

THE STRATFIRE PROJECT

Nos 22 High Street (now demolished), Stratford-upon-Avon

Documentary history (version 11.9.2024)

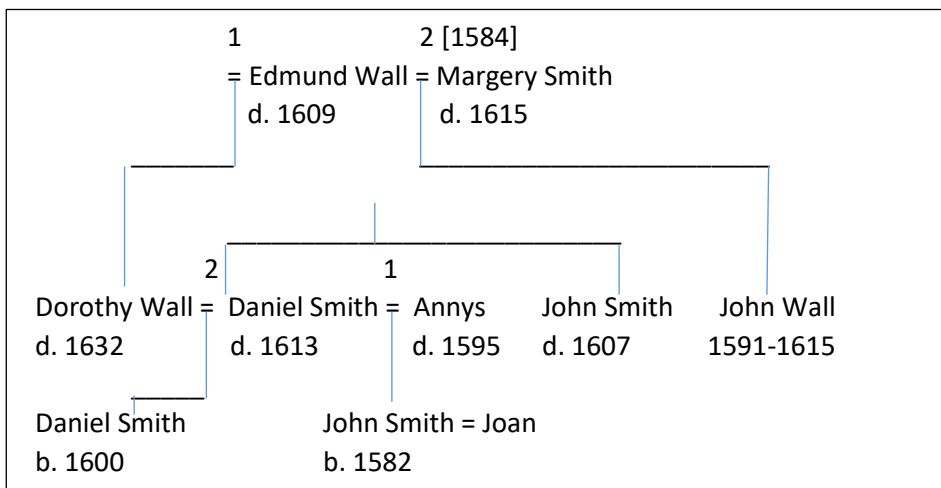
1. In 1553 Stratford-upon-Avon became an incorporated borough and, under letters patent issued by Edward VI, was granted the properties in the town previously held by the suppressed Guild of the Holy Cross. This was principally to provide the newly-appointed Corporation with an income to support the provision of a school and almshouses, earlier the responsibility of the Guild. The properties given in this way included the building which stood on the corner of High Street and Sheep Street, here numbered for convenience 22 High St. In 1855 it was replaced by a Corn Exchange and a smaller unit on the corner with Sheep St (**Fig. 1**). Both these were demolished in 1958 (**Fig 2**) and replaced in 1963-4 by the present development designed by Frederick Gibberd. The corner site itself was left vacant affording a view of the timber-framed south wall of No. 21 High St.
2. There are only a limited number of views of the building which stood on this site prior to the building of the Corn Exchange but some early prospects of the Town Hall of early nineteenth-century date include incidental views of No. 22. They show it as a jettied building of two storeys, with some visible timber framing despite re-fronting work. By that time it was also divided into two units, one of which was an inn (**Figs 3-5**).
3. The history of buildings on this corner site can be traced back into the mid fifteenth century, a period when the freehold was held by the Guild of the Holy Cross. In 1436 it was leased for ninety years to a weaver, William Ireton, at an annual rent of twenty shillings which by 1456 had been increased by 6s. 8d. to include a shop in Sheep Street, built at the east end of the plot (SCLA, BRT 1/2/466; BRT 1/3/124, 126-7, 133-6). Ireton's wife Helen remained as tenant until 1481, followed by Peter Knottesford (SCLA, BRT 1/3/137-41, 143-4, 146, 148).
4. By 1513 Adrian Quiney (1) was the new tenant, paying the 26s. 8d. rent for the remainder of the ninety-year lease of 1436 (BRT 1/3/149). Adrian died around 1533 and in 1544, his son Richard was granted a new lease, again for ninety years and at the same rent of 26s. 8d. (BRT 1/2/607). This lease passed to his son Adrian Quiney (2) who was paying the rent by 1561 (*Minutes & Accounts*, i, 111). However, by that date, he had sub-let the property to a baker, Roger Sadler.
5. Roger Sadler, first recorded in Stratford in 1552, had originally traded in Henley Street. He had joined the Common Council as a capital burgess by 1557, was quickly promoted to alderman and was to serve as high bailiff in the year in 1560/1 and again 1572/3 (*Minutes & Accounts*, i, 62, 108, 123; ii, 65). He died in 1578 and, having no children of his own, divided his real and personal estate between members of his wider family (*Stratford-upon-Avon Wills*, i, No. 56). The leasehold house in High Street, 'wherein I doe nowe dwell', was to pass to his wife Margaret for life and then to Hamnet Sadler who elsewhere in the will is described as Roger's cousin. However, he is more likely to have been his nephew, born in Solihull in 1561 (Fry, *The Register of Solihull*, 1904, 16). Though barely eighteen, it is generally believed that he had already been taken into Roger's bakery business.
6. Margaret, Roger's widow, lived until March 1595 (*Register: Burials*, 53) so Hamnet would not have immediately come into full control of the premises. Nevertheless, in a survey of Corporation property taken in 1582, Hamnet is recorded as the holder of one 'Tenement ... graunted unto Richard Quiney' in 1544 for ninety years for which he was paying the rent of 26s. 8d., as he had been doing for some years (BRU 15/7/107). He was therefore the principal

occupier of the premises at the time of the 1594/5 fires. However, there is no record that the ninety-year lease made to Richard Quiney in 1544 was ever officially assigned to him.

