

The Historic Spine Report for 2020

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Stratford's '**Historic Spine**' is an initiative of the Stratford-upon-Avon Society.

The project was launched in 2007 to highlight the historic route from today's town centre to the parish church along High Street, Chapel Street, Church Street and Old Town.

Over the centuries, Stratford's finest buildings were built along this main artery, comprising the best of the town's architectural heritage, from the mid thirteenth to the early twentieth century and making it one of the most important historic walks in the country.

The project aimed:

- To encourage further research into the history of the buildings along the route
- To make public in various ways the results of this research
- To advocate ways that this rich and varied heritage can be visually improved and appreciated both by local people and visitors to the town.

Since 2007 the Society has:

- Produced a walking guide to the route, regularly updated to incorporate new discoveries.
- Posted a fuller version, again regularly updated, on its website of the best buildings along the route.
- Supported the publication, twice reprinted, of 'The Frieze', a series of elevational drawings of every building along the Spine, with notes on its history.
- Published a series of articles in the Stratford-upon-Avon Herald's *Focus Magazine*, on the history of particular buildings along the Spine.
- Worked with the Stratford District Council in a scheme to award grants towards the improvement of several shop fronts.
- Ensured that the Historic Spine was included in the town's Neighbourhood Plan as one of Stratford's assets.
- Launched a scheme, largely supported by owners or tenants of some of the most important buildings along the Spine, to install specially commissioned 'pavement plaques'. So far ten are in place.
- Supported dendrochronological work (tree-ring dating) of several timber-framed buildings along the street to establish an accurate date for their original construction. Five buildings along the route have been dated in this way.
- Prepared a video – in 2008 – explaining the historic spine and the initiatives that might be undertaken.
- Has been represented on the management committee for the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan which included features of the Historic Spine, e.g. pedestrian priority in High Street and the continued enhancement of shop fronts.

The Stratford Society is keen to continue with this work. In particular:

- At least ten further buildings could be highlighted through the installation of 'pavement plaques'.
- The majority of these buildings are timber-framed and could possibly be dated more precisely by dendrochronology.

The Society has sponsored the pavement plaques through the Historic Spine Joint Working Group and in the most recent batch has funded one plaque outright – for 5 Old Town – where the owners were not able. Since then the initiative has stalled because of increasing funding difficulties; unsuccessful applications were made for grants from the Town Trust and public funds and a crowd funding effort was launched which failed to meet its target and as a result produced nothing. The current position is that there are, in Section 2 below, five owners who have expressed keen interest but have been unable to raise the funds for the full cost, some £900 per plaque, and one where funding is likely to be provided by them.

The proposal of the General Committee is that the Society commit from reserves the sum of £4000 to be used to make a significant contribution to the plaques listed in Section 2 and towards dendrochronology in the two buildings from this list where appropriate. This may be sufficient to stimulate the owners themselves to find sufficient money to enable an order to be placed for the six plaques; probably for the time being the final batch. Also it may enable the Society to persuade architectural and historic buildings bodies to provide funding or carry out the work on dendrochronology.

Reserves stand at £11,000. The Society Treasurer advises that spending this sum would leave a balance sufficient to provide an adequate reserve for the Society's operational purposes and give some scope for some further project expenditure.

April 2021

HISTORIC SPINE: STRATFORD-UPON-AVON
Pavement Plaques & Dendrochronology Investigation

PLAQUES

1. Plaques in place

New Place (Grade I)
Guildhall (Grade I)
Hall's Croft (Grade I)
Guild Chapel (Grade I)
1 High Street (Grade II*)
Garrick Inn (Grade II*)
Falcon /Hotel (Grade II*)
Town Hall (Grade II*)
Mason Croft (Grade II)
No 5 Old Town (Grade II)

2. Other buildings on which preliminary discussions have taken place

Almshouses in Church Street (Grade I)
Holy Trinity Church (Grade I)
Harvard House in High Street (Grade I)
Shakespeare Hotel in Chapel Street (Grade II*)
Town House at No 16 Church Street (Grade II)
Headmaster's House Grade (II)

3. Other buildings which could be considered

Dower House in Old Town (Grade I)
No. 30 High Street (Grade II*)
Nos 17-18 High Street (Grade II)
Nos 19/20/21 (Grade II*/II)
No. 29 High St (Grade II)
No. 31 High Street (Grade II)

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

1. Completed for

Guildhall (Grade I)
Almshouses (Grade 1)
Hall's Croft (Grade I)
Falcon /Hotel (Grade II*)

2. Desirable before plaque is made

Dower House (Grade 1)
Nos 22-3 High street (Grade II*)
No. 30 High Street (Grade II*)
Shakespeare Hotel in Chapel Street (Grade II*)
No. 30 High St (Grade II*)
Town House at No 16 Church Street (Grade II)
Nos 17-18 High Street (Grade II)
Nos 19-21 (Grade II)
No. 29 High St (Grade II)
No. 31 High Street (Grade II)

Estimated Prices

Plaques	£900 each (design, make and install)
Dendro	c.£800 each