

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

**Parish/County:** Henley-on-Thames  
**Street and House name:** The Row Barge PH

**Owner:** Brakspears  
**Tenants:** David Cheyney  
( end of tenancy 8.8.06)  
**Recorder:** Ruth Gibson  
Date of visit 19.6.06

**Nos 35 (formerly The Cottage) and 37 West Street (The Row Barge)**



**Listing grade and entry:** Three separate Listing entries ( summarized): Grade II, C 18, flint walls with red brick dressings. Old tiled roof, 2 storeys. No 35 has 2 dormers, central door with small flat hood on brackets. No 37 has central door with moulded architrave and flat hood. Weather boarded outshut to east of No. 35. The garden wall of No. 35 is also listed.

**Discussion on building dates, datable alteration and additions:**

Although one building now, both houses started life separately, ‘The Cottage’ had a separate tenant/owner? only becoming part of the PH some 30 years ago (verbal information) and one must assume that the internal alterations, such as the creation of openings between the two on the ground floor to create a large bar area, and first floors to create access from the staircase and landing/corridor of No 37 to 35 must date from that time. The staircase of No. 35 must also have been removed (no signs of its former location). It now only has a fire escape stair at the back. NB Needs checking with Brakspear’s documentation).

However, the work to the circa 2 foot former gap between the gables of both houses in the front elevation, now filled with well knapped flint bedded in lime mortar, was surely done some time ago, when the use of lime mortar and knapping and laying of flints were still routine. The 1878 map shows the houses without a physical gap between them, but as separate properties.

The ground floor front elevation of the PH certainly has the look of an 18<sup>th</sup> century house with its Georgian sash windows and almost central door, whilst the taller No. 35 looks later with its 19<sup>th</sup> century fenestration. However, windows are not a reliable dating tool, as they were – and still are - most easily replaced and updated.

The brickwork appears to tell a different story, as that of 'The Cottage' consists of 2" bricks, whilst that of the PH was built using 2 ½" bricks. This may mean nothing more than that they came from different brick kilns, as it took a long time before 2 ½" bricks became the standard, but the narrower bricks are usually the earlier ones. It certainly tells us that they were built at different times. It is also interesting to note that the right hand ground floor window of 'The Cottage', which is larger than that on its left hand side, has brick work, including a cambered arch, like that in the PH using the 2 ½" bricks. Both would very likely to have been done once they were in the same ownership.

There is evidence of timber framing in the wall between the front and rear range of No. 37; i.e close studding on a low sill beam are visible on the ground floor. A wall post with wall plate and mid rail can be seen in the stair well between ground and first floor. The question is whether this always was an internal wall. In an 18<sup>th</sup> century brick and flint building internal walls would have been timber framed, but the use of close studding would have been unlikely in such a location, as the use of more timbers in the walls than necessary was usually done for show, not for internal work. It is more likely that this is the remnant of a timber framed building, which was later given a brick and flint front. The slight sag in the front of the first floor brick string course may also indicate an earlier building behind the brick and flint work.

The difference in floor levels between the rear and front ranges of No. 37 may indicate different building dates of the two, but could also just reflect the site topography. Nevertheless the shape and scantling of the timbers and the use of close studding do suggest that, what is now an internal wall, was once the outside wall of a timber framed building of probably 16<sup>th</sup> century date and that it previously looked the other way, i.e. south over the upper market place, before this was infilled with houses. It was then given its new look, as well as a new outlook towards West Street, when it was encased in brick and flint in the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Enigmatically there is also the hint of a jetty in the back wall of the rear range at first floor level. However, the rear range is circa 10 m wide with a half hipped roof, all indicative of a later building date. Unfortunately, neither the roof structure nor floor joists are accessible at present to confirm or dismiss this idea. Should this nevertheless be a true jetty of a timber framed house then that rear section would be of a pre-16<sup>th</sup> century date and very likely pre-date the front range. All questions which can as yet not be answered, but may be with more evidence becoming available through access to the roof structure in the future.

In No. 35 the attic bedroom gables show timber trusses from the tie beams upwards in the two outside walls; the tie beam is clearly sitting on top of the thicker masonry wall of the east gable; the west gable has a flush tie beam, but is still of the traditional collar and clasped purlin construction. This truss may have been rebuilt when the gap between 'The Cottage' and the PH was filled.

Visible in the central dividing wall of No. 35 is a fully framed truss and cross wall with studs below as well as above tie beam level. This is not unusual in a masonry building of late 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century date, at a time when the timber framing tradition was still very much alive and trusted; the timbers too were still cheaper than bricks and easier to transport and handle than flint. Timber framed internal walls continued in use right through the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, but deteriorated in quality and changed in design. This is not the case here, where we are looking at a traditional framing with tie beam, collar and clasped purlins. This evidence brings the building date of No. 35 to about 1700, which is confirmed by the use of narrow 2 " bricks in the outside walls.

## Description of the buildings

**Map ref., date of 1<sup>st</sup> map, type of plot:** Shown on 1878 OS map, narrow plots parallel with the street. They appear to be part of the infill of the upper, or western end of the planned market. This position as an infill building on the edge of the planned upper market area marks these two buildings out as of more than usual historic interest.

**Type and use of building:** Formerly two houses, now joined and used as one premise for the PH and B&B accommodation. No. 37 documented as a PH since 1712 ( A. Cottingham 'The Hostelries of Henley' ).

**Plan form/position in street:** No 35 is L-shaped, the front part built parallel to the street; No 37 also runs parallel to the street, has a wide rear wing, at right angles to the front. This is approximately the same width as the length of the two front bays. Both houses have single storey side extensions. Both houses sit at the back of pavement, on narrow plots backing on to a back lane and slope down steeply to it and the back gardens of Gravel Hill beyond.

**Height (no of storeys):** No 35 has 2 storeys and attic, a single storey extension to the side as well as a single storey lean-to at the back ; No 37 has two storeys with a 2 ½ storey rear wing.

**Walling type and materials:** Brick and flint. The bricks (of 2" at No. 35 and 2 ½" at No. 37) are used as quoins, brick arches and window and door surrounds. No. 37 has a 3 brick string course, with a projecting central brick course. No 35 has a flint plinth with 3 courses of stepped brickwork providing the coping. At No. 35 the right hand ( western ) quoins show that the house was built separately from No. 37. Later, but pre the 1878 map survey, the gap of circa 2 feet was filled with knapped flints.

**Roof shape and structure:** Pitched roofs on front ranges; half hipped roof to rear range of No. 37 with cat's slide roofs off.

**Roof covering:** Old clay tiles

**Chimneys:** There are 4 brick stacks, none looks original to the houses and internally all brick fire place surrounds seem of 20<sup>th</sup> century date. No. 35 has an external gable end stack. No. 37 has a lateral stack, which serves the main bar, rising through the back of the roof with 3 flues. The rear wing of No. 37 has a one flue stack rising below the ridge on the east side and a further stack in the single storey element on the west side rising from the cat slide roof.

**Windows:** No. 35 has 19<sup>th</sup> casement windows to all floors. The brickwork to the right hand g.f. window, which has a cambered 2 ½" brick arch shows signs of disturbance, i.e. it seems to have been inserted or enlarged later. This may explain why this window is larger than the left hand one, which lacks a brick arch of any kind. The slightly taller first floor windows have flat brick arches.

No. 37 has two Georgian sash windows, 10 panes over 10, no horns, set back slightly from the masonry. The long first floor windows are divided by a central timber mullion and have four lights each. There is evidence of brick quoins next to the first floor sign of THE ROW BARGE, which indicates a blocked window. This is confirmed internally, where a blocked window is visible behind the wall which now forms the partition between the two bedrooms. Was this a single room before or did the central window serve a staircase landing, as the present staircase appears to be a later insertion.

### **Front Doors: Shop fronts, fascias, hanging signs, other features**

Projecting sign, showing a barge being rowed by the Thames Watermen with Temple Island in the background. A triangular sign above the door of No. 37 and a square sign THE ROW BARGE located above the door. An oval sign with a small barrel and the wording BRAKSPEAR is located above the now disused door of No. 35.

**Doors and openings at the back:** There is a blocked door opening in the circa 1 m tall flint plinth of the rear wing of No. 37. Two side doors give access from the gable and outshut of No. 35 to the garden. The rear and side windows are a mix of casements with small glazing bars and sash windows

**Special features at the rear and sides:** The back wall of the rear wing of No. 3 has a projecting first floor, as the floor jetties out by about a foot at the western end of the gable and tails away towards its eastern end. Was this the jetty of a timber framed house, later partially underbuilt in flint and brick?

### **Internal evidence in No. 37 'The Row Barge'**

**Cellar:** There is a cellar only under No 37 with iron trap doors in the pavement as well as a further opening for light and air. Metal and glass grille in pavement.

The cellar is reached from the back wing through a heavy ledge and plank door, of the stable door type, located immediately at the back of the front range, behind the bar. The stair is of the companion ladder type and gives access to a two-room cellar under the front range and a slightly lower, narrow section under the rear range. This may have been larger once, as the flint wall has a blocked recess/window/door.

