



The Shrieve's House

Stratford-upon-Avon

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THE STRATFORD-UPON-AVON SOCIETY

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The Historical Background

To unravel the history of an ancient building is to try to solve a puzzle to which many of the clues are irretrievably lost and many are contradictory. Furthermore, this three-dimensional jigsaw does not stand in isolation from its historical environment. In the case of 40 Sheep Street, Stratford-upon-Avon, now called the Shrieve's House, its very existence is as deeply embedded in the history of the town as were the lives of the people who dwelt in it.

Stratford is an early example of a planned town. Before 1549 it was a manor of the Bishops of Worcester, and in 1196 the then Bishop laid out 109 acres of his demense, at the edge of an existing village and along the bank of the River Avon, in six streets, whose lines remain to this day. Three streets ran roughly parallel to the river and three ran across these to form a grid pattern, within which the land was marked out into buildings or 'burgage' plots. Thus, the ground upon which 40 Sheep Street stands has existed as a possible house site since the end of the twelfth century.

As a manor of the Bishop, Stratford was not self-governing. However, a quasi-executive was formed by the officers of the local lay religious fraternity, the Gild of the Holy Cross. These men, leading tradesmen of the town, provided jurors for the manorial courts under the magistracy of the Bishop's steward. Other responsibilities undertaken by the Gild for the welfare of the town comprised the maintenance and support of 'a certain Free Grammar School and a certain Almshouse and a certain great stone bridge called Stratford Bridge . . . was from time to time maintained and repaired'.¹

These functions were paid for by the dues of the 'Sistern and Brethren' of the Gild and by the 'rents, revenues and profits' from the 'divers lands, tenements and possessions' which were held by the Gild.

One such Gild tenement, in the middle one of the three streets running back from the river, stood upon the site of 40 Sheep Street.

In 1547, at the Reformation, the Gild was dissolved. Six years later, in 1553, Edward VI granted Stratford its first Charter of Incorporation, and the town gained a measure of autonomy. Both the duties and the possessions of the old Gild of the Holy Cross devolved upon the new Borough government.

The House and its Site

The size of Stratford's burgage plots was set, in 1196, at 12 perches in length and 3½ perches in breadth (198 feet by 57 feet 9 inches). Over time, many of the plots were subdivided and this had clearly happened to the site of 40 Sheep Street well before 1542, the date of the first surviving lease. The measurements of the plot vary in leases from 203 to 212 feet in length and from 37 to 38 feet at the widest breadth, the street frontage. The site is not a true rectangle, and one corner of the front range of building actually protrudes into the land of No. 41, suggesting that the two sites may once have formed one burgage plot, measuring some 60 feet along the street.

Most tenements of the Gild were given or bequeathed by members of the fraternity, but some were built by the Gild itself and some were erected on Gild ground by tenants, either on vacant plots or to replace older buildings. Into which of these categories No. 40 originally fell is not known, but it appears from the rent rolls² that a house has stood on the site at least since the late 15th century.

The present house is not that old, and it is impossible to reconstruct the earlier plan, as the only available evidence, an inventory of 1566, is in a fragmentary condition.³ The rooms there mentioned are: the Chamber over the Hall; three little Chambers; the Chamber 'over the entre'; the Chamber over the 'parler'; the 'parler' by the entry; the Brewhouse; the Boulting House; the Ewting house; the Fish house; also unspecified sheds. There must also have been a hall, a parlour, a kitchen, probably a buttery and possibly other rooms.

The entry, with its chamber above, is interesting, for if a gateway is meant, not just a main door and passageway, then it appears that a carriageway to the street existed in some form by 1566, although there was then no building on the adjoining plot.

In September 1595, a disastrous fire swept Stratford, raging within a block bounded by Bridge Street, High Street and Sheep Street. The severity of the damage to The Shrieve's House is impossible to assess from the contradictory statements of the documents. The new 41-year lease granted to William Rogers⁴ on 30 October 1595 (only a month after the fire) says 'by the casualtye of fyre the most part of one Ten'te ... in the tenure ... of the seide Willam Rogers was consumed and clene burnd downe to the grounde to the losse and hyndrance of the sayde Willm'. The new lease is in consideration of 'the buylding charge ... already bestowed and hereafter to be bestowed by him in and upon the grounds where the seyde late Ten'te did stande toward the new

buyldinge and re-edifieing of the syde Ten'te'. However, William's *post-mortem* inventory of 1597 mentions 'the new buyldings' only after the rest of the house, upstairs and down, has been accounted for, and they hold only a lead furnace, two looms, some vats, sheepforks and old wood, a hatchet and 2s 6d. in money.

