STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

A History of its Streets and Buildings

Robert Bearman

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

A History of its Streets and Buildings

Robert Bearman

Revised Edition

Stratford-upon-Avon Society

PREFACE

The first edition of this little book, published nearly twenty years ago, has been out of print for many years and I was therefore very pleased to be asked by the Stratford-upon-Avon Society to prepare a new edition. Since 1988, there have been many changes, not least the demolition of some of the buildings originally featured. New information has come to light and tastes have changed too, reminding us that we need to pay due regard to the architectural quality of some of the more recent additions to the street scene. I have also decided that this time, rather than examine the streets in simple alphabetical order, some attempt should be made to group them by common characteristic or original function.

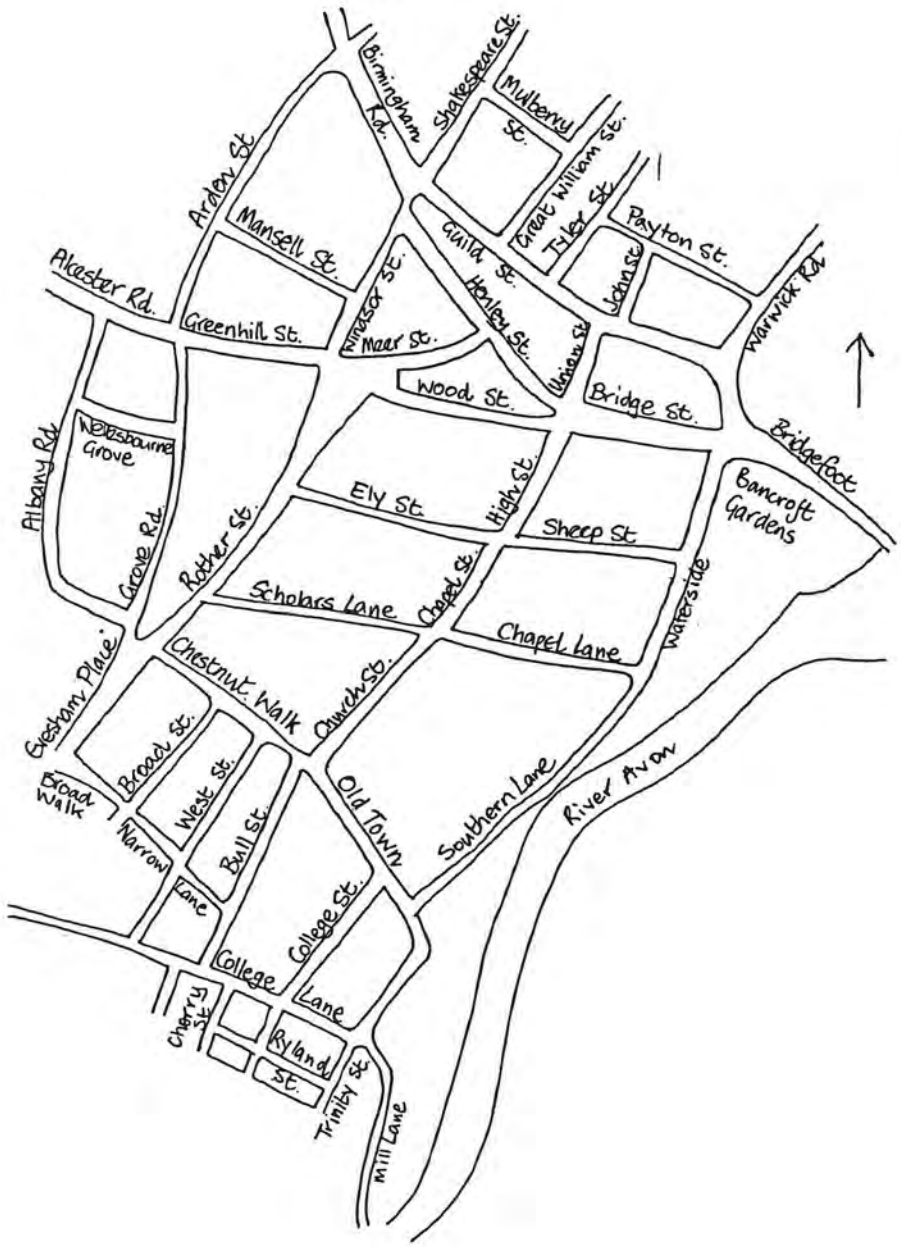
Much of the text originated in a series of articles which I contributed to *Focus*, a magazine published by the *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, whose permission to reproduce it, albeit in much altered form, is nevertheless once again gratefully acknowledged. I have given no references to my sources, but most points can be followed up by reference to indexes at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, originally compiled by an evening class working under my supervision (and without whose efforts the original study could not have been undertaken) and to which new information has been added over the years. All the illustrations are also drawn from the Records Office's extensive collection and are reproduced by permission of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

William Hawkes and Patricia MacFarland kindly read the text in draft and made many helpful suggestions. Jan Bunyan drew the maps and was customarily rigorous in her identification of infelicities of expression.

ROBERT BEARMAN

CONTENTS

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON
General Map



Introduction

Few would disagree that Stratford-upon-Avon is a 'historic town' but it is as well to define our terms. Many visitors to Stratford are on a literary pilgrimage but the fact that Shakespeare was born in Stratford does not in itself make Stratford a 'historic town' if by such a term we mean one which retains today physical evidence of its past: one, in other words, that tells us something of its history through a close observation of its street patterns, street names and surviving buildings. Some historic towns are well known for particular architectural styles (Bath is a good and obvious example), others today retain more varied evidence of a gradual evolution, from early medieval times to the twentieth century. Stratford-upon-Avon is one such town. It is, of course, famous for its timber-framed buildings of Elizabethan vintage but interested observers find that they can disentangle a great deal more about the town's general history by taking a close look at other surviving topographical and architectural features.

Before examining this evidence, some general remarks should first be made. Firstly, much of the town's present layout and appearance can only properly be appreciated if we bear in mind that today's town centre street pattern is the direct result of a deliberate act of town planning around the year 1196. It might come as a surprise to learn that town-planning was one of the concerns of our medieval forebears but Stratford is only one of a score of towns which came into existence at about that time as the result of a deliberate policy on the part of some major landowners (in Stratford's case the bishop of Worcester) of encouraging urban growth as a means of generating income. The present-day layout of such towns almost invariably suggests conscious planning and in Stratford this is reflected in the regular street pattern which survives today, the main thoroughfares intersecting one another more or less at right angles.

The place chosen for this new town was ideal, situated near a convenient river crossing, in use since at least Roman times, and a natural focal point for local trade. The old Roman road, following the line of what is now Greenhill Street, Wood Street and Bridge Street, was incorporated into the new town, with the new development set out mainly to the south on a regular grid pattern: two thoroughfares (Ely Street/Sheep Street and Scholars Lane/Chapel Lane) running east-west parallel to the old road, intersected by three (Rother Street, High Street/Chapel Street and Waterside) running north-south (see plan opposite). Despite frequent rebuilding inside the limits of the old borough and the town's great expansion in more recent times, this street pattern has survived virtually intact, eloquent testimony not only to the town's establishment in the medieval period but to its original size and layout.

This new town was carved out of the much larger rural parish of Stratford and was enclosed within a closely defined boundary which excluded the old medieval

village, clustered around the church further downstream, on the site of another ford. This accounts for the church's apparent isolation today.

Another point to bear in mind when considering the town's surviving buildings is the destruction of much of the centre of the town in four highly damaging fires of 1594, 1595, 1614 and 1641, the effect of which was to wipe out much of the medieval building in the heart of the old borough. As a result it is only on the fringes of the old town (in such areas as Rother Street, Church Street, the bottom of Sheep Street and parts of Henley Street) that we find buildings which date from earlier than about 1600.

One final point of a general nature concerns building materials. Until the development of modern communications, the most expensive part of any building operation was the cost of transporting materials. For most construction work it therefore made good sense to use those materials which were readily available. In the Cotswolds, stone was almost universally chosen, but in Stratford, with well-wooded areas to its north, timber was a more obvious choice. In the medieval period, and even much later, stone was used very sparingly and only for the most important buildings: Holy Trinity Church, the Guild Chapel, Clopton Bridge and the Town Hall are the best examples.

Following the great fires, regulations were introduced to encourage the use of brick and from 1650 this rapidly became the almost universal building material in the town. Again, however, this could only happen because it could be made locally, the clay to the north and north-east of the town being found excellent for brick production. At the end of the nineteenth century there were still three brickworks flourishing in that part of the town, producing the red and orange bricks which are such a pleasant feature of the town's Victorian suburbs.

The development of the spa town of Bath, characterised by elegant stone buildings, prompted further changes. In Leamington, another spa town expanding rapidly in the early nineteenth century, the appearance of stone was achieved by applying stucco to brick-built buildings. This trend is also clearly reflected in buildings put up in Stratford during this period. The less wealthy managed to keep roughly in step with this changing taste by concealing old timber frames under a layer of this convenient material (Plate 1). Some even went as far as rebuilding the entire front wall in brick first. Much of this work was reversed within a century, with the growing awareness that timber-framing was more suitable for a town which was beginning to attract visitors to the birthplace of Shakespeare. In many cases stripping away the stucco was all that was required (Plates 2, 45); and where whole front walls had been removed by Georgian improvers, their Victorian and Edwardian counterparts did not scruple to rebuild them with a timber frame. Some properties, more often the smaller cottages, escaped these latest attentions and no attempt was made to put the clock back in the interests of

1. High Street, c. 1900. Some of the town's finest timber-framed buildings are still hidden behind a stucco facing.

2. The timber-frame of No. 23/24 High Street (on the corner of Ely Street) emerging from behind its stucco facing during restoration in 1903.

tourism. As a result, several fine timber-framed properties lie concealed behind more recent façades. These developments were accompanied by the construction of a few buildings in what might be termed the 'high Victorian' manner and these, together with a few important additions in the last century, have also been noted in the pages which follow. The intention, however, is not simply to present a digest of information about particular buildings and their architectural qualities. Instead, the emphasis will be on how the present-day appearance of the town centre reflects its history and, in this context, the humble building may be as significant as the grandest structure. Sometimes we have to look hard for this evidence. In those parts of the town where commercial pressures are at their greatest, the original character of some buildings is not readily apparent, as they have been chopped off at the knees by inappropriate plate glass windows and large fascia boards. Only by the raising of one's eyes to first floor level do some of the remarks which follow make sense. Another regrettable feature is the loss of character behind the street frontage. Whereas many historic towns retain a feeling of maturity by virtue of alleys and passageways leading to interesting back areas, in Stratford barely one of these survives in anything like its original form, with intensive backland development obliterating any trace of historic character. In the worst cases, this has involved the demolition of all but the front wall of an otherwise distinctive building, followed by a totally new development conveniently hidden behind an older façade (Plates 4, 5, 15). In the longer term, such excesses may come to be regarded as this generation's contribution to the evolution of the town's built heritage, although it may prove difficult to portray this as a positive one.

We will be assessing the town's historic character on a street-by-street basis but these are arranged neither alphabetically nor as an itinerary. Instead an attempt has been made to group them by common characteristics, beginning with the main streets in the historic core (Bridge Street, High Street, Wood Street and Henley Street) followed by other important streets where commercial pressures have nevertheless been slightly less significant (Sheep Street, Chapel Street, Rother Street and Greenhill Street). We then move on to the small streets in the town centre, where small-scale residential use was historically often more characteristic (Windsor Street, Ely Street, Waterside, Scholars Lane and Chapel Lane), followed by Church Street and Old Town which merit special treatment. We then consider the 'fringe' areas of the original settlement – the Bancroft, Guild Street and Arden Street – and finally the Victorian suburbs, linked into the town by a new street, Union Street.

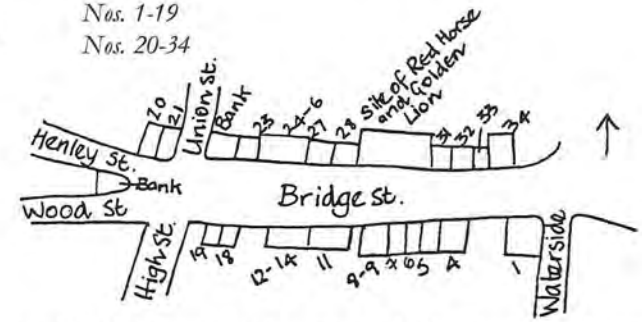
There is inevitable difficulty over the identification of particular buildings. Although street numbers can be expected to remain unaltered in the mid term, they are rarely visible on commercial properties. However, identification of a building by its current use is, from experience, likely to be overtaken by events within a very short time. The imperfect solution to this problem has therefore been to rely mainly on street numbering but to provide a sketch map for each street to ease identification on the ground.

THE HISTORIC CORE

As has already been said, the planned town of 1196 had as its main artery an existing Roman road: in time this became known, from east to west, as Bridge Street, Wood Street and Greenhill Street. The concentration of business activity was at the east end where the road crossed the river, with development petering out, until comparatively recent times, beyond what is now Wood Street. Another existing road, to Henley-in-Arden, heading off at an angle from the top of Bridge Street, was also incorporated into the new town. This too was a busy street. Bridge Street was made twice as wide as the other main streets of the original grid to provide space for a market. There is also good evidence that the triangular space created as Wood Street and Henley Street diverged was, in the early days, also left as open space. Only gradually did it become filled in with buildings, eventually leaving only the narrow Cooks Alley and Meer Street connecting them. These are therefore considered in this section. The other main street in these early days, as its name indicates, was High Street. This area of the town has remained a centre of economic activity and generally this has taken its toll on the urban fabric, many of the properties now carrying carelessly positioned and out-of-scale fascia boards above modern and out-of-character shop fronts.

Bridge Street

South side: *Nos. 1-19*
North side: *Nos. 20-34*



As already noted, Bridge Street was in existence before the planned town of 1196 was conceived, forming part of the Roman road running down to the ford over the River Avon. When this was incorporated into the new town, Bridge Street remained an important major thoroughfare, laid out on a grand scale so that it could function as a major market area. Market stalls, set up in the middle of the street, over the years gradually evolved into permanent shops. These, in turn, were enlarged to provide living accommodation and, by at least the fifteenth century, a complete row of houses, known as Middle Row, ran down the centre of the street, dividing it into Fore Bridge Street and Back Bridge Street.

This partial filling-in of old market areas was a characteristic common to many market towns and evidence of it can often still be seen. But in Stratford, this row of higgledy-piggledy and ramshackle structures came to be regarded, by the early 1800s, as a disfigurement to a town which was just beginning to feel the effects of tourist patronage. Bridge Street was the main road into the town and the two narrow streets into which it had become divided, often blocked with traffic and lined with makeshift shops, was thought by some to make an unfavourable first impression. An 'improvement' scheme was therefore devised which led not only to the widening of Clopton Bridge but to the demolition of Middle Row (Plate 3). The first houses went in the 1820s and the work was completed in the late 1850s, when the medieval proportions of Bridge Street once more emerged.

3. The last remaining houses in Middle Row, Bridge Street, demolished in the late 1850s.

This was not the only 'improvement' going on. As part of the general scheme, most of the houses on either side of the street were either rebuilt in Regency style, or given a stucco facelift, in a deliberate attempt to create a street with a more fashionable look. Rows of Leamington houses were going up in this style at that time and we can see in these Stratford improvements a conscious effort to keep the town in step with its fashionable neighbour. Only the odd building – No. 15/16, for example – escaped this treatment, its humble proportions in direct contrast to the dignified three-storey frontages which otherwise predominate.

The first of the new Bridge Street houses dates from about 1815 and rebuilding continued into the 1840s. Some of these new houses have been mutilated by later

developments: of No. 11 (Boots), for instance, and No. 28 (Halifax Building Society) only the original front walls still stand; everything behind them was demolished in 1970s reconstruction (Plate 4). But many still survive – No. 31 of 1812, for example; No. 5 of 1814; No. 23, built as a public house known as the George in 1830 (Plate 8); No. 12/13/14, dating from 1832; No. 18 (W.H. Smith), built in the same year; and No. 19, next door, also dating from the 1830s. Some property owners could not, or would not, rebuild but compromised by plastering over the old Elizabethan timbers. No. 1 (the Encore), No. 4, then the Old Red Lion (with its archway originally leading through to stabling), unsympathetically 'restored' in recent years, and No. 27 were treated in this way, combining with the new buildings to create the distinctive Regency character we have already mentioned: No. 27 in particular, with its handsome doorways, makes a fine contribution to the street scene. Only a few buildings escaped the 'stucco' treatment: No. 34, at the bottom of the north side of the street, built around 1777, has always presented its handsome brick façade to the street even though its most striking feature today, the wrought-iron work and much of its present detailing, is the result of a Victorian facelift.

4. No. 11 Bridge Street, c. 1970. Only the front wall was left standing, and the front door moved to a 'more convenient' position, when this building was converted to a Boots store.

Of the many coaching inns which once flourished in this main thoroughfare, none has survived. From the early eighteenth century the Red Horse, on the north side of the street, was the most important and, from about 1780, a similar establishment, the Golden Lion, flourished alongside (Plate 5). Of these famous inns only the handsome façades remain, the Red Horse to the west and the four-gabled Golden Lion to the east; behind is an entirely new structure, nearly all of it functioning as a Marks & Spencer store (No. 29/30/31). The distinctive 1820s portico is a late addition, moved from outside the Shakespeare Hotel in Chapel Street in 1920 (below, p. 33, and Plate 26). No. 32/3 was also an inn from the early nineteenth century, known as the Mulberry Tree: this too had an arched carriageway leading through to stabling at the rear but which now gives access to a department store (Plate 6).

5. The Red Horse in Bridge Street (now Marks and Spencer), c. 1910, before the addition of its portico. On one side was another inn, the Golden Lion, and on the other a Temperance Hotel (No. 28).

