

THE STRATFIRE PROJECT

No. 12 Chapel Street and 1 Ely Street (sites of)

Documentary History (version 10.11.2024)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In 1553 Stratford-upon-Avon became an incorporated borough and, under letters patent issued by Edward VI, was granted the properties in the town previously held by the suppressed Guild of the Holy Cross. This was principally to provide the newly-appointed Corporation with an income to support the provision of a school and almshouses, earlier the responsibility of the Guild. The properties granted in this way included a building in Chapel Street, on the site of a building numbered 12 in the later nineteenth century. From the medieval period these premises in Chapel Street dog-legged out into Ely Street, the site of a horse mill, here numbered 1 Ely Street (**Fig. 5**). Also associated with the property was a garden in Chapel Lane on which two tenements were later built. This grouping under a single lease persisted until 1607.
- 1.2 Thereafter the premises facing Chapel Street were leased out separately from those in Ely Street. In 1818, under the terms of one of these Corporation leases, No. 12 was rebuilt and in 1880 the Corporation sold the freehold itself to the Stourbridge and Kidderminster Bank, operating since the early nineteenth century on an adjoining site on the corner of Ely Street (No. 13). Both properties were then demolished and in 1883 rebuilt in flamboyant Gothic style, No. 12 initially as the residence of the bank manager (BRR 49/1/57). Its appearance after the 1818 reconstruction, along with the bank itself, is fleetingly captured in nineteenth-century general views of the contemporary street scenes (**Figs 1, 2, 3**). The present building on the site of No. 12 Chapel Street is shown as **Fig. 4**.
- 1.3 From 1607 the history of No. 1 Ely Street (and, for a time, that of the Chapel Lane cottages) followed a different course. However, by the mid nineteenth century the building also became merged into the fortunes of the adjacent bank and the freehold was later transferred to it.
- 1.4 Documentary evidence establishes that earlier buildings on this combined site were affected by the 1594/5 fires, bringing it into the remit of the Stratfire project.

2. 12 CHAPEL STREET & 1 ELY STREET, 1521-1607

- 2.1. This present documentary history begins in March 1521 when the combined property, at that date belonging to the Guild of the Holy Cross, was let to John Barber and his wife Margaret for thirty years at an annual rent of 26s. 8d. (BRT 1/2/550). At that point, it was described as made up of two tenements, a horse mill and a garden in Stratford, with one tenement facing out into Chapel Street and the other, with the horse mill, sited on the opening into Ely Street. The garden in Chapel Lane was situated between two other gardens. This lease was surrendered in February 1537 and a new one granted to William Smith and Katherine his wife for ninety years at the same rent of 26s. 8d. (BRT 1/2/574).
- 2.2 Neither of these leases names the occupant of the premises and in surviving rentals of 1530, 1537, 1546 and 1561 (by which time the freehold had passed to the Stratford Corporation), it is Richard Symonds who was recorded as paying the rent of 26s. 8d. (BRT 1/3/150-3; *Minutes and Accounts*, i, 109). Symonds, well educated and with a knowledge of Latin, was Stratford's town clerk from 1553 to around 1570 (Fripp, *Shakespeare Studies*, 52-5). He also served as a capital burgess from at least 1564. By 1572 he had moved from his Chapel Street house and by March

1574 Francis Burnell, a tailor, had taken up residence (*Minutes and Accounts*, ii, 81). He was recorded in 1582 as holding the premises under the lease of 1537 made to William Smith (BRU 15/7/107).