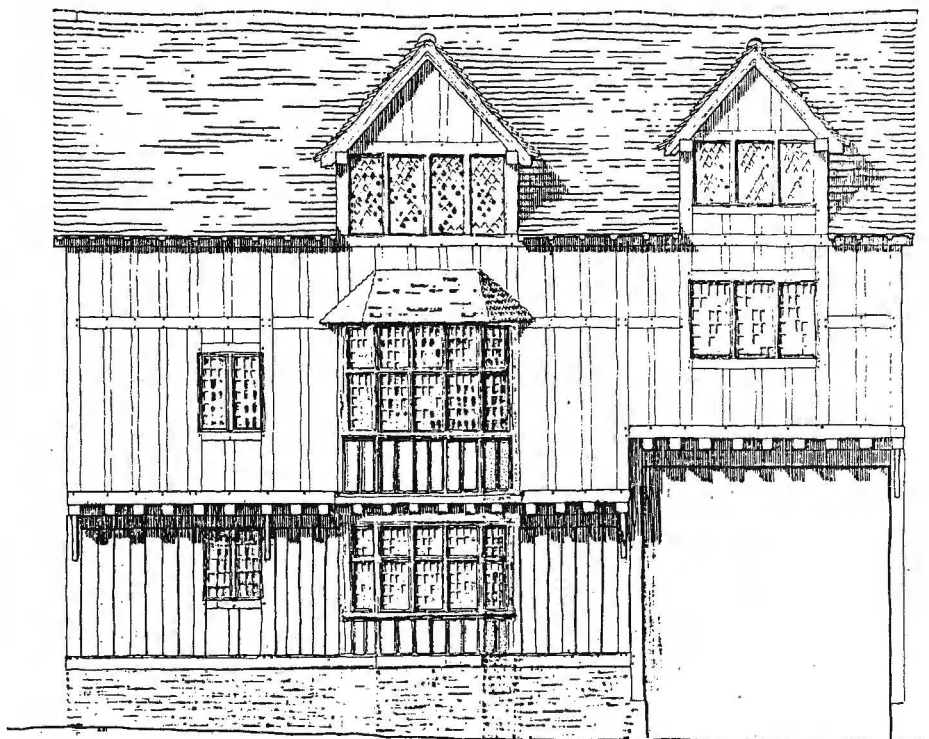
The third piece of evidence is a Corporation survey of its properties taken in 1599. This lists for 'Widdow Rogers', 'a tenement in the strete iij baies tiled, a range of housing on the backside of vj baies new built; the garden in length xxij yardes or thereabouts, in bredth ix yardes'.

Fire had a part to play again in the house's history. On 9 July 1614, the front range at least was damaged, and five years later, on 10 September 1619, Elizabeth Rogers was granted a 60-year lease in her own name in consideration that she 'hath at her own expense and charge newlie builded the said tenement yt being lateley heretofore consumed by fire and hath covered the same with tyles'.⁷

Corporation accounts for 1615 show that 'Elizabeth Rogers in the Sheep Street' paid 10s 2d for 'four hundred and an halfe of tyles', proving that some repairs took place.⁸ But, puzzlingly, the lease goes on to require that Elizabeth will within five years next following the date of the lease, at her own charge, 'erect and build upon all the forefront next adjoining unto the aforesaid premises good and substantial and sufficient building and Cover the same with tyles or slates'. Stranger still, the next Corporation lease, granted 37 years later, makes the same demand.⁹

Such is the tale of the documentary evidence. The physical evidence does not entirely clarify the issue.

The house, as it now stands, has a south-facing range to the street, of three irregular bays, the easternmost being a tall gateway, closed by an old wooden door, leading to a carriageway with a room above. The ground floor is of close-set vertical timber studding set on a high stone foundation and the second storey is jettied on shaped brackets with its studding slightly recessed and thinner and more widely spaced. This suggests that this storey was plastered all over from its first building, thus concealing the economy in timber. The present front door is a later insertion and the windows have been extensively repaired and/or replaced. The ground and first floors each have a splayed bay window, the upper overhanging the lower, which now rests on shaped wooden brackets; photographs taken in the 1920s show a solid stone-built base at that time. The dormer windows were inserted in the restoration of



The Shrieve's House, as it may have looked after the early 17th century rebuilding. The dormers, if they existed, had disappeared by the nineteenth century and the present ones are modern replacements. *Drawing by Richard Harris*

