

VERNACULAR BUILDINGS  
RESEARCH SECTION

SU 762 825  
Report No 54/1989

Nos. 17, 19 and 29 Friday Street  
Henley-on-Thames / Oxfordshire

[See other detailed reports]

Owners: Mr. P. Stott, Mr. J. Botley and Mr. I. Pritchett

Listed Buildings Entry: Grade II 'C17 range of terraced cottages forming a repeating street facade. Painted brick wall on flint base with projecting string at 1st floor level. Old tiled roof with a higher ridge line near centre. 2 storeys, No. 23 (formerly the White Lion Inn) has additional attic with 2 dormers. 14 windows, 6 on first floor with heavy, barred, small paned, casements. Ground floor windows have transom and mullions, some 19th century casements. Some reproduction casements with leaded glazing. Mostly plank doors with small, bracketed flat hoods'.



Nos.17 to 29 Friday Street ( slightly set back )

### Setting and History

These three houses are part of a terrace of six on the north side of Friday Street. Originally this street formed the boundary between the parishes of Henley and Rotherfield Greys, the north side being situated in Henley, on the very edge of the town. The street runs from Rotherfield Greys to the river, first as Greys Road, and after crossing Duke Street/Reading Road ( one of Henley's main arteries) it becomes Friday Street.

In 'The Buildings of Britain TUDOR AND JACOBAN' Dr. Malcolm Airs, the South Oxfordshire Conservation Officer, describes this row of houses as 'a sixteenth-century row of timber-framed tenements built as a single speculation ( for re-letting) and refronted in the eighteenth century.'

The documentary evidence gathered by Ann Cottingham and John Crocker for this part of Friday Street supports the architectural evidence, namely that these originally three timber-framed houses belonged to one single owner, who left them to the Henley Corporation in 1624. They became known as William Gravett's Charity. (See enclosed historical notes in appendix.) The documentary data also agree with the architectural evidence concerning the refronting in brick, new fenestration and doors, as well as division into six units during the 18th century. Confirmation for this work comes from a brick dated 1744 next to the door of No. 23 which forms the tall central range.

The Census Returns for the years 1851, 1861, 1871 and 1881 show that the tenants were mainly artisans and labourers. Nos.23/25 was The White Lion public house, but the publican often pursued another trade as well ( i.e. thatcher, bricklayer ) or had lodgers staying. Adjacent in No.21 was Collins, the marine store dealer, still run by the widow Elizabeth Collins aged 71 in 1881. The Census Returns do not give numbers to the houses, and the enumerators sometimes started from the riverside, sometimes from Duke Street. However with the White Lion in the centre of the row one can be fairly sure, that the order in which the households are listed, correspond to the modern numbers (which have been put on the Census copies for ease of identification). However there is always the possibility that a house was temporarily empty, or that two cottages were jointly rented. It is therefore possible that the marine store occupied more than the single-bay house of present day No. 21.

## House No. 17

This house forms the western end of the row. It has the same brick facade as its neighbours. The ground floor window is of the mullion and transom type, but probably a modern replacement. The two upstairs ones are Yorkshire sliding sash windows. A timber-framed wing runs at right angles to the back. This has a weather boarded north gable.

The plan form of this house is somewhat different. The ground floor room consists of two bays, both are one room deep like its neighbours. The western one is 2.70<sup>m</sup> wide, the eastern one only 1.80<sup>m</sup>. The partition wall has been removed, and both together now make a good-sized living room. The fire-place is modern but in an old stack, and is situated in the eastern bay. The staircase rises in the space next to the stack. Behind the stack is the timber framed wing that houses the kitchen.

Of the original timbers a great deal survive. The low plinth in the west wall supports a timber sole plate, wall posts with yowls and long braces (20 cm wide). The ceiling timbers are all of very heavy scantling. The central transversal joist has 7 empty mortises where presumably a partition wall used to be. One of the mortises may have been a brace slot. Jointed into this timber are two off-set spine beams of 30 - 33 cm width with deep chamfers of up to 9 cm. There are no chamfer stops. The ceiling joists are all laid flat, of mostly roughly squared-off timbers. Those near the present front door are the largest and most regular ones. They measure 20 cm across, and may well predate the others.

The first-floor front rooms also show much of their original framing. The west wall has a brace and a jowl wall post in the back, whilst in the front a little of the sloping tie beam can be seen. All tie beams of this house as well as of No. 19 slope steeply towards the front. The central truss also has a jowl post and a large mortise for a brace. There are several sawn-off tenons in the visible part of the tie beam confirming the existence of a former partition wall.

The loft over these two front bays preserves its original rafters at the back, presumably because they were well protected by the roof of the rear wing. The rafters on the street side have been replaced, as has the purlin. An empty mortise in the remaining principal rafter below the purlin shows that the truss originally had a collar. A groove on the upper face of the tie for holding wattle staves shows that the partition wall noted below extended right up into the roof. The underside of the rafters of the central bay, the curved wind braces and the purlin show signs of soot, but they are not heavily encrusted. This may be due to the loft timbers having been cleaned at some time, or that the stack was added quite soon after the house had been built. The open hearth in the narrow central bay was then replaced by a fireplace, and the room given an upper chamber. The rear wing may have been built at the same time, as its

## House No. 19

This house is the second one seen from the western end. The outside elevation is the same as that of No. 29, but it has a mullion and transom window with one iron casement on the ground floor. On the second floor are two modern casements.

It has the same plan form as No. 29, with a fire-place in the back wall of its front room. The partition wall to the neighbouring property on the east side <sup>is</sup> are of square panels and the timbers are of slight scantling. To the west the partition wall has large rectangular panels. The winder staircase rises next to the stack from the back room. Substantial ceiling joists are exposed in the kitchen.

This house retains a considerable number of its original timbers. The roof trusses together with those of No.17 help to explain more of the original design of the houses and their later development.

The house was originally one-room deep, with a steeply pitched roof running parallel to the street. The rafters have been repaired and strengthened, some have been replaced, and quite a number show signs of smoke blackening. They are jointed into each other at the apex without a ridge piece. Before modern fire regulations had to be complied with it was possible to look into both neighbouring lofts. On the east side the gable of No. 21 has a wall of studs, laths & plaster, separating it from the tall central range of the row ( Nos.23/25). On the west side the end gable of No. 17 also has a lath and plaster wall.

Sometime after the one-room deep house had been built, additional rafters were fitted above the original ones, lifting the roof line at the back (north). This allowed for an extension to be built under a cat-slide roof. A second set of extra rafters inserted over these increased the roof space still more, allowing for an upstairs chamber in the back. These two sets of additional rafters are still visible in the loft (see section C - C1). However the line of sloping timbers in the east wall (section D1 - D) suggests that an original outshot or aisle had existed prior to these extensions.

A very interesting feature was discovered in the west wall of the back bedroom during present restoration work. When the plaster was removed a stud wall with part of a diamond mullioned window were found. This belongs to the back wing of neighbouring house No. 17, where part of it still exists ( but without mullions ). It was obviously partially covered when the outshot was extended.

framing sits behind the stack and stair well. The nail holes for the laths left on the upper face of the original rafters of the front build show that there had been a covering of thatch or tiles before the rear wing roof was built over it.

This rear wing has queen strut trusses, the end one having had its collar cut back, presumably to allow for a window or hoist door in the gable wall (now covered by weather boarding). The ground floor room has a large central spine beam measuring 20 by 28 cm with a 4-5 cm chamfer. The joists are narrow and roughly sawn, they measure between 8 to 10 cm. During recent renovation work wattle and daub panels were found in the side walls, and in the east wall some diamond mullions indicate the existence of an earlier window. This is all the more interesting as at first floor level there is a small window in the east wall, which seems to form part of the window, which was recently found in No. 19.

### Conclusion

The evidence of smoke blackening in the loft mainly in the narrow bay of No. 17 helps to reconstruct a buildings sequence for these houses, or single house as it originally probably was. A one room deep house, but consisting of several rooms or bays, was built running parallel with the street, forming part of a development of good quality timber-framed houses. Nos. 17, 19 and probably also 21 formed one unit (21 has yet to be investigated, but the partition wall which seems to lack substantial timbers as well as the formerly open loft indicate this).

Bays 2 and 3 may have been the open hall, although the evidence of smoke blackening comes now mostly from the roof of bay 2. This may be due to the replacement of rafters in bay 3. The visible carpenter's marks are certainly all mixed up. It is, however, also possible, that only the narrow bay 2 had an open hearth, and that all other bays had chambers above from the start. The use of 'smoke bays' is certainly common practice in other parts of the country, especially in Surrey, where they are found throughout the 16th century as a forerunner of the brick chimney.

The evidence collected so far certainly indicates a building date early in the 16th century, ~~or even in the 15th century~~. The houses were substantial and of good quality, and only the last one in the row, No. 29 lacks its own end gable wall, but makes use of the side wall of its neighbour. The rear wing at No. 17 must date from the time after the brick chimney replaced the open hearth. Most chimneys seem to have been built during the latter part of Queen Elizabeth's reign. Diamond mullion timber windows are certainly still found in 17th century houses, and even later in stables, hay lofts and the like.

The written evidence suggests that the houses were in a bad state of repair in the early 18th century, and this is confirmed by the evidence of subsidence (all tie beams slope down to the front at an alarming angle), and substantial renewal of rafters and purlins. The replacement of the front timbers by a substantial brick wall allowed the retention of a great deal of the framing. The subdivision into small, mostly one-bay units with rear extensions produced the existing long, narrow houses on narrow plots running back from the street frontage.

We are very grateful to the owners for allowing us such liberal access to their houses and making this investigation possible.

Recorded by members of the Henley Archaeological and Historical Group

Scale Drawing: WCC. Clenshaw, R. Gibson  
Photographs: I.Reeves, S.Bromilow, R. Gibson  
Hist. Research: J.Crocker, A.Cottingham  
Report: R. Gibson

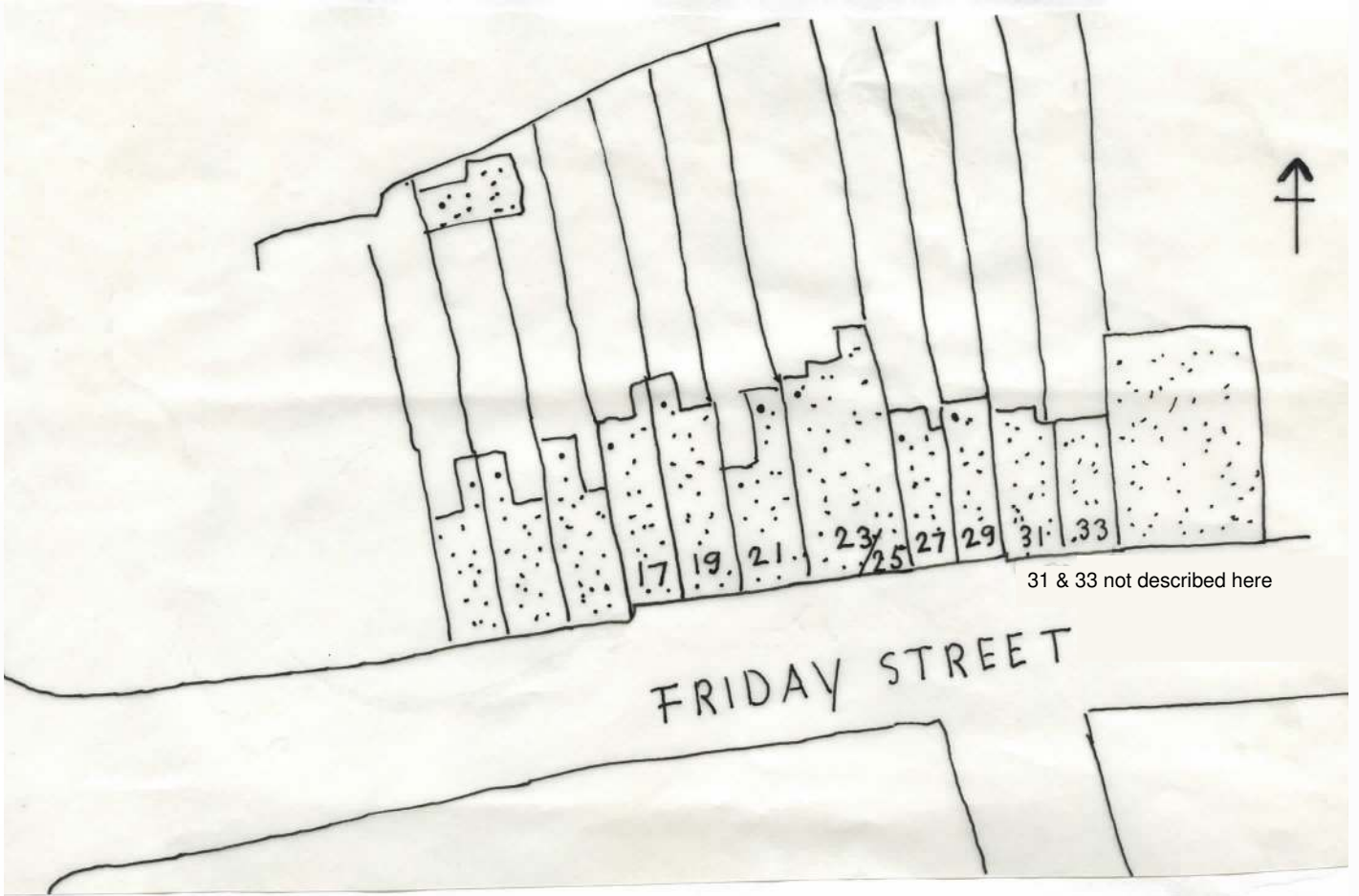
Copies of this report will go to:

