

1264-1268 HIGH ROAD WHETSTONE

Surveys conducted by John Heathfield

Friern Barnet & District Local History Society

The oldest house in Whetstone

(from *Whetstone Revealed* by John Heathfield and David Berguer)

The premises at 1268 High Road is probably the oldest continuously inhabited building in Whetstone. In 1485 Robert ffoxe was asked to prove that he owned the building. He produced a roll of 1483, showing that by that date he already owned the house. The family also owned land at Edmonton, hence Fox Lane. Like most others of the period the house was timber framed.

In 1492 the ffoxe family, of Bowes, owned "all that piece of woods of ½ an acre abutting Longcroft of R Copewood on the West and W Goodyere's land on the North". He also had a cottage, curtilage and garden called 'Chapmaynes Howe', formerly of Margaret Burton and before that of John Piper.

The 1588 survey shows Robert ffoxe having "Beldamshotte, rent 9 pence, Pond Field & Longshotte rent 22d, and Newmans rent 18d". In 1613, Robert Fox, a customary tenant, sold "all that messuage stable and garden and called the Fox now in the tenure of Robert Nicoll to the use of John Reeve".

By 1662 the pub was called *The Crown*. By 1835 the will of John Cooper bequeathed to his nephew Thomas Cooper "my two copyhold messuages in which I lately resided situate on the east side of Whetstone near to the turnpike gate and opposite Totteridge Lane and held of the Manor of Friern Barnet".

In 1871, Robert Gilmour, draper, lent £155 to Joseph Burges of Whetstone, tailor, the security was "all, those three messuages in Whetstone, one of which with a stable, washhouse and coal shed and the whole of the garden and yard is in the occupation of Joseph Burges and the other two of Mrs. Evans, widow and Robert Cannon". By 1925 it was "all that messuage formerly Crown Inn but long since converted into 3 tenements known as White House, Bank House and Fair Oak".

In 2008 the building was owned by Pilgrim the property company who have restored it in an exemplary fashion. The Pilgrims were a large family, most of whom were builders. They built houses in Longland Drive (with the slogan "Don't buy pup, buy a Pilgrim!"), and amongst other places, Oakleigh Gardens as well as in Enfield, Southgate, and Tottenham together with a large estate near Forty Hall in Enfield.

Number 1264 High Road is often and erroneously referred to as the oldest house in Whetstone. In fact, it originally consisted of three interconnected houses on the site, two fronting the road and a third behind them and at right angles. They were all owned by the Sanny family. The ancient Sanny family had at least two branches, one in Finchley and the other in Whetstone. They date back to before 1420.

The front building is a complete six-roomed Georgian house, quite separate from the other two, but with an interconnecting door knocked through at some time. It was built on a site which was originally a Tudor hall type dwelling built on chalk foundations. At the rear is another Tudor hall type house. The third house became *The Griffin Inn*.

The rear house was "a bake house with two acres of garden". Baking would require an oven probably in the large central chimney. In 1484, it was reported to the local court that Thomas Sanny was "commonly accustomed to put lez hoppes in his beer". He was fined 8½d. In 1504, Elizabeth Sanny paid four pence for permission to brew "common ale", which presumably she sold. Thus was established the tradition of a pub on or near the site. A survey of 1554 shows Robert Sanny holds "The Bake house and field and pasture; Blackwelle Field, Hillgrove and a garden in Whetstone; Gleysfelde of 4 acres, and Gladmans".

The whole site was sold in 1742 to Robert Browne who rebuilt the front part. He built a typical Georgian house on the original foundations, using dark red brick with dormer windows and with a cellar. It was left to his sister Elizabeth Sandys in 1744. By 1840, it was bought by Robert Gilmour who ran a draper's business. He was also keeper of the tollgate that stood outside his shop. When the tollgate was demolished in 1863, in order to increase his income, he took over the Post Office, which he sited inside his house. He was born at Blackford in Perthshire in 1820 and came to Whetstone to seek his fortune. His three daughters, Ellen, Ada and Louise, the youngest, continued to run the Post Office until May 1939. They occupied the whole house, including the rear hall, using the attic at the front as a sorting office with bays marked with Post Office destinations like Edinburgh or Bristol. When the main drains came through about 1870 the cellar was enlarged. The ground floor was split with living room on the right of the door and the shop on the left. Inside the shop, the draper's counter was on the left with a post office counter at the rear. After the war, part of the ground floor was used by Studio Cole as a photographer's business. The whole building was sadly neglected by the owners. It has been taken over by Pizza Express in 2001 who have restored it, leaving much of the original timberwork exposed.

The rear house was a typical Tudor hall, with massive timbers some of them 12 inches thick. It was described in 1505 as "the house that Thomas Sanny has lately built". It has a massive brick chimney, unfortunately covered with plaster and consequently impossible to examine. Such chimneys replaced smoke hoods about 1550. The roof timbers are smoke stained. The rearmost bay was burnt down and the building ends abruptly. It was the subject of a detailed examination by HADAS in 1989. Traces of metalworking and a large well were discovered in the rear garden and it is possible that a smithy was attached to the pub.

The electric telegraph was extended to the Whetstone Post Office in September 1870. Telegrams were delivered by telegraph boys originally riding bicycles but later on mopeds.



Number 1264. October 1989.

Roof space from west. Rafters and later purlins. Wattle and daub.



Number 1264.
Roof space partition from east. Wattle and daub. Rafters straight butt purlin.



Number 1264. October 1989.
Bedroom. Purlin & rafter showing joint shaped with axe or adze.



Number 1264. October 1989.
Rear ground floor room. Detail of ceiling timbers.



Number 1264. October 1989.
Roof. Main longitudinal ceiling joists.



Number 1264. October 1989.
Rafters, roof tiles on battens, probably Victorian. Carpenters marks obscured by flash.



Number 1264. October 1989.
Roof inside. Sole plate, rafters, detail of joint to beam.



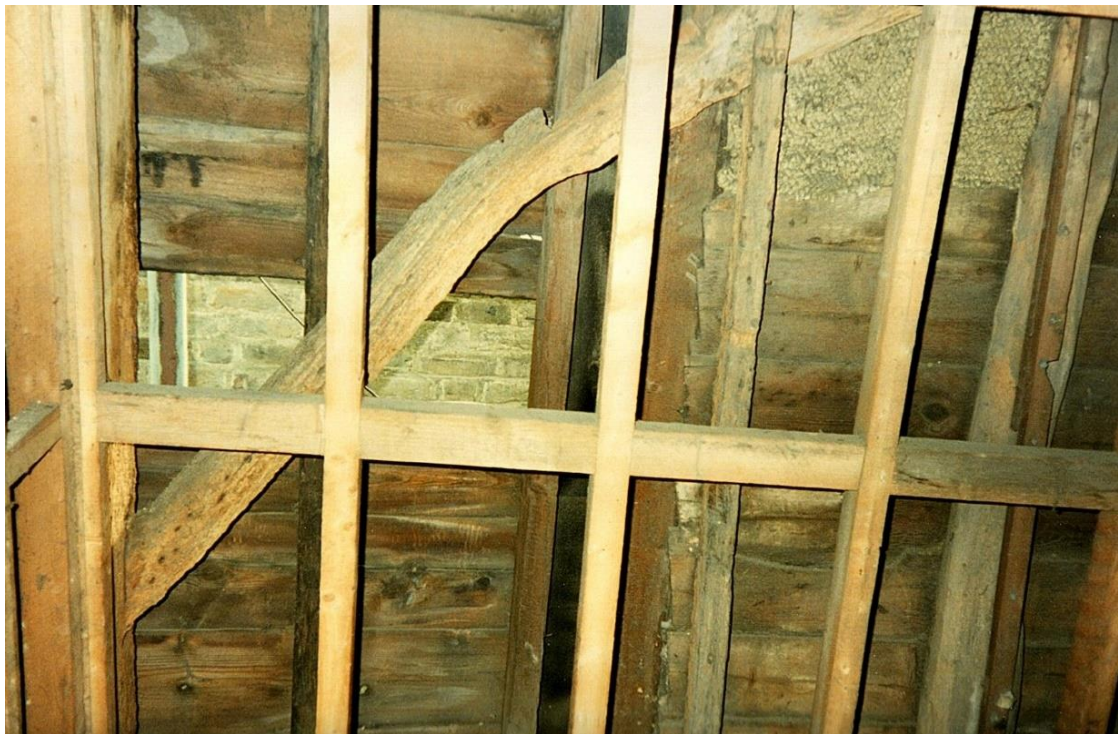
Number 1264. October 1989.
Roof. Victorian lath and plaster. Victorian timber.