- 2.3 Francis Burnell, by then elderly, was still tenant of the combined holding at the time of the 1594/5 fires and he continued to pay the inclusive rent of 26s. 8d. until his death in December 1598. However, fire damage to his property was extensive. As early as July 1597 the Corporation had agreed that Burnell's thirty-year-old son, Thomas, in consideration that 'all that tenement and milne with appurtenances in Chapel St and Ely St ... were near consumed by fire', would be granted a new lease of the undivided property on the condition that he build a new house in Chapel Street within five years and to cover it and the mill with tile (*Minutes and Accounts*, v, 105). In a survey of April 1599 the site of the house in Chapel Street was described as still 'wasted not yet built again' though work in Ely Street may by then have been under way (*Minutes and Accounts*, vi, 74, 76). The garden in Chapel Street, now with two houses built thereon and included in the lease, was described in the same survey as '2 tenements, thatched, newly re-edified', probably a reference to their recent construction rather than the result of fire damage, not known to have affected properties in Chapel Lane. The lease was sealed on 30 September 1599, for fifty-two years at the rent of 26s. 8d. (BRU 8/4/9).
- 2.4 Thomas Burnell paid this rent for at least four years but by October 1605 he was in serious arrears, perhaps the result of the cost of the rebuilding work. The Corporation therefore began processes to repossess the property (*Minutes and Accounts*, vi, 305, 308). By January 1607 Thomas was described as deceased although his burial is not recorded in Stratford. However, the Corporation, taking advantage of the situation, now decided to divide the property into two parts. In January 1607 it was agreed that, if Mary Burnell surrendered her late husband's lease of 1599, the house facing Chapel Street (No. 12), now described as 'new built', would be leased back to her for thirty-one years at a rent of 10 shillings (*Minutes and Accounts*, vi, 396). However, for some reason such a lease was never finalised. On 2 September 1607 Mary did surrender her late husband's lease but at the end of the month the Chapel Street house was leased instead to Thomas Rutter, a haberdasher, but sub-let to George Shackleton, a wool driver (*Minutes and Accounts*, vi, 420; BRU 8/4/12).
- 2.5 It was also agreed during these negotiations that the remaining part of the property – the mill and tenement in Ely Street and the two cottages in Chapel Lane – were to be let for thirty-one years to Mary the 'widow of old Francis Burnell' and her son Ralph Burnell, the Ely Street property at 20 shillings a year (*Minutes and Accounts*, vi, 396).
- 2.6 These arrangements required a more precise definition of the boundary between the property in Chapel Street and the tenement and mill in Ely Street. The lease to Thomas Rutter of the Chapel Street house, sealed on 20 September 1607, included 'so much of the backside thereof as is now divided and set out to be demised with the same, namely unto the post at the lower corner of the stable, parcel of the same tenement, cross over to the post called a "pricke post" in the building of Frauncis Smyth, mercer' (BRU 8/4/12). The purpose of this division is then explained, namely to reserve 'unto the Corporation their assigns and undertenants of the messuage in Ely Street, now in the occupation of Mary Burnell or Ralphe Burnell or one of them, free liberty ingress egress and regress to draw fetch take and carry away water out of and from the well now being in the backside of the said demised messuage and liberty to wash at the same well at all convenient times'. For the probable line of this boundary, see **Fig. 5**.

3. 12 CHAPEL STREET, 1607-1880

- 3.1 For two or three years, Thomas Rutter paid the 10 shilling rent on the 'new built' Chapel Street house, sublet to George Shackleton, but in April 1610 it was agreed that a new lease of twenty-seven years should be granted to the prosperous woollen draper, William Walford, who was rapidly expanding his property portfolio at that time (BRU 8/4/14). In 1618 this was renewed for a longer term of forty-one years, retaining George Shackleton as sub-tenant (BRU 8/4/16). Under Walford's will of 1624, this leasehold house in Chapel Street, now sublet to Richard Letherland, was bequeathed to his son Francis (*Stratford Wills*, i, 353). Letherland, a glazier, died in January 1639. An inventory lists his goods and chattels in the hall, the chamber over the hall, the shop, the chamber over the shop, the parlour, the chamber over the parlour, the kitchen and the cellar (*Stratford Inventories*, ii, 60-2). A year later his widow Elizabeth married Richard Phillips (*Registers of Stratford: Marriages*, 38). Francis Walford, the principal tenant, died in March 1641 and, when in 1647 the Corporation granted a new lease of the property to Richard Hunt, a draper, Richard Phillips was still the sub-tenant (*Registers of Stratford: Burials*, 138; BRU 8/4/3).
- 3.2 Subsequent leases of 1684, 1722 and 1758 (BRU 4/29, 29a, 38) refer to a single dwelling on the site but in 1818, when it was made a condition of a lease to William Morrell that two new brick buildings should replace the existing building, the premises were described as two tenements in the occupation of James Palmer and John Winstone (BRU 8/4/47). According to the rate books, they had, in fact, been there since 1805.
- 3.3 The dimensions of the Chapel Street plot are first given in 1618, namely 27ft 2ins facing the street and running back 53ft 4ins to a rear boundary 21ft 6ins wide (BRU 8/4/16). These measurements are repeated in subsequent leases, endorsed with plans in 1758 and 1818, and correspond with the land sold to the Stourbridge and Kidderminster Bank in 1880 (BRU 8/4/38, 47). However, when the lease of 1818 to William Morrell was agreed, it included approximately a half-part of the Ely Street premises which since 1607 had descended separately (**Fig. 5**) (Para. 4.4 below). This lease was assigned to representatives of the bank next door in 1837 (BRR 10/6) but it was not until 1880 that the freehold itself eventually passed from the Corporation to the bank (above, Para. 1.3).

