

Henley's Major Inns in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries

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SUMMARY

Recent work on Henley probate documents has revealed more about the town's inns in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. This study examines the four main inns, in particular the wealth and social standing of the families who ran them, their likely clientele, and how the businesses passed through the generations. Comparisons are made with Burford and Chipping Norton, where there are similar projects to transcribe the probate documents. Lastly, the article combines the evidence from maps, building studies, and inventories to reconstruct the layout of the inns, and assesses whether they expanded during this period.

Henley had been an inland port since the Middle Ages, and by the seventeenth century its merchants and bargemen were taking local produce, principally grain, malt and wood, down the Thames to London and bringing back wine, coal and other goods.¹ To cater for all its traders and travellers, Henley had a substantial number of hostelries supplying a mixture of food, drink, and lodging. They ranged from large well-appointed inns that catered for the gentry and rich merchants, to smaller inns looking after lesser travellers; and from drinking establishments such as taverns, providing wine and often food for the well-heeled, right down to alehouses catering for the lower orders.² Ann Cottingham's account of these hostelries provides evidence of thirty-five or more such places in Henley in the seventeenth century.³ The distinction in the records between the three types of establishment is not always clear, however, and it is likely that more alehouses existed than are in the surviving records, since no licensing lists survive for this period.

A hitherto largely untapped source of information about Henley hostelries is the probate records. A project to transcribe these documents is now over two-thirds completed.⁴ This project has uncovered new detail about Henley's inns, and especially about its four largest. Probate documents survive for over 880 people whose estates were proved between 1570 and 1730.⁵ About fifty of these estates belonged to individuals whose occupations were related to the hostelry trade, such as innholders, vintners, brewers, and victuallers, while some others described as gentlemen and widows were clearly also involved in the trade. Out of these fifty, sixteen inventories clearly refer to inns. Eleven separate hostelries are described, seven of which can be identified: the Bell, the Catherine Wheel, the Red Lion, the Plough, the Bear, the White Horse by the bridge, and the White Horse on the Fair Mile.

This article looks in detail at the large, high-status inns in Henley – the Bell, the Catherine Wheel, the Red Lion, and the White Hart – and uses the evidence from the wills, inventories, hearth taxes, and parish registers to reconstruct the families that ran them. Inventories, maps, plans, and building studies are used to analyse the development of these inns in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This was a significant and transitional point in their development,

¹ S. Townley, *Henley-on-Thames: Town, Trade and River* (Chichester, 2009), chapters 3 and 5; *VCH Oxon.* 16, pp. 78–88.

² For a discussion of different types of hostelries, see P. Clarke, *The English Alehouse* (London, 1983), chapter 1.

³ A. Cottingham, *The Hostelries of Henley* (Shiplake, 2000). This estimate is calculated from the diagrams in the end plates.

⁴ This project has been undertaken for the Oxfordshire VCH, with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

⁵ Three hundred or more of these documents are in the National Archives, the rest in the OHC.

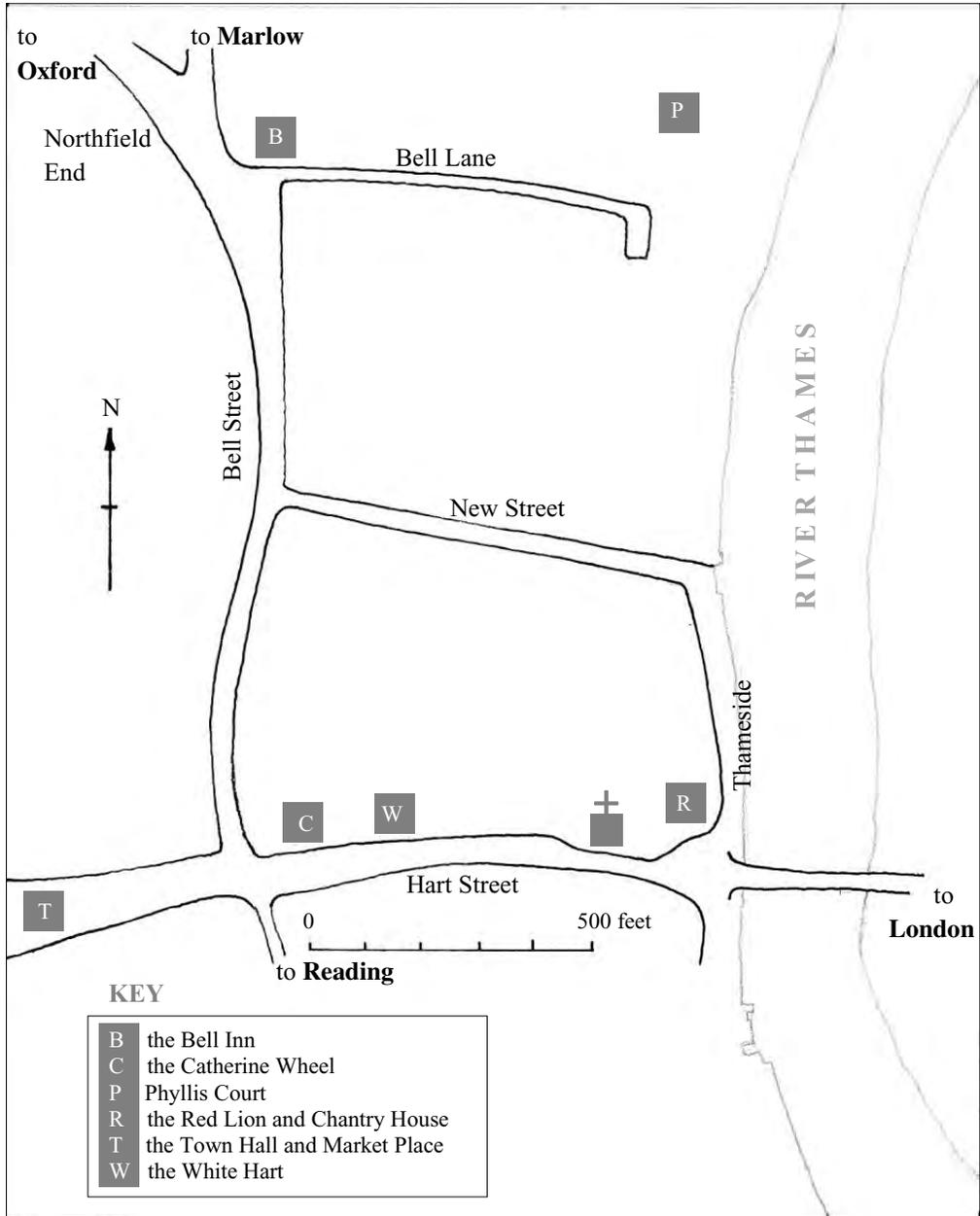


Fig. 1. A simplified plan of Henley, showing the location of its inns.

which coincided with the beginnings of commercial coaching. Coaching started very early in Henley (by the 1660s) and grew slowly until the mid eighteenth century. Thereafter two trends had an enormous impact on inns generally: the development of an extensive, timetabled, stage-coach network, and the growth of a larger number of people with time and money for leisure activities. To cater for these changes inns expanded their stabling, added assembly rooms, and turned ground-floor areas into coffee rooms. This study looks at the Henley inns before these mid to later eighteenth-century changes took place.

HENLEY'S FOUR MAJOR INNS

The four large, high-status inns in Henley in the seventeenth century are shown in Fig. 1.⁶ The Bell was on the corner of Bell Lane and Northfield End and belonged to an estate owned by the resident Whitlocke family of Phyllis Court. It was on the main road from Oxford to London, and also on the main Reading to Marlow route. At the other end of the town, the Red Lion was on the corner of the High (now Hart) Street and Thameside, overlooking the bridge over the Thames. It was also well placed to serve travellers from London, both by road and by river. Between these two inns lay the Catherine Wheel and the White Hart, both in the High Street, the town's main street, near the market place. The Catherine Wheel and the Red Lion are still used as hotels today.

Until now, relatively little has been known about these inns as they were at that time. The innholders of the Red Lion in the later seventeenth century have been identified as the Worley and Stevenson families. Its rear wing is thought to be the earliest part, probably late fifteenth century in date. The Catherine Wheel was recorded from 1499 and probably extended during the seventeenth century (when the amount of bridge rent it paid to the town's corporation was doubled). Richard Stevens was the innholder of the Bell at the turn of the eighteenth century. The cellar of the White Hart (recorded from 1428–9) dates possibly to c.1300, and its lodging ranges were re-built in 1530–1. A few possible names of innholders have been put forward, based on isolated documentary and other evidence such as mid seventeenth-century trade tokens.

Thanks to the project to transcribe the probate documents of Henley, much more is now known about these inns. Using wills and inventories alongside hearth tax records and parish registers it is possible to identify particular innholders, to work out family links, and, from these, the previous and later holders (see Table 1). It is now possible to identify the seventeenth-century innholders of three of the inns: the Goodwin and Stevens families ran the Bell, the Rance and Boler families the Catherine Wheel, and the Worley and Stevenson families the Red Lion. Unfortunately, the same degree of information has not emerged about the White Hart: the Springall family owned, but probably did not run, the inn, and the innholder in the 1660s was almost certainly Richard Ellians. The story of these families provides a good example of how inns were passed down the generations, often not to the eldest son, and almost always to the widow if the children were young. It shows the role of women in running such large businesses and the importance of marriage in the process.

The hearth tax shows that the inns were substantial properties. There can be problems in interpreting this record, but it serves as a rough indicator of the size of properties lived in by the people named in the lists. Over 90 per cent Henley's inhabitants lived in properties of between one and six hearths. But there were five men with very large properties of over twelve hearths each. One was Sir Bulstrode Whitlocke of Phyllis Court. The other four were innholders: Abraham Goodwin at the Bell had fifteen hearths; Henry Boler at the Catherine Wheel had seventeen; Nathaniel Worley at the Red Lion had thirteen; and, by elimination, Richard Ellians at the White Hart had eighteen. No other properties in Henley approached this size.⁷ The next largest four

⁶ *VCH Oxon.* 16, pp. 86–7.

