

## THE STRATFIRE PROJECT

### The Falcon Hotel (Nos 1-3 Chapel St)

#### Documentary History (version 15.3.2026)

1. The documented history (in terms of will, deeds and other documents of title) of the site of the Falcon (Nos 1-3 Chapel St) begins on 17 May 1624 when it featured amongst the properties included in the will of the wealthy Stratford woollen draper, William Walford. He described it as then made up of two tenements, in the occupancies of Richard Robins and Thomas Cleaver, which he left to his youngest son, Francis Walford. William was buried six days later, on 23 May 1624, and the will was proved on 9 June following. As the timbers of the existing building have recently been dated between the winter of 1621/22 and the spring of 1622, this could indicate that it was probably Francis who rebuilt the inherited premises as a single structure (but see below for a reinterpretation of its earlier history which would link it more closely with his father William). When, on 13 November 1640, Francis Walford mortgaged the larger of the two sections to raise £50, it was described as late in the tenure of Mrs Katherine Temple [who had recommended to her brother-in-law, Sir Thomas Temple, the excellence of John Hall's vines across the road at New Place] but then of Joseph Boles, gentleman [to whom John Hall would have bequeathed his manuscripts 'if he had been here'].
2. Francis Walford is said to have made his will (though this has not been traced) on 3 March 1641 and he was buried on 9 March. Under its terms it was stated that the corner property had passed to his 14-year-old daughter Alice who in 1645 married Richard Smith. When, in 1644, the mortgage was redeemed, a new tenant was in occupation, Edward Wagstaff. In 1655 the Smiths sold the property to Joseph Phillips, already in occupation, and it was he who, by 1661, had converted it into the Falcon.
3. The other part of the property appears to have passed to Francis's son Edward Walford who is recorded as apparently living there at least during the years 1655-1662. He was buried on 14 November 1664 after which the house, further subdivided, passed into the possession of William Bradfield.
4. The recent architectural study has established that the second (originally jettied) storey was later cut back flush with the first storey. According to James Halliwell, writing in 1864, the outward appearance of the building had been transformed twice in the past hundred years. A crude drawing by John Jordan of c.1790 (Fig. 1) apparently shows the Falcon as still timber-framed, with jetties at first and second floor. A drawing by Samuel Ireland, published in 1795, suggests the same. However, in 1806 (Fig. 2), just inside the right margin of R.B. Wheeler's 'reconstructed' view of New Place, the Falcon is shown as re-fronted with only one jetty between the ground and first floor. A slightly later and better drawing, by James Saunders confirms this, showing a frontage with two bay windows, and doorway between, on the ground floor, and above the single jetty two rows of three windows at first and second floor levels (Fig. 3). At a later date this elevation underwent a further change (the second of Halliwell's re-frontings) when five sets of twin pilaster strips were added at first and second floor levels to the section of the building on the corner of Scholars Lane (Fig. 4).
5. There is a documentary reference in 1795 to the renovation and improvement of the smaller of the two properties, which by then had been further sub-divided. Given the evidence of the

drawings, this could well relate to the first refronting of the whole building, although, if it affected both parts of the present structure, it would have involved co-operation between the two freeholders between whom the ownership was by then divided. The further alterations to the Falcon, on the corner, carried out by 1864, probably followed the purchase of the freehold by the tenant John Ashfield, who thereafter was listed in local directories as a hotel keeper.(Fig. 4)



Fig. 1

John Jordan's view, c. 1790



Fig. 2

R.B. Wheler's view,  
1806



Fig. 3  
James Saunders, view.  
c. 1825



Fig 4.  
C. 1865

## Earlier history of the site

As already explained (Para.1), it had been assumed that the dendrochronological date suggested that the property was rebuilt as a single structure by Edward Walford in 1624, shortly after inheriting it from his father William Walford. However, research carried out as part of the Stratfire project has linked several new buildings with William Walford: for example, Nos 17-18 High Street, Nos. 19-21 High Street, the Five Gables (part of the Shakespeare Hotel) in Chapel St, and Nash's House (also in Chapel St). In at least one case, we know that the 1594/5 fires had affected the building and that William Walford had only rebuilt it in its entirety in shortly after he acquired it nearly twenty years later.

Given this background, the following evidence can be used to track an earlier building on the site of the Falcon back to a least the time of the 1594/5 fires. This would explain why one of the collectors was Richard Dixon alias Waterman, in turn suggesting that initial repairs may have been carried out to meet urgent need but that larger-scale rebuilding did not happen until William Walford came on the scene. The evidential steps are given here in reverse order.

- i) Dendrochronological date of the winter of 1621/22 and the spring of 1622 for the main structural timbers
- ii) Land of William Walford in the tenure of Richard Robins on the south and west of No. 4 Chapel Street, 7.11.1621
- iii) Widow [Margaret] Waterman, assessed at 12d in parish rate, for house in Chapel St, 7.4.1618
- iv) Widow Margaret Waterman find 2d for keeping alehouse, 6.9.1615
- v) Burial of Mr Richard Dixon, 12.9.1613
- vi) scene of a well-documented alleged murder in April 1608 by Lewis Gilbert of Richard Waterman's son, Thomas. Gilbert had apparently been playing at cards on the premises but refused to pay his losses. When Richard Waterman attempted to throw him out, his son Thomas came to his assistance but Gilbert stabbed him with a dagger '15 inches long' (April 1608).
- vii) Mr Richard Waterman presented for selling ale contrary to the statute form Chapel/ Church Street ward (3.9.1606)
- viii) Richard Waterman named as a licenced "tippler" of Chapel St (8.1.1606)
- ix) Richard Waterman first presented at petty sessions as an inn keeper, including selling ale in small measures and allowing unlawful games, 17.4.1602
- x) In Corporation meeting Richard Waterman listed as collecting relief with Richard Quiney in Northamptonshire for fire-damage to houses in Stratford, 25.10.1594