



The changing face of a

STRATFORD

House... No. 16 Church Street

In this series about buildings along Stratford's Historic Spine I have had a lot to say about the early re-fronting of old timber-framed buildings with stucco and, later, the removal of this stucco to reveal what was thought to have been the building's original appearance. But a few buildings have not been given this 'back-to-the-past' treatment, probably because the work of re-fronting was done in real style. Nowhere is this more obvious than with The Church Street Townhouse (No. 16), on the corner of Scholars Lane: this tells the story of not just one face-lift but two.

At heart, No.16 Church Street is a fine timber-framed building probably dating back to the late sixteenth century. You can see this simply by looking at its gable end along Scholars Lane. For a hundred years it belonged to four generations of the Sadler family, represented (unhelpfully) by four successive Johns. John I, who died in 1582, was a man of some wealth, owner not only of No. 16 and adjoining property in Church Street but also the town mills on the Avon and the Bear Inn at the bottom of Bridge Street. John II, died 1625, went through hard times, being removed from his post of alderman in 1614 due to his 'decayed state'. John III, who blotted his copybook by fathering an illegitimate child, had meanwhile taken himself off to London where he prospered as a grocer. With his brother-in-law and fellow London 'exile', Richard Quiney, he gave a mace to the Stratford Corporation in 1632. On his death in

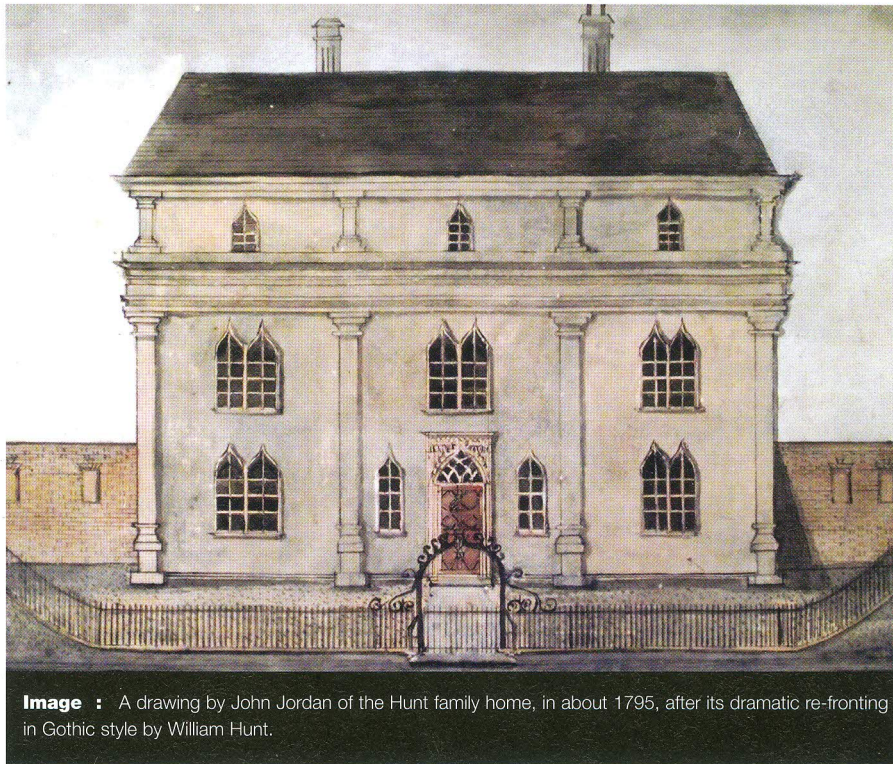


Image : A drawing by John Jordan of the Hunt family home, in about 1795, after its dramatic re-fronting in Gothic style by William Hunt.

1659 his Church Street house passed to his son, John IV, who eventually sold it off in 1689.

In these later years, the house was let out to a series of town gentry, including in 1670, a well-to-do lawyer, Abraham Bailey, who was paying tax on a house with ten hearths, making it, with New Place, the second largest private house in the town.

For much of the next half century, the property was owned by the Clopton

family but in 1758 it was sold to the 27-year-old William Hunt. He was a younger son of the wealthy John Hunt of Tanworth-in-Arden, busily establishing himself as a solicitor in Stratford, which included his appointment in 1753 as the town clerk. A man of great energy, he first threw himself into the rebuilding of the Town Hall in 1767, and then became the local driving force behind the famous Garrick Jubilee held in the town in 1769. Indeed, for those three days in September David Garrick stayed at his house, which in 1768 Hunt had refronted in flamboyant Gothic style (see illustration) complete with ogee-headed windows. There was nothing else like it in the town at the time (nor since) but one or two nearby country houses have these features, including Alscot Park, remodelled in very similar style a few years earlier for James West, closely involved in the Jubilee. Hunt certainly knew him, and helped to sort out his estate after he died, so he might well have asked him for advice.

Image : The Hunt family home, as drawn by Bradford Rudge in the late 1830s. The second re-fronting kept the ogee-headed windows but introduced battlements. Note that the Scholars Lane timber-framed gable end was still stuccoed over

