

THE STRATFIRE PROJECT

Nos 37, 38, 39 High Street, Stratford-upon-Avon

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In the context of the Stratfire project, these three properties, though distinct units, can be considered together as they were jointly owned for some of their history. However, each descended separately until c. 1750 when Nos 37 and 38 came under joint ownership. From c. 1775 No. 39 was added to the portfolio but this common ownership of all three proved short-lived. In 1812, the three units evolved separately, No. 37 until the end of the century, though Nos 38 and 39 were reunited under single ownership in 1831.

No. 39 is timber framed though re-fronted in brick and stucco. Nos 37 and 38 had been re-fronted, or perhaps substantially, by 1827. No documentary evidence has yet been traced for Nos 38 and 39 earlier than 1642 but see paragraphs 1 and 2 in relation No. 37 in 1599.

No. 37

1. The earliest surviving title deed so far traced for No. 37 High Street is dated 1652 and from c. 1750 it was jointly owned with No. 38 to its north. However, a house to its south (No. 36) was owned by the Stratford Corporation and the surviving leases of this property provide information on its northerly abuttal from 1599.
2. The earliest of these abutments is from a survey of Corporation property in April 1599 when it was observed that 'the ancient windowes & lightes of the house [No. 36] are darkned & stoped up bi Ralfe Lorde and lacketh tilinge allso on Ralf Lordes side'.
3. Ralph died (apparently intestate) in November 1610 and his widow Margery was later listed under High St in a church rate of 7 April 1618 as liable for 6d. In a lease of 1 June 1618 of No. 36 High St to Richard Castle the property to its north is duly described as Margery's. She died in September 1631.
4. In the survey of those holding corn and malt in 1598, and on several occasions in the period 1606 to 1608, Ralph Lord also occurs in borough sessions records as living in Wood St. His house is probably that referred to in a conveyance of 1611 from Elizabeth Quiney to William Mountford of a messuage in Wood Street in his tenure and late in the tenure of Margery Lord, widow of Ralph Lord, butcher, deceased. Its location, on or near the corner of High St (No. 40) and Wood St (No. 1) is discussed elsewhere but it would seem likely that the two properties occupied by the Lords formed a dog-legged access to both High Street and Wood Street.
5. On 11 June 1649, the southerly abuttal to No. 38 High Street was described as belonging to Richard Castle the elder, indicating that a sale to him had been made since Margery Lord's time. Also, given that No. 36 had been let to him in 1618, he would have become the owner of two adjoining properties. This is confirmed three years later when he mortgaged No. 37, describing the house to the south as his residence. In fact, in a list of chief rents surviving from 1638 there is an entry under High St for 'Mr Castells Houses'.
6. The most likely date for Castle's acquisition of No. 37 would have been in the 1620s. William Mountford, who had bought the Wood St property in 1611 (Para. 4), died in 1618 and in 1623 his son Richard Mountford sold it on to Richard Castle. This would indicate that Richard Castle, like the Lords before, now owned a group of properties with access to both High St and Wood St.
7. Richard Castle died in 1657 by which time he had disposed of his Wood Street property and possibly his High Street property as well. In any event, by 1724 it was in the possession of Thomas Payton (and probably from 1708 when he first paid the chief rent for which it was

liable) whose son John Payton sold it in 1756 to James Keating, a bookseller, together with No. 38 next door.

No. 38

8. No. 38 is poorly documented and no data has yet been traced prior to 11 June 1649, when three properties (one in High St and two in Wood St) were settled on Robert Ingram of Alcester, haberdasher, and his wife Sibilla daughter of Edward Croft of Sutton, in Gloucestershire, gentleman. The High Street house, in the tenure of John Townsend, was described as lying between a tenement in the occupation of William Hiccox on the North [No. 40] and a tenement in the holding of Mr. Richard Castell on the South [no. 37]. How the Ingrams came by this property has yet to be established.
9. Robert Ingram had moved to Stratford by 1657 and was paying tax on a house in High St with three hearths from 1662 to 1670. He died in 1670 survived by his wife Sibilla and son and heir Edward. Edward is recorded as paying the chief rent on the house from 1704 to 1709 followed by a second Robert from 1710 to 1722. He evidently then sold the freehold to John Lord, a flax dresser, who on 11 May 1726 mortgaged it, in the tenure of John Millward, to Nathaniel Eden. Before 1741 (according to the chief rents) it had passed to John Payton who in 1756 sold it to James Keating, with No. 37, as explained in Para. 7.

No. 39

10. At a date that still needs to be clarified No. 39 was acquired by James Keating, the owner of Nos 37 and 38 from c. 1750. The early history of No. 39 is of considerable interest, featuring in the will of Thomas Nash, dating from August 1642, as a messuage near the Market Cross in the tenure of John Copland, one of several which he devised to his kinsman, Edward Nash. In 1649, it is described, as the northerly abuttal to No. 38, as a tenement in the occupation of William Hiccox. This would link with the entry in the Hearth Tax return for 1671 listing a tenement of five hearths occupied by William Hiccox. Edward Nash died in 1679, arranging for much of his freehold estate to pass to his grand-daughter, Jane Forster. It then passed to her daughter Jane Norcliffe in 1731 and from her to Edward Mundy in 1749.
11. In 1756, a deed for No. 38 duly describes the tenement to the north as belonging to Edward Mundy esquire in the tenure of Henry Turbitt. This links the property to a settlement of 1752 following the marriage of Edward Mundy of Shipley, in Derbyshire, to Hester Miller which included a tenement in Stratford in the tenure of Henry Turbitt.
12. The next step in the history of the property is at the moment unclear but by 1802 is clearly one of three contiguous messuages in High St (i.e., Nos 37, 38, 39) conveyed by William Ambor Keating, late of Stratford-upon-Avon, son and heir of William Cooper Keating, late a colonel in the East India Company, deceased, himself nephew and heir of James Keating late of Stratford-upon-Avon, bookseller and banker, to Thomas Cresswell of Stratford-upon-Avon, gentleman. The abuttals leave no doubt that the three properties are Nos 37-39, lying between a messuage belonging to the Corporation on the south late in the possession of John Tissell, saddler, and since of John Gill [i.e. No. 36] and on the north by a messuage heretofore of John Halford, since of Joseph Egginton and now of Edward Hawkes, ironmongers [No. 40]. James Keating was the man who bought Nos 37 and 38 in 1756 (Paras 7, 9) but the deed recording his acquisition of No.39 has yet to be traced.