

THE STRATFIRE PROJECT

Nos 19-21 High St, Stratford-upon-Avon

Documentary History (version 4.7.2024)

1. Nos 19-21 High St is of a single build, though for a long time divided into two units. It was a freehold property and the earliest surviving document to clarify its title is the will of William Walford made in 1624 (*Stratford Wills*, i, No. 175). However, it stands between properties on the sites of Nos 17-18 and No. 22, both held by the Guild of the Holy Cross and, after 1553, by the Stratford Corporation. In surviving leases of these two properties, Nos 19-21 is often given as an abuttal, throwing additional light on its history. In 1436, for instance, it is described as the house of Richard Hubaud abutting on No. 22 (BRT 1/2/466), and in 1481 by a second Richard (BRT 1/2/413). The Hubaud family of Ipsley was of some standing and its members frequently involved in Stratford affairs, including ownership of several properties in the town.
2. No evidence has been located for the property's descent in the sixteenth century but in 1618 it is described as William Walford's house as the southerly abuttal of Nos 17-18 and in 1619 as the northerly abuttal of No. 22 (BRU 8/9/25; BRU 8/9/28). As already explained, it next features in Walford's will, made on 17 May 1624, six days before his burial.
3. William Walford is a crucial figure in Stratford's history at the turn of the sixteenth century. He was a mercer by trade but was not certainly involved in the town's affairs until his marriage to Ann Badger on 18 December 1595 (*Registers of Stratford-on-Avon: Marriages*, 17). From the following year he makes regular appearances in Stratford's court of record. His place of birth is uncertain although he was apparently descended from Edward Walford of Evenlode who, in 1557 married the widow of Thomas Phillips (*Stratford Wills*, i, No. 37). Their daughter Elizabeth married Richard Quiney (*Registers of Stratford-on-Avon: Marriages*, 9). Indeed, on one occasion Richard Quiney refers to Walford as his cousin.
4. It is not clear where Walford first lived on his arrival in Stratford but by 1624, when he made his will it is clear that he owned the freehold of nearly twenty town properties with an interest in the leases of three others (*Stratford Wills*, i, No. 175). These were mainly divided between his two sons, Richard and Francis. From 1611, he lived at Nos 17-18 High street as a tenant of the Corporation, which he rebuilt after earlier fire damage. He, or his son, Francis also rebuilt what is now the Falcon Hotel in Chapel Street, with timber felled over the winter of 1621/22 (Martin Bridge and Cathy Tyers, *Falcon Hotel, Chapel Street, Stratford-upon-Avon: Tree-ring Analysis of Elm and Oak Timbers*, 2019); and by the time of his death he had also acquired the freehold of No. 22 Chapel Street.
5. However, also bequeathed to his son Richard is a freehold property listed as 'a howse or tenement house in the High Streete now in the tenure of George Colchester, Master Thomas [Gunne] and Davie Aynge' (*Stratford Wills*, i, 353). As no other freehold property in High Street is included in the will, it is reasonable to identify this as the same tenement (Nos 19-21 High St), as confirmed by later abuttals. For example, in 1649 it was described as the inheritance of William Walford deceased to the south of Nos 17/18, and in 1652 as Richard Walford's house on the north of No. 22. This would imply that what might at first appear to have been a substantial single residence was from the start intended to be divided up as a speculation. This would also explain why Nos 19-21, though owned as a single entity until 1728, in fact was comprised of at least two units. George Colchester and David Ainge are also included in a parish levy of April 1618, their names listed between William Walford (Nos 17-18) and John Smith (No. 22).
6. Although William Walford bequeathed Nos 19-21 to his elder son Richard, it came with a life-time interest of his mother Ann in a third part of the property. Richard died in 1635, confirmed