The only public building in the street (if we omit the imposing Lloyds Bank, built in 1899 to the designs of Julius A. Chatwin of Birmingham: Plate 8) is the old Market House, now Barclays Bank, standing at the top of the street (Plate 7). This was built in 1821 to replace the old Elizabethan market cross, demolished in that year, which had stood on the corner of High Street and Wood Street. Built by William Izod and William Thompson at a cost of £375, the foundation stone was laid as part of the celebrations held in the town to mark George IV's coronation. Being a market house, the building was originally open on the ground floor to accommodate stalls on market days, but it was very much under-used and the arcading was later filled in. By 1869 there was even talk of demolishing this 'ugly and inconvenient structure', and the building only survived because the Corporation lacked the funds to replace it with something 'grander'. Saved by its

6. The Mulberry Tree Inn in Bridge Street (No. 32), c. 1890.

7. The Market Hall, now Barclays Bank, at the top of Bridge Street, 1864. Built in 1821, it was originally open on the ground floor to provide a covered area on market days.

conversion into a bank in 1908, it is now regarded by most as a handsome building, an object lesson in changing taste and also a helpful reminder of the market function of this particular area of the town.

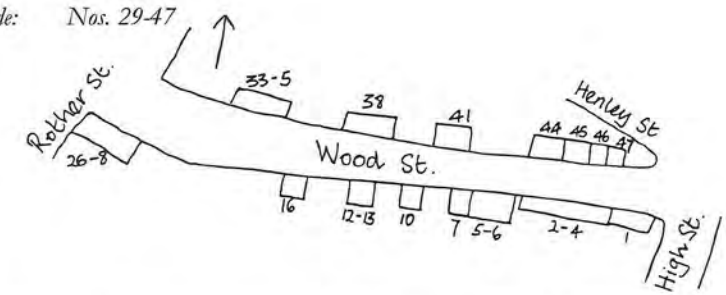
Nos. 20 and 21 became isolated from the rest of the street when Union Street was cut through around 1830 (below, p. 78). Both are timber-framed, three-storied and topped with gables, No. 20 having been substantially rebuilt after the town fire of 1641. But No. 21, though outwardly very similar, is in fact skilful and thoroughly misleading 'mock' Tudor, built as a branch of the National Provincial Bank to the designs of Frederick C. Palmer of London. The date on the rainwater head, 1924, comes as a surprise to many visitors to the town. Similarly misleading are Nos. 24-26, from a distance blending in well with their 1830s neighbours, but on closer inspection proving to be of a much later date: late 20th-century, in fact, replacing an uncompromising Post Office block of the 1960s, which itself had displaced three Regency houses (Plate 8)!

8. Lloyds Bank, in Bridge Street, c. 1905. To its right is the former George Inn (No. 23). Beyond are the three houses demolished in the 1960s to make way for the Post Office which itself has been replaced by modern units.

No. 7 has an unusual frontage for Stratford. Built as a Burtons store in 1933, its black marble face matches those in other towns built by the same retail chain, even though its top section, on which the word Burtons once proudly appeared, has since been chopped off. But its foundation stones, complete with inscriptions, can still be seen. No. 6 next door, which had become a Woolworths store three years before, may still retain vestiges of a building put up in the 1760s, though it was severely altered in 1932 and again in more recent times.

Wood Street

South side: *Nos. 1-28*
Northside: *Nos. 29-47*



Wood Street is the western continuation of Bridge Street, following the line of its Roman predecessor, and it thus became part of the town's principle thoroughfare. We have discussed how in Bridge Street a row of stalls set out in the street on market days came to form a line of houses running down the centre of the street, known as Middle Row (above, p. 6). Those in Bridge Street were demolished in the mid-nineteenth century, but in fact Middle Row continued westwards and formed much of the present block between Wood Street, Henley Street and Meer Street. This whole area, once an open space where the main road, coming up Bridge Street, divided to carry traffic to Alcester and Henley, was later gradually filled in with no proper regard for the street width. Thus, whereas a street like High Street has a uniform width throughout because it was planned like that in 1196, the line of Wood Street, and its funnelling at the Bridge Street end is probably to be explained by this more gradual process of encroachment on what had originally been set aside as an open space.

The street name presumably came into use because it functioned as the site of a timber market. However, the name does not occur until 1405 and it is clear that before that the top (west) end at least was known as Meer Street, after the stream which flowed down the modern Meer Street and across the top of Wood Street into Rother Street (below, p. 23).

There are no public buildings in the street and its general character is of early nineteenth-century rebuilding. There are, however, a few older properties, probably the most important being No. 26/27/28, on the corner of Rother Street, dating from the early sixteenth century, once a single house of two storeys, and retaining its continuous jetty (Plate 9). Don't be misled by No. 25 next door, a twentieth-century fabrication!

The other important timbered building in the street is No. 45, a fine specimen of early sixteenth-century work and one, unlike so many in Stratford, which has succeeded in retaining its ground-floor jetty and nearly all its original timbers.

No. 46 adjoining (now part of Barclays Bank) is slightly later in date. Two other small timbered buildings can still be seen, No. 10 and No. 16: the latter, though, has been altered in more recent times.

9. No. 26/27/28 Wood Street, c. 1915. Its old timber-frame was then partly concealed by early nineteenth-century stucco.

As will be noticed elsewhere, one or two of Wood Street's timbered buildings lie concealed behind brick fronts. A very important example is No. 47 (now part of Barclays Bank), a timbered building dating from about 1640 but with a brick front, topped by a very unusual Dutch gable, added in the next century. No. 5/6 is also of special interest. This was the house built by Abraham Sturley after the fire of 1595. The interior decorations may have taken some time to complete for a fine early seventeenth-century plastered ceiling and frieze in No. 6 bears a crown with the initials J.R. for *Jacobus Rex*; that is, James I who came to the throne in 1603. The building later flourished as an inn under the name of the Unicorn from about 1630 until 1775 (hence its wide gateway at the side) and was refronted in brick in 1815. From the rear, the old timber-framed wings are still clearly visible.

Until about 1800, timber-framed buildings must have filled almost the entire street. One or two new buildings appeared late in the eighteenth century, including the attractive No. 7, for instance, dating from about 1760. No. 44 is also of this period, although the original proportions of this once handsome building were upset in the 1930s when it was decided to extend it on the left (west) side by two

10. No. 44 Wood Street, 1931, after the demolition of a single-storey building to its west (left). Its proportions were upset when the building was then extended to the corner of Cooks Alley in a matching style.

bays but in an identical style (Plate 10). So skilful was the match that it is not easy today to detect where the original building ends and the imitation begins.

From about 1800, rapid changes gave the street the basic character which it still has today, that of early nineteenth-century brick buildings. Many are fairly nondescript or spoilt by later alterations, but Nos. 12-13, built in 1815, with first-floor windows added later, are an attractive pair and Nos. 33-5, dating from 1825-6, still have some charm (Plate 11). No. 41 built in 1857, was given a facelift in the 1890s when the 'half-timbered look' came back into fashion.

11. Nos. 31-34 Wood Street, c. 1911. These buildings all still stand, although more recent developments have taken a heavy toll.

12. No. 1 Wood Street, c. 1900. This was given a stucco finish when built in 1840 to match similar buildings in nearby Bridge Street.

13. No. 38 Wood Street, c. 1950, built in 1898 as a public house, the Horse and Jockey.

Not all the new buildings, however, were in plain brick. No. 1 was given a stucco finish when rebuilt in 1840 (Plate 12), as were Nos. 2-4 which followed shortly afterwards, the whole block replacing a haphazard collection of timbered buildings. They are very similar in style to many of the nineteenth-century buildings in Bridge Street and can be read as part of the drive to modernise this part of the town centre.

There was then a lull in building activities, the only new building added until very recent times being No. 38, built in 1898, as a public house, the Horse and Jockey, to the designs of Owen and Ward of Birmingham, a very solid and attractive piece of imitation Tudor (Plate 13).

High Street

East side: *Nos. 1-21*
West side: *Nos. 23-40*

High Street was also in the very heart of the medieval planned town and its name was clearly adopted to denote one of its principal trading streets. Two distinct market areas existed in the street from very early times. One, at the junction with Sheep Street, Ely Street and Chapel Street, was the site of the corn market from at least the fifteenth century. When the first town (or market) hall was built in 1634, this market probably moved into the open arcaded area on the ground floor (below, p. 31); but in 1855 a proper Corn Exchange was built on the corner of High Street and Sheep Street, replacing an inn, known from the mid-eighteenth century, appropriately enough, as the Wheatsheaf. This remained the principal site of Stratford's corn trade well into the twentieth century but in October 1958 the building was demolished, the reason for the present open area on the corner of Sheep Street (Plate 1).

The other major market area was at the opposite end, at the junction with Bridge Street. We know this from the existence there of a market cross (or the High Cross as it was called) from at least 1381, replaced by a new one in 1431. By 1478, this structure was large enough to accommodate a clock (including a bell and other ironwork) hung there in that year. In 1821 this cross was demolished and replaced by a far more impressive Market House at the top of Bridge Street (now Barclays Bank, above, p. 8); the medieval stone base, however, was for some years preserved in the garden of Shakespeare's Birthplace and is now incorporated into the exhibition in the Visitors' Centre there.

The siting of the town gaol and other places of punishment in High Street also points to its being a general centre of activity. The gaol, first referred to in 1530, stood on the site of No. 5 and remained in use until about 1700. In addition, a pillory stood near the Cornmarket and in 1614 a whipping post was set up at the

Market Cross 'for the punishment of rogues and vagabonds'. The house on the corner of Bridge Street and High Street (now no. 1 High Street) was also known as the Cage for a period from 1470. Quite what this implied is not certain, although it is possible a cage may have been attached to the outside of the building in which petty criminals were imprisoned for a short period.

14. The Garrick Inn and Harvard House in High Street, c.1865. Harvard House was one of the few timber-framed buildings not to receive the stucco treatment. The front of the Garrick, on the other hand, had to be virtually rebuilt during restoration in 1913.

Different parts of High Street were badly affected by the fires of 1594 and 1595 and there are very few, if any, houses still standing earlier than those dates. But there are some fine examples of houses built in the wake of this disaster. They are timber-framed and typically of three jettied stories, topped with gables, striking testimony of the wealth of the townsmen who lived in this town centre street. The best in terms of detailing is the richly-carved Harvard House, built in 1596 by Thomas Rogers, a leading townsman and a well-to-do butcher (Plate 14). His initials and those of his wife Ann can still be seen carved on the front of the house, together with the construction date, and the carvings include a bull's head to denote Rogers's trade. His daughter Katherine married Robert Harvard whose son, John, founded Harvard University in America, hence the name. Harvard House, in fact, was only part of the Rogers's home, which for many years also included Nos. 27-8 next door.

The other fine examples of post-fire timbered buildings, all dating from about 1600, are No. 30 with a handsomely carved bressumer beam but with its original two gables later filled in, and No. 23/24, on the corner of Ely Street, also with altered gables. Across the street are No. 19/20/21, built as one house but now missing two of its original four gables. No. 17/18 next door has replacement gables but is otherwise basically intact. With the exception of Harvard House all these buildings had been covered in late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century stucco, removed as part of a major restoration project some hundred years later (Plate 1). The Garrick Inn, genuinely timbered inside, had suffered more severely at the hands of earlier 'improvers', who had virtually replaced its timbered front wall with a brick one. When this was removed, a few surviving timbers were found and these were used as a basis on which to reconstruct an elaborate façade (Plate 14).

So enthusiastic was this movement to restore Stratford's half-timbered look that two new buildings – No. 4/5 and No. 6/7 – were built in imitation Tudor. No. 4/5, designed by Guy Pemberton in collaboration with W.H. Smith, is particularly fine, its construction date, 1921, unashamedly visible on one of its rainwater heads. No. 6/7, built for the chemist chain, Timothy White and Taylor, dates from 1937 and is more ponderous. Successfully bucking this trend is No. 31, richly timbered inside, but with its nineteenth-century facing intact. Nos. 2-3 are an attractive pair, timbered inside but stylishly refronted around 1800, with No. 2 retaining a traditional shop front: the words DISPENSING CHYMIST painted on the façade refer to a business established there by the Loggin family in the 1840s.

Although Tudor and Jacobean buildings predominate in the street, other styles are represented. Brick was used for the rebuilding (or refronting) of No. 36 in 1758 and for No. 11/12/13 in 1790. In the nineteenth century stucco treatment became the fashion, used in High Street, for instance, as a finishing touch to No. 40 on the corner of Wood Street, built in 1840, and to No. 8/9 which date from 1842. Some buildings, like Nos. 37-39, for instance, may only have been refronted in this style:

as is the case with so many buildings in the town centre, these once handsome houses retain little dignity at ground floor level, thanks to the chaotic jumble of inappropriate fascia boards.

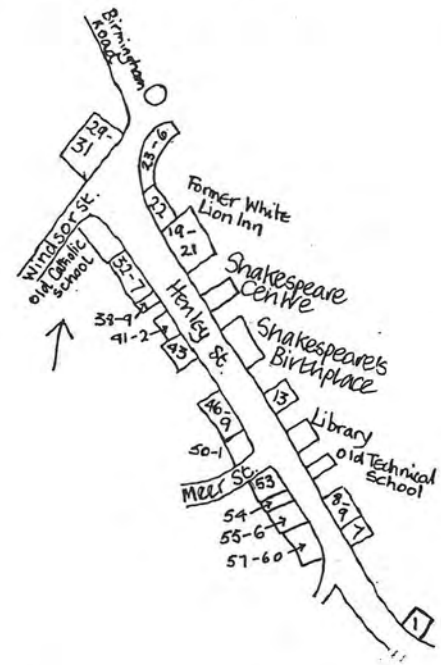
No. 1 had an interesting tenant from 1616 to 1637 – Thomas Quiney, who married Shakespeare's daughter Judith in 1616. Quiney was a vintner and must have used the old cellars, known to have existed on the site since at least 1381, to carry on his business. The building still retains much of its interior timber work but was given facelifts in the early nineteenth century and again in 1923, courtesy of W.H Smith, who ran its business from there before moving to No. 4/5.

Nos. 14 and 15 should also perhaps be mentioned, a reminder that not all the houses in High Street were imposing structures. But nor are they are quite what they seem. Of No. 15 only the front wall is timber-framed: everything behind is a complete rebuild of the 1970s. As part of the same development, No. 14 was totally demolished and replaced by a look-alike (Plate 15).

15. Only the front wall of No.15 was left standing during 1977 redevelopment work and No. 14 was completely demolished and rebuilt.

Henley Street

North-east side: *Nos. 1-26*
North-west end: *Nos. 29-31*
South-east side: *Nos. 32-65*



Henley Street is a curious street, for although it contains Shakespeare's Birthplace, the town's most famous building, it is not otherwise characterised by obvious examples of fine, mature houses; indeed, of all the streets in the central area, it is the one most affected by twentieth-century rebuilding. On the other hand, because it lay on the edge of the original town and was only partially affected by the fires which swept Stratford in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, it does contain one or two examples of medieval building, otherwise very uncommon in the town.

As we have seen, the planned town of 1196, laid out on a simple grid system, incorporated near its northern boundary the old Roman road from Alcester, now represented by Wood Street and Bridge Street. Henley Street represents the only departure from this grid pattern, for the early town planners also decided to include this other existing road, leading to Henley, branching off at the top of Bridge Street. The north (or north-east) side was divided into uniform building plots, the same size as those in the central grid, and the bottom of these (nearly 200 feet from the street frontage) became more or less the borough boundary, running along what is now Guild Street. There was not room to set out plots on the other side of the street because of the proximity of Wood Street and so, as we have seen, much of this area was originally left as open space. This was later filled in but Cooks Alley and Meer Street, linking Henley Street and Wood Street, remain to remind us of this piecemeal development.

Henley Street was affected by fire in 1594/95 but it has still succeeded in retaining one or two medieval buildings, albeit in altered form. One is the Public

Library, scheduled for demolition in 1901 but saved, mainly through the lively efforts of Marie Corelli, after what was perhaps the first of the town's conservation controversies. The building was in such a bad state of repair that extensive renovations were necessary and much of the external timbering is modern (Plate 18). Inside, however, some very fine roof timbers can still be seen. Another notable medieval building, next door to the library, now houses the Visitors' Shop for Shakespeare's Birthplace (No. 13). Though bricked over in the early nineteenth century, the original framing in the gable end is clearly visible and much of the internal timbering still survives, revealing a type of building (a recessed-bay hall) which would once have been common in fifteenth-century Stratford but is now quite rare.

But the most remarkable building from this early period is the late fifteenth-century house hidden behind the plain brick façade of No. 41/42. Originally comprising a galleried hall with cross wing, its front wall was replaced by the existing brick one in about 1820; and until recent alterations, the survival of the rest of the timber frame had not been appreciated. Sympathetic conversion has meant that most of this internal structure is now clearly visible.

Sixteenth-century building is principally represented by Shakespeare's Birthplace. The building underwent very extensive restoration shortly after its purchase as a national memorial in 1847, and the renovators of the time used as their model the earliest known drawing of the building, dating from 1769 (Plate 16). Close study of the internal timbering is rewarding, revealing an original three-bay

16. Shakespeare's Birthplace, c. 1850, after cottages either side had been demolished but before restoration work got under way, principally the removal of the nineteenth-century brick facing to the part of the building then used as an inn known as the Swan and Maidenhead.

structure, of which the south-eastern bay was unheated and is believed to be the traditional wool shop of Shakespeare's day. To this was later added a kitchen at the rear and a self-contained bay at the north-western end. As part of the restoration, the houses on either side were also demolished, which has left the Birthplace in a splendid isolation which it did not enjoy in earlier times.

There are several other timbered houses in the street but most are concealed by early nineteenth-century brickwork. This is the case with Nos. 38-39 and the attractive row of cottages at the top end, now numbered 32-7 (the timber-framing is clearly visible in the archway between Nos. 36 and 37); but a better example is No. 29/30/31, built across the end of the street and giving it a very fine closing feature. This was once one substantial timber-framed farmhouse but was refronted in the early nineteenth century so elegantly that the refacing itself is now of architectural importance. Again, some of the original structure is visible in the alley which divides the ground floor. No. 1 has its timber-frame concealed behind stucco. No. 53, on the corner of Meer Street, a timber-framed building with its front wall rebuilt in brick around 1800 (when No. 54 next door was also built), suffered a rather severe 'restoration' in 1970 when the front wall was once again removed and replaced with a timber-framed one (Plate 17).