Dr. M. Airs, Conservation Officer  
South Oxfordshire District Council

The Sites and Monuments Record, Oxfordshire County  
Museum, Woodstock

The Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of  
England. Fortress House, London

The Archive of the H.A. & H. Group, Townhall, Henley



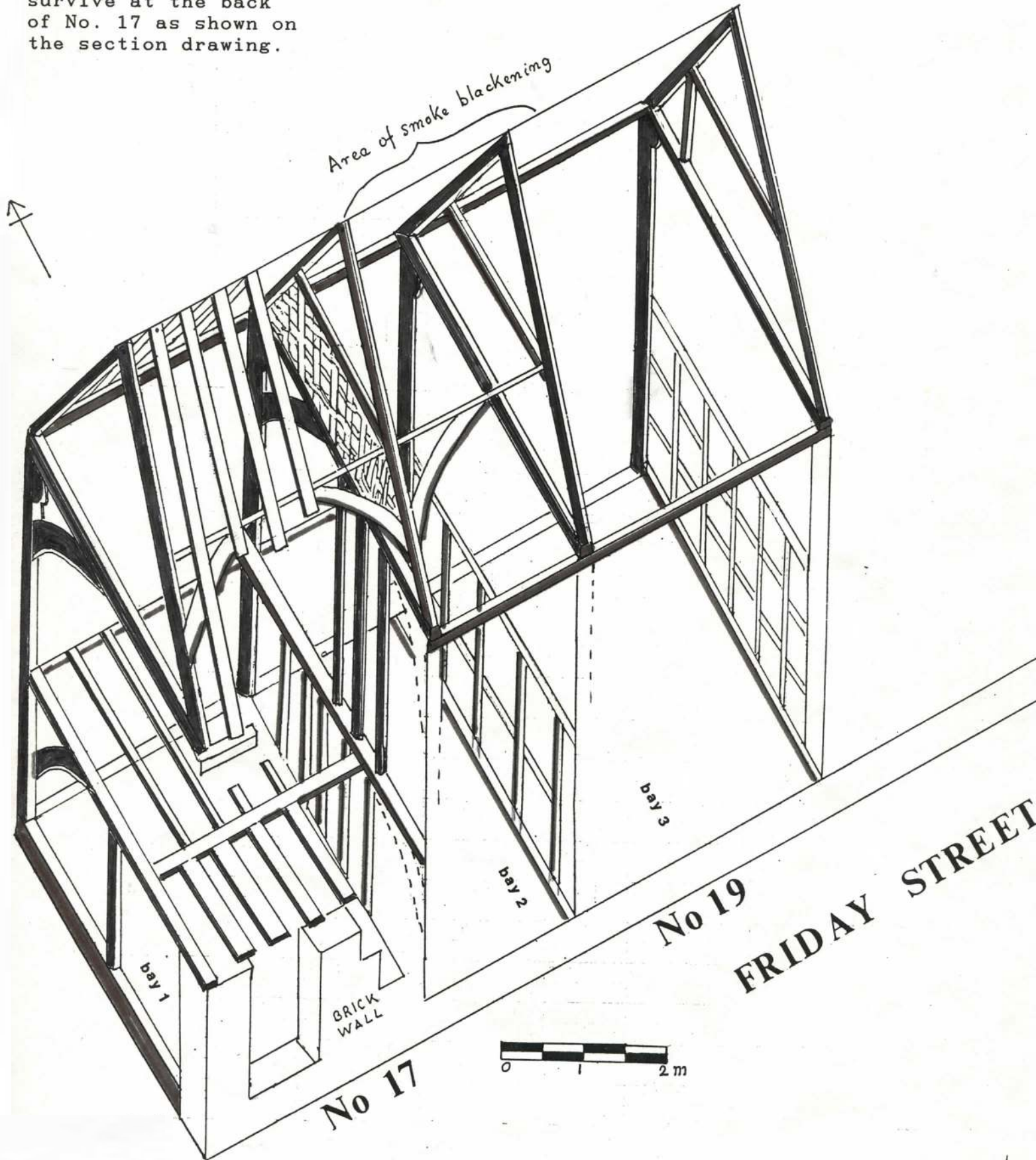
Location of the Six Houses in Friday Street, Henley

