

A Walk round Henley on Thames

**With the
Henley Archaeological
and
Historical Group**

Seventh Edition

Editorial

This guide was written by a founder-member and current president of HAHG, Ann Cottingham, with the intention of pointing out interesting historical buildings and their associations, on a walk around Henley. She also drew many of the illustrations. It has been compiled and updated from the results of research by members of the Group over many years. It does not claim to be comprehensive, and it is reviewed from time to time as further information is gained. The emphasis is on medieval buildings in particular. More detailed information about the buildings of the town can be found in Journals 28 *The Houses and People of Friday Street North*, 31, *Five 15th Century Houses in Ancient North Street Henley*, and 33, *The Historic Buildings of Friday Street South* by Ruth Gibson. Journal 34, *Charles Clements' Henley*, by Dr Michael Redley, provides a guide to the development of Victorian and Edwardian Henley. These have been available in print editions and are available on the website. Special thanks go to Ruth Gibson for her contributions, Jackie Fortey for photography and editing, and David Feary for making this digital edition possible.

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Introduction to Henley-on-Thames

The name of Henley is probably a late Saxon derivation. The 'ley' ending in Old English means a wood or clearing in a wood, and in Middle English a meadow or land under grass. Henley is not mentioned in Domesday Book, and it is likely that it was built on the meadowlands of Badgemore.

In the autumn of 1984, an arch of the old bridge was discovered on the east side of the river, and it has been dated to about the 1170s. The main part of the bridge arch is of shuttered flint masonry (that is flints set in mortar) with Barnack stone square-edged dressings. A slightly wider arch is on the outside, also with stone dressing, giving it a stepped appearance. This double order is a Romanesque type of arch, the square-edged kind being older than those with a rolled edge.

Two paintings by Jan Siberechts of about 1690 show the old bridge with two stone arches on the east side of the river and one on the west. (This western one may have been adjoining the still existing, but much lower, segmental arch in part of the cellars of the *Angel on the Bridge*). The central part of the bridge in the paintings is shown as being of wood. It is possible that it had been of this construction for a long time, as the earliest reference, from a Patent Roll of 1223, was to repairing the bridge with wood from Windsor Forest, which at that time included Remenham and Wargrave.

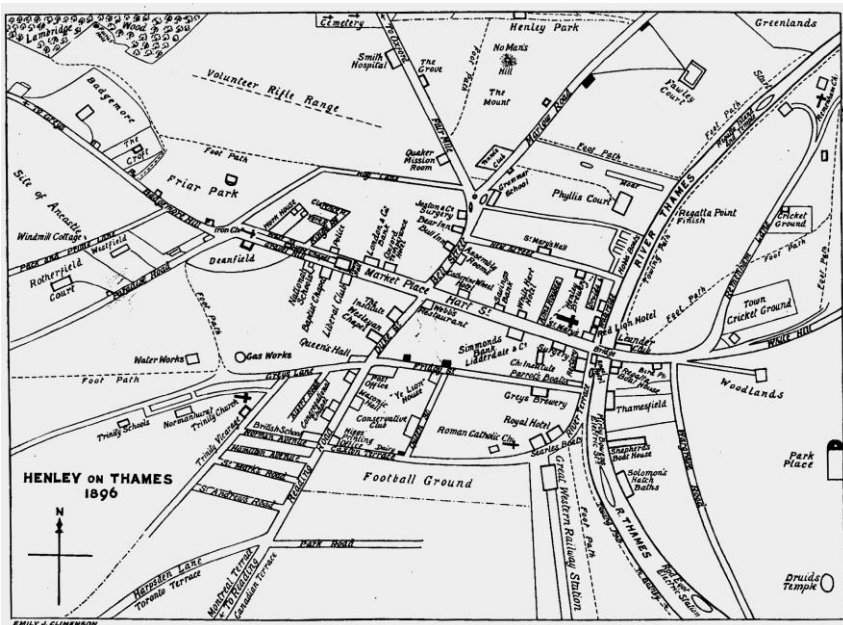
However, evidence found by divers in the river suggest that there may at some point have been arches of flint, edged with stone across the centre span. If the date of the bridge is 12th century, then it may be suggested that the town could date back to the early 12th century rather than late, possibly created in the reign of Henry I (1100–1135). In 1121, he was building Reading Abbey, and may have intended Henley to serve as a port, because the river between Henley and Reading may not have always been navigable. Henley is a planned town with its orderly pattern of streets and burgage plots, and possibly was at first planned without allowing for a bridge, the ford probably being at the end of Bell Lane.

Standing in the part of the Market now called Falaise Square, one realises that Hart Street, the main street, leads eastwards not directly to the river, but to the west door of the Parish Church. This indicates that the church could pre-date the bridge – indeed in a planned town of the 12th century the church would have been one of the earliest buildings. Although Hart Street does lead to the river beyond the church, it was not a main through route. Until the present bridge was built, the way to the old bridge was narrower, more curved and steeper. In about 1830, part of the churchyard was removed to widen the road to the present bridge (built in 1786). The first mention of the church is 1204, but this is a reference to the transfer of patronage, and not to when it was built. Again the first reference to the

bridge in 1223 is to its repair and upkeep, and not its construction. An arch of this bridge found on the Remenham side in 1984 has been dated to 1170.

The growth of the town is due to its position on the river, and later to the bridge across the river. The river above Henley was often not navigable due to shallows, and the town became an important market and port for goods travelling both up and downstream. Early travel was often by boat but, when road travel improved, the existence of the bridge brought traffic through the town. The Turnpike Trusts, set up mostly during the 18th century and continuing into the 19th century, considerably aided the flow of traffic by improvements to the roads. There were three Trusts in the Henley area, the Dorchester Road Trust (Henley–Oxford), the Hurley Trust (Henley–Maidenhead Thicket), and the Reading and Hatfield Trust (Reading through Henley to Hatfield).

The opening of the Great Western Railway in 1839, and in 1857 the branch line to Henley from Twyford, destroyed a large part of the road traffic that existed then; but eventually caused the development of Henley as a residential and leisure town, and then later still as a commuter town.



Map of Henley from Emily J Climenson's *A Guide to Henley on Thames* 1896.

The shape of the older part of the town reflects the importance of the river. The old boundaries of the town were Bell Lane and Friday Street, and between these were New Street and Hart Street. All four of these streets led up from the river, and were connected by the north-south road, Bell Street and Duke Street. Of the four, Bell Lane no longer exists as a throughway, its access to the river being blocked. Hart Street continues across the north-south road swelling out into the Market Place, bounded at the top by Gravel Hill and West Hill. The Town Hall and the buildings behind it are typical later infill encroachments of market space.

The burgage plots behind the houses lining the roads of the town centre may be seen on any Ordnance Survey map. Each house had a road frontage and land behind, in the form of a strip the width of the house. In Hart Street where the larger properties were, the plots are terminated to the south by buildings and much smaller plots along Friday Street, the old south boundary of the town. The Hart Street plots to the north finish where the smaller properties on the south side of New Street end. On the north side of New Street, first mentioned around 1300, the plots go northward towards Countess Garden, which occupied the whole area between these plots and Bell Lane, the north boundary of the town.

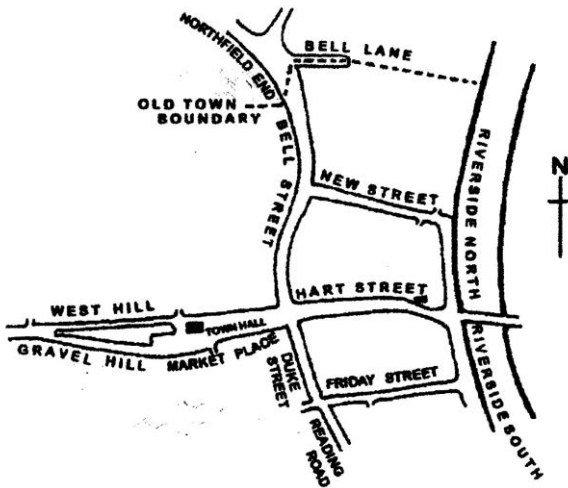
The first document to refer to buildings in the town is a Pipe Roll of 1179, in which property owned by Henry II is mentioned. The earliest known reference to Henley is in the Cartulary of Missenden in which Stephen made a grant of Kingsmill at Headington. The document was written at Henley ('apud Henleiam') some time between 1135 and 1145. That it refers to this Henley seems likely, especially now that the dating of the bridge to about 1170 makes an early 12th century date for the town probable. Stephen is also known to have spent time at Wallingford, and could well have been at Henley.

The earliest Corporation Seal is dated 1306, and the Wardens of the Town or Keepers of the Guild are listed from 1305, beginning with Robert Stokes. The office was changed to that of Mayor under the Henry VIII charter of 1526. Other important charters were those of Elizabeth I (1571) and George I (1722).

Early local government of Henley consisted of a Warden, two Bridgemen (an office combined with that of Churchwarden), ten Aldermen and sixteen Burgesses. In 1882, the Municipal Corporation Act changed the old

Corporation, and a Council was formed with a Mayor, four Aldermen and twelve Councillors. The present Council consists of the Mayor and sixteen Councillors. There are also a Town Clerk and a Town Sergeant, who carries the Mace before the Mayor on important occasions. The mace and other regalia are kept in the Mayor's Parlour, which may only be visited by special permission.

A suggested route for the walk starts on the steps of the Town Hall, and continues as follows: The Market Place – Bell Street – Northfield End – New Street – Riverside North – Riverside South – Friday Street – Duke Street – Hart Street (south side) – Hart Street (north side)



Town Hall 1901

The Town Hall was built 1899–1901 to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The architect was Henry Hare, a president of the RIBA. The stained glass was by Henry Holiday (for further details see *The Building of Henley Town Hall* by Joy Aston, HAHG 1975, under articles on this website).

The present building replaces the Town Hall of 1796, which was taken down and re-erected as a private house at Crazies Hill near Wargrave by Charles Clements, builder, architect and six times mayor of Henley (see Journal No 34, 2021, HA&HG). The Town Hall of 1796 originally had an open pillared area at ground level, which was used as the Corn Exchange.

An even earlier Guild Hall, pulled down in 1781, was at the crossroads. This may have been the one built in 1486.



The Old Town Hall,
built in 1796.
Demolished and
rebuilt on Crazies
Hill by Charles
Clements.

At the crossroads there was once a Market Cross, also a pump, stocks and a whipping post.

During the 16th to 18th centuries a row of buildings containing shops ran down the centre of the Market Place across into Hart Street to about the level of where *The Catherine Wheel* is situated. This was known as Middle Row, the south side was Butcher's Row and the north side Fisher's Row. These were demolished in 1781.

Market Place/Falaise Square

This was named in 1974 in honour of the twin town, Falaise, in Normandy. An earlier connection with Falaise was through the D'Oyly family, commemorated by a magnificent 17th century tomb at Hambleden. They came over with William the Conqueror from the area round Falaise. Robert D'Oyly built, and was the first Warden of, Oxford Castle. The family later owned property at Pishill and Hambleden.

Turn right from the Town Hall steps, and walk up the left side of the Town Hall, looking at the buildings across the road.

35 Market Place, on the west side of the existing Grey's Road car park entrance and now a pizza restaurant was *The Swan* public house until 1878.

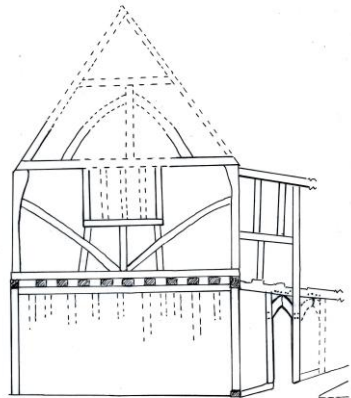
37 and 39 Market Place Two Georgian houses mid 18th century built together, a rainwater head in the centre is marked R I B 1755.

43 Market Place. This used to be a builder's yard belonging to local builder and mayor of Henley, Charles Clements, who rebuilt the 1796 Town Hall at Crazies Hill. The ridge tiles were examples of his stock (see HAHG Journal 34, 2021).

47 Market Place, with a central carriageway entrance. The left part of the building is a service wing of a former medieval hall and has been dendro-dated to 1353. It retains smoke-blackened timbers and the remains of a crown post roof, as well as one original Gothic arch doorway. Until 1918 it was the *Broad Gates* public house, now owned by Stuart Turner, world renowned for the manufacture of pumps.



Old Broad Gates, Market Place. The 1353 jettied wing is on the left of the passageway. What remains of a crown post roof has been mutilated by the large Georgian window. One gothic arch door still leads into the ground floor room; a second one is blocked.



Continue towards the back of the Town Hall and look up Gravel Hill.

From the south-west corner of the Town Hall, you can see what is left of the market area. Thursday is still Market Day and until recently a market was held here in the upper Market; the stalls are now set up in Falaise Square.

Gravel Hill is the road to the left leading out of the town. You can see what seems to be a row of Victorian houses at the back of a raised footway. Many of them are older than their frontages, especially Nos. 9, 11 and 13, which are timber-framed with crown strut roofs. The latter has been dendro-dated to 1454 and was built as an additional chamber wing to the medieval hall on its east side. The hall is now divided into the two dwellings of Nos. 9–11.



Nos 9, 11 and 13 (left to right) Gravel Hill.

Walk along the back of the Town Hall and look up West Street

Market Cottage with an end gable that is visible dates probably to the 15th or 16th century. West Street joins Gravel Hill further up, and it is thought that this area may have been formerly part of the upper Market.



Market Cottage on West Street, formerly known as West Hill. The render hides the substantial timber framing underneath.

Turn right again down towards Falaise Square

32 – 34 Market Place (CAB) On right of the passageway was *The King's Arms* public house till it closed in 1998. Mentioned in a will of 1684, excavations (1993) of the rear yard stable floor area showed refuse indicating a much earlier date as a pub, including a coin of 1587. In 1713, it was briefly known as the *Queens Arms*. In the Napoleonic wars, it was used as a store by the Queen's Light Dragoons.

The former stable of the *Kings Arms* pub is a timber-framed building with a tiled roof, which can be hired as a venue from the Town Council and is used for HAHG's monthly lectures.



Kings Arms Barn, former stables for the *Kings Arms* pub. This building has the dendro date 1601/02.

26 Market Place is currently the Oxfam charity shop. Behind this black and white mock Tudor facade survives a genuine old timbered building with a jettied front; the jetty beams can still be seen above the door and shop window.

20 Market Place, a shop with side yard entrance, built c. 1740. This large house has a pediment and was occupied in the 19th century by doctors J H Brooks and his son. It then became a baker's called Hales (1895–c1960) followed by Lawlors' bakery. At the back there are some rather fine bread ovens, of which one survives. Later it became an antique shop, since then a restaurant.



20 Market Place was built in the mid-18th century.

12, 14 and 16 Market Place were rebuilt in 1985 on the site of the *Waggon and Horses* and the *Fisherman's Cottage* beerhouses in the 19th century. Subsequently, the site was occupied by shops. Excavations (1984) revealed that previous house at no 16 had brick barrel-vaulted cellar at the front, probably used by one of the two beerhouses on the site in the mid 19th century, an 18th century fireplace was also found, and below a much earlier fireplace, which may have belonged to a house occupying the whole site in the 15th or 16th century.

4 Market Place This house with a tiled front was the site of *The Feathers* beerhouse 1795–1908. It was rebuilt as a dairy, with a decorative detail of Prince of Wales feathers.

Before turning into Bell Street look across the road at the houses on the south side of the Lower Market.

25 Market Place Here a Georgian front was added to a much older timber-framed building. This alteration resulted in three mock windows (top left and second row centre) to provide symmetry and accommodate two beams. A long wing behind retains its roof trusses, including a rare scissor-braced roof truss dendro-dated to 1471.



This building has a scissor-braced roof, behind the late 18th century façade. Look out for the three false windows.

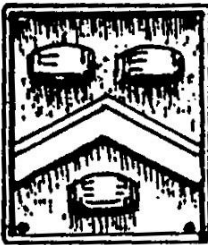
East of the car park entrance was the site of the old *Rose and Crown*, closed in the 1780s, and now a shop at No. 25, adjacent to Facys. The Quakers' Minute Book of 1705 records that in about 1658, a Quaker, Ambrose Rigge with two friends came to Henley 'on the 5th day of the week, being Market Day: they setting their horses at the *Rose and Crown* inn. After market was a little over they got a stool or form and set it in the gateway of the said inn, which was against the Corn Market: and there the said Ambrose Rigge declared Truth.'

There have been Quakers in the town since the 17th century. Their brick-built 19th century Meeting House is at Northfield End, the adjoining cottage is timber-framed, of 16th–17th century date, and is all that remains of a group of earlier buildings.

The Argyll pub, re-fronted in about 1919, was first given that name in the 1880s. Before that it was the *Hop Leaf*, the *Cannon Inn*, and in 1851 was the *North Star* pub. It was built as a pub in about 1845 on the site of an older shop.

7 Market Place is a fine 16th century timber-framed shop. This has been a butcher's shop since about 1840 after the closure of the *Crown & Thistle*, once known as *The Black Horse & Farrier*. It then included a previous building at No 9, which later became *The Crown*, closed in 1952. Gabriel Machin was first mentioned as butcher in 1877.

The Three Tuns has probably been a pub since the 16th or 17th centuries. An iron roundel on the front is dated 1824. It may once have belonged to the Vintners Co.



Three barrels and a chevron on the pub sign are the arms of the Vintners Company.

At the crossroads turn left into Bell Street

Bell Street

Bell Street, formerly North Street, leads towards Northfield End where the former Bell Inn was situated, near to a field known as the Bell Pits, and possibly where the church bells were cast.

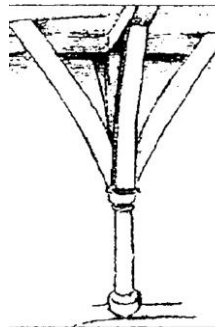
Continue along Bell Street and look to the right across the road.

The Assembly Rooms at 16–18 Bell Street were built in about the 1780s as a Furniture and Auctioneer's saleroom, with a plastered front with a pediment above and central carriage archway. In the mid 19th century this building was used as the Town Assembly Rooms. It is most likely on the site of a malthouse in the garden area of *The Duke of Cumberland*.



The late 18th century Assembly Rooms very likely occupy the site of a former hall house, of which only the wing, now the *Old Bell* public house, survives.

The Old Bell Inn, which has only been known by that name since 1920, having previously been *The Duke of Cumberland* since 1758, not long after the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745. It was possibly named to indicate support for the Hanoverians and perhaps relief at the defeat of the Jacobites. The building's roof has been dendro-dated to 1325, which makes it the oldest surviving house known in Henley. It is the wing of what must have been a now vanished hall house. See scale drawing below of one of the three crown posts in the roof. The present mock timber-framed façade hides the original 1325 framing.



Original crown post in the roof of the *Old Bell*.

The pub's mock-timbered front dates to the 1930s and the first floor window conceals a blocked medieval doorway.

Continue along the left side of the street

The Bull Inn This coaching inn is one of the oldest in Henley. The timbers at the side of carriageway may be 14th or 15th century, although it is not known whether it was then an inn. It was much altered later with long rear ranges of different dates. The first floor bow windows are typical of the period 1640–50. A Royal Exchange Insurance plaque is attached to each of the window bays.



A Royal Exchange Insurance plaque displayed on a window bay. This ensured that a fire engine would attend if needed.

In the 18th and early 19th centuries there were two fire engines in Henley, belonging to the Royal Exchange Insurance Co. and the Sun Insurance Co., which would only attend fires insured by themselves; subscribers had to display the company's plaques. The Town Volunteer Fire Brigade was only formed in 1867.

61 Bell Street 16th century. This timber-framed house with gabled end facing the street was in 1657 the property of Margery Sharp, widow.

63 Bell Street dating to the 17th century was said, in 1657, to have been built on the land of and next door to Widow Sharp.

71 Bell Street According to Nikolaus Pevsner's *Buildings of England* this has some of the best Georgian detail in Henley.

73, 73a Bell Street Once a butcher's with slaughterhouse behind. Meat hanging racks outside and a trackway for moving carcasses still survive in the ceiling of the carriageway entrance. The plain façade of this building conceals a very fine timber-framed structure of probably 15th century date, with a medieval arch braced roof with smoke blackening indicating its

original use as a medieval hall house. The front roof has been raised concealing the timber-framed structure underneath it.



Trackway with iron hooks, used by the butcher to move carcasses.

77-79, 81 Bell Street, until 1986 the Bear Inn, has a yard entrance under a four gabled front.

Known since 1683 (The will of Inn holder William Dolton has a detailed description); the western rear range has been dated to 1438, probably formerly the kitchen, which was enlarged, sideways under a new roof, in 1589. It was one of the larger carter's inns with extensive stabling and a barn at the back. It is now partly an office and partly in residential occupation.

The Bear Inn (right) in the early 1900s, with the entrance under the central gable.



93-95 Bell Street, 1436–1444, a four-bay house with exquisite moulded timbers and cusped wind braces, it would once have been an impressive property, now with a plain frontage and subdivided into two dwellings. The Town boundary ran through the house and, when ‘Beating the Bounds’, boys had to climb through a window and go through the bread oven in what had become a baker’s shop, before becoming Kingstone’s Antiques for many years. Boundary Cottage next door at 1-3 Northfield End still marks this division.

Northfield End

After 95 Bell Street the road becomes Northfield End, which was known as Aldefield in the 13th century. It is a continuation of Bell Street but becomes Northfield End outside the old town boundary, which ran diagonally across the road to the middle of Bell Lane. (For further details of individual buildings see Journal 31.)

Cross the road to Bell Lane, which used to go to the river and is now a cul-de-sac.

George Ravenscroft 1618–1681, glassmaker, came to Henlev in 1674. It is thought that he lived in a house to the right of the lane and had a glass works in the town for about a year. He was the inventor in 1673 of a type of glass resembling rock crystal, using a process of adding lead acid to sand and potash, reducing the amount of alkaline fluid, thus preventing the cloudy effect of soda glass. He was a relative by marriage of the Stonor family, and it is believed that he lived in one of their properties.

Look at the houses beyond Bell Lane

The Bell Inn c1592-1854. This large white-fronted building with a central pediment, now divided into separate houses, was until the 1850s *The Bell Inn*. A deed of 1592 mentions the inn already in existence. It was the first inn reached by travellers arriving in Henley from a northerly direction. The inn’s frontage was re-built c 1795. It was one of the inns that catered to the gentry, and was used in the Civil War by Prince Rupert, who is said to have had a spy hanged from an elm tree in the front garden. The elm or its remains, known as Rupert’s Elm, was there until 1995 when it was removed. After 1854, the building was used Henley Grammar School until c. 1928.



A photo of Rupert's Elm. There is a piece of its bark in the River & Rowing Museum collection. It stood in what was once the front garden of the *Bell Inn* (right).

Before returning to the town look along the road to the north west at:

The Fairmile

According to a 17th century inventory, a bowling green existed near to the pub known as *The Old White Horse*. The pub was rebuilt in 1938 (it was the last building in Northfield End) and is now closed. Beyond it stretches the Fairmile, a wide road, perhaps originally Roman, with expanses of grass on either side, which may have been used as a drover's road and a halting place for flocks or herds coming to market or to be shipped down river to the metropolis.

Returning to Bell Street

Walk back along Bell Street on the left hand side facing the town. The houses along this part are often older than their frontages suggest.

82 Bell Street originally had a jettied front to the house and, at the rear, a small hall open to the roof, which may have been a barn or workroom.

74, 76 and 78 Bell Street These three houses, with frontages that would appear to be 19th Century, are very much older. The houses only became three in the 1920s.



Drawing of Nos 74, 76, 78 Bell Street (left to right), with photo of 78 (right).

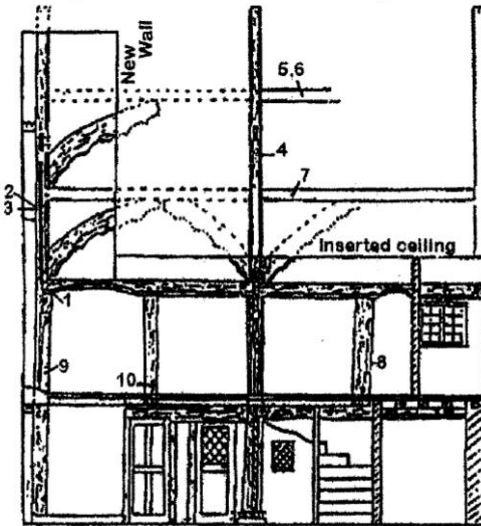
Up to 1900, behind these houses was the site of Brakspears' main malthouse – a large building occupying the garden of 76 and 74 and shown on the 1878 OS map. Before this malthouse was built, probably in the mid 19th century, malting had most likely taken place in a large room which extended across the back of the three houses.

They are situated midway between Bell Lane and New Street, and behind them is the land known as Countess Garden. This plot of land possibly once extended from Bell Lane to New Street, and from Bell Street to the Thames. Countess Gardens was so called after the Countess of Cornwall who held the Manor of Henley in the early 14th century.

The Countess inherited the Manor of Henley, which was part of the Manor of Bensington, from her husband Edmund Earl of Cornwall, who had inherited it from his father Richard, the youngest son of King John. By 1381 the Manor of Henley was said to be 'of no worth because the whole is spoiled and dilapidated'. It may have been somewhere in Countess Garden. In 1584 it was said that Countess Garden 'is approved to be parcel of the Manor of Henley whereupon did stand the manor of Henley'.

The central part, now 76, was originally a hall open to the roof with an open hearth. The roof not only shows signs of smoke blackening, but also has cusped wind braces, designed to be seen from below. (See elevation drawing). Tree ring cores have been taken of some of the roof timbers and posts and give a felling date of 1405. It may have been built as a

replacement, soon after the Manor House became derelict.



Elevation of back wall of 76 Bell Street (drawing by Ruth Gibson). Dotted lines indicate the existence of former timbers. Solid black areas show empty mortices or brace slots. Numbers refer to points where tree ring cores were taken from the front timbers of the house.

Nos 74 and 78 were wings of the central open Hall; 74 was built in 1569, probably as a service wing and is the only part with a cellar. There is now a dendro date for No. 78 of 1404/5, making it the contemporary chamber wing to the hall. Both wings originally projected slightly further forward by circa 4 feet and were probably truncated for road widening purposes. The cross passage adjoins the hall on its south side, allowing access from the street to the back of the buildings – a typical medieval plan.

Walk towards town centre and then turn into New Street

New Street

This may have originally been a back lane to the northern side of Hart Street, and the boundary known as Grims Ditch may have run down it. As said on the previous two pages, the north side of New Street may have been part of the Manor land of Countess Garden. However, in about 1300 properties were being established on the north side of the street. One of these grants in 1307 mentions Nywestrete. The Borough Records show that from about 1270–1320 two potters, Adam and William were working in

New Street, the only reference found so far to a pottery in Henley. The exact site is not known.

As you turn into New Street the corner house opposite may date to the 15th century.



Corner House
now occupied
by Asquiths
Teddy Bear
Shop.

Smoke-blackened timbers in the roof, suggesting an open hall and the interrupted king post structure of the roof, give a possible date of c. 1400.

There is a will dated 1349, of a Robert Tybrai, who left his house at the corner of Bell Street and the south side of New Street. Whether the foundations of the present house are as early as that is not known.

Next door, **Barnaby Cottages**, originally two cottages but changed to five in 1788, sometimes known as Barnaby Groats, are part of the Barnaby Groat Charity of 1581. This gave a groat (about 4d prior to decimalization) to the poor on Lady Day and Michaelmas. William Barnaby founded two charities for the poor, both of which are funded by properties in the town, whose rents supplied money. These are known as Bridge Rents, and were started when Richard II in 1385 allowed the rents of 115 houses to provide funds for the upkeep of the Church and Bridge, and later for other specific charities. The rents continued at the same amounts until 1967 when those still being paid were changed to a down payment sufficient to bring in when invested, the same amount of money. The Bridge Rents on houses round the town were over and above any later leasing or purchasing transactions.

The Horse & Groom This was altered and probably refaced in 1870. In 1855 it was described as an old established beerhouse though probably not dating back as a beerhouse to earlier than about 1830

Opposite on the north side of the road

15 and 17 New Street, built as a chapel in 1823, are now two houses, but built as chapel in 1823 with sittings for 300 persons. This was discontinued as a chapel in 1832, when it was sold.

The Kenton Theatre 1805

The 1632–1790 buildings on the site were part of the Workhouse. From 1813, it used as Non-Conformist Chapel, a Church of England School, and a church hall.

Though claimed as the fourth oldest theatre in England built as a theatre, it has only been in use as such 1805–1813, in the 1930s and since 1951, when it was named the Kenton. Two Robert Kentons were benefactors to the town in the 16th and 17th centuries. The site, then occupied by cottages, was bequeathed to the town on the death of the last Robert Kenton in 1632. From that time until the 1790s it was the site of the Workhouse, until the new Workhouse was built off West Hill, now the Henley Hospital with the doctors' surgeries in its grounds.

The theatre's proscenium arch was rebuilt and painted by the 20th century artist John Piper in 1951.

Across the road again on the south side of the street

The Rose & Crown is now a private residence. The pub that existed here was named after a much older pub in the Market Place was closed. There is no record of *The Rose & Crown* being a beerhouse before about 1850. Prior to that, the building was occupied by the builder, John Strange. During his tenancy, it was offered for sale in 1835 and in 1838. In 1835 it was described as 'recently built' and, in 1838, as being built in the last 25 years, and as being suitable for a brewery or a tradesman requiring a long range of buildings. It seems that it was probably built in 1812, to replace an older building.

Anne Boleyn and Tudor Cottages c. 1470. The names were bestowed in the 19th century, when it was claimed that the houses were used for members of the court, when Henry VIII stayed at Phyllis Court. There is no documentary evidence to support either of these claims.



Anne Boleyn
and Tudor
Cottages.

Across the road can be seen Radnor Close, 1973, the side entrance to Phyllis Court, now a modern gateway to the country club. Phyllis Court or Fillets as it was once known, was rebuilt in 1830 and again in 1870. It is on the site of a medieval moated building, and remains of the moat still exist. Fortified during the Civil War, its defences were 'sighted' (deliberately destroyed) afterwards. The original house was probably nearer the river. King John is said to have stayed there.



Brakspears'
1899 built
Maltings,
replacing the
various other
maltings in the
town used by
the brewery ;
now converted
for residential
use.

Continuing on north side of the road, you will see Brakspears' last functioning malthouse, built in 1899, closed in 1972. The large building

with two towers was built to serve as Brakspears' only malthouse, replacing all the smaller ones scattered around the town. Malting had taken place in the town since medieval times and there was a large trade shipping malt down river. It also had stables and yard. The buildings at the back of the yard were stables for dray horses with all the latest stable improvements of 1899. It now has offices and residential uses.

The Red Cross Inn, 51 New Street c 1790–1977. This may have existed earlier. The small timber framed house, next to the malthouse yard, was originally one of several which extended round the yard, known as Floyd's Tenements, the rents of which went to the Charity of Richard Dunt, by his will of 1589 giving 8s to each of eight aged men.

Camden House 53 New Street and **Bishop's House 55 New Street** both date to the 18th century; Camden House is dated on drainpipe 1729. Bishop's House is named after a one-time resident John Russell Woodford, who became Bishop of Ely.

Before continuing to Riverside, look across the road at what was

Brakspears' Brewery closed in 2002 and is now a hotel and restaurant. It was the last of the many breweries of Henley. The Old Brewery House, dating to c1735, and some of the other buildings, were built by the Sarney family. They were later owned by nephew Joseph Benwell, who in 1812 amalgamated his company with Brakspear, which had been established by Robert Brakspear (1750–1812) in 1779, when he joined his uncle Richard Hayward at his brewery in Bell Street.

The large brick building on the right was built as a Mineral Water Manufactory in 1897, partly on the site of two cottages belonging to Henley Charities, who agreed to an exchange for a larger house on the north side of the street.

Brakspears' brewed their own beer, using water from an artesian well 200ft deep. The flow of water was approximately 38 million gallons per annum. It also had its own power supply and could be self-sufficient, though since 1972 it no longer did its own malting.

Church Avenue Next to the brewery, there is an ancient pathway to the church and originally through to Hart Street.

Cross to near the public slipway on the Riverside and look to the left.

Wharf Lane and Boathouses were built at the end of the 19th century to replace old wharves and timber yards, which stretched along the waterfront to Bell Lane, the old boundary of the town.

Still standing on the corner of the Riverside path above the slipway, look to the left downstream

The straight stretch of river is the Henley Regatta course. The Regatta began in 1839 as a one-day event, becoming Henley Royal Regatta in 1851 when Prince Albert became President of the Regatta. Held now in the first week of July or ending during the first week, it now lasts five days, Wednesday to Sunday. The Course is 1 mile 550 yards, the far end of which was straightened, finishing nearly opposite to where Bell Lane used to come down to the river and near the boathouses that replaced the wharves. In the early races, the finish was at the bridge, but this was deemed too dangerous, so it was then moved back to opposite *The Little White Hart*, and then to its present position.

Looking down the Regatta course you can see Temple Island or Regatta Island. It is now owned by the Stewards of the Regatta, but was previously owned by the Freemans of Fawley Court. The building was classicised by the architect James Wyatt in 1771, and the Temple was then built as a summer house. The Regatta Stewards have had it restored, including the original interior paintings and decorations.

Riverside North

Turn round and look across the river.

The Leander Club, the oldest and most famous of the rowing clubs, was founded in London in 1818. The clubhouse was moved to its present position in Remenham in 1896.

Look along Riverside towards the bridge

The footpath along the river edge is modern, dating to 1992. The whole area once consisted of wharves used by the occupants of the various riverside properties, which at one time were mostly granaries. The towpath this side of the bridge was on the opposite bank across the river.

As you walk towards the bridge along Riverside North, look at the houses on the right. The building between the cottages and what was once *The Little White Hart* was used by Henley Rowing Club as their boathouse, from 1903 to 1986. They have now moved to a site above the bridge on the Remenham bank. This was previously a storage building, as was the building next to it, until recently known as a part of the *Little White Hart*.

The Little White Hart c 1900 closed 2002 The present mock Tudor gabled building replaces an older pub and yard. There is a pub shown on the site in a painting by Jan Siberechts in the 1690s. At one time the Henley United Rowing Club kept their boats here. The Chinese dragon figure on the roof is similar to ones on other buildings of this period, and is thought to keep evil spirits away



20, 21 Thameside This building with an ornamental pediment and decorative plasterwork, now occupied by shops, is on the site of coach houses that belonged to the *Red Lion*. In the early 18th and 17th centuries, there were two granaries on the same site shown in Jan Siberecht's painting of 1690s. The present building was erected in 1889 as a boat-building shed. The ground floor was used as a boathouse for hire boats and the upper floors were for boat building. The boats were raised or lowered through a trap door.



20-21 Thameside, with pediments and ornamental plasterwork by a local craftsman named Cook. Other examples of his work can be seen in Queen Street and St Andrews Road.

The Red Lion Yard & the Chantry House

Looking into *The Red Lion* yard you can see the east side of the Chantry House (also see p 43 Chantry House/Churchyard). From this side it is an imposing three storeys, while on the churchyard side it is only two storeys high. Originally all the land on this side of it belonged to the Chantry House, with both the yard and part of the Red Lion now between it and the road. All were storehouses for grain, timber, malt, wool and general goods using the river as the trade route to and from the capital.

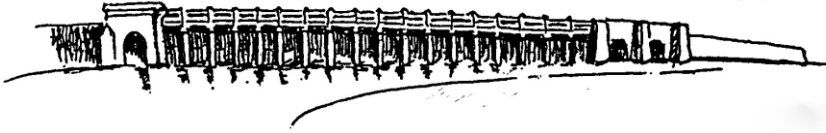
The Red Lion (now known as *The Relais at the Red Lion, Henley*) with its earliest part dating to 1462, was one of the larger coaching inns of Henley, catering mostly for the gentry and including a list of notable guests - Charles I in 1632 and 1642 (a Royal Arms was found painted in one room), Prince Rupert, Oliver Cromwell, William Shenstone the poet (one of his poems is scratched on the window pane of a front bedroom), the Duke of Marlborough (who kept a room here), Dr Johnson and Boswell, George III and Queen Charlotte, the Prince Regent (who is said to have eaten 14 mutton chops at a sitting), the Duke of Wellington and General Blucher.