17. No. 53 Henley Street in 1970, a timber-framed building refronted in about 1800. A severe 'restoration' has since transformed its appearance for the second time.

The eighteenth century has left little impression on Henley Street today: indeed, virtually the last surviving building of this date (the central portion of the White Lion Inn, built in 1753) was demolished in the late 1970s. In its heyday (the late eighteenth century) the White Lion Inn, under its enterprising landlord, John Payton, dwarfed

all other hostelries in the town, occupying a very large site between Henley-Street and Guild Street and reaching from the garden of Shakespeare's Birthplace to very nearly the end of the street. It was ideally situated to catch the coaching traffic to Birmingham and several eminent persons, both native and foreign, have left accounts of their stay there. Of this famous building, only a timber-framed section remains (No. 19/20/21), and even this has been given a pseudo-Elizabethan facelift. The only other building from this period is No. 8/9 which dates from the 1770s.

In the early nineteenth century many of the houses near Meer Street were entirely rebuilt. Nos. 46-9 date from 1815 and Nos. 50-51 were built in 1827. There was a third house in this latter block, demolished in recent times when Meer Street was widened. No. 7 was built around 1820.

The most attractive nineteenth-century building, however, is No. 43; a public house from the 1820s, it had its front elevation completely rebuilt in 1840 and this has survived intact. A timber-framed extension at the back and the rear wall of the main building were left undisturbed by these alterations and can still be seen today. No. 22 is a later addition to the street scene (1866-7), built as a coach manufactory between Henley Street and Guild Street and later developing, naturally enough, into a garage, its large windows a reminder of its original function.

There have been several public buildings in Henley Street. The earliest, and one now long since vanished, was an ancient timbered building on the corner of Henley Street and Windsor Street, used as the borough workhouse from the mid-eighteenth century. This was pulled down when the new workhouse was built near Arden Street in 1836 and the site remained vacant until 1883 when the new Catholic School (now St Gregory's Hall), designed by George A. Cox of Birmingham, was built. The Public Library has already been mentioned. This was restored and extended eastwards as a gift to the town by the American millionaire, Andrew Carnegie (Plate 18). It has now absorbed another distinctive Victorian 'Tudor' building with very fine detailing, put up a year or two earlier to the design of Arthur S. Flower, the young nephew of Charles Flower of Flowers' Brewery. It was to serve as a Technical School, providing training for young people looking for skilled jobs as well as classes for adults on more general subjects like cooking. Out of this evolved the present Stratford College, now sited at the Willows. On the opposite side of the road, buildings of a similar date predominate. No. 55/56, built in 1900, is a creditable example of late Victorian 'Tudor', built in 1900 to the design of Francis Trepess of Warwick, for the grocery chain, Walker and Walker. Nos. 57-60, built a year later, are less successful.

There are several unappealing blocks of twentieth-century building in Henley Street but two have some distinction. The first is the block (Nos. 23-26) which was

18. Rear view of the Public Library in Henley Street, at mid point in its 1904 restoration.

built in 1933 as part of a scheme to improve access to the top of Henley Street: hence their rounded footprint. Designed by A. Macer-Wright of Birmingham, they make an unusual contribution to the street scene. The other is the Shakespeare Centre, designed by Lawrence Williams, and enriched with additions by Douglas Wain Hobson (motif in brick to indicate the extent of Shakespeare's influence) and John Hutton (etched glass panels). Built in 1964, it is one of the few buildings in the town which has dared to strike a modern note, though not all of it has weathered well and some have questioned the wisdom of positioning it so close to Shakespeare's Birthplace.

Meer Street

Cooks Alley, at the east end of Henley Street was one of the narrow links through to Wood Street (Plate 19). Another was on the line of Meer Street, apparently built on a curve because of a natural feature, a stream, which seems to have flowed down into the town from the high ground to the north and then along Meer Street into Rother Street. At some point, probably at the top of Wood Street, was a pool (or mere) which has given Meer Street its present name: indeed, in early records it is often referred to as Meer Pool Lane. Like Cook's Alley it was also very narrow, difficult to appreciate now as the road was widened in the 1960s and

19. Cooks Alley, linking Wood Street and Henley Street, before widening in the mid 1930s.

almost entirely rebuilt. This involved the demolition of a house at the corner of Henley Street and only old photographs and plans can give us anything like an impression of what this part of Stratford was like. By the mid nineteenth century it was lined with small tenements occupied by poor families, the sort of street along which the well-to-do, who owned the houses but employed others to collect the rents, did not care to venture. In 1871 there were forty cottages crowded into this site, with 200 occupants (Plate 20). Demolition began in the 1930s and the street was widened and lined with smart shops and offices in the 1960s. Only at the ends of the street have any older properties survived. At the Henley Street end, Nos. 1-4, now tastefully restored and maintained, represent the type of house once common in the street. These formed part of the outbuildings of the house on the corner of Henley Street, but in the early nineteenth century were rebuilt and re-fronted to form a row of cottages. At the other end, No. 13/14 and No. 15/16 are both sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century houses, with much of their original construction still intact.

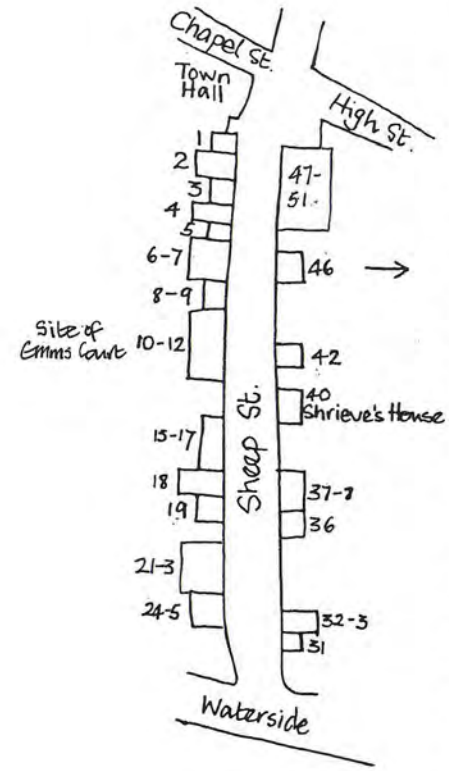
20. Meer Street in the 1930s, then made up of small residential units but since widened and almost completely rebuilt

OTHER MAJOR TOWN CENTRE STREETS

A little way from the heart of the medieval town there were other important streets but ones which would never quite attract the same degree of investment. In this category we can place Sheep Street, Chapel Street, Rother Street and Greenhill Street. Here many of the buildings are of more modest proportions. Because they have been under less commercial pressure, many have also successfully retained far more character for the simple reason that modern development, intentionally or otherwise, has not obliterated all trace of the original ground floor elevations. Original front walls, at least in part, can be followed down to the ground and many of the old doorways and ground-floor window openings have also survived.

Sheep Street

South side: *Nos. 1-28*
Northside: *Nos. 30-51*



From very early times Sheep Street was the site of one of the town's markets: around 1265, early deeds refer to sales of land 'in the street where sheep are sold' and there is thus no mystery as to how the street got its name.

The north side of Sheep Street was twice affected by the disastrous fires which swept Stratford in 1594, 1595 and 1614. On the first occasion houses from the top of the street down to the Shrieve's House (No. 40) were affected whilst in 1614 the Shrieve's House may again have been destroyed as well as several houses further down the street on the same side, together with others across the street. But there is one important survival from medieval times, namely No. 31, with its jaunty gable, a tiny building when compared to others in the street. It is believed to date back to the fourteenth century and thus to be the oldest domestic house still standing in the town (Plate 21).

21. Nos. 30-31 Sheep Street in 1899, possibly the town's oldest domestic building.

22. The bottom of Sheep Street in the 1860s, characterised generally by smaller-scale buildings, several of early nineteenth-century date.

23. No. 42 Sheep Street, c. 1895, before a restoration which revealed its timber-frame. The building to its left was the Post Office, since demolished.

Sheep Street, though the centre of a certain amount of business in Elizabethan times, never equalled High Street in this respect and, generally speaking, its inhabitants were less wealthy and their houses proportionately smaller: indeed, it is a noticeable feature of the older properties in the street that the three-storey buildings are to be found towards the town centre (that is, near High Street), whilst two-storey structures predominate towards Waterside (Plate 22). But this is not to say that the street does not contain some fine buildings. The Shrieve's House, for instance, is an early seventeenth-century building of quite exceptional interest. Unlike so many of Stratford's half-timbered buildings, it has not been converted to modern shop use but has instead retained almost all its original features. These include an intriguing bay window and high gateway through to the range of original outbuildings at the rear, another unusual survival. No. 42 was also built by a wealthy Stratford tradesman in about 1600 and still retains, at least from the outside, something of its 'domestic' look, with some original window openings on the first floor (Plate 23). But these apart, the older buildings in the street tend to be of smaller proportions, evidently the homes of lesser tradesmen. Their original character is also better preserved due to less intensive commercial pressures in recent years. The best is No. 12 which, with No. 10/11, was once one house. No. 2, No. 46 (though heavily restored) and Nos. 24-5 are other good sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century examples. But behind comparatively recent brick or stucco fronts other early buildings lie concealed. For example, No. 3, No. 5 and Nos. 32-3

all have their original timber construction masked by brick fronts, added in the early nineteenth century when half-timbering was out of fashion, whilst others, like No. 1, were given a stucco finish. Some properties, however, were completely rebuilt, notably the very distinctive No. 18, between 1774 and 1779, and No. 19 next door, in 1810, both with fine doorways. A grander pair, Nos. 37-8, were added to the street scene in 1818-19 and No. 36 must also have been built about this time. No. 8/9 is another interesting building of about 1800, with a charming pediment and semi-circular window.

Around 1900 another craze affected the street scene when attempts were made to bring back the 'Elizabethan look', more in keeping, it was thought, with Stratford's image as the birthplace of William Shakespeare. This involved not only some very drastic 'restorations' but the planting of bogus 'Elizabethan' frontages. This is what happened to No. 4 (then the Shakespeare Press) and No. 15/16/17, although in both cases original timber-framing survives behind the new front walls. No. 6/7, however, though half-timbered, dates in its entirety from 1913.

A few Sheep Street properties are still private houses and others have been converted to business premises only recently. This residential character is of very long standing and was even more pronounced in the middle of the last century when little clusters of labourers' cottages were built in courts behind the main street frontages. The most notorious example was Emm's Court, ten or eleven tiny dwellings squeezed into the site behind No. 12. These have long since been demolished but the passage-way giving access to them can still be seen (Plate 24).

24. Looking out into Sheep Street, from Emm's Court, c. 1910.

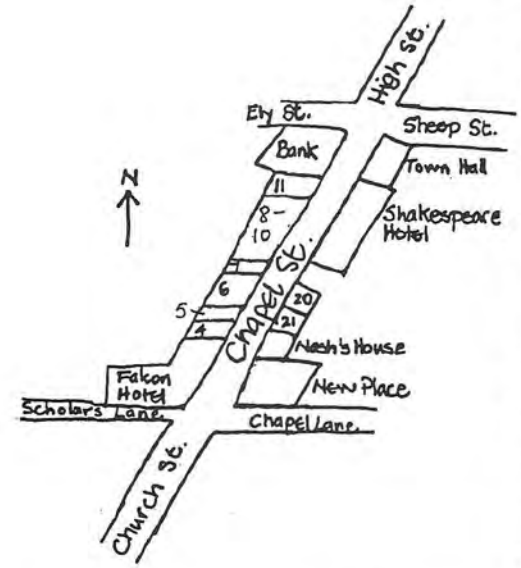
The large number of Sheep Street residents (over 300 in 1851 compared, for example, with about 200 in High Street),

many of them of the poorer sort, stimulated the opening of small taverns and beer-houses. These were not the imposing establishments to be found in the main thoroughfares, but 'locals' like the Plough at No. 13, the Green Man at No. 19, the Dog at No. 36 and the Shakespeare Hotel Tap on the site of No. 6/7 (see Plate 22 for the location of two of them).

Sheep Street has one or two more recent buildings which make a contribution to the town's architectural heritage. No. 21/22/23, built in 1933 as a ladies' hairdressers, was designed by the well-known architect, Leonard Dussault, the son of a German immigrant, who by that date was living in Tiddington Road. But the most dominant is the block of shops and offices (Nos. 47-51) near the junction with High Street. This was built in 1963/4 to the designs of Frederick Gibberd, their concrete frames, painted black, and their mini-gables acknowledging the presence of older neighbours, but certainly not intended to blend in with them. The attached statue of 'Everyman' is by Fred Kormis.

Chapel Street

West side: *Nos. 1-13*
East Side: *Nos. 14-22*



Of all the streets in Stratford's town centre, Chapel Street is the shortest but at the same time contains some of Stratford's finest buildings. Not being a main shopping street, these buildings have also escaped the commercial pressures which have had an adverse effect on many properties in the heart of the town. Instead of the inappropriate shop frontages which have undermined the character of so many town centre buildings, here in Chapel Street we find properties with their frontages more or less intact and their essential character thereby preserved.

Chapel Street is a name which came into use in the later part of the fifteenth century and, although found occasionally from about 1480, only became usual after

the building of the nave and tower of the Guild Chapel in the 1490s – a feature which thereafter became very much part of the street scene even though the chapel in fact stands in Church Street (below, p. 56). Before this date, and afterwards on occasion, the street was known as Corn Street – after the street market which was held at the north end, at the junction with High Street. This name occurs as early as 1265 and the site must always have been a very busy one on market days. It was a natural consequence that in 1626 it was decided to build the town's first Market Hall here. There was a market area at the south end of the street as well: a cross, known as the White Cross, stood opposite the Guild Chapel from about 1275 to at least 1608, and at the latter date was the site of the butter and cheese market.

Much of the west side of the street was destroyed in the great fire of 1594 but one building which escaped was the Falcon, on the corner of Scholars Lane. This was originally a two-storied building dating from about 1500 but had an extra storey added a little clumsily in the seventeenth century: this alteration may have been linked to its becoming an inn, for Joseph Phillips, who bought the house in 1655, had converted it by 1661. It is difficult to find another inn or public house in the town today with as long and undisturbed a pedigree as this.

A building of similar, or slightly later date, is the Shakespeare Hotel. This was, in fact, until the late nineteenth century, two buildings. To the north, adjoining the Town Hall, occupying the site of four of the present-day nine gables, was a sixteenth-century building, much altered in subsequent centuries and with its front elevation rebuilt in mock-Tudor in 1920 (Plate 26). This was the original Shakespeare Inn, first known as such in 1766. To its south stands the present Five Gables, a very fine early sixteenth-century building which has undergone much less alteration. Though absorbed into the Shakespeare Hotel from the 1880s, it still remains a very impressive example of the kind of residence occupied by a wealthy Tudor burgess.

There was, of course, a similar building of even greater importance in the street – New Place, on the corner of Chapel Lane. This was built by Hugh Clopton at the end of the fifteenth century: also with five gables fronting onto the street, it was one of the finest houses in the town. This was the property which William Shakespeare purchased as his Stratford residence in 1597 and where he lived, when visiting his home town, until his death in 1616. By the end of the seventeenth century it had passed back into the hands of the Clopton family and was rebuilt in 1702. This handsome replacement was itself demolished in about 1759 but the site was not subsequently built on and it has therefore proved possible to expose some of the foundations of the original New Place and to preserve the site as a memorial to Shakespeare.

Next door (No. 22) is a house of about 1600 (known now as Nash's house). Its front is a Tudor replica built in 1912 to replace a brick and stucco front wall which in turn had displaced the original in the 1820s. Inside, however, many of the original timbers have survived and the ground floor is maintained as a typical Jacobean residence with a local history museum upstairs.

There are also some smaller timber-framed buildings in the street. A fine, relatively unaltered, example is No. 20, but in some ways No. 21 is more interesting; for, although from the street it is to all intents and purposes a house of about 1790, with a fine doorway to match, the roof and rear date at least from the late sixteenth century when it was the home of Julius Shawe, one of the witnesses to Shakespeare's will. The alterations of 1790 were made for a very good reason, for it re-opened as Stratford's first bank (hence the impressive doorway) and, when this closed, was used until 1838 as the Public Dispensary for the Poor, a charity founded in 1823 to give free medical help to those who could not afford doctors' fees. In the early twentieth century it was the home of the Shakespeare Head Press, run by A.H. Bullen, a specialist in fine printing.

Another timber-framed building masked by more recent brickwork is No. 6. The large gateway to the right was to admit coaches into the yard at the back when the property was used as an inn (known as the White Bear) in the middle of the eighteenth century.

The end of the seventeenth century is represented in Chapel Street by a very interesting, if mutilated, house, No. 5, being one of the earliest in the town built in brick. Brick had the virtue of being fireproof and in this sense was obviously preferable to timber, especially in view of the four great fires which had swept the town, the last in 1641. But until it was manufactured locally (by the 1670s) brick had been too expensive to use except for the construction of chimneys. The house bears the date 1673 and the letters $E^{G}A$, doubtless the initials of the builder and his wife who have not, however, been identified.

Chapel Street also contains the finest example of eighteenth-century work in the town, the Town Hall. The first Town (or Market) Hall) had been built on this site in 1634. Like others of its type, it was open on the ground floor for use on market days, with a room above for civic and other functions. This building was damaged during the Civil War when a store of gunpowder exploded, and repairs took several years to effect. The entire building, however, was demolished in 1767 to make way for the present Town Hall. Like its predecessor, it originally had open arches on the ground floor, not filled in until 1863 (Plate 25). The unusual feature is the building material: unlike timber and brick, fine building stone was not readily available and was therefore used only for buildings of real importance. The builder was Robert Newcombe of Whittingdon in Gloucestershire. The date of construction, 1767,

25. High Street and Chapel Street, looking south, c. 1860.
Notice that the Town Hall, built in 1767, still has its open arcading on the ground floor, originally designed to house the corn market.

and the Stratford borough arms are carved in the triangular pediment crowning the Chapel Street elevation. Gracing the Sheep Street frontage is a statue of Shakespeare by John Cheere, given to the town in 1769 by the actor, David Garrick.

Another attractive frontage of the eighteenth century, this time in brick, stretches the width of Nos. 8-10 and dates from about 1796. The little semi-circular window set in the central pediment is a charming feature; several of these are to be found around the town and may perhaps be the hallmark of a particular builder.

The building is flanked by others with frontages of similar date, No. 7 to the south, and No. 11 to the north, dating from 1818, thus creating a range of very attractive houses which have all successfully retained their essential character. Nos. 7 and 11, however, are in fact sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century houses, with only their street elevations rebuilt in the Georgian style: the timber frame to No. 7 is clearly visible within the archway next door. This was a very common method of bringing one's house up-to-date at minimum cost, and, as we have already seen, was also used across the road at No. 21. The best example of a complete rebuilding in Georgian style is No. 4 (adjoining the Falcon Hotel) a fine three-storied building of 1810, its plain façade typical of what was then the current fashion.

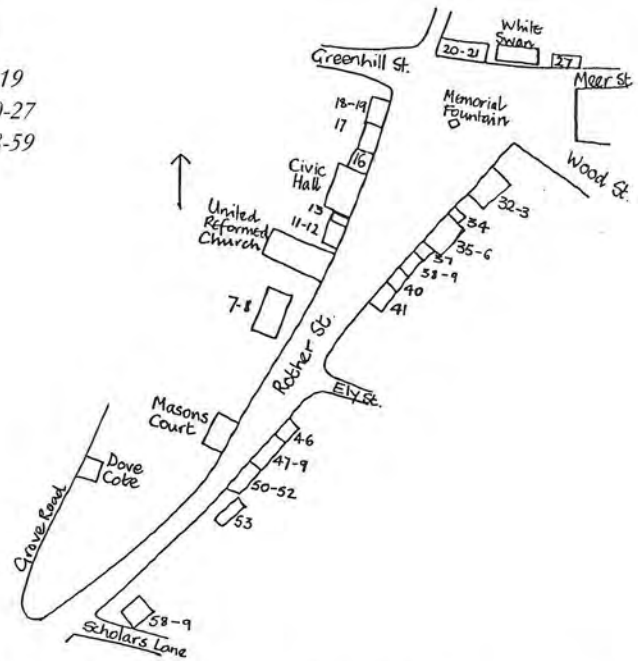
No account of the buildings in Chapel Street would be complete without a mention of the HSBC Bank (No. 12/13), one of the few examples in the town of high Victorian architecture. A bank by the name of Oldaker, Tomes & Chattaway, established in 1810 (the date is over the door), moved into a building on this site in 1830. By a process of mergers and takeovers, the firm had become a branch of the Birmingham Banking Company by 1883 when a Birmingham firm of architects, Harris, Martin and Harris, was engaged to prepare plans for a new building. Naturally it had its critics in its the early days, despite the fact that the architects had sought to endear it to the locals by embellishing it with a fine terra-cotta frieze by Samuel Barfield, depicting fifteen scenes from Shakespeare's plays.

In 1920 the decision was made to 'restore' that part of the Shakespeare Hotel immediately adjoining the Town Hall in honour of local men killed in the First World War; in effect this meant stripping off an early nineteenth-century frontage, together with its portico, and replacing it with a timber frame, topped with four gables (Plate 26). This is explained in a plaque at pavement level. The portico survived, being moved round into Bridge Street and attached to the Red Horse (now Marks and Spencer) where it can still be seen (above, p. 8).

26. Rebuilding the front wall of the Shakespeare Hotel, 1920.
The portico was salvaged and attached to the Red Horse in Bridge Street.

Rother Street

West Side: *Nos. 1-19*
North side: *Nos. 20-27*
East side: *Nos. 28-59*



The basic character of Rother Street was defined in 1196 when Stratford was laid out as a planned town, for it was intended from the start that this area, near the edge of the early town – the original borough boundary ran along Grove Road and Arden Street – was to be the site of the cattle market, hence its great triangular space at the Wood Street end (Plate 27). We know this from its name, rother being the old English word for cattle.

27. Rother Street, c. 1920, a view which emphasises the large triangular space created to accommodate the cattle market.

The name is first recorded as early as 1275 and the market continued to be held there down to the 1870s until the establishment of proper sale yards at Bridgefoot. These markets often gave rise to complaints from the residents: as early as 1692, William Wright, living in what is now No. 27, was given permission to put up palings in front of his house 'as his windows were often broken by cattle standing against them'; and the resentment increased from the 1860s when popular entertainments began to transform the old Mop Fair (also held in Rother Street) into what it is today.

Rother Street is remarkable for its diversity of buildings. Not all are of particular merit but overall they give the street great character. Being towards the edge of the original town, the street was hardly affected by the fires of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and there are important examples of medieval buildings still to be found here. The largest – and possibly earliest – is the White Swan Hotel, dating from the middle of the fifteenth century. Although entirely refronted in 1927, much original timber-framing survives inside, together with notable remains of an early sixteenth-century wall painting depicting scenes from the apocryphal book of Tobit.

Other fifteenth-century buildings in the street are No. 11/12 and Mason's Court, rebuilt in about 1480. Mason's Court has successfully retained much of its original character both inside and out. This allows us to see exactly how the accommodation in this type of house was arranged – a central hall, open from floor to roof, with two-storied jettied wings on either side. The right-hand jetty has been under-built at a later date, but its form can still clearly be seen. For much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this house was occupied by yeomen and farmers, a reminder that this house then stood on the very edge of the town. No. 11/12 is smaller and much altered but from the street it is still clear that it is timber-framed and was once jettied. Opposite Mason's Court are Nos. 47-9, timbered cottages showing clear evidence of first-floor jetties, albeit partly concealed by some re-facing.

The dovecote facing Grove Road, built in 1684, is another reminder of the once rural aspect of this part of the street, one of several outbuildings which adjoined a farmstead standing on the site of the modern Police Station and the history of which can be traced back to the middle of the seventeenth century. No. 17 (York House) is another building thought once to have been a farmhouse. It is not as early as Mason's Court and has a modern timber and stucco front, but a good deal of the interior is original.

Several early but smaller timbered buildings survive on the other side of the street, though nearly all have their original timber frames obscured by later frontages. The front of No. 34, for instance, has been bricked over (Plate 28), as

28. No. 34 Rother Street in the early1970s. Its timber-frame, concealed by a brick skin, only became obvious when the public conveniences next door were demolished to form an entrance into the multi-storey car park.

29. Nos. 20-21 Rother Street, on the corner of Windsor Street, c. 1910. The character of these handsome houses, dating from around 1810, has been undermined by the addition of obtrusive and unsuitable shop fronts.

have the two little cottages nearby, Nos. 38-9. No. 40 and No. 41 have stucco fronts, added in 1831 and 1799 respectively. No. 27 may also be a timber-framed building but is now of more interest for the nineteenth-century alterations to the frontage which turned it into an imposing, almost symmetrical, town residence. The timbered cottages, now Nos. 32-33, were formerly the outbuildings of the house on the corner of Wood Street (Plate 9)

Eighteenth-century survivals are No. 37, built around 1740 but to which bay windows were added at a later date, and the very fine pair, Nos. 7-8. These were built in about 1798, their plain elevations making a very striking contribution to the street scene. It is interesting to compare them with Nos. 20-21, on the corner of Windsor Street, built only ten years later but the character of which has been undermined by later additions (Plate 29). No. 16 also began life as an attractive house of eighteenth-century date.

Most of the nineteenth-century houses in the street are small but still of great charm, mainly because they have retained a domestic feel: from the slim and elegant No. 13 of three storeys, and the modest Nos. 50-52, to the expansive No. 53. These all date from early in the nineteenth century and are beautifully maintained. More work-a-day are Nos. 35-36, apparently dating from around 1800, but with later bay windows and modern shop fronts. The original character of Nos. 18-19, built in 1814/5, has suffered even more.

30. Nos. 14-15 Rother Street, c. 1910, built as two villas in 1830 but converted into a Nursing Home and Children's Hospital in 1876.

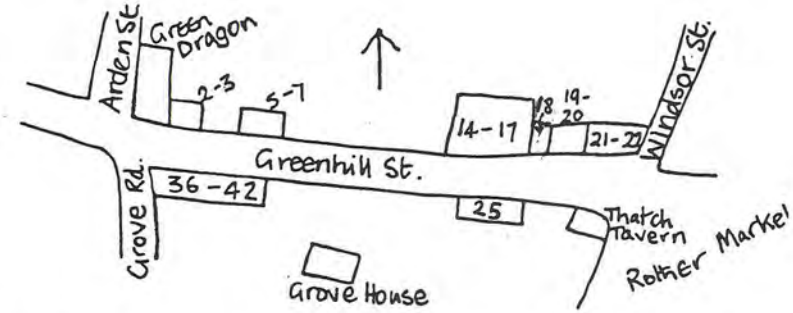
Strikingly different are Nos. 14-15 (now the entrance to the Civic Hall), built in 1830 as a pair of substantial Regency villas, which, in imitation of fashionable building elsewhere, were given a stucco finish. This building also has the distinction of having accommodated the town's first Roman Catholic chapel, from 1852 to 1857, before being converted into a single building in 1876 to serve as a Nursing Home and Children's Hospital (Plate 30). A similar, but smaller pair are Nos. 58-59 (Caterham House), built between 1836 and 1840. The substantial and uncompromising proportions of No. 46, a later building (1860), earned it the local nickname of 'The Tank', whilst across the road No. 6 was added to the street scene in 1900.

Rother Street also contains two examples of buildings in Victorian 'Gothic'. The first is the Congregational (now United Reformed) Church, built in 1878-80 to the designs of H.J. Paull. From the outside the building may not seem very impressive, although we should be aware that it has lost its spire. Inside, however, the cast-iron piers, the sloping floor and the fine furnishings all give the building a real period flavour (Plate 31). A finer example of 'High' Victorian is the Memorial Fountain, paid for by an American millionaire, George W. Childs, and designed by Jethro Cousins of Birmingham. Its foundation stone was laid in 1887 as part of the celebrations held in the town to mark Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee.

31. The striking interior of the United Reformed Church, designed by H.J. Paull in 1878. Note the cast-iron piers and the elaborate furnishings.

Greenhill Street

North side: *Nos. 1-22*
South side: *Nos. 23-42*



Greenhill Street follows the line of the old Roman road into Stratford from Alcester and was therefore always part of the important thoroughfare which continued along what is now Wood Street and Bridge Street (above, p. 5). However, it was on the very edge of this new town (the borough boundary ran down Grove Road and Arden Street) and for a long period it remained only partly developed, especially on the south side, parts of which were not built on until the end of the nineteenth century. Nor was it ever an important area of commerce and many of the buildings retained a semi-agricultural use into the eighteenth century.

The street name is a very ancient one, occurring in about 1260 as Grenhulstret: the choice, however, is a strange one as the road does not lead to noticeably higher ground until well out of the town. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the street was also known as Moor Towns End, in some ways a better description in view of the proximity of the borough boundary.

One's first impression is of a street of fairly modern buildings but this is misleading and several deserve a closer look. An important block lies at the corner of Windsor Street. One, No. 18, still retains its original front wall and we can see quite clearly how the upper floor of this sixteenth-century cottage was originally jettied out over the ground floor. Next door are two other cottages (Nos. 19 and 20) of similar date but refronted with brick in the early nineteenth century. More important, however, are the buildings on the very corner, once an early seventeenth-century house (No. 21) with a large barn and stabling (No. 22) adjoining. The whole building, like those next door, was partially rebuilt in brick in about 1800 but is still richly timbered inside, with further timbering visible in the archway and in the courtyard at the rear. The barn, with its interesting roof-trusses,

was later used as a malthouse and for many years an old windlass survived upstairs for lifting sacks in through a first floor door which can still be seen from the street (Plate 32).

32. No. 22 Greenhill Street, originally a barn, partially rebuilt around 1800, and still retaining much its character in this 1969 photograph.

This barn is an excellent reminder of the original character of Greenhill Street, where the town merged into the countryside. The Bureau, formerly the Green Dragon, on the corner of Arden Street, is another: this began life in the mid-seventeenth century as a farmhouse with outhouses, barn, stables and malthouse. By 1800 this range of buildings, which ran down Greenhill Street, had been extensively remodelled to form a row of cottages (Nos. 2-3, 5-7) grouped each side of a malthouse (where Dixon Ltd. now stands). Enough old timbers can be found in most of these, especially in the roof spaces, to establish that the old farm buildings were not completely demolished. In 1835 some of the farmstead itself on the corner was pulled down and the site redeveloped as the Green Dragon public house. Even so, some of the original structure survived, encased in the new brick and stucco.

On the other side of the street is the only other building with exposed timbers, the Old Thatch Tavern (No. 23). This is a unique building in the town for the simple reason that it is still partly thatched. Regulations against the use of thatch

were in force even before the disastrous fires in 1594, 1595, 1614 and 1641 and, as late as 1665, several attempts were still being made to enforce them.

The street changed little in the eighteenth century but in the nineteenth several new buildings appeared. One of the earliest was Grove House, set back on the south side of the street, built in 1826 as a town gentleman's residence by John Morgan Sanders. It has since fallen on hard times, in the process gaining some windows and losing its porch (Plate 33). In the early 1880s it became the home of the Commercial School, a boys' private school providing education in subjects like mathematics and geography, thought indispensable for boys whose fathers had earmarked them for a business career.

33. Grove House Commercial School, Greenhill Street, in 1910, with its original Georgian character still intact.

The buildings between Grove House and the Thatch Tavern were originally a hotch-potch of small early nineteenth-century houses, now mostly spoilt by later alterations. But in the 1860s, No. 25 was reconstructed as a coach manufactory, with a wide archway through the ground floor (Plate 34). This has since been filled in but the shape of the arch is just visible above the modern shop front. Finally, in 1882-3, a row of houses, Eastbourne Terrace (Nos. 36-42) was built in the decorative brickwork fashionable at the time but now sadly mutilated.

A relatively modern building which has attracted favourable comment is the block now numbered 14-17 built in 1953 to the designs of Robert Harvey of the Stratford firm, Yorke, Harper and Harvey, its mass broken down by the clever use of dormers, and its striking first floor windows supported over deliberately offset shop fronts.

34. No. 25 Greenhill Street in the 1930s, with its wide arched entrance still a prominent feature.

MINOR TOWN CENTRE STREETS

Several streets, though not far from the centre of the medieval town, were never intensively developed in the early period. They tended to be narrower and partly lined with outbuildings of more important structures facing the principal streets. For example, Ely Street, at its east end, accommodated gardens and subsidiary buildings attached to the rear of imposing residences in High Street and Chapel Street. Even when development did take place, it tended to be on a small scale and residential in character. In this grouping we can place Ely Street, Chapel Lane, Scholars Lane and Windsor Street.

Windsor Street

'Windsor' is apparently derived from two early English words meaning a pasture or meadow 'at the edge', a name applied in Stratford to a piece of land lying between what is now Windsor Street on the east and Arden Street on the west, the latter marking the boundary, or 'edge', of the medieval town. However, the name was not used to describe the street itself until the eighteenth century. Before that, Windsor Street was generally known as Hell Lane, not a term of abuse (even though the street had something of a seamy reputation in the nineteenth century) but a contraction of the words Henley Lane, a narrow street leading, like Henley Street itself, towards Henley-in-Arden.

Like Meer Street (above, p. 23), the only other really narrow street in the town centre, Windsor Street, once it became residential, consisted of small cottages for labouring families, over thirty of them by the mid-nineteenth century. Some of these were seventeenth-century timbered cottages re-fronted with brick in the early nineteenth century. With the exception of No. 21, which still retains a domestic look despite its current use, all these have been demolished in recent years to make way for car and coach parks (Plate 35). The northern end of the street has thus lost its domestic feel and its original character is really only preserved at the south end. Here two terraces of mid-1830s cottages survive, complete with a public house; Nos. 7-12 built in 1835 and Nos. 1-6 two years later. Opposite is a building (formerly a motor garage (Plate 36) but now a restaurant with cinema above) really too big for the street but incorporating one of the few examples of 1930s architecture in the town. Designed by Maynard Powell and built in 1935, it retains its rounded windows to what were first-floor offices at its southern end. The remainder of the building along Windsor Street was once single-storied, with a row of show-room windows (still a feature) providing views of the interior. This arrangement was upset in 1954 when the upper storey was added, albeit with matching windows.

35. The west side of Windsor Street, before the demolitions of the 1960s. Both these terraces have now disappeared, seriously compromising the street's residential character

36. Guyver's garage in Windsor Street in 1935, before rebuilding works transformed its appearance.

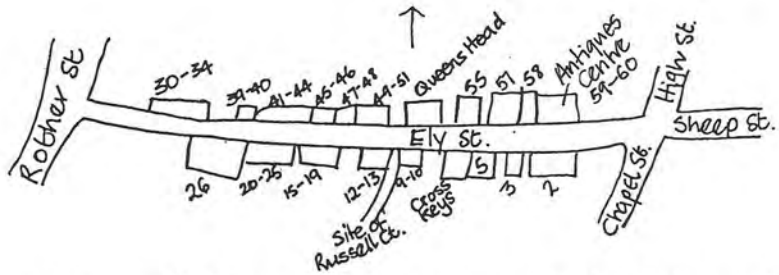
Apart from the Oddfellows Arms (Plate 37), so called more or less from the date it was built in 1837 (and since drastically remodelled), the only other building which has ever had a semi-public use is No. 21; this, with a cottage which adjoined it on the left, was once a barn on the edge of the town, used in 1824 and 1826 as a temporary theatre. A contemporary Stratfordian, James Saunders, has left us with a vivid account of the company who performed there for two months in 1824. The manager, Davenport, was a young Scotsman whose strong accent made him 'utterly unfit to open his mouth before a Southern audience'. Another member of the company, one Sheares, was 'mutinous and ill-disposed, dirty in person and of bad principles', whose wife, once an actress of some standing, had been 'coarsened and degraded' by her marriage.

37. The Oddfellows Arms in Windsor Street, c. 1905, once recognisably part of a terrace but since 'remodelled'.

Ely Street

South side: *Nos. 1-26*
North side: *Nos. 30-60*

Ely Street undoubtedly has the most interesting street name in Stratford. Its original name was Swine Street, evidence that, like Sheep Street and Rother (or cattle) Street, it was once the site of one of the town's livestock markets. Indeed, in the first surviving document which mentions it, dating from about 1270, it is simply described as 'the street where pigs are sold'. Ely Street widens out quite noticeably at its eastern (or High Street) end, and we can be fairly sure that this is where the market would have been conducted. By the fifteenth century, however,



the present name, Ely Street, was coming into use and, although the name Swine Street survived as an alias into the eighteenth century, it was eventually abandoned in the interests of 'good taste'.

The origin of the new name is almost certainly to be attributed to the existence in the street, at least from the early fifteenth century, of an oil mill, worked by a stream which appears to have run down from the Rother Market into Sheep Street, and which was used for crushing seeds for the extraction of oil. The early forms of its name, 'Eale Mill' and 'Ullemylle', and of those of the men who worked it (John Ulemaker, John Ulyman and John Ylymaker) leave little doubt that the name Elystrete, as it is first called in 1454, is derived directly from them.

Ely Street has always been mainly residential in character and the general impression is still of terraces of small cottages interspersed with the occasional larger house (Plate 38). It is also still relatively quiet, its greatest asset for a street so near the centre of a busy town.

38. This photograph, from the 1970s, shows how successfully Ely Street has retained its small-scale residential character.

None of the buildings is remarkable but many have a charm of their own and blend pleasantly together. The most interesting is No. 26, now occupied by the First Church of Christ Scientist. This began life in about 1600 as an imposing two-storied timber-framed building. In 1849 it was sold to an architect, William Gibbs, who refaced it in brick and added the 'Gothic' windows, dormers and porch to the front elevation, the barge boards to the gable ends and an extension at the rear. From the early nineteenth century, this building was used as a school for the sons

of gentlemen, known first as St John's Place and later as the Shakespeare Academy. To increase the accommodation, a group of cottages on the east was demolished in about 1810 to make way for a new brick school-room and dormitory: this still stands. The school closed in 1845 on the death of the last headmaster, the Reverend Samuel Hay Parker, who left a widow and nine children 'in distressed circumstances'.

This may be the biggest timber-framed building in the street but there are plenty of other smaller examples. The easiest to spot are Nos. 30-34 at the top. These, like so many of Stratford's other timbered buildings, had their front walls rebuilt in brick in the early nineteenth century (Plate 39). In this instance, these were removed in the 1970s and timber frames re-instated but with a poor regard for detail. Much the same happened to Nos. 39 and 40 nearby. Other cottages are still concealed, or partly so, by later refronting. Nos. 49 and 51, for example, are both timbered (like No. 50 between), but are still masked by brick. So are two little cottages opposite (Nos. 9 and 10). No. 14, a little further up the street, had a more ambitious face-lift, added, apparently, when it functioned as a public house, the Rose. But the most interesting building of this type is the Cross Keys Inn (No. 6). This dates from about 1600 but was very attractively refronted some two hundred years later. Great care was taken over the new elevation, with a centre bay projecting slightly forward topped with a pediment and semi-circular window. There are few better architectural features in the street and none which demonstrates so well how visually effective the simplest device can be.

39. Nos. 30-34 Ely Street, timber-framed cottages with their front walls rebuilt in brick in the early nineteenth century. During restoration in the 1970s, timber-framing was re-instated along the street but in an ill-informed manner.

Across the road is another public house, the Queen's Head (No. 54), of similar date and likewise refronted in brick about 1800. Several timbers are still visible in the bar area and the steep pitch of the roof suggests that the basic structure may be much older than first impressions suggest. A little further down is another old building of more substantial proportions, No. 57, masked this time not in brick but stucco; in this instance, however, the early nineteenth-century alterations were so extensive that very few of the original timbers can still be seen.

Of the same date but in a different category are the timber-framed buildings, now Nos. 59-60, providing access to the Stratford Antiques Centre. These, and those within the courtyard, started out life as outbuildings to Nos. 27-28 High Street (above, p. 17), and are one of the few surviving examples of the layout and appearance of buildings which would once have been found behind most town centre properties (Plate 40).

40. This courtyard to the rear of Nos. 59-60 Ely Street was typical of the many semi-open spaces behind the street frontages. Many have since been built over but this one still survives.

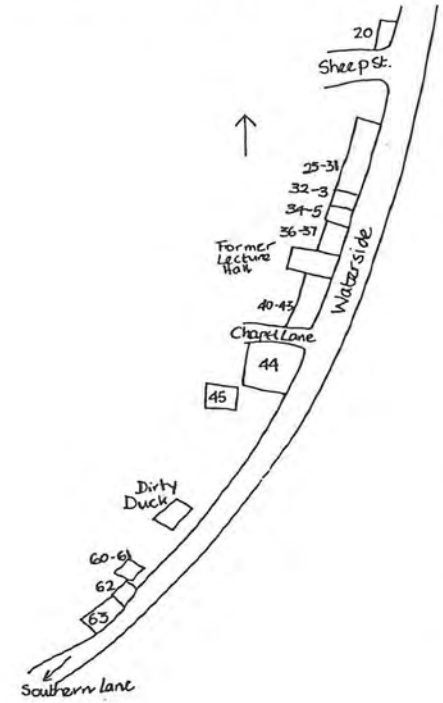
The eighteenth century has left little mark on most of Stratford's streets and Ely Street is no exception. Only one building, No. 5, built in about 1780, is of this vintage, with interesting first-floor window openings and a stone cornice. The nineteenth century is much better represented due mainly to the virtual rebuilding of some western sections of the street in the 1820s and 1830s. Nos. 20-25 date from 1821 and the neighbouring block, Nos. 15-19, from the following year. Nos. 12-13, on a grander three-storied scale, followed in 1835, while on the other side of the street, the 1830s saw the rebuilding of two modest terraces, Nos. 41-4 and

45-6, with Nos. 47-8 striking a more ambitious note. These are all quietly attractive buildings, replacing small timber-framed cottages, or even barns, which had fallen into too bad a condition to restore.

At the east end of the street, however, nearer the commercial centre, nineteenth-century houses are more ambitious. No. 58, for example, is a very attractive brick house of about 1820 with a stucco finish and an elegant staircase. No. 55, somewhat later, is also a large property, with a little money spent on modest embellishments. Opposite, No. 3 is a charming three-storey town house of the 1830s, whilst No. 1, a rather unconvincing shape for a house, appears to have been adapted out of early nineteenth-century outbuildings to a grander property facing Chapel Street.

By and large, however, Ely Street was, and still is, made up of cottage properties, lived in during the nineteenth century by labouring men and their families. At that time it had something of a reputation for rowdiness, due partly to a development behind Nos. 9 and 10 of sixteen back-to-back cottages, known as Russell Court (later Ely Cottages) on the site of the present-day Russell House.

Waterside and Southern Lane



Waterside has never been a shopping street and, until the eighteenth century, was mainly a residential area of the humbler sort. A row of some eighteen cottages between Bridge Street and Sheep Street, typical of this early housing, was demolished in stages from 1913 (Plate 41), but another group, now Nos. 25-31, still survives. All these cottages have early nineteenth-century front walls but original timber-framing has survived behind most of them. There are several other timber-framed cottages beyond Chapel Lane, including the 'Dirty Duck', with later fronts. Another interesting cottage, No. 61, was visited by Washington Irving in 1815 who left a fascinating description of it (both inside and out) in his 'Sketchbook'.

41. Eighteen cottages, which stood in Waterside between Bridge Street and Sheep Street, were demolished in stages from 1913. This photograph, from 1914, reminds us that until the 1930s, those living here did not look out across well-maintained gardens but were faced from across the road with warehouses built around the canal basin.

During the eighteenth century, fashion demanded that the well-to-do had a view from their houses and in Stratford the river offered the best prospect. Because of the risk of flooding, it was impossible to build on or near the river-bank until the ground begins to rise slightly beyond Chapel Lane. But then are to be found one or two elegant houses, clearly built there for the prospect they commanded. One of these (the 'left hand' part of the 'Dirty Duck') is in fact a remodelling of an earlier timbered building, carried out in 1738 when the owner, Richard Watts, refronted it with a handsome stone elevation to create a somewhat odd but very picturesque feature. New buildings are represented by what is now the Thistle Hotel, built between 1792 and 1794 by Charles Henry Hunt, one of Stratford's first bankers. This has not quite survived in an unaltered state but is still a very fine example of a late eighteenth-century town residence. The Ferry House (No. 63) of about the same date, built by Edward Easthope, a barge-master, is even better. The building to its right (No. 62), was Easthope's granary (later a malthouse), built soon after 1800. Another impressive building which, from the outside, looks of similar vintage is No. 20, on the corner of Sheep Street; this, however, like the 'Duck', is a substantial modification of a timber-framed building, probably the largest still standing in the street, encased in brick in about 1800. From the 1880s it was a public house, the Wheatsheaf: the name can still be read on the side elevation.

The biggest change in Waterside during the nineteenth century was the refronting of the numerous little cottages in brick. But several new ones were also built, Nos. 36-37, for example, in 1829, Nos. 32-33 and Nos. 34-35 also in the 1820s, and a very handsome row, Nos. 40-43 in 1856/57. But it was not until 1887, when the Lecture Hall (now theatre workshops) was built that any striking addition to the street's appearance was made. The architect, Arthur Flower, chose to build in imitation Tudor, as he later did for the 'Technical School' in Henley Street (above, p. 22). But here, half-timbering was limited to the gable, with the ground and first floor built in brick with stone dressings and with a tall 'Elizabethan' door. The initials are his uncle's (Charles Edward Flower), who bore the cost.

The twentieth century brought further changes, the most attractive being No. 45, now part of the Thistle Hotel, built in 1915 to the designs of Albert H. Calloway for Miss Annie Justins, the proprietor of the Shakespeare Hotel and later Stratford's first lady mayor (Plate 42).

42. No. 45 Waterside, a splendid house commanding a fine view, built in 1914 for Annie Justins, the proprietor of the Shakespeare Hotel.

Waterside has lived with the threat of flooding for many years. A plaque on the wall of No. 18 records the deluge of 1 January 1901 as the worst in recent times, apparently breaking a record set in a flood of 1801. *The Stratford-upon-Avon Herald* painted a dramatic picture: 'Water flowed in a torrent over the Bancroft gardens .... while Waterside was flooded to a depth of several feet. The cellars and ground

floors were overswept and the furniture was floating about in the lower rooms of some of the houses. Many of the inhabitants suffered severely and collecting boxes are being taken round the town with a view to relieving the distress'. The floods of 1932 and 1998 came close to breaking this record.

The old borough boundary of 1196, enclosing the grid-pattern of streets, cut through Waterside to the north of No. 52, leaving outside it the land on which Nos. 52-63 were subsequently built. The building line of these cottages and of Southern Lane (the continuation of Waterside) was therefore not defined in 1196, and this may be the explanation of its slightly meandering course from this point. The name refers not to the street's geographical position but to a family of that name who owned land in this part of the town. The only building of any age is now part of the Courtyard Theatre complex and evidently began life as an agricultural building of some sort: in 1851 it is described as a stable. The eastern side of the road is bounded by what were the gardens of Avonbank, which will be discussed as part of Old Town (below, pp. 63-4). Much of the west side, now mainly occupied by theatre buildings, was similarly garden ground, belonging to another Old Town residence, the Dower House.

Chapel Lane

Chapel Lane has fewer buildings in it than any other street in Stratford and, although this is partly the result of some recent demolitions, its street frontage has never been more than half built up, due mainly to the fact that the street was on the fringe of the medieval market town.

There seem to have been two alternative early names for Chapel Lane – Walkers Street and Dead Lane – both in use by the end of the thirteenth century. The origin of Dead Lane is rather obscure but may have come into use to denote the route of funeral processions from the Guild Chapel at the top of the street to the parish church of Holy Trinity. It was customary, on the death of members of the Guild, for their bodies to lie in the chapel for several days while masses were said for the safety of their souls; burial would then take place in Holy Trinity churchyard and so it is possible that the body would have been carried down Chapel Lane. The alternative name, Walkers Street, is more easily accounted for. Walkers, or fullers, were important members of the cloth industry, cleansing and thickening the cloth by washing and beating it. For this, a supply of water was required and Chapel Lane was ideal; for down the street ran one of the town's two watercourses. Quite where it came from is uncertain, but there is no doubt that it remained a feature in Chapel Lane down to the end of the eighteenth century, when, due to its deterioration into an open sewer, it was finally filled in. In the medieval period it must have been sufficiently clean to provide the fullers with water and, indeed, to serve a fulling

mill, which we last hear of in 1604. Chapel Lane came into use, first as an alias, around 1500, when the rebuilding of the nave and tower of the Guild Chapel made it such a prominent feature of the townscape (below, p. 56).

There are virtually no houses in Chapel Lane today and this is nothing new, for until the early seventeenth century, and even later, the street was made up almost entirely of barns. These have all gone now as well, even though one of them, on the site of the old Union Club, had particularly interesting associations as one of the buildings used in the early nineteenth century as a temporary theatre.

There are one or two attractive cottages at the bottom of Chapel Lane, No. 7 built in the 1850s, together with cottages facing Waterside, and Nos. 4-6 dating from slightly earlier. But the building of real interest in Chapel Lane, and virtually the only other one left, is the old Union Club (Plate 43). This was built in 1837-8 as the Stratford Infirmary, a charitable institution giving free medical help to the poor, which had opened at No. 21 Chapel Street in 1823 (above, p. 31). The move to bigger premises allowed a better in-patient service to develop, but despite enlargements made in 1858 – not entirely in keeping but at least preserving the a symmetrical appearance – these buildings in turn proved insufficient. This led in 1884 to the building of the hospital in Alcester Road (below, p. 76) and the old building then became the headquarters of the Union Club, founded with the male-orientated but worthy Victorian intention of providing young middle-class men with premises where they could engage in respectable pastimes.

43. The old Union Club in Chapel Lane, c. 1905, built in 1837 as an Infirmary for the Sick Poor.

Scholars Lane

Scholars Lane is also one of Stratford's modest streets: although included in the 1196 grid plan, it lay some distance from the original town centre and, like Chapel Lane, was not built up for some time. Its original name, first recorded in about 1330, was Tinkers Lane, that is, the street where tinkers would gather on market days to mend pots and pans. This was a noisy business and then, as now, itinerant workers were not universally popular, so a site on the edge of the town may well have been thought suitable for them. The present name, Scholars Lane, in use as an alias from about 1600, must be attributed to the nearby Grammar School, refounded under Stratford's Charter of Incorporation of 1553.

Scholars Lane today, or at least part of it, is the narrowest street in Stratford, but this was not always the case. On the contrary, a careful look at early maps shows that most of the houses and buildings on the south side are infilling, built on land which was originally open. This may have been intended as a subsidiary market area, but, not being needed as such, then became a convenient site for the tinkers. Over the years makeshift structures gave way to permanent buildings which have reduced the street to its present width (Plate 44).

44. Scholars Lane, from the west end, c. 1960, showing clearly how buildings further down the street encroached on previously open space.

The great charm of Scholars Lane, despite one or two recent intrusions, is its small-scale residential character. Like other areas away from the heart of the medieval town, Scholars Lane remained undeveloped, except for a few barns, right up to the seventeenth century; and, when houses did appear, they were usually of the humbler sort. The early nineteenth-century cottage property, of which Scholars Lane is largely composed, is thus another reminder that this was once the periphery of the built-up area where space was first found for the growing labouring population. Indeed, some of the building is even more recent than this, with two terraces (Nos. 2-6 and 15-22) dating from around 1912, and some even later.

Though modest in size, some of these cottages have great charm, particularly Nos. 32-4, built in 1827, with their double round-headed windows, unique in the town. Many more cottages were once crowded into this area; there were three behind Nos. 35-7 (built in 1857), for instance, called Nasons Court. Though demolished, the name can still be seen on the wall in the gap between Nos. 34 and 35. Garden Row, now reduced to four modernised houses, began life in 1815 as a continuous row of fourteen cottages, sharing one wash-house and privy, and brought to the attention of the Board of Health Inspector in 1849 as one of the principal 'fever localities' in the town. They have another distinction – their mono-pitched roofs, a building technique otherwise unrepresented in the town.

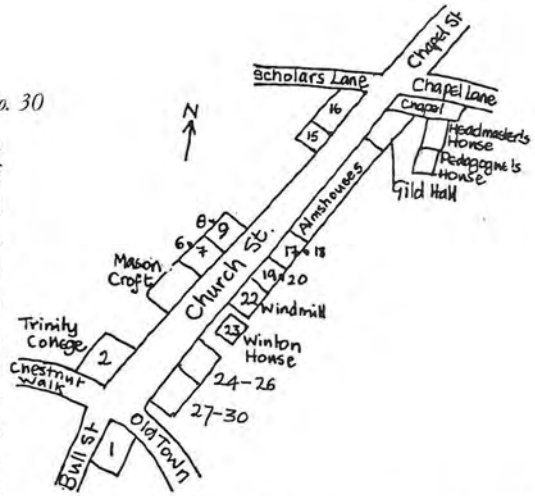
Little more need be said about individual buildings, though we might note that the present Salvation Army Hall was built in 1861 as a chapel for the Plymouth Brethren, who held meetings there until 1908 when it was made over to the Salvation Army. No. 14, Garden Cottage, is also of some interest. It began life as a stable attached to the large Paddock behind Mason Croft in Church Street (below, p. 59) and stands close to the rear entrance to the Paddock, on the corner of Scholars Lane and Rother Street, whose gateposts retain some of their Victorian dignity. In 1868, it was converted into a cottage, which was enlarged in 1874, principally by the addition of the large cross-wing at its western end: the street elevation still carries the evidence of these changes.

