

## THE STRATFIRE PROJECT

### No. 1 High Street, Stratford-upon-Avon

#### Documentary History (version 27.6.2024)

1. By 1440/41 the freehold of the plot of land on the corner of High St and Bridge St (on which No. 1 High St now stands) belonged to the Guild of the Holy Cross. In that year the aldermen of the Guild ordered that the Master, Thomas Leeke, should within a year, rebuild one of its houses at the corner of High St beside a tenement of John Medbourne, a cardmaker (*Guild Register*, 165, 464). This seems to have been observed as in the accounting year 1442/3 the Guild paid £15 to a carpenter for building a house on the site (BRT 1/3/50). Two years later it allowed 3s. 4d. to buy a hood for John Smith, 'taylour', as a reward for finishing 'le plasterynge' of the same tenement (BRT 1/3/52). For an earlier history of the site, see **Appendix 1**. From 1381 this includes mention of a cellar which may be relevant to the present study as the building on the site today has such a feature, retained perhaps from an earlier structure on the site.
2. This new tenement was divided into two sections. In March 1445, when the Guild leased the southerly of these units to Richard Barker, tailor, and Elizabeth his wife, for 20 years at 16s. 8d., it was described as half a tenement with a tavern below in High St between a tenement late of Thomas Medbourne, card maker, and then Alice his widow, on the one side, and the other half of the said tenement next to Bridge St (i.e. on the corner) on the other (BRT 1/2/488). This northerly half had been leased by 1446 to Roger Murdac, a corviser, for 20 shillings (BRT 1/3/121). Barker remained tenant of the 16s. 8d. unit until 1460. The other unit was in the tenure of John Walton, also a tailor, by 1452 and then successively of John Avys of the same trade in 1456 and then William Sampson, a corviser, in 1460 (BRT 1/3/123-5).
3. Guild rentals record the new tenants in each of the two units until 1468 when there was a change in how the premises were described, namely, as a tenement where Lawrence Suger lived, at a reduced rent of 10s. instead of 16s., and a tenement annexed to Suger's house in the tenure of William Sampson, also at a reduced rent of 13s. instead of 18s. (BRT 1/3/128-30). However, from 1474, Thomas Blakeman, a corviser, was listed as paying the combined rent of 26s. 8d. for the two adjoining tenements, first called the Cage in 1472 (BRT 1/3/132-5, 137-41). Blakeman was replaced by Thomas Michael (Mihell) by 1485 (BRT 1/3/143). He was granted a new lease of the tenement 'opposite the High Cross' (on the corner of High St and Wood St) for twenty-one years at the same rent and was still tenant in 1500/01 (BRT 1/2/523; BRT 1/3/145, 148). He was followed by Oliver Lightfoot by 1530, and by Thomas Bell by 1546 (BRT 1/3/150-3) but paying a reduced rent of 23s.4d. It retained the name of the Cage until at least 1689.
4. The Guild of the Holy Cross was suppressed in 1536 and its properties forfeited to the Crown. Then, under its charter of incorporation, these properties were granted to the Stratford Corporation, mainly to provide an income to support the school and almshouses and to pay the vicar's stipend. The building on the site of No. 1 High St was included in this grant and thereafter there is a more or less unbroken series of leases to a succession of Corporation tenants, supplemented by the payment of annual rents in the chamberlains' accounts.
5. On 20 August 1559 the Corporation let the property to a widow, Joan [Jone] West, although it was said to have been occupied by her and Thomas Bell, suggesting that the property may still have been divided into two units. The lease was for forty years at the rent of 23s. 4d. (BRU 8/9/1). Agnes West, presumably a relative, was paying this rent in 1561 (*Minutes & Accounts*, i, 111). By November 1582 a

butcher, Anthony Wolston, had taken over the lease described as 'one mesuage or Tenement Cum pertinentiis vocatum le Caydge graunted unto Jone West as by an indenture therof made bearinge date the xx<sup>th</sup> day of August Anno Regine nostre Elizabeth etc. primo [i.e. 20 August 1559]' (BRU 15/7/107). In the same year Wolston's house was described as having 'the southend decayed' and 'lacking a sell in backyard' (*Minutes & Accounts*, iii, 108). He continued to hold the lease on the same terms and rent until 1601 (*Minutes & Accounts*, i, 89; v, 32, 74, 116, 130; vi, 57, 89).

6. Wolston was therefore the tenant of the property at the time of the 1594/5 fires and in a survey of Corporation property of April 1599 it was recorded that 'Anthoni Woolston holdeth the Cage far out of repaire in tileworke and walls within and without' with a later note: 'Anthony must have warning accordinge to his lease' (*Minutes & Accounts*, vi, 71).
7. The old lease of 1559 for 40 years was at that point due to expire. On 27 February 1601 the Corporation therefore decided to grant Wolston, then in arrears with his rent to the tune of 20s., a new lease for twenty-one years from next Christmas at the higher rent of 40s. on condition that the arrears were repaid on the day that the lease was sealed (*Minutes & Accounts*, vi, 126). This was dated 8 May and sealed on 2 September (BRU 8/9/6; *Minutes & Accounts*, vi, 144). However, on 9 May 1602, Wolston had already assigned half of the property to Henry Wilson, a whittawer, 'for a certain sum of money', implying that this was how the arrears were paid off (BRU 8/9/7). By 2 July 1604, for a further £10, Wolston quitclaimed to Wilson any of his remaining rights in the property (BRU 8/9/9). Two years later, on 2 July 1604 Wilson assigned the lease to William Chandler, a mercer (BRU 8/9/10). These changes are reflected in the rents paid: for 1602 they were shared between Wolston and Wilson, for 1603 were paid by Wilson alone, for 1604 shared between Wilson and Chandler, and for 1605 by Chandler alone (*Minutes & Accounts*, vi, 211, 280, 325, 355). Wolston moved to No. 2 High St where he was named as the occupant in 1610 and his son John in 1626 (BRU 8/9/18, 31).
8. For the following 120 years the tenure of No. 1 High St (and 19 Bridge St, a freehold property adjoining) was associated with the Quiney family (see **Appendix 2** for further evidence of this). On 8 November 1604 William Chandler had married Elizabeth the daughter of the late Richard Quiney who had died in May 1602 (*Marriages*, 21). In April 1606, when Chandler surrendered the lease that had been assigned to him in July 1604, he was granted a lease in his own name (*Minutes & Accounts*, vi, 331; BRU 8/9/12). This was renewed in January 1616 for a further thirty-one years (BRU 8/9/22).
9. Thomas Quiney, another child of the same Richard Quiney, had become Chandler's brother-in-law as the result of the 1604 marriage (Para. 8). Since 1613, Thomas had been trading as a vintner at another leasehold property belonging to the Corporation (today's No. 36 High St). By the summer of 1616, a few months after his marriage to Judith daughter of William Shakespeare, Chandler and Quiney had evidently been parties to a wider family settlement, probably co-ordinated by the widowed Elizabeth Quiney, Thomas's mother and Chandler's mother-in-law. This affected both Nos 1 and 36 High St, whereby Thomas Quiney exchanged his lease of No. 36 High Street for Chandler's lease of No. 1 (BRU 8/9/23, 24) to hold for a further thirty-one years.
10. Thomas and Judith Quiney had three sons, Shakespeare, Thomas and Richard, all of whom had died by 1639 (Burials, 92, 133-4). Their father, Thomas, did not prosper. Even by November 1630 he had applied to the Corporation to 'passe away his estate and Terme of yeeres yet to come in the house called the Caidge' to Thomas Combe, a local landholder (BRU 2/3, p. 36). This may not have happened, or perhaps represented a loan which was repaid, but two years later the Corporation agreed that Thomas's lease could be renewed 'for 61 yeeres from Michaelis last att the usuall rent of 40<sup>s</sup> per annum' (BRU 2/3, p. 66). However, relatives of Thomas Quiney's wife, Judith, perhaps aware that she could be left without an income if Thomas predeceased her, intervened and ensured that the lease, sealed on 13 March 1633 for sixty-one years, was made to them instead, namely, John Hall and

Richard Watts (her brothers-in-law) and Thomas Nash (John Hall's son-in-law). John Hall paid the necessary entry fine of £6 13s. 4d. for the tenement, still called the Cage, and in the tenure of Thomas Quiney but with the proviso that it was not to be assigned by these four trustees except for the benefit of Quiney's wife and children (BRU 2/3, p. 72; BRU 8/9/33; BRT 2/1, p. 115). This was similar to a standard clause incorporated in many Corporation leases at the time, to prevent tenants from assigning their lease to non-family members. However, it differs in the requirement that this restriction is placed not on Quiney but on his trustees.

