

Henley-on-Thames
9-11 Gravel Hill

Part of Gd. II listed row: 7 – 17 Gravel Hill

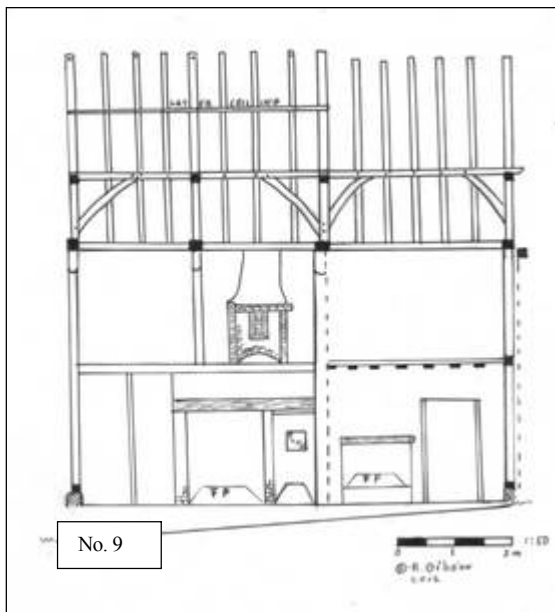
No. 9: Graham and Barbara Jones
 No.11: The Henley and District Housing Trust



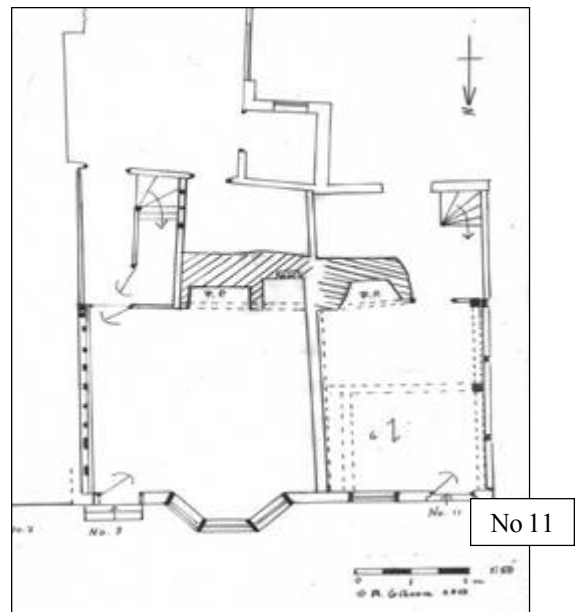
Nos. 7 9 11 13

Synopsis

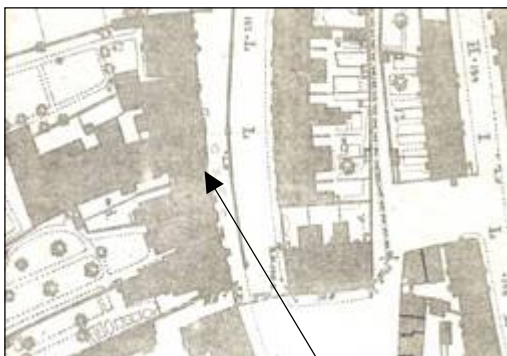
Nos. 9 and 11 comprise three timber-framed bays of what may have been a row of small hall houses. No. 13 appears to have been built as a cross wing, replacing the western section (one or more bays) of what is now the single-bay No. 11 Gravel Hill. There are also signs that the timber framing of No. 9 once extended further to the east into what is now No. 7 Gravel Hill.



Sectional elevation of the rear walls of No. 9 and No. 11, showing later inserted fire places and ceilings. No 9 consists of two narrow bays; No. 11 is one bay of what appears to have been a larger building, extending further west. This was replaced in 1454 by a cross wing, now No. 13 Gravel Hill



Ground floor plan of the former halls. The stacks were added to the rear walls when the halls were chambered over. The stacks are brick and chalk rubble stone built (exposed at the back of of No.9 during renovation) with the date 1795.



