



## Newsletter No 2

**BTT Members,**

**The BTT Board hope you will find this newsletter useful and informative.**

**If you wish to comment or include something in the publication, please contact the Chair on [p.riddington@outlook.com](mailto:p.riddington@outlook.com)**

**Or the Secretary on [gayerynsardbtt@gmail.com](mailto:gayerynsardbtt@gmail.com)**



Many thanks to all of you who came to our open meeting on August 1 to discuss two of the projects we've got on at present. It was great to have such a good turn out, and to actually make a profit even without charging an entry fee!

Particular thanks to Alan Broadway and Andrew Hinchley for (as usual) providing the technical equipment needed to put on the show.

This is the second edition of our irregular newsletter. This one is mainly about our house in High Baxter Street and includes explanations about its history of construction and use and where we are with the restoration and fundraising.

There are also details of how we're organising visits for those interested in

getting a closer view of what the building is like before we do anything meaningful to it.

Last, but not least, there is the notice of the AGM in November. Martyn Taylor, our local historian and author, will be entertaining us with a short talk on the evening . . .

Enjoy

Peter Riddington

BTT Chair



## 11 High Baxter Street

### Historical Background



High Baxter Street was a part of the Norman layout of the town, created by Abbot Baldwin in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century.

The building at present on the site is almost certainly not the primary construction. It is likely that by the late medieval period the street was built up with buildings along the pavement edge and probably with their first floors cantilevering with jetties.

From site evidence, by the late 15<sup>th</sup> C the current house was built apparently always with a first floor and probably two rooms on the ground floor. High Baxter Street would have been occupied by people who were reasonably well off but probably tradespeople or craftsmen, ideally located adjacent to the market square, but also likely to trade from their premises.

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> C the street buildings had probably been either rebuilt or, as in the case of No 11, heavily remodelled and extended to accommodate workshops and service buildings, such as livery stables, supporting the local population and businesses.

### The Known History of the House

From site evidence the house was altered considerably in the late 16<sup>th</sup>/ early 17<sup>th</sup>C when it was remodelled and the attic converted to habitable accommodation. It was further altered in the later 18<sup>th</sup>/ early 19<sup>th</sup> C, so it was apparently still in reasonably affluent occupation.

By the mid19<sup>th</sup> C, it seems to have been in multiple occupancy of tradespeople. According to the Rate Books and Census Returns between 1831 and 1841 the house was occupied by Richard and Mary Kemp, who seem to have shared the building with others including the Reffell family (with five children) in 1841. Richard Kemp was a Livery Stable Keeper but it is not known if the stables were on the site of the house However, this



could explain why the site evidence suggests there was a passage from the front to the rear.

This 1851 census records the Reffell family still in occupation with Samuel (pipe maker) and Elizabeth by now having eight children.

By the late 1960s High Baxter Street had been largely demolished and the historic buildings all removed except No 11. In 1970 the house was bought by the Suffolk Hotel, who were in the Buttermarket, and used the house for staff accommodation. They undertook thoroughgoing 'modernisation' of the house covering up most of the building's historic fabric and fitting it out with modern joinery and finishes.

### The Significance of the House in its Context

In terms of the Town Centre Conservation Area and High Baxter

## ***Take a Tour . . .***

*Peter Riddington is offering to provide guided tours of 11 High Baxter Street for BTT members in October.*

*Peter plans that these would be on Thursday afternoons between 2.30pm and 4.30pm. Each tour would last about 40 minutes and he could take about four or five at a time (with a possibility of three tours each afternoon). This would be on a first come, first served basis and Peter would need to be advised by email. If you wish to attend a visit please send a message to:*

[p.riddington@outlook.com](mailto:p.riddington@outlook.com)

*In the email please advise on the following:*

- *Which Thursday you would prefer.*
- *What time you would prefer*
- *How many are you (if more than an individual).*

*The house is not especially dangerous but the floors are uneven. The ground to first floor staircase is precipitate, so if you have mobility issues I'm afraid it's not really feasible to attend.*

Street in particular the historic and architectural interest the building's fabric exhibits are of major significance. It is the last remnant of what had been an almost continuous terrace of buildings from the late middle ages onwards until mass clearance of the 1960s.

While there remain historic buildings at the extremities of the street this is the last historic building between on the West side of the street and a reminder of the very mixed nature of buildings and their uses in the town centre from the very earliest days right up to modern times. In some ways that the building illustrates quite how much was lost during the 1960s clearances makes it significant.

