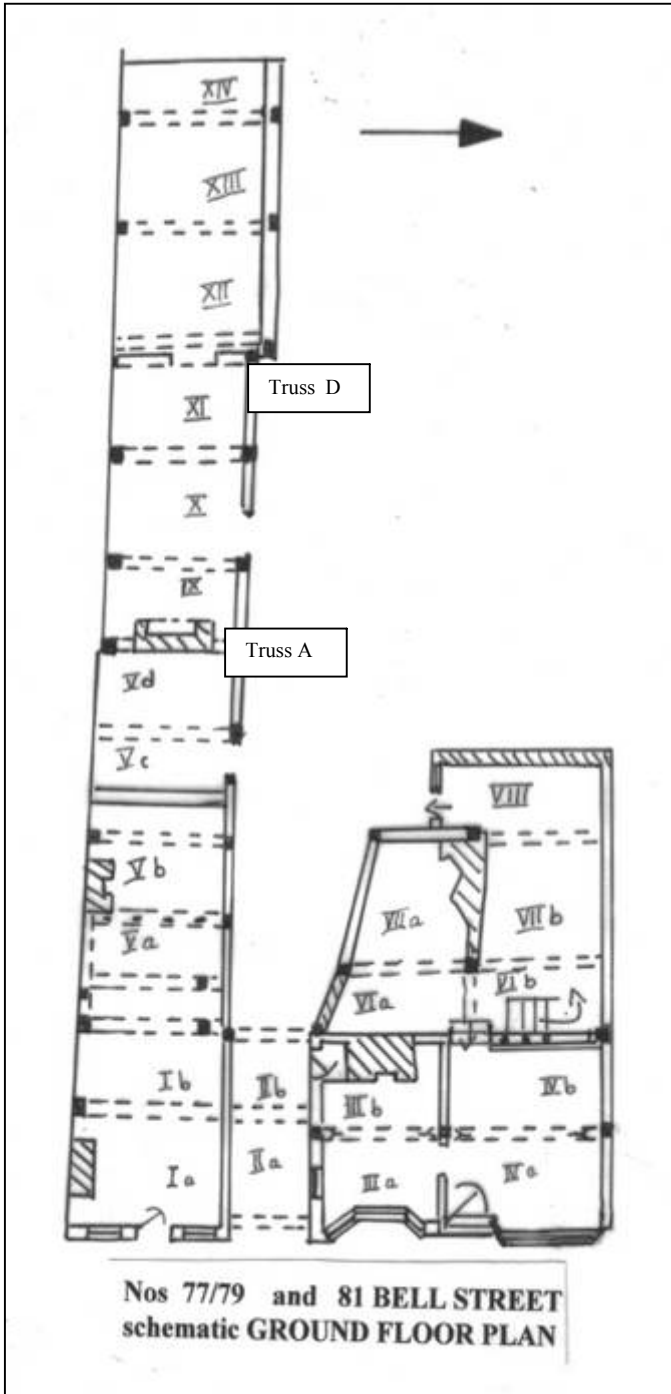
Above left: apex pegged rafters with scribed carpenter's marks.

Above right: East gable truss, collar of 'Stable' in front of the west gable of the 'Barn'. The trusses are separated by a c.1 foot gap, clearly showing different bldg. dates

Left: Looking west beyond the queens strut truss where a new breeze block wall cuts off the western part of the building.

All traditional timber framing elements are present in this roof including the curved wind braces, but the timbers are of poorer quality scantling than those of the adjoining earlier 'Barn' range.

This building has a traditionally framed roof and may have been timber framed throughout, but there is only little evidence of the original structure on the ground floor. Its original purpose is not known, but it seems to have been one of the many long, rear service buildings mentioned in the documentation and shown on the 1878 map ( see below). The quality of the timbers indicates a c. 1700 building date.



**For Discussion and suggested dates for the building ranges of The Bear please see separate Discussion and Summary paper**

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