No. 17 North Side

South Side



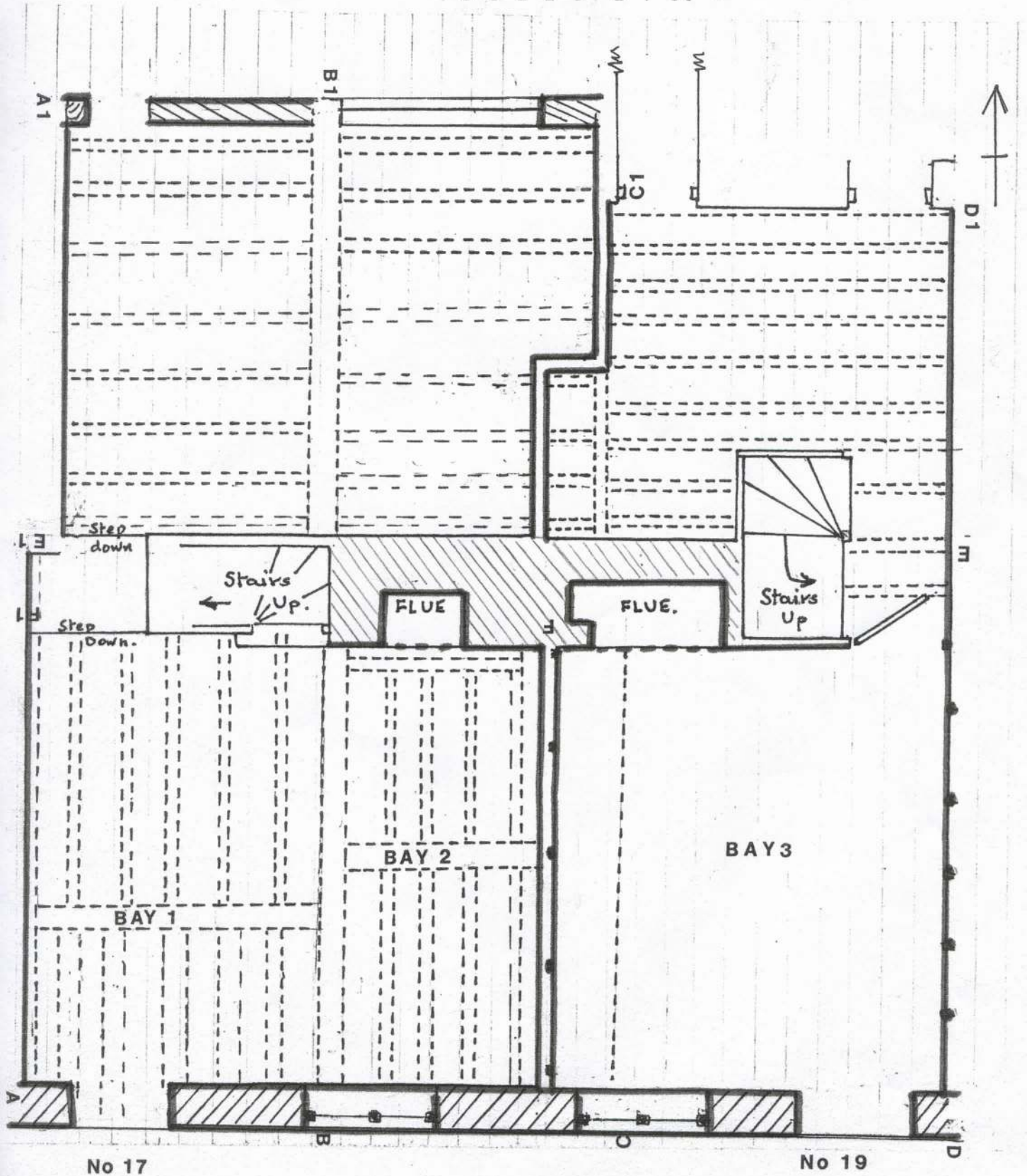
Reconstruction of three front bays. Showing all existing timbers as well as those suggested by empty mortises, brace slots and grooves. Doubtful timbers are dotted in. The 3 roof windbraces are shown in the front for better visibility, but only survive at the back of No. 17 as shown on the section drawing.



