

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

Parish/County: Henley-on-Thames, Oxon

Owner: Mr & Mrs M.
Frankenburg

Agent: Spratley Studios

Contact|: Sarah Tassell

Tel No: 411 277

Ruth Gibson

Date: 19.4.10

Street and House name:

32 Hart Street



Listing grade and entry text: Gd II 'Early 19th C. altered facade , mock framing added
Slate roof. 3 storeys, 2 windows incl. canted, contemporary bay ground floor with sashes and
glazing bars, large oriel 1st floor. All windows except those on G.F. early 19th C. reproduction
casements. Double door space containing now only eastern door under flat hood'

Summary: A house of probably 17th C. date located on a narrow burgage plot built to a medieval plan with through passage on the east side. It was probably two rooms deep with a rear extension and central stack when the 1801 sales particulars describe 3 g.f. rooms and 3 chambers. The work carried out after 1801 described only as a 22" encroachment on the 'waste of the manor' i.e. the pavement, involved a new front wall with bow windows and also new rear walls in a blue and red chequer board pattern together with a new, wide slated roof. These early 19th C. works also allowed for an extra storey to be added. The existing small cellar was also extended northwards, but only enough to allow access to the coal hole from the pavement.

Known History: See A Cottingham notes attached; in particular the 1801 Sale reference which indicates a smaller building, but shows the presence of smith's shop at the back. Also 1818 encroachment on the pavement – the Waste of the Manor - by 22" (0.56 m) and a bow window by Thomas Mellett. The Melletts continued there as black smiths and later as veterinary surgeons until 1905.

Map ref., date of 1st O.S 1878 map, type of plot. Narrow burgage plot (c.6 m wide at north front, reducing to 5.30m at the back of the house). Original length of the burgage plot is extant to the town ditch boundary measuring some 285 feet in length (approximate length taken from the 1878 map). The plot may have included No. 34, as indicated by the curving boundaries shown on the map and also the close relationship between both houses such as the rear stack of No. 34 encroaching on 32. Both burgage plots together would have been c.2 ½ perches wide (12.57m). The standard medieval burgage plot in the town measures 1 ½ perches or 7.50 m, but amalgamations and subdivisions have brought about many changes.

A smithy is shown on the map in the form of a long rear building; beyond this are marked four tethering posts in the form of dots. The former through passage, now an internal corridor, is shown on the map with a diagonal cross, indicating an open fronted through way, a necessity for accessing the rear smithy.

Plan form/position in street: A narrow, but deep, double pile building with long side passage to the rear yard. This through passage may have been wider, as indicated by possibly a former double width entrance. The roof pitch runs parallel to the street.

Description of the building: The front entrance is through a door on the left, whilst the right hand side appears to have been blocked and given an oval window. Entrance is into the passage from where the front room, stair case and rear room are accessed. The front room retains evidence of an earlier building in the form of a brick fire place and substantial, one foot wide, transverse ceiling joist. The F.P. is built of 2” bricks with a narrow timber bressumer. It is much repaired and probably altered but still recognizable as pre-dating the front and rear elevations as well as the wide roof. The ceiling joist has chamfers and stops at both ends, indicating its original position over the whole width of the building, including the passageway.

The dog-leg staircase rises against the width of the large brick stack and is now accessed from the front room, but there are signs that it was formerly enclosed and accessed from the through passage. The stair railing has stick balusters and small, turned newel posts with a decorative head and simple curved hand rails; very modest and a clear departure from elaborate Georgian stairs and very typical for the simple lines of the early 19th C. The turned newels become simple square sawn timbers at the upper floor level, a sign that this area was used for servants’ accommodation.



Ground floor stairs, decorative newel post



Upper floor stairs with square cut post

At first floor level the front room retains evidence of the enlargement of the building which led to the fines having to be paid to the manorial court over many years. The one visible ceiling joist which runs south-north, has been extended by 26" (66 cm). One can still clearly see where the wall was it used to rest on. The width of 22" (56 cm) of this wall as well as lime mortar remnants indicate that it too was brick built rather than timber framed.



G. floor, front room ceiling beam is 1 foot wide and has chamfers with step & run-out stops at both ends. These are known from the 14th to 17th C. (see Linda Hall 'Period House, Fixtures and Fittings' P 159)



F. floor, front room ceiling beam is 10" wide and shows where the former north wall was located underneath it (lime mortar of former 22" brick wall) when the front was rebuilt further north out onto the 'lord's waste', ie. the present pavement.

A small brick built F.P. also using c 2" 'Tudor' bricks and with its brick flue exposed, is located at the back of the front room (left below). Other, former fire places have been removed or blocked in, although the stack still has six flues indicating that each of the 3 floors had fire places, but probably none in the attic.



G.F fire place with timber bressumer with narrow chamfer

Attic, walls and Roof structure: There is evidence that some timber framing was still used in the construction of this building as can be seen in the exposed east side wall below right. At this time this is usually the case with internal walls and may reflect the fact that the building abuts neighbouring No. 34 and may have once been an internal wall (See comments on burgage plot width above)

The attic contains one room, landing and storage area off this. All roof timbers are concealed, but said to have a king post structure. This would be consistent with an early 19th C. date and with the wide, shallow roof pitch which supports a Welsh slate covering.



Cellar: There is a small cellar under the front room. Its walls are covered by centuries of lime wash, but seem to consist of rubble chalk blocks and flint rather than brick, indicating an early date. However, the stairs treads consist of bricks with timber nosing, more typical for the 18th and 19th centuries. An access to a pavement coal hole has been built forward of the original front wall. The iron cover for this access is located in front of the bay window indicating that this work was either part of the early 19th C. remodelling of the house or inserted later, when coal increasingly became the main fuel, first transported by barges after the river navigation had been improved in the late 18th C. or by train from the mid 19th C. onwards once the Henley branch line had been built.

Conclusion:

The evidence from the extended first floor ceiling beam and cellar access clearly confirms that of the manorial documents, which tell us about a forward extension onto the pavement to '*bring it in line with adjoining houses*'. That much more work was carried out can be seen by the new staircase, additional brick flues and new, double depth roof. The brick work of the rear with its chequer work pattern also has a late 18th/mid 19th look. However, only the encroachment on the manorial waste merited a comment in the Court Leet Book from 1818 onwards, as it carried a fine, or rather an annual fee as compensation or rent for the loss of pavement.

The Sales Particulars of 1801 describe a smaller building of three ground floor rooms and three chambers above only; quite different in lay-out to the present building. The narrow brick work surviving from the fire places and flues together with the size, chamfers and stops of the g.f. ceiling beam indicates a building date of no later than the 17th C for the earlier building with a building date of the early 19th C. for the present building.

The present cross-windows as well as the mock timber framing of the front elevation appear later, probably early 20th C. alterations and additions, to give the building an older, 'tudoresque' appearance, also seen elsewhere in the town such as the former Old White Hart opposite.

Photocopy of portion of the 1878/9 1st O S map of Henley-on-Thames
No 32 is the 5th house from the right on the south side (bottom) of the map. One
can just see the words SMITHY on the long rear extension as well as the 4 small
dots, which denote tethering posts.



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32 Hart Street - December 2005 – A private house

Information from Sarah Bromilow (*probably Street Directories*)

- 1981 private house
- 1967 Oldacres & Simms auctioneers (30 ?)
- 1958 Euphemia F B Oldfield
- 1942 Miss C Oldfield
- 1940 Herbert Rooke Oldfield

Henley & South Oxon Standard 8 October 1926

Change of residence Mrs Baker late of the Ferns, Remenham now at 32 Hart Street

Baptism Register 1920-1953

7 June 1924 Daphne Patricia Reynolds
father Francis Godfrey Baylie Reynolds mother Doris

Burial Register 1884-1944

December 1905 Edward Mellett 75

Street Directories 1903-1854 Edward Mellett & Son veterinary surgeons

Census Returns

1881 Edward Mellett veterinary surgeon

1871 Edward Mellett 40 veterinary surgeon
daughters Elizabeth 14, Rose 10 servant Ellen Hawkins 30

1861 Edward Mellett 30 veterinary surgeon employing 4 men & 1 boy
wife Elizabeth 35 daughters Elizabeth 4, Rose 10mths son Edward J 2
servants Martha Alleway 22 unmarried, Hesther Jefferson 17 nurse

1851 Thomas Mellett 56 widower blacksmith son Edward 21 veterinary surgeon

Court Leet Book of the Manor of Henley 1786-1881

9 November 1881 Edward Mellett owes for an encroachment by a bow window projected in front of his dwelling house Quit Rent 1s

26 October 1868 Edward Mellett owes the Lord of the Manor for an

encroachment by projecting a Bow window in front of his house Quit Rent 1s
4 August 1818 Thomas Mellett has made an encroachment on the Waste
of the Manor by projecting his house 22 ins forwards so as to bring his house in
a line with adjoining houses & he has also made a Bow window in the new
front 1s p.a. & 3¾ d Quit Rent

Reading Mercury & Oxford Gazette 28 December 1801

Freehold house to be sold by Auction, house garden yard & outbuildings well
situated for trade, nearly opposite the church Hart Street, now in the
occupation of Mr John Mellett at rent of £12 11s p.a. Ground floor 3 rooms,
passage in front, wash house & smith's shops, good cellar under, 3
bedchambers over. Roomy yard & garden. Measures in front 18ft 4ins, in the
centre 17ft & 186ft in depth.