

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

**Parish/County:** Henley-on-Thames, Oxon

**Owner:** Brakspear's

**Tenant:** Ian Blandford

**Street and House name:**

7 Market Place, Butchers: 'Gabriel Machin Ltd'

**Tel No:** 574377

Ruth Gibson

**Date:** 6.5.08

**Listing grade and entry text:** Gd II

*16<sup>th</sup> cent. and later. Gable end to street, 3 storeys. Bracing in patten of quadrants in square framing.*

**Known History:** The building and its neighbour No. 9 are known to have been the P. H. called the 'Black Horse & Farrier' until about 1770 and then the 'The Crown & Thistle' with malshouses on the plots behind providing the ingredients for the beer brewed on site (see A. Cottingham, *The Hostelries of Henley*). Whilst 'The Crown' at No. 9 continued until 1952, No. 7 had become a shop by 1841, when the Census Returns show that James Wise, green grocer, was in occupation together with his family and two servants, a total of nine people.

By 1861 the Census Returns show the butcher Richard Blackall as the head of a household of nine, which included a butcher's labourer and a house servant. By 1871 Alfred Pearse Lester, also a butcher, was the head of household with his son Charles Lester as a journeyman butcher. The household totalled again nine, which included two servants.

In 1881 Gabriel Machin, poulterer, born in Reading in 1836, has arrived on the scene with his family. In 1891 the succession was assured by the presence of his son Gabriel, born in Henley in 1865, named as 'butcher's assistant'. The fact that he had not appeared on the 1881 Census suggests, that Gabriel junior had been learning his trade as a journeyman somewhere else at that time. It was 1901 when Gabriel junior was in charge, head of a household of only 4, one of them still a domestic servant.

Today Gabriel Machin Ltd continues the tradition as Butchers, Fishmonger, Smokers, Curers & Gamedealers under the care of Ian Blandford and his team.



**Map ref., date of 1<sup>st</sup> map, type of plot.** Shown on 1878 O.S map. Narrow burgage plot of 5.40 m, probably created by subdividing an earlier, wider plot.

**Type and use of building:** Shop and food processing premises, office and storage above

**Plan form/position in street:** The front range, which consists of one bay, runs parallel to the street and is 5, 96 m deep, including the rear corner post and midrail above. ( NB the listing entry is incorrect with regard to 'gable end to street' as this gable is only a large dormer, sitting at right angles to the main building). The slightly lower rear range, also at right angles does not quite occupy the full width of the plot, leaving a c. 0.50 narrow gap on the east side.

**Description of building:** This is a one-bay building of two storeys and attic with an extension at right angles at the back under a hipped roof. Both parts are timber framed with timbers of heavy scantling. The only visible post is of heavy scantling with a splayed head in the rear, south west corner.

The front/north elevation has a large dormer window, square framed and decorated with quadrants. Internally straight diagonal braces in the walls of both ranges dominate, but one long, slightly curved arch brace is visible in the front range from the south-western rear post to the west gable tie beam.



**Rear range, west wall at first floor level; raking braces from rail to wall post**

The roof trusses are only visible in the front range. They consist of queen struts from tie to collar with clasped purlins.

The small newel staircase between ground and first floor is located next to a large stack, of which only one heavily painted brick wall is visible. This stack is located just behind the front bay and started as an external stack, now it is partly enclosed by the rear range. It does not serve any fire places now, but externally, seen from the back yard, it appears to have been a very wide 4-flue stack of 2m plus width (access to measure it was not possible, but views from the rear plot show it to be of very substantial size) It probably served 2 fire places in the front and two in the

back range, some of these may have served an industrial use rather than a purely domestic one. . There is still evidence of one blocked f.p. in the front, first floor room.

There is a small 1<sup>st</sup> floor landing next to the stack which gives access to one rear room with timber framing exposed in the walls and two front rooms. This was clearly one room originally as the arrangement of the ceiling joists and single window shows.



**Front range, east wall, first floor; post with staggered straight braces**



**Circa 1.80 m by 1.20 m stack built of c. 2" 'Tudor' bricks located at the rear wall of the front, timber framed range**



**1<sup>st</sup> floor landing with stack and adjoining stairs of which only the balustrade is visible. The entrance door to the attic stair is on the extreme left of the picture, the other, open door leads to the front room.**

A separate turned staircase within the north or front range leads to the attic, which is lit by the dormer window, which dominates the front elevation of the building.



