

No. 13 Chapel Street (HSBC Bank)

Documentary History

1. Given that damage by fire in 1594/95 is recorded at No. 25 High St (Garrick Inn), No. 12 Chapel St and No. 1 Ely St, it would seem likely that No. 13 Chapel St, on the corner of Chapel St and therefore in close proximity, would also have been affected. However, unlike those other nearby properties, its freehold was not vested in the Stratford Corporation and, as result, its history is less well documented. Nor is there surviving timber framing on the site. The present building, the HSBC bank, dates from 1883 (**Fig. 1**) replacing a building to which substantial rebuilding work had been carried out in the late 1820s (BRR 49/1/57). The appearance of this pre-1883 building is captured in a photograph of c. 1875 (**Fig. 2**). The footprint of the building before that is shown in **Fig. 3**.



Fig. 1: HSBC bank, viewed from the north, 2023



Fig. 2: Chapel St looking north showing on the left buildings on the corner of Ely St, c. 1870

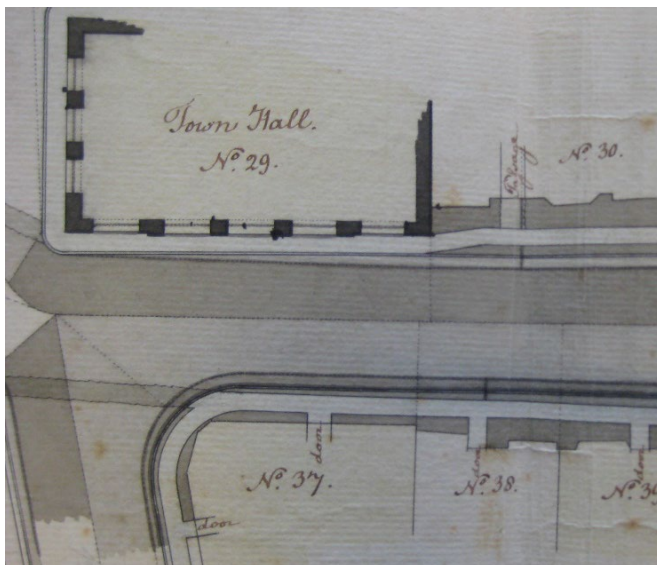


Fig. 3: Street plan of Chapel St, c. 1785. North is to the left

2. The earliest references so far traced to a building on the site are simply as abutments to No. 12 Chapel St which adjoined it immediately to the south. It is there described, both in 1527 and 1537, as the tenement of John Such of Broadway (BRT 1/2/550, 574). This may allow identification with an entry in a 1590 survey following the death of Ambrose earl of Warwick, recording a chief rent of 4d. due from the heirs (undefined) of Thomas Such for a tenement in Chapel St (*Minutes and Accounts*, iv, 99).
3. The next documented evidence so far located is dated 20 September 1607 in a description of the boundary between No. 12 Chapel St and No. 1 Ely St (originally a dog-legged site) which in that year was being divided into two leasehold units. This boundary was to run from 'the lower corner of the stable, parcel of the same tenement [i.e. 12 Chapel St], cross over to the post called a prick post in the building of Francis Smyth, mercer' (BRU 8/4/12). The Oxford English Dictionary gives as a general definition of a prick post: 'Any of various upright posts (usually one or two or more placed between the principal posts) which help bear the weight in a timber-framed building'. However, none of the quotations given for the early use of the word matches what might have been meant by its occurrence in this example but the context implies that it was affixed to a neighbouring building belonging to Francis Smith. The line of this boundary may be the one shown on a measured drawing of 1818 (Fig. 4), suggesting that Smith's property occupied the site of what by 1818 was in the ownership of 'Miss Hunt' (see Para. 9). In that case the prick post could have stood at its south-west corner.

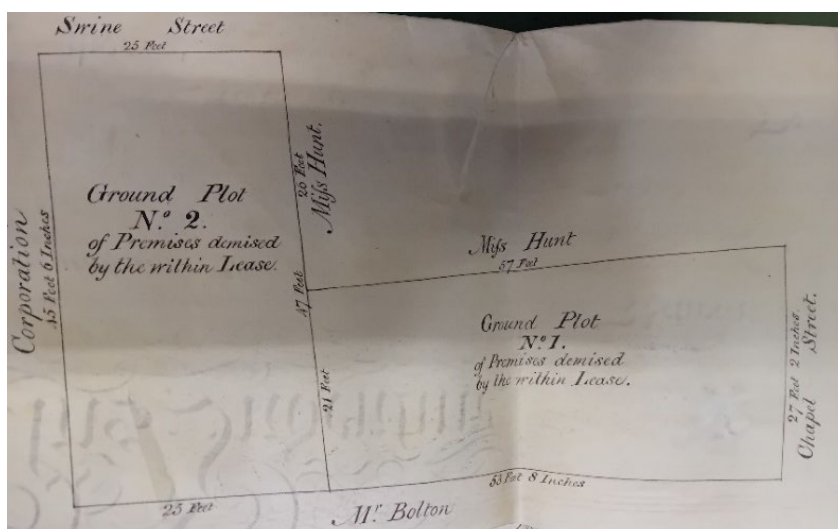


Fig. 4: BRU 8/4/47, 1818 (north to the top)

This lease plan shows the division between the dog-legged site of 12 Chapel St, bottom right, and 1 Ely (Swine) St to the left. No. 13 Chapel St (top right) was then occupied by 'Miss Hunt'. Its south-west corner may have been the site of the 'prick post'.