4. 1 ELY ST, 1607-1880

- 4.1 As explained above (Para. 2.5), the Corporation agreed that the remaining parts of the property – the mill and tenement in Ely Street and the two cottages in Chapel Lane – were to be let for thirty-one years to Mary the 'widow of old Francis Burnell' and her son Ralph Burnell (Thomas's brother) for 20 shillings a year. This came with provisoes that within four years any remaining thatch should be replaced with tile and that the rents of the Chapel Lane cottages which had evidently been sublet should not be increased beyond 16 shillings and 12 shillings respectively (*Minutes and Accounts*, vi, 396). A lease confirming this was dated 21 September 1607 (BRU8/6/8).
- 4.2 Ralph Burnell paid these rents for the Ely Street and Chapel Lane premises until at least 1624 and even in January 1627 a survey of Corporation property implies that he was still alive (BRT 2/1, pp. 117-18). He had married Katherine Baxter, apparently a second wife, in 1612 when the Ely Street property had been vested in a trustee for the benefit of any children of the marriage (BRU 8/6/10). On 7 March 1629, the Common Council further agreed 'that the howses which Raphe Burnell held by Indenture from the Chamber [i.e. in Ely Street and Chapel Lane] shalbe graunted by a new Lease To foure men of this Company ... For the use of the Children of the said Raphe Burnell To have from Lady day next Comeing for xxxi yeires at the usuall Rent of xx^s

per annum' (BRU 2/3, p. 10). There is no record of Burnell's burial in Stratford though by then he was almost certainly 'deceased' (Para. 4.3).

- 4.3 A month later, the Council agreed that 'Edward Rogers draper shall have the whole interest of the Lease formerly graunted to Raffe Burnell assigned over unto hym of the howse in Elie Street and the Tenementes in the Chappell Lane' (BRU 2/3, p. 12). Rogers was to be charged £15 5s. 0d. for this, to be 'Employed to the best benefite of the Children of Raffe Burnell deceased accordinge to the desscreation of the baylife & burgesses'. However, it would seem that Rogers went back on this undertaking, it being reported a year later that Rogers had simply taken over Burnell's lease for the remainder of the thirty-one year lease agreed in 1607 (BRU 2/3, p. 28). This was to expire in 1638 at which point Rogers admitted that he had simply assigned the lease to his brother-in-law Thomas Smith, an ironmonger (BRU 2/3, p. 154). At Rogers' request, the Corporation then agreed on 12 January 1638 to grant Smith a new lease for sixty-one years (BRU 2/3, p. 157; BRU 8/6/19). On this occasion, however, the Chapel Lane cottages, leased with the Burnell property in Ely Street since 1607, were replaced by another property in Ely Street on the other side of the street on the site of today's Nos 45-6.
- 4.4 In the lease of 1638 the dimensions of the Burnell property in Ely Street are given for the first time. It was roughly square-shaped, measuring about 45ft along each side. These measurements were repeated in subsequent leases in 1641 (to Robert Fitzhugh), in 1693 (to John Hunt), in 1742 (to Joseph Hatton) and in 1784 (to Mary Taplin and Sarah Stevens) (BRU 8/6/20, 27, 32, 36). The last of these, when the property was described as a 'building and warehouse', was for thirty-nine years. When No. 12 Chapel Street was leased to William Morrell in 1818 (BRU 8/4/47), around half of the half the premises in Ely Street adjoining No. 12 Chapel St at the rear (with a frontage of 25ft) was included in Morrell's lease (**Figs 5, 7**). This was assigned to the Bank next door in 1837, the same year as the remaining half of No. 1 Ely Street was also leased to it, with a frontage of 20ft (**Fig. 6**) (UR 7/15; BRR 10/6). This was 'in consideration' that the Bank had spent £70 in taking down the front part of a warehouse belonging to the Corporation and converting it into a coach house and stable. In 1880, as described above (Para 1.3), the Corporation sold the freehold of the combined sites of No. 12 Chapel Street and No. 1 Ely Street to the Bank.



