

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

Parish/County: Henley-on-Thames, Oxon

Owners: Kealy Farmar LLP
Contact: Richard Kealy

Street and House name: 73 Bell Street

Recorder: Ruth Gibson
Date of visit: 21.3.13

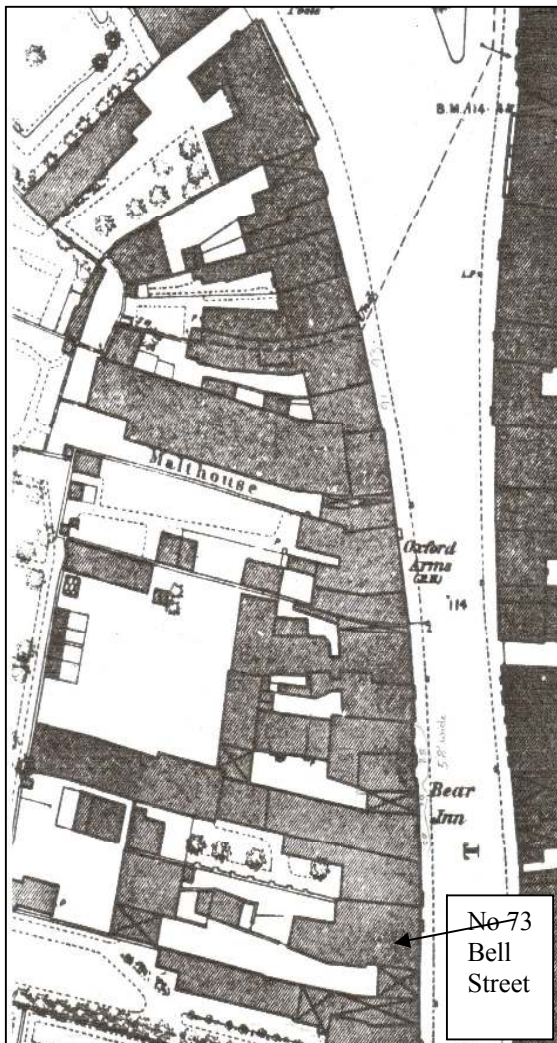
Listing grade and entry text: Gd II: C19th façade

Stucco with wide eaves soffit, slate roof, 3 storeys. Large, projecting bracketed canopy above modern shop front. Carriage entrance at south side.

(NB the projecting canopy has gone, otherwise the exterior of the building remains the same)

Known History: It was W.& G. Lee, the family butcher's premises in 1915 as a stone plaque on a rear outbuilding reminds us. Before this the Census Return from 1881-1901 locate the butcher and farmer Joseph Broad and family there. The large iron rails and hooks in the ceiling of the passageway are a reminder of this business, which involved the slaughter and meat preparation on site for sale in the shop.

Map ref., date of 1st map, type of plot It is shown on the 1878 OS map occupying a wide and deep plot running back to the line of former orchards and paddocks, now the Adams Court development adjoining Kings Road Car Park, both 20th C developments. The building has a substantial carriage arch (3.15m wide x 6 m deep) on the south side and several outbuildings in two substantial yards at the back. Some of these service buildings with their heavily cobbled roadway still exist, but have now been converted to residential uses.



Description of the building: The List description only tells us what the building now looks like seen from the street. The rear elevation shows a steeply pitched, tiled roof as well as a long, brick built rear range. – There is a wide and tall carriage way accessing the rear yard. The substantial iron rails in the roof of the access passage are witness to the former use as a butcher’s premises.



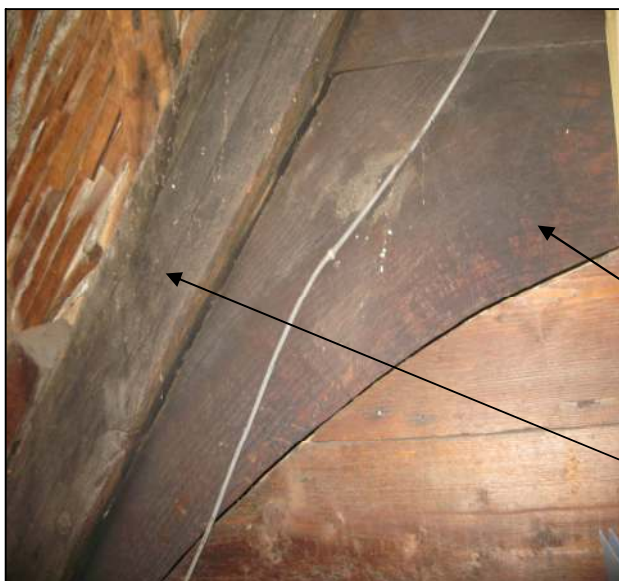
The plan form of the building is of three bays, running parallel to the street, of a total length of c.10.50 m (just over 2 perches) with a long rear extension. The building was originally timber framed, but apart from a timber post (moulded and heavily weathered) at the rear of the carriage arch no framing is visible at ground floor level. N.B. the two g.f. shops have not been recorded.

At first floor level two transverse ceiling beams can be seen. The one in the north wall may be the original tie beam, the one which sits between bays II and III (see sketch plan) is probably a later addition and part of the floor structure, inserted when the hall was chambered over.

The attic alone retains most of its original timber framing, despite the front wall having been raised to allow the insertion of three C 19th windows and new front rafters, now supporting a shallow slate roof. It is clearly made up of three bays, two of them still showing sooting on their timbers from the use as an open hall house.

The central roof truss located between bays II and III) consists of large arch braces between principal rafters to collar. All timbers are of excellent scantling and quality; they are sooted, but without any decorative detailing such as chamfers, despite having been visible from the floor of the medieval hall.

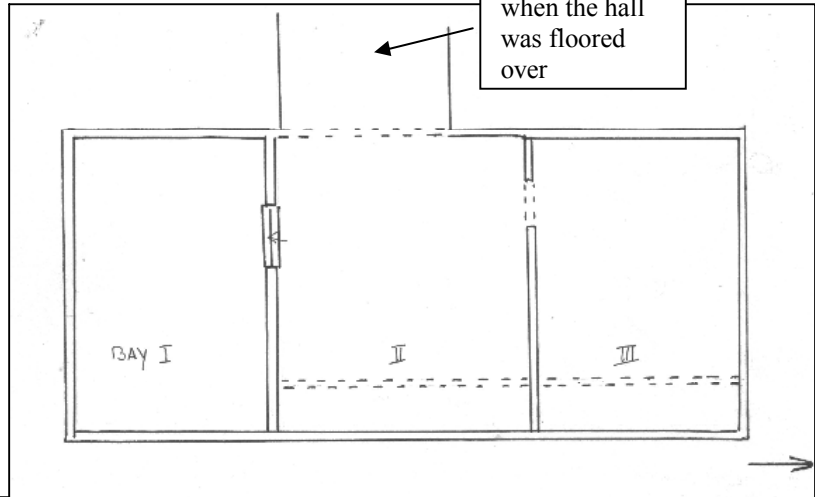
collar extends across the attic



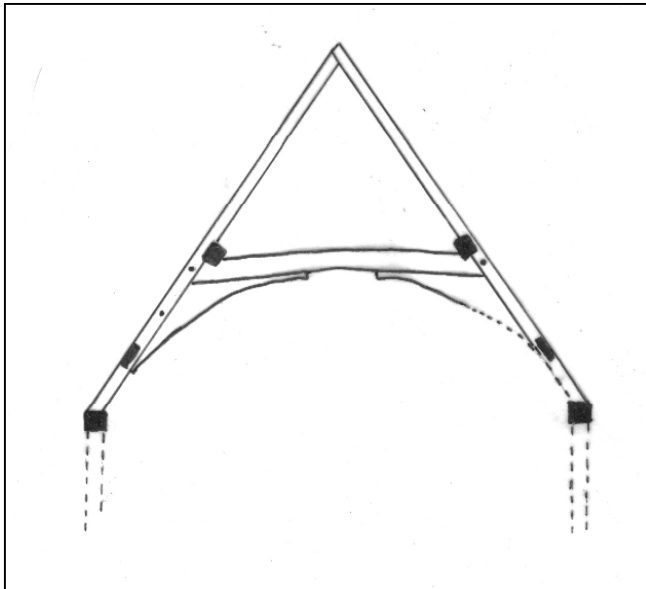
These two photographs show parts of the central truss, which still exists in its entirety, but is partly hidden behind shelving stacks and boarding. The horizontal collar is supported by arch braces, which rise from the principal rafters.



Medieval roof with purlin and wind brace preserved under the modern, shallow pitched roof of the front/east elevation. The medieval timbers are sooted, a sign of the use as an open hall of at least two bays of the building



Sketch of the attic plan, where the original lay-out of the bays is still clearly visible. Bay I is located above the carriage arch; the latter's floor being 0.57 m higher than that of the hall, steps leading up to it now from Bay II. There is evidence of a smoke louvre at the back of Bay II, where two rafters have been cut back and retain tenons formerly supporting the louvre framing – forerunner of a chimney.



Sketch of central truss located between bays II and III. Scantling: Collar 30 x 10 cm; principal c. 15 x 15cm; purlins 15 x 10 cm ;wind braces 20 cm x 5 cm; arch brace maximum width 25 cm.