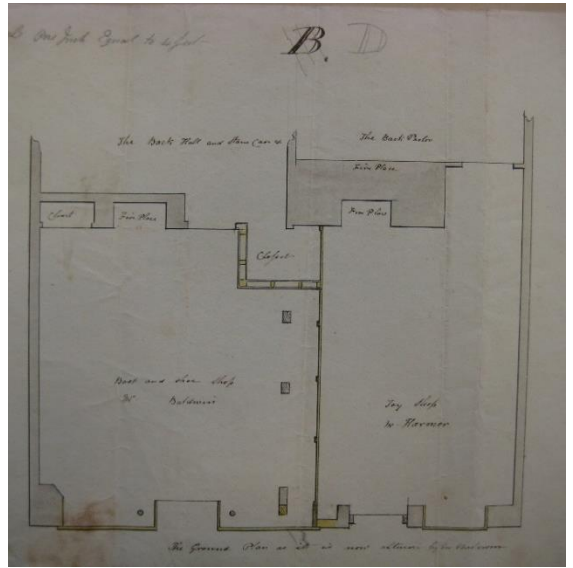
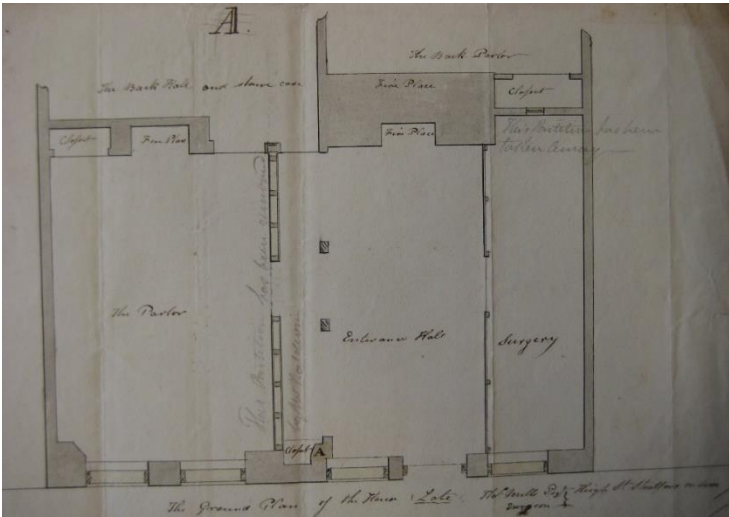
as owner of Nos 19-21 by his outdated payment of a 12d. chief rent due to the lord of the manor in 1637, and in 1675 when as a northerly abuttal to No. 22 it was described as belonging to the heir of Richard Walford (Kent Archive Centre, U269/E249/6; BRU 8/9/40). He appears to have left no will but in 1656, in a deed affecting property in Ely Street, Ann and Priscilla are named as the daughters and co-heiresses of Richard Walford late of Stratford-upon-Avon, woollen-draper, Ann (baptised 1629) having married John Edwards, late of Stratford-upon-Avon but by 1656, of London, baker, with Priscilla (baptised 1631) given as the wife of Bartholomew Bull of Coventry, clothier (DR 237/6; *Registers of Stratford-on-Avon: Baptisms*, 114, 117).