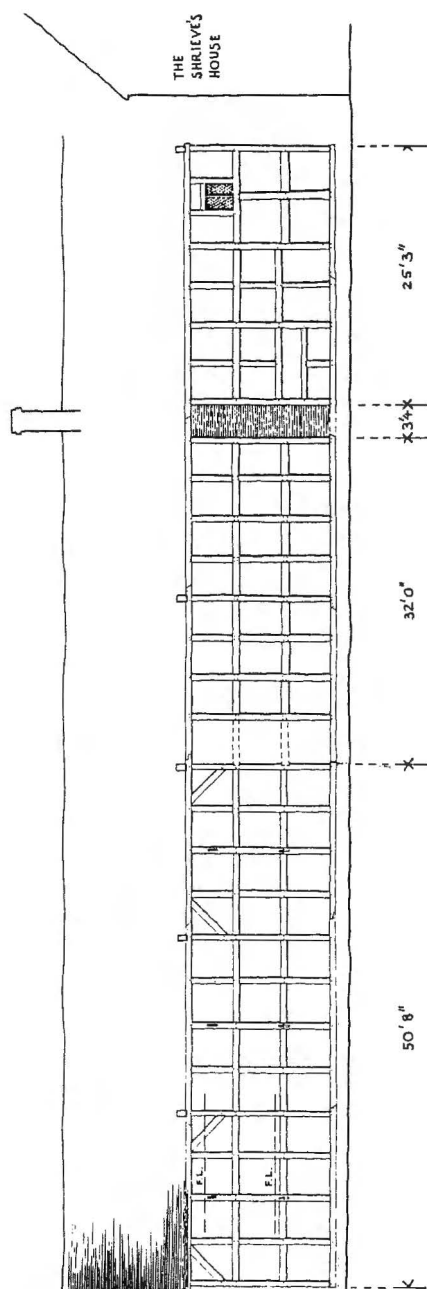
the 1950s. (Plate I)

This front range was built all at one time and has never been substantially altered. Three of the four cross frames of the range remain largely intact; the east party wall is all, or largely, of modern construction. Though the rear wall frame survives only above first floor level, between the chimney and the carriageway, the crucial main post at the north-east corner of the main room is intact, still resting on its original sill beam just above floor level. This post in itself is virtually sufficient to prove that the building now stands almost exactly as it was first designed. The main ground floor room contains timbers that are badly charred - could this date from one of the fires? The staircase occupies the space between the chimney and the carriageway behind the north wall of the house and is reached via a lobby and external door (probably the original main entrance) in the west wall of the carriageway. The staircase has fretted balusters and is certainly seventeenth century, but there is no way of proving that it is the original staircase to the front range. All that is certain is that the front range was designed to be served by a staircase of similar or identical design to the one that still exists.

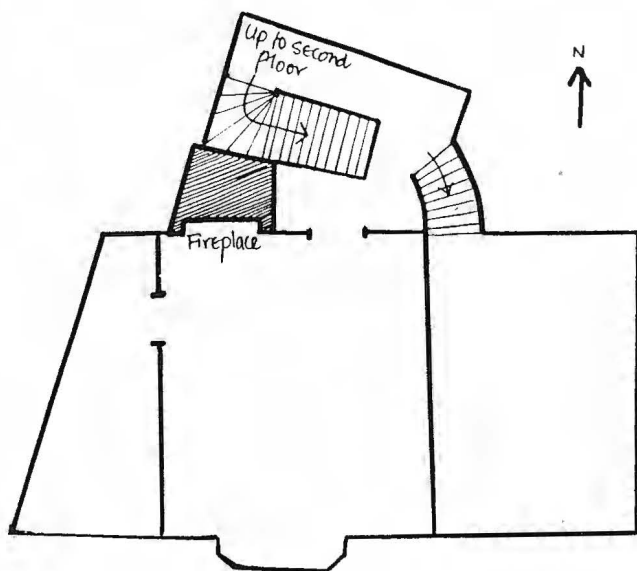
Running north behind the front range are six and a half bays of a narrower timber-framed building. This range was built in two phases, which may not, however, have been widely separated in time. The first phase was the northern end and is three bays long, with first and attic floors. The remainder, about 61 feet long, was joined onto the earlier part and consists of two bays of about 16 feet each, then an original chimney, and finally a south end about 25 feet long which adjoins the chimney behind the main house. (Plate II) The 1599 survey, which speaks of six newly-built bays at the rear of the house, suggests that the present structure may date from after the 1595 fire.

The ground floor consisted of a main room about 16 feet long, with a small room adjoining to the west, which was much narrower at the back than the front, thus taking up the irregular shape of the site. Access to the main room was from the rear, probably next to the north-east corner post, and it was heated by a fireplace on the rear wall. