

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

Parish/County: Henley-on-Thames

Street and House name:
20 Hart Street

Owner/Occupant:
BALLARDS Estate Agent
Tel No:
Recorder:
Ruth Gibson
Date: June 2007

Listing grade and entry text: Grade II

'C18 and later façade to timber framed building, timber framing visible on west sided building. Grey brick with red brick window dressings. Steeply pitched, tiles roof. 2 storeys, 3 early C19 casements with glazing bars. Large altered late C19/early 20th shop front. Grade II for group value' (NB The oddly described 'west sided building' is the west gable wall one can glimpse when the entrance gates to neighbouring No. 18 are open)



Known History: Formerly 'The Union', P.H., documented since 1790. Its last landlord was Alfred G. Brown and it was closed on 30.12.1911 (see Ann Cottingham *'The Hostelries of Henley'* for details). Lucy Cooper's painting of 1892 in the Town Hall shows the pub with a large bay window, where the shop window and fascia are now; otherwise nothing has changed for the past hundred plus years.

Summing up: Building date, datable alteration and additions:

Behind the 19th century front elevation exists a small timber framed building of good quality, very probably part of a larger house. One bay and a through passage is all that remains of a building dating to the 15th/16th century. Not having access to the roof above collar level makes it impossible to assess the framing further..

There is evidence of a former cross passage on the west side of the building, which is also expressed in the framing of the first floor, indicating that this was formerly the hall and cross passage to a larger building.

At first floor level on the east side there is evidence of a possible former connection with No. 22, as the eastern truss is located away from the wall, which now separates the two buildings. The gap is between 1 foot (at the street end) and 3 feet (at the back). It seems that No. 22, formerly the 'Old Ropewalk' was a cross wing to No 20 and that both shared this truss.

The 1878 OS map shows that both Nos. 20 and 22 seem to occupy one burgage plot, which had been subdivided by then.

Map ref., date of 1st map, type of plot:

The 1878 O.S. shows that the rear burgage plot of No. 20 was squeezed in between the large grounds occupied by the malthouse and yards of No. 18 Hart Street on the west and on the east by the long and very narrow plot of the former 'Rope Walk' at No. 22, now Magoos Bar. It is possible that Nos. 20 and 22 once occupied one burgage plot as one house and that the jettied No. 22 was built as the two-storey solar (built traditionally at right angles) to the single storey hall and cross passage of present day No. 20.

Type and use of building: Formerly a PH, now an estate agent's shop and offices.

Plan form/position in street: One bay and a third of a bay, built parallel to the street. Two later, probably 18th century ranges running back from this are located behind; the one on the west side continues as a single storey range.

Description of front elevation (height, windows, entrances, shop front etc): See List description. One storey and attic. The 6 by 6 pane casement windows are inserted flush with the brick work and appear to be 18th century. Their insertion caused the front roof to be raised by over a foot above the original wall plate level.

Walling material: (give brick sizes, bond, colour; timber frame type; render or stucco; stone types and finishes): Flemish Bond brickwork in front elevation; timber framed inside, stucco and brick at the back.

Roof shape: pitched roof, parallel to street, two later roofs running back from this, also pitched

Roof covering: Clay tiles

Chimneys: Location on roof and materials

A three-flue stack rises from the back of the roof

Internal evidence

Cellar: Large brick paved cellar under front room, accessed by brick steps with timber nosing, from a door under the main staircase. This staircase is located in the rear wing directly adjoining the timber framed rear wall of the front range. There is a large access hatch to the cellar on the street side. (This is still clearly shown in the 1892 painting, but hardly visible now from the outside) The cellar as well as the stairs probably date to the C18th when it was a P.H. or it may have been refurbished at that time.

Ground Floor:

The ground floor was originally divided into a passageway which ran between the still existing front and rear doors and a room to the left with a F.P. at the back wall (which may have been a later insertion). At the back there are now two rear extensions, built at right angles to the front. The western one houses the extension of the passageway and the staircases to the cellar and first floor. The eastern one houses a back parlour, now an office.



Former through passage seen from the back

and from the front entrance

Fire places: (location and type) The stack is still partly intact, but little is left of the hearths and fire place surrounds. It occupies the central space in front of the back wall of the main g.f. room, but also served a F.P. in the back room and probably served another upstairs. At first floor level there is no sign of the stack in the front room, but a walk in cupboard seems to occupy its space.

Stairs: (location and type) The staircase is located in the western rear wing. It is of the turned type at the bottom with newel post and a straight run to the first floor, typical of the 19th century,

and may originally have been enclosed with a plank wall and door, similar to that of the cellar entrance. The attractive balustrade is made of cut, splat balusters and is Arts and Crafts inspired, but may be a modern replacement. – There is no sign of an earlier staircase in the probably 16th century front range, but since the floor boards and joists are not visible one is not able to see whether or where one might have been. It is equally possible that the front room was once open to the rafters without an upstairs chamber above.

First Floor and Roof structure: The front room preserves much of the timber framing, which defines the bay divisions, already seen at g.f. level. The eastern tie beam still exists, located at a slight distance from the boundary wall to No. 22 at the front; this increases to some 3 feet at the back. This gap has been used to create an access to the later rear extension, but it was necessary to cut away some of the thickness of the tie as well as to remove some studs and a brace to achieve this. The collar, clasping the purlins, above the tie is supported by two queen struts, a very traditional roof construction. Above the rear wall the lower parts of the original rafters can be seen, providing more evidence for the one room depth of the earliest part of the building. A main post in this wall has a wide empty slot, where once a long brace would have existed, giving strength to the wall frame.



First Floor, east truss with curved wind brace and rear rafters on the right. Ignore the later inserted truss in the centre of the picture (with fluffy toy); this is not part of the original structure. Note how the tie beam of the east truss stands proud of the wall of No. 22 and how its underside as well as part of the wall post have been cut away to create an access, once the rear room had been added.

The western truss is in line with the transverse beam on the ground floor, which defines the cross passage. Here only the collar appears to have survived and its empty mortise slots show that there was a partition wall.

The stub of the former tie beam assembly remains in the north wall between two windows. Where the principal rafter and the tie beam meet was the location of the original roof eaves; the window height above this point shows by how much the eaves height was increased to allow for the insertion of new fenestration for the chamber over the hall.

Sawn off tie beam stub and tenon of the principal rafter foot, just visible above, partially hidden behind new timber trimmers



The somewhat fancy additional collars and studs in the centre of the room must have been inserted to support the new roof structure and make up for its inevitable weakening when the tie beam was cut away to allow for head height, when the chamber over the hall was created.

At the stair landing one can see the back wall of the front range in the form of a major post (in line with the through passage) and wall studs. They appear to be weathered indicating that this was an outside wall for some time before the construction of the rear wing and stairs.

The framing of the staircase wall is of narrow scantling and not of the quality in evidence in the front part of the building; this indicates a building time, when timbers was in short supply and brick was beginning to take over for important external walls.