

## No. 25 High Street, Stratford-upon-Avon (Garrick Inn)

The focus of the StratFire Project is on surviving timber-framed houses in High Street and Chapel Street, Stratford-upon-Avon. In particular, were they affected by the two urban fires of 1594 and 1595? Documentary sources indicate serious damage to a building on the site of today's Garrick Inn (25 High Street), making it an ideal subject for investigation.

In 1553 Stratford-upon-Avon became an incorporated borough and, under letters patent issued by Edward VI, it was given the properties in the town previously held by the suppressed Guild of the Holy Cross. These properties included the building occupying the site of No. 25 High Street (now the Garrick Inn). Surviving leases and rentals provide a more or less continuous record of the occupants of the site thereafter. Often included in these leases was a building in Ely Street (here referred to as No. 60 Ely Street) occupying what originated as rear access to the High Street property (**Fig 1**). This too was damaged at the time of the fires.



**Fig. 1: Detail from 1886 OS Town Plan**

In 1553, the Corporation's tenant was Christopher George, soon to be followed by Thomas Deege, alias Gethen, a weaver. In 1580 Deege was granted a formal lease for twenty-one years at an annual rent of 18s. At the same time, the house in Ely Street was separated from the main house and let for 21 years to Philip Green, a capital burgess since 1574, for an annual rent of 6s.

Thomas Deege and Philip Green were still tenants when the fires of 1594 and 1595 seriously damaged their two houses. By 3 July 1595 Deege, unwilling or unable to bear the cost of rebuilding, surrendered his lease of the High Street house and on 9 January 1596, the chamberlain recorded that at some point in the previous twelve months, 2s. 6d. was spent for 'five Dayes worke at Teigg'es house after the fyre'. Deege himself was admitted to the almshouses on 27 October 1596, where he died less than three months later. He was replaced as tenant by his widow Tomasin who attracted as a second husband William Gilbert, the curate, whom she married in September 1598. This enabled her to move out of the almshouses.

Philip Green was also badly hit by the fire, surrendering his lease of the house in Ely St on 17 October 1595. In January 1598 Richard Quiney gave him £8 out of the fire-relief money that he had been authorised to collect in Suffolk and Norfolk.

The Corporation, faced with two ruined buildings, agreed to lease the site of both to a mercer, William Smith, at the combined annual rent of 24 shillings, subject to the condition that 'he would build upon the ground according to indifferent articles betwixt this House [i.e., the Corporation] and him to be agreed upon'.

William Smith was son of a prosperous mercer, William Smith, who lived as a tenant of the Stratford Corporation at what is now No. 1 Henley Street. William Smith the younger, paid the combined rent of 24s. for the High Street and Ely Street properties up to 1599. On 30 April of that year, a survey of Corporation property describes Smith's premises in High Street ward in the following terms: 'William Smith a tenemente new builded, tiled, and a lettinge out with a tenemente into the Swine [i.e. Ely] Strete tiled, containinge on the Highe Stret side [blank] baies, in the yarde [blank] baies [blank], in Elie Stret [blank] baies'.

Despite the agreement back in September 1595 that William Smith would be granted a new lease of the combined property, this did not immediately happen. Instead, over the years 1600-06 it was William Smith's brother Roger who paid the 24s. rent and on 9 January 1607 the Council agreed 'that a Lease shalbe made to Roger Smyth of the howses sometyme in Thomas Teggs occupacion & burnt downe; & in respect of the sayd Rogers great charge in reedifyeinge he is to have yt from michaelmas last for 31 yeres at 24s. yerely rent, And the Fyne to be only 3<sup>s</sup> 4<sup>d</sup> in respect of his great Charge in buyldynge'. Nearly ten months later, on 20 September, this new lease was eventually sealed.

There are thus two men who deserve credit for the rebuilding, William Smith and his brother Roger. Their father, William the elder, had died in June 1600 and his wife Agnes in February 1601. Thereafter it was their son William the younger who paid the 12s.-rent for the family's Henley Street homestead. In fact, he remained the Corporation's tenant there until his own death in 1626.

What would seem to have happened, then, is that William Smith the younger had quickly taken advantage of the 1594/5 fires to lodge a claim for a rebuilding lease for No. 25 High Street, with its dog-legged access from Ely Street. However, on the deaths of his parents in 1600 and 1601, it was evidently agreed within the family that this new lease was to be made instead to his younger brother Roger who completed the rebuilding, leaving William the younger installed in the Henley Street homestead.

Rebuilding in High St appears to have been under way at least by the time the April 1599 survey (see above) although the blanks in the description may indicate that it had not been completed by then. It was therefore Roger who, in 1607, was eventually granted a formal lease with its reference to earlier building work. As for the tenement in Ely Street, a sub-tenant (Richard Williams) is recorded in January 1605, establishing with some certainty that a building had by then been erected.

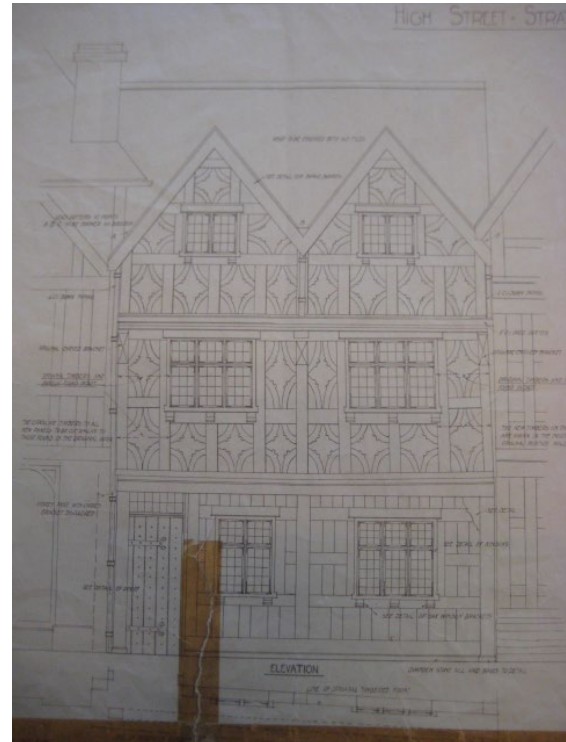
Four samples were taken from surviving oak timbers in an effort to confirm by tree-ring dating the year 1599 as the building date. However, they could not be dated more closely than the period 1588-1610.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (date to be established), the elevation to High Street was re-fronted in brick (**Fig. 2**). No drawings have yet been traced that show the building's earlier appearance.

Good plans exist for alterations in 1913 when the brick facade was replaced with the present timber-framed frontage (**Fig 3**). The design was based on surviving fragments found built into No. 26 (Harvard House) next door.



**Fig 2: Garrick Inn, c. 1895, re-fronted in brick earlier in that century**



**Fig. 3: Garrick Inn: proposed new frontage, 1913 (SCLA, BRR 50/71)**