11. The details of the next steps in the descent of the Quiney family's interests not only in the leasehold property at No. 1 High Street but also in the more general dispersal of its properties, is not entirely clear but in December 1652 the Corporation agreed to a new lease of the High St property (together with the tithes of Drayton) to Thomas Quiney's elder brother Richard, a London grocer, for 41 years but at the increased annual rent of 60s. (BRU 2/3, p. 368). The original of this lease has not survived but there is no doubt that it was made (BRT 2/1, p. 141). Richard Quiney died four years later, bequeathing the leasehold of No. 1 High St to his son Thomas, a London brewer, for the residue of forty-one years (*Stratford Wills*, ii, 40). This lease was renewed to Thomas on 8 April 1685 (and again on 8 April 1689), by which time it had been sub-let to William Martin, a barber (BRU 8/9/43, 50; BRT 2/1, p. 169a). On his death in 1701 Thomas Quiney bequeathed his leasehold interest to his sister Elizabeth Pyle wife of Richard Pyle of Edmonton, Middx., for life, with reversion to his niece Eleanor Richardson, wife of Joshua Richardson, clerk, vicar of all Hallows, again for life, and on her decease to kinsman Joshua Richardson, eldest son of his niece Eleanor Richardson and his heirs male or in default to George Richardson, her second son (TNA, PROB 11/460/351). It was this George, of London, esq., to whom on 26 November 1729 the Corporation granted a new lease, still in Martin's tenure, for 41 years at an annual rent of 40s. (BRU 8/9/52).
12. Quite how long Richardson, as a descendant of the Quiney family retained his interest in No. 1 High St is currently uncertain but on 14 December 1770 the Corporation formally leased the premises to Nathaniel Cookes, a mercer (and then described as in his occupation), for forty-one years at 40s. rent. This lease is endorsed with a plan of the property confirming its location (BRU8/9/60). However, the rent of 40s. had been paid by Cookes to the Corporation from at least 1744, implying that Richardson's involvement in the property was short-lived.
13. On 21 May 1834 the Stratford Corporation leased the property to Thomas Ashwin, for forty-two years at the annual rent of £25, the lease endorsed with a measured plan showing Ashwin's property to the east in Bridge St (BRU 8/9/76). One of the conditions placed on Ashwin was to spend £170 on building work according to agreed specifications (see Fig. 2).
14. In 1906, Edward Fox, printer, the tenant of No.1 High St since 1888, sold the business there to W.H. Smith & Son (DR 982/39/5). In 1922 the firm surrendered the lease but nevertheless funded the restoration of the building the following year (see Figs 3- 5; wall plaque).

#### **Appendix 1: early history of the site**

1. Although the building on the site is described as new in 1445, there is a sequence of deeds in the records of Guild of the Holy Cross relating to buildings on what appears to be the same site but before the date that it came into the hands of the Guild. They include from 1381 mentions of a cellar, relevant to the present study as a cellar may have been retained from an earlier structure.