⁷ Hearth taxes were meant to be levied on occupants, rather than owners. In some cases this did not happen, and the data can show the hearths owned by one person across several properties. The assumption made here is that the tax

Table 1. Hearth tax and probate evidence for the four inns

Inn	Families	Hearths in the Hearth tax 1662 (1665)	Inventory Date:	The number of rooms (and rooms with beds in): [see note]	Inventory values in total, and (excluding money, clothes and debts)
The Bell	Goodwin and Stevens	Missing (15)	1665/6 1701/2	23 (8+) 25 (21)	£1,478 (£1,027) £794 (£719)
The Catherine Wheel	Rance and Boler	17 (17, not inhabited)	1642 1665/6 1671	10 (4) 18 (10) 17 (9)	£107 (£79) £223 (£203) £127 (£117)
The Red Lion	Worley and Stevenson	13 (13)	1679	19 (15)	£517 (£399)
The White Hart	Richard Ellians? Springall (the owners)	18 (18)	None found		

Note: the room count excludes outbuildings such as granaries and malhouses, but includes cellars. The 1665/6 inventory of the Bell provides little detail of room furnishings.

had eight to ten hearths, and at least one of these was a smaller inn.⁸ Five further innholders can be identified in the Henley hearth tax lists. They all ran much smaller inns, with four to eight hearths. In other words, the major inns were not only substantial properties in comparison with other houses in the town, but they were also far larger than other inns.⁹

This was a common feature of other small market towns at this time, including Burford and Chipping Norton. In these towns too the vast majority of people (again over 90 per cent) lived in properties of between one and six hearths. In Burford three men lived in properties with over twelve hearths, all of which can be shown to have been inns, while at Chipping Norton only one person, again an innholder, lived in such a large property.¹⁰ Other inns in these towns were likewise smaller.

The evidence from the Henley probate documents reinforces the conclusion drawn from the hearth tax that the four high-status inns were the largest properties in the town. Of the sixteen surviving inventories that mention the hostelry trade, six are for three of these inns: the Bell had two inventories, the Catherine Wheel three, and the Red Lion one.¹¹ Unfortunately no inventories have been found for the White Hart. This study looks in detail, though not exclusively, at the inventories for three of the innholders, the same ones listed above for the hearth tax: Abraham Goodwin at the Bell, Henry Boler at the Catherine Wheel, and Nathaniel Worley at the Red Lion.

The inventories described the inns in some detail. All itemised the rooms, and in all but one case gave considerable detail about the furnishings. The Bell was clearly the largest, with twenty-three rooms in 1666; the other inns were about two-thirds of its size. The Catherine Wheel had

data for the Henley innholders is for one property (their inn). The 1662 hearth tax is on microfiche in the OHC; the 1665 hearth tax is from M. Weinstock (ed.), *Hearth Tax Returns for Oxfordshire 1665*, ORS, 21 (1940), pp. 6–11, 43.

⁸ Thomas Gorroway had eight hearths, and his inventory shows he was an innholder: OHS, MS Wills Oxon. 166/2/3 (1668).

⁹ The five innholders that can be identified in the hearth taxes are Ralph Burnham (four hearths in 1662), Robert Freeman (eight and then six hearths in 1662 and 1665), Thomas Lay (seven hearths in 1662), John Gosswell (seven hearths in 1665), and Thomas Gorroway (eight hearths in 1665).

¹⁰ The Burford inns were the Bear, the Bull, and the George. The Chipping Norton inn was the White Hart.

¹¹ The Catherine Wheel: OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 172/4/48 (Edward Rance, 1643); TNA: PRO, PROB4/17414 (Henry Boler, 1666); OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 61/4/20 (Martha Springall, 1671). The Bell: TNA: PRO, PROB4/17605 (Abraham Goodwin, 1666); TNA: PRO, PROB4/22293 (Richard Stevens, 1702). The Red Lion: OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 88/3/12 (Nathaniel Worley, 1678).

eighteen rooms and the Red Lion had seventeen. This reverses the impression gained from the hearth tax that the Catherine Wheel was larger than the Bell and illustrates the problems of relying solely on such tax data. However, it is clear from the probate evidence that wealthy non-innholders in the town lived in much smaller properties. One example was John Collins (d. 1669), a maltster who left assets worth over £305 (more than Henry Boler). Collins lived in a five-roomed house and had three hearths.¹²

The inventory values also give some indication of the size of the businesses that the innholders ran. If the innholders' personal effects (clothes, money they were owed, and ready money) are excluded then clearly the Bell, worth over £1,000, was a far more substantial business than the others; the next largest, the Red Lion, was worth £399. Where several inventories survive they can also record how the inns changed over time. Two of the three inventories for the Catherine Wheel show how that it expanded from ten to eighteen rooms between 1642 and 1665/6.

THE INNOLDERS' ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE, WEALTH, AND SOCIAL STANDING

Before looking at the inns themselves, it is important to assess the economic importance, wealth, and social standing of the innholders. Clearly the people running such large establishments would be important to the local economy. For a start, they would be major employers in the town, though it is impossible to know exactly how many people were employed by them. Only occasionally is there a glimpse of the employees: Roger Shard was named as the 'chief ostler' in the White Hart in a will of 1620, which implies that there were a number of ostlers working at the inn.¹³ George Harrison, a later innholder of the Red Lion, bequeathed a guinea each to his ostler and cook in 1729.¹⁴

The major innholders must have been important buyers of local goods and services, such as foodstuffs, fuel, and fodder. It is rare to find food mentioned, but Henry Boler had almost £20-worth of firewood in his yard, while Abraham Goodwin and Nathaniel Worley had hay worth £104 and £80 respectively (very large sums). They brewed their own beer and ale from locally grown barley and hops: the Bell had a brewhouse and the Catherine Wheel a malthouse. They also bought malt from the local maltsters: for example, Christopher Worley, a later innholder of the Red Lion, owed Henley maltster Richard Sanders £13.¹⁵ Occasionally the impact of the inns on local shops can be seen: Frances Wickens ran a small mercers shop and when she died in 1696 several innholders owed her money for items purchased.¹⁶ They would also buy substantial goods from outside the town, principally wine and tobacco: Nathaniel Worley had wine worth £42, and Henry Boler had £29-worth of tobacco. They all had substantial amounts of linen: sheets, tablecloths and so on, most probably imported into the town.

The innholders were among the town's élite, but it is difficult to assess their wealth precisely. The best proxy measure is the size of the inventories made after they died. But the inventories only measured 'moveable goods' and often omitted assets such as land and property, and debts, either owed to them or that they owed to others. Occasionally an executor's account also survives, in which such debts may be itemised. Only one account for the major innholders survives, for Nathaniel Worley, and it shows that his assets comfortably exceeded his debts. If no inventory survives, then the total of monetary bequests in their wills is an indicator of how much wealth they thought they had. Both these measures are best thought of as measures of the minimum size of the estates.

¹² TNA: PRO, PROB4/20402.

¹³ OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 300/1/23 (Daniel Smith, 1620).

¹⁴ TNA: PRO, PROB11/632 (George Harrison, 1729).

¹⁵ For evidence of hop growing see the inventory of John Collin of Henley, gent.: TNA: PRO, PROB4/20402 (1669). For Christopher Worley's debt see PROB5/4335 (Richard Sanders, 1687).

¹⁶ *Ibid.* PROB5/3800 (Frances Wickens, 1696).

Table 2. The innholders' wealth

Name (burial date)	Inn	Inventory value	Debts	Net value	Owner of the freehold of the inn	Property mentioned in the will
Abraham Goodwin (1665)	Bell	£1,478	No surviving account	–	Phyllis Court estate: the Whitelocke family	No details given in his will
Henry Boler (1665)	Catherine Wheel	£223	No surviving account	–	Not known	Two houses in Henley
Nathaniel Worley (1678/9)	Red Lion	£517	£207	£309	Rent paid to Sir Jonas Moore and Mrs Dorthwaies	Died intestate
Richard Ellians? (not found)	White Hart	–	–	–	Francis Springall	–

Table 2 looks at the evidence of their wealth. Abraham Goodwin was by far the wealthiest, with an inventory worth over £1,478. But there is no evidence of his outstanding debts, and almost a third of his wealth was possibly accounted for by uncollected money, owed to his brother Ellis and bequeathed to him.¹⁷ Nonetheless, he was clearly a wealthy man, owning moveable wealth far in excess of the other innholders. Table 2 also includes other information. Often testators gave details about their landholdings in their wills: Henry Boler was the only one to do so here. He owned or leased two other houses in Henley. And lastly, it is clear that two of the innholders did not own the freehold of their inns. The Bell belonged to the Phyllis Court estate, and the White Hart was owned by the Springalls. Possibly Henry Boler owned the Catherine Wheel, but he had to pay small bridge rents (effectively quitrents) to the town corporation. This could imply that it was originally town property which the town had in effect granted as freehold, but alternatively it may be due to a charitable bequest involving the inn.¹⁸ The account for Nathaniel Worley showed that he owed rents to Sir Jonas Moore and to Mrs Dorthwaies. This may have related to the inn itself, or to other leased properties.

Table 3. Estimating wealth in Henley in the 1660s and 1670s

The number of people with:	In the 1660s	The major innholders (other innholders)	In the 1670s	The major innholders (other innholders)	Totals
probate documents	88		62		150
and who have inventories	52		40		92
Their level of 'wealth'					
£1–£50	21	(Thomas Gorroway, Thomas Lay)	21		42
£50–£100	9		9	(James Farmer, Robert Freeman)	18
£100–£250	8	Henry Boler, Martha Springall	4		12
£250–£500	7		3		10
£500– £1,000	5		2	Nathaniel Worley	7
Over £1,000	2	Abraham Goodwin	1		3
Totals	52		40		92

¹⁷ TNA: PRO, PROB11/317 (Ellis Goodwin, 1665).

¹⁸ Cottingham, *Hostelries of Henley*, p. 94.

Nonetheless, all three innholders were very well-off in comparison with most other people in the town. Table 3 shows the distribution of wealth in Henley in the 1660s and 1670s, as measured by inventory values. Probate documents for 150 people survive for these two decades, out of which ninety-two individuals left inventories. Of these, forty-two people had estates worth under £50. Included in this category were two lesser innholders, Thomas Gorroway and Thomas Lay. In the next band, with estates worth between £50 and £100, were eighteen people, including two more small innholders, Robert Freeman and James Farmer (who ran the same inn at different times). So out of the total of ninety-two people, sixty had estates worth under £100. All three of the premier innholders were in the remaining top thirty-two, and two of them in the top ten. Abraham Goodwin, with assets worth £1,478, was one of a small élite of three: the other two were Thomas Parslow, who had possibly been a maltster and was worth £1,566 (mostly tied up in cash and loans), and Ralph Messenger, a maltster and timber merchant worth £1,454. But inventories do not survive for many people, and there were perhaps others who were equally wealthy. An example may be Robert Shard, a yeoman (possibly an innholder) who bequeathed over £1,550.¹⁹

Table 4. Assessing the social standing of the four innholders

Name	Inn	Probate documents: title and date	Burial register: title and date	Other sources	Burgess	Warden of Henley
Abraham Goodwin	Bell	Gentleman 1665/6	Mr; October 1665		Not listed	No
Henry Boler	Catherine Wheel	Gentleman 1665/6	Mr; August 1665		1654–death	1664–5
Nathaniel Worley	Red Lion	Innholder 1679	Mr; January 1678/9		Constable in 1657; bridgeman in 1678/9	No
Richard Ellians	?White Hart	–	–	Mr Ellan (borough minutes 1662)	1657–63; not listed after then	No

The influence of the top innkeepers extended beyond their wealth and businesses. Table 4 looks at other aspects of their lives. Abraham Goodwin and Henry Boler were both regarded as gentleman by their peers, and always designated ‘Mr’ in the documents, a sign of status in the town. Nathaniel Worley was designated as an ‘innholder’ in his probate documents, though called ‘Mr’ in the parish burial register. Richard Ellians’s will and burial have not been found. Three of them served as burgesses: Henry Boler, Richard Ellians (or Ellans), and Nathaniel Worley. Henry Boler became warden, the leader of the town’s corporation, from 1664 until his death. Innholders often did become burgesses of their towns: John Collier, innholder of the George in Burford, was burgess and bailiff of the town.²⁰

Abraham Goodwin at the Bell lived outside the town boundary and so was not a member of the corporation, but this may not have restricted his and his family’s influence: his uncle by marriage, John Hunt, was warden in 1628–9, and a relative on his mother’s side, possibly another uncle, Robert Heybourne, was warden from 1630–1. There are instances in the borough records of the innholders supplying goods for the church: for example, Henry Boler and Richard Ellians both supplied communion wine, Boler until his death in the plague outbreak of 1665, and Nathaniel

¹⁹ OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 166/2/3 (Thomas Gorroway, 1668); 41/4/25 (Thomas Lay (or Lea), 1664); 23/2/14 (Robert Freeman, 1671); 165/2/17 (James Farmer, 1672); TNA: PRO, PROB4/10920 (Thomas Parslow, 1679); PROB4/11040 (Ralph Messenger, 1668); PROB11/313 (Robert Shard, 1664).

²⁰ R. Moody, *The Inns of Burford*, 2 vols. (Burford, 1996–7), vol. 1, p. 11.

Worley occasionally from 1662. Henry Boler was one of several men who held money on behalf of the town: in 1646, he held part of the ‘poor stock’ which was due to be paid in Easter 1647.²¹

There is no evidence in these innholders’ wills and inventories that they had additional occupations, and that innholding was a ‘sideline’. None appeared to be investing heavily in the malting or timber trades, nor acting as bargemasters, nor running retail businesses such as mercers’ shops.²² This was not the case in Burford or Chipping Norton, where there is evidence that some of the main innholders had other occupations. One example is Richard Veysey, the innholder of the George in Burford, who had substantial farming interests, with over 127 acres of standing crops in his inventory.²³ Another is Thomas Carrick, a mercer in Chipping Norton, who may also have been an innholder as he left ‘my house or tenement wherin I now dwell sometime called the crown’ to his wife.²⁴ The implication is that there was not enough business to fully occupy the innholders in these towns. Henley appears to have been a much busier place, and its élite innholders (as in many towns) were important both economically and socially.

BECOMING AN INNHOLDER

How did these men become innholders, especially when theirs were such important businesses in the town?

The Bell

Abraham Goodwin came from a well-off Henley family. His father Richard was an innholder, and it is highly likely that he ran the Bell as well. Richard’s own father William bequeathed over £200 to his children, but left the residue of his estate to Richard and his son-in-law John Hunt. Richard was the third son, reflecting a common trend in Henley, where most often it was not the eldest son who inherited the family concern. More often the eldest son would be apprenticed to a trade in London, while the second or later son inherited the local business. Richard Goodwin died in 1641, and it was probably his widow Joan who was the ‘woman’ mentioned in a letter to their landlord, Bulstrode Whitelocke, by his bailiff. Part of the Bell had been damaged by a fire which began in its alehouse, probably caused by Parliamentary troops who were quartered there, and she had lost a great deal of her household stuff.²⁵

Richard bequeathed over £310 to his six sons, but left the residue of the estate, including presumably the Bell, to his widow Joan. This reflected a contemporary practice in Henley and elsewhere of men bequeathing the residue of their estate, especially one involving a business, to their wives, with or without conditions if they remarried. Again Abraham was the third son. It may be that he came to an agreement with his older brother Ellis: an agreement between them concerning their mother’s maintenance is mentioned in Abraham’s will. Abraham died in the plague, and left virtually all his estate to his widow, another Joan.

The next known innholder of the Bell was Richard Stevens (d. 1701/2). He married Ann Goodwin, who was probably Abraham’s youngest daughter Ann, born in 1661 just before his death. It is unclear what happened to Abraham’s seven other children, except for Milbourne Goodwin, who became a London clothworker.²⁶ It is not known whether Richard Stevens bought the inn, or if he married the heiress. Again, Richard Stevens left his estate to his wife. No evidence has come

²¹ OHC, BOR/A/V/BM/6 (October 1646, August 1657, and September 1662).

²² The Catherine Wheel had a malthouse, but this only contained a bedstead, tubs, and lumber. There was no indication of malting activity.

²³ OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 68/4/4 (1667).

²⁴ *Ibid.* 10/5/35 (1590).

²⁵ R. Spalding, *The Improbable Puritan: A Life of Bulstrode Whitelocke 1605–1675* (London, 1975), pp. 99–100.

²⁶ TNA: PRO, PROB11/519 (Milbourne Goodwin, 1711).

to light about what happened to her, other than a mention in the burial register concerning the death of a child. The last innholder in the family was Richard's son Jonathan. He named one of his children Gislingham, after his new landlord Gislingham Cooper, who had bought the reversion of the Phyllis Court estate in 1724. Jonathan died in 1730, aged 33, and left his estate to be shared between his widow and his surviving children.²⁷ It is unclear what happened to the family after that.

The Catherine Wheel

Henry Boler obtained the Catherine Wheel through marriage to Joan, widow of Edward Rance, the previous innholder, sometime after May 1642. She was certainly in her late thirties by then, with five surviving children to provide for. So why did she remarry, whereas Joan Goodwin, widow of Richard, did not? Perhaps Joan Rance was less well off and needed support: Edward Rance left over £107-worth of assets, but his debts totalled £160. Widow Rance certainly needed to provide for her young children, who ranged in age from nine to sixteen years. Joan Goodwin's six sons were older than that when their father died, the eldest (William) being thirty-three years old, and possibly they were well set up with apprenticeships in London as well as their inheritances.

Henry Boler did indeed provide for his step-children, and provide for them well, as the slightly querulous tone of his will makes clear. He did not leave much money to any of them, and his comments on Edward Rance, the eldest son are typical: 'I now give to Edward Rance and his wife Dorothy but ten shillings apiece because I lately paid forty pounds for him at Maidenhead and am engaged for more and have also given him otherwise long before this time'. He also mentions that he had made an agreement to give to Henry Rance (the second son this time) 'the house that I now live in called by the name of the Catherine Wheel from and after the decease of me and my wife'.

Henry and Joan Boler both died of plague in 1665, leaving the inn empty (it was described as 'not inhabited' in the hearth tax). Some time later Henry Rance and his wife Martha took over the Catherine Wheel. But they did not have it for long: Henry died in 1666/7, leaving the inn to his wife during her lifetime. Martha remarried soon after, to Richard Springall, brother of the owner of the White Hart, but she died in 1671. The inn reverted to two nephews of Henry Rance, and it is not known what happened to it afterwards.

The Red Lion

The Red Lion was run by a widow for sixteen years at the end of the seventeenth century: Frances Worley was left in charge of the inn, and ten children, when her husband Nathaniel died in 1678/9. He made no will, but his assets were worth over £517, of which £207 was taken up paying his debts. The court allocated the residue of his moveable estate (£310) in the ratio of one-third to the widow, and two-thirds equally between the children, as the law specified.²⁸ Perhaps importantly for Frances, eight of her children were under age, and so the money they were due under the court settlement, £20 each, did not have to be paid out immediately. She did not have to remarry to preserve the business.

Her eldest son, Nathaniel, was a woollen draper in London, and it was the second son Christopher who inherited the inn from his mother. He may have been helping her run the Red Lion well before her death in 1705/6, but many of the surviving records mention 'Mrs Worley, innholder'. She is even described as such in the burial register, a rare occurrence, as most women at that time were described by their marital status. Christopher Worley was a burgess from 1686–7,

²⁷ The probate document references for the Bell are: TNA: PRO, PROB11/131 (William Goodinge, 1618); PROB11/189 (Richard Goodwin, 1642); PROB11/319 and PROB4/17605 (Abraham Goodwin, 1666); PROB11/317 (Ellis Goodwin, 1665); PROB11/464 and PROB4/22293 (Richard Stevens, 1702); PROB11/639 (Jonathan Stevens, 1730).

²⁸ See A.L. Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London 1993), p. 178.

and then warden of Henley for two years from 1704–6. He clearly became involved in town affairs for some time before his mother's death, and may have been more involved in running the inn than some of the evidence implies.²⁹

Christopher left the Red Lion to his youngest brother and sister, Thomas and Sarah Worley. He made his will, unusually, when he was 'in good health of body'. Sarah was unmarried and about forty-three years old when he died in 1709. The dates are unclear, but just before or after Christopher's death, she married Gregory Stevenson, presumably because of her recent (or impending) change of fortunes. Gregory went on to run the inn with Sarah and to become warden in 1715–16. Like Henry Boler, he also made an agreement, this time with his wife, to settle the Red Lion as well as other land on her at his death.³⁰ It must have been a happy marriage: Gregory referred to 'my dear and loving wife' several times and left his entire estate to her. He died in 1720/1. Sarah may have run the inn on her own for a while, but there is evidence that she leased it out to various people.

One of the lessees was George Harrison, who came from an innholding family. His father James Harrison was an innholder, and there is some evidence that both father and son may have ran the Catherine Wheel in the first years of the eighteenth century.³¹ Clearly though, George Harrison took on the Red Lion in the 1720s. His will mentions 'my messuage or tenement, inn, meadows, and appurtenances which I hold by lease from Sarah Stevenson'. It also included an interesting list of bequests to the town's élite, which is discussed below. Sarah died in January 1734/5, leaving the Red Lion to her nephew Nathaniel Worley. She died a rich woman, who made bequests of over £900 to relatives.³²

The White Hart

The story of the ownership of the White Hart is characterised, less typically, by the property passing to the eldest son. Adam Springall, who died in 1644, aged thirty-eight, left the White Hart to his eldest son Francis, then aged twelve. In 1660 Francis was described as a citizen of London.³³ He also died young (aged thirty-five) in 1667, probably intestate. His only son Thomas, who was four years old when his father died, certainly owned the inn in the last part of the seventeenth century, but sold it to Jonathan Sayer by 1711. There is no evidence that any of the Springall family ran the inn, nor that the Sayers did either. It is probable that they leased out the premises to a succession of innholders, and that none of the innholders died while they were still running the inn. This could explain why no inventories survive in the probate records.

Common Patterns

As might be expected, a common way of becoming an innholder was to inherit an inn from a parent, and Abraham Goodwin and Henry Rance illustrate this. But they were not the eldest sons: Abraham was the third and Henry the second son. It appears that in Henley it was important for families to establish a connection with London, and so the eldest sons (and often younger ones too) were apprenticed to London merchants and traders, such as woollen drapers (Nathaniel Worley junior), brewers (William Worley), and haberdashers (Francis Springall). The evidence from Burford and Chipping Norton may be similar: Robert Aston of the George in Burford had apprenticed at least two of his sons (the eldest and second eldest) to London fishmongers and

²⁹ OHC, BOR3/A/V/BM/6, f. 472; BOR3/A/V/BM/7, pp. 2, 45, 47, 49.

³⁰ Cottingham, *Hostelries of Henley*, p. 184.

³¹ *Ibid.* p. 95.

³² TNA: PRO, PROB11/669.

³³ OHC, BOR3/A/V/BM/6, f. 261v.

tallow chandlers respectively, but whether they became involved in running the inn has not been established.³⁴

As has been found in other studies, widows often inherited from their late husbands, Joan Goodwin and Martha Rance being examples. At some moments during the century, widows were running several of these inns: the Joans Goodwin and Rance in the 1640s, and Frances Worley and Ann Stevens in the 1700s. If a man died intestate, leaving children, the court would usually split the assets between the widow and her children: how much was left to the widow, and the ages of the children, may well have determined whether she had to remarry, or indeed whether she was an eligible prospect for a future husband. The evidence is less clear that widows ran the inns of Burford and Chipping Norton, though it was likewise very common for the innholders of these two towns to leave their estates to their wives. So for example, Richard Veysey, Robert Aston and William Gossen, all innholders of the George in Burford, left their assets to their wives, but it is yet to be established that the widows ran the inns.³⁵

Marrying a widow or the heiress was also a time-honoured way to obtain a business: Henry Boler married Joane Rance, with her five children, and Gregory Stevenson married the forty-three-year-old spinster Sarah Worley. In both cases, the men bequeathed the inns to their wives in their wills, and made provision for that well before they expected to die. Stevenson made a settlement on Sarah, and Boler made his will three years before his death. In Chipping Norton, Edward Harrison married the widow Elizabeth Jaquest who had been left the Swan by her husband Nicholas in 1688. In Burford, Thomas Kemett, the next known innholder of the George after William Gossen, married William's daughter Rebecca. All three of her brothers had been apprenticed to London livery companies, and her father had left his estate to her mother. Who actually ran the inn after William's death is unclear.³⁶

The purchase of a lease of an inn must have been a common way of becoming an innholder, but there is little evidence in the Henley records of this for any of the four inns. It is possible that Nathaniel Worley or Edward Rance became innholders by this route. In Burford, the Swan was given to the town in 1590, and the records survive to show who leased it in the seventeenth century: for example, in 1629, Richard Norgrove leased the inn for twenty-one years at a rent of £8 a year.³⁷

Also interesting is the length of time one family would run an inn. If female descendants are included, the Goodwin family ran the Bell for possibly 100 years, and the Worley family the Red Lion for much the same length of time. In Chipping Norton, the various members of the Jaquest family ran the Swan for about seventy-five years.

COMPARING THE FOUR INNS

In 1633, Archbishop Laud and his attendants stayed at the Bell on their way to Oxford. When Bulstrode Whitelocke invited him to transfer to his house, Laud replied that he 'was now settled in his lodging and would not remove'.³⁸ He had probably taken over most of the inn with his retinue, and may even have installed his own cooks in the kitchen. Richard Goodwin was probably the innholder in 1633, and may well have made the existing guests move out (or move in together)

³⁴ Robert Aston, 1698 (TNA: PRO, PROB11/447). For Nathaniel and William Worley see the parish register entries for September 1701 and November 1698; for Francis Springall see marriage allegations from Lambeth Palace Library for November 1662; for Robert Aston's sons see C. Webb (ed.), *London Livery Companies Apprenticeship Records*, Society of Genealogists, nos. 44 (fishmongers) and 39 (tallow chandlers).

³⁵ Richard Veysey, 1667 (OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 68/4/4); Robert Aston (as above); William Gossen, 1705 (TNA: PRO, PROB11/484).

³⁶ See William Gossen (as above), and Anne Gossen, 1723 (OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 130/1/12).

³⁷ Moody, *The Inns of Burford*, vol. 1, p. 33.

³⁸ R. Spalding (ed.), *The Diary of Bulstrode Whitelocke, 1605–75*, Records of Social and Economic History, ns 13 (1990), p. 70.

to accommodate this illustrious visitor. The Bell was clearly a very superior inn at that time, but no inventory has survived to illustrate this. It was still the best inn in Henley in 1665/6, and Table 5 summarises some of the comparative data.

Table 5. Comparing the inns in 1665/6 and 1679

Inn and inventory value (note 1)	No. of rooms (including cellars)			Service rooms	Outbuildings	No. of rooms with hearths	
	Total	Chambers	Other rooms, some with beds			1665 tax data	Rooms with heating equipment
The Bell £1,027 (note 2)	23	?11	two parlours, two new rooms, nursery, hostelry, garret	Kitchen, buttery, larder, two cellars	Brewhouse, washhouse, fruithouse, chicken loft, stables, granary, and barn	15	No details in the inventory
The Catherine Wheel £203	18	10	shovelboard room, the George, the Star, the Bull's Head, the Sun, and the Cross	Kitchen, cellar	Washhouse larder and dark room, malthouse, woodhouse, hayhouse	17	14
The Red Lion £399	19	10	lower parlour, shovelboard room, nursery, three garrets, ostler's room	kitchen [Implied: cellar]	Stables [Implied: storage for wood, hay, cows, and oats and beans]	13	12
The White Hart (not known)		22 (note 3)		Hall, kitchen (note 3)		18	

Notes

1: Inventory values exclude money, debts, and clothing.

2: The Bell inventory contains very little detail of room contents so some figures are uncertain.

3: Information taken from a building study discussed in the next section.

The inventories were made in February 1665/6, March 1665/6, and July 1679, close enough in time to make a meaningful comparison. But some caution must be taken: all three inventories were made well after the innholders died, seven months after in the case of Henry Boler, and so some doubt must be cast on their accuracy. Empty rooms were omitted, and sometimes also those with only low value 'lumber'.