### **The Significance of the House**

The building itself is a palimpsest. It is not an architectural statement of any significant quality but, rather, it is an extremely old structure which exhibits its history to those who are prepared to study it, but also give significant hints of its origins even in passing. It is clearly a very old building; it needs further interest to discover its most special qualities.

The building's history is not remarkable, there have been no events or people of particular interest associated with the house but, rather, the building has been occupied for good or bad by a mixture of people who until more recent years Jane Austen might have described as of the 'middling' type. But these people had their effect on the fabric, not in any

grand manner, but in ways which allow us now to enjoy the history of the building through its fabric and plan forms.

It has no particular historic interest, excepting of course it tells a long and complicated historical story, but special interest it certainly has:

- **It has a core and significant historical fabric and plan form dating from the late 15<sup>th</sup> Century.**
- **The building was changed significantly in the late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> Century when the attic was converted, and staircases and chimney stacks were added and much of this fabric survives.**
- **In the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries there was further remodelling and the first floor layout still survives from this period.**

There were other changes from the late 19<sup>th</sup>/ early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries when changes were made in particular to the staircase from the ground to the first floor and a rear extension was rebuilt.

Fabric of this period added little to the interest of the building and has no particular quality in itself.

Finally, there were even more fundamental changes effected in the 1970s when the building was converted to multiple occupancy.

None of those changes are of special interest and in many ways served to hide much of the historic fabric.

Only one thing survives of any interest from this most recent period of use and that is a 'folk art' panel of no great artistic quality but, at least, providing a reminder that even in adversity the artistic spirit can survive.



## **Working Group Report**

Since the purchase of the property was completed in January, the working group has met on a monthly basis to progress the project on various fronts.

With the support of the Architectural Heritage Funds, we varied out a series of investigations on the building which helped us to review the options for the building.

We have been very well supported by professional Board members and consultants in this design and technical work.

The option studies and discussions we had with interested groups led us to pursue the next stages and develop the building as a single dwelling with a new extension. This will offer a generous floor area with a potential for a family home or live/work house. We have now appointed Architects to take this option forward and will be submitting a listed building application in the autumn of this year.

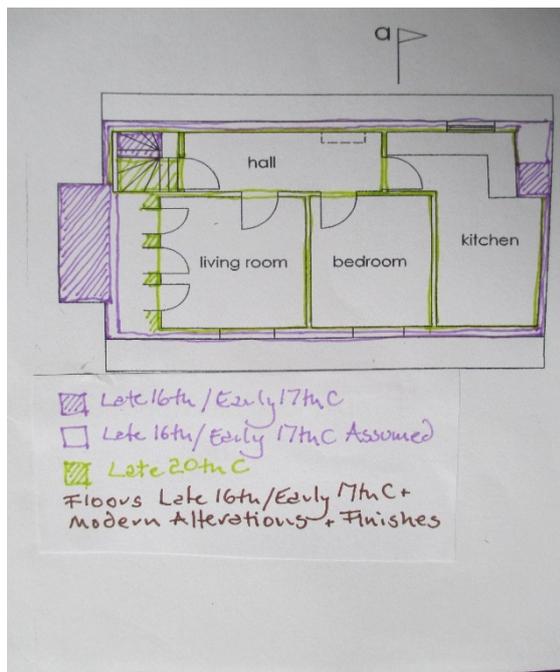
We hope to commence work on the property in the spring of 2020.

In addition to this work, we have carried out investigations to help us better understand the building and its interesting history.

BTT Chair Peter Riddington has completed a heritage appraisal which will be very helpful in guiding our design team.

An up to date report on further progress will be given at the BTT AGM together with our proposals for raising the short term loans required to complete the project.

**Paul Rynsard**  
**Project manager 11HBS**



**11 High Baxter Street floorplans  
– pages 5 & 6**

## **BURY TOWN TRUST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**This will be held on Wednesday,  
November 20, 2019 at the  
Unitarian Meeting House in  
Churchgate Street, Bury St  
Edmunds (from 7pm).**

**We are delighted that Martyn  
Taylor will be the guest speak on  
the evening.**

**The title of Martyn's talk will be  
'Have You Noticed' – a look at  
the quirky and unusual things  
around the town.**

**We hope you will be able to join  
us.**

**Refreshments will be served.**

**This newsletter is being sent to all  
BTT members via email.**

**Please ensure the Membership  
Secretary has your correct details  
to ensure you receive the next  
publication.**

**The newsletter will also be  
available on the BTT website  
[burystedmundstowntrust.org.uk](http://burystedmundstowntrust.org.uk).**

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