4. This is not the first occasion that Francis Smith's name is linked to Chapel Street. In January 1595, Francis Smith, junior, was recorded briefly in the occupation of No. 4 Chapel St, a Corporation property, but with the rent being paid by a 'M' Bradley' (*Minutes and Accounts*, v, 34). Bradley has yet to be identified but he was also paying the rent for another Corporation property, No. 7 Chapel St in the occupation of William Court, as he was to do the following year (*Minutes and Accounts*, v, 74). In February 1598, Francis Smith, junior, is also recorded as holding three quarters of malt in Chapel St ward (*Minutes and Accounts*, v, 136). In 1618 Francis Smith the younger was rated in a parish levy, under Chapel St ward, as liable to a payment of 3 shillings (*Vestry Minute Book*, 3).
5. Francis Smith had married Ursula Ainge in August 1592 (*Stratford-on-Avon Registers: Marriages*, 16) and at least nine children, five daughters and four sons, had been born to the couple by 1612. Francis was elected a capital burgess in June 1598 (having been appointed taster in October 1597) and an alderman in 1607, and served as bailiff in 1608/9 (*Minutes and Accounts*, v, 111, 145; vi, 409, 481). He was named junior on his election to the Common Council to distinguish him from a namesake, though not a close relation, also a member of the Council.

6. Francis Smith did not prosper in his trade of mercer. He resigned as alderman in August 1621, his place taken by his brother-in-law, Francis Ainge, promoted at the same meeting from capital burgess to alderman (BRU 2/2, p. 405). At the September meeting it was further agreed 'that there shall be presently delivered to M^r Francis Smith junior in regard of his decay 40s by the chamberlains, and afterwards 13s 4d quarterly to be paid to him by the chamberlains the first payment to begin at St Thomas day next; and this gift to continue till it be by the company otherwise altered' (BRU 2/2, p. 409). In January 1622 his widowed mother-in-law Alice Ainge included bequests to all nine of her Smith grandchildren (though not Smith himself) (*Stratford-upon-Avon Wills*, i, No. 165) and the Corporation was still making charitable payments to Francis in 1633 (BRU 2/3, p. 69). The date of his death has not yet been established.
7. Francis Smith, then, was living in Chapel St at the time of the fires of 1594/5, and almost certainly at No. 13 at least by 1607. Given the recorded fire damage at neighbouring properties (Para.1), further damage at No. 13 would not be surprising. Of this, however, there are only hints. His temporary accommodation immediately after the fires at No. 4 Chapel St, by courtesy of 'Mr Bradley', is suggestive as are his later financial difficulties perhaps caused by the cost of any rebuilding work. The reference in 1607 to a 'prick post' in his building, when defining the boundary between No. 12 Chapel St and No. 1 Ely St, may also be relevant.
8. On the evidence of abuttals to No. 12 Chapel St and No. 1 Ely St, Francis Ainge, Francis Smith's brother-in-law, had also taken over the freehold of No. 13 Chapel St by 1638 at least (BRU 8/6/19-21). The Ainge family lived in Bridge St and by the time Francis Ainge made his will (in 1659) the freehold of No. 13 had apparently passed to Richard Hunt, as recorded in an abuttal of 1647 (BRU 8/4/23). Under Hunt's will of 1681 it then passed to his wife Abigail with reversion to his son John (*Stratford-upon-Avon Wills*, ii, No. 419). Indeed, in 1647 Richard Hunt, a mercer, had taken a lease from the Stratford Corporation of neighbouring No. 12 Chapel St where his business was apparently focussed (BRU 8/4/23). His son, also John, took a lease of neighbouring No. 1 Ely St in 1694 further emphasising the family's domination of this corner site (BRU 8/6/27).
9. By 1740 the freehold had been acquired by Philip Hatton from whom it descended to his son Joseph Hatton, then to his brother Philip Hatton, junior, and then to Thomas Mortiboys, his (Philip junior's) brother-in-law (TNA, PROB 11/705/570; PROB 11/742/282). In 1762 it passed to Richard Stephens, in 1783 from Stephens' executrixes to Edward Hunt Butler, and in 1791 to Mary Hunt (ER 4/55), the 'Miss Hunt' of 1818 (Para. 3; **Fig. 4**).
10. In terms of its structure an important development was its sale to the banker, Thomas Woods Weston, in 1821 (SBT, UR 7/38) who by the time of the next sale in 1830 had largely rebuilt it as his banking house (SBT, UR 7/40). The buyers were Messrs Oldaker, Thomas and Chattaway who had been operating a bank in High Street since 1813.