The Bell was clearly the largest inn from the inventory evidence: it had twenty-three rooms in total, compared to the eighteen to nineteen rooms of the Catherine Wheel and the Red Lion. However, a building study of the White Hart suggests that it had twenty-two guest chambers, which implies it had many more rooms overall than the Bell. The buildings and the layout of the inns are discussed in detail in the next section, but it is clear from the inventory that the Bell had four floors: it had beer and wine cellars, parlours and some rooms with beds on the ground floor, chambers with names like the Oxford and the Bell on the first floor, and a garret chamber in the roof. At the Red Lion no cellars were mentioned, though some are shown in a sale plan of

1897. Including the implied cellars, it also occupied four floors: cellars; parlours with and without bedding on the ground floor; chambers with similar names, the Oxford (again) and the Star, on the first floor; and then three garrets in the roof. The Catherine Wheel similarly had chambers on the first floor, and rooms (presumably on the ground floor) containing only tables and seating. It too has a cellar for wine, but there is no mention of garrets.³⁹

Inventories also mentioned hearth equipment, which indicates that rooms had fireplaces in them. The Red Lion even burnt coal in its lower parlour: it is around this date that evidence of coal-burning is seen in other inventories of Henley. All the inns had a range of outbuildings including malthouses, washhouses and so on. Some were clearly for storage, such as the Bell's fruithouse, while others were for specialised activities, such as washing or making ale. The Bell also had a granary and a barn: the granary contained over £34-worth of beans and grain (for fodder), but the barn had only £1-worth of 'materials' in it, and clearly did not contain the inn's feedstuffs; it may have been for storing the goods of travelling merchants staying at the inn. All the inns must have had stables (see below).

Table 6. Comparison of the inns in 1665/6 and 1679 continued

Inn and inventory value (note 1)	No. of rooms		Values					
	Total	With a bed (or 2 beds)	With no beds	Of the best bedroom	Average Bedroom	Kitchen, including brass etc.	Linen	Wine and beer
The Bell £1,027 (note 2)	23	Possibly 16	Uncertain	£49	£19	£72	£232	£69
The Catherine Wheel £203	18	10 (1)	7	£12	£8	£18	£14	£20+ (note 3)
The Red Lion £399	19	15 (5)	1	£15	£10	£31	£65	£49
The White Hart (not known)	22+							

Notes

1: Inventory values exclude money, debts, and clothing.

2: The Bell inventory contains very little detail of room contents; some figures are uncertain.

3: The inventory is illegible where there may be details of the beer cellar.

Table 6 provides more evidence of the superiority of the Bell, shown not only in the higher value of its kitchen and brass ware, and its stock of bed and table linen, but also in the values of the furniture in each room. Its best rooms had high value furniture (worth £24 to £42) and were clearly equipped for wealthier customers. Other rooms' furniture was worth less – for example, a back chamber had bedding and old lumber in and was worth £9 – but even so it was worth significantly more than that in many of the rooms in the other two inns. But unfortunately the Bell inventory has few details about furnishings. It is therefore impossible to say in what way the furniture in the Bell was so much more valuable. There may have been more of it or, more likely, it was of higher quality.

³⁹ See the next section for the building references mentioned here.

The inventory of the Red Lion is much more detailed. Its rooms ranged in value from £15 down to £5, and nine of them had heating. The Starr chamber, worth £15, had the following items in it:

two feather beds and two bedsteads, two feather bolsters, four feather pillows, one quilt, one rug, blankets, curtains and valances [for the beds], two drawing curtains and curtain rods; one oval table, one sideboard, table, one court cupboard, a stand, one great chair, twelve turkey-work chairs, two low chairs, two cushions, two carpets [for the table and cupboards], and window curtains, a looking glass; a pair of brass andirons, iron dogs, fire shovel and tongs, and a pair of bellows.

Clearly four or more people could sleep in the room, and also could dine in and entertain others, given the large number of chairs and tables. This list of items is typical of the higher-value rooms. The items in the better chambers in the Catherine Wheel were very similar, though its rooms had only one bed in. The inns had other rooms with beds in besides those designated as chambers, rooms that nowadays would not be expected to contain bedding but which commonly did in the seventeenth century. The Bell had 'bedding' in the great parlour; the bedding noted in the buttery was probably for the servants to get out at night to sleep on.

All three inns had a stock of linen. The linen itemised in the Catherine Wheel gives a flavour: 'thirteen pair of fine and seven pair of coarse sheets, fourteen pillowcases, eight and a half dozen napkins [some diaper], fifteen table cloths, ten towels, and four cupboard cloths.' The value of this linen was only £14, far less than the stock of linen in the Red Lion (£65) and the Bell (£232). Perhaps some items had been removed while the inn was empty during the plague. But the bed- and table-linen in the Bell was probably far more extensive, and probably all of good quality, without any coarse sheets.

All the inns included some rooms without beds, and most of these appear to have been on the ground floor. They generally contained tables and seating of several sorts: chairs, benches, and stools. Their use is not apparent from the inventories. But the inns were businesses, and it is almost certain that they would welcome non-residents, to use a modern term. So it is likely that outsiders could both drink and dine in the inns, and possibly hire small rooms to undertake business deals. Bulstrode Whitelocke for example, records in his diary that he dined 'at the Bell inn' in August 1663 with his wife and several gentlemen. The Catherine Wheel had far more rooms without beds than the other inns, which implies that much of its trade came from people using its facilities in this way. None of the inns had tables and seating in their cellars, which indicates that these rooms were just used for storage and not as bars. Not did any of these inns have taphouses, such as are found in inns in Burford and Chipping Norton.⁴⁰

Both the Red Lion and the Catherine Wheel had 'shovelboard' rooms: clearly all sorts of gaming could take place in these premises. The Catherine Wheel's shovelboard room contained 'the long table, three little tables, six joined stools, five leather chairs, a desk, and a pair of andirons and tongs'. It also had a room called 'the Sun', with 'one block to cut tobacco on', and over £29-worth of different types of tobacco in another room (possibly a cellar, but the inventory is illegible here). Another inn in Henley, run by John Stevens, had an outdoor bowling green, and his regular customers left their bowls in his care.⁴¹

Travellers generally arrived at these inns on horseback or perhaps in private carriages or litters, and merchants or traders would also have had goods in waggons or on packhorses. Inns had to be capable of accommodating horses and providing safe-keeping for the travellers' goods. So stabling was expected. The Bell and the Red Lion (like the White Hart) had stables, with accommodation for their ostlers and large quantities of hay. But there is no mention of stables in the Catherine

⁴⁰ John Collier, 1635 (OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 12/4/27).

⁴¹ John Stevens, 1638 (ibid. 148/3/29).

Wheel in 1665/6. The earlier inventory, taken in 1642, mentions a little stable, and there was some hay at both dates. The stables may have been empty when the appraisers came round in 1665/6, or the inn may have used private stabling elsewhere in the town.

All the inns may have provided storage for travellers' goods, but there is no clear evidence of large storehouses in the inventories, and it may be that in an inland port like Henley there were many river side warehouses for traders to rent and to leave their goods locked up for the night. However, the Red Lion faced the river Thames, and it did lease an adjoining wharf and substantial granaries, haylofts, and stables from the grammar school trustees (see the following section). It was also the only inn that had many chambers with two beds in. This may indicate that much of its business came from traders who were bringing their wood, barley and other goods into the town and found the inn a very convenient place to stay before seeing their goods transferred to barges for the trip to London. The Bell also had a granary and a barn, which may have been used for customers' goods.

So what could a Restoration traveller have expected to find in the inn? In his chamber feather beds, with room for several people to sleep in (possibly including servants), feather bolster and pillows, curtains and a valance round the bed, window curtains, and tables and chairs. Perhaps he would have a looking glass, carpets on the tables, and the chair seats may have been covered in 'turkeywork', a carpet-like fabric. He would expect the sheets and pillow cases to be of good quality linen, not 'coarse', and perhaps even to be supplied with towels. He would expect to be able to dine in his room, or down in the public areas if he wished, and to entertain visitors in his room. And he would have expected his horses, and possibly his goods, to be taken care of.

Travelling was gradually becoming easier in the second half of the seventeenth century, with the growth of the stage-coach network. Henley's first recorded service was in 1668, and a thrice-weekly service ran to London by 1681.⁴² Inns were at the hub of this network since coaches began, ended, and made stops at them. The prospect of more business must have encouraged innholders to increase the size (and improve the suitability) of their premises. The next section looks at the evidence for the changes in the physical layout of the four inns, perhaps in response to this potential improvement in their trade.

THE LAYOUT AND EXPANSION OF THE INNS

Probate documents, maps, and building studies allow some assessment to be made of the layout and the possible expansion of the inns. As discussed above, there are two surviving inventories for the Bell, three for the Catherine Wheel, and one for the Red Lion; none have been found for the White Hart. All the inns are shown on the 1879 OS map of Henley, at a scale of 1:500, which gives a great deal of detail about the buildings' footprints. The Bell is shown on the Fawley Court estate map of 1788, surveyed for the new owner Strickland Freeman. The Red Lion has a number of plans associated with it: a plan of 1726 shows its yard and the outbuildings that it rented from the grammar school trustees (as part of the Chantry House complex); a description of the same in a lease of 1732; and a sale plan of the ground floor of the inn in 1897.⁴³ The most detailed building study is that of the White Hart, undertaken in 2008. A study of the old part of the Red Lion was made in 1997. The Bell complex has been only partly investigated: Denmark House (the current No. 2 Northfield End) was examined and some of the other extant buildings visited. There is no building study of the Catherine Wheel.⁴⁴

⁴² Townley, *Henley-on-Thames*, pp. 98–9.

⁴³ The maps and plans are: OS 1879 and 1910 (OHC); Fawley Court Estate Map 1788 (Henley River and Rowing Museum); 1726 plan of the storehouse (Cottingham, *Hostelries of Henley*, p. 183). The lease is OHC, Acc, 4443, box 1, bundle 1/3.

⁴⁴ The building studies are: R. Gibson, 'The Oldest Part of the Red Lion', *Henley Archaeological and Historical Group Journal* (1997), pp. 19–25; Gibson, 'The Old White Hart', OBR report, 57(b) (2008); Gibson, 'Denmark House', *Henley Archaeological and Historical Group report*, March 2008 (the Bell); Cottingham, *Hostelries of Henley*, pp. 57–60.

