

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

Parish/County: Henley-on-Thames, Oxon

Street and House name: 17 – 29 Friday Street, known as Gravett's Charity

Listing grade and entry text: Listed Gd II in 1974

'C17th range of terraced cottages. Painted brick wall on flint base with projecting string course.....' N.B. this listing entry is no longer correct as recording of the buildings as well as documentary evidence, below, will show.



17/29 Friday Street in c. 1940 (Nos 31/33)

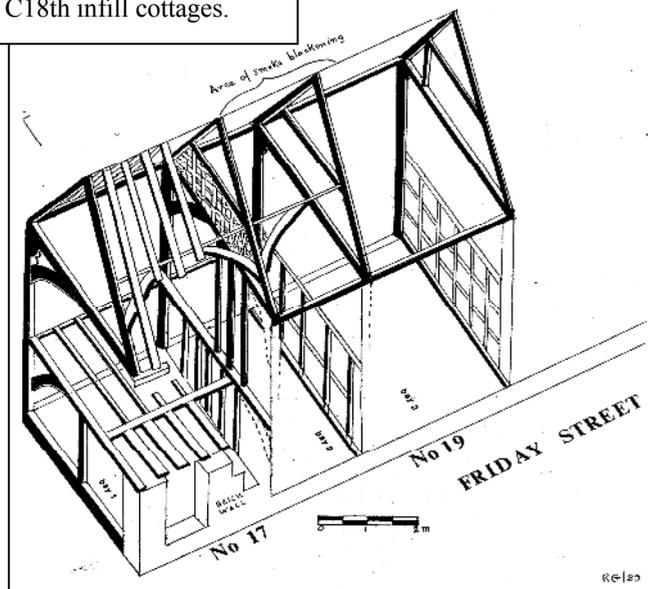


and in 2010 (For Nos 31/33 see sep.report)

This is now a uniform looking terrace of small brick cottages; however they started as two separate, substantial timber framed buildings, which were altered and joined together in the mid 18th C to create 5 two-up/two-down labourers' cottages, leaving the timber framing of the largest and tallest building in the centre least altered to become a shop and a PH.

No. 17 on the extreme left is the other, early timber framed building, in which c. mid C15th framing survives. It also has a rear timber framed bay, set at right angles to the front, with a four-light, diamond mullion window. Nos. 19, 21, 27 and 29 are infill buildings, which used the earlier timber framing of their neighbours as side walls (see photo and drawing below).

The framing of No 17 shows a bay and a half of a medieval timber framed house, the small one was probably used as a smoke bay; sooting survives in the roof. Nos. 19 & 21(not shown) were built as C18th infill cottages.



Interior of No. 17. The long arch brace in the side wall is typical of a medieval timber frame. Two other examples in Henley date from 1438

Known History: This group is known as ‘Gravett’s Charity’ cottages, given to the Henley Corporation in 1624 by William Gravett. The first mention of property belonging to William Gravett in Friday Street comes from the will of another benefactor of the town, William Barnaby. In his will of 1585 he mentions one of his tenements in Friday Street as *‘between the tenements of John Lewes on the east parte and William Gravatt on the west parte’*, (i.e. Barnaby refers to Nos 31/33, which lie immediately east of Gravett’s Cottages – for these see separate report on William Barnaby’s Henley properties left to the Town)

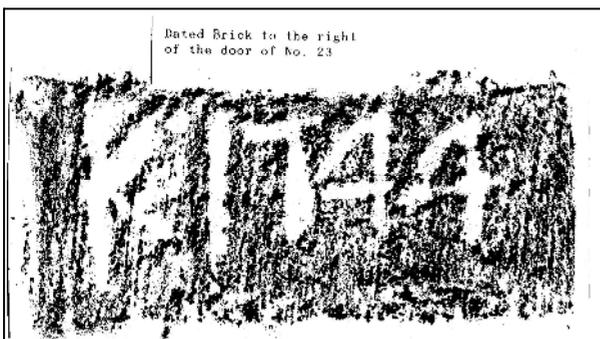
‘Gravett’s Gift’, as it was also known consisted at first of two houses and a malthouse and is mentioned on 6.4.1744 in the Henley Borough Assembly Minutes as having lately been in the possession of widow Simmons. A lease was given to Benjamin Bradshaw in 1744 *‘in consideration that he is to pull down the old houses and malthouse, with appurtenances, being run to ruin, and build new houses in their stead.’*

On 2.9.1746 Benjamin Bradshaw was granted a new lease for the 6 tenements in Friday Street which he hath now built in place of the 2 old houses and malthouse for £6, and a chance to renew for two further terms of 11 years at a rent of £9.

N.B. By going inside the various cottages we now know that Bradshaw did not pull down the ‘two old houses’, only the malthouse left no trace, but he incorporated them into his terrace of workers’ cottages by giving them all a unified brick front, similar windows and doors. Bradshaw was obviously keen on preservation, or he may have thought to himself: why build new when the old was still doing very well? – No complaints from the Town Council are registered, as they apparently firmly believed, that *‘he hath now built 6 tenements in place of the 2 old houses.*

Description of the buildings

Nos. 19, 21, 27 & 29 appear newly built by Bradshaw and fill the gaps in the street frontage between the C15th-16th original timber framed houses, now Nos. 17 at the extreme western end, and Nos. 23-25 the tall 2 ½ storey building in the middle. All have been unified with a brick front (a dated brick of 1744 was found in the front wall of No. 23/25), similar doors and new windows. All newly built cottages consist of a front room, accessed directly from the street, a stack and fire place in the back wall, a stair case next to it and access to a rear kitchen, which was added at right angles to the front range.