Number 1264. October 1989.
Roof north side showing rafters, purlins, ceiling joists.



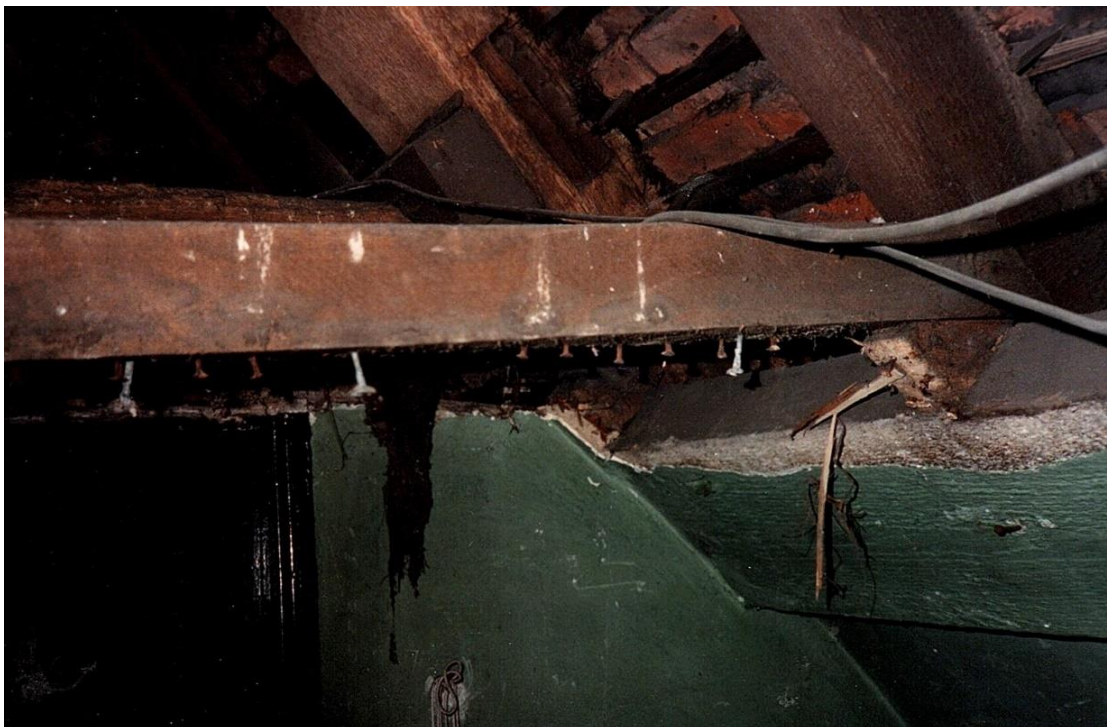
Number 1264. October 1989.
Roof northside, rafters and purlins.



Number 1264. October 1989.
First floor rear. Brace in SE corner.



Number 1264. October 1989.
Roof partition, Victorian plaster and earlier wattle and daub. Medieval rafter.



Number 1264. October 1989.
Front roof, west front. Clasped purlin, main purlin, tie beam and rafters.
Clasped purlins adopted in S E England from 16th century.



Number 1264. October 1989.
Roof. Central longitudinal beam from east.



Number 1264. October 1989.
Side path, baulk foundations of Victorian scullery. Looking south.



Number 1264. October 1989.
Foundations of scullery, probable hearth, looking east.



Number 1264. October 1989.
Rear wall, storage well from house, looking east.