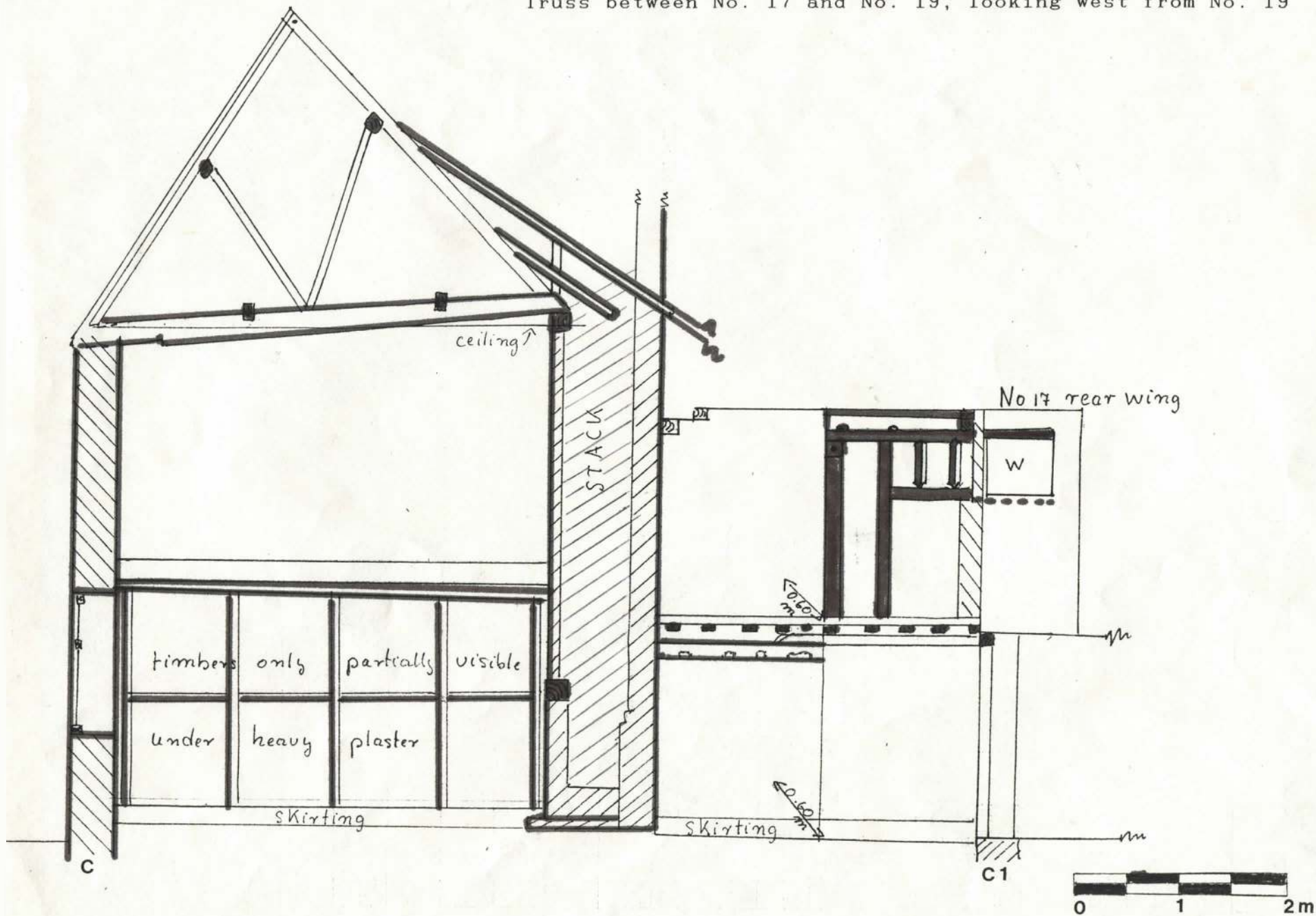
NOS. 17 AND 19 FRIDAY STREET HENLEY-ON-THAMES

- Ground plan -

- Scale 1 : 50 -



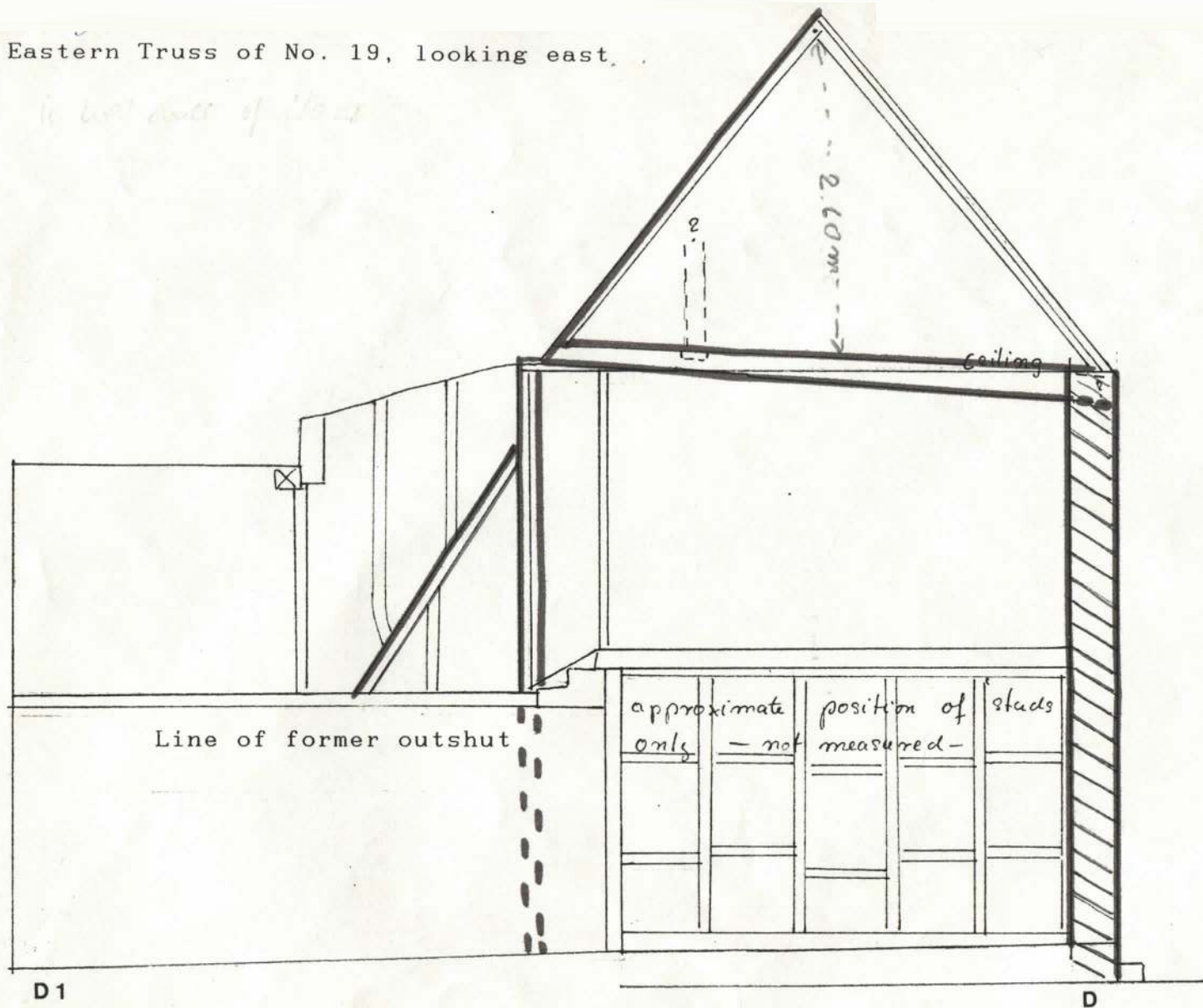
Truss between No. 17 and No. 19, looking west from No. 19



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Eastern Truss of No. 19, looking east.

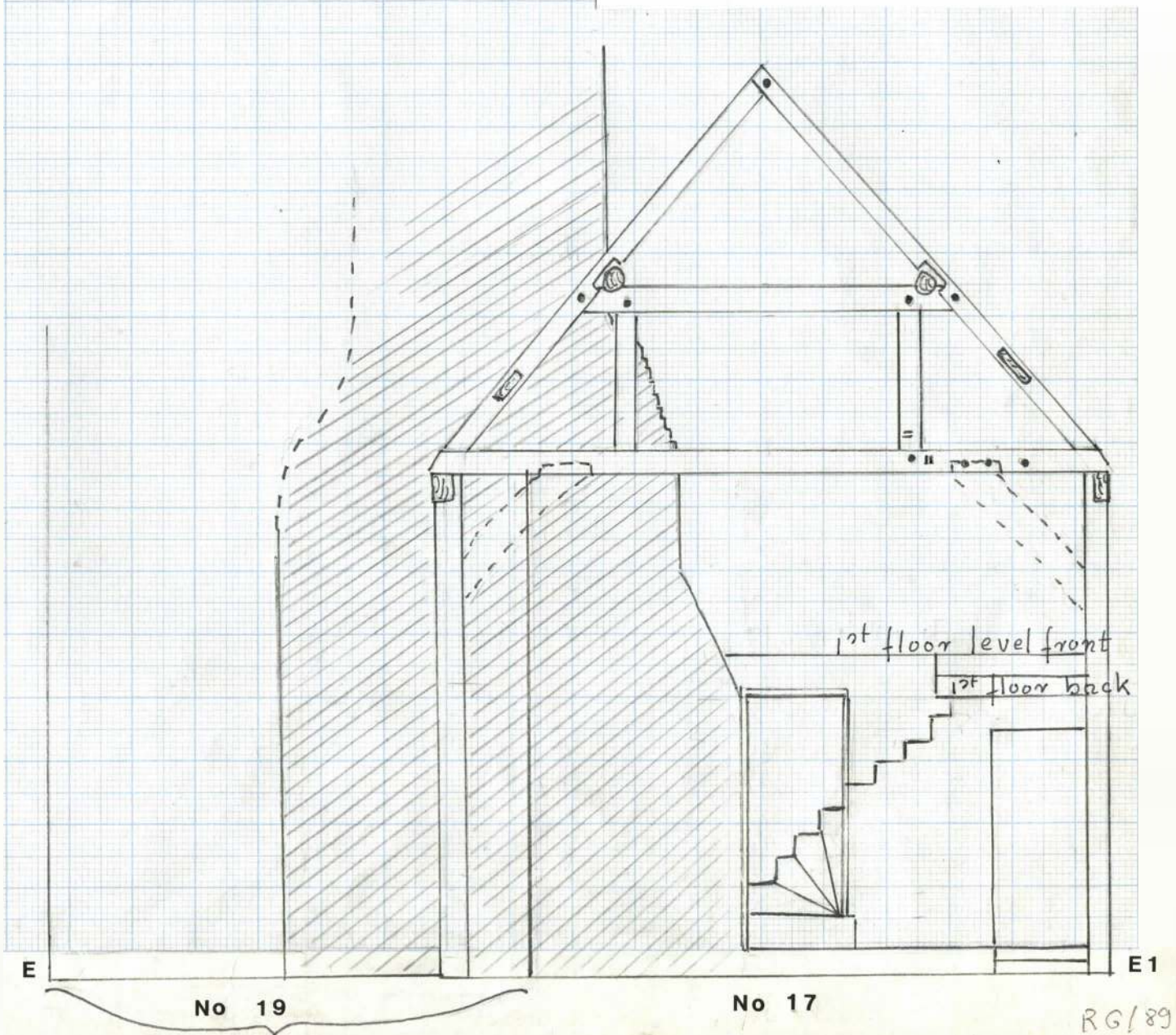
*in west wall of No. 19*



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No. 17 Friday Street  
Rear Wing Truss, looking south.  
Stack and stairs occupy the  
space between this truss and  
the framing of the front part.