Fig. 1: Chapel St, looking south, showing on the right, buildings on the corner of Ely St.



Fig. 2: High St, looking north, showing on the left, buildings on the corner of Ely St.



Fig. 3: Chapel St looking north showing on the left buildings on the corner of Ely St, c. 1870.



Fig. 4: site of No. 12 Chapel St, 2023.

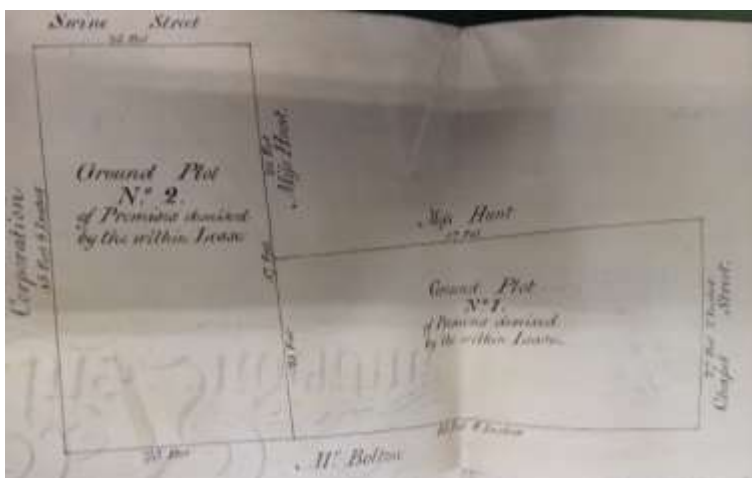


Fig. 5: BRU 8/4/47, 1818

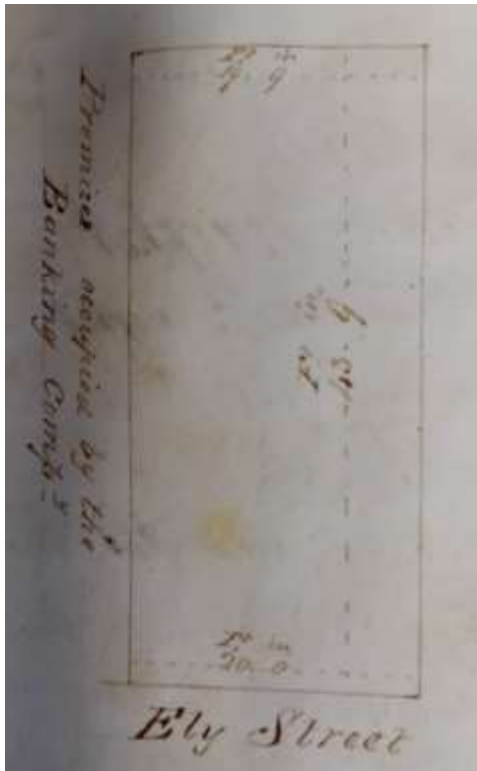


Fig. 6: BRR 10/6, 1837



Fig. 7: No. 1 Ely St, 2023.