CHURCH STREET AND OLD TOWN

Church Street and Old Town can hardly be regarded as town centre streets but nor are they of a minor nature. Instead they have always served as the important thoroughfare which led from the town to the church. From an early date they were therefore lined with significant buildings, developing during the eighteenth century into a well-to-do residential area.

Church Street

South end: *No. 1*
West side: *Nos. 2-16*
East side: *Guild Chapel – No. 30*



Church Street, well away from the busy thoroughfares of Bridge Street, High Street and Wood Street, provided, as its name tells us, a link between the new thriving town of the early thirteenth century and the old settlement around the church. It was as far away from the centre of the town as you could get whilst still remaining in the borough – the boundary just included what is now the Stratford Preparatory School. It is not surprising, then, to find that this was traditionally a residential area and this is the character it retains today.

Some of the buildings in the street are amongst the most famous in the town. The one with the earliest features is the Guild Chapel, with late thirteenth-century work possibly surviving in the south and parts of the east wall of the chancel but with the north wall rebuilt and the roof and windows altered later. This was originally built as an oratory for a hospital which the Guild of the Holy Cross was licensed to establish in 1269, and the main part of which probably stood on the site of the present nave. But for some reason, it never flourished and the Guild seems to have taken over the building for its own meetings.

By the beginning of the fifteenth century the Guild had outgrown this accommodation and in the 1420s built, next to the chapel, a two-storied Guild Hall fronting onto Church Street. This now forms part of the Grammar School premises and the interior may be viewed by appointment. The ground floor, once the hall where the Guild met, currently houses the school library; upstairs, still a teaching

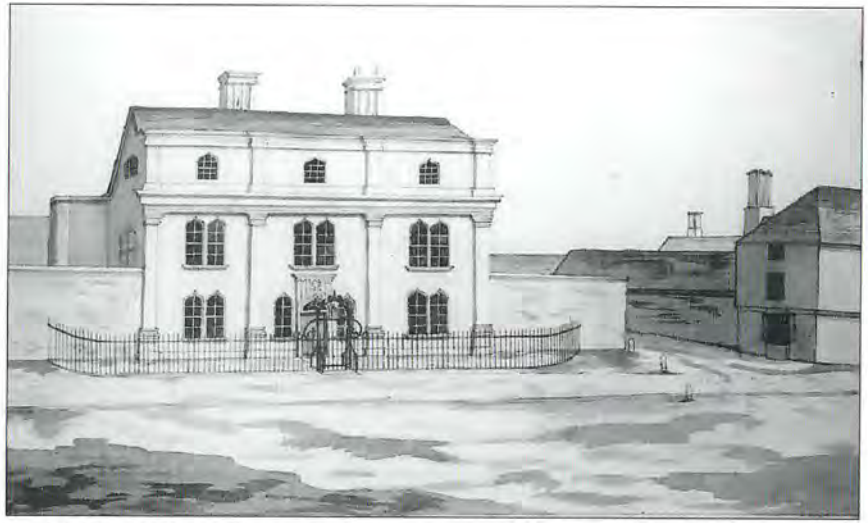
area, the roof trusses and other interior timbers are all exposed, though it is clear that originally this area was divided into at least three rooms. When the Guild moved into this new hall, the premises it vacated on the site of the present nave became part of an enlarged chapel. Then, around 1495, this building was demolished and replaced by the present impressive nave and tower. This work was paid for by Hugh Clopton, who left money in his will of 1496 to complete the reconstruction. The interior walls were decorated with fine wall paintings but, of these, the only obvious survival is the portrayal of the doom over the chancel arch. The building has been carefully renovated over the last fifty years, the transformation of the interior carried out under the direction of Stephen Dykes Bower, with the stained-glass windows in the chancel designed and executed by Vernon Spreadbury.

The Guild's main concern was to pray for the souls of its departed members, hence the importance attached to the Guild Chapel. But it also provided help of a more practical kind. For the sons of its members, it ran a school and, for the aged and infirm, it built a range of almshouses along the street. These have been said to date originally from 1427, but this is difficult to substantiate and they may well be later, built, or at least substantially altered, in the early sixteenth century (Plate 45).

As we shall see, much of the street was rebuilt in the early eighteenth century but, the Guild buildings apart, there are still one or two other examples of early houses. By far the most interesting is No. 16, built in about 1600 as the residence of a wealthy Stratford burgess, John Sadler. During its history it has been given two

45. Early nineteenth-century stucco being removed from the original timber-framing of the almshouses in Church Street during restoration in 1902-03.

face-lifts, one in 1768 when the front wall was rebuilt in a classical style but with curious ogee-headed windows, and the second in about 1840 when the front wall was again remodelled (but keeping the windows) and the embattled parapet added (Plate 46). For many years this was the home of the Hunt family, wealthy lawyers who also monopolised the posts of town clerk and Clerk of the Peace for Warwickshire for a long period.

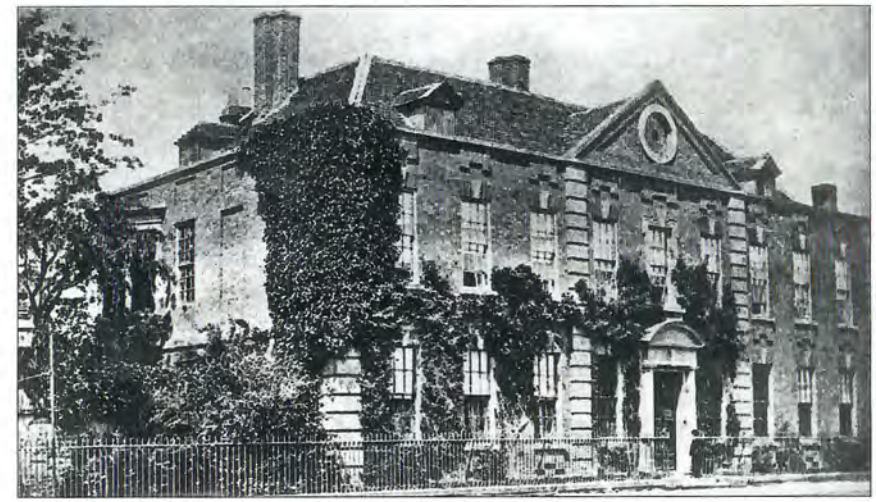


46. No. 16 Church Street, after its first re-fronting in 1768, when Gothic windows and pilasters appeared. During the second facelift (1840) the Gothic windows survived but the pilasters were removed or covered over and the present battlements added.

Another building of the same date (or slightly earlier) is the Windmill Inn (No. 22). A public house since about 1760, it has many of its original timbers surviving inside, though the street elevation was later refronted. In 1769, when the lease was renewed, we read of bricks being carried to the premises, so this could well have been when the alterations were carried out. Nos. 8-9 opposite are also houses of this type, the only survivors of a row of timber-framed cottages with early nineteenth-century brick fronts, demolished in 1927 to make way for the offices of the National Farmers Union Mutual Insurance Society (now the District Council Offices). Nos. 24-26 are also timbered, though partly refaced, probably when the row was extended south (Nos. 27-30) early in the nineteenth century.

The general impression of Church Street, however, especially at its south end, is of eighteenth-century elegance. This was the part of the town where a rising class of town gentry, many of them connected with the legal profession, decided to build their imposing new residences. One of the first of these new houses was Trinity

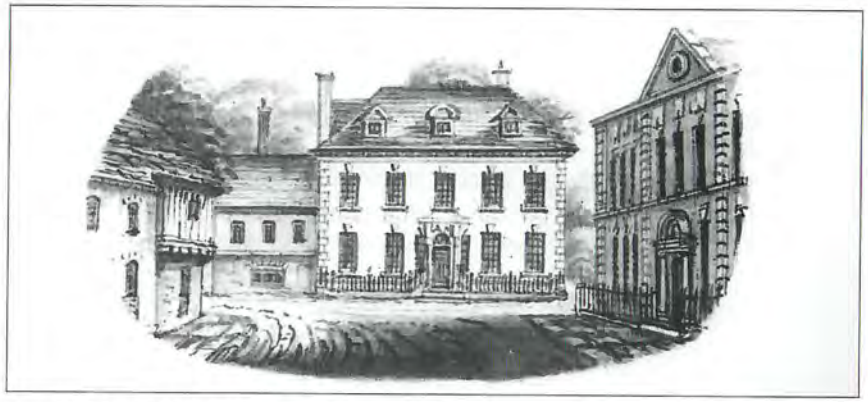
College (No. 2) dating from about 1720 and built for Thomas Rawlins, great-nephew and heir of another Thomas, a wealthy serjeant-at-law (or top-flight barrister). The house was originally only two stories high but in 1872 it was given an extra floor – the change in the brickwork is clearly visible – and a new roof and porch (Plate 47). This was to adapt it for use as a school, as duly recorded on the memorial stone placed in the pediment, known as Trinity College, founded by the vicar, John Day Collis, for the sons of clergy who would also sing in the church choir. It later developed into a private school with a national reputation which closed in 1908.



47. Trinity College in Church Street, before 1872, when a second storey was added and the old doorway replaced..

Nearby is Mason Croft (No. 5) a house of similar date, built for another lawyer, Nathaniel Mason, in about 1724. This was originally a symmetrical building, in all probability designed and built by the well-known master mason, Francis Smith of Warwick. Its symmetry was upset by Nathaniel's son, Thomas, who built the small extension to the south in 1735 to house his library. A similar fate befell No. 1 (Stratford Preparatory School), built around 1690 by William Warry, a trader in tobacco. An early drawing shows the house with its door in the centre, flanked by two windows on each side; the extra pair of windows we now see on the left is part of an 1836 extension, done so cleverly that it is not easy to see where the original work ends and the imitation begins (Plate 48).

A fourth house of this period is often passed unnoticed. This is the present Headmaster's house, only briefly glimpsed by the passer-by through the Grammar School entrance. This was built in 1702 as the Vicarage, a building which this time we know for certain was built by Francis Smith of Warwick.



48. No. 1 Church Street as originally built. In 1836 it was extended to the left by an additional two bays, upsetting its original proportions.

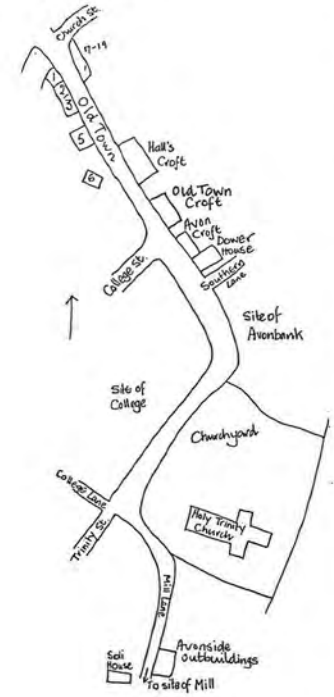
During the nineteenth century, further elegant houses were built, giving emphasis to the general character formed in the previous century. No. 19/20, built in 1831, was given a stucco finish and stylish Ionic pilasters. Winton House (No. 23) built in 1836, is less ambitious but again has applied stucco. Nos. 17 and 18, a grander pair of three stories, were built in 1856 in a very attractive brick.

49. No. 15 Church Street, as built for Dr Henry Ross in 1911. Later it was taken over by the National Farmers Union Mutual Insurance Society and its individuality overwhelmed when new offices in a similar style were built.

The mock-Tudor phase in the development of Stratford's architecture did not leave Church Street unmarked, represented by Nos. 6-7, a rather uninspired example. An unusual building for Stratford, however, was the northern part of what are now the offices of the Stratford-on-Avon District Council. It was designed by local architect, Albert Calloway – the same man, in fact, who had worked on Nos. 6-7 – and was built for Dr Henry Ross as a private house (No. 15) in 1911 (the date is still on the building) in a neo-Classical style not represented elsewhere in the town but in keeping with the general character of the street (Plate 49). However, in 1928 the attractive symmetry of this house was obscured and its original proportions completely overwhelmed when the National Farmers Mutual Insurance Society added to it a ponderous extension to the south to create its new headquarters. The whole of this block, extended again in 1957, is now occupied by the Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

Church Street's most famous resident was probably the celebrated novelist, Marie Corelli, who bought Mason Croft in 1901 and lived there until her death in 1924. During this period various alterations were carried out, including the conversion of the old dining hall of Trinity College into a music room (now the lecture room of the Shakespeare Institute) in 1907.

Old Town



When we enter Old Town, we step outside the bishop of Worcester's planned town of 1196 (the boundary cut through Hall's Croft garden) and enter the area of the original settlement. This was left undisturbed when the wide streets of the new town were laid out but so successful was the bishop's venture that his new borough soon overshadowed the original settlement and the latter gradually dwindled away: the street name, Old Town, is one of the few reminders that until 1196 the centre of Stratford was there and not where it is today. The buildings, with one notable exception, today give little help, for none is older than any in the modern town centre and many perpetuate the much later eighteenth-century elegance of Church Street.

The exception, of course, is Holy Trinity Church. This would have been the nucleus of the Anglo-Saxon settlement on the banks of

the River Avon and the focal point of a very large rural parish. It continued to fulfil this role even after the new town was planted some way from it, and the townsfolk had quite a walk (as they still do today) in order to worship there.

A church is first mentioned in Anglo-Saxon charters of the ninth century, probably a wooden structure later rebuilt by the Normans. Little, if anything, of this church survives and, with the possible exception of the lower stage of the tower, the earliest surviving parts of the present church are the mid-thirteenth-century transepts. These were originally matched by a nave and chancel of the same date: a major building operation took place then because the new borough, in existence for fifty years, had led to a great increase in the local population which could no longer be accommodated in the old church.

In the early fourteenth century, further extensive alterations took place when the crossing under the tower was rebuilt and the two nave aisles added. The old chancel was demolished at the end of the fifteenth century and replaced by the present one and the clerestory to the nave and the great west window added slightly later. The spire of 1763 was the last stage in the evolution of a building which today is a fine blend of successive architectural styles.

In 1331 John de Stratford established a chantry in the south aisle served by a warden and four priests; but in 1340, when the offices of warden and rector of the parish were combined in one person, the chantry effectively assumed control of the whole church and in 1353 a College was built near the site of the present parish hall to accommodate these priests. This was clearly one of the most important buildings in the town, and, after the Reformation, when chantries were suppressed, the College became a private residence, the largest in the town. Added to and embellished over the years, it survived until the very end of the eighteenth century when it was demolished and the grounds developed for housing (hence the names College Lane and College Street). An old outbuilding of the College survives as a cottage in College Lane (Elmhurst), its wall built half in stone and half in brick; but, this apart, we have to rely on careful drawings by antiquarians of the early nineteenth century for our knowledge of the building's appearance (see Plate 61).

As the original settlement dwindled, the smaller buildings were demolished, their sites merged into their neighbours' and the land used for the building of substantial dwellings. The best example, of course, was the College but others still survive. The earliest is probably the Dower House and Avoncroft (originally a single dwelling) dating from the sixteenth century, with substantial garden ground and including Old Town Croft, apparently part of the original outbuildings. In its early days the house was owned by the Cloptons, and may have served as a residence for the widows of heads of the family (hence the name), but it was sold out of the family in 1738 and then divided into two dwellings. The Dower House

and Avoncroft have most of their timbers concealed with rough-cast, but some of the original framing can still be viewed from Southern Lane, where the complexity of the building is also very clear. Old Town Croft, formerly outbuildings, is also a fine mixture from three different periods – an original timber-framed outhouse, the old parish room built in brick, and another timber-framed block, designed by Albert Calloway, added in 1916.

Next door, the earliest parts of Hall's Croft, believed to be the home of Shakespeare's son-in-law, John Hall, date from the early seventeenth century. It is a complex building, added to at the rear several times during the seventeenth century. Set in very substantial grounds and open to the public, its structure can be thoroughly examined both inside and out.

Unrestricted by the uniform and rather narrow shape of the plots which existed inside the borough boundary, the wealthy members of the community who lived outside it built their houses in less formal and more expansive settings. This was the case with a house, known initially as St Mary's, which adjoined the churchyard and which was lived in by the town clerk, Thomas Greene, from about 1611. This no longer survives, nor do its two successors, both known as Avonbank. The first Avonbank, which, from early photographs, seems to date from around 1700, was demolished in 1866 when Charles Flower built the second – by the standards of the day a very modern villa (Plate 50). It was designed by the eminent architect,

50. The second Avonbank, a striking building designed by Francis C. Penrose and built in 1866. Only the gateway and some balustrading survive today.

Francis Cranmer Penrose, then the surveyor of St Paul's Cathedral, who in later life also achieved some eminence as an astronomer. There is nothing now to remind us of Greene's house, although the site and the grounds (now the Royal Shakespeare Theatre Gardens) bear witness to its importance: the only surviving features of the old Avonbank make up what is now the Brass Rubbing Centre, visible at the far end of garden. Its front section was built around 1800 as a summer house, using stones from the demolished College. The oval, or 'rear' part had been added to the first Avonbank in the early nineteenth century to the designs of Henry Hakewill (Plate 51). When the house was demolished in 1866 it was salvaged and attached to the summer house. Of Penrose's second Avonbank, we now have only the balustrades near the church and the stone gateposts onto the street (Plate 50).

51. The first Avonbank, just before its demolition in the 1860s. The oval extension to the right, designed by Henry Hakewill and added to the house in the early nineteenth century, was salvaged and built onto the back of the summer house in the garden (now the Brass Rubbing Centre).

The first Avonbank may have set the fashion for the early eighteenth-century houses we have looked at in Church Street. One of the most attractive buildings of the eighteenth century, however, which has survived virtually unaltered, is the immaculately maintained No. 5 Old Town. This is almost the last in this style (about 1760-1) but its elegant proportions have not been upset by any later additions and extensions and reflect better than any other house in Stratford the refined taste of the period. Nos. 2-3 are of similar date but less ornate and have been altered later. No. 1 (architects' offices) has a late eighteenth-century frontage, including a charming semi-circular window in the central pediment, although some of the building behind is timber-framed (Plate 52).

