

Stratford-upon-Avon's Fire of 1614

Robert Bearman

Stratford-upon-Avon experienced more than its fair share of urban fires in the early modern period: four to be precise, in 1594, 1595, 1614 and 1641, with one of less certain ferocity in 1582.¹ Its fortunes were not quite the worst, but very few towns suffered more. The fires of 1594 and 1595 have already been analysed in some detail and the fire of 1641 has been fully discussed in a recent study of more general trends in urban fires over the period c. 1580 to 1645, drawing on the substantial surviving archive which demonstrates how, following the 1641 fire, contributions towards relief funds were both sought and distributed.² This article draws on a less substantial but still illuminating archive for the 1614 fire, alleged to have caused £8,000-worth of damage, which documents in some detail the manner in which the principal sufferers sought compensation for their losses, a process initially characterised by accusations of self-interest, inefficiency and corruption before a more equitable arrangement was devised. How much money was actually raised is far from clear, though the more realistic claims lodged when the revised system of collection got under way imply that the official estimate of the amount of damage had been greatly exaggerated. Moreover, although the Stratford Corporation, the town's governing body, thereafter valiantly strove to enforce measures which would prevent further outbreaks, the townsfolk, including some who had made claims for compensation, proved remarkably resistant to such pressure. Surviving data are also sufficient to demonstrate in some detail the area of the town affected.

The fire broke out, it was later said, on Saturday 9 July and the first contemporary record of the event occurs in orders issued at a meeting of the Stratford Corporation held on 15 July, when steps were taken to deal with the crisis.³ By unfortunate coincidence, the Corporation, barely three weeks earlier, had carried out a survey as to 'whoe of owre Compa[ny] have ther Bucketes & whoe have not', a reference to one of the stipulations of the town's book of orders of 1612 that, as part of its fire-fighting policy, every alderman should provide two leather buckets, and every capital burgess one bucket 'to cary water in for the better defence and preservacion of the houses & buildinges of the said Bouroughe from & against casualtie of fyer'.⁴ This survey may have been carried out in response to a recent upsurge in the number of urban fires coinciding with a series of dry summers and droughts. Three had broken out in Tiverton, Dorchester and Melton Mowbray since 1612 and there would be three more following Stratford's in quick succession, at Wymondham, Thetford and Westbury.⁵ Since at least 1612, then, printed briefs would have been circulating in Stratford, pleading for donations towards the relief of the sufferers, perhaps prompting an anxious Corporation to check that its own fire-fighting resources were up to scratch.⁶ In fact, the survey revealed a sorry state of affairs, with only seven of the twenty-seven-man governing body found to have the stipulated number of buckets, which may well have hampered the response when two or three weeks later, a fire did indeed break out. However, Puritan preachers had attributed the earlier fires of 1594 and 1595 to the ungodly behaviour of some of the townsfolk and in 1614 it may well have suited the Corporation, anxious to deflect any criticism, to encourage a belief in further divine intervention. It made three payments to at least three visiting preachers that year.⁷ One, staying at New Place, was supplied with a quart of claret wine and a quart of sack, costing the Corporation twenty pence, whilst a 'Mr Beck' received two shillings and a third, more fortunate, ten shillings. The fire would doubtless have caused serious damage, whether or not the members of the Corporation had been more assiduous in their fire-prevention duties, but it may well have suited them to hear preachers place the responsibility for the fires on the misdeeds of the wider community.

At the meeting of the Corporation, held on 15 July, it was immediately agreed 'that the Justices of the peace of this shire shall presentlie be sued unto for the obteneing of a Collection in our owne shire towards our losses by fyre'.⁸ However, in recognition that this would almost certainly be insufficient, it was also agreed that these same justices should be asked to endorse the claim in the form of a certificate 'to be exhibited to his majestie concerneing the great losses of this Towne for the procuring of a further Collection in other shires'; in other words, for the issue of the customary printed brief, copies of which could be carried into other parts of the realm. The Corporation even listed the twenty counties and ten cities which it thought might be approached. Three other fire-prevention orders were then approved: firstly, a petition to the Lord Chief Justice 'to restrayne all thatched houses in our towne', the second requiring that 'the bucketes that remane belongeing to the Company shall be made up two dosen' and the third that 'ther be some spouttes provided by the Chamberleines' and that four more fire hooks and ladders be acquired.⁹

The issue of organising a collection for the benefit of the sufferers was not referred to again for nearly twelve months, and then only obliquely.¹⁰ This may have been due, at least in part, to a controversy in which the Corporation was soon engulfed as the result of a proposed enclosure of some of the town's open fields at Welcombe, to the north-east of the town.¹¹ This threatened to have an adverse effect on the Corporation's income as the owner of a good proportion of the parish tithes and thus on its ability to discharge the charitable functions imposed upon it by its charter of incorporation. From late September, when news of the proposed enclosure first broke, the Corporation became quickly involved in tortuous manoeuvres to thwart the scheme, distracting it from proper oversight of the collection on behalf of the fire sufferers, the consequences of which only became apparent later. However, the fact that a brief authorising collection was published on 5 December is sufficient indication that some investigations had nevertheless been taking place. The grant of a brief depended on a certificate issued by local justices that a collection was justified and such a certificate would only have been drawn up after a smaller group of justices had visited the site and assessed the damage. A delay of six months would therefore not have been unusual.¹²

The brief, issued on the evidence of a certificate signed by eighteen Warwickshire justices, opens with the statement that the fire had destroyed fifty-four houses, 'many of them beeing very faire houses', together with a number of barns, stables and other buildings containing a 'great store of Come, hay, straw, wood & tymber', causing in all £8,000-worth of damage, 'the force of which fire was so great (the wind sitting full upon the towne) that it dispersed into so many places thereof'.¹³ This estimate of the amount of damage done, approved as it was by local justices of the peace, should not have been fanciful but is nevertheless difficult to reconcile with the far smaller sum later raised and with no apparent long term adverse effect, either on individuals or the town as a whole.¹⁴ Reference was then made to the two earlier fires 'within these twenty years' which had already cost the town an alleged £20,000, further justification for the appeal for help lest the town should be 'utterly undone and like to perish'. Furthermore, the petitioners had claimed that its status as a 'great Market Towne whereunto great recourse of people was made, by reason of the weekely Market, Faires and other frequent meetings', would be 'in great hazard to be utterly overthrowne, if either the resort thither bee neglected, or course of travellers diverted'; and, although the townfolk had given assurances that they 'are very ready and willing to the uttermost of their powers to reedifie & new build the said Towne againe', the cost of doing so was 'farre beyond their ability'. The brief then records that, in response to this petition, the king had agreed that for one year five inhabitants of the town – William Wyatt, Richard Tyler, Isaac Hitchcock, Richard Mountford and William

Harding (all of whom, except Hitchcock, are later listed amongst those seeking personal compensation) – could travel through the counties of Warwick, Leicester, Northampton, Worcester, Gloucester, Oxford, Buckingham and Berkshire, and the towns and cities of Coventry, Peterborough, Worcester, Gloucester and Bristol – and the University of Oxford – to request contributions towards rebuilding costs. In particular, incumbents were encouraged ‘deliberately to publish & declare the Tenor of these our Letters Patents unto our said Subjects’ and churchwardens were instructed ‘to Collect & gather the Almes & charitable benevolence of all our loving Subjects, And what shalbe by you so gathered, to endorse on the back side heerof [i.e. of the printed brief], and deliver the same to the bearer or bearers heereof’.