Henley 1898/99 Nos 9 & 11

Notes on the history of the site: This group of hall houses is located on the steep south side of the widest point of the upper market place area, which was probably created as an early western extension to the circa 1170 planned town. This group of c.15th C. houses may be the first permanent structures built on this site. As the cigar shaped open market area was filled in, the earlier name of the road alongside it, i.e. the Hill, became Gravel Hill.

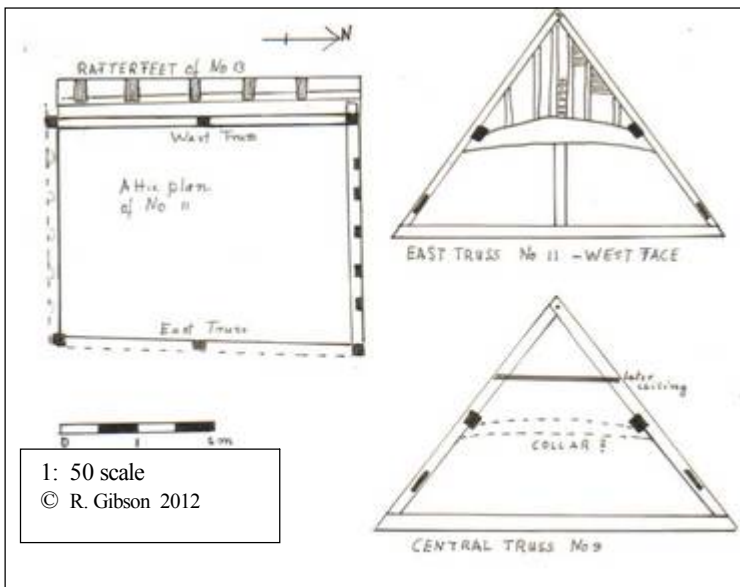
Notes on architectural details:

- No. 9 consists of two timber framed bays, built parallel to the street, of a length of c. 4.20 plus width of ties (c 20 cm each, not accessible) . There are signs that the framing extended further east into what is now No.7, i.e. shared truss.
- No. 11 consists of 1 timber framed bay, built parallel to the street, 3.09 m long plus ties, but it is slightly narrower at the back. The purlins appear to have been cut off at the western end; the back one has a scarf joint profile and extends by 27cm beyond the principal into the 50 cm gap now occupied by the rafter feet of No13 (built at right angles to it, i.e. gable-end onto the street). The front purlin one has a slightly ragged end, but shows no signs of weathering.
- The framing of the roofs is of the clasped side purlin type with cambered collars, supported by slender crown struts (both exposed at No. 11) and curved wind braces.
- The roofs of Nos. 9 and 11 are of slightly different heights as seen from the outside, suggesting two separate frames, but there is evidence that the east truss in No. 11, see drawing and photographs below, also serves No 9 and is part of one roof structure.
- All roof timbers show signs of sooting, with the w.&d panels between Nos. 7, 9 & 11 also sooted.
- The main posts, where visible, have heavy jowls; there is evidence of braces, both arch and tension braces. Early flat laid ceiling joists exist in the first floor chamber at No. 9. Those at No. 11 may be part of later alterations and use of second hand timbers, which exist in many areas of this house.
- Much of the wall framing is hidden or has been replaced by masonry walls, but where visible it shows timbers of substantial scantling and some close studding at the back.
- Two fire places were inserted at the back of both halls. Both 2” brick work and chalk rubble stone were used. Initials and date **AS 1795** at the back of the stack in No. 9 is unlikely the date of the first construction of the large inglenook here, but may be the date of alterations and insertion of the first floor brick F.P.
- Lean-to extensions under cat slide roofs at the back are the earliest additions; originally timber framed, but of lesser quality timbers. Little of this survives or is now visible.
- No. 13, dendro-dated to 1454, was built as a chambered cross wing, apparently replacing part of No. 11 as the evidence of the projecting western purlin stubs suggests.
- Parts of the frame of No. 13 is visible in both g. & f. floors of No. 11. The g.f. has two long tension braces between sill beam and corner wall posts exposed with very little of a separate frame for No.11 surviving; the 1st floor side wall shows the wall plate of No. 11 with a deep chamfer, c 3 feet long, indicating a doorway opening between the adjoining frames. Which are here less than a foot apart.
- Evidence from the 1st floor main rear post position and attic views from No. 9 through to No. 7 suggest that the timber framing continued on the east side for at least a further bay, possibly more, but no physical evidence has been discovered in the heavily altered No 7 (roof height raised).

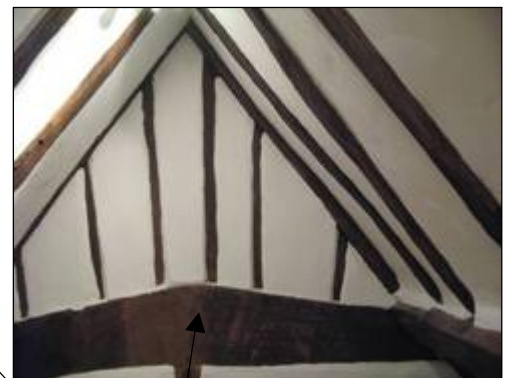
Conclusion: The fact that the front elevations of Nos 7, 9, 11, 15 and 17 have very similar Georgian features, i.e sash windows, and canted bays, and possibly the brick work (now hidden under render) indicates that they were in one ownership when they were converted into modest cottages. (The front elevation of No. 13 is modern below the tie beam), but it does not mean that they were built as one development. - The interior shows that they all

conceal much earlier timber framed buildings, but one cannot say whether they are all of one build. (NB No. 15 is said not to have any original roof structure left; No. 17 has not been recorded, but is also timber framed.

Dating: No. 13, the cross wing with its fan shaped crown strut truss is dated to 1454, which fits well into the date range for this type of roof in the area. The fact that its rafter feet are visible next to the sooted roof space of No. 11, but are clean, is the only indicator that the roof of the hall predates it and that the use as an open hall stopped in 1454. No 11 too has crown strut trusses, and very probably shares its eastern one with No. 9. We still have not got sufficient dates for this roof form, the earliest dates from c. 1437 (Documentation of Ewelme Almshouses). Therefore, and for the time being, we can only assume a building date for Nos.11 & 9 of the early 15th C; in both cases there is evidence that they were longer originally.



No. 9 No. 11 No. 13
 NB different roof heights of Nos 9 and 11 Original 1454 crown strut roof truss



Sooted central truss at No. 9 No. 11. Left: Open western crown strut truss; rafter feet and purlin of No. 13 beyond NB. New rafter inserted above
Right: Eastern closed truss with wide, cambered collar; w & d infill.
 Does it increase the roof height? NB. Trusses were sooted before recent modernization



No. 9: East side wall of front room

Jowl post, 1st floor, south-east corner

1st floor chamber fire place



Sooted timbers and wattle & daub panels of the closed east truss of No. 11 (photographed prior to the renovation work of 2007).

The cambered collar is unusually wide, measuring 35 cm (14") in the centre and reducing to 25 cm (10") at both ends. It is only 10 cm (4") thick – almost a plank. The truss at the western end, see photo p 3, is of more usual proportions; both have slender crown struts echoing the crown post shape, which they seem to be replacing, but which was still being constructed in Henley (see Baltic Cottage, Friday Street, dendro date 1438)



Close-up of east collar. NB the angled saw marks are typical of pit sawn timbers; also soot still ingrained in the wide tree rings of this fast grown oak (only c 30 rings, too few to dendro date)