The Red Lion, now renamed the Relais at the Red Lion.

Henley Bridge

The previous bridge, which stood alongside the present bridge on the south side, was swept away by floods in 1774. It had been declared dangerous in 1754 having been damaged in the Civil War.



Drawing of the Old Bridge from the south, from painting c 1690 by Jan Siberechts.

In the 16th century there was a chapel to St Anne and houses on the bridge, though they were probably sited at the ends of the bridge rather than on the main structure.

In 1483, after storm damage, the bridge was rebuilt of wood by John Elam and Godfrey Gyldone. Paintings by Jan Siberechts in the 1690s show the centre span then to have been of wood, with one solid masonry arch at the west end and two at the east. However diving in the river has revealed the remains of what were masonry arches in the centre of the river, so the original bridge of c. 1170 was most likely of stone throughout.

A Patent Roll of about 1225, the earliest documented reference to the bridge, was to allow the Warden and Bridgemen of Henley free passage to Windsor Forest to load such wood as was wanted for the repair of Henley bridge, probably to act as shuttering for the then stone bridge. At that date Windsor Forest extended to the parishes of Remenham and Wargrave. The bridge was repaired again in 1483.

In the autumn of 1984 one of the two arches at the east end of the bridge was uncovered. It was found to have been constructed of shuttered flint masonry, with the outer arch rims of Barnack (Northamptonshire) stone. The outer part was stepped, forming a double arch, with squared stone edge dressings. The construction details together with the mason's marks have placed the date to about 1170.



Drawing of arch in Henley made of shuttered flint masonry and Barnack stone, found in 1984.

The Bridge/Riverside South

The arch found in 1984 is similar to the arch at the west end of the bridge, which is now part of the cellars of *The Angel on the Bridge*. It lies under the pavement outside the north wall of the pub. The north wall of *The Angel on the Bridge* was built close up to the face of the bridge arch at the west end of the old bridge, as was the north wall of the former *Carpenters Arms* at the east end of the bridge in Remenham. Neither building was shown in the paintings of the 1690s and neither building was recorded until the 18th century. Built possibly in the early 18th century, the *Angel* did not have much exterior timbering; that on the north wall was applied after 1912, the portico with pillars was added between 1836 and 1868.

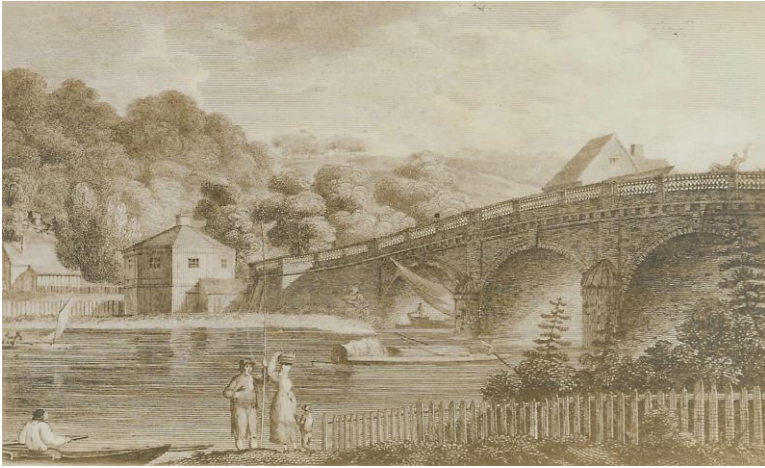
A floodmark on the riverside bay shows the height of the floods on 8th January 1809.

The present Bridge, constructed in 1786 of Headington stone, is the work of architect William Hayward of Shrewsbury, who is buried in St Mary's Church, Henley. Carvings, which represent Thamesis and Isis, on the central arches, were made by Anne Damer, of Park Place.

Across the Bridge the **Royal Regatta Building** was opened by the Queen in 1986 on the site of the 18th century *Carpenters Arms*, demolished 1984.

Two of the houses mentioned as being on the old bridge were pubs and were removed with the demolition of the bridge. One was called *The Marquis of Granby* and the other was *The White Horse* known since the beginning of the 17th century, and was probably located in the position of what is now the roadway over the bridge.

A Toll House 1786–1873, was placed at the north east corner of the new bridge in 1783. Tolls were collected until the debt created to build the bridge was paid off. In 1873 it was said that on 'March 1st, a Saturday, at 12 noon, the gate was pulled down with much rejoicing.'



Print of Henley Bridge showing the toll house on the Berkshire bank, print by J Walker from a drawing by Edward Dayes, 1796.

It is thought that before any bridge was built that there may have been a ford. One mentioned in documents was called Bockerinsforde or Bokinerysforde, but its position is unknown. It may have been at the end of Bell Lane or New Street, either of which seem likely as being on the after side of the river bend. However, it has also been suggested that it was located at the end of Friday Street or even at Marsh Lock. Another suggestion is that Bockerinsforde was a ford across one of the streams running down to the river. If so there was probably another unnamed ford across the Thames, which would then have been much shallower, without locks or modern dredging.

Continue walking southwards along Riverside South

The Old Rectory was in use as such from 1830 till the late 1970s and now houses offices. It has a Queen Anne type frontage and probably dates from, circa early 1700. It only became the Rectory when acquired by the Rev James King in about 1830. He had become Rector of Henley in 1825, and in 1826 got permission to pull down the old Rectory.

The Rectory grounds once occupied the whole area between Hart Street and the back of the houses on the north side of Friday Street, with a gateway into Friday Street. Excavations in 1983-4 of an earlier rectory revealed some of the walls of the building that was demolished in 1826,

and showed that there had been several phases of rebuilding. A plan of the grounds in 1830 shows the existence of a large Tithe Barn in the garden at that time, but no evidence of this was found in the 1983 excavation.

The modern Rectory is accessed from Hart Street.



Built in the late 1700s, this became the Rectory in about 1830 and continued to fulfil this role until the 1970s.

Town Ditch called the Brook in 1474 (Duke Street was once known as Brook Street) This stream, now underground, comes down behind the houses on the north side of Greys Road, across the crossroads, and then down behind the houses on the north side of Friday Street. It used to flow beneath 13 Riverside, but was moved in 1986 so as to flow under the yard entrance alongside, and then into the river. It still runs and its outflow may be seen if one peers over the river wall in line with the manhole cover in the riverside pavement.

11 Riverside Flood marks on the wall show the height of the floods on 28 January 1809 and those of November 1894. The markers must have been reset, as No.11 was rebuilt after the 1894 flood.



Boating along Friday Street during the flood of 1894.

The Old Granary, No.10 Thameside, is 16th century and was restored in the mid 20th century. Originally this was probably a merchant's house, which can be seen in Siberechts painting of the 1690s. At one time a granary, but later a general warehouse, it was very dilapidated at the end of the 19th century and early 20th century, but restored to an attractive dwelling together with the adjoining corner house, Barn Cottage, at 73 Friday Street in c. 1925 by Dame Merrial Burke, who saved the group from demolition.

Granary Cottage was dendro-dated to the mid Tudor period of 1549/50.

Friday Street

Friday Street was the southern boundary of the town until 1892. The boundary ran down the street, so that houses on the north side were in Henley but those on the south side were in the parish of Rotherfield Greys, which then went down to the river and had a river frontage.

The first mention of Friday Street was in 1305 when the Rector of Henley was given land south of the street and a fishpond, which seems to have been at the bottom of the street near the river. This fishpond may account for the name of the street, with fish being sold here on Fridays.

In the time of Edward IV (1461–1483), there was a house known as Beldamehouse in Friday Street; its exact location is unknown.

Before turning right into Friday Street look across the road at the end of the street at Baltic Cottage, originally a two bay hall house with a smoke blackened crown post roof, dendro-dated to 1438/9. It has a cross wing of 1537/8 on its west side, both now under the same roof. A large brick stack now serves both bays of the former hall.



Crown post,
Baltic cottage.

Baltic House is the elegant 18th century extension of Baltic Cottage. It is accessed from Thameside.

The Anchor Inn has only been known as a pub since c 1847, but the house is much older, possibly 17th century and is of a lobby-entry plan. In the 19th century it was known as *The Greys Brewery Tap*.

Greys Brewery, circa 1820–1896, which owed its name to the fact that it was situated in Rotherfield Greys parish, was bought and closed by Brakspears' in 1896. Beyond the house next to *The Anchor* is the entrance to the Greys Brewery yard.

As you walk up Friday Street look on the right,

First there are some 16th century timber-framed houses, called **Barn Cottage, Friday Cottage** and **Old Timbers**. Beyond them a long building, mostly of flint, is part of The Old Foundry, but after a fire in the early 20th century, it was largely rebuilt with a 'tudor-esque' door and new windows.