7. There is little surviving evidence how the property descended for the next twenty or thirty years. In the Hearth Tax returns, two occupiers are given, Jonathan Newbury with six hearths and Thomas Mills with five, though they may only have been tenants of Richard Walford's heirs who could have retained an interest in the property as late as 1675 (see Para. 6). However, in 1723 there was talk of dividing the freehold between Francis Burt and William Wall, yeomen of Hampton Lovett, in Worcestershire, whose fathers (of the same names) had married Ann and Elizabeth, daughters and co-heiresses, of 'John Perkins of Stratford-upon-Avon deceased'. However, Stratford's parish registers do not include Perkins's burial nor the marriages of either of his daughters, making it difficult to establish how the premises had passed from Walford's descendants to Perkins. In a later deed, Perkins was described as a 'woolman' and may therefore have been the John Perkins, 'wool driver' occurring in Waterside in 1657 and even the 'fellmonger' of 1618 (ER 3/1962; BRU 6/13/4. See also BRU8/13/5).
8. A preliminary agreement was made on 13 May 1723 whereby the larger section (now Nos 19-20), a public house known as the George, was to pass to Francis Burt, with the 'Little House' (No. 21), 'on the south side of the entry that divides the tenements' allotted to William Wall. This was confirmed on 13 February following (DR 325/2755/6-7). Then, on 27 March 1728, Francis Burt (in fact, the son of the Francis Burt of the 1723 agreement who had died in the interval) sold the George, in the tenure of John Harris, to Daniel Yeates of Hampton Lovett, gentleman (DR 1030/1/14). Included is a useful description of its layout, viz. a large hall on the north side of the passageway between Nos 19-20 and No. 21, a street parlour, a room called the 'dark parlour' with a large cellar below, a little parlour, and a kitchen and brewhouse. Upstairs were an unspecified number of chambers, with 'two rooms over them and two cocklofts', also a loft over the brewhouse, three stables with lofts over two of them and other outbuildings. The property measured 34ft on the street and extended eastwards 181ft 3ins to include a garden. The rooms over the passageway were to pass to the Little House on the south but a right of passage was reserved for users of the George.
9. Ten years later, in 1738, William Wall sold the 'Little House' (No. 21) to William Lees, a periwig maker and later that year Lees agreed with Pasham that 'whereas they had recently bought two adjoining houses in High Street', there should be an exchange of specified pieces of backland and their uses to resolve the 'great inconveniences' which have arisen (DR 1030/1/14).
10. Nos 19-20 High Street were owner/occupied by barber/surgeons from 1750 to 1835, namely Robert Carruthers, William Smith, Richard Walls, Thomas Nott and Thomas Mills. However, in 1798 Nott purchased the freehold of No. 21, thus reuniting the building under a single ownership (DR 1030/1/14). By doing so, however, Nott had clearly over-reached himself and, under his will of 1802, the property, heavily mortgaged, was left to his brother John, who sold both parts off separately, No. 21 in 1803 and Nos 19-20 in 1804, though in both cases to the same purchaser, Thomas Mills (DR 1030/1/14). Thomas Mills died in 1835 leaving Nos. 19-20 to his grandson, Thomas Mills (son of Samuel Mills) and No. 21 to his son Samuel, for life, with reversion to his wife Charlotte for life, then to their second son John (DR 1030/1/14).

11. Thomas Mills, who inherited Nos 19-20 immediately on his grandfather's death, had already moved away from Stratford and by 1846 had let the property to William Baldwin, a shoemaker. At around this time, the ground floor and its elevation to the street were remodelled and plans show the layout and appearance of the building before and after these alterations (ER 23/2/51, 52; **Figs 1-4**). Mills's property, entered by an off-centre door into a hall, earlier has a surgery to the south and a parlour to the north. After alterations, the former parlour, now encroaching on the former hall, became a shoe shop and the surgery (and remaining part of the old hall) was converted to a toyshop run by a Mr Harmer. The upper stories were not affected.
12. John Mills (died 1835), as explained above, left No. 21, to his son Samuel, Samuel's wife Charlotte and their second John. Samuel died in 1846 but by 1861 his wife Charlotte was still living. In the meantime, in 1864, their son John died intestate leaving his elder brother Thomas, the owner of Nos 19-20, his heir at law, but subject to Charlotte's life tenancy (DR 1030/1/14).
13. In the early nineteenth century a layer of stucco was added to many of Stratford's timber-framed buildings and this was removed some hundred years later. Nos 19-21 experienced both these transformations, clearly initiated by c. 1820 (**Fig. 5**) and with the stucco still in place, c. 1906 (**Fig. 6**). In 1913 the stucco was removed from No. 21 and similar treatment was given later to Nos 19-20 (**Figs 7-8**).

Robert Bearman

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Figs 1-4

Nos 19-20 High St, c. 1845: plans and elevations before (above) and after (below) alterations to the ground floor (ER 23/2/51, 52).