7. In April 1599, in a survey of Corporation property, is the following entry: 'Hamlett Sadler, a tenement on the street side containinge 4 baies tiled. On the north side of his yarde a range of 4 baies, 2 old tiled, 2 newe burnt & newe sett up bi him thatched, which should be tiled'. The next entry clearly concerns part of the same property: 'On the same lande William Hardinge hath built newe & tiled 2 baies with a faire chimnei. The old house in his owne tenure wanteth tilinge & in mani places plasteringe. Accordinge to the bredth of the strete, it boundeth on the backside on M^r George Badgers house' further down Sheep Street (now No. 46) (*Minutes & Accounts*, vi, 71-3).
8. To this clear evidence of fire damage can be added entries in an account of Richard Quiney (grandson of the lessee of 1544) of money which he and Hamnet Sadler had collected in Suffolk and Norfolk for the relief of those who had suffered in the recent Stratford fires. This amounted to £68 4s. 0d. out of which Quiney gave to Hamnet Sadler twenty shillings when they were in London and a further £8 3s. 4d. on their return (*Minutes & Accounts*, v, 135). There is other evidence that Sadler was involved in the collection of similar relief. In June 1596 he was summoned to the local court of record on the complaint of Thomas Godwin that Sadler, despite promises, had not paid him 20 shillings out of the money which he had collected in Wiltshire for fire relief (SCLA, BRU 15/4/71). Early in 1597, John Lipton complained that Sadler had not paid for the hire of a mare for twenty-four days 'to ride and work with on Hamnet's business' closely followed by a claim from William Parry who alleged that Sadler had failed to pay him 25s. 4d. for the outright purchase of a mare (BRU 14/4/90).
9. Taking this evidence together, it is clear that, in one of the recent fires, Sadler's property had been damaged but, as far as the main house of four bays facing High Street, not so seriously as to require rebuilding. However, two of the four bays of a range at the rear had been badly damaged and at the rear of the holding, abutting on a property in Sheep Street, were two bays of new building which William Harding had added to a house where he lived. That Sadler's and Harding's properties were covered by the rent of 26s. 8d. is established by a survey of 1613 wherein Sadler's property is measured at 54 feet facing High Street and running back down Sheep Street 193 feet including 'the parcell there in William Hardinges occupacion' (*Minutes & Accounts*, vii, 284-5)
10. Sadler continued to pay the 26s. 8d. rent until January 1614 but his wife Judith died two months later and Hamnet appears to have given up the lease and to have moved elsewhere in the town (*Minutes & Accounts*, vii, 303; *Register: Burials*, 86). He was buried in October 1624, leaving no will and little evidence of his subsequent career except for the well-known inclusion of his name in Shakespeare's will early in 1616 (albeit as a substitute in a re-drafting) as the recipient of money to buy a mourning ring (*Register: Burials*, 107; Thomas, *Shakespeare in the Public Records*, 32). He also witnessed the will suggesting more than a passing acquaintance. Indeed, it is generally accepted that Shakespeare's twins, Hamnet and Judith, born in 1584, were named after Hamnet and Judith Sadler, perhaps acting as godparents (*Registers: Baptisms*, 39).
11. By August 1614 the lease had been passed to Margery Wall 'and others' and it was she who paid the rent in that accounting year (*Minutes & Accounts*, vii, 329, 368-9). Born Margery Smith, she was the widow of Edmund Wall who had died in July 1609 (*Register: Marriages*, 11; *Burials*, 78). However, she herself was buried in February 1615 on the same day as John Wall, baker, usually taken to be her son, born in May 1591 (*Registers: Burials*, 87; *Baptisms*, 50). There is some evidence that assignments of such leases often required the Corporation's consent but in this instance there is little to indicate why in this case the lease passed from Hamnet Sadler to

the Wall family. Both Hamnet Sadler and John Wall were bakers but evidence of any other family or business link remains elusive.