Three copies of the brief of 5 December survive in the Stratford Corporation archives, probably ones which Isaac Hitchcock had circulated, each one annotated in the required manner.¹⁵ One, from Avon Dasset, lists the individual contributions of seventeen parishioners, totalling 7s. 10d., nearly half of which had been given by the lord of the manor, John Woodward, whose brother Richard had been a well-known Stratford figure.¹⁶ One other ‘gentleman’, George Betts, gave a shilling but most of the other contributions were of two or three pence. Their contribution did not exceed Pillerton Hersey’s whose brief was returned endorsed: ‘collected towards their great Losses by fire at th’aforsaid Towne Amongest them xviii^s’,¹⁷ and Fenny Compton also made a creditable effort, their brief endorsed: ‘wee have Colected for you x^s’.¹⁸ A fourth copy of the brief, now part of the Shirley of Ettington archive, is endorsed with details of a collection of 35s. 6d. from twenty-one Oxhill parishioners, paid over on 6 April following, headed by Richard Bishop, with a contribution of ten shillings.¹⁹

The brief, though in general terms worded conventionally enough, was later deemed defective as it failed to name any persons or body to oversee the collection, thus placing no defined obligations on the named collectors. At the end of January, the Corporation took steps to impose some sort of control, on the grounds, presumably, that the collectors named in the brief were either being dilatory or were suspected of pocketing any money collected. On 30 January William Pigeon (not, in fact, one of the collectors named in the brief but, like Hitchcock, later listed as a claimant) entered into a bond in £40 to pay over to the bailiff and two named aldermen any money he had collected within a fortnight of having received it and also to render an account of all such sums within a month of being asked to do so.²⁰ This bears the endorsement that he was given fifty copies of the brief on 3 February and another eleven a week later. Another note, added by the steward, Thomas Greene, records that similar bonds were entered into by Richard Tyler, William Wyatt, Isaac Hitchcock and William Harding (all named in the brief) and by another newcomer (and claimant), Nicholas Jevyns. Jevyns’s bond, in £40 and signed on the same day, also survives but requiring him to pay any money he collected to ‘one Nicholas Bensone, Cittizen of London att his howse in Frydaye Streete’ within a fortnight of collection, though rendering an account of all such sums to the bailiff and burgesses.²¹ A Benson family (but no Nicholas) occurs with increasing frequency in the Stratford parish registers from 1590 and a Nicholas Benson of London was recorded as a bankrupt in 1630.²² Perhaps Benson had advanced money for rebuilding in the expectation that he would be compensated once the collection had got under way. It is endorsed with a note of how much Jevyns had managed to garner, namely £10 14s. 0d., broken down into sums raised from particular streets in Stratford – the biggest contribution, of 19s. 5d., was from Bridge Street and the smallest, of 5s. 5d., from Meer Street – to which was added 17s. 6d. raised in Evesham. A third bond, attested by William Harding, one of collectors named in the brief, is different again.²³ It was not signed until 5 April and was in the much larger sum of £200, requesting payment to the bailiff and burgesses on the same basis as stipulated in Pigeon’s case.

The increased penalty certainly implies that he at least was under some suspicion of conducting his collection in an irregular manner and the recruitment of two new collectors, and the imposition of conditions on them and their fellows, reflects the same unease that the collection was not going well.

Collecting continued into the summer when various accounts were rendered. At a meeting of the Corporation on 7 July 1615 William Pigeon submitted details of what he had collected although it is not certain that any money was actually handed over.²⁴ Indeed, his surviving account for money received from over sixty Warwickshire and Worcestershire towns and parishes, totalling £16 17s. 1½d., is endorsed by the steward: 'this Accompt was exhibited by *William Pyggyn* but no penny paid by him'.²⁵ The sums of money, if ever actually paid over, were generally low. Only Bromsgrove, at £1 8s. 2½d., exceeded a pound, followed by seventeen shillings from Aston Cantlow, sixteen shillings from Kidderminster, 14s. 6d. from Birmingham, 12s. 5d. from Kings Norton and twelve shillings from 'Stoke'. Of the others, only Bidford, at 10s. 8d., exceeded ten shillings and Beaudesert managed a mere eleven pence. Alongside the statement that Pigeon had submitted his accounts are references to money collected by William Wyatt, one of the nominated collectors, and to 'M' Baylyffes money payd over to M' John Wylmer one of the Chamberlaynes'. However, these sums are not accounted for in the chamberlain's account, submitted in January 1615, nor is the £5 referred to at a council meeting held a week later 'gyven towards the fire by Sir Henry Raynsford Knight & *William Barnes Esquire*', both of Clifford Chambers, together with 33s. 4d. 'gyven by others named in a note'.²⁶ Taken together, then, this evidence reflects a disjointed and poorly supervised enterprise which, though carried out under the nominal oversight of the Corporation, had succeeded in raising only limited sums, either paid into a 'ring-fenced' fund outside the Corporation's immediate control or immediately dispensed to claimants in no organised way.

As time went on the unhappiness of those awaiting compensation developed into more outspoken criticism. The brief of 5 December was due to expire after twelve months and so in the late autumn the Corporation drafted a petition to Thomas Egerton, the Lord Chancellor, for an extension of the time allowed for bringing in additional funds.²⁷ The Corporation's case hinged on its claim that the collection to date had been conducted in an inefficient, if not irregular, manner. Whereas, it argued, it had allowed 'two of the principall men of them [the sufferers] as well for reputacion & greatnes of their losses as for sufficiency of discession' to take the lead in obtaining the earlier brief, this had been on the understanding that the collection itself would be supervised by Sir Richard Verney, Sir Henry Rainsford and other local gentlemen. Instead, the petition continued, the two men had ignored this proviso, and had simply sought permission to be collectors themselves 'with two or three others of meaner qualitie then themselves'. They had then, it was further alleged, proved incapable of organising the collection with the result that 'before the multitude whom yt Concerned could agree of any Course, half the tyme lymitted by the Patent for Colleccion was worne out insomuch as towards 8000^{li} losse there ys not 80^{li} Come in'.²⁸ The two men (of the five collectors named in the original brief) held responsible for this situation were not named but are likely to have been Richard Tyler and William Harding, who were not re-appointed when a new brief was eventually issued.²⁹ The petition therefore ends with an appeal to the Lord Chancellor for permission to seek further contributions 'through all the Counties and Citytes ... not mencioned in the former letteres Patent'es' and, to avoid further problems, to authorise Richard Verney, Henry Rainsford, Bartholomew Hales and the Corporation's bailiff and chief alderman 'to nomynate and appoynte Collectors for gathering in the same and to order, receyve and devyde the same as to the discessions of any three or more of them shall seeme to stand with equite and the partyes losses'.

Lord Chancellor Egerton was not unsympathetic and on 21 November wrote to two local justices, Henry Rainsford and Bartholomew Hales, enclosing the Corporation's petition and asking them to investigate.³⁰ The chamberlain's annual account, submitted on 12 January 1616, recorded a payment of 12s. 6d. 'when Sir Henry Rainsford and M^r Hailes sate aboute the collection for the fier'.³¹ By 15 March their report had been drafted and, at a Corporation meeting held on that date, it was agreed that the justices' 'Letteres be delyvered to the right Honourable the Lord Chauncellour that the Patent be sought to be renewed for as long as can be obtayned', agreeing at the same time that a new representative of the claimants, William Mountford, 'shalbe employed in prosecuteinge the reneweing of such Patent'.³² The justices' letter survives in draft only but gives a clear account of what they thought had happened.³³ They begin by explaining that they had 'bestowed divers dayes, doing our best endeavours to accomplish your Honours Commaundmentes, taking such accoumpts as willingly or by perswastione wee Could gett them who undertooke the Collections to tender unto us'. However, they had found these accounts to be 'verry unperfect and indirect, everyone prefferringe his owne private beniffitte befor the generall good', even to the extent of 'exhibitinge to us bills of Charges excedinge theare Collectiones'. As a result, 'wee have effected nothing nottwithstanding our earnest Solisitationes and paynes hearein' except to hand out small sums to 'the poorest sort by sattisfing them out of the moneyes weare brought to us, theare damadges apperinge to be smalle'. But for those who had suffered 'losses amounting to many hundred powndes, and the somes payd in (now remayninge in the hands of the Bayliff and Auldermane of Stratford) Rissinge not much above 60^{li}', they could do nothing. They found further fault with the collectors for failing to recover many of the briefs distributed to various counties and which they could no longer gather in as the time allowed for the collection had now expired. They ended by pleading that the Lord Chancellor would 'bee pleased to permytt them [the bailiff and burgesses] to Collect those breeffes allredy dispersed' and to give them permission to collect in the counties which were not mentioned in the original brief. However, to avoid further irregularity, Egerton was pressed to authorise 'some of those they shall nomynate to your lordshipp whom you shall thinke Fitt' to oversee these new arrangements 'so that generall Charytie may not bee abused'. There is no reason to think that the justices were exaggerating. The total sum collected as recorded in the various documents cited above amounted to only £37 or so, implying that the justices' figure of £60 was not far from the truth.

The justices' appeal was successful and on 11 May two, if not three, new briefs were printed, again to run for a year, naming the authorised collectors as Richard Verney, Henry Rainsford, Bartholomew Hales, and the bailiff for the time being. One brief authorised collection in the counties of Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Wales, Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Cornwall, the cities of Canterbury, Rochester, Chichester, Salisbury, Exeter, Bristol, Bath and Winchester, the Cinque Ports, and the towns of Southampton and Poole.³⁴ Another authorised collections in the counties of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire, Denbigh, Flint, Montgomery, Pembroke, Brecknock, Monmouth and Hereford, the County Palatine and Bishopric of Durham, the cities of York, Chester and Hereford and the town of Kingston upon Hull.³⁵ However, as explained below, collections were also later made in a circuit covering Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and East Anglia, implying that a third brief was issued to cover that area of the country as well.

By 27 June steps had been taken to set a new collection in motion but in the meantime, the Corporation had had to face a challenge to the new arrangements from Richard Tyler, named as a collector in the original brief. The Corporation complained that Tyler, on learning that he was to be excluded from the new arrangements for 'havyng ill behaved himself', now 'endeavoureth

to thwart [proceedings] by petitionyng falsely' under four specific heads.³⁶ Whether the Corporation ever filed its response – it survives as a rough draft only – is uncertain but it still provides good evidence of its view of Tyler's activities, alleging that he had 'refused to be directed' by Rainsford and Hales or to render to them any accounts, and that he had put out a story that the Corporation had suffered no losses and was therefore not entitled to any compensation, whereas it was common knowledge, the Corporation insisted, that it had lost '4 faire dwellynge houses & 4 barnes' for which it had yet to seek any compensation. It also indignantly dismissed another of Tyler's charges – that the Corporation had simply planned 'to take in their owne names the newe patentes for their own uses' – alleging that it was Tyler himself who had been guilty of self-interest when the first brief was issued, naming only himself '& 3 others to be Collectours'.

The first step, in anticipation of the new collection and completed by 27 June, was for the twenty-five petitioners who still had outstanding claims to organise themselves into three groups, based on proposed circulation of briefs, with a note of the amount of compensation to which they thought they were entitled.³⁷ One group, headed 'Kent etc' and covering the south-east of England, had nine members, with claims amounting to £683, a second, covering much of East Anglia and headed 'Cambridge etc' had seven members with claims of £650, and a third covering the south-west, headed, 'Hereford etc', ten members with £323 in claims (see Table 2).³⁸ Richard Mountford and John Baker, alias Smith (not one of the claimants but perhaps acting for Dorothy Smith), were chosen as collectors on behalf of the 'Kent' circuit, and William Wyatt, Nicholas Jevyns, Ananias Nason and Isaac Hitchcock for the 'Cambridge' circuit. The three justices, and the bailiff, were then requested, in accordance with the instructions in the brief, to draw up letters authorising these men to visit the counties on their circuits. Drafts survive of two of these letters, dated 29 June, confirming the appointment of the agreed collectors for the 'Kent' and 'Cambridge' circuits.³⁹ Rough time tables also seem to have been prepared, presumably for the distribution of briefs, the one for the 'Cambridge' circuit, running from 8 to 23 July, and those for the 'Kent' and 'Hereford' circuits from 4 to 10 July and 11 to 15 July respectively.⁴⁰ Figures added in a different hand against the counties to be covered in the 'Cambridge' circuit probably denote the number of briefs distributed, as many as 979 in Suffolk. For some reason the choice of collectors for the 'Hereford' circuit, William Pigeon, Richard Dawkes and George Badger, was delayed until 10 September.⁴¹ The counties to be covered by the brief authorising collection in the north and the Welsh counties were listed but no timetable was given for the distribution of briefs and there is no evidence that any collection went ahead.

Very little evidence survives to establish how successful these arrangements proved to be. In fact, the only record so far traced that any money was raised at all is a note, endorsed on a copy of one of the briefs distributed on the 'Hereford' circuit, that 21d. was collected in South Cadbury, in Devon.⁴² However, a letter also survives from Henry Rainsford to the bailiff, dated 4 November 1616, implying that the 'Hereford' collectors had been given until February 1617 to complete their operations⁴³ and it can therefore be assumed that efforts were indeed made to bring in further funds. Even so, the precise mechanism of the collection and distribution remains elusive. As far as the 'Cambridge' circuit was concerned, perhaps in recognition of the fact that one of the collectors, William Wyatt, had put in the highest compensation claim (£280), it was agreed that he should collect in the south of the circuit with only Norfolk and Norwich allocated to the other three, Jevyns, Nason and Hitchcock.⁴⁴ Whether or not this meant, in effect, that he could keep what he raised, only handing over for wider distribution any money surplus to his claim, is not made clear, but there are hints that this is what happened on the other circuits. When, on 10 September, the 'Hereford' circuit got under way, it was

agreed that two of the collectors, William Pigeon and Richard Dawkes, would be responsible for much of the collection, whilst the third collector, George Badger, was authorised to collect in the city of Hereford but for his own personal benefit.⁴⁵ For the 'Kent' circuit, an even more casual situation arose. Although at the end of June Richard Mountford and John Baker, alias Smith, had been chosen collectors by its nine members, they failed to act and on 6 September, after it had been made clear that Mountford in particular had refused to take on the task, the other members of the 'Kent' consortium agreed that one of their number, Richard Tyler, the same man who had been side-lined when the second patent was issued, should be allowed to collect for the whole of the circuit but for his own personal use.⁴⁶ Without further details, this evidence is difficult to interpret but certainly implies that the collectors were still in doubt as to how to carry out their duties fairly and efficiently, even to the extent, as far the 'Kent' circuit was concerned, that eight of its nine members appear to have more or less abandoned their claims within ten weeks of the new arrangements having been agreed.

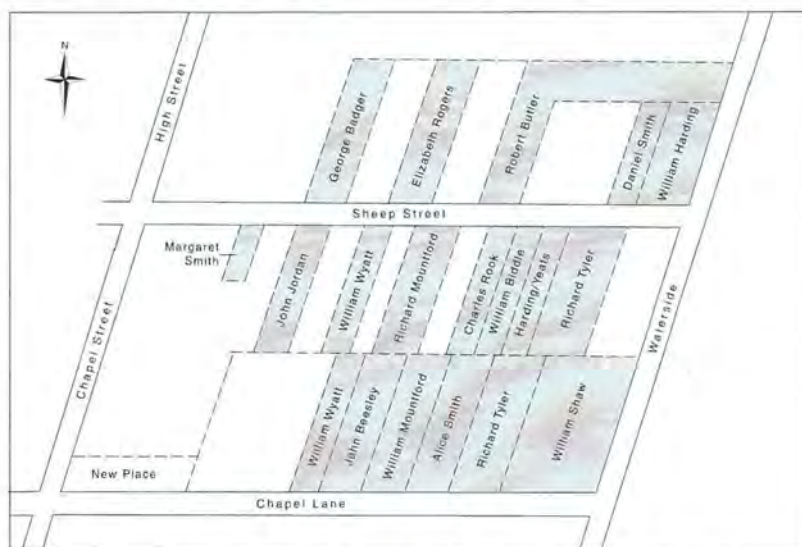


Fig. 1: Location of property in Sheep Street and Chapel Lane held by freeholders or tenants seeking compensation for fire damage

The area of the town affected by fire damage can be quite precisely determined. All the properties on the north side of Chapel Lane, mostly barns, from its junction with Waterside at its east end up to the boundary with the garden of New Place as it was then defined, appear to have been affected. The fire also affected Sheep Street, running parallel to Chapel Lane to the north, though, as the direction of the wind is not specified, we do not know in which direction it spread. Those certainly affected comprised two adjoining Corporation houses on the south side of the street, on the sites of today's Nos 19 and 20 which had to be rebuilt, and there is also evidence that other freehold property on the same side, from at least the house on the site of No. 12, and perhaps even No. 5, down to the east end of the street were affected. The other side of Sheep Street also suffered, again apparently throughout almost its entire length, from George Badger's house at the west end (today's Nos 44-5) down to the junction with Waterside, although material evidence of damage is restricted to only a few properties. Barns running north along Waterside also had to be rebuilt though there is no evidence that the fire spread as far as Bridge Street. Table 1 lists the sites for which there is material evidence for fire damage, Table 2 combines this information with other evidence linking the twenty-five claimants to Sheep Street and Chapel Lane (though a few appear to have had no immediate connection with either), and the map (Fig. 1) plots the holdings of the claimants where known,

establishing amongst other things that some of the owners or occupiers held property which ran through from Sheep Street to Chapel Lane. The brief claimed that the fire had destroyed fifty-four houses, probably an exaggeration, especially if barns and other buildings are excluded. However, given that the fire damaged much of one side of Chapel Lane and both sides of Sheep Street, this figure is probably not far off the mark in terms of the number of buildings affected in some way.

Allegations of personal loss ranged from £280, said to have been suffered by William Wyatt, down to £8 claimed by Margaret Smith (Table 2).⁴⁷ Although there is good evidence (Table 1) that some at least of the buildings had to be rebuilt from the ground, one suspects that greater losses were sustained by those storing substantial amounts of material in their barns – a ‘great store of Corne, Hay, Straw, Wood & Timber’, as the brief describes it. From Stratford’s well-known corn survey of 1598 – the ‘note of corn and malt’ in which William Shakespeare featured⁴⁸ – and an earlier survey of 1595,⁴⁹ it is clear that many burgesses stored more than their own holdings in their barns, belonging either to other burgesses or to landholders living outside the town. Doubtless the same would have applied in 1614 though whether losses were borne by the owners or tenants of the buildings or by those to whom the stored material belonged is not clear.

Chapel Lane, n. side (west to east)	Owner	Tenant	Claim	Evidence	References
Clifford Chambers charity land	Clifford Chambers charity	John Beesley, alias Cox		1619: complaint against, for building with thatch 1622: new house of two bays erected by	SP 14/112/62, 81 ER 3/1980
Former Reading Abbey land	William Wyatt		£280	1619: complaint against, for building with thatch	SP 14/112/62, 81
Barn A	Corporation	William Mountford	£200	1619: Richard Mountford holds rebuilding lease on plot of land	BRT 2/1, p. 104
Barn B	Corporation	Alice Smith	£80	1619: has rebuilt and is granted new lease	BRU 8/3/9 BRU 2/2, p. 382
Barn C	Corporation	Richard Tyler	£123	1623: re-building lease granted to William Shaw	BRT 2/1, p. 104
Nos 1-5	William Shaw			1619: complaint against, for building with thatch	SP 14/112/62, 81
Sheep St, s. side (west to east)					
No. 5	Corporation	Margaret Smith	£8	1623: granted new lease ‘for good causes’	BRU 8/12/21 BRU 2/2, p. 416
No. 12	William Wyatt		£280	1619: complaint against for rebuilding with thatch	SP 14/112/62, 81
No. 19	Corporation	Charles Rook	£20	1615: to be granted a building lease	BRU 2/2, p. 286 BRU 15/10/21
No. 20	Corporation	William Biddle	£20	1615: to be granted a building lease	BRU 2/2, p. 286 BRU 8/12/20
Sheep St, n. side (west to east)					
Nos 44-45	George Badger		£20	1619: complaint against for building with thatch. His house had been previously destroyed.	SP 14/112/62, 81
No. 40	Corporation	Elizabeth Rogers	£80	1619: has rebuilt and is granted new lease	BRU 8/12/18
Nos. 37-8 and Waterside barn	Corporation	John Charnock/ Robert Butler	£20	1615: Butler to be granted a building lease	BRU 2/2, pp. 293, 298 BRU 8/12/16
Waterside barn	William Harding		£10	1615: to be granted building lease 1619: plot of land	BRU 2/2, pp. 297, 382 BRU 8/13/2

Table 1: Evidence of fire damage in Chapel Lane, Sheep Street and Waterside

The highest claim, £280, was made by William Wyatt, whose house, apparently, was on the south side of Sheep Street communicating with a barn in Chapel Lane. In 1595 it had been alleged that ‘besides his trades of vycuallinge and makinge of mallte, [he] usethe buyinge and sellinge of corne for greate somes’ and held thirty-one quarters of barley and malt of his own as well as eighteen belonging to William Cawdry. William Mountford, with the next highest claim of £200, arising out of his tenancy of a barn in Chapel Lane which was burnt down, was said in 1595, ‘besides his whelewrightes occupation’, to be involved in ‘makinge of mallte and vycuallinge and hathe in his howse’ twenty-four quarters. By 1614 his son Richard, with a house in Sheep Street, may also have been involved in the same business, putting in a claim of £30. The third highest claim was made by Dorothy Smith, widow of Daniel, with a house on the north side of Sheep Street towards the east end (Table 2). In 1595 we find that Daniel Smith, ‘besydes his mallt makinge useth husbandrye and buyinge and sellinge of corne, And

hathe of his owne in his howse' twenty-six quarters of barley and malt. William Pigeon of Sheep Street was one of three householders who put in a claim of £80 and whose father, Hugh, in 1595, 'besides his Taielers occupacion usethe makinge of mallt and hathe in his howse' twenty-eight quarters. Another with estimated losses of £80 was Alice widow of John Smith, ironmonger. The family's main house was in High Street but she had succeeded to her late husband's tenancy of a barn in Chapel Lane which, like William Mountford's next door, had been destroyed. The tenant of the third of the row of Chapel Lane barns was Richard Tyler, who also owned the property communicating with it at the bottom of Sheep Street. His losses were estimated at £123 (the fourth highest) but he had not been singled out as a major holder of grain in 1595 (he was said to have had only four quarters). Nicholas Jevyns's losses, estimated at £90, the fifth highest, might also have been largely in goods. He was certainly a Sheep Street resident, though his exact place of residence has yet to be identified, and he is not recorded as a holder of grain in the surveys of the 1590s. However, on occasion he is described as a yeoman and is also known to have operated as a victualler in Sheep Street, and may therefore have been storing large quantities of grain or malt at the time of the fire. The third £80 claimant was Elizabeth, widow of William Rogers (d. 1597), who lived as a Corporation tenant at No. 40 Sheep Street. The family's grain holdings are not listed either in 1595 or 1598 but, although her house was known to have been affected, £80-worth of damage would seem unlikely. Perhaps she lost corn stored in one of the destroyed barns, which would also explain Elizabeth Quiney's claim for £40 (she had no identifiable property in Sheep Street) and William Horne's – he was a Bishopton farmer – for the same sum.

Claimant	Sum	Circuit	Other evidence of ownership or residence in Sheep Street/Chapel Lane
William Mountford	£200	Kent	Sheep St listing 1606; tenant of Chapel Lane barn
Dorothy Smith	£130	Kent	Sheep St listing 1606-7; husband Daniel, buried 8 March 1613, buys land on north side of street in 1598 (ER 2/23) adjoining William Harding's (BRU 8/13/2)
Richard Tyler	£123	Kent	Deeds linking him to Nos 23-6 Sheep St; tenant of Chapel Lane barn
Alice Smith	£80	Kent	Tenant of Chapel Lane barn
Elizabeth Rogers	£80	Kent	Tenant of 40 Sheep St; Sheep St listings, 1606-17
Richard Mountford	£30	Kent	Sheep St listing 1617; deeds linking him to Nos 15-17 Sheep St; pays chief rent, 1637; leaves house in Sheep St in will, 1650
John Charnock	£20	Kent	Father Gilbert in Sheep St listings, 1606-07; John tenant of Nos 37-8 Sheep St and Waterside barns
William Biddle	£20	Kent	Mother Joan in Sheep St listings, 1606-08; William tenant of No. 20 Sheep St
William Harding	£10	Kent	Sheep St listings, 1606-17; deed evidence as owner of No. 30 Sheep St; tenant of Waterside barns
	£693		
William Wyatt	£280	Cambridge	Sheep St listings, 1606-17; possible links to No. 12 Sheep St and barn in Chapel Lane
Nicholas Jevyns	£90	Cambridge	Sheep Street listings, 1606-17
Isaac Hitchcock	£90	Cambridge	
Thomas Walker	£60	Cambridge	
Ananias Nason	£60	Cambridge	Sheep St listings, 1606-17
Elizabeth Quiney	£40	Cambridge	
Thomas Gedyn, al Deege	£30	Cambridge	Listed in Sheep St in corn survey, 1596
	£650		
William Pigeon	£80	Hereford	Father Hugh listed in Sheep St, 1590 (<i>Minutes and Accounts</i> , iii, p. 98)
William Horne	£60	Hereford	
Richard Dawkes	£50	Hereford	Sheep St listings, 1606-17; occupant of Sheep St house on death in 1627
Joan Bradshaw	£30	Hereford	Husband Thomas (buried 25 May 1616) has interest in No. 19 Sheep St; Joan buried 25.9.1617
Charles Rook	£22	Hereford	Tenant of No. 19 Sheep St
George Badger	£20	Hereford	Sheep St listings, 1606-17; owner of Nos 44-5 Sheep St
Daniel Gilbert	£20	Hereford	
John Jordan	£20	Hereford	Sheep St listings, 1606-17; family later has links with Nos 8-9
Richard Whiting	£13	Hereford	Has property, probably in Bridge St, bordering Nos 37-8 Sheep St on the north
Margaret Smith	£8	Hereford	Sheep St listings, 1606-08; in 1623 granted new lease of No. 5 (BRU 8/12/21; BRU 2/2, p. 416)
	£323		

Listings: 8 Jan 1606 Sheep St tipplers *Minutes & Accounts*, vi, p. 347 2 Sept 1607 Sheep St tipplers *MA*, vi, p. 417
 3 Sept 1606 Sheep St tipplers *MA*, vi, pp. 382-4 April 1608 Sheep St tipplers *MA*, vi, p. 44
 27 Sept 1606 Sheep St licencees *MA*, vi, pp. 389-90 7 April 1618 Poor rate listing *Vestry Book*, p. 2

Table 2: claimants for compensation, by collection circuit, with evidence of Sheep Street/Chapel Lane interests

In seeking to establish the level at which claims for relief were met, the advantage of being a Corporation tenant needs to be taken into account. The Corporation's normal practice, when granting a lease of one of its properties (and as a means of raising some capital) was to require the incoming tenant to pay a substantial entry fine, sometimes as high as £20, in exchange for which the tenants would hold the demised property for a specified term of years but at a modest annual rent. However, following the 1614 fire, many tenants whose premises had been damaged by the fire were able to surrender their existing leases in exchange for longer ones at the same rent but without the payment of an entry fine, either on the understanding that they would rebuild, or in return for the cost of repairs already undertaken. Such concessions were made, or at least offered to, William Biddle, Charles Rook, Gilbert Charnock (who then assigned the benefit to Robert Butler), William Harding, Elizabeth Rogers, Alice Smith and Richard Tyler – later transferred to William Shaw (who owned the property next door) on Tyler's refusal to co-operate.⁵⁰ Margaret Smith may also have benefitted in this way.⁵¹

As already explained, there is little or no evidence as to how much money was actually raised under the new arrangements or how it was distributed, but it is at least clear that the original claim that the fire caused £8,000-worth of damage must have been a serious exaggeration, despite the fact that such claims were supposed to have been certified by local justices as reasonable. At the time of the issue of new briefs in May 1616, the claimants had put their total losses at £1,656. Even allowing for the fact that some claims may already have been met out of the £60 or so collected under the first brief, and that Corporation tenants would have been partly compensated by the grant of favourable leases, the figure of £8,000 must therefore remain highly suspect. There is no evidence as to whether even this comparatively modest sum of £1,656 was reached but it is at least possible to look at what was achieved elsewhere. In 1641, following Stratford's fourth fire, the collection brought in £870, roughly ten per cent of the £8,618 19s. 6d. filed in claims.⁵² Other towns, Nantwich, Dorchester and Wymondham, for example, managed to collect eleven to fourteen per cent of the amount of damage allegedly suffered.⁵³ This would imply that, if all Stratford's later claims were met, then its success rate would have stood at the significantly higher rate of around twenty per cent. Given the general impression that the town's collection was both disorganised and inefficient, this is difficult to believe, implying that few of the claims were ever fully met.

Not surprisingly, the fire of 1614 gave rise to a batch of orders intended to prevent further outbreaks. As already explained, under the book of orders of 16 July 1612, it was required, under pain of fine of 13s. 4d., that every alderman should have available two leather buckets, and every capital burgess one bucket (making a total of forty-two) 'to cary water in for the better defence and preservacion of the houses and buildings ... from & against casuallie of fyre'. The same order also required each of the six wards to provide an additional six buckets, 'at the common charge of every such warde', with a draconian fine of 20 shillings on every inhabitant refusing to contribute. The survey had revealed a woeful deficiency in the number of such buckets held in readiness.⁵⁴ Only three aldermen (out of fourteen) were able to provide two buckets, and only four (out of fourteen) capital burgesses, one, a total of ten. Of the six buckets supposed to have been held by each of the town's six wards, there was no mention. Following the fire, it was therefore agreed, on 15 July 1614, that the Corporation should ensure that 'the buckettes that remane belonging to the Company shall be made up two dosen' and that the chamberlains should provide 'some spouttes' and 'make four fire houkes mo[r]e and make four ladders mo[r]e'.⁵⁵ The chamberlain's account submitted the following January, records that only eight new buckets, at a cost of 21s. 4d., were acquired that year, with 13 pence spent on some new poles for the fire hooks.⁵⁶ An unspecified number of fire hooks and poles were purchased the following year for 2s. 2d. but not, as far as is known, the additional ladders.⁵⁷

The reference to spouts implies that water was to be pumped up from wells but it was not until 1621 that the accounts record any payment for provision of this sort.⁵⁸

Further orders were issued at a meeting of the Corporation on 30 September 1614. First it was made a condition that 'All Leases hereafter to be made shall contayne a provisoe in them for tylinge or slatyng', in accordance with a requirement in the book of orders of July 1612.⁵⁹ It was even ordered that a lease to Francis Ainge, dated 30 September 1611 but never sealed, should be looked out so that a provision 'especially to tyle & keepe tyled all usuall tyled buyldynges & newe buyldynges in respect of any new building' could be included, as a last minute interlineation.⁶⁰ Finally it was ordered, again in accordance with the 1612 book of orders, but never routinely enforced, that any outbuildings 'used or ymployed as a Backhouse, Brewhouse, Dyehouse or Kylnehouse ... shall at all tymes ... be covered with slate or tyle' and further that 'no Inhabitant ... shall make or Kepe any fyer in any parte of such house or building for brewing, baking or for dressing meate & drinke or for washing or otherwise but onely in Chimneys & other fitt places sufficiently walled with stone or bricke'.

A further clause to protect Corporation property from outbreaks of fire was incorporated into at least six other leases, dated between August 1616 and September 1619, which, though not requiring rebuilding, still bound the tenant 'for the better protection of the said borough (if God so please) from the danger of fire which it hath often fallen into' to carry out 'all and every such amendments, alteracions and repaires for avoydinge the daunger of Fire in and upon all and every the premisses' by such time as the Corporation should require.⁶¹ On 19 July 1616, in a final bid to ensure that its own property at least was protected from fire damage, the Corporation ordered that a further clause be inserted into its leases that if any tenant failed to 'doe & make or cause to be done & made all & every such Amendmentes, alteracions & repayres for avoydyng the danger of fire in and upon all & every the premises & every part thereof, And by such tyme and tymes as by the Chamberlaynes of the seyd Boroughe for the tyme being shalbe from tyme to tyme required or directed by wrytyng to be left at the seyd demysed premisses' then his lease would be void.⁶² Four leases sealed after this resolution, dating from between 20 August and 20 September 1616, contained this clause but, in circumstances which are not entirely clear, the order appears to have been revoked on 29 May 1618 and indeed had been omitted from nearly all leases sealed after 20 September 1616.⁶³

There was one further option open to the Corporation in its pursuit of a policy of reducing fire risk. The book of orders of 1612 had not only placed conditions on its tenants who wished, or were expected, to carry out building work but had further required that:

... all houses alreadye builded & standing on the streete syde in ... Highe Streete, Chapell Streete, Church Streete, Sheepe Streete, Bridge Streete, Henley Streete and Wood Streete and now covered in parte or in all with thatche shall for so much as is thatched before the nyne & twentieth day of September which shall be in the yere of our Lord God one thousand six hundred and thirtene be covered with Slate or tyle.

On 15 July 1614 the Corporation therefore resolved to petition the Lord Chief Justice to issue an order 'to restrayne all thatched houses in our towne'.⁶⁴ There is no evidence that such a petition was ever lodged but by early 1619, once the collection was completed and the rebuilding well under way, the Corporation decided to revive the idea, this time with a petition to the Privy Council. This begins with a reminder that the three recent fires had together caused £20,000-worth of damage, going on to explain the root of the problem the town faced, namely that they:

... had their beginnings in poore Tenements and Cottages which were Thatched with Strawe, of whiche sort very many have byn lately erected there, and many more or like to be, unles the builders may and shalbe by authoritye restrayned soe to doe ... And to convert their Thatched barnes into Cottages ... From doeing whereof the Peticioners have noe power to restrayne them, for that they build uppon their owne land ... Albeit the said Thatched Cottages adjoyne close to fayer howses which are slated or tyled, whereby it happeneth in tyme of danger by fier ... That when one or more Thatched howses are on fier, the wynde taketh the Thatch & carryeth it very farr of, and there fireth other Thatched howses, with many Stacks of Furses and strawe, the flame and smoake thereof is soe greate and violent that noe man is able to come neere those howses or to stand in the wynde to defend the fayer tyled howses which are adjoyning to them.⁶⁵

The Corporation therefore went on to petition for powers to ensure:

... that noe such Thatched howses shall hereafter be erected within the Streates of the said Towne nor on the backsides or parts of any of those howses, nor any Stacks or pyles of strawe or Furzes placed or made in any of the yards or grounds neere to any of those howses, And that all the howses which are already erected and thatched may within some convenient tyme to be Covered with slate or tyles for the better defence of Fier.

The Privy Council responded positively, and on 16 March confirmed the Corporation's right to ensure that:

... from henceforwarde there bee not anie house or Cottage ... suffered to bee thatched ... that may anie way endainger the same by Fyer as formerly; But that all the houses and Cottages to bee hereafter built within theTowne be covered with Tyles or Slates ... And for the houses and Cottages already builte and covered with Strawe there, Wee doe likewise require you to cause them to bee altered and reformed accordinge to theis direccions with as much expedicion as may stand with convenience and as the safetie and wellfare of that Towne may anie way require.⁶⁶

Enforcement, however, was another matter and on 15 October 1619, the Corporation ordered one of its members, Daniel Baker, to begin proceedings against three men, George Badger, William Shaw and John Beesley alias Cox, albeit claimants or beneficiaries of the post-fire collection, who 'have newlie builded and thatched contrarie to the Lordes of the Councill Letter'.⁶⁷ The three men were summoned to London but the Privy Council, 'forasmuch as they [the defendants] doe absolutely deny that they have shewed any such disobedience at all to our said order, nor comitted any manner of act contrary thereunto since the publicacion of the same in that towne', was not initially minded to uphold the complaint, especially as 'the partie that exhibited the complaint against them in the name of the towne [presumably Daniel Baker] did not appeare to make good his informacion'.⁶⁸ The three men were therefore dismissed and three local justices instructed to look into the matter. They reported back on 25 January 1620 that the charges were unwarranted, firstly because the Corporation had failed to make known the order 'in any publique manner' but 'onely reade [it] before some of their Magistrates in their Councill house'. As a result, two of the three men had begun their re-thatching 'before notice given unto them of your Lordships letters' whilst the third, John Cox, 'an exceeding poore man', had been given permission to replace his thatch with tile at a later date. The justices ended with a blunt accusation of hypocrisy against those who had brought the charges ('these men that had eyes to pry into their poore Neighbours') who were nevertheless 'absolutely blinde towards one another, being not onely ... guilty of continuing their Thatched howses but where it is decayed repairing them with the same'.⁶⁹ The Corporation took exception to this version of events and the bailiff and chief alderman immediately wrote to the Privy Council to put their own side of the argument, insisting:

... that your *Lordships* said Letters weare published from howse to howse throughout the towne where thatched Buildinges weare, And warning gyven for reformation, And that the said Beeslie was warned ... before he began to thatch his howse & was also divers tymes Admonished before he began to build ... not to proceede therin unless he Could or would tyle the same ... and as touching the offences of Badger and Shawe ... they weare both of them warned by virtue of your said Letters to alter the same in some Convenientie tyme, which they refused, And would not promise to doe, the said Badger Answering in a scoffing manner that a pyper Could not pype and want his upper Lipp, And further said that he must tyle his howse to save M^r Bakers Aprycock tree from burninge with other such like speeches; And the said Shawe being one of the Common Cowncell of the said Burrough had the said Letters manie tymes read unto him And was often tymes entreated ... to Conforme himselfe to the said order yet he obstinatlie reffused soe to doe.⁷⁰

As to the accusation that those who had brought the charges were themselves the owners of unimproved thatched buildings, 'wee humblie Confess to be true yet notwithstanding, those Buildinges are very Ancient And the owners have All promised a speedie refformacion'. The final outcome is not known and the case seems then to have petered out although orders against thatching continued to be issued throughout the 1620s and early 1630s, indicating the Corporation's continuing inability to enforce its policy.⁷¹

How soon the town recovered from the fire is far from clear. From the evidence of new and favourable building leases granted to Corporation tenants, rebuilding in most cases took a few years. By September 1619, two properties had been rebuilt or repaired, by Alice Smith and Elizabeth Rogers, who had each made a substantial claim for compensation of £80. William Biddle, claiming £30 for damage to his house in Sheep Street, had rebuilt it by September 1620, when a new lease was agreed. William Harding, with a modest claim of only £10, had, by the time his lease was sealed, on 10 September 1619, already rebuilt one of two specified barns.⁷² On the other hand, Richard Mountford, after five years, had not even made a start. He had put in a claim for £30 and his father William a much more substantial one of £200 for damage to a barn in Chapel Lane. William had died in May 1618 before undertaking any rebuilding and it was his son Richard who was granted a favourable rebuilding lease in September 1619.⁷³ Whether or not this had a long-term impact on the family finances is uncertain but, for the record (though the documentation is far from definitive), neither William nor Richard appeared in the town's subsidy rolls after 1594. Nevertheless, Richard died a gentleman in 1661, his goods valued at a very healthy £122, the owner of both the family home in Sheep Street and another house in Bridge Street.⁷⁴ For others, the fire might have had a more serious effect. John Charnock, who had taken over his father's lease of another of the Corporation's Sheep Street properties, lodged a claim for £20 but then pleaded his inability to rebuild and surrendered the lease to Robert Butler. Butler was then granted a generous rebuilding lease early in 1616 which required him to provide newly built premises both in Sheep Street (within two years) and Waterside (within seven), as well as taking on Charnock's rent arrears. Something similar may have happened in the case of Thomas Bradshaw who on 19 May 1615 surrendered his interest in a fire-damaged house in Sheep Street in favour of a fellow tenant, Charles Rook, who was then promised a favourable rebuilding lease. However, this did not prevent Rook from filing a claim for £22 as did Bradshaw's widow Joan – Thomas had died a week after surrendering his interest in the house – for £30, implying that the two families had a joint interest in the property but that the Bradshaws had decided to cut their losses. Even so, the new lease to Rook was not finalised until 1624, indicating some delay. Richard Tyler may also have been in some difficulty – or may just have refused to co-operate following the Corporation's criticism of his behaviour as a collector. He had lodged a claim for £128, the fourth highest sum, for

damage to both his house in Sheep Street and a barn in Chapel Lane held of the Corporation, but he was not offered a rebuilding lease of the barn and after the fire refused to pay any rent for the site: instead in 1623 it was let to William Shaw on the understanding that he would rebuild.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, Tyler died a gentleman in 1636, still the owner of Sheep Street property. The biggest loser may have been William Wyatt. He lodged the highest compensation claim, £280, but an indication that he may never have recovered financially is suggested by his disappearance from surviving subsidy rolls over this period.⁷⁶ Finally, we might speculate on the fortunes of Dorothy Smith. Having recently inherited from her husband goods worth just over £33 and a house which had cost him 100 marks in 1598, she was obliged to lodge a claim, the third highest, of £130 as a result of fire damage. Little is known of her subsequent fortunes (she died in December 1632) but the goods of her son-in-law, William Loach, who inherited the property, totalled only £14 or so when valued on his death in 1661.⁷⁷

Although in some cases rebuilding after the fire may have been delayed for up to eight years, it would still seem unlikely that the town suffered a major setback. Although the sums raised came nowhere near the alleged £8,000-worth of damage included in the briefs, it is equally clear that, as far as we can tell, the actual sums claimed, or at least 'loss adjusted' ones, were either met, or at least not missed by too wide a margin. Nor is there any evidence that more than two or three of the townfolk were caused any real distress. Of more interest, perhaps, is the light thrown on the difficulties which faced the town authorities in the collection of charitable relief, dogged as it was in its early stages by delay, obfuscation and impropriety. Even after the issue of a second brief, when a more transparent process was agreed on, the surviving evidence suggests a less than enthusiastic performance on the part of the collectors. It might be argued that this impression is due, at least in part, to a loss of data. Where detailed accounts survive, following the fires at Wymondham in 1615 or Stratford in 1641, for example, an air of orderliness and fairness inevitably prevails; but this does not necessarily mean that where, as in 1614,⁷⁸ surviving records are scrappy and incomplete, the collection itself was badly managed. However, there was clearly a failure over nearly two years, before the second brief was issued, to organise a collection in a generally acceptable way, and that even in the later stages the process was pursued in only a half-hearted manner. The Corporation's efforts to prevent further disasters were also resisted. Even those who had suffered in the 1614 fire appear to have been reluctant to abandon thatch during rebuilding operations and the frequent re-iterations of the orders against thatching must only have been necessary because they were regularly flouted. Even Richard Tyler, accused in the early stages of malpractice, emerged with his reputation largely intact, included as he was in the revised collection process, followed by his appointment as a churchwarden in 1621, and his election as a capital burgess in 1623 and alderman in 1632. And in the final analysis it can hardly be said that the town had learnt its lesson: its fourth fire broke out in 1641 causing a similar amount of damage, this time in the Bridge Street area,⁷⁹ and presentments against thatching continued into the 1660s. As so often happened, in this as in other situations, when the immediate danger had passed, it proved difficult to introduce new, and costlier, procedures.

Notes

- ¹ Stephen Porter, 'Fires in Stratford-upon-Avon in the 16th and 17th centuries', *Warwickshire History*, iii (1976), pp. 97-105; E.L. Jones, S. Porter and M. Turner, *A Gazetteer of English Urban Fire Disasters*, 1500-1600, Historical Geography Research series, xiii, 1984, Tables 3, 5, 8 (but apparently misdating the 1582 fire to 1598); *Minutes and Accounts of the Stratford-upon-Avon Corporation, 1577-1586*, ed. Richard Savage and Edgar I. Fripp, Dugdale Society, iii (1926), pp. 110-1.
- ² Robert Bearman, 'Stratford's fires of 1594 and 1595 revisited', *Midland History*, xxv (2000), pp. 180-90; John E. Morgan, 'The representation and experience of English urban fire disasters', *Historical Research*, lxxxix, May 2016, pp. 268-93.
- ³ Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, BRU 2/2, p. 267. Other manuscript references are to archives at the same location, unless otherwise specified. The date of the fire, as given on the first brief published the following December (see n. 13), Saturday 19 July, was clearly wrong as this was a Tuesday in 1614 and in any case post-dated the Corporation meeting of 15 July when the fire was discussed. The date was changed to 9 July when the second brief was printed in May 1616 (see n. 34).
- ⁴ BRU 15/13/6; BRU 3/2.
- ⁵ Jones, Porter and Turner, *Gazetteer of English Urban Fire Disasters*, Table 3.
- ⁶ D.J. Schove, 'Fire and drought, 1600-1700', *Weather*, xxi (1966), pp. 311-14; Morgan, 'Representation and experience of English urban fire disasters', pp. 268-9.
- ⁷ The three undated payments are recorded in the chamberlain's account submitted the following January (BRU 4/1, pp. 265-6). Assuming that entries were generally listed chronologically, the three payments are separated by only fourteen lines and follow a payment for purchasing eight new buckets as ordered by the Corporation on 15 July.
- ⁸ BRU 2/2, p. 267.
- ⁹ These measures are discussed further below.
- ¹⁰ On 7 July 1615: BRU 2/2, p. 288.
- ¹¹ This quarrel has attracted much attention because of the involvement of William Shakespeare, tenant of half the Corporation tithes, but, despite the survival of extensive documentation, there is still no detailed account of the dispute itself which dragged on until 1619: but see *Victoria History of the County of Warwick*, iii, pp. 267-8.
- ¹² The chamberlain's account, submitted the following January, records that on 30 September 16 pence was spent on wine and sugar for two justices, Edward Greville and Bartholomew Hales, when visiting the town, both of whom later signed the certificate (BRU 4/1, p. 266).
- ¹³ At least four copies are extant: below, nn. 16-19.
- ¹⁴ However, the claim that fifty-four properties were affected is more easily tested and is further discussed below.
- ¹⁵ One is endorsed: 'Izake Hicockes hath accounted for thes brefes'.
- ¹⁶ BRU 15/7/106a.
- ¹⁷ BRU 15/7/106b.
- ¹⁸ ER 1/1/65.
- ¹⁹ Warwickshire County Record Office (WCRO), CR 229/18/4/35.