Number 1268. November 1991.
North end of attic



Number 1268. November 1991.
Apex joint of rafters.



Number 1268. November 1991.
Rafter apex



Number 1268. November 1991.
East wall. Detail of sole plate and tie beam.



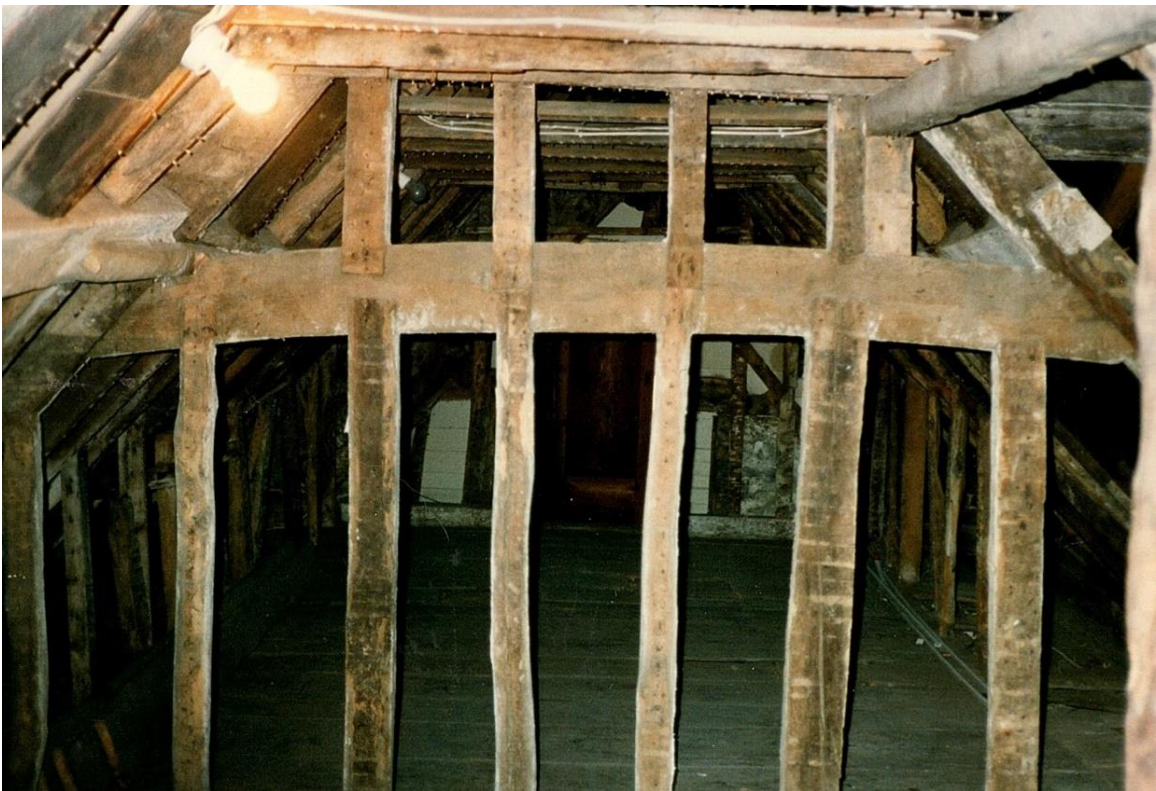
Number 1268. November 1991.
West wall. Sole plate showing rafter joint.



Number 1268. November 1991.
Purlin has been removed during later renovation



Number 1268. November 1991.
Collar utilised to form later partition wall. From south.



Number 1268. November 1991.
Partition in roof attic showing collar. From south.



Number 1268. November 1991.
Carpenters marks on rafter.



Number 1268. November 1991.
Window frame now blocked off. Still visible in 1945.



Number 1268. November 1991.
Detail of apex, mortise and tenon with wooden peg.



Number 1268. November 1991.
Purlin – chamfered. C16?



Number 1268. November 1991.
Clasped purlin has been removed.



Number 1268. November 1991.
Wattle and daub in S E corner of attic.