2. The earliest of these deeds dates from 8 June 1381, a grant by Thomas Otyngdon of Stratford-upon-Avon to John Taylor, junior, of the same town of a cellar (celarium) in Stratford opposite the Cross in le Heyestret, between the shops of John Wyard and Robert Egote, above which cellar John Pydele held a certain chamber and which cellar the said Thomas had by gift and feoffment of Nicholas Lacy (BRT 1/2/302-3). Nearly two years later, on 15 May 1383, Taylor, described then as cousin and heir of Master William de Shottery, conveyed to Roger de Oldberrow a cellar called Wyncellar at 'le Corner in the Hyestret' opposite the cross, which the grantor lately purchased of Thomas de Otyndon (BRT 1/2/307). A week later, on 22 May, John Pydele sold to Roger de Oldberrow a messuage situated 'in the corner of the Hyestret' opposite the Cross between the messuages of John Wyard & Rober Eycote which he had inherited after the death of John Lacy, late parson of the church of 'Estlouent' and which messuage was situated over a certain house called 'Wynceler' and which the grantor had recently recovered from Nicholas Lacy by the King's writ (BRT 1/2/306).
3. The next transaction occurred on 13 March 1399 by which time the property, or at least part of it, appears to have been vested in trustees who by a deed of that date conveyed it to John Blaunfron of Stratford, describing it as a shop with an upper room built above it in Stratford, above a cellar in which wine used to be sold which Thomas Compton held in the High St, viz that shop on the corner (opposite the tenement of Nicholas Saucer in which the said Nicholas then dwelt) and containing 17' in breadth and 13' in length (BRT 1/2/342-5). A power of attorney in favour of John Blaunfron refers to the property as a tavern with all shops and rooms built over the same (BRT 1/2/346).
4. John Blaunfron was an alderman of the Guild of the Holy Cross and its Master in 1408 and 1423/4. He last occurs in the records of the Guild in 1425/6. Whether or not he conveyed his freehold of the property to the Guild is currently unclear but it was clearly their property by 1440/1 (above, Para.1).

### **Appendix 2: joint occupancy of 1 High St and 19 Bridge St**

There is good evidence that the occupiers of No. 1 High Street also owned the freehold of No. 19 Bridge St, abutting No. 1 High St on the east. This evidence is here presented in a chronological sequence.

1. May 1637: Thomas Quiney pays 1s. chief rent for No. 1 High St and 6d. for freehold house adjoining in Bridge St (Kent Archives Centre, U269/E249/1).
2. 3.1.1657: probate of will of Richard Quiney of London, grocer, bequeathing to his son Thomas Quiney No.1 High St, as leasehold, and No. 19 Bridge St adjoining as freehold (*Stratford Wills*, ii, 40).
3. 8.4.1689: lease from Stratford Corporation to Thomas Quiney, citizen and brewer of London, of a messuage in High St called the Cage in the tenure of William Martin (BRU 8/9/50).
4. 13.6.1701: probate of will of Thomas Quiney of London, brewer, bequeathing No. 19 Bridge St in tenure of William Martin to Quiney's sister Elizabeth Pyle, wife of Richard Pyle of Edmonton, Middx., for her maintenance, for life, and the use of leasehold messuage adjoining; after her death the freehold and leasehold to pass to his niece Eleanor Richardson, wife of Joshua Richardson, clerk, vicar of all Hallows, for life, and on her decease to kinsman Joshua Richardson, eldest son of his niece Eleanor Richardson and his heirs male or in default to George Richardson, her second son and his heirs or in default to Robert Richardson or in default to he right heirs of Eleanor (TNA, PROB 11/460/351).
5. 26.11.1729: lease from Stratford Corporation to George Richardson of London, esq. of tenement in High St in the tenure of William Martin (BRU 8/9/52).

6. 14.12.1770: lease from Stratford Corporation to Nathaniel Cookes of No. 1 High St, now in his occupation, for forty-one years at an annual rent of 40s., with a plan showing property adjoining it on the east in Bridge St as also belonging to Nathaniel Cookes (BRU 8/9/60).
7. 21.5.1834: lease from Stratford Corporation to Thomas Ashwin, for 42 years at an annual rent of £25, of No. 1 High St, with a plan showing Ashwin's property in Bridge St adjoining it on the east (BRU 8/9/76).
8. 1923: plans survive for the restoration of 1923 showing the blocking off of former openings into No. 19 Bridge St (Fig.5) (BRR 49/1/659).

### **Appendix 3: visual representations**

**Fig. 1:** the earliest view of No. 1 High St is included in a general prospect from Wood St, c. 1820, showing High Street to the right and Bridge Street running into the distance. No. 1 High St, on the corner, shows no external timber framing but, given this has survived internally, the external elevations must either have been rebuilt or simply plastered or stuccoed over as happened to many buildings at that time.

**Fig. 2:** several photographic images of the building survive for the period 1890-1910, revealing a second face lift. This may have been the result of alterations when a lease of the building was being negotiated with Thomas Ashwin in 1834 (BRU 8/9/76) whereby Ashwin agreed to spend £170 on building work according to agreed specifications.