The walls are mostly flint with bricks used for piers, the surround of the various openings, the floors and nosing of the steps leading to the trap door/access hatch. All the walls are heavily white washed. The cellar is still very much used for its original purpose, the storage of beer barrels and the pumping equipment.

**Ground Floor:** This has been much altered. The wall once separating the two buildings has been removed and some support timbers introduced to bridge the gap between the two houses; a step down leads into No. 35. The western gable wall and part of the rear wall of No. 37 have also been removed, incorporating the single storey side extension and rear outshut into an open plan bar.

A spine beam of irregular scantling is visible in the main bar; a cambered and somewhat twisted tie beam is visible in the west gable of the single storey part.

The wall which divides the front range from the rear range is clearly of timber frame with close studding on a low sill beam and a wall post with wall plate and intermediate rail clearly visible in the stairwell. Was it an internal wall or the original rear wall of the front part of No. 37?

**Stairs to first floor:** Located in the rear range of No. 37 it now serves both houses. It is of the dog-leg and winder type with a small landing area half way up' This area allows views of the timber framed wall, a wall post and wall plate.

The stairs arrive at a landing within the rear range, 3 further steps from there lead to the front range, a clear sign of the different building dates of both ranges. A further turned staircase leads up to the attic above the rear range.

### **First Floor:**

The rear range is divided into a landing/corridor, bathroom and large living room. This has a F.P with a modern brick surround in its east wall and two plank and ledge doors with strap hinges, leading into large walk-in cupboards. Two horizontal timbers are visible in the western side wall as well as a spine beam (all heavily painted, but appear straight cut and are not datable).

The front range consists of 2 bedrooms and a corridor now, but the evidence of the blocked central window indicates that a different arrangement had existed before, i.e the small window probably served a staircase landing. There is a small brick FP in the western bedroom, but no external flue. The corridor, which has a blocked F.P. or stack in the back wall now leads to a doorway opening into No 35, which is reached going down two steps. Previously this corridor would have been part of the bedroom, which would have had a F.P., as the 3 flues in the chimney stack above show. (NB 3 flues but evidence for only 2 fire places, i.e. in the bar and here. Where was the third?)

**Attic above rear range of No. 37:** Only the rear range of No. 37 has an attic, which is reached by a narrow staircase. The sloping roof shows a single, diagonal brace from wall plate to probably purlin, however the ceiling hides this and the rest of the roof structure above collar height. The collar is just visible in the gable end. The roof space above collar level is unfortunately not accessible.

### **Internal evidence in No. 35, 'The Cottage'**

**Ground Floor:** Nothing remains of the original lay-out of the ground floor of the front part of the house. A transversal joist immediately to the right of the entrance door has some round mortise holes, indicating a former stud partition and probably a doorway into the room on the right. All other ceiling joists are heavily altered. The former circa 2 feet gap between both houses is marked by two transversal joists, chamfered with crude run out stops towards the area of the gap.

At the back is a lean-to under a catslide roof with a modern extension, which has meant the demolition of its rear wall. Both together now serves as a kitchen. The original lean-to has a heavy spine beam, crudely chamfered and joists of different dimensions ( c. 4 " ), some laid on edge, some square, probably using some second hand timbers.

**First Floor:** The first floor can now only be reached by an external fire escape from the rear and the access corridor from neighbouring No. 37. It is now subdivided into a modern kitchenette, a bathroom and one bedroom. The narrow winder attic staircase rises at the back of this floor and is probably original; it may also indicate where a similar staircase came up from the g.f..

**Attic Floor:** This is reached by the winder staircase and is divided into a small landing and two bedrooms with dormer windows. The two outside gables in the attic show timber trusses from the tie beams upwards; the tie beam clearly sitting on top of the thicker masonry gable wall on the east side. In the central truss the studs of the timber framed wall are exposed rising from the floor joists to the tie beam and from there to the collar and principal rafters respectively. The purlins are supported by the collars and presumably clasped between them and the principal rafters. This visible timber frame indicates an entire timber framed internal wall, which continued in use long after external walls were built of masonry.

The tie beam is interrupted by the door opening, which looks like an original arrangement as the door frame is formed directly by the timber members above, below and to the sides. The door is a ledge and plank timber door with long strap hinges.

**Concluding:** Access to the lofts of No 37 and a look at the floor joists of its rear range would be helpful to come to firmer conclusions about the sequence and dating of the buildings. At present it looks like a building date of around 1700-1750 for No. 35 in brick and flint and an early 17<sup>th</sup> century date for the timber framed construction of No. 37, encased in brick in flint during the later 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Ruth Gibson  
31. 7.06

