



Stratford-upon-Avon's
HISTORIC SPINE

Nos. 19-21 High Street

Stratford-upon-Avon is famous for its many timber-framed buildings but one of the finest, standing on the corner of High Street and Sheep Street, doesn't always get the attention it deserves.



Above: Nos.19-21 High Street today. Photo: Dick Prior

Right: No.21 High Street, after restoration, under its new owner, J.S. Robb. Nos.19-20 were still waiting for the same treatment (as was Nos.17-18 further down the street!)

Below Inset: A drawing of Nos.19-20 High Street in the mid 1830s, showing how it looked after its conversion into two shops, one (on the left) for the sale of boots and shoes and the other of toys.

It may once have had four gables, now reduced to two, and is currently divided into three units, the Hathaway Tea Rooms and the chemist with the one between unoccupied. But taken together, they make up one of those fine buildings substantially reconstructed after the town fires of 1594/95, clear evidence of the wealth of the leading burgesses of the day. Quite who owned the site at the time of the fires is not entirely clear but by 1614 the new building on it belonged to William Walford, a wealthy woollen-draper, who on his death in 1624 held an astonishing twenty freehold properties in the town centre together with several other leasehold properties. He lived, not in Nos. 19-21 High Street, but in Nos. 17/18 next door (Blacks).

Walford settled in Stratford in 1598 on his marriage to Ann Badger and quickly established himself in the town. He was elected onto the Corporation in 1601 and

served as high bailiff in 1610/11 and again in 1620/21. We don't know exactly when he set about buying up his town centre properties but he was living in Nos. 17/18 High Street by 1611, which he was said to have rebuilt, and must have acquired the neighbouring house at about the same time. There are early signs that he was already looking to make money out of it: in his will, it is described as divided up into three units, leased out to George Colchester, Thomas Gunn and David Ainge. On his death, Walford left most of his freehold property to his eldest son, Richard, who himself died in 1635 leaving two daughters as co-heiresses. They both married and moved away from Stratford, selling off their Stratford properties. Nos. 19-21 High Street passed to John Perkins whose two grandchildren, in the 1720s, we find dividing up the property between them. By then, what we know today as Nos' 19-20, was an inn under the name of



the George, with access to the rear through a passageway which still survives today. No. 21, known as the Little House, was tenanted by William Posgate.

