

## = Pulteney Bridge =

Pulteney Bridge crosses the River Avon in Bath , England . It was completed by 1774 , and connected the city with the newly built Georgian town of Bathwick . Designed by Robert Adam in a Palladian style , it is exceptional in having shops built across its full span on both sides . It has been designated as a Grade I listed building .

Within 20 years of its construction , alterations were made that expanded the shops and changed the façades . By the end of the 18th century it had been damaged by floods , but it was rebuilt to a similar design . Over the next century alterations to the shops included cantilevered extensions on the bridge 's north and south faces . In the 20th century several schemes were carried out to preserve the bridge and partially return it to its original appearance , enhancing its appeal as a tourist attraction .

The bridge is now 45 metres ( 148 ft ) long and 18 metres ( 58 ft ) wide . Although there have been plans to pedestrianise the bridge , it is still used by buses and taxis . The much photographed bridge and the weir below are close to the centre of the city , which is a World Heritage Site largely because of its Georgian architecture .

## = = Design and construction = =

One of only four bridges in the world to have shops across its full span on both sides , the structure was designed by Robert Adam ; his original drawings are preserved in the Sir John Soane 's Museum in London .

The bridge is named after Frances Pulteney , wife of William Johnstone . He was a wealthy Scottish lawyer and Member of Parliament . Frances was the third daughter of MP and government official Daniel Pulteney ( 1684 ? 1731 ) and first cousin once removed of William Pulteney , 1st Earl of Bath . She inherited the Earl 's substantial fortune and estates close to Bath in Somerset after his death in 1764 and that of his younger brother and heir in 1767 , and the Johnstones changed their surname to Pulteney . The rural Bathwick estate , which Frances and William inherited in 1767 , was across the river from the city and could only be reached by ferry . William made plans to create a new town , which would become a suburb to the historic city of Bath , but first he needed a better river crossing . The work of the Pulteneys is memorialised by Great Pulteney Street in Bathwick , and Henrietta Street and Laura Place , named after their daughter Henrietta Laura Johnstone .

Initial plans for the bridge were drawn up by Thomas Paty , who estimated it would cost £ 4 @, @ 569 to build , but that did not include the shops . A second estimate of £ 2 @, @ 389 was obtained from local builders John Lowther and Richard Reed ; it included two shops at each end of the bridge , but work did not begin before winter weather made construction of the pillars impossible . In 1770 the brothers Robert and James Adam , who were working on designs for the new town at Bathwick , adapted Paty 's original design . Robert Adam envisaged an elegant structure lined with shops , similar to the Ponte Vecchio and the Ponte di Rialto he would likely have seen when he visited Florence and Venice . Adam 's design more closely followed Andrea Palladio 's rejected design for the Rialto . The revised bridge was 15 metres ( 50 ft ) wide , rather than the 9 @. @ 1 metres ( 30 ft ) width envisaged by Paty , which overcame the objections of the local council about the bridge being too narrow .

Construction started in 1770 and was completed by 1774 at a cost of £ 11 @, @ 000 . The builders for the lower part of the bridge were local masons Reed and Lowther ; the shops were constructed by Singers and Lankeshere .

## = = Development = =

Pulteney Bridge stood for less than 20 years in the form Adam created . In 1792 alterations were made during which the bridge was widened to 18 metres ( 58 ft ) and the shops enlarged , converting the original sixteen shops into six larger ones . Floods in 1799 and 1800 wrecked the north side of the bridge , which had been constructed with inadequate support . Thomas Telford

suggested replacing the bridge with a single span cast iron bridge . However it was rebuilt by John Pinch senior , surveyor to the Pulteney estate , in a less ambitious version of Adam 's design . Nineteenth @-@ century shopkeepers changed the structure and appearance of their premises by changing windows , or expanding them by adding cantilevers over the river . Some painted advertisements on the outside of their shops , affecting the view from the river and Grand Parade . The western end pavilion on the south side was demolished in 1903 for road widening and its replacement was not an exact match .

In 1936 the bridge was designated an ancient monument . The city council bought several of the shops and made plans for the restoration of the original façade , which was completed in time for the Festival of Britain in 1951 . Further work was carried out in the 1960s to repair the underside soffits of all three arches . More restoration of the southern street facade was needed in 1975 . The status of the bridge as an ancient monument was replaced in 1955 with its designation as a Grade I listed building .

In 2009 Bath and North East Somerset council put forward a proposal to close the bridge to motor traffic and turn it into a pedestrianised zone , but the plan was abandoned in September 2011 .

= = Architecture = =

The bridge features two ranges of shops designed in the Palladian style c . 1770 , between them forming a narrow street over the bridge . The street and buildings sit above three segmental arches of equal span .

The shops on the north side have cantilevered rear extensions . Consequently , the northern external façade of the bridge is asymmetrical , much altered and of no architectural merit , whereas the southern external side clearly shows the hand of Robert Adam .

Built of limestone , in classic Palladian style , the southern façade takes the form of a temple @-@ like central bay with symmetrical wings connecting to two flanking , terminating pavilions . The central bay is given eminence by a broken pediment supported by austere Doric pillasters . It in turn is flanked by two small bays , each with a small pointed pediment supported by shallow pilasters , which further emphasise and complement the central broken pediment sitting above a large Palladian window ? the focal point of the building . On this southern side the structure comprises a principal floor at street level , with a low mezzanine separated by stone banding above . Beneath the principal floor is a sub @-@ floor constructed in the masonry between the spans of the bridge , its presence indicated by ocular windows placed symmetrically beneath the span of each arch . This ocular motif , on a reduced scale , is repeated symmetrically at mezzanine level beneath the central broken pediment . The two terminating pavilions , in reality slight projections , have shallow saucer domes concealed behind their pointed pediments . The roof is pitched and of Welsh slate .

The western mid @-@ stream pier was rebuilt in 1804 . Further alteration took place in 1895 , when the western pavilion was moved for the construction of the Grand Parade . The appearance changed yet again when the current weir , the scene of Javert 's suicide in the film version of Les Misérables , was constructed between 1968 and 1972 as part of a flood @-@ prevention scheme . Further restoration was undertaken in 1975 .