The Old Foundry, largely rebuilt after a fire in the early 20th century.

This was part of a foundry from the mid-19th century until about 1924, before that it had been a tannery. A tannery is mentioned in Friday Street in 1406, and also in 1315 when Gilbert de Fulle was the tanner. Where exactly these early tanneries were is not known, but they might have been here, as the town ditch or brook runs along the end of the garden, forming the boundary between the Hart Street and Friday Street burgage plots.

Next to the foundry is **Queen Anne Cottage**, built in about 1700 as the tanner's house. A Sun Insurance plaque is on the wall to the right of the central upstairs window (see note on Insurance Companies p. 14 *The Bull*).

Across the road

16 Friday Street was once *The Black Horse*, previously *The Plough* at the end of the 18th century. The building is earlier, probably 17th century and still retains timber framing and an external stair turret at the back. A central door up some steps above the basement cellar gave access to the front room bar. *The Black Horse* pub closed in 1896 when Brakspears' shut down Greys Brewery.

14 Friday Street, also known as Old Farm Cottage. The house on the corner of Queen Street may once have been a farmhouse. It was certainly twice its

present size with large outbuildings at the rear and was built soon after 1590 (dendro date). It is an elegant Tudor house with outstanding and unusual features such as the close studded raised gable, the fenestration with its adjacent smaller flanking windows, the moulded jetty beams; all of these demonstrate a wealthy owner, very likely the Benwells, a local landowning family.



14 and 14a Friday St
– an elegant Tudor
house, with
moulded jetty
beams.

Queen Street was built towards the end of the 19th century, a large part of No.14 Friday Street being demolished to make an entrance to the newly built Queen Street.

Back on the north side of the street

17–29 Friday Street, probably date from the early 1600s. They were given to the town as three cottages by William Gravett, and known as Gravett's Gift Charity of 1624. They were rebuilt in c.1746 by B. Bradshaw, as seven cottages, but are now only six. No 17 is probably the oldest building of the group, having smoke-blackened timbers in the roof and wide arch and wind braces.

The tallest of them, with the higher roof, was until 1890 the *White Lion* pub, which it had been since the early 18th century.

Pause at the top of Friday Street as you round the corner and glance to the left along Reading Road

You will see the spire of the **Christ Church, United Reformed Church**, along Reading Road.



The existing church was completed in this site in 1908 on the site of a previous Congregationalist chapel. Below: a blue plaque outside the Manse, commemorates Humphrey Gainsborough, Minister from 1748–1776.

In 1662 William Brice, Rector of St Mary's Church, Henley, was ejected for non-conformity on the restoration of the monarchy and return to the Church of England. His ejection did not stop him preaching. He held services in various places around Henley, and may be considered as a founder of the Henley Congregational Church. Persecution of Dissenters continued and various ministers held services in private houses and barns. A permanent Meeting House was built in 1719 alongside the road. It was replaced by the larger church at the time of the Olympic Henley Regatta in 1908, and contains some fine Art Nouveau stained glass. Until 1892 the site was in Rotherfield Greys parish.

If you make a short diversion to the Church, you will see

The blue plaque for Humphrey Gainsborough, minister, engineer and inventor, and brother of Thomas Gainsborough the painter. He planned and oversaw the construction and the deep cutting of the road up White Hill; he designed the stone bridge along the Wargrave Road, using stones from Reading Abbey; in 1770 he designed the locks on the river from Hambleton to Sonning, and became a Toll Collector for those locks. In 1761

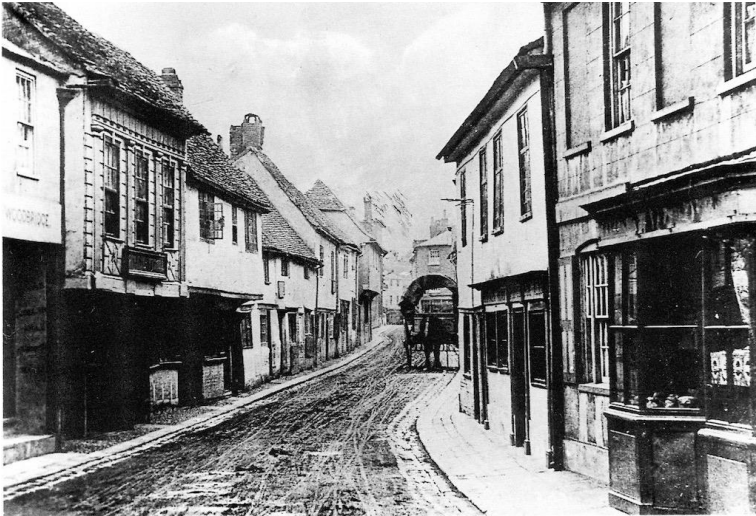
he constructed a Tide Mill, in 1766 a Plough Drill; in 1776 a Weighing Machine for vehicles, used in Henley Market Place. In about 1750 he made a fireproof box of cast iron, the forerunner of the fireproof safe; and he also made model hydraulic machines and a model steam engine.

Humphrey Gainsborough was the first Minister to occupy the Manse, though he may for a time have lived in West Hill. He died in Henley on the way back from collecting tolls from the Hambleden Lock in 1776.

Returning to Duke Street

Duke Street

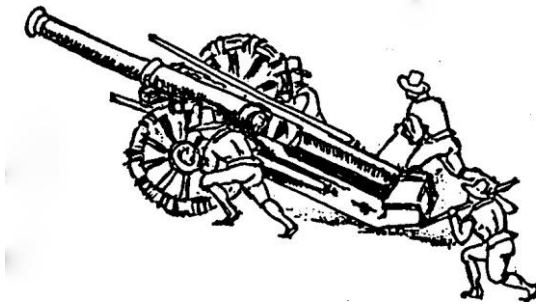
At one time known as Street, or Brook Street, but originally South Street or Vi Australi (1492). The street was much narrower before 1870, when the whole of the west side was demolished and rebuilt further back. A photo taken before 1870 shows a horse and cart occupying about half of the total width of the street.



Duke Street was a narrow lane until it was widened in the 1870s.

In January 1642, (New Year was at that time March 25, so January was at the end of the year, now it would be regarded as January 1643) the only known skirmish of the Civil War in Henley took place here. It was known as the Battle of Duck Street. A gun was set up at the crossroads where Duke

Street meets Hart Street by the Parliamentarians defending Henley from the Royalists, who were approaching along the Reading Road.



Burial records show that six soldiers were killed of whom four were 'slaine with the discharging of a Canon as they marched up Duck Street to assault the towne' and were subsequently buried in the churchyard; three died later, presumably of wounds; no mention in burial records is made as to who they were or what side they were on.

Henley changed hands several times during the war: at one time Prince Rupert was in the town, while Sir John Byron's parliamentary infantry were at Fawley Court. Never a defensible town, Henley remained during the Civil War a place of mixed loyalties.

49 Duke Street The visible part of this shop was constructed in 1934 from second-hand timbers, by the builders Reg and Ted Willis. However it has recently been found that the inside and back part of the building, dendro-dated to 1569–1601, are primary timbers and original for the construction of this three-bay building, which was very likely the wing of a larger house, demolished when the corner of Duke and Friday Street was rebuilt in 1899 by Charles Clements, as part of the road widening scheme.

The house and shop set back from the road was once *The Duke's Head*, closed in 1988, it had been rebuilt in 1901 in its present, set back position, for further road widening, which was planned but not carried out. *The Duke's Head* replaced an earlier pub commemorating the Duke of Albemarle, one of those concerned with the restoration of Charles II.

33 and 35 Duke Street, now the Henley Dental Centre. These houses, when renovated in the 1980s, seemed to date from the mid or late 17th century; a Charles II coin was found behind plasterwork upstairs. The original structure was a single room deep, running alongside the street, to which

another room was added behind giving the building two roof ridges parallel to the street with a valley between them. The timbers of the building, now uncovered, show that they appear to be re-used, and are probably timbers from some other nearby demolished building.

Glance across the road at 8 and 10 Duke Street

All buildings on this side of the street were demolished in 1870. For further details of Charles Clements' alterations to Duke Street, see Journal 34, HAHG, 2021.

Continue to the corner and turn right into Hart Street

Hart Street

Hart Street runs from the crossroads to the river. In earlier times it was sometimes referred to as the High Street, which can be confusing as sometimes the Market Place was also called the High Street. Hart Street is probably the oldest street in Henley, originally leading to the west front of the church at one end, and to the Guild Hall and Market Cross at the other. The Guild Hall was situated just west of the line of Duke and Bell Street, and the Market Cross probably at the crossroads.

On both sides of the street are the larger burgage plots, which were strips of land the width of the houses on the street fronts, but extending back some way. These are where the more important men of the town, the burghers, had their dwellings and businesses, the land behind the houses being used as gardens, for stables, barns, yards, sheds or workshops. Many of the burgage plots are still there today, although some of them now built up, their shapes can still be seen on the 1878 Ordnance Survey map.

Continue along the south side or right hand side

Hart Street South side

Numbers 2–4 Hart Street, like many Henley houses, have been re-fronted. Above the white plastered wall, the tip of an old gable may be seen. It retains much of its timber framing inside, although much altered.