12. In his will of February 1615 John Wall refers to a kinsman, John Smith, also a baker, and in January 1616 it is this John Smith who is recorded as paying the 26s. 8d. rent for No. 22 High Street (*Stratford-upon-Avon Wills*, i, No. 147; *Minutes & Accounts*, vii, 404). Furthermore, in 1619, on surrendering the ninety-year lease originally granted to Richard Quiney and assigned first to the Sadlers and then to Margery Wall, John Smith was granted a lease for forty years in his own name (SCLA, BRU 8/9/28).
13. The link between John Wall and his 'kinsman' John Smith, to whom the lease passed, is tortuous. An earlier John Smith, baker, had been trading at the top of Sheep Street, almost opposite No. 22 High Street (for convenience numbered here referred to as 1a Sheep Street) since at least 1582 (SCLA, BRU 15/7/107). This was also a Corporation property for which he was paying an annual rent of sixteen shillings under a lease made to Humphrey Plymley in 1574. However, this John Smith died, without issue, in October 1607, leaving a will which later gave rise to problems (*Stratford-upon-Avon Wills*, i, No. 129). One outcome was for his executors to assign Plymley's lease to another John Smith, baker, son of Daniel Smith (SCLA, BRU 8/12/7). A John son of Daniel Smith was indeed born in June 1582 (*Registers; Baptisms*, 34) and this second John Smith was the man who continued to pay the sixteen-shilling rent after 1607. In this way he ended up paying the rent for both No. 22 High Street (Para. 12) and No. 1a Sheep Street for some years.
14. John Smith's will of 1607 (Para. 12) also gave rise to a legal dispute in 1616, involving Daniel, named as the brother of the late testator, and his son John Smith the younger, in other words the testator's nephew (*Minutes & Accounts*, vii, 439-40).
15. It remains to establish why in his will of 1615 John Wall described the younger John Smith as his 'kinsman' (Para. 12). In the same will John refers to his sister Dorothy Smith, widow, the same Dorothy Smith, widow, buried in 1632 (*Registers: Burials*, 121). She was the second wife of Daniel Smith who, by his first wife (d. 1595), had had a son John born in 1592 (Para. 13). Daniel soon remarried with children born to him in 1597 and 1600 (*Registers, Burials 54; Baptisms*, 59, 63). In his own will of 1613, Daniel Smith duly names this second wife as Dorothy (*Stratford-upon-Avon Wills*, i, No. 198). John Smith (b. 1582) was therefore sufficiently, but not too distantly, related to John Wall (1591-1615) to qualify as kinsman (son of Daniel Smith by his first wife, whose second wife was John Wall's step-sister). Wall names another kinsman in his will, namely Daniel, born in 1600, son of the same Daniel but by his second wife Dorothy.



Simplified family tree to show links between the Smith and Wall families

16. In 1624 the combined rents – 26s. 8d. under High Street and 16s. under Sheep Street – were still being paid by John Smith, baker, but by 1627 by his assignee (SCLA, BRU 4/2, p. 6; BRT 2/1, p. 115). Neither John nor his wife Joan are recorded as buried in Stratford but, when in 1636/7, the lease of the Sheep Street property was surrendered, the assignee is identified as ‘Mr William Smithe haberdasher’. He is known to have lived at a house since demolished on the other side of the street (SCLA, BRU 2/3, p. 142).
17. This same assignee also continued to pay the 26s 8d rent for the High St property into the 1640s when there is a break in the rentals. However, in August 1652, a new forty-one year lease of the property was granted to John Smith of Warwick, mercer (SCLA, BRU 8/9/37), described in a survey of 1653 as the son of William Smith of Balsall, the same man identified in 1637/8 as the haberdasher (SCLA, BRT 2/1, p. 141). (Para. 16). Indeed, John is duly recorded as William’s son, baptised in July 1624 (*Register: Baptisms*, 105). However, it is at present uncertain if and how John Smith the baker of 1624 was related to John Smith of Warwick, son of William Smith, the haberdasher of 1637/8 and 1652/3.
18. In 1675 John Smith’s lease of No. 22 High was renewed, this time for a further fifty-one years (SCLA, BRU 8/9/40). The date of John’s death has not yet been established but this had occurred by early 1711 when a new lease was made in favour of his nephew, Christopher Smith, the incumbent of Clifford Chambers (SCLA, BRU 8/9/48). He paid the rent until his death in 1729, followed by John Smith of Stratford, a mercer, granted a new lease in 1741 for a further fifty-one years (SCLA, ER 4/47, f. 2; BRU 8/9/55).
19. From the late 1630s the successive members of the Smith family outlined above had sublet No. 22 High Street, sometimes as a divided property. In 1652 there were three people living there, Richard Sturley, a sadler, William Martin, a barber, and William Capp, a blacksmith (SCLA, BRU 8/9/37). By 1675, William Martin had been replaced by Mary Hammond and the Hearth Tax returns name only her and Richard Sturley as occupants (SCLA, BRU 8/9/40; *Hearth Tax Returns, 1670*, 217).
20. By 1704, the premises had been sublet as a tavern known initially as the Crown but from 1790s as the Wheatsheaf. A unit on the corner of Sheep Street was separately leased out from c. 1800 probably linked to an estimate for repairs prepared in 1798 for the Wheatsheaf itself, though early views suggest this was simply achieved by the application of stucco (**Fig. 3**) (SCLA, BRU 15/18/30).



Fig1. The Corn Exchange and the Sheep St corner c. 1950



Fig. 2: site of the Corn Exchange, c. 1958, after its demolition



Fig 3: Town Hall and No. 22 High St, 1810



Fig. 4: Similar view when Thomas Newey was tenant of the corner property, 1815-30



Fig. 5: view of the south end of High St, c. 1825, showing No. 22 in use as an inn.