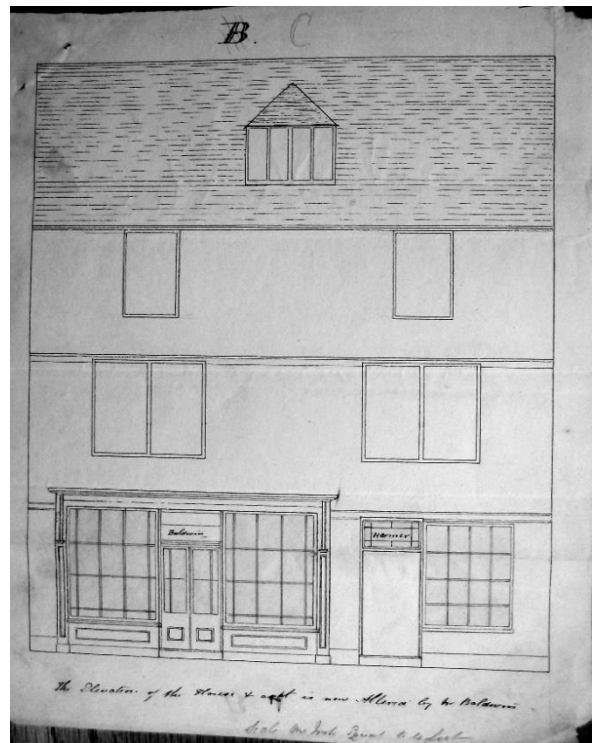
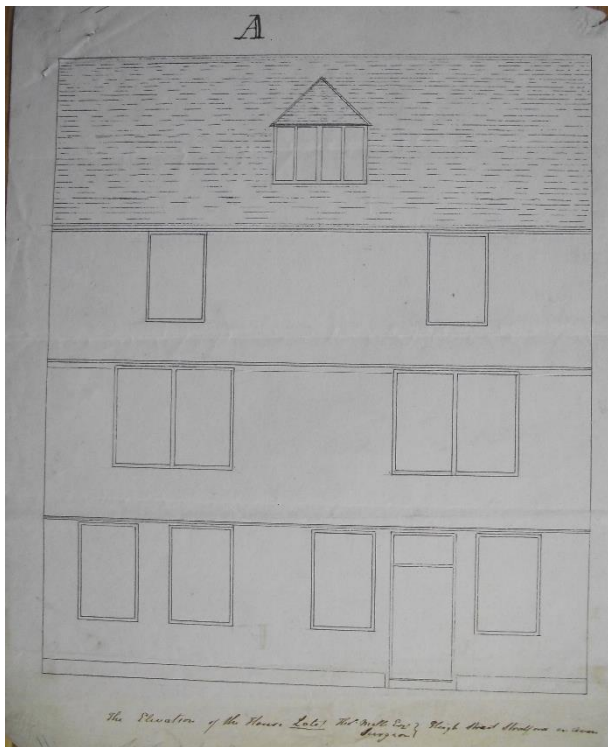




Fig. 5: from engraved view of High St, c. 1820

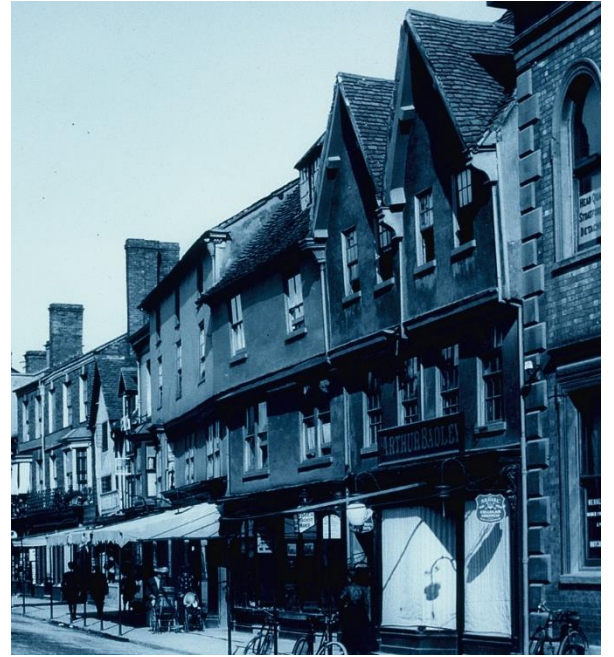


Fig. 6: Layer of stucco still in place, c. 1910



Fig. 7: The stucco was removed from No. 21 in 1913



Fig. 8: by c.1950, Nos 19-20 also exposed