

## Memo on **The Angel on the Bridge, Henley-on-Thames**

**Grade II listed, 25.1.51 Ref: SU 7582 1/33**

Described as ‘C16/-17 façade to river, colour washed walls with some timber framing visible. Flint base, brick and plaster above. Irregular plan etc.’ ‘Three storey road façade has some mock timber framing’.



**East elevation of The Angel as seen from the 18<sup>th</sup> century bridge**

Attached are the results of a further visit and measurements taken to locate the medieval bridge arch within the basement of ‘The Angel’. One is a sketch of the medieval arch with annotated measurements; the other a scaled sketch plan of the cellar. This means that all important dimensions regarding the arch and its location have been measured and put on plan, but that not all details of the cellar such as stairs, dividing walls, stack etc have been included in the plan as the purpose of this exercise is not a record of the standing building, but its relationship with the medieval bridge arch.



**South face of medieval double arch, heavily painted voussoirs of the outer arch  
Bottom of corbel to support cellar axial beam just visible above visitor's hand**

**Inner arch, shuttered flint work and long-short stonework of the voussoirs**



There remain question marks over wall thicknesses, especially in the area of bow window II and the north/east corner of the Angel wall, where it adjoins the external steps. Internally this wall area is very uneven with disturbed flint work and could be the hacked back remnant of

the former pier, which would have adjoined the arch on the east side. On the west side of the arch the flint work is relatively flat (unfortunately heavily painted) and looks like the town side bridge abutment.

The location of the arch as shown on the drawing along that north wall may not be absolutely correct, but the width and depth of the arch have been measured and drawn and its relationship to the cellar seems a little clearer. The north front wall of The Angel was built above the southern part of the arch and its adjoining bridge abutments on either side. There is no evidence at all of ground floor walls next to the bridge abutment and pier to support the three-storey front wall of the PH. This would have been essential if the building only 'abutted the bridge' as is often quoted in Henley guide books.

The internal measurement from arch to a point parallel with the east basement entrance door measures 7.66 m, whilst the external measurement from this door to the north east corner of the building is 8.43 m, i.e. externally the building is 0.77 m longer than internally, showing that its substantial foundations rest on the medieval bridge ( See attached sketch scaled plan)

Attached to the masonry just above the central voussoirs is a small brick corbel, which appears to support the spine beam of the cellar ceiling; small, 20<sup>th</sup> cent. brick piers on each side of this now further strengthen this ceiling. I have not shown these brick piers on the plan, as they are not relevant to the original construction of either the arch nor the building above. Had the building been constructed just abutting the bridge there would have had to be walls coming forward of the bridge arch on either side of the opening, rather than the flint walls which are flush with the ashlar stone work of the arches, in order to support the Hart Street elevation of The Angel.

This part of the Angel is of course that which externally at least dates to c.1800, shown by its architectural detailing with its shallow, slated roof. However, we do not know whether it was a new build extending the existing earlier to the south, a rebuild of what had been there or just an alteration after the damage to the building during the construction of the new bridge alongside the existing one.

The documentary evidence from Ann Cottingham's entry in 'The Hostelryes of Henley', p. 35 indicates repairs and alterations to an existing building rather than new build, which would agree with the evidence of the 4-flue stack, which serves both parts of the building and which appears to pre-date 1800.

On p. 36 ( ibid) there are two references to the inn's location, i.e. 'the Angel at the foot of the bridge on the south side thereof' in 1780 and in 1728 of a lease to Mary Simmons for 11 years of a messuage on the south part of the bridge.

This seems to indicate a very close relationship between the PH and the medieval bridge arch, before the new bridge existed. Was this low arch part of the causeway leading up to the medieval bridge rather than a bridge arch proper? (Although the height from floor to the underside of the inner arch measures only 1.75 m we cannot be sure where exactly the floor level below the arch is or was – it would mean excavating the layers of mud ) The Siberechts paintings of c. 1690 show very tall bridge arches on each side of the river, quite unlike this shallow, segmental one, which due to its location so close to the west bank is probably hidden by the trees and, like the PH itself, is not shown on the south side of the bridge in the painting .



Two views of the corbelling, attached to the top of the arch, which supports the floor structure above .

A building apparently on stilts on the opposite side, i.e. the north side of the bridge on Siberechts' Rainbow painting seems to show that the river bed was wider and less controlled at that time because houses on the river bank had to be constructed well above river level. The building shown as adjoining the bridge on the other side may have been the 'White Horse on the Bridge' or its predecessor (see A.Cottingham p. 254). Perhaps the Angel was similarly built high up, using the bridge arch for support on its north side and securing a front entrance directly from the bridge roadway. The use of the arch as part of the cellar may only have become possible once the new bridge had been built and the embankment fortified.