- ²⁰ BRU 15/13/16.
- ²¹ BRU 15/7/123.
- ²² The National Archives (TNA), C111/193; Worcestershire County Record office, BA 14450/377/1/231. He may be the same man listed as liable to pay taxes in London in the 1620s (TNA, E115 *passim*).
- ²³ BRU 15/13/14.
- ²⁴ BRU 2/2, p. 288.
- ²⁵ BRU 15/13/17.
- ²⁶ BRU 2/2, p. 289.
- ²⁷ BRU 15/7/111. The draft (or copy) is undated but it must have been sent (even if in altered form) as by 21 November the Privy Council had taken action.
- ²⁸ Due to damage to the document, '8000' could be read as '800', though, given that £8000 was the figure given in the brief for the extent of the damage, this would be very unlikely.
- ²⁹ A complaint about Tyler's behaviour was to be made the subject of a separate letter (below, n. 36).
- ³⁰ The letter has not survived but was acknowledged by Rainsford and Hales when they replied.
- ³¹ BRU 4/1, p. 281.
- ³² BRU 2/2, p. 305.
- ³³ BRU 15/7/120. The status of the draft is uncertain but may have been submitted to the Corporation for comment.
- ³⁴ ER 1/1/70. The Society of Antiquaries also holds a copy and another, not now located, was presented at its meeting on 7 June 1888, endorsed with a note of a collection in South Cadbury, in Devon (*Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*, Series 2, xii, p. 165).
- ³⁵ Folger Shakespeare Library. ESTC 8541 does not acknowledge a difference in these two briefs.
- ³⁶ Or so it was alleged in the Corporation's draft response (BRU 15/16/14). Rumours of Tyler's misbehaviour was probably the reason that he was struck out of William Shakespeare's will. As originally drafted, or-redrafted, in January 1616, Tyler was to be given 26s. 8d. to buy a mourning ring but when the will was further redrafted, on 25 March, his name was struck out and Hamlet Sadler's substituted: David Thomas and Jane Cox, *Shakespeare in the Public Records*, London, 1985, pp. 24-32.
- ³⁷ BRU 15/1/164, i, ii, iii.
- ³⁸ In other words, the 'Kent' and 'Hereford' circuits were based on one of the briefs as described above, and the 'Cambridge' circuit on a brief which does not survive.
- ³⁹ BRU 15/7/122. This, in fact, is a draft for the 'Kent' circuit, amended for the 'Cambridge' one.
- ⁴⁰ BRU 15/1/164, ii, iv.
- ⁴¹ BRU 15/1/164, vi.
- ⁴² See note 34.

- ⁴³ BRU 15/1/21.
- ⁴⁴ BRU 15/1/164, i.
- ⁴⁵ BRU 15/1/164, vi. For a reference to a bond signed by Dawkes, see ER 1/1/79.
- ⁴⁶ BRU 15/1/164, i, v.
- ⁴⁷ Compensation claims are listed in BRU 15/1/164, iii, vi.
- ⁴⁸ *Minutes and Accounts of the Stratford-upon-Avon Corporation, 1593-1598*, ed. Levi Fox, Dugdale Society, xxxv (1990), pp. 135-40.
- ⁴⁹ WCRO, CR 1886/2663, only a few entries of which are edited in *Minutes and Accounts*, 1593-1598, pp. 48-51.
- ⁵⁰ BRU 8/3/9; BRU 8/12/16-18; BRU 8/12/20; BRU 8/13/2.
- ⁵¹ BRU 8/12/21.
- ⁵² The sources of the figures are, for claims, BRU 15/7/108, and for money raised, ER 1/77, ff. 169v-173v (a copy by James Saunders, c. 1820, from a lost original).
- ⁵³ Morgan, 'Representation and experience of English urban fire disasters', p. 18.
- ⁵⁴ Above, p. 251; BRU 15/13/6; BRU 3/2.
- ⁵⁵ BRU 2/2, p. 267. This would appear to be a reference to the thirty-six buckets theoretically paid for by the six wards but of which the survey had made no mention. Perhaps twelve had subsequently been found leaving a shortfall of twenty-four.
- ⁵⁶ BRU 4/1, pp. 265-6.
- ⁵⁷ BRU 4/1, p. 279.
- ⁵⁸ BRU 4/1, p. 177, misbound.
- ⁵⁹ BRU 2/2, p. 272; BRU 3/2.
- ⁶⁰ BRU 8/1/11. Thereafter, a clause concerning tiling any new structure was routinely incorporated into the lease, not only in cases where fire-damaged buildings in Sheep Street and Chapel Lane had to be rebuilt, but elsewhere in the town as well.
- ⁶¹ BRU 8/5/16; BRU 8/7/2; BRU 8/9/23-24, 26; BRU 8/15/18. This was not standard practice, however, many leases having no such provision, incorporating instead the standard repair clause as had been used in previous instances, even in cases when rebuilding had been required (e.g., BRU 8/12/20; BRU 8/15/19).
- ⁶² BRU 2/2, p. 312.
- ⁶³ BRU 8/5/16; BRU 8/9/23-4; BRU 8/15/18. The revocation note was added as a postscript to the order of 19 July 1616 but was not entered in the orders of the meeting held on 29 May 1618. The inclusion of the clause in leases of 1 June 1618 and 27 September 1619 was probably by mistake (BRU 8/7/2; BRU 8/9/26).
- ⁶⁴ BRU 3/2; BRU 2/2, p. 267.
- ⁶⁵ BRU 15/7/114.

- ⁶⁶ BRU 15/7/113; *Acts of the Privy Council* (APC), xxvi, p. 401.
- ⁶⁷ BRU 2/2, p. 380; BRU 15/7/19. See also *APC*, xxxvii, p. 56.
- ⁶⁸ *APC*, xxxvii, p. 74.
- ⁶⁹ TNA, SP 14/112/62.
- ⁷⁰ TNA, SP 14/112/81.
- ⁷¹ BRU 2/2, pp. 432, 479; BRU 2/3, pp. 5, 52, 58.
- ⁷² BRU 8/3/9; BRU 8/12/18; BRU 8/13/2; BRU 2/2, pp. 382-3.
- ⁷³ Both the Mountford claims were listed in the 'Kent' circuit, as was Richard Tyler's, who was allowed the whole of the circuit collection (see above). It may therefore be relevant that Richard Mountford married Tyler's daughter in November 1620.
- ⁷⁴ He was also a victim of the later fire of 1641: Morgan, 'Representation and experience of English urban fire disasters', p. 23.
- ⁷⁵ BRU 8/3/10; BRT 2/1, p. 104.
- ⁷⁶ Having been regularly rated over the period 1606 to 1608, neither he nor members of his family appear when the rolls resume in 1621.
- ⁷⁷ *Stratford-upon-Avon Inventories, 1538-1699*, ed., Jeanne Jones, 2 vols, Dugdale Society, xxxix, xl (2002, 2003), i, pp. 281-4; ii, pp. 96-8.
- ⁷⁸ John Wilson, 'The great fire of Wymondham 1615', *The Annual: the Bulletin of the Norfolk Archaeological and Historical Research Group*, x, 2001, pp. 29-41; Morgan, 'Representation and experience of English urban fire disasters', esp. pp. 20-22.
- ⁷⁹ Morgan, 'Representation and experience of English urban fire disasters', *passim*.