

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

**Parish/County:** Henley-on-Thames  
**Street and House name:**

Nos 27,28, 29 Thameside

**Owner/Occupant:** No.  
28 Let by Savills, 60 Bell  
Street, 01491-843002

**Recorder:**  
Ruth Gibson

**Visit: Date:** May 2006 – 27 & 29  
**Date:** 25.2.09 – No. 28

**Listing grade and entry text:**

**Grade II** : *18<sup>th</sup> facades to timber framed buildings. Street facades of Nos 27 & 28 restored with roughcast upper floor. No 29 built on curve as corner to New Street with hipped half gable ; red and grey brick. Old tiled roofs. 2 Storeys, Nos 27 and 28 with dormers and 4 windows, - unbarred casements and sashes. Return façade to New Street blank but some timbering exposed in rear facades to courtyard ( entrance from New Street)( No. 29 extends up to the archway to the rear courtyard on New Street).*

NB This is no longer the case; the adjoining house is now called 88 A New Street, a separate property, and does not form part of this report, as it could not be accessed.



**No 27**

**No 28**

**29 Thameside**

### **Known History, suggested building dates, datable alteration and additions:**

Although the above are listed as a group of cottages their building dates could not be more dissimilar. The corner building No 29 and half of No. 28 were one building of three bays originally, of heavy scantling timber framing and 2 ½ storey high, with a half hipped roof at the southern end. This was formerly the gable end, but now adjoins the later and lower roof of Nos.28 & No 27. This and the southern half of No. 28 are much later, probably early 19<sup>th</sup> century, without visible signs of any timber framing. The difference in roof height between the northern part and the southern one shows this division quite clearly. Internally the differences in construction is confirmed; No. 28 preserves its early timber framed walls and roof in its northern bay; these match the framing found in No. 29. The first floor, blocked window in the timber framed south wall, which now separates the two bedrooms in No. 28, is the former external south wall of the medieval building, which was known as ‘The Anchor’ in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. One earlier, documentary reference comes from the will of 1580 of Thomas Woolley, yeoman (National. Arch. PROB 11/62), who refers to a property on the south side of New Street, ‘*being the corner house next to the river, called commonly by the name of Byrdes house, ... ..in the tenure and occupation of John Stampe gent and Ambrose Wise*’. Unfortunately we do not know what their occupations were. The testator, Thomas Woolley, a very wealthy man, who owned a large number of properties in and outside the town, also lived in a house in New Street called ‘*by the name of the swanne*’.

An engraving from the ‘*Beauties of England & Wales*’ by Hay from a drawing by JP Neale in about 1813-20 shows the r.h. end cottage, now No. 29, with its jettied front. This and three neighbouring cottages were purchased some time between 1793 & 1812 by Appleton & Shaw, brewers, then Benwell’s, which Brakspear’s joined in 1812.

An inventory & valuation of the brewery, freehold property of Joseph Benwell & W.H Brakspear of 1826 says: ‘A cottage near the Waterside at extremity of New Street brick & timber built, but in bad repair and at present untenanted, 3 rooms. Three cottages of same size adjoining, all for quit rent of 1s 6d.’ (Information from A.Cottingham)

The above description of the corner property being in bad repair indicates that the widening of the road and the construction of the rounded corner, which meant reducing the length of the corner building by half a bay, took place after 1826. This may have led to the reduction from 4 to three cottages, as the half bay at the corner was no longer viable as a cottage on its own. The corridor with the blocked door in No. 29 indicates the former entrance to one cottage, which may have been amalgamated with the remaining half bay. It is certainly not a rebuild, but a major alteration to the existing, medieval timber framed building.

The good quality hand made bricks and craftsmanship shown in the curved brick wall and gauged arches over the sash windows and door show that the work was still done in the Georgian tradition, i.e. in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and great care was taken with preserving the timber framed structure within, when it was given a new façade as well as removing a half bay to widen New Street where it turns into Thameside. No signs of the former jetty remain at ground floor level, as the ceiling beams are not visible. However, the remaining framing at first floor and attic levels shows a building of good quality and heavy scantling. Its close studded west, south and east exterior walls, the wide, curved wall and wind braces as well as the crown strut trusses indicate a date no later than 1450.

This is one of several buildings in Henley where the crown strut construction has been noted, an unusual method and apparent forerunner of the more common queen strut or queen post truss. Other local examples of the crown strut truss have been dendro dated to 1443 and 1454, but Henley's best examples at 8-16 New Street and 77/79 Bell Street remain undated.



