

## **STRATFORD-UPON-AVON, 1550-1650**

The **Stratfire** project seeks to establish the exact extent of the town fires of 1594, 1595 and 1614, the chronology of the rebuilding programme, and the effect of the fires not only on the families particularly affected but also on the economic well-being of the town.

This briefing sheet is organised in three sections:

1. Background reading: i.e. secondary work based on an individual's interpretation of the source material, the bedrock of all historical writing.
2. Published source material
3. Unpublished source material

### **Part 1. Background reading**

Bearman, Robert	<i>Stratford-upon-Avon, a History of its Streets and Buildings</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition (Stratford-upon-Avon Society, 2008)
Bearman, Robert	'The Early Reformation Experience in a Warwickshire Market Town: Stratford-upon-Avon, 1530-1580', <i>Midland History</i> , vol. 32, 2007.
Bearman, Robert	'Stratford's Fires of 1594 and 1595 revisited', <i>Midland History</i> , vol. 25, 2000
Bearman, Robert	'Thomas Greene: Stratford-upon-Avon's Town Clerk and Shakespeare's Lodger', <i>Shakespeare Survey</i> , vol. 65, 2013
Bearman, Robert	'The "Stratford Fireplace" at Packwood House', <i>Transactions of the Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society</i> , 96, 1989-90, pp. 83-87
Bearman, Robert	'Stratford-upon-Avon's fire of 1614', <i>Warwickshire History</i> , XVI, No. 6, Winter 2016/17, 254-68
Bearman, Robert	'Stratford-upon-Avon and the "Bawdy Court"', <i>Warwickshire History</i> ,
Dyer, Alan	'Crisis and Resolution: Government and Society in Stratford-upon-Avon, 1540-1640' in Bearman, ed., <i>The History of an English Borough: Stratford-upon-Avon, 1196-1996</i> (Stroud, 1997)
Eccles, Mark	<i>Shakespeare in Warwickshire</i> (University of Wisconsin, 1961)
Fripp, Edgar Innes	<i>Shakespeare's Stratford</i> (Oxford, 1928)
Fripp, Edgar Innes	<i>Master Richard Quyny</i> (Oxford, 1924)
Fripp, Edgar Innes	<i>Shakespeare Man and Artist</i> (Oxford, 1938)
Hughes, Ann	'Building a Godly Town: Religious and Cultural Divisions in Stratford-upon-Avon, 1560-1640', in Bearman, ed., <i>The History of an English Borough: Stratford-upon-Avon, 1196-1996</i> (Stroud, 1997)
Hughes, Ann	'Religion and Society in Stratford-upon-Avon, 1619-1638', <i>Midland History</i> , vol. 19, 1994

- Jones, Jeanne *Family Life in Shakespeare's England: Stratford-upon-Avon, 1570-1630* (Stroud, 1996)
- Martin, J. M. 'A Warwickshire Market Town in Adversity: Stratford-upon-Avon in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries', *Midland History*, vol. 7, 1982
- Morgan, John E. 'The representation and experience of English urban fire disasters', *Historical Research*, lxxxix, May 2016, pp. 268-93.
- Mulryne, J.R. ed. *The Guild and Guild Buildings of Shakespeare's Stratford*, Abingdon, 2012
- Orlin, Lena C. *The Private Life of William Shakespeare*, 2021
- Porter, Stephen 'Fires in Stratford-upon-Avon in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries', *Warwickshire History*, vol. 3, 1976
- Styles, Philip Article on Stratford-upon-Avon in *Victoria County History for Warwickshire*, vol. III (1945)

## Part 2. Published/edited/transcribed source material

(For references to the original sources, see Part 3)

- Appleton, S., & Macdonald, M. eds, *Stratford-upon-Avon Wills, 1348-1701*, 2 vols (Dugdale Society, vols. 53 & 54, 2020)
- [Arbuthnot, George, ed.] *The Vestry Minute-Book of the Parish of Stratford-on-Avon from 1617 to 1699 AD* (London, 1899)
- [Bearman, electronic files] RB/MA 7: edited for publication shortly as *Minutes and Accounts of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon*, Vol. 7, 1610-20 [see below, under 'Fripp, Edgar', for Vols 1-6]
- RB/MA 8: transcribed, minutes (to 1639) and chamberlains' accounts (to 1626) but not yet edited for possible publication as *Minutes and Accounts of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon*, Vol 8.
- RB/MA Supp: transcribed but not yet edited for possible publication of items from 1553-1620, which should/could have been included in *Minutes and Accounts of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon, MA*, Vols 1-6
- RB/CR: Stratford's court of record registers, transcribed and translated
- RB/Church Court: transcribed but not yet fully edited for publication
- Brinkworth, E. R. C., ed. *Shakespeare and the 'Bawdy Court' of Stratford* (Chichester, 1972)
- Fripp, E.I. and others, ed. *Minutes and Accounts of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon, 1553-1609, 1-6* (Dugdale Society, vols 1, 3, 5, 10, 35, 44 (1921-1929, 1990, 2011))

- Halliwell, James O. *A Descriptive Calendar of the Ancient Manuscripts and Records in the Possession of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon* (London, 1863)
- [Halliwell, James O., ed.] *Selected Extracts from the Ancient Registry of the Causes Tried in the Court of Record at Stratford-upon-Avon* (London 1867)  
NB: this can now be supplemented by a complete transcript by Margaret Webster of the surviving registers of the court, from 1553 to 1602, available at the Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive and in RB/CR .
- [Halliwell, J.O. ed.]: *Extracts from the Ancient Subsidy Rolls ... in Respect of the Inhabitants of Stratford-on-Avon* (London 1864)
- [Halliwell, J.O.ed.]: *A Muster Roll of the Able Men of Stratford-upon-Avon in the Twenty-eighth year of King Henry VIII* (London 1867)
- Halstead, R, and others, eds. 'Return of Recusants in Kineton and Barlichway Hundred, co. Warwick, 1605-6', *Worcester Recusant*, no. 18, 1971
- Hodgetts, Michael, ed. 'A Certificate of Warwickshire Recusants, 1592', *Worcester Recusant*, nos 5-6, 1965-6
- Hopper, Clarence, ed. *A Descriptive Account of a Series of Churchwardens' Papers etc. Appertaining to the Parish of Stratford-on-Avon* (London, 1867)
- Ingleby, C.M.,ed. *Shakespeare and the Enclosure of Common Fields at Welcombe* [from the diary of Thomas Greene, Town Clerk] (Birmingham, 1885)
- Jones, Jeanne, ed. *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, 1538-1699*, 2 vols (Dugdale Society, vols. 39 & 40, 2002-2003)
- Lane, Joan *John Hall and his Patients: the Medical Practice of Shakespeare's Son-in-Law* (Stratford-upon-Avon, 1996)
- Macdonald, Mairi, ed. *The Register of the Guild of the Holy Cross, Stratford-upon-Avon*, Dugdale Society, vol. 42, 2007.
- Ratcliff, S.C., & Johnson, eds *Warwick County Records, vol 1 (Quarter Sessions order book Easter, 1625, to Trinity, 1637); vol. 2 (Quarter Sessions Order Book, Michaelmas 1637, to Epiphany, 1650)* (Warwick 1935, 1936)
- Savage, R., ed. *The Registers of Stratford-on-Avon: Baptisms, 1558-1652; Burials, 1558-1652; Marriages, 1558-1812:* (Parish Register Society, 3 vols., 1897-1905)
- Tobias, John, ed. 'New light on recusancy in Warwickshire, 1592', *Worcestershire Recusant* No. 36 (December 1980), pp. 8-27.
- Wells, Greg *John Hall: Master of Physique*

## Part 3. Original source material

### A. *The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust*

This is where much of the original source material is to be found. It is here divided into two main sections: (i) the records of the Stratford Corporation; (ii) other records. Material that has already been transcribed/published is cross referenced to the titles listed in Part 2:

#### *i) Records of the Stratford-upon-Avon Corporation, 1553-1835*

These are comparatively easy to work through as much is already available in published (or at least transcribed) form. The main categories are as follows:

- **BRU 1/1 Borough charter, 1553**  
Published edited transcript: *Minutes and Accounts of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon*, 1, pp. 1-22.
- **BRU 1/2 Borough charter, 1610**  
Edited for publication, with translation: RB/MA7
- **BRU 2 Minute books**
  - i) Facsimiles, *Adam Matthew*
  - ii) Published edited transcripts, 1553-1609: MA, 1-6
  - iii) Edited transcripts, 1610-1620: RB/MA7
  - iv) Unedited transcripts, 1621-39: RB/MA 8
- **BRU 3/1 Borough orders and byelaws, 1604**  
Published edited transcript, 1604: *Minutes and Accounts*, vi, pp. 249-61
- **BRU 3/2 Borough orders and byelaws, 1612**  
Edited transcripts, 1612: RB/MA7
- **BRU 4 Chamberlains' accounts: includes rentals**
  - i) Published edited transcripts, 1553-1609: *Minutes and Accounts*, 1-6
  - ii) Edited transcripts, 1610-20: RB/MA7
  - iii) Unedited transcripts. 1621-26: RB/MA8
- **BRU 5 Receipts and Vouchers**
  - i) Facsimiles, *Adam Matthew*
  - ii) Published edited transcripts, 1553-1609: some only in *Minutes and Accounts*, 1-6; some too in RB/MA7; RB/MA8. Good calendar of complete series at SBT.
- **BRU 7 Separate rentals and surveys**
  - i) Facsimiles, *Adam Matthew*
  - ii) Published edited transcripts, 1553-1609 (included in *Minutes and Accounts*, 1-6, RB/MA7; also, awaiting editing, in RB/MA8; RBMA Supp)
- **BRU 8 expired leases**  
Very few, if any, available in facsimile or transcription, either edited or unedited
- **BRU 9 title deeds**  
Very few, if any, available in facsimile or transcription, either edited or unedited
- **BRU 12/1 Court of Record: registers**  
Translated transcript available in hard copy on reading room shelves and in electronic format: RB/CR

- **BRU 12/2 Court of Record Declarations**

Most of these now linked (in electronic format) to corresponding cases in the Registers: BRU 12/1 (RB/CR)

- **BRU 15 Miscellaneous Documents**

18 volumes comprising numerous documents originally stored as individual items but in the 1860s mounted on guards and bound into volumes. These will be challenging to deal with BUT:

1. Many are already available in edited and published form in *Minutes and Accounts*, 1-6; in edited form in RB/MA7, or simply transcribed in RB/MA8, RB/MA Supp
2. Others have been edited and published in *Stratford Wills* and *Stratford Inventories* as described above.
3. Court of record items, for periods when the registers survive (see BRU 12/1), have now been linked (in electronic format) to corresponding cases in the registers
4. Many were briefly calendared by J.O. Halliwell in his *Descriptive Calendar of the Ancient Manuscripts and Records in the Possession of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon*. In the Reading Room, there is a copy marked up in an attempt to identify some of these edited transcripts.
5. Facsimile of BRU 15/1 only is available via *Adam Mathew*

- **BRU 17 Trading Company records, mainly comprising Orders**

- i) Facsimiles, *Adam Matthew*
- ii) Edited for publication: RB/MA7
- iii) Transcribed for editing: RB/MA Supp

- **BRT 2/1 Records of the Stratford-upon-Avon Bridge wardens**

The Bridge Book, originally used solely by the Bridge wardens, but used later by the Corporation for property surveys and memoranda

- i) Facsimiles, *Adam Matthew*
- ii) Edited for publication (surveys, to 1620 only): RB/MA7

- **BRT 3 Records of the Stratford-upon-Avon Peculiar Court**

- i) Facsimiles, *AM*
- ii) BRT 3/1: original wills and inventories, 1557-1745: edited and published, to 1700, in *Stratford Wills* and *Stratford Inventories* (see above)
- iii) BRT 3/2: copy wills and administrations, 1658-98; Edited and published in *Stratford Wills* and *Stratford Inventories* (see above)

- **BRT 4/1/1 - Records of the Stratford-upon-Avon Borough Sessions, 1600-1706**

- i) Facsimiles, *Adam Matthew*
- ii) Edited and published (to 1610) in: *Minutes and Accounts*, 6.
- iii) Edited for publication (to 1620) in: RB/MA7

- **BRT 8 - Stratford-upon-Avon Borough vestry**

- /1: vestry minutes, 1617-1699  
edited and published in Arbuthnot, *Vestry Minute-Book*
- /198: Pauper apprenticeships:  
Facsimiles, *Adam Mathew*  
Edited for publication, to 1620 only: RB/MA7 and RB/Supp
- /201: bonds of indemnity, 1613-51  
Edited for publication, to 1620 only: RB/MA7 and RB/Supp

## ***ii) Other items from miscellaneous collections***

These will be more difficult to deal with but the following will be helpful:

- a) the ownership/occupancy of all town centre properties was recorded by evening class students in the 1970s and 1980s, working on original source material, on a series of cards, arranged by property, now kept in the Reading Room at SBT. From these it is possible to reconstruct a file of material for particular sites, derived both from the Corporation records, as described above, and from other records found at SBT (and indeed from some other sources held elsewhere). These will need to be checked, and they are not exhaustive, though in some cases new cards were added as further material came to light.

Also three streets (High Street, Chapel Street and Bridge Street) were written up in simpler format, and are to be found on open access in the Reading Room, which have also been updated (but not systematically) as the result of further material coming to light.

- b) SBT finding aids, both for place names and personal names, either computerised (and on-line) or hard copy, can also be used but can only be regarded as introductory.

For place names:

- a) It is possible to search for 'Stratford, High Street' in hard copy from index cards under this heading, with a series of references to hard copy lists. However, the main drawbacks here are:
  - i) this can only be done on site
  - ii) the cards were not always tidily or fully kept
  - iii) the system is no longer maintained
  - iv) the references were recorded from lists which specifically mention High Street only. If this was not included by the cataloguer (say, for a general rental of the town) it will not appear on the card
- b) The same words could be put into the search box for the archive section of the computerised catalogue. This can be done from home and should produce a list of archive references in which these three words 'High Street Stratford' appear (when I tried, got 1298 hits). Refinement of the results allow these to be presented as a list and the entries arranged chronologically. The drawbacks are:
  - i) this picks up entries where all three words appear, rather than 'High Street, Stratford' consecutively. The entry may therefore refer to a property not in High Street.
  - ii) The search can be 'refined' by looking for the search terms under the 'Place' option but this will only work if the cataloguer provided the necessary link. Although this is now often a standard process, the bulk of the computerised archive catalogue was initially created by out-sourced copying of existing hard copy lists so that in most cases entries can only be traced if the selected words are found anywhere in the entry. Various refinements are offered but these can produce conflicting results and it is therefore better, at least in this case, to search 'everywhere'.
  - iii) as above, the references are only to descriptions of documents which specifically mention High Street. If this was not included in the description (say, for a general rental of the town), it will not be found.

For personal names:

- a) The hard copy card index at SBT can here be used to great advantage as the spellings of surnames are grouped together under one common form with cross references from less usual variants. Disadvantages are as above:
  - i) this can only be done on site

- ii) the system is no longer maintained
- b) with the computerised catalogue, a search can be done from home but there is one serious drawback. For instance, a simple search for 'Reynolds' will return 133 hits. Though these can be sorted by date, it will not, unlike the card catalogue, include variant spellings. Thus, if the search is refined, 'Reynoldes' returns 22 hits, 'Raynolds' 22 hits and 'Raynoldes' 29. This could have been rationalised when the computerised catalogue was created but, for the reason given for place names above, this was not consistently done.