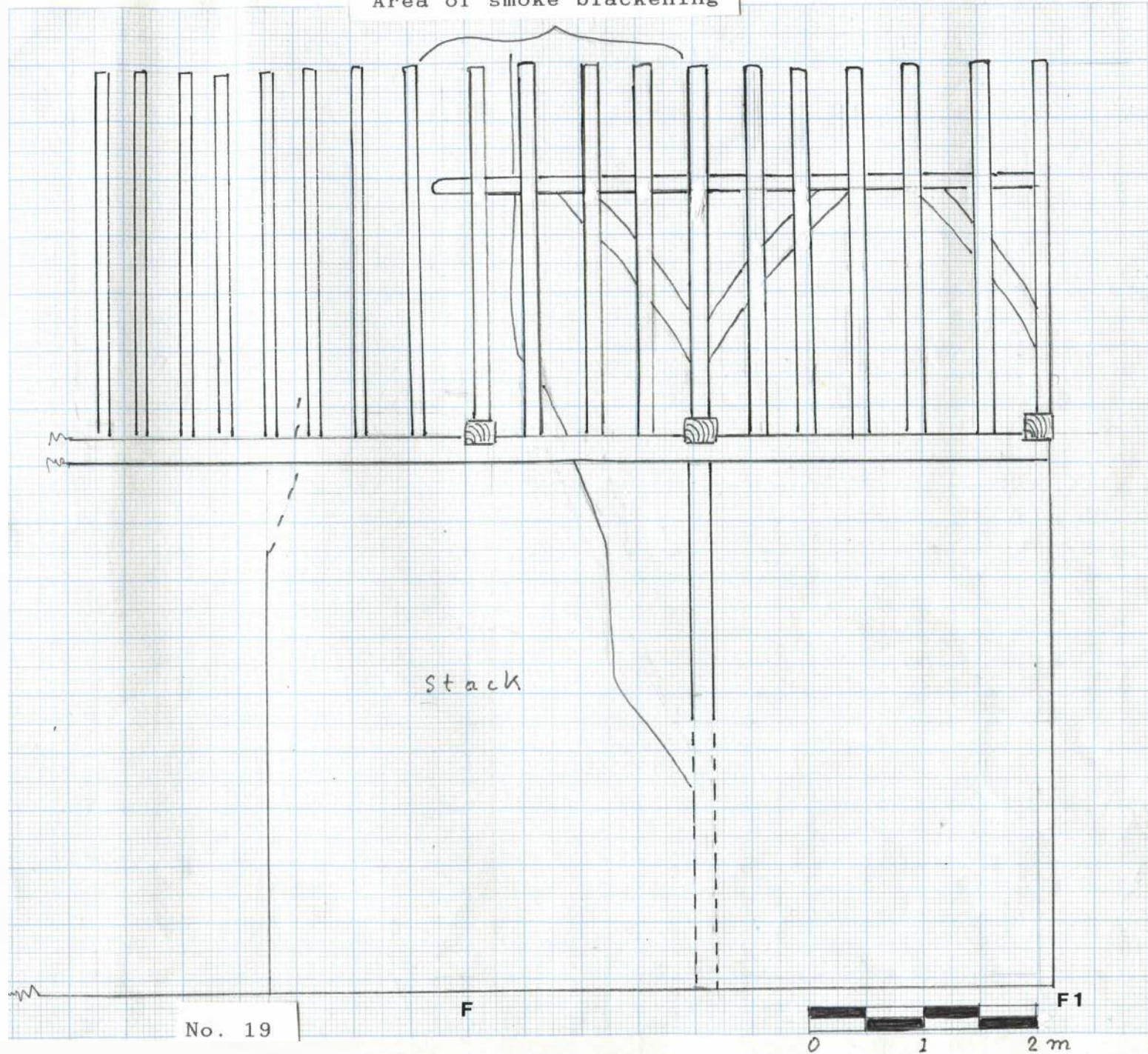


No 19

No 17

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Area of smoke blackening



No. 19

F

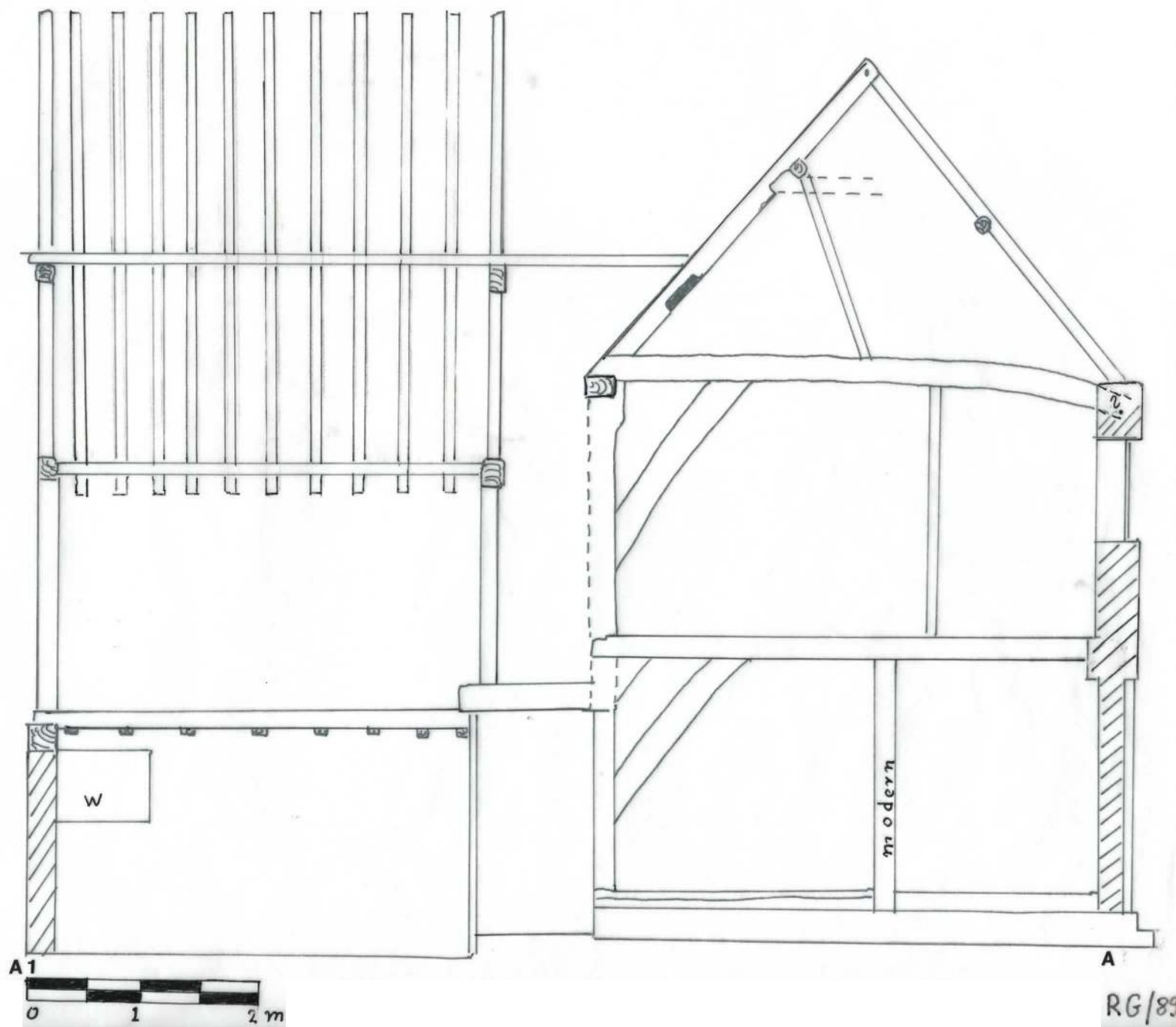
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Original Rafters and Wind Braces in loft of No. 17