The c. 7 feet tall crown strut posts are the central part of the trusses, which form the bay divisions of the timber framed house; here seen in the attics. The l.h. side, painted white, in No. 28; the r.h. side, painted black in No. 29.

**Map ref., date of 1<sup>st</sup> map, type of plot:** The 1878 OS map shows the buildings as part of a courtyard group with the rounded corner abutting New Street and Thameside; the buildings are set back from the road at a slight angle to it. This is in contrast to the adjoining buildings immediately to the south, which come forward and follow the line of the road. This difference in alignment indicates that the property line of Nos. 27-29 pre-dates the laying out of the new embankment by Mr. Freeman of Fawley Court. It is shown on the c.1788 Fawley Court Estate map of Henley ( see below ).

**Type and use of building:** Three cottages. No 29 and half of No. 28 were a beer house called The Anchor ( see Ann Cottingham 'The Hostelries of Henley'), later in the ownership of Brakspear's Brewery and used as staff cottages.

**Plan form/position in street:** Running north-south, parallel to street, one room deep. A variety of rear extensions of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century dates. These include a gabled, single storey kitchen extension to No 29, a short, single storey lean-to to No. 28 and a two-storey lean-to with catslide roof and porch to No. 27.

**Description of the exterior:** See list description

**Roof shape and covering:** The roof shows that these cottages are of two builds. The slightly lower roof of Nos. 27 & the southern part of 28 is gabled. The next roof section is taller ( it

includes half of No. 28) has a half hip in the south roof and incorporates a curved hip at its northern end (No. 29). The three dormers are also hipped. Clay tile covering.

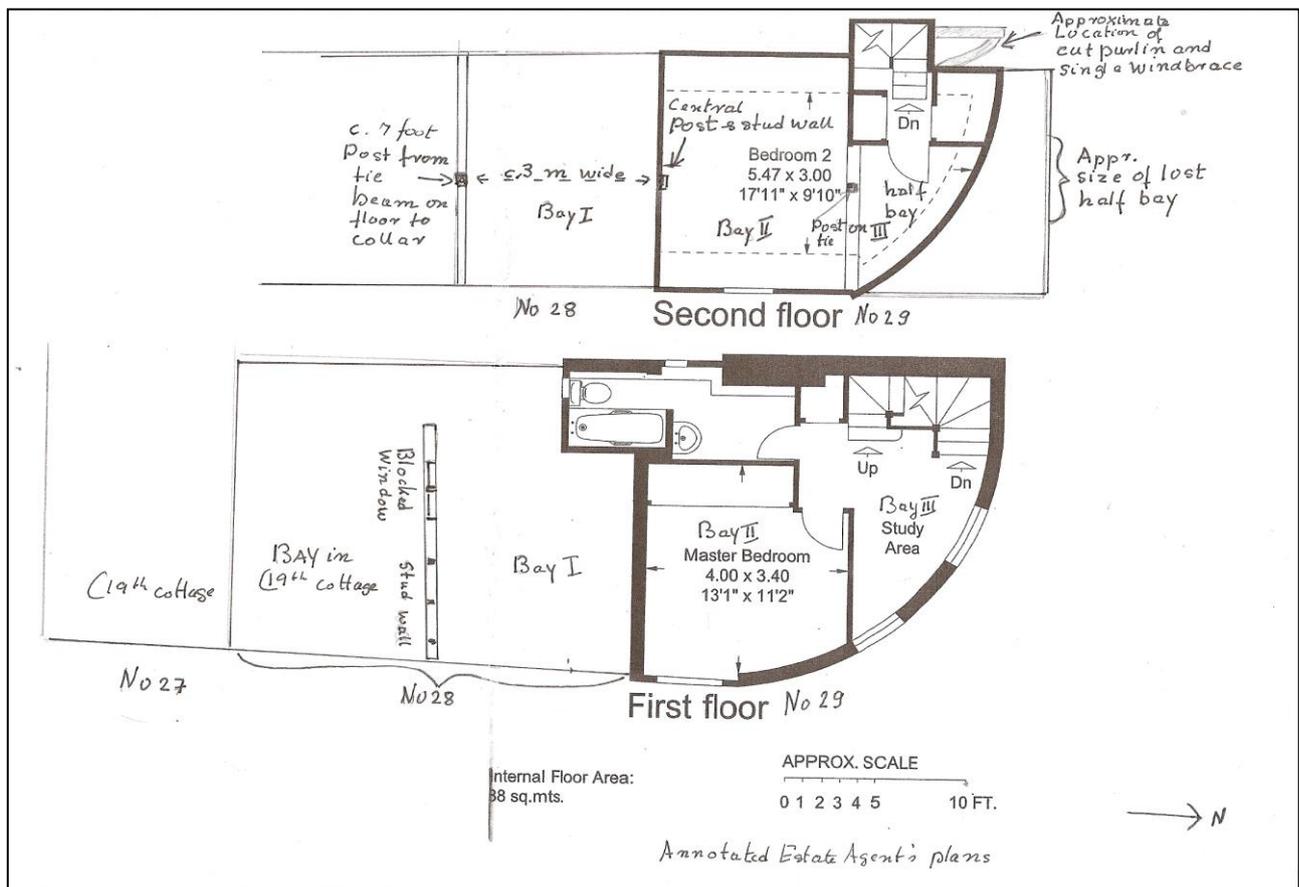
**Chimneys/Fire Places:** 1 small FP in each of the front rooms. Brick built. Stacks are rising through the front of the roofs of Nos. 27 and 28 and at the rear of No. 29. No original features survive.