Since changes were made to the embankment by the Freemans in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the former curve of the river in that bend appears to have been straightened out on the west side,. The 1878 OS map shows the curve in the river on the east side not mirrored on the opposite bank creating a pinch point and possible reason for repeated flooding of the west embankment documented in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and still occurring occasionally now despite very careful river management.

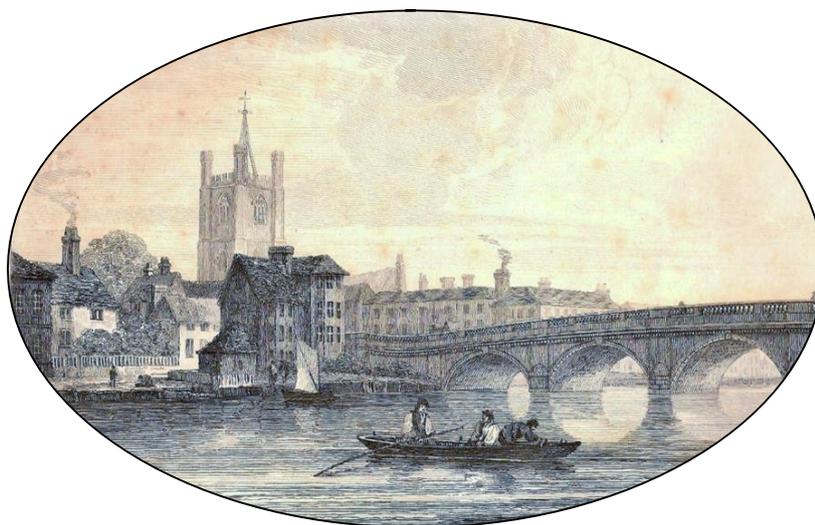
R. Gibson, BA IHBC  
April 2009



ANGEL HOTEL - THAMES - WINDSOR - ENGLAND

Henley Bridge 1811 – perhaps the earliest engraving of the ‘Angel on the Bridge’

Also of note is the depiction of the old rectory.



3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2008

Dear Simon,

**Re: The Angel on the Bridge, Henley-on-Thames**

I enclose the results of our further visit and the measurements taken to get more information on the arch and its location. One is a sketch of the medieval arch with annotated measurements; the other a scaled sketch plan of the cellar. ( this means that all important dimensions in relation to the arch and its location have been measured, but that not all details of the cellar such as walls, stairs etc have been included in the plan)

There remain question marks over wall thicknesses, especially in the area of Bow window II and the north/east corner of the Angel wall, where it adjoins the steps. Internally this wall area is very uneven and seems to retain disturbed flint work, very possibly part of the demolished bridge masonry.

Therefore one cannot take the location of the arch as shown on the drawing along that north wall as absolutely correct, but the width and depth of the arch has been measured and drawn and its relationship to the cellar seems a little clearer. It seems that the north wall of the Angel was built above the southern part of the arch and adjoining bridge masonry, as the internal measurement from arch to a point parallel with the east basement entrance door measures 7.66 m , whilst the external measurement from this door to north east corner of the building is 8.43 m.

Attached to the masonry just above the central arch voussoirs is some brick corbelling which supports the spine beam of the cellar ceiling; later modern brick piers on each side of the arch further strengthen this ceiling. I have not measured these brick piers, but pencilled them in by hand to illustrate this point. Had the building been constructed just abutting the bridge there would have had to be a wall coming forward of the bridge arch on either side rather than in line with it, as is the case here, in order to support the north wall of the Angel. This seems to prove that part of the Angel was indeed built on the southern side of the bridge masonry including the arch, using it as well as the flint work on both sides as its foundations. It is unfortunate that the flint work is so heavily painted, giving nothing of its original finish away. ( i.e. was it knapped or shuttered like that of the arch?)

This part of the Angel is of course that which externally at least dates to c.1800, shown by its architectural detailing of shallow, slated roof. However, we do not know whether it was a new build extending the existing, a rebuild of what had been there or just an alteration after the damage to the building during the construction of the new bridge alongside the existing one.

The documentary evidence from Ann's entry in her *Hostelries* book, p. 35 indicates repairs and alterations to an existing building rather than new build, which would agree with my idea over the evidence of the 4-flue stack.

On p. 36 there are two references to its location ie. 'the Angel at the foot of the bridge on the south side thereof' in 1780 and in 1728 of a lease to Mary Simmons for 11 years of a messuage on the south part of the bridge.

This seems to indicate a very close relationship between the PH and the medieval bridge arch, before the new bridge existed. Was this low arch perhaps part of the causeway leading up to the medieval bridge rather than a bridge arch proper? (Although the arch from floor to the underside of the outer arch is only 1.75 m high we cannot be sure where exactly the floor level below the arch is or was – it would mean excavating the layers of mud) The Siberechts paintings show very tall bridge arches, quite unlike this shallow, segmental one, but it is highly unlikely that this low arch was ever that tall.

Since changes were made to the embankment by the Freemans in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the former curve of the river in that bend appears to have been straightened out on the west side,. The 1878 OS map shows the curve in the river on the east side not mirrored on the opposite bank creating a pinch point and possible reason for repeated flooding of the west embankment documented in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and still occurring occasionally now despite very careful river management.

A building apparently on stilts on the other side, the north side of the bridge on Siberechts painting seems to show that the river bed was wider and less controlled at that time because houses on the river bank had to be constructed above river level. This building may have been the ‘White Horse on the Bridge’ or its predecessor ( A.Cottingham p. 254). Perhaps the Angel was similarly built high up, using the bridge arch for support on the north side and securing a front entrance directly from the bridge roadway.

R. Gibson



Map Scale: 1:1250

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PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990

AMENDMENT TO THE LIST OF BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL

ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST

WHEREAS:

1. Section 1 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ("the Act") requires the Secretary of State, for the purposes of the Act and with a view to the guidance of local planning authorities in the performance of their functions under the Act and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 in relation to buildings of special architectural or historic interest, to compile or approve a list of such buildings, and he may amend the list so compiled or approved.
2. The Secretary of State, having consulted with English Heritage and such other persons or bodies of persons who appear to him appropriate as having special knowledge of, and interest in, such buildings, considers that the said list (English Heritage Volume 691, South Oxfordshire) should be amended in the manner set out in the Schedule hereto.

NOW THEREFORE the Secretary of State, in exercise of the powers conferred on him by Section 1 of the Act, hereby amends the list in the manner set out in the Schedule hereto.



ENGLISH HERITAGE

## SCHEDULE

The entry for:-

**246179**  
**SU7632182627**

**Hart Street (S)**  
**Angel Hotel**  
**II**

Shall be replaced by:-

**246179**  
**SU7632182627**

**Hart Street (S)**  
**ANGEL HOTEL**  
**including attached**  
**medieval arch**

**25-JAN-1951**

**II\***

Inn. Late C16/C17 and c1800 and later C19, supported by the westernmost arch of the medieval bridge over the river Thames, which forms part of the cellar and extends below ground beyond the street frontage to the north. The bridge was probably built by Henry II in the late C12.

**MATERIALS:** rendered and painted timber framing, brick and flint. The c1800 northern range is timber framed and rendered with applied framing on the N elevation, and part brick built; roofs are tiled except for later C19 wing which has a slate roof. At basement level the northern and the central bay are of flint and brick, including, early narrow brick. The faces of the medieval arch are of dressed stone, the soffits of the arch are of shuttered flint; flanking walls are of flint and brick.

**PLAN:** a late-C18 or early-C19 single-pile range adjacent to the bridge, aligned east-west and facing north; the single bay of an earlier, C16/C17 two-storey wing, including a large internal stack and stair, attached to the south and aligned north-south; a lower, later, C19 wing to the south. The north wall of the north range is supported on the southern face of the

westernmost stone arch of the medieval bridge, which is now subterranean and extends c 3 m to the north of the pub, beneath the pavement and road and the stone facing wall of the 1786 bridge.

**EXTERIOR:** the northern range is arranged on three storeys and a cellar, which is at river level. The north elevation is symmetrical, in three bays, beneath a hipped roof. The door is of four raised panels beneath an overlight and under a Tuscan porch with timber columns, which appear to have been reset on replaced bases. Windows are timber sashes: a single window of eight over eight panes on the ground floor, a pair, each of six over six panes, on the first floor and three shallow upper floor windows of three over three panes. The hipped roof has deep eaves with paired brackets. The east elevation overlooking the river is in 2 bays, divided by a substantial brick stack, and a lower later wing to the south. The east-facing bay of the northern range is of four storeys with a canted bay under a separate half-hipped roof. On the three upper floors, each face has eight over eight pane timber sashes. At lower ground-floor level are cellars. The east elevation of the adjacent three storey bay has a steeply pitched tiled roof, an added late-C18 or early-C19 canted bay, the upper two storeys with timber windows of six over six pane sashes, the lower ground-floor level with an entrance to former kitchens and cellars served by the stack, and now a bar. To the south is a two-storey, two-bay wing, probably of mid-to late-C19 date, with a shallow-pitched hipped slate roof and replaced timber casement windows and now houses the dining room and kitchens.