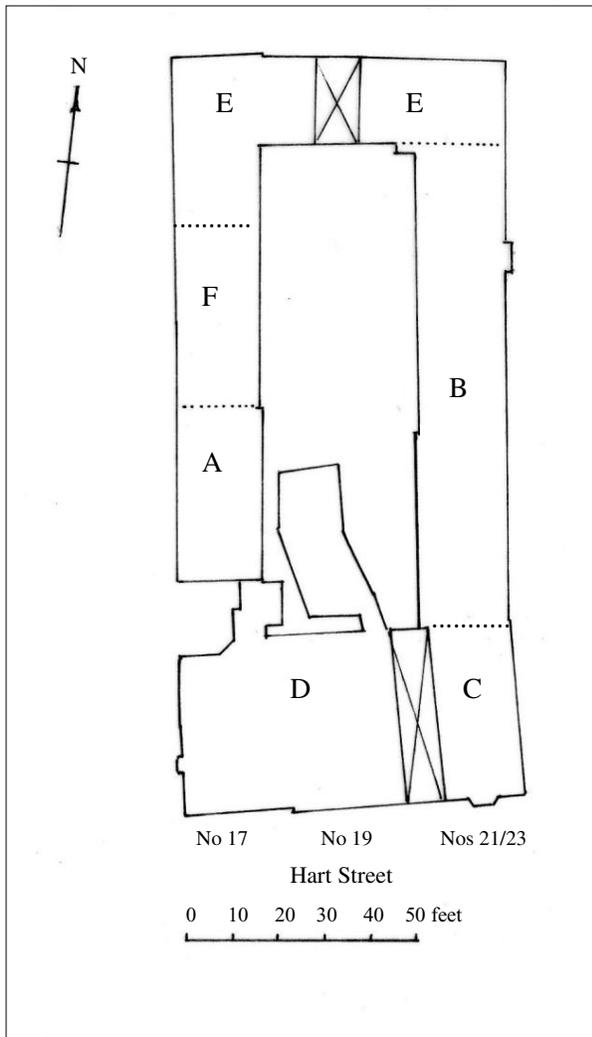


Fig. 2. The Old White Hart in 1531, with known seventeenth- to eighteenth-century alterations.

Suggested layout of the rooms from the building study

Below ground	Ground Floor	First floor
	A: 1531 hall, with possibly a kitchen to the south	[a single-storey building]
B: 1531 cellar in the corner at the east side of junction with area E	B: Stables	B: Part of the continuous lodging range, with at least seven chambers in it
C: Medieval cellar	C: Medieval hall	C: Hall with chamber over
	D: Shops	
	E: Stables and/or service rooms	E: Lodging ranges
	F: Stables with hayloft (converted from former lodging range in seventeenth to eighteenth century)	

The White Hart

The footprint of the inn in 1879 is shown in Fig. 2. The inn's frontage encompasses the present-day Nos. 17, 19, and 21/23 Hart Street, and is roughly the width of three burgage plots (or 75 ft). Numbers 17 and 19 (area D on Fig. 2) are now shops, and their dating is not known. They may have been built separately to the inn, although it was not uncommon for inns to have shops incorporated in them. Numbers 21/23 (area C) were probably the site of the original medieval inn, as it has a possibly thirteenth-century cellar underneath it, and evidence of a hall with smoke-blackened roof timbers. The White Hart was greatly extended behind this front range in 1530–1 to form a courtyard-type inn.⁴⁵ It stretched for c.290 ft behind, forming a courtyard with ranges on the east, north and west sides. There was a further courtyard behind, not shown on Fig. 2, with evidence of wings on the east and west sides.

The building study showed that as rebuilt in 1530–1 the inn included in the west range a large, double-height hall, about 26 ft by 15 ft in size (or 390 sq ft), marked as area A, with a fireplace and possibly a kitchen to its south side sharing the same chimney.⁴⁶ The remainder of the west range, together with the east and north ranges, had lodging ranges on the first floor, in all totalling about twenty or twenty-two rooms. The evidence for seven of these is still visible in area B, and each room measured about 10 ft by 13 ft (or 130 sq ft). These must have been some of the inn's smaller chambers: a study of the Cross Inn in Oxford shows that the more prestigious chambers were larger - approximately 20 ft by 20 ft (or 400 sq ft).⁴⁷ The east range of the White Hart retains evidence for ground-floor stabling, and part of the west range, marked F, was later converted to stabling in the seventeenth or eighteenth century. This was a common layout for a medieval inn, which tended to have a narrow street frontage, perhaps with shops on the ground floor, and generally extended well back along the burgage plot, grouped around a rectangular courtyard.

The Catherine Wheel

The footprint of the White Hart and the layout of its rooms is clear from the surviving building (see Plate 4). The Catherine Wheel, however, has been altered extensively over the years and it is difficult to see from the extant building what form it originally took. However, measuring the footprint of the inn on the 1879 OS map, and comparing it with inventories of 1642 and 1665/6, enables some conjectural reconstruction (see Fig. 3).

The inn in 1642 was small, and probably occupied what is now No. 7 Hart Street. The front range (marked C on Fig. 3) was the public and lodging range. On the ground floor, it contained a bedchamber (called the Lower Chamber, which indicates that it was not on the first floor) and various public rooms, including rooms over the cellar, which implies that the beer cellar was under this part of the building. Four more chambers were on the first floor, totalling 1,150 sq ft, which would be sufficient space, even if the two chambers called the Rose and the Catherine Wheel were large ones. The back range, marked A, probably contained the kitchen and the 'great room in the backside', both single-storeyed and possibly double-height. This area measures 21 ft by 45 ft (945 sq ft). Again this seems to be a reasonable size for two such rooms: the hall in the White Hart was 390 sq ft. This leaves about 550 sq ft for the kitchen and perhaps other rooms such as a buttery, though none were mentioned in the inventory. The back part of the inn (marked B) probably contained the various service rooms, and buildings such as the little stable and malthouse. A pump is marked on the 1879 map, and is shown Fig. 3.

⁴⁵ For recent dendrochronological dating see *Vernacular Architecture*, 40 (2009), p. 130.

⁴⁶ The measurements are gross areas and no allowance has been made for wall thicknesses and internal elements such as corridors or chimneys.

⁴⁷ W.A. Pantin and E.C. Rouse, 'The Golden Cross, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, 20 (1955), pp. 46–89. The approximate measurements quoted here were calculated from the drawings included in this article.

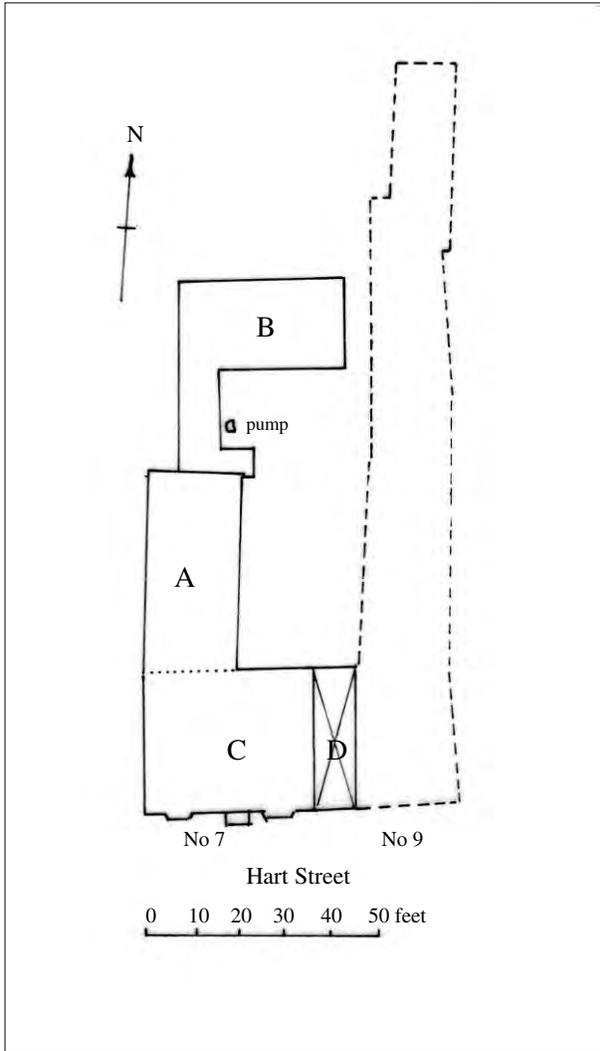


Fig. 3. The Catherine Wheel in 1642: a suggested layout for No. 7 Hart Street.

Suggested layout of the rooms at the Catherine Wheel mentioned in the 1642 inventory

Below ground	Ground Floor	First floor
C: Cellars, including the beer cellar	A: Kitchen, great room in the backside B: Malthouse, little room, little stable, ?hayhouse C: Lower chamber, rooms over the cellar, little room next to the street D: The entry	C: The Rose, the Crown, the Catherine Wheel, and the men's chambers

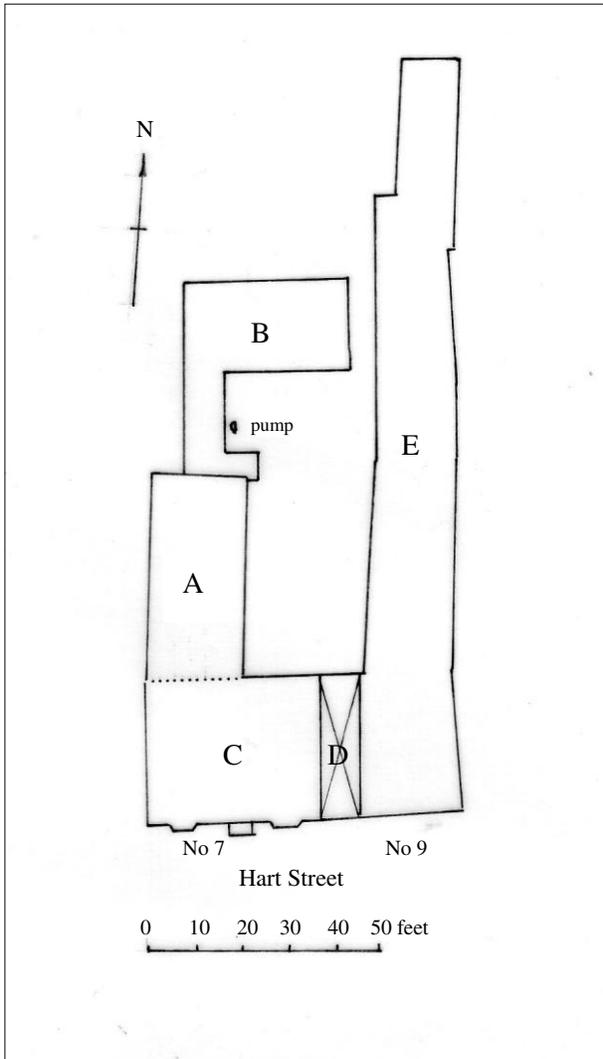


Fig. 4. The Catherine Wheel in 1665/6: a suggested layout for Nos. 7 and 9 Hart Street.

Suggested layout of the rooms mentioned in the inventory of 1665/6

Below ground	Ground Floor	First floor
	A: Kitchen, The George, and Bull's Head	A: Room over the kitchen
	B: Malthouse, hayhouse, washhouse, larder, and darkroom	B: Chamber over the pump
C: Cellars, including the wine cellar, and storage for tobacco	C: Shovelboard room, the Sun, the Star	C: The Rose, the Catherine Wheel, the little room behind, chamber next to the King's Arms
	D: The entry	D: ?The Cross
	E: ?Stables	E: Wainscot room, King's Head, Queen's Head, Swan, King's Arms [implied]

Henry Boler extended the inn by building over the single-storey part and by taking over the adjoining building, the present-day No. 9 Hart Street (see Fig. 4). Looking at the original inn at No. 7 first: he inserted a room over the kitchen, built a chamber over the pump, and possibly improved the 'great room in the backside' (which he divided and re-named the George and the Bull's Head). The front range C was improved, and the public rooms were renamed, for example the shovelboard room, but the chambers on the first floor retained their names. A room, the Cross, may indicate that the entry has been built over at first floor. There was some improvement in the chambers: the Catherine Wheel chamber had twelve leather chairs in it rather than six stools and a bench, but the bedding was valued the same. The stock of linen seems to have declined: Henry Boler's linen was worth £2 15s. less than Edward Rance's.

The adjoining building, No. 9 Hart Street (marked E), is shown as long and thin on the 1879 OS map. The whole of this block is over 2,250 sq ft in plan. There is no evidence in the inventory to indicate what was on the ground floor of this building: if the typical inn pattern was followed stables would be found there, but none were mentioned. Above were at least five chambers. If they extended over the whole of the block, they would be about 440 sq ft each, which was much bigger than the upper rooms in the White Hart, and bigger than the largest chambers in the Cross Inn in Oxford. The furniture in these five chambers was less than in the Catherine Wheel chamber, both in amount and in value. So it is probable that this part of the inn was much smaller in the seventeenth century than is shown on the map. Possibly Henry Boler took over (or perhaps already owned) No. 9, and did not alter it much, merely adding its existing rooms to No. 7 to form the larger inn. Any further extension to the inn may have taken place after the 1660s.

The Bell

Both the White Hart and the Catherine Wheel still retained evidence of their medieval past as depicted in the 1879 OS map. However, that is not the case for the Bell. The Fawley Court estate map of 1788 shows a quite different building footprint. When the estate map is rescaled to correspond with that of the 1910 OS map, the match for many of the boundary points is excellent and it is clear that the estate map was well surveyed. Figure 5 shows the resulting position of the 1788 Bell compared with the Bell in the OS map.

It seems that the inn was almost completely rebuilt after 1788. The new owner of the Fawley Court estate was Strickland Freeman, who undertook a number of building projects in his estates, and although there is no documentary evidence, it is possible that one of his projects was the rebuilding of the Bell.⁴⁸ Contemporary newspaper articles confirm that major building work had been undertaken and that the renovated inn was re-opened by 1794.⁴⁹

The footprint of the inn shown on the late eighteenth-century estate map could well depict the Bell as it existed in the late sixteenth or seventeenth century. It is not known when the inn was originally built, and the first evidence for the Bell itself is in a document of c.1592.⁵⁰ It may well be that it was a late sixteenth-century building, constructed by the then owners of Phyllis Court. Inns at that time were built in the style of private dwelling houses, and it is possible that the Bell and Phyllis Court may have been in a similar style (though Phyllis Court was medieval in origin).⁵¹ There is no documentary evidence that it was rebuilt or substantially altered later in the seventeenth century, and this may be unlikely since the owners of the estate (the Whitelock family) were often short of money.

The outline of the inn makes it difficult to tell whether it was all built at one time, or in several stages. However, three rooms in the 1666 inventory, two on the ground and one chamber, were 'new' rooms, which may indicate a recent addition. The plan seems to fit W.A. Pantin's category of

⁴⁸ G. Tyack: 'The Freemans of Fawley and their Buildings', *Records of Buckinghamshire*, 24 (1982), p. 140.

⁴⁹ Cottingham, *Hostelries of Henley*, p. 56.

⁵⁰ *VCH Oxon.* 16, p. 86.

⁵¹ Pantin, 'Medieval Inns', p. 166.

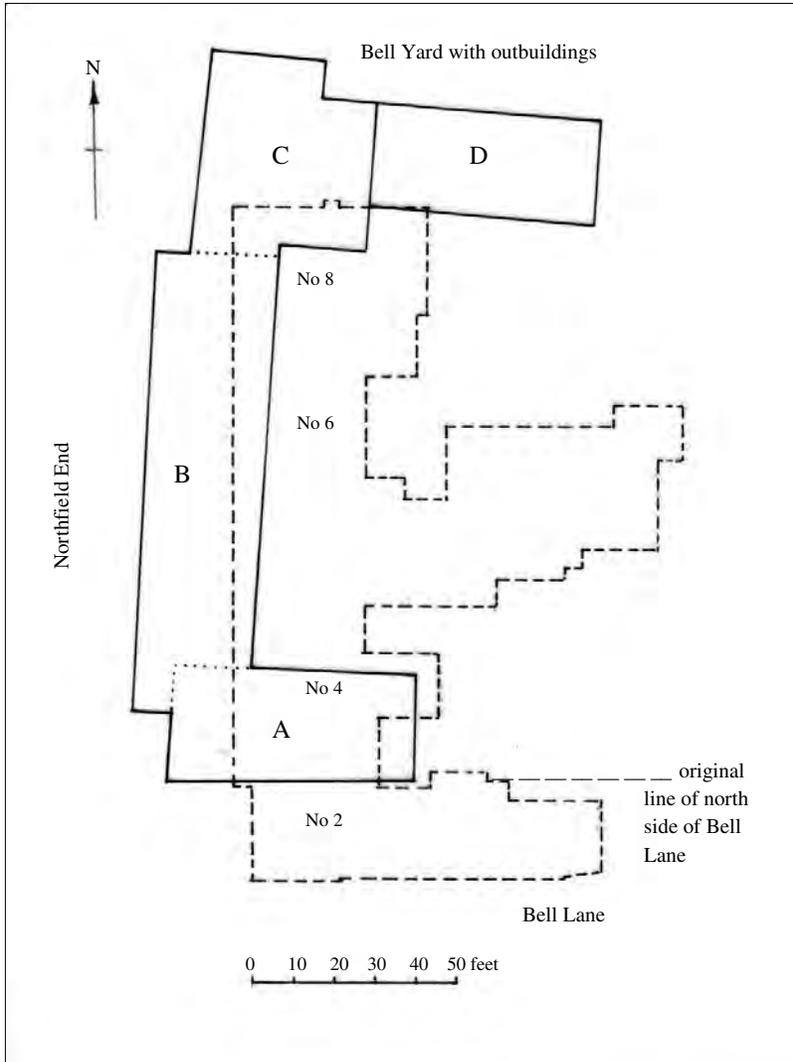


Fig. 5. The Bell in 1665/6: a suggested layout.

Suggested layout of the rooms mentioned in the inventory of 1665/6

Below ground	Ground floor	First floor	Second floor
A: Beer and wine cellars	A: Buttery, hostelry, larder, kitchen B: Great parlour, little parlour, the Hope, his lodging chamber and closet, nursery C: Great new room, little new room D: Stables	B: Seven chambers: the Oxford, the Great, the Well, the Little, the Bell, the Back, and the Green C: The new chamber	B: The garret chamber

a variant on the block or gatehouse inn where the building had a long range facing onto the street, which contained the principal rooms. These front ranges sometimes had wings that projected at the front, or (as would have been the case at the Bell) the back. The general effect was ‘not unlike the country houses of the period’.⁵²

Figure 5 shows a very tentative suggested layout. It is assumed that the new wing was the area marked C, and that the area beyond it (marked D) was the stables. The Bell had an extensive yard beyond the northern edge of the building range, and it was likely that the granary, brewhouse, and other service buildings were there. The central range (marked B) may have contained the reception areas of the inn, the parlours and the Hope, and possibly the owner’s lodging chamber and closet, along with the nursery, on the ground floor. The service rooms, such as the kitchen and larder, could have been in one of the wings (marked A). Above the central range were the seven rooms described as chambers. The whole of this central range was about 3,100 sq ft, which if averaged between the seven chambers would make each one about 440 sq ft, larger than the better chambers in the Cross Inn. It may be that the high valuation of the contents of the Bell’s chambers was matched by their size, or alternatively, if there was a mix of large and smaller rooms, that the inn was smaller in the mid seventeenth century than shown on the estate map.

Another inventory of the Bell was taken in February 1701/2, on the death of Richard Stevens. The total value of his moveable goods, excluding money, debts and his clothes, was £719, below the £1,027 of Abraham Goodwin thirty-five years earlier. There is some evidence of an increase in the original building in this inventory: there were twenty-six rooms (three more than before), but there was no mention of the larder and buttery found in 1665/6. The inn also now had a taproom. This could indicate that additional building had taken place.

Many of the rooms retained the same names, so some comparison of their contents can be made, and, generally, the value of their contents was well below that of 1665/6. For instance, the goods in the Oxford chamber were worth £42 in 1665/6, but by 1701/2 their value had fallen to £9. The highest-value room was the ‘great new room’, worth £22, a slight fall from the £25 of 1665/6, but furnishings in the majority of the rooms were worth below £10. As with Abraham Goodwin, much of Stevens’s wealth was tied up in his stocks of wine and beer, coal and wood, and hay, beans and oats, but far less in the value of the furniture in the rooms. All this evidence seems to imply that by the start of the eighteenth century, although busy and well prepared for travellers, the inn was no longer the prestigious place it once was.

The Red Lion

Figure 6 shows the plan of the Red Lion in 1879. The Red Lion as an inn on this site possibly dates from the seventeenth century, but one part of the building is much earlier. Area B on Fig. 6 was built at a similar time, and possibly as part of, the separate Chantry House complex in the late fifteenth century (at which time it is not known to have been an inn). The Chantry House is marked A. The other parts of the building (areas C and D) are later, but their date is uncertain. The innkeeper also leased a large area of buildings, comprising stables, granaries, haylofts, and a wharf, from the governors of the town’s grammar school, the successor owners of the Chantry House. These (marked E) also included the ground floor of the Chantry House. A 1732 lease of this property (though it is not known when the Red Lion began to rent it) mentioned that part of the inn was ‘lately new built’. This could be interpreted as part, possibly the northern part, of area D. This section considers the 1679 inventory evidence and tries to establish how much of the areas C and D were built by the time of the inventory.

On the 1897 plan of the Red Lion’s ground floor, the kitchen was located in the area marked B, in the oldest part of the buildings. Building evidence shows the remains of a large fireplace on the south wall of that block. So it is possible that the seventeenth-century kitchen was located there.

⁵² *Ibid.* p. 183.

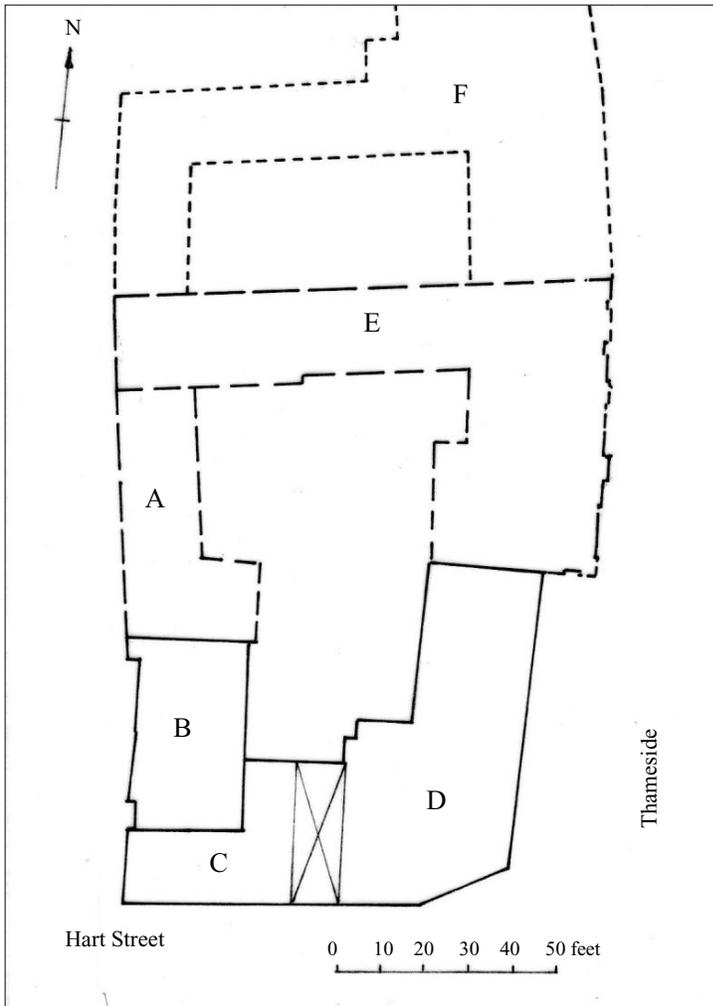


Fig. 6. The Red Lion in 1679: a suggested layout.

Key: The area marked F is land now occupied by the Red Lion, but was not part of the inn in the seventeenth century. It is shown as a dotted line. The areas A (ground floor only) and E were leased from the governors of the free grammar school, and are shown as a dashed line.

Suggested layout of the rooms mentioned in the inventory of 1679 and the lease of 1732

Below Ground	Ground Floor	First Floor	Second Floor
	A: stables, ostlers	[Chantry House complex]	[Chantry House complex]
B: [implied cellar]	B: kitchen; [implied service rooms]	B and C and D: Five two-bedded chambers: The Star, the Lion, the Gloucester, the Parlour, the White Lion.	B and C and D: Three garrets, nurse's chamber
C: [implied cellar]	C and D: Shovelboard room, lower parlour, lower chamber	Five one-bedded chambers – the New, the Oxford, the Crown, the Hyne, the Rose	
E: Cellar	E: Stables, granaries, haylofts, woodhouse	[possibly double-height]	

The inventory also contains a lower parlour, a lower chamber, and a shovelboard room, all clearly on the ground floor. These between them contained beds, cupboards, chests, tables, chairs, and so on. Area C was relatively small, only about 700 sq ft, and so too small to hold these three rooms. It is very likely therefore that some of area D was built by the 1670s, and most likely incorporated one or more of these rooms on its ground floor.

However, the outstanding feature of the inventory is the large number of chambers containing two beds: five out of a total of ten chambers. Each room also contained the usual tables and chairs, sometimes as many as ten chairs. This implies that half the rooms were large, at around 400 to 450 sq ft each, with the rest 250 to 300 sq ft. The total area thus needed for the chambers could be around 3,500 sq ft or more. The ten chambers would have spread across all three areas, B, C, and D: those areas together make over 4,200 sq ft, a difference of 700 sq ft. Again the evidence indicates that at least some part of area D was built by the time of the inventory, but possibly not all of it. The remaining part of area D may post-date 1679, and be the area referred to as 'newly built'.

The extensive stables, granaries and other storehouse leased from the governors of the school amounted to over 5,000 sq ft, but it may be that the buildings, especially those on the riverside, were two-storey. Jan Siberechts' painting of Henley, 'Landscape with Rainbow', painted perhaps in the 1690s, showed a series of two-storey buildings along the Thames from the bridge towards New Street. Some of those buildings may have been the storehouses of the Red Lion. In that case, the amount of storage space is well over 8,500 sq ft, and reinforces the likelihood that the inn catered for merchants and traders who were travelling with their goods, and needed safe keeping for them.⁵³ Interestingly, paving stones worth 15s. were mentioned in the inventory: perhaps Nathaniel Worley was improving the inn's yard to cater for this trade.

INTO THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The analysis of the available evidence on the major inns of Henley shows that they were substantial buildings, among the largest in the town. The innholders who ran them were among the local élite, in terms of wealth, status, involvement in town government, and influence in the town's economy. The Bell was run by the Goodwin family for at least four generations, and was by far the most prestigious inn in the town, clearly catering for the gentry. The Catherine Wheel was run by the Rance family, with Henry Boler, for several generations, and given its location near the market place, appears to have been a meeting place for local and visiting traders, where business could be undertaken. It was extended in the mid seventeenth century, but there is little evidence that it tried to attract a more well-heeled clientele. The White Hart remained in the Springall family for at least three generations but unfortunately no inventories have been found for it. The Red Lion, run by the Worley family for about seventy years, with its wharf, ample granaries and storehouses, and many beds, probably catered for merchants and other travellers with their goods.

Henley's inns, like those elsewhere, were changing during the eighteenth century. They became important coaching centres, and there is some evidence of the innholders' response to this emerging potential market. Additional rooms were added to the Bell; the Catherine Wheel was doubled in size; the Worleys may have improved the Red Lion, building extra rooms at the end of the century if not before, and paving their yard; and part of the lodging range of the White Hart was converted to make extra stables. Innholders often became postmasters: George Harrison was Henley's first known postmaster in 1708.⁵⁴

Inns also became far more important as social centres, as they tried to cater for the newly leisured classes: many innholders built on rooms for assemblies and other functions in the

⁵³ Townley, *Henley-on-Thames*, pp. 71, 78.

⁵⁴ *VCH Oxon.* 16, p. 30.

eighteenth century.⁵⁵ There is only a faint hint of this development in the few early eighteenth-century probate documents that have been transcribed so far. George Harrison, who was innholder of the Red Lion by the 1720s, left a gold ring in his will to over thirty people, the 'élite' inhabitants of Henley. Included were the rector Charles Aldrich, Gislingham Cooper, several widows, and the three unmarried Mounteney sisters. The sisters had come with their mother, the widow of a London man, to live in Henley: their income derived from her properties in London and stock invested in the East India Company and elsewhere.⁵⁶ They may be an early example of people of independent means who chose to live in increasingly fashionable provincial towns away from London. Perhaps Harrison developed the Red Lion into a social centre to cater for such a respectable clientele.

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⁵⁵ A. Everitt, 'The English Urban Inn, 1560–1760', in A. Everitt (ed.), *Perspectives in English Urban History* (London 1973), pp. 91–137.

⁵⁶ Will of Olive Mounteney, 1721 (TNA: PRO, PROB11/580).



Plate 4. Surviving medieval building at the rear of the White Hart, Henley, with the single-storey former stable block on the right. Photograph by Vic Allison. [Allison, p. 71]