### Description of the individual cottages

**No 29:** This house now consists of 1 ½ bays of a timber framed building with framing members of heavy scantling, all of which is concealed by the elegant rounded brick corner we see today, an alteration very likely carried out to allow for some widening of the road and an easier turn for wheeled traffic when repairs to the building had become essential.

A drawing reputedly dated to c 1813 shows the corner house as a jettied building, already underbuilt in brick up to the jetty and apparently already with a rounded ground floor corner, but the timber jetty above is still clearly visible in its original corner position. This rounded brickwork was very likely already a response to damage caused over time to the ground floor timber structure, as the original building would very likely have been entirely timber framed, although it may have had a stone or flint and brick plinth in this riverside location. A little of the former timber framed back wall survives at ground floor level in the west rear elevation in fragmented form.

N.B: Below is an annotated estate agents plan showing No. 29, which was for sale in 2006 at the time of my first visit. This was extended in sketch form after visiting No. 28 to include bay I, now part of the latter to illustrate the original plan form of this three-bay Thameside building.



The ground floor consists of a sitting room with an entrance door directly into it despite the fact that a corridor exist next to the sitting room, which obviously once housed an entrance door, now a modern window is located there. The modern fire place may conceal a much older stack. No timbers are visible apart from a reused timber post, which supports the remnants of the rear timber framed wall.

In contrast the heavy scantling of the surviving frame on the first and attic floors is impressive and unusual for Henley. On the first floor the rear or west wall is close studded and has large arch braces. The posts have jowl heads and large knee braces from posts to tie beam. The northern bay has been reduced by half, only one of the pair of wind braces remains in the rear roof, the missing partner shows that the building was reduced in length.

The attic floor shows all its timber frame up to collar level. The stud wall between the two bays has been removed with only the tie beam and tall crown strut remaining of the timber frame. The southern wall, however, remains intact; it too has a substantial, c. 7 foot tall central post supporting the collar, which clasps the purlins. Wide, long wind braces are located between principal rafters and purlins. (For more details on No. 29 see earlier report of May 2006 and photographs of the framing)

**No 28** The southern part of the cottage consists of two rooms on each floor with the front door leading directly into the southern g.f. room, which has no special features. The north room is accessed from it. The first floor is accessed from a narrow stair at the back. The stud wall between the two bays ( 19<sup>th</sup> cent. bay and bay 1 on plan respectively) preserves some studding and a blocked window with square mullion. This confirms the gap in building dates between the northern and southern structures. A long, slightly curved wall brace is visible in the east front wall, very much like those of neighbouring No. 29. – The attic is separated into two rooms by the same type of truss, already seen in No. 29 (see photo above). The south part of the roof ends in a half hip ( photograph below).



South end gable wall of Bay 1 with blocked window, studs and long wall brace, seen from first floor room of the adjoining 19<sup>th</sup> cent. building.



Pegged rafter roof above Bay I, looking south towards hipped end. There is a saddle between the last pair of rafters to support the hip rafter. (Ignore the board below the saddle, not part of the original roof structure)

No. 27 This occupies the southern half of the terrace, which also includes one bay of No. 28. It has a slightly lower roof and is clearly of a different, much later build than the adjoining building to the north.

The oldest part of the cottage consists of a front room with a small fire place with brick arch in the south wall. There are no signs of timber framing within the building. The roof appears to have been renewed. The turned staircase with stick balusters rises at the rear, probably a late 19<sup>th</sup> century extension, which also houses the kitchen. There are no features by which to date the building having been erected before 1800 or later. The listing entry describing it as a jettied building is totally wrong.

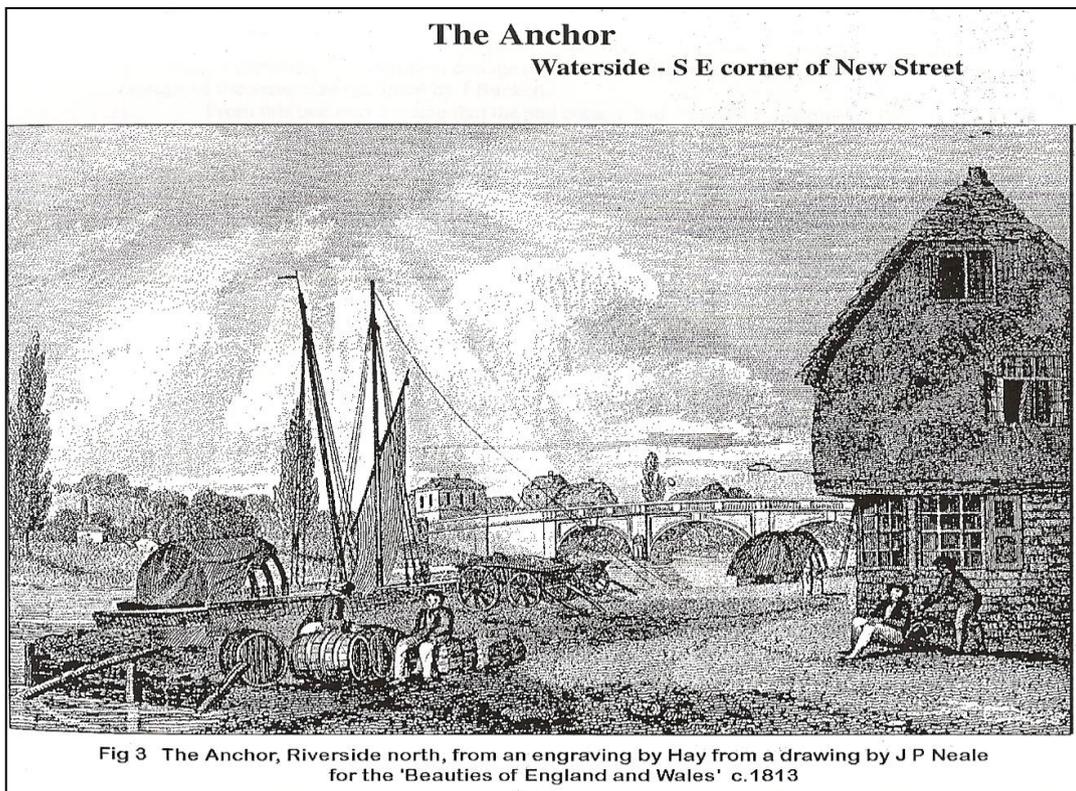
### Concluding

This row of 3 cottages is deceptive. Whilst 2 ½ bays of a very substantial, formerly jettied timber framed building survive, visually the rendered fronts of Nos. 27, 28 and a small part of No. 29 give a unified impression to the group, despite the difference in roof height. However, the brick corner building, now most of No. 29, is very different and relates visually to the adjoining 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> cent. century brick buildings in New Street.

The two southern bays could date to between 1800 and 1870, built as either one modest house or two even more modest cottages. The northern, formerly three bays have been altered externally a great deal, but from the quality of the framing which exists inside No. 29 and part of No. 28 this is the substantial remnant of a building, which may have served a merchant as either riverside storage or accommodation, or both and is very likely another example of a medieval building serving merchants involved with the river trade. Its location on the down-stream side of the medieval bridge ensured it a prime position. The change to a public house first and then cottage accommodation would have reflected economic changes and population pressure at various times. The rounding of its corner and loss of part of the building were another sign of the times following the laying out of the embankment by the Freeman's in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.



**Pt. of Fawley Court Estate Map of c 1788 showing Mr. Freeman's embankment at Thameside. The corner building at the bottom of New Street is shown with a square end and is set back from the building line, as now.**



**The Anchor is shown as a jettied building with a gabled and half hipped end. There is no sign of the ceiling joists to detect evidence of the former jetty, but the existence of the full length tie beams with their complete trusses shows that the building's original structure survives.**

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