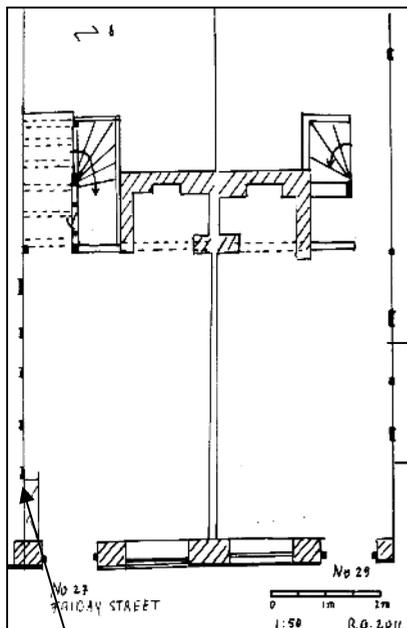
From top left, clockwise:
Dated brick on front wall;

Typical lay-out of the front room of the mid-18th C. infill cottages;

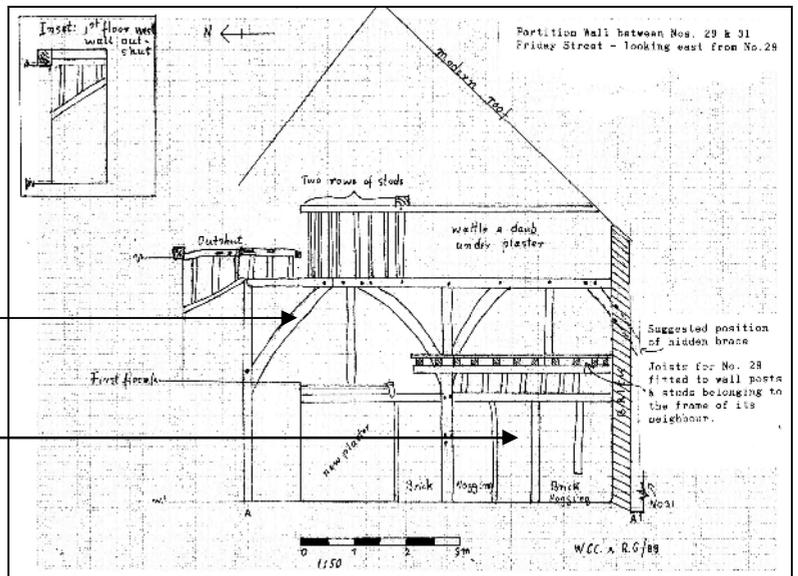
Typical turned staircase built against the wall and stack between the two ground floor rooms;

Pt. of diamond mullion window in rear wing of No. 17





G.F plan of C18th infill cottages Nos 27 & 29, both use neighbouring framing for their side walls



The west timber framed wall of the C 15th No.31/33 is here used to form the side wall of the 1744 infill cottage (now No. 29)



West wall of No. 27, which is also the east wall of No. 23/25 the former **White Lion PH**



Large, curved wind braces in the roof of the former White Lion PH, Nos. 23/25



Brakspear's 11-year lease for the White Lion up to 1834 for an annual rent of £ 45 (Cooper & Caldecott , ORO /Brakspear VII)

The White Lion PH closed in 1890 and it and the other cottages were sold by the Town Council in 1892 (see A. Cottingham *The Hostleries of Henley*, p.265)



View south from the burgage plots of Nos 33/31 (low slate roof on the left) to Gravett's Cottages Nos. 29/27; 25/23 in the centre with large, early rear wing; Nos 21,19 & 17 – little is visible of the latter. This view gives quite a different picture of this varied group of buildings to the one presented to the street, a typical C18th device of giving the public façade a uniform treatment, but not worrying about the back elevations.

Gravett's Charity Cottages – what have we got?

Nos. 19 & 21, as well as Nos. 27 & 29 were built as pairs set between the existing late medieval, timber framed houses, now known as Nos. 17 and 23/25 Friday Street, as well as using the side wall of No. 31 (not part of Gravett's Charity, but already gifted to the Henley Corporation by William Barnaby in 1582 and therefore in the same ownership). For both groups the existing timber framed walls of their neighbours were utilized by the thrifty builder in the C18th. The timber partition walls are of a different construction, using much slighter scantling timbers (see drawings and photographs above) than found in the earlier, timber framed houses. All dwellings, newly built and old, were refronted, creating a unified terrace of mostly small two-up/two-down cottages for letting. Only the central, 2 ½ storey building was larger, two bays wide and with a rear extension of similar framing, but of a slightly later date. It became a public house, called the White Lion and is first documented in 1826, then leased by the brewers Benwell and Brakspear. It closed in c. 1890 (see A.Cottingham, *The Hostelries of Henley* for more details on its period as a public house and connection with Henley breweries) and became a dwelling house once again.

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