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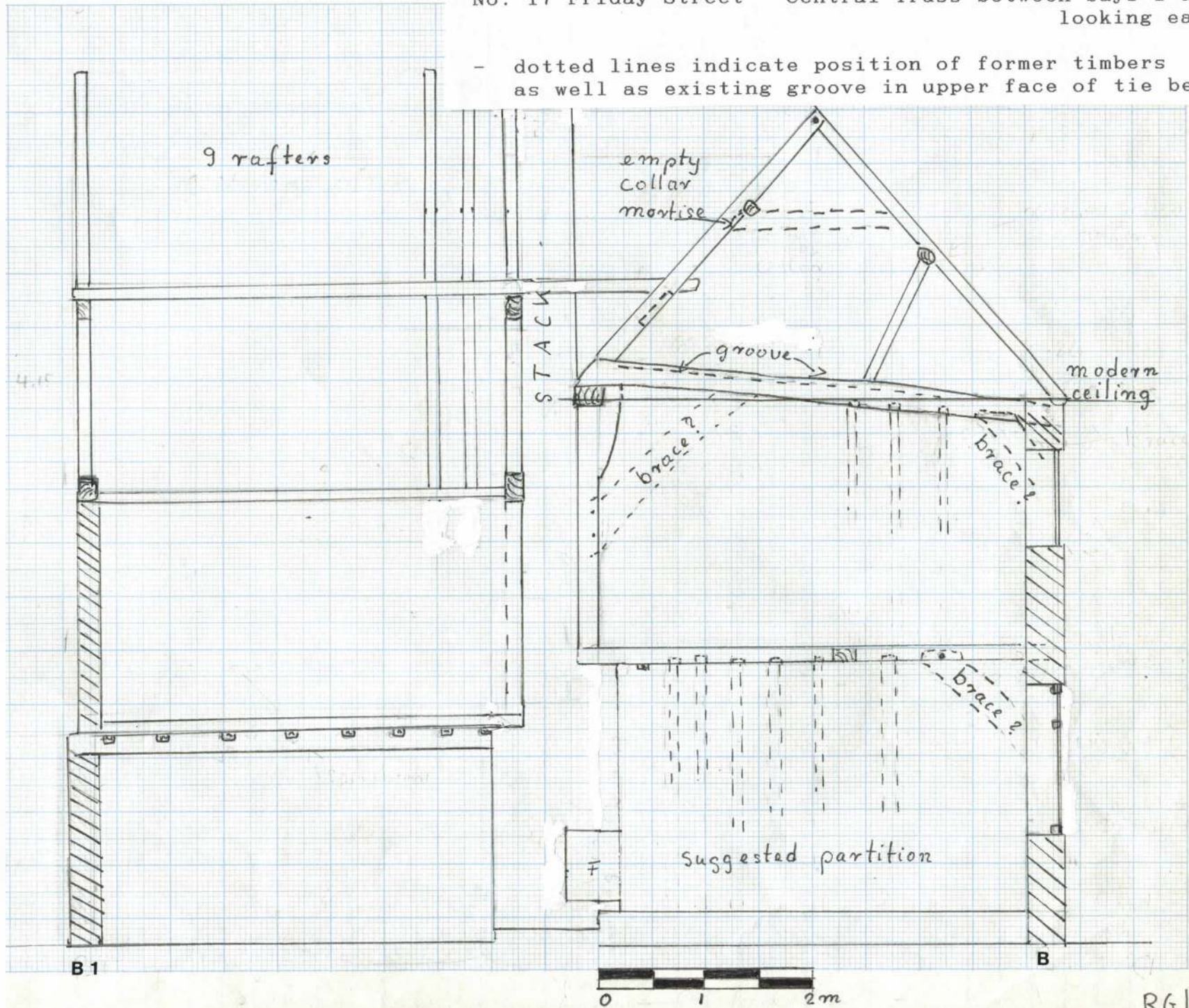
No. 17 Friday Street Western Truss looking east



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No. 17 Friday Street Central Truss between bays 1 & 2  
looking east

- dotted lines indicate position of former timbers  
as well as existing groove in upper face of tie beam



Rear Wing of No. 17 with Weather Boarded Gable.  
Low Kitchen Extension of No. 19 to the Left.



Common Rafters in the Loft of No. 19 with Two Sets  
of Additional Rafters for Outshots ( north side )



Loft of Nr. 17

Central Principal Rafter & Windbraces  
- all showing smoke blackening.



View of Central Truss from back wing

Western Gable, note small gable outline in lath-and-plaster wall. This may have been an extension



No. 17 Friday Street View from bay 2 into bay 1



Kitchen Spine Beam, looking north



Ceiling Joists in bays 1 and 2, looking south-east



Blocked window with two diamond mullions in first floor back bedroom of No. 19. To the right, seen through the glass pane, the continuation of the window. This is situated in the rear extension of No. 17 and belongs to that house. It was partially blocked when the outshut of No. 19 was extended.

Wall braces in No. 17 west wall - upstairs - - downstairs





Half of Mullion Window in West Wall of No. 19. This Window belongs to No. 17 and was Partially Blocked when the Back Bedroom of No. 19 was built over the Kitchen. The other half still serves as a Window in the Rear Wing of No. 17



Studs in the East Wall of the Upstairs Rear Extension of No. 19 (denoting the former Roofline of the Cat's Slide Roof.)

Common Rafters in Loft of No. 19, South Side  
Later narrow Queen Strut Supporting Purlin



Above: Looking into the Apex of the Roof of No. 19

Below: Part of a Purlin is projecting from the Loft of No. 17  
This and some of the Rafters are Smoke-Blackened



Mullion and Transom Window Ground Floor No. 19  
( NB. Circular timber support is recent )

Detail of Catch on Iron Casement  
Leaded Diamond Glass is 20th Century





Kitchen Ceiling in No. 19

The Lower horizontal wall timber is the middle rail of the rear wing of neighbouring No. 17. Several cut-off tenons in its underside show that it used to be a partition wall. The upper timber was probably added when the outshut at No. 19 was enlarged.



Fire-Place in Ground-Floor Front Room of No. 19  
- Cleaned and Restored during present Renovation Work -