**Fig. 3:** Restoration work In progress, 1923 under plans submitted in 1923 (BRR 49/1/659).

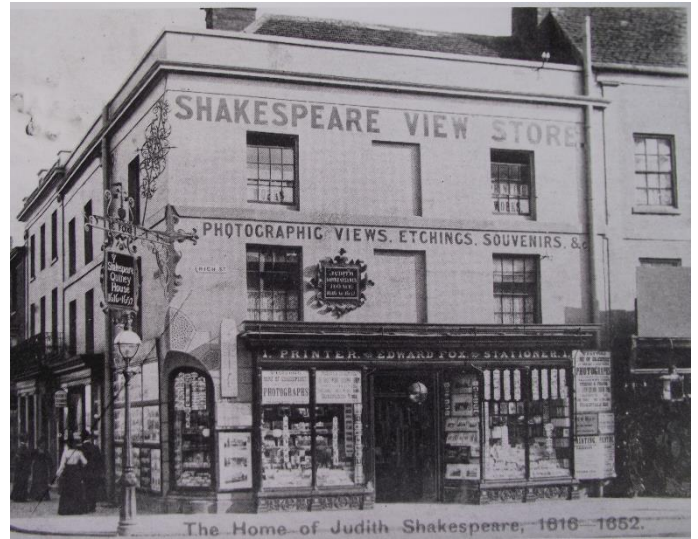
**Fig. 4:** The building, c. 1923, after restoration work had been completed.

**Fig. 5:** ground floor plan, 1923, showing proposed changes, including the closing of former openings in east wall (top) into the premises still owned by Edward Fox (BRR 49/1/659)

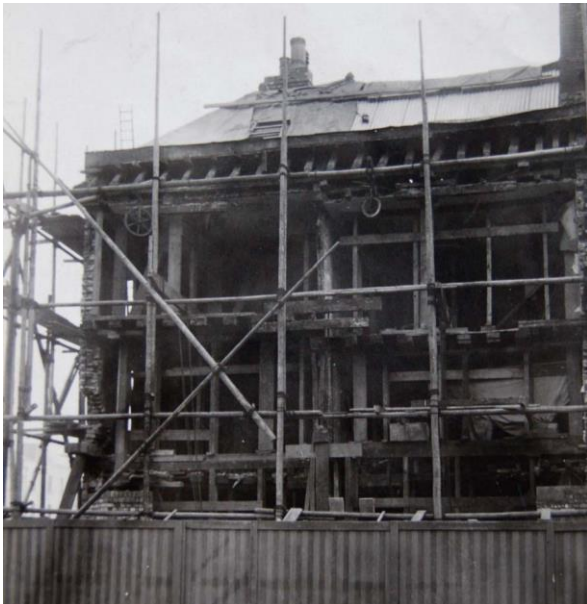
Robert Bearman  
27.6.2024



**Fig. 1: corner of High St and Wood St, c. 1820**



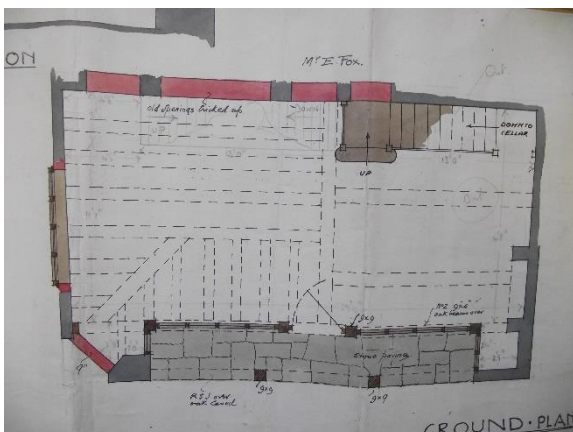
**Fig. 2: No. 1 High St, c. 1890, probably reflecting Ashwin's work in 1834**



**Fig.3: internal framing exposed during restoration of 1923.**



**Fig. 4: No. 1 High St, as restored , c. 1923**



**Fig. 5 Ground floor plan of changes to No. 1 High St, 1923, including closure of former openings in east (top) wall**