

STRATFIRE PROJECT

Briefing Note for Owners and Occupiers

The Stratfire Project sets out to discover how the many 16th-17th century fires in Stratford-upon-Avon affected the built environment of the town. It is funded by Historic England and supported by other bodies with an interest in the historic town.

Buildings on the historic spine will be studied in three phases:

- a. Recording of the building
- b. Tree-ring dating
- c. Study of deeds and documents relating to its history

In more detail, these will involve:

- a. Measurement of all floor plans of the building (except where all historic timbers have been removed in modern conversion) and of selected elevations and sections of historic timbers. Photographs may also be taken of exterior views and interesting details; owners and occupiers should inform us if any of these might affect their privacy. The results will be analysed to understand the building's development. This phase will be undertaken principally by Ric Tyler, buildings archaeologist, in association with Nat Alcock, and is likely to take several days for each building.
- b. Sampling for tree-ring dating. This involves drilling out small cores (about the size of a pencil) from selected timbers (usually about 8 in all). The cores are then sanded and polished, and the tree-ring widths measured and matched with ring widths for cores of known date. The holes are carefully filled and stained, meaning that they become virtually invisible. This will be undertaken by Martin Bridge, dendrochronologist, and is expected to take between half and one day per building (which may be combined with the building recording). More details of the process are given in *Historic England Dendrochronology Explained* (copies on request).
- c. Study of deeds and documents. This will mainly use the resources held at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, though it will also be useful to consult documents held by owners. This research will be undertaken by volunteers, working with Dr Bob Bearman.

All those undertaking site work are appropriately insured, with no liability to owners and occupiers.

Reports

Individual reports will be prepared as the work proceeds and will be provided to owners as they become available; they will also form part of the public archive of the project. Owners and occupiers will be thanked at appropriate points (anonymously). We expect the first report for each building will describe its development and date, based on the building recording and the tree-ring dating; it will generally include some of the drawings and photographs taken during the recording. Since the documentary research is likely to take considerably longer, the original report will be updated when this research is concluded.

Important: Historic England is a public body and legally bound to make the research results publicly available. The reports will be deposited with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and may be placed on the HE website. It is important that all property owners are aware of this responsibility at the onset of the recording and sampling programme. This does mean that we need to agree the report will publicly available, before being able to undertake the study of your building.

Project Results

The Stratfire Project is planned to last for three years. At the end of it, the intention is to produce a book describing the project and its results. There will also be presentations to owners, occupiers and others interested at intervals during the project.

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