52. Old Town, c. 1900, lined with dignified and substantial Georgian and Victorian dwellings.

The Victorian buildings in Old Town are important as they represent a style of architecture we have not yet come across. No. 6 (Old Town Cottage) and Nos. 17-19 date from 1841-2, but, instead of the Regency feel which many Stratford houses of this period still have, these incorporate features reflecting earlier building styles. Some architects were now designing buildings with gables, decorated with barge boards. Rectangular hood-moulds were being reinstated over the windows and casement windows with elaborate tracery began to reappear (though not in Nos. 17-19). The identity of the pioneer of this style in Stratford is uncertain but a strong contender is George E. Hamilton who lived for a short period in Old Town and is known to have designed the hotel at the nearby Bishopton Spa in a very similar style.

Mill Lane (the continuation of Old Town) was once an important thoroughfare for it crossed a ford on the site of the present footbridge. (Earlier bridges can be traced back to at least 1599). Another ford is shown on an eighteenth-century map linking with a track running down the north side of the churchyard, and the evident ease with which the river could be crossed at this point must have been the deciding factor in the choice of this site for the Anglo-Saxon village.

The mill was further evidence that this part of Stratford was once the site of the original settlement. A mill had stood here at least from Domesday (1086), over a hundred years before the new borough was laid out, and would have been one of the most important buildings on the manor. The last mill on the site, demolished

in the 1970s and replaced by the present block of flats, dated from 1833. The mill owners lived nearby in a large Victorian house, known as Avonside. This too was demolished in the 1980s but nineteenth-century outbuildings survive, now converted to residential use.

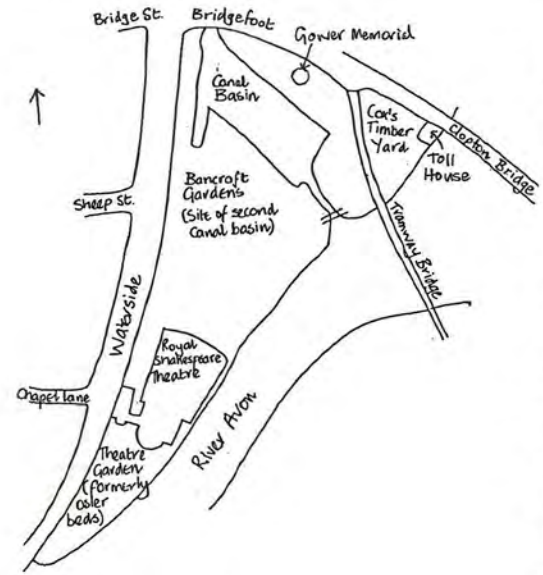
It is easy to overlook what is now the most interesting building in Mill Lane, Soli House. This was built by William Oldaker in 1809-10, using some of the stone from the demolished charnel house once adjoining the church. It is of plain design and has been added to in recent times with not too fine a regard for its original character (Plate 53).

53. Soli House in Mill Lane, c. 1960, built as a gentleman's residence in 1809/10.

THE OUTER FRINGE

In this category, we will consider the Bancroft and Guild Street and Arden Street, parts of the town which lay on the very edge of the town as laid out in 1196 and which remained for many years largely undeveloped.

The Bancroft



Waterside marked the eastern limit of the medieval town of Stratford for a very good reason: although the river formed a natural boundary on this side of the town, it was not possible, because of the danger of flooding, to build any nearer to it than Waterside. The large expanse of low-lying land between it and the river, the Bancroft – literally 'the bank field' – was therefore earmarked as common land. Here the burgesses could turn out their cattle, horses, sheep and pigs. As the population grew rules had to be imposed to limit numbers and during the Elizabethan period we read of sheep being restricted to an hour's grazing and pigs needing to have keepers with them. It was alleged soon afterwards that the rates charged for the use of the Bancroft were so high that only the better off could afford them. Subsequently the land degenerated into waste.

The event which transformed the Bancroft was the arrival of the canal in 1816. Begun in 1793 at the Kings Norton end, the project had taken over twenty years to complete and the line through to the Bancroft was not finalised until 1814. It opened two years later with a canal basin which still survives. In 1823, the lord of the manor, the Earl of Plymouth, to whom any wasteland in the town still belonged, sold the site of this basin to the canal company and in 1827 the rest of the Bancroft for the construction of a second basin – the arm which connected the two can still be seen although in 1901 the later one was filled in. The reason for this expansion was the completion of another scheme with a terminus on the Bancroft – the Stratford to Moreton-in-Marsh horse-drawn tramway, which

opened in 1826: this pioneer venture is now commemorated only by the attractive brick footbridge which carried it across the Avon.

While the canal and the tramway flourished, this remained a busy area, with both basins lined with wharfs and warehouses and all linked to the tramway by a network of lines. Coal was the principal commodity with no less than fourteen coal wharfs in the Bancroft area by 1851, and with two timber wharfs, a stone wharf and a lead and glass wharf. There were also two dry-docks, managed by a boat-builder, Thomas Kent, and a timber-merchant's business established by James Cox in 1839.

The whole area was thus transformed – in little more than a decade – from a piece of scrubland to a bustling commercial centre. For a time trade flourished but neither the canal nor the tramway could withstand competition from the railways which reached Stratford in 1859/60. Trade fell away rapidly and by the 1870s the time was approaching for a second transformation of the Bancroft, this time into a recreational area.

The process started with Charles Flower's acquisition of part of the land for the building of a Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. This, built to the designs of Edward Dodgshun and William Unsworth, opened in 1879 although the buildings were not completed until 1881. The style was startling, nothing remotely like it having yet been seen in the town, a collection of pointed towers and spires in an ornate mixture of brick, stone and timber. Much of this extraordinary building was burnt down in 1926, although the Picture Gallery (fronting Waterside) survived, together with its fine terra-cotta panels by Paul Kummer, and also the walls of the semi-circular auditorium which had projected to the south (Plate 54). The new theatre, designed by Elizabeth Scott, opened in 1932. This was in an uncompromising 1930s style and was regarded as a radical intrusion into a town of such ancient traditions. It has been softened over the years through the addition of restaurant rooms overlooking the river and a covered foyer. But the notable brick sculptures by Eric Kennington high on the external north wall were part of the original concept. This new theatre incorporated what had survived of the older building, including the old semi-circular auditorium which was re-christened the Conference Hall. Then, in the mid 1980s, this Conference Hall was converted into another auditorium, the Swan, to the designs of Michael Reardon and Tim Furby: from the outside, the main alteration was to re-instate a roof similar to the one that had graced the original 1879 building.

A theatre requires a proper setting and osier beds to the south were reclaimed early on to form a garden. This was where Lord Ronald Gower's fine statue of Shakespeare was first put in 1888. To the north of the theatre, the second canal basin, now hardly used, formed an attractive ornamental lake, and when this was filled in (despite vigorous protests, notably from Marie Corelli) in 1901, the area became a public park, complete with bandstand, erected in 1913 (Plate 55). The

54. The Shakespeare Memorial Theatre soon after the completion of building works in 1881, an extraordinary building designed by Edward Dodgshun and William Unsworth. Following the fire in 1926, the tower was demolished and the remains of the original roof removed. The picture gallery on the left survived as did the shell of the old auditorium on the right. In 1985 this was re-roofed and converted into the Swan Theatre.

55. A view from the Theatre tower, 1892. The 'second' canal basin dug in 1827 had been landscaped when the theatre was built, but was filled in in 1901.

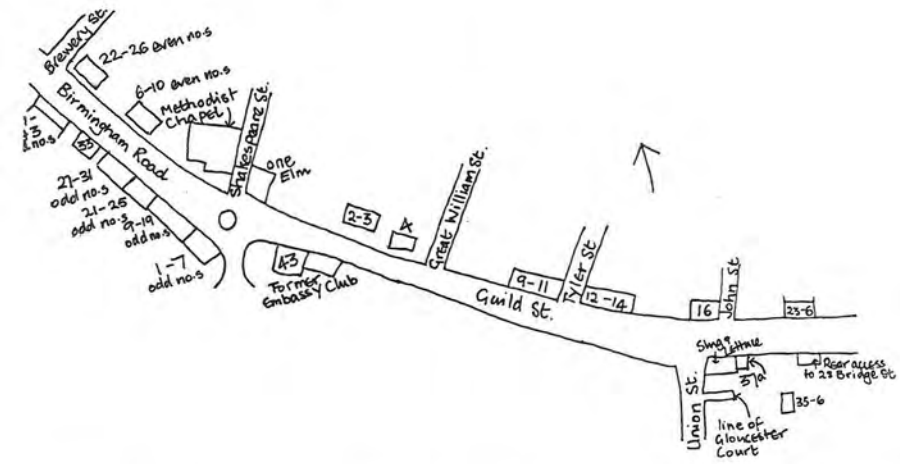
original canal basin survived, but growing increasingly stagnant and surrounded by semi-derelict wharfs and other ramshackle buildings (Plate 56). In 1932, with the opening of the new theatre, the site was cleared, the Gower Memorial moved from its original position to its present one, and the area generally landscaped and improved to serve as an extension of the pleasure grounds (Plate 57).

56. The 'first' canal basin, c. 1930, still surrounded by dilapidated wharfs and warehouses, built when this area was a thriving commercial centre. They were cleared away when the theatre was rebuilt in 1932.

57. The Bancroft Gardens as laid out in 1932.

The only buildings remaining from the industrial era are those on the site of Cox's timber yard, now a public house and restaurant. The fine timber-clad drying shed dates from the 1840s, and the brick buildings which once housed the machinery were added in the 1870s: the date 1873 is still visible on the high chimney. A walk round the site also affords a good view of the toll house, at the north-east end of Clopton Bridge. This was built in 1814 as part of improvements carried out to the bridge around that time, which involved widening it on its north-east side, with the cast-iron footway then hung from it in 1827. But the bridge, viewed from Cox's Yard, with its fourteen arches of stone, looks much as it has always done since its construction in the 1490s, except for the parapet, which was raised to its present height in 1696.

Guild Street and Birmingham Road



It might well be thought that Guild Street had some historic connection with Stratford's flourishing medieval Guild of the Holy Cross but this, apparently, is not the case. The early names for the area, occurring as early as 1316, are *le Gilleput* and *le Gylleputts*, obscure in meaning but perhaps referring to some form of ditch or area of low ground used as a rubbish tip. The gradient of Union Street shows how much higher Bridge Street is than Guild Street and this may well be the reason why in the early years it was regarded simply as wasteland lying right on the northern edge of the 1196 town (the borough boundary ran down Guild Street until 1879). By the late sixteenth century, the name had become Guild Pitts and this persisted until about 1860 when the name Guild Street was substituted as part of an improvement scheme.

The need for this improvement can be properly understood only after looking at the general character of the area before that. Though Guild Street is now fairly wide, the Guild Pitts were even wider. The gardens to the houses in Bridge Street and Henley Street ended along a line now marked by Gloucester Court in Union Street, leaving a much larger open area than now exists. Only later did a road come to run along it, following closely the line of the borough boundary and leaving a considerable area of wasteland between it and the bottom of the gardens. From about 1800, however, enterprising landowners in Bridge Street and Henley Street began to encroach on this land, using it to extend their properties down to the road. This was particularly to the advantage of the coaching inns (the Red Horse and Golden Lion in Bridge Street and the White Lion in Henley Street) but other owners soon followed suit and by the 1860s the old Guild Pitts had been reduced to its present width (Plate 58).

58. Guild Street around 1850 before the improvement scheme narrowed it to its present width.

The other great change taking place at much the same time was on the north side of the street. Open fields ran down to the Guild Pitts until about 1800 but from that date attempts were made to develop some of the land for housing. The original idea was to build a fashionable suburb along the lines of neighbouring Leamington, and John Street and Payton Street were begun with this in mind, followed by more buildings in Tyler Street and Guild Street (below, p. 80). It is against this background that the improvement scheme of the 1850s was introduced. Arrangements were made for the last of the wasteland on the south to be sold off and tidied up and the thoroughfare was planted with limes and re-christened Guild Street.

This nineteenth-century transformation is very much reflected in the buildings we see here today. There is one interesting exception – a pair of cottages, now offices (Nos. 35-6), standing back from the road on the south side. They are timber-framed and infilled with brick, dating probably from the end of the sixteenth century. They began life not as cottages but as an outbuilding at the

bottom of the garden of No. 27 Bridge Street: in other words, they stand on the southern boundary of the old Guild Pitts and the distance they are now set back represents the encroachment which has since taken place; and the steep approach is another reminder of the different levels between Guild Street and Bridge Street.

Guild Street proper, however, is nineteenth century or later. On the north side, the early period is represented by some very fine town houses, No. 16 of 1818, and Nos. 9-11 and 12-14 of 1837, which we will be looking at in more detail when considering the town's Victorian suburbs (below, p. 81). As the population rose sharply in this part of the town, the 'need' for a public house was met by the One Elm, another attractive house, built in 1835. No. 4, of 1847, is another distinctive addition. These buildings all have a Regency flavour. But buildings with Victorian detailing were also beginning to appear – Nos. 2-3, for instance, built in 1866, with their gables decorated with bargeboards.

The other side of the street, especially the east end, has suffered from being the back of Bridge Street and Henley Street. There are one or two redeeming features, however; the simple but charming house on the corner of Union Street (the Slug & Lettuce) built in 1847, its neat neighbour, No. 37a, built in 1868, and the attractive archway into the back of No. 28 Bridge Street dating from 1869 and now sympathetically renovated.

The Newland almshouses (Nos. 23-6), dating from 1857, were paid for by Mary Newland. Their front doors, all but hidden in the side elevations of their steeply-pitched porches, gave access to four cottages, originally intended for women inmates, who were also to receive six shillings a week (Plate 59). Another

59. The Newland Almshouses in Guild Street, c.1910, now dwarfed by modern office developments.

building provided a social service of a different kind, namely the Brewery Club House (or the Embassy Club, as it was later known), built by Messrs Flower & Sons in 1878 at a cost of £2,000. The management was delegated to its members, originally brewery employees, upon whom Charles Flower placed only one restriction: that no gambling should be allowed to take place. It was designed by Thomas Taylor Allen, a local architect who combined public office with a private practice, and was built in a 'mock-Tudor' style befitting a building so near Shakespeare's Birthplace. The local newspaper described it as 'undoubtedly an addition to the sights of Shakespeare's town'. It now accommodates the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office.

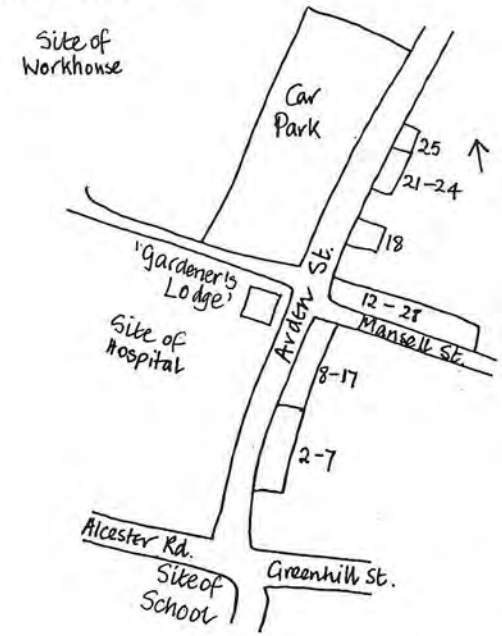
Of the Victorian and Edwardian business premises which were once to be found on the south side of the street, only No. 43 survives, built in 1866 as part of a carriage builders premises which, like its successor, a motor garage, extended right through to Henley Street (above, p. 22).

Beyond the roundabout, Guild Street becomes Birmingham Road but is really very much part of the same thoroughfare as far as the present traffic lights. Most of the houses here were built between 1820 and 1830, but there is one notable exception, the terrace numbered 9-19 (odd). Built in 1815 and originally known as Birmingham Row, it stood alone for some ten years, later to be sandwiched between Nos. 1-7 (odd), built in 1828, and Nos. 21-25 (odd) of 1829. These later developments are remarkable for the delicate and elegant brick arches over their doors and windows. No. 23 in particular retains a distinctive ogee-headed doorway. But the finest buildings on this side of the street are the three-storied Nos. 37-43 (odd) built in 1827 and named Wellington Terrace (the old name can still be seen) after the Duke of Wellington who became Prime Minister in January of the following year. But there are other unpretentious but attractive terraces of the same date: the nearby Nos. 27, 29, 31, and, almost opposite and set back from the road, Nos. 22, 24, 26, built in 1823-4, and Nos. 6, 8, 10 dating from ten years later. The public house for this little suburb (No. 33) opened in 1824 as the Sir John Falstaff (once symmetrical but extended to the west in more recent times), and provision of a different kind was made opposite in 1834, when the Wesleyan Methodists laid the foundation stone of their new chapel (now a restaurant). This was given its present frontage in 1883, but the original chapel survives behind. The building adjoining it on the west was built in 1902 as the church hall, replacing a house set back from the road which had been used as the minister's residence.

On the corner of Birmingham Road and Clopton Road stand some vestiges of the last remaining buildings associated with the town's once-famous brewery (hence the name Brewery Street running off from Birmingham Road near this

point). This firm, founded by Edward Fordham Flower in 1831, was established on the nearby canal but all the buildings of that date were demolished in the early 1970s. The shell of the once-impressive malthouses, built in the 1850s, have just about survived the conversion of some of the building into flats.

Arden Street



Arden Street, with its continuation, Grove Road, formed the western boundary of the borough from the late twelfth century until 1879, when the nineteenth-century expansion of the town made some adjustment necessary. Its early name was Pound Lane, after the pound, or enclosure, possibly in Grove Road, where stray animals were held until payment of a fine by their owners.