The stairs to the attic are located just inside the rear and west wall of the front timber framed range.

At the back one can see the main corner post and the wide archbrace between it and the tie beam above, on the left is the back wall with its narrow studs, which support the wattle & daub infill panels.

The short stub, seen in the triangle formed by the brace and post sits the wall plate of the rear range, clearly a later insertion.



**Attic, west truss, queen struts and clasped purlins, the dormer window is on the right**

At ground floor level the turned staircase continues down into the cellar.



**The mainly brick and flint built cellar, also has some tile coursing.**

**Here a small niche with timber lintel was created as candle or lamp recess.**

**The bricks are mostly of 2", but may be re-used.**

Brick coving visible in the ceiling next to the stairs indicates that this is the area, where the large central stack is supported above.

There are two openings to the street front, the larger one is now blocked, the other is very small, but shows signs of heavy usage in its brick work. This may reflect the movement of heavy barrels being brought into the cellar during its use as a pub, but also as a shop, as it would always have been the main storage area before refrigeration came in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Interestingly now it houses the motors of the many refrigerators, which keep the goods cool in the shop above.

The shop occupies the whole of the front bay and this seems to be the original lay-out as the central axial beam crosses its whole width of of c.5 m and is chamfered and stopped, probably at both ends, although only the eastern end is now visible.



**Central axial beam of the shop, it has a c 2 ½” wide chamfer and step stop at its eastern end; the western end is hidden by a cabinet**



## **Discussion of development and possible building date - Summing up:**

The earliest part of the building, the front range, consists of one room per floor only. Both the stack and staircase are outside the front range. The stack is attached to its rear wall and the staircase is within the rear extension, attached to the west side of the stack. The front building occupies its entire, very narrow plot of 5.40m, the rear range is slightly narrower, allowing for a narrow passageway between Nos. 7 and 5. Access to the back is from the back of the plot via Tuns Lane. It is very likely that this building was once part of a larger house; the burgage plots to both the east and west side are equally narrow and all appear subdivided. The fact that at least during the documented period of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries it was in use as one PH together with No. 9 also points in the direction that this was part of a larger building. Unfortunately No. 9 seems to date from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and any physical relationship, if there was one, has gone.

No. 5, the 'Three Tuns', preserves more of its timber framing and the outline of their joint plots shown so clearly on the 1878 O.S map, also seems to indicate a close relationship to the building on its east side. It will be interesting to compare the framing of both buildings when access there becomes possible.

The straight wall braces in both front and rear range indicate an early 17<sup>th</sup> date, whilst the curved arch brace from corner post to tie beam is much more typical for a construction date nearer 1500.

Unfortunately one cannot see the rafters in either front nor rear range, nor have I been able to investigate the stack closely, but photographs taken from the rear as well as measuring its one accessible elevation at the stairs shows that it is an early, 'Tudor brick' stack, which may be original to the house, but could equally have been added later. (These narrow bricks continued to be used through most of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but are known to have been in use from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards; early examples are the Ewelme Almshouses and School, a later example is the Watlington Townhall, built in 1665).

The large and attractive dormer and decorative framing of the front wall above the shop, which is such a dominant feature of the building, is probably an early 17<sup>th</sup> or very late 16<sup>th</sup> century addition. It is purely ornamental and has no structural functions beyond creating a dormer for the attic, but tells us of the desire of its then owner to show off his building/business premises in this important location to the best of his abilities without going through the trouble and expense of a rebuild or of raising a new brick front wall as seems to have happened at the 'Three Tuns' in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The good size cellar under the front range is accessed via a narrow, turned staircase next to the stack. Its walls are brick and flint with tile coursing; and most of the bricks are also narrow, 'Tudor' bricks. The ceiling has timber joists, supported by posts, mostly machine cut and evidently much replaced. The two openings to the street, the larger one is blocked with modern brickwork, show the heavy use of this storage area, very much in keeping with its pub use, but equally useful for any other food related business which required barrels to be brought in.

This traditional, small shop is the only one on the south side of Market Place, which has survived in anything like its original timber framed construction. Its earliest parts may date to the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, but with alterations and additions being carried out during the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.



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