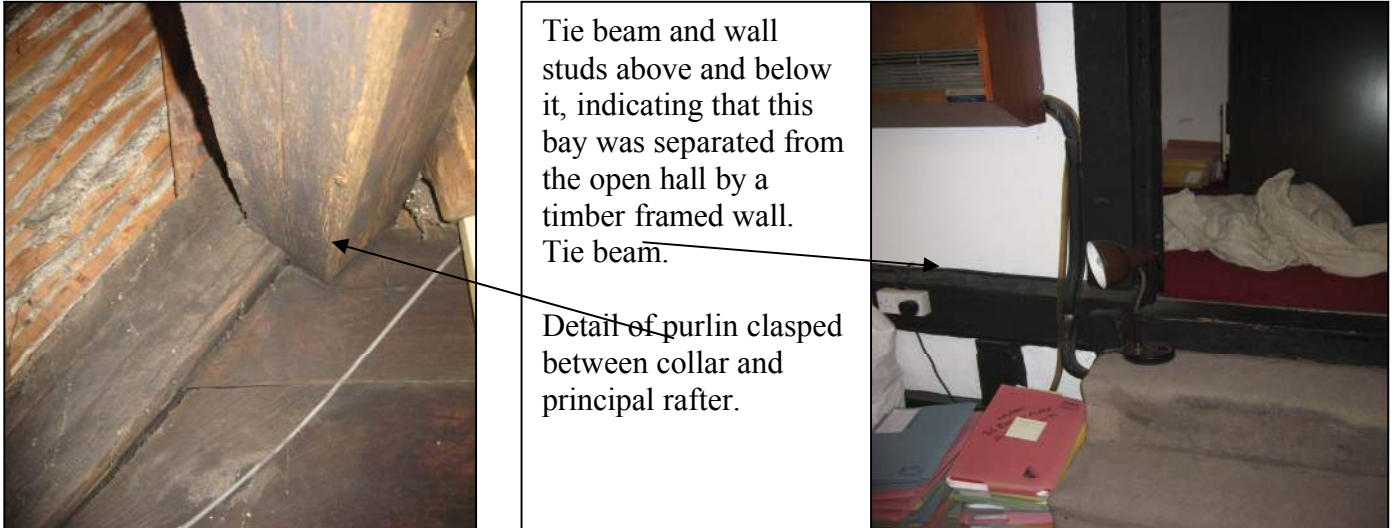


The two sooted, short rafters in bay II with their long tenons exposed. (NB these are not sooted as they would have been housed within the mortises of the louvre structure they once supported)



View of turned stairs at the back of Bay II. Access was gained into the attic by the removal of most of the rafters at the back/west side of Bay II of the roof. One of the horizontal timbers was probably the purlin, but additional timbers seem to have been added to make up for the loss of a large part of the rear roof of the central bay.

Bay I has been altered more than bays II and III and none of its roof timbers are visible. Its floor level is higher by 0.57 m than that of the former hall and its tie beam is exposed. This may be due to alterations to the carriage arch, to increase its height for larger vehicles, but could also be original to the building, as there is evidence of a closed truss in the framing below and above the tie beam; i.e. this bay may have always had a floor, unlike the open hall, and provided ground and first floor accommodation to the two-bay open hall.



DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

A medieval, three bay house; two bays of which were an open hall, the third, southern bay was probably always of two storeys, but not enough evidence is visible to come to a definite conclusion on this. The roof timbers in Bays II and III are still sooted and there is evidence of a former smoke louvre. The roof structure with its substantial arch braces and clasped side purlins is fairly typical for a 15th C building; a similar arch braced truss at No. 76 has been dendro dated to 1405.

It occupies a c. good 2 perch plot (10.50 m), wider than the more usual 1 ½ perches (7.50 m) found in the lay-out of the medieval planned town in Hart Street and Market Place. These wide plots have also been noted in other houses at this northern end of Bell Street, i.e. at 74 – 78 (c. 18 m), 93 – 95 (c. 14 m, but with possibly one original bay missing) and 77 - 81 (c. 14.70 m). Clearly, there was less pressure on the land here than in the centre of the market town.

All the buildings are timber framed and of good quality scantling, but now hidden behind brick or stucco facades; most have been subdivided into several dwellings, having clearly lost some of the status they had when first built on these very substantial plots at the town's northern entrance. The fact that there was land available here in the C15th for such large street frontages may be due to the fact that the royal manor, located north of the town ceased to exist in the C14th and that more land became available as a consequence for buildings of substance.

Ruth Gibson BA, IHBC
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