18 Hart Street dates to the 18th century and behind it was one of the larger malthouses with kiln, in use till the 1890s, then as a furniture workshop, now converted to dwellings. The impressive Georgian front range was the dwelling of the wealthy maltster, now offices.

10 Hart Street was for many years occupied by Barclays Bank. This was built to house Simonds Bank 1895-96 on the site of the *Vine* public house and saddlers.

22 Hart Street is now *Magoos Restaurant*, but until relatively recently it was called *The Rope Walk Café*. Until early in the 20th century the building was a ropewalk, consisting of a long room and a long garden where rope was spun and twisted. This was part of a larger plot that once included the neighbouring small house to the west, which was *The Union* public house. Both houses are on the site that was *The George Inn* before 1629. A medieval, timber-framed building, with a cusped window head on its first floor east side still survives upstairs on the east site; later blocked by the adjoining No. 24's west wall.

24 Hart Street dates to the 15th/16th century. This house was until the early 1980s a butcher's shop, and had been a butcher's premises since at least 1769. The house is timber-framed and has a jettied front, now partially underbuilt by the shop window.

40 Hart Street The rather tall house used to be called *The Tudor Tea Rooms*, now a restaurant, and has timbering on the front elevation, which is mock Tudor, probably of about 1920. However, it retains much of its circa 1600 timber framing, as well as a jettied front, now underbuilt. There is also a brick vaulted cellar. It once had a malthouse behind it, and may, in medieval times, have been the site of *The Kings Head*.

Hart Street south side

The Old Schoolroom, 19th century. This is located down the alleyway between the last house and Speaker's House.

Speaker's House mid c. 15th century. The two adjoining houses are slightly later in date. Records show that William Lenthall 1591–1662, Speaker of the Long Parliament, was born in a house near the church, and tradition has it that it was at the house now known as Speaker's House. However, this location may not be definitive. Educated at Thames School, he was M.P. for Woodstock in 1640. In 1642 when Charles I went to the House of Commons to arrest five MPs, Lenthall refused to point them out saying 'I have neither eyes to see, nor tongue to speak, but as the House directs me'. Retired in 1654, at the Restoration; though exempted from the

Act of Indemnity as a regicide, he was later pardoned. He died in 1662 at Burford Priory, his principal residence.



The building on the right was the Speaker's House.

Henley Royal Grammar School was established in 1604 in the Chantry House and moved to Speaker's House and the neighbouring two houses to the east in the 18th century, remaining there till the 1850s, when it moved to the Bell Inn at Northfield End, moving again in the 1930s to what is now the Henley College. The three houses have been divided and combined in different ways over time, as three, two or one property, partly as offices, partly residential.

The new Rectory of 1985 was built on part of the old rectory garden. It stands behind the old wall along the roadside. Excavations (1983) found a ditch about 6ft back from the wall and parallel to it, which may have been the original street edge.

Beyond the new Rectory is what used to be one of the earlier petrol stations, with pumps on the roadside. It is now used as a garage and office for the Rector. Before 1830 it was part of site of Bishop Longland's Almshouses founded in 1547. They were removed over the road and rebuilt in part of the churchyard in 1830 (see page 43). Longland's parents owned the corner site where the almshouses were built, and their land stretched down to the river.

At the same time that the almshouses were removed, the road was widened, using some of the almshouse land but also cutting into part of the

churchyard to the south of the church, leaving only the narrow raised pavement directly adjoining the side of the church on the south side.



The Longland Almshouses before they were moved in 1830
(drawing by J Buckler 1825–7).

Cross the road to the Church

The Church of St Mary The Virgin

St Mary's Church was already in existence in 1204 when King John made Aumericus de Harcourt rector for life. However it is probable that there was a church before that, since it would have been one of the first buildings in a new town. It was enlarged in the 14th and 15th centuries.

The church was, until the mid 19th century, in the See of Lincoln, but the advowson, or right to appoint the Rector, was at first held by the king. In 1244, Henry III gave the advowson to his brother the Earl of Cornwall (see p 18 Countess Garden), who was later to exchange it with the Bishop of Rochester for a benefice in Cornwall. It remained in the hands of the bishops of Rochester till 1852 when it was assigned to the Bishop of Oxford.

It seems likely that the oldest part of the church is the north aisle, to be seen in the drawing of about 1840 as the gable roofed building with a dormer

window. The crenellated building jutting out on the left is the Chantry Chapel of St Leonard.



The Church of St Mary the Virgin – a view from the north, based on a drawing of c 1840.

Chantry Chapels were often constructed in the 15th century so that the priests serving in them might pray for the souls of the dead, and especially for the soul of the Founder, his family and ancestors. All chantries were closed in 1547 in the reign of Edward VI.

The Chapel of St Leonard, on the north side of the north aisle and the only remaining chantry chapel, was built by John Elmes of Bolney Court, who died in 1460. It may be seen on the left in the drawing of 1840, and to the right in the drawing of the Chantry House (see p 44). Other chapels were dedicated to St Anne, which was on the bridge (see p 27), St Katharine, St Clement and St Nicholas. There was also the Lady Chapel and the Jesus Chapel.

The tower was thought to have been built in the 16th century, a gift of John Longland, Bishop of Lincoln 1521–1547, who was born in Henley; however this may not be correct. It may be that it was built some time before that as a bell tower. There are several mentions of bells in the 15th century. It is possible that the tower was rebuilt and refaced in the 16th century. The present bells were cast in 1813. The clock face shown in the 1840 drawing would be the one which was inscribed 'Henley clock I be, Lawrence of Thame made me, 1733.' This clock was replaced in 1877.

The Church and Churchyard



Monument to Lady Elizabeth Periam in St Mary's Church.

In the north aisle there is a fine memorial to Lady Perriam, the half sister of Sir Francis Bacon, who was married three times, to Robert D'Oyly, Henry Neville and William Perriam, respectively.

She was a benefactress to the town. Amongst other works, she founded a school for twenty poor boys, a foundation incorporated with Henley Grammar School in 1791. She also endowed two scholarships at Balliol College, Oxford.

Walk into the churchyard and look to the right behind the Church

The Chantry House

The Chantry House only received its name when the church bought it in 1922 to use as a vestry and church rooms. The name is derived from a mention in a deed of 1553 that four priests were lodged in a house in the churchyard. However the building is not in the churchyard but very definitely part of a riverside property. The priests are not described as chantry priests, and may have also been schoolmasters besides serving the church. The building dates from 1461 (tree ring dated in 2020 by the Oxford Dendro Laboratory); it is located to the east side of the churchyard, and does have a magnificent, wide doorway with Tudor arched head and carved spandrels, looking towards the town.

This entrance would have originally been accessed from the lane called Church Avenue, which ran from New Street to Hart Street, serving as an access away from the riverside, its busy wharfs and the occasional flooding (there was no roadway by the river until the 18th century bridge was built). The lane still comes out in New Street at the former Brakspears' Brewery buildings, but is now blocked at the south end by an extension built between the church and Chantry House.

From the churchyard, the Chantry House appears to be only two storeys high, but from the Red Lion yard (Riverside north) it shows its full three

storeys. It was said in 1922 that it was built as a house for the priests who administered the various chantry chapels in the church and surrounding district, but this seems very unlikely as it is an improbably large building for that purpose, and moreover chantry priests were of the lowest rank in church affairs, most unlikely to have a building of this quality and in this most prominent and busy riverside location erected for them.

Documents found in the Town Hall have shown that the property, which then consisted of a house, yard (now part of *The Red Lion*) and a storehouse or granary along the Riverside front were sold in 1444 by the then recently appointed Rector, Sir John Say, to two merchants John Elmes and John Devene. There is no suggestion that any chantry priests were in occupation or had been there. The building with its yard and granary was essentially a commercial building, dating to 1461, and it is probable that the wording of the deed suggests that it was not a sale by the church but a private transaction by the Rector.



Left: The Chantry House, with two storeys seen from the churchyard.
Below: three storeys seen from the riverside.



In 1553, when the whole property was sold by the Devenes, the house was called the Schoolroom, and the granary was termed the Storehouse, names which remained in use until 1922.

The Schoolhouse, Storehouse and yard were given to the Warden of the Town in 1578. Then, in 1604, on the establishment of the Grammar School by Royal Charter of James 1, the school was to occupy the upper part of the Schoolhouse, ownership was transferred to the Governors of the Grammar School, and remained with them until sold to *The Red Lion* in 1846. Before this, in 1609, Lady Periam's School occupied the lower or middle floor. Both schools moved out to Speaker's House at the end of the 18th century. The building, but not its yard, were bought back by subscription as a memorial to Canon John Maud, and the two upper floors since 1922 have been used as church rooms. The ground floor is let to *The Red Lion*.

Almshouses on the east and west of the churchyard

To the north of the Chantry House there is a row of brick almshouses, ten of which were given by Humphrey Newberry in 1664, and four by Mrs Ann Messenger in 1669. All were rebuilt in 1846.

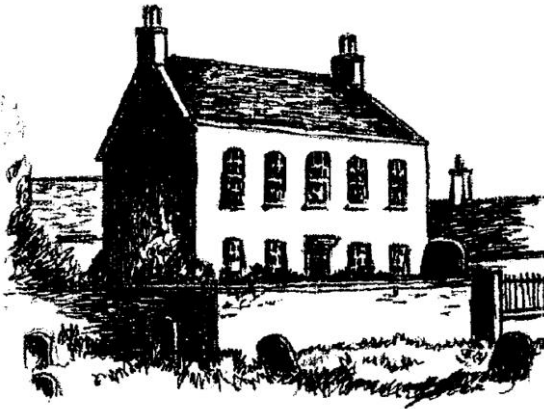


Two panels on the almshouses north of the Chantry House acknowledge the endowment of Humprey Newberry (left) and Ann Messenger (right).

On the west side of the churchyard there is the white stuccoed row of Bishop Longland's Almshouses left to the town in 1547, moved from across the road and built here in 1830 (see p 40), when two houses next to the church were demolished to make way for the almshouses.

In 1827 the Grammar School's master's house stood in the north east corner of the churchyard alongside the lane past the Newberry and Messenger Almshouses.

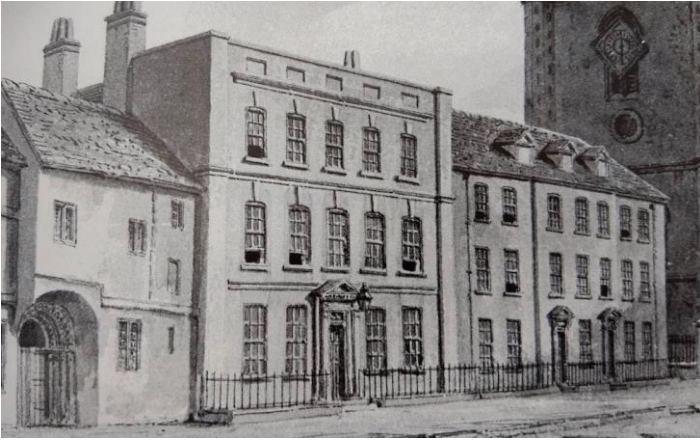
It was possibly demolished soon after 1830 – no trace of it remains. This may have been on the site of a house used by the four priests in 1553 (p 44), which would have placed them in the churchyard. The eastern almshouses may be seen behind on the right in the drawing.



The Schoolmaster's House 1827 (since demolished), from a drawing by J Buckler.

Hart Street north side

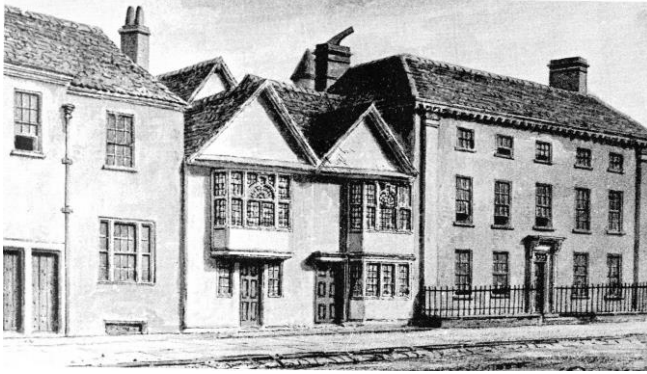
Leave the Churchyard and turn right, Longlands House circa 1720, is said to be the site of Bishop Longland of Lincoln's birthplace. All that is known is that his parents lived 'in a house near the river', so this site seems improbable. It is more likely that they lived at the property where Bishop Longland in 1547 had his almshouses built, on the corner of Hart Street south and Riverside south (see above). Graffiti of the dates 1768 and 1769 are scratched on bricks just to the left of the front door beneath a window.



Longland's (centre) is unaltered. The Romanesque doorway, shown here on the left, was moved to Fawley Court. It and the houses on the right were removed c 1830. Drawing by J Buckler 1825–7).

The Romanesque arched doorway may have been a remnant of one of the chapels, possibly that of St Clement or St Nicholas; or possibly the entrance to an early town house for a wealthy merchant, or it may even have been the original west door of the oldest part of the church, which is now the chancel of the north aisle, before the nave was built and the church enlarged. Whatever its origin it was removed from here in about 1830 and transferred to Fawley Court where it was used as the entrance doorway to the Dairy, disguising it as a chapel.

Blandy House is a white, stuccoed building, described in 1853 as 'newly erected' on site of a house that was the scene of parricide in 1752. The former house on this site was the home of Francis Blandy, Attorney at Law and Town Clerk, poisoned by his daughter Mary, by the use of supposed 'love philtres' supplied by Captain W H Cranstoun who wanted to marry Mary and believed her father to be wealthy. The fact that he was already married he disregarded and the 'love philtres' were pure arsenic. Blandy died in August 1751, Mary Blandy was tried at Oxford in February 1752, and was hanged at Oxford in April 1752, protesting her innocence. She was later buried beside her parents in St Mary's Church. Cranstoun fled abroad and was never brought to justice.



Blandy House (centre) as it looked in 1827, before it was rebuilt.

The Old White Hart is early 15th century behind a mock Tudor front, mentioned 1428, closed 1996, now a restaurant called *Zizzi*. The rear yard accommodation ranges were dendro-dated to 1530/31, but the front part with the remnants of a crown post roof and the chalk block vaulted cellar may date to the 13th or early 14th century.

In spite of the fact that this was the oldest inn still trading in Henley, Brakspears' closed it at the beginning of December 1996. It had then been in business since at least 1428/9, when a Court Roll mentioned Le Herte.



Entrance passage to the yard erected in 1530, which provided first floor accommodation for Tudor travellers. (remains of chambers still exist). Their steeds were stabled below at ground floor level.

It is possible that it started as an inn during the reign of Richard II (1377–99) whose badge was the White Hart. Richard was a benefactor to the town; in 1385–88 he allowed Thomas Clobbere, Warden of Henley, to use

the rents from 115 messuages (or houses) in Henley to provide for a Chaplain at the Chapel of St Katharine, and for the repair of Henley bridge.



The white hart, personal badge of Richard II.

This was the beginning of the Bridge Rents in the town; the *White Hart* being a property paying Bridge Rent (see page 20). After the Peasants' Revolt, Richard II made a circuit round London attending trials. He is known to have travelled from High Wycombe to Reading and may well have come through and stopped in Henley.

In the 18th century, and until the coming of the railways, *The White Hart* was the main public coaching inn. As many as fifteen coaches stopped there day and night, mainly 'en route' from London to the west country, Wales and Holyhead.

It was the only inn in Henley to have the remains of a galleried yard. The jettied gallery, though now partly lost on the west side, can clearly be seen looking into the back from the wide, timber framed carriage entrance.

The Catherine Wheel was mentioned in 1499 but may originate earlier. Another very old inn, mentioned in a will of 1499, it may date back to the beginning of the Bridge Rents, since it is named after St Catharine, patron saint of weavers, whose chapel in the church was to benefit from the Bridge Rents. In 1499, the owner of the pub, who was also a weaver, left money to the chapel.

In 1564 a Bridge Rent of 6s 8d was being paid from an inn called Le Katharin Whele. In 1612 this rent was assigned to the poor of Wokingham, and was called the Wolleys Charity or later the Nosegay Charity.

Although now extending over about five house plots, it started as a small single house. In the 1665 Hearth Tax returns the then landlord had only two hearths. Later a second house was acquired as the Bridge Rents went up to 13s 4d. It was not till 1928 that the inn extended eastwards to its present size.

The Catherine Wheel was a public coaching inn but not as busy as the White Hart. The original yard gateway has been partly filled and is now the principal entrance to the inn. Several panels informing the visitors of the history of the inn, compiled by members of HAHG, can be seen on the right of the wall of the entrance passage.

This is the end of the Henley Walk finishing at the crossroads.

In conclusion, a note on research

There are many documents, wills, deeds, mortgages and other papers concerning properties in Henley.

In most cases they refer to the street in which the properties are situated, but not the actual site, sometimes the owners of adjoining properties are mentioned, and from these clues it is hoped to establish past ownerships and use of properties. Public houses are often named, but this can be misleading, as they tended to change their names or sometimes their location.

Members of the Henley Archaeological & Historical Group are continuing their researches, publishing their results in the Journal and updating this guide as new facts emerge. They welcome new members and also information about the town. If anyone has documents relating to properties in Henley and surrounding district, the Group would be extremely grateful if they might examine them.

The Group has the use of an archive room at the back of the Town Hall, in which various records and books are kept. Admission to the records is by arrangement with the Group.

The interests of the Group extend to the parishes of Rotherfield Greys, Harpsden, Shiplake, Bix, Stonor and Pishill, Fawley, Turville, Hambleden and Remenham.

On the Group website: <https://hahg.org.uk> you will find census records, many 17th and 18th century wills and inventories, records of buildings, census returns, articles, newsletters and journals, events and details of monthly lectures.

* Dendrochronology or dendro dating is the science of dating timbers by taking small, drilled core samples from a building. The timber samples must have at least 50-70 years growth, ideally more, from heartwood to

sapwood, ideally with bark edge. Comparing the pattern of the growth rings (narrow for dry years, wide for wet ones) with already known examples of a reference site chronology of overlapping ring patterns from successively older samples can establish the exact felling date.