The west elevation of the building has irregularly placed timber casement windows, an internal stack to the north range and external brick stack to the south range, and an entrance in the inner angle of the central bay at the foot of the stairs.

**INTERIOR:** the medieval arch which supports the north wall is a low, single-span segmental arch, which may have supported a causeway approaching the bridge. The arch is c 4.5 m wide internally at floor level, and 3.87 m in depth. On the north face is a single arch, on the south face a double arch, the inner arch set back c 40 cm from the outer face and c 25 cm lower. The voussoirs of the arches are of dressed stone on average of 40 x 25 x 18 cm, laid in alternating long and short work; the soffit of the arch is of shuttered flint. The internal arch is 1.75 m in height above floor level at its maximum, but is in part backfilled with the lower courses buried. The N opening is infilled in buff, yellow and red 2.5 inch brick. The cellar floor level of the N range of the pub is 0.6 m higher than the ground level under the arch which is reached via C20 brick steps.

At basement level the west wall and north wall flanking the arch are predominately of flint with brick patching and are heavily painted; the latter may represent former abutments to the bridge. The foundations of the north wall of the building above are c 0.7m deep. Above the arch a stone corbel supports the spine beam of the cellar ceiling. Cellar floor are of stone flags. The north range is of exposed light-scantling timber frame with chamfered ceiling beams; the plan form survives, albeit partially opened up at street

level. There are mid-C19 fireplaces with cast iron grates on the upper floors.

At ground floor level the central bay has a C20 stove in a partially rebuilt earlier stack, with a slender chamfered bressumer. Ceiling beams are stop chamfered. At basement level walls are of brick and stone, part painted; the stack, which is of narrow red/brown brick of C17 type is exposed, and in part reworked. A framed stair with square section newels and balusters rises from basement to upper floor. Upper floor doors are of 2 plain panels.

**HISTORY:** The Angel Hotel, also known as the Angel on the Bridge, is a composite building of late C16/C17 and c1800 and later-C19 dates, supported by the westernmost arch of the medieval bridge which forms part of the cellar. The C12 bridge was probably built by Henry II in the 1170s; in 1179 he had bought land in Henley for 'making buildings'. The corresponding arch of the medieval bridge on the east bank (Berks) is included in the listing for Henley Bridge (Grade I, UID 246180 S Oxon; 41269 Berks). The bridge was rebuilt in 1786, adjacent to the medieval site, but the old bridge was portrayed by the Flemish artist Jan Siberechts c1690. The Angel Hotel was closely associated with the bridge from at least the C18, and predates the c1800 extension or rebuilding of the N range, which may have been precipitated by the construction of the new bridge in 1786. The hotel has an important position at the end of the bridge forming, with the church, the visual entrance to the town from the east. Stone steps lead from the street to the river terrace.

#### SOURCES

R Gibson, *The Angel on the Bridge* (April 2009)

B Durham, Henley. *St Anne's Bridge*, *S Midlands Archaeol.*16 (1986) 101;19 (1989) 52

J Sherwood, N Pevsner, *Buildings of England, Oxfordshire* (1974) 638

J Steane and J Andrews, *Henley-on-Thames Bridge*, *S Midlands Archaeol.*15 (1985) 77-9

S Townley, *Henley, town trade and river* (2009)

#### REASONS FOR DESIGNATION

The Angel Hotel, also known as the Angel on the Bridge, of late C16/C17 and c1800 and later-C19 dates, supported by the westernmost arch of the medieval bridge which forms part of the cellar, is designated at Grade II\* for the following principal reasons:

\* Architectural interest: composite building with a C16/C17 core which incorporates the westernmost arch and abutments of the medieval bridge, which support the north wing of the pub and extend below ground to the north; together with the surviving arch on the east bank of the river, the arch demonstrates the structure and extent of the early medieval bridge; early-C19 remodelling, the canted bay windows giving extensive views of the river;

\* Historic interest: strategic medieval river crossing, the bridge probably constructed by Henry II after the acquisition of land in Henley in 1179; inn, in a prominent position at the entrance to the town, closely

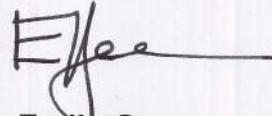
associated with the bridge from at least the C18 and remodelled after the building of the new bridge in 1786.

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Dated:-

22<sup>nd</sup> March 2011

Signed by authority of  
the Secretary of State for  
Culture, Media and Sport

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Gee', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

**Emily Gee**  
English Heritage