Until the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the west side of Arden Street was still open countryside, with the east side also largely undeveloped. As the nineteenth century progressed, the great social reforms introduced on a national scale to cope with the problems of urban expansion led to pressure to provide buildings for the poor, the sick and the young; and the open fields bordering Arden Street, some of which were already in public ownership, provided an ideal site. The first of these public buildings was the Union Workhouse, completed in 1836, set back from the road on land beyond the public car park. Workhouses were grim places where conditions were made deliberately harsh to deter all but the destitute from seeking help. Not surprisingly, these buildings had few friends and, although, in Stratford, most of them survived into the 1980s, only a few remnants now remain to remind us of this important, if much feared, feature of Victorian social welfare. The determined investigator can still find what remains – in fact, a very well preserved 'male vagrants' ward built in 1900 in the far north-west corner of the present Hospital site.

Education of the young was also a matter which much preoccupied the Victorians and in 1846 a Church of England School was built nearby in the angle between Alcester Road and Grove Road, to the designs of the young architect, Henry Caulfield Saunders. This too has been the victim of recent development, the site now occupied by a block of retirement apartments.

On the opposite corner stood the old hospital, built in 1884, designed by the well-known Edwardian architect, Edward Mountford. This building, one of the earliest in the town to incorporate some Victorian 'half-timber' construction, was to provide better facilities for the sick poor who had previously been accommodated in a building in Chapel Lane (above, p. 53). However, following its closure, this too has been levelled, to be replaced by the present hotel. As a token gesture towards conservation, the old clock tower was salvaged and placed on the top of the new building. But all that remains of the Victorian structure is what was known as the 'Gardener's lodge', built in Arden Street in 1900. It still bears a plaque to the effect that it was built 'in grateful acknowledgement of Mr Edward Corbett's generous legacy to this hospital'.

But the Victorian character of this part of the town has not been completely destroyed. In fact, Nos. 2-7 Arden Street, built in 1866 as a private venture, are a very important survival. At that time, the railway was a comparative newcomer to the area, and the station, in its present form, had scarcely been built. But William Greener, 'a merchant of Birmingham' (and remembered by posterity as an innovatory gun-manufacturer) had the idea of dragging Stratford into the 1860s by developing a suburb in Arden Street for would-be Birmingham commuters, built in the very latest style. Nos. 2-7 were the result, the first of the few nineteenth-century buildings in the town which represent what we might call the 'High Victorian' manner. 'Gothic' houses of this type, with pointed windows and doorways and elaborate decorative brick and tile work, are fairly common in such places as north Oxford; but in Stratford this row is virtually unique and a very important part of the town's architectural heritage, even though some original features have been lost. The architects were John H. Hawkes and G.F. Hawkes of St Anne Street, Birmingham.

However, housing of this type did not catch on and the next significant building operation was of a very different kind. Slum clearance was another popular concern of Victorian city fathers and in Stratford was the driving force behind the formation of the Stratford-upon-Avon Labourers' Dwellings Company Limited in 1875. The aim of this company, which combined concern both for the moral and material welfare of the poor with sound business sense, was to build cheap but respectable houses which could then be let for low but still commercially viable rents: in this way the town could rid itself of slums or, as the directors of the

company put it, 'do away with nursing beds of crime, pauperism and vice'. By March 1877 seventeen cottages had been built in Mansell Street (Nos. 12-28), at right-angles to Arden Street, and by March the following year another ten in Arden Street itself (Nos. 8-17). Despite the loss of some original doors and windows, these twenty-seven terraced cottages still survive, complete with memorial stones in their central pediments testifying to their origins: an interesting and early example of housing provision for the poor.

Beyond Mansell Street there is a pleasant terrace of earlier Victorian houses, the earliest (No. 25), built in the mid 1840s and beautifully maintained, and the others (Nos. 18, 21-24) from the 1860s and '70s. The name, 'Foundry Court', applied to the modern infill between Nos. 18 and 21, refers to the large ironworks run by Ball Brothers, which flourished further down the street and has since been replaced with over-sized office blocks.

UNION STREET AND THE VICTORIAN SUBURBS

All the town centre streets we have looked at so far have dated back to the basic arrangements made in 1196 when Stratford was laid out as a planned town. Union Street, however, is modern in comparison, part of a general plan to improve Stratford in the early part of the nineteenth century. The demolition of Middle Row, a line of ramshackle houses down the centre of Bridge Street, had begun in the 1820s (above, p. 6): this, together with the widening of Clopton Bridge, was 'in order to promote and encourage the travelling and posting business'. Moreover, to the north of Guild Street, a new fashionable suburb was under development, the first on what we would now call a greenfield site. Union Street was thus a natural consequence, linking (hence the name) Guild Street with the top of Bridge Street. Hitherto, the only proper link between the two was the little alley between 1 Henley Street and 22 Bridge Street, quite unsuitable as access to the sort of housing that was now being put up. This alley still survives as a reminder of the original arrangement.

Union Street

The east side of Union Street was built up almost immediately in three main blocks, Gloucester Court and the building now divided into Nos. 6a, 6b, 6c in 1833-4, Nos. 1-2 in 1835, and Nos. 3-5 in 1839-40. No. 6 is a later, but still a Victorian insertion. These have all survived largely unspoilt and now make an attractive row. As we have seen, Union Street originally ended on a line with Gloucester Court, leaving a much wider space, known as the Guild Pits, than exists there at present. It was carried down to its present length in 1847, when No. 38 Guild Street was built (above, p. 73). Gloucester Court and the Gloucester Arms (a public house which opened when the building was put up in 1834 and which survived until the early 1850s) were named after William Frederick, the last of the nineteenth-century Dukes of Gloucester, who died in 1834.

The other side of Union Street is occupied almost entirely by buildings put up by the firm of Ashwin & Co. They were erected on what was really the garden of No. 21 Bridge Street which Manley Cornell Ashwin, the son of the founder of the firm, bought in 1861. The firm can be traced back to a coal and corn merchant's business run by Thomas Ashwin from the early 1840s from a wharf at the canal. By the 1850s he was also dealing in 'guano, gypsum, lime, bones, oil-cakes, linseed, rock and agricultural salt, stone, cement, blue and fire-bricks, draining pipes, etc., coal, corn and hay'; and his son, soon after inheriting the business, obviously thought that larger warehouse premises were needed. In any case, the advent of the railway in Stratford in 1859/60 had made a location by the canal unnecessary. He therefore bought up the Union Street site in 1861 and immediately began building operations.

The striking warehouses which he put up, a unique contribution to the town's Victorian architecture, were in fact erected in three stages. The first, built in 1861, reached from the top of the street and comprised, firstly, some rather severe, but still well-preserved offices (now Nos. 11-12), then a fine symmetrical three-storey warehouse topped with a pediment and flanked by a tower. The second stage of 1868 extended the development almost to the junction with Guild Street. Finally, in 1898, the corner there was rounded off in similar style. Although the frontage is now divided up into smaller units, the range is still wonderfully preserved, the first stage of the building harking back to the symmetry of the Regency period but with later embellishments and detailing which are very obviously Victorian. Ashwin's architect was a local man, Joseph Lattimer, who for several years served as Stratford's Borough Surveyor.

The Suburbs

Although we have taken a detailed look at nearly every street in Stratford's town centre, we cannot regard this survey as complete until we have given some account of the town's Victorian suburbs built on greenfield sites outside the old borough boundary. These rows of attractive terraced properties, mainly to the north and south of the town, were originally built largely for Stratford's humbler families but, as anyone who has given them more than a casual glance will know, they reflect craftsmanship which is rarely equalled today and are built of materials which are outlasting more modern ones. Even some of the simplest still have their panelled doors. Others, with attractive doorcases and brick arches or simply-patterned keystones over the windows, and built in chequered red and orange brick, all contribute to the character of these modest Victorian streets, as much a part of Stratford's architectural heritage as any other.

The construction of these Victorian terraces is easily explained by the rapidly rising population. In 1801, the year of the first official census, there were about 3,000 inhabitants of the town; by 1900, over 8,500, nearly three times as many. Although some of these had been accommodated by filling in the vacant land within the medieval boundary it was not long before housing began to spill out on to what had originally been farmland. The first incursion took place shortly before 1810 and has never stopped.

The geography and chronology of this building was controlled by the availability of land and in the early days was concentrated in two areas; one north of Guild Street and originally named New Town (still reflected in the modern Ward name) and the other to the south of Old Town. Expansion to the east was not really possible because of the river and to the west, as we shall see, building was

held up during the lifetime of Thomas Mason, a gentleman-lawyer living at Mason Croft, who owned much of the land in that area and whose stranglehold was not broken until his death in 1867.

i) The north

The first suburb to get under way was the 'New Town' one, beginning as a decidedly up-market venture in an attempt to emulate neighbouring Leamington, where fortunes were being made (and lost) in land speculation and building. So when in 1817 John Payton, the owner of the White Lion Inn, found himself short of money, he sold off a field on the far side of Guild Street in substantial building plots. Quite who decided to remind posterity of this in the new street names is not known.

The development did not proceed quite as quickly or as impressively as had been hoped. Only two villas (now the Fold, in Payton Street) were built in the real 'Leamington' style, with the stucco finish so characteristic of the neighbouring spa: all the same, most of the houses in John Street and Payton Street still have a distinctly affluent look, a collection of dwellings which at one point became a veritable hornets' nest of Victorian clergy and solicitors. Payton Street also accommodates by far the most attractive of the town's non-conformist chapels, that of the Baptists, opened in 1836. This handsome classical building bears witness to the rapid growth of the Baptist movement in the town: the earliest meetings had dated only from 1826, and no proper organisational framework had been worked out until 1832. Nevertheless, building work on this substantial chapel was begun in August 1835. The Sunday School adjoining was built in 1861.

It soon became clear that, in Stratford at least, developments of this kind had their limitations and, when the next big land sales took place in this part of the town (in the 1830s and 1840s), the building plots were reduced in size and the houses built on them of more modest proportions. This has given us the smaller but very attractive terraces of Great William Street, Mulberry Street and Shakespeare Street, mostly to become the homes of clerks or skilled artisans. The evolution of the small Victorian house is here clearly apparent. In Shakespeare Street, developed in the 1830s, some of the houses are very small indeed, with no door cases and with simple rounded arches over the door and window openings; sash windows are not yet standard. In Great William Street, largely second-phase development, door cases and sash windows have become the norm, and stone key blocks over windows were replacing the simple brick arches. The brick chapel, built for the Primitive Methodists in 1866, and designed by Thomas T. Allen, was a later addition.

The last major building venture in this part of the town took place around 1840, when the trustees of Tyler's charity, who owned the last vacant area of land there (an L-shaped piece between Guild Street and Warwick Road) decided to increase their revenue from it by letting it on building leases. The large plots were laid out

to front mainly on to what were then pleasant main roads, and the substantial sums which the trustees laid down that their tenants had to spend on building, are reflected in the houses which we can still see today. In addition to those in Tyler Street itself (the best being Nos. 4-5), the fine terraces fronting Guild Street (Nos. 9-11, 12-14) were also part of the same development. Fronting Warwick Road a collection of impressive, detached, villas also appeared (Nos. 12-17), each with its own character (Plate 60). Particularly interesting is the contrast between Nos. 12-13 and Nos. 14-15 (now all part of the Grosvenor Hotel): though all were built around 1840, Nos. 12-13 firmly maintain the dignity of the Regency period, while Nos. 14-15 bravely announce a new trend in Victorian architecture, the 'Elizabethan' look. Their gables, decorated with bargeboards, and casement windows (instead of sashes) surmounted with rectangular hood-moulds were features inspired by the study of sixteenth-century building techniques and increasingly used by those Victorian architects wishing to move on from Regency-influenced design.

60. Warwick Road, c. 1910, lined with smart villas. St Gregory's church can be seen in the distance.

While in Warwick Road we can note, at the junction with St Gregory's Road, the Catholic Church. Fund-raising for the purchase of this site and the erection of the church had begun in 1849, but it was not until 1866, after sundry hold-ups, that the church was dedicated. The architect was Edward Welby Pugin, still only thirty-two years old but with the advantage of a famous father, Augustus Pugin, already a well-known figure.

ii) The south

It was not only to the north that the town was expanding: comparable developments were taking place on the southern fringes as well. Land was available here because of the recent demolition of the College, a large house on the site of the present Methodist church and parish hall, built in medieval times as a residence for the priests serving Holy Trinity Church, but which, since the Reformation, had been the biggest private residence in the town (Plate 61). Its grounds spread over a considerable area and in 1823, its owner (like John Payton, in financial difficulties) auctioned them in building plots. As had happened to the north of the town, the first houses to go up in College Street, and (to a lesser extent) College Lane, were of a markedly superior type, the homes of respectable middle-class folk; but as the development of the College land proceeded, during the 1830s and the early 1840s (Ryland Street, New Street and the east side of Bull Street), unpretentious terraces became the norm, no less attractive, but originally intended as artisan homes. Many are of the simplest type, comparable to those we have seen in Shakespeare Street. Only in Trinity Street, where there was then a pleasant view over open ground, did builders bother with houses for the better off.

61. The College from the north-west, demolished at the end of the eighteenth century. Its grounds were subsequently developed as College Street and College Lane.

A short lull followed and then, in 1849, John Branston Freer (who lived in Trinity College on the corner of Church Street and Chestnut Walk) decided to sell his orchard off as building land. This lay to the north of Narrow Lane, between Broad Street and Bull Street, and Freer, who had burnt his fingers in an attempt to develop a Spa at Bishopton, had evidently decided that the time had come to realise some of his assets. The portion fronting Bull Street was sold off in 1849-50 (Nos. 41-58) and the rest was disposed of at a quickening pace up to 1867. This led to the development of the east side of Broad Street (Nos. 1-24), the whole of West

Street north of Narrow Lane, and Nos. 1-6 Chestnut Walk. Building regulations introduced during this period, laying down rules for height of rooms and sizes of window, have given these terraces a different look from those built on the College ground. They are both taller and more spacious looking: we can also see the development of more elaborate, but standardised porches.

In 1867 Thomas Mason died, bringing onto the market land to the west of the town. The first area to be developed, however, comprised two irregularly shaped fields known because of their form as Salmon Tail and Salmon Jowl, extending from the site of the public house in Evesham Road (the tail) through to Bull Street (the jowl). This led to the rapid completion of Bull Street (Nos. 61-74) and before 1880 West Street had been pushed through to meet Sanctus Street. By then, Broad Walk and part of Evesham Road (Nos. 5-34) were also lined with houses. The last phase of development involved building on what was known as Poors Close. This was originally a field lying between Broad Street, Chestnut Walk, Evesham Place and Broad Walk, handed over by John Lord in 1555 to the Corporation in trust to provide an income for 'four and twenty poor almspeople of Stratford'. By the nineteenth century this field had been divided into allotment gardens and in the early 1880s, when the School Board was looking around for a suitable site for a new school, Poors Close naturally presented itself. The school, designed by William Milne and still in use, opened in 1883 (Plate 62). The remainder of the field was sold off in 1897 and developed for housing: to this period we can attribute the smart 'villa' residences of Evesham Place, with recessed doorways and bay windows on both floors.

62. Broad Street School, built on part of Poors Close in 1883.

iii) the west

The ultimate effect of Mason's death was to permit residential expansion to the west, notably, in 1875-6, when the whole of Wellesbourne Grove and the adjoining section of Albany Road (originally a cul-de-sac known as Albany Place, made up only of Nos. 52-74, 79-84) was built. This development was a particularly interesting venture, being the work of an experimental building society, the Shakespeare Mutual Benefit Society. This organisation, through the investments of its shareholders, was able to purchase the land and build homes for its members which they could then buy, if necessary with the help of mortgages. The most characteristic feature of these mid-Victorian houses is the appearance of bay windows both at ground and first floor levels. In the early examples to the south of the town (West Street, for example) stone key blocks had been retained over the first-floor windows, but by the time Wellesbourne Grove was built these had disappeared and the bay windows were run up into the eaves.

Most of the houses and streets we have looked at here are popularly regarded as outside the town's historic centre and are not usually brought into discussions on the town's historic character. However, if we define a 'historic town' as one which retains features which illustrate all periods of its history, then Stratford's Victorian suburbs are striking evidence of a major step in its evolution into the town we know today – its rapid expansion in the nineteenth century as the result of a rising population. Now, thanks to the convenience and attraction of living near the town centre, many of these small houses have been given a new life. Ironically, it is now over-modernisation which threatens their character. Some original doors and windows have been replaced by modern ones or blocked up, other features obscured by porches, and variegated brickwork hidden under white paint. But, unpretentious as they are, these small houses still have a very distinctive character which deserves sympathetic respect.

THE STRATFORD-UPON-AVON SOCIETY

The Stratford-upon-Avon Society was founded forty years ago to:

a) stimulate interest in the beauty, history and character of the town and its surroundings

b) encourage the preservation and improvement of features of architectural and historical importance

c) encourage high quality design in all new developments

d) promote these aims by lobbying the local authorities and by way of civic improvement schemes, meetings, exhibitions, workshops, study tours, publications and other means.

It has so far published five books concerning the history of particular buildings in the town and is pleased to make this more general appreciation of the town's historic fabric the sixth in the series.

For more information about the Society, visit www.stratfordsociety.co.uk

Anyone interested in helping the Society in its work should contact membership@stratfordsociety.co.uk






Stratford-upon-Avon is a popular visitor destination because of its Shakespeare associations but it is also a historic market town in its own right. Much of its history can be pieced together through a proper appreciation of its street layout and its surviving buildings.

This book takes a detailed and authoritative look at these features in order to bring the fascinating history of the town alive.

With the help of street maps and over sixty striking illustrations, we move from the historic core of the town to the less commercialized, but still important, streets in the town centre; from there to quieter areas of the town, some of which were not developed until well into the eighteenth century; and then to the urban fringe of the old medieval town and even out into the Victorian suburbs.

At the same time we are made aware of how some recent developments have jeopardised the integrity of the town's historic fabric and how lack of respect for features which make a town truly historic could eventually prove its undoing.

Robert Bearman is Head of Archives and Local Studies at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and has written extensively on Stratford and Shakespeare.

ISBN 978-0-9514178-2-9