Bearing these caveats in mind, there are also particular collections which can be profitably searched for the **Stratfire** project.

**ER 1/115:** Churchwardens' presentments

Published poorly in C. Hopper, *A Descriptive Account of a Series of Churchwardens' Papers etc. Appertaining to the Parish of Stratford-on-Avon*

## ***B. The National Archives***

These can be initially searched on the TNA online catalogue using the Simple Search option. Enter '**Stratford**' and '**Avon**' in the 'Search' box, limit the date range to 1550-1650, and in the 'Held by' box click '**The National Archives only**'. This will yield 154 references. To make life easier you can then sort these by reference and download them (I prefer as a webpage). These will include:

- PROB** Register copies of forty-four Stratford Wills  
Facsimiles downloadable from TNA website  
Edited and published in *Stratford Wills* (see above)
- STAC/8** Star Chamber records
- C1-8** Court of Chancery cases

But Stratford material survives in many other places than the 154 references caught by a simple place-name web search. Examples are:

- E 179** Lay subsidy records  
Poorly edited, [Halliwell, J.O.], *Extracts from the Ancient Subsidy Rolls ... in Respect of the Inhabitants of Stratford-on-Avon* (London 1864)
- PC 2** Registers of the Acts of the Privy Council: these are published and indexed in 46 volumes, from 1542 to 1631. They are also accessible on line:  
<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/search/series/acts-privy-council>
- SP 10-17** State Papers. These are well calendared and indexed in published volumes, as *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series*, 1547-1625 (12 vols), 1625-1649 (23 vols)
- C 66/799-2906** Patent Rolls, Edward VI-Charles 1: for much of the period, these are calendared with indexes as *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, either in vols published by TNA or by the List and Index Society.
- E 377** Recusant rolls

The National Archives website can also be used as a guide to locate Stratford material held by other bodies. For this choose '**All other archives**' when you reach the 'Held by' box as described above. This will yield 992 references, most of which will be to SBT but these can be edited out.

## ***C. Warwickshire CRO***

Records deposited here can first be tackled via the on-line catalogue

(<http://archivesunlocked.warwickshire.gov.uk/CalmView/advanced.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog>)

Entering 'Stratford' and 'Avon' in the text box and 1550-1650 as a date range gives 40+ references. However, there is more than these to be checked and this can only be done through their on-site card catalogue. These will include:

**CR 1886** Some papers from Warwick Castle muniments in the 1590s when Fulk/Edward Greville were leading Warwickshire figures. Includes the draft of the return of recusants in 1592 (see edited versions by Tobias and Hodgetts in the list of published source material above) and a full copy of the December 1595 corn survey, only poorly edited in MA 5.

## ***D. Worcestershire CRO***

### **i) Wills and inventories proved at Worcester**

Edited and published in *Stratford Wills* and *Stratford Inventories* (see below)

### **ii) Visitation records and other diocesan material**

The online catalogue is not very helpful as it excludes diocesan records.

## ***E. Kent CRO***

**U269/** Papers arising out of the lordships of Stratford and Old Stratford from c. 1590 as a result of the vesting of the manor, from c. 1620, in Arthur Ingram and Lionel Cranfield, earl of Middlesex. These include:

- i) **Q22:** Act book of the Stratford Peculiar Court with other papers.  
Microfilm at SBT  
Calendared in Brinkworth, *Shakespeare and the 'Bawdy Court' of Stratford*
- ii) **M76-77, 79-80:** manorial records, Stratford and Old Stratford, 1623-69
- iii) **O/270:** official papers arising out of the lordship, 1591-1696
- iv) **E/247-51, 53:** estate papers, 1609-68
- v) **T:** title deeds and leases to Stratford properties

Catalogue searchable at <https://www.kentarchives.org.uk/>

Microfilm of some of these are at SBT.

Transcripts of some of U259/M, O, E references in RB/M8.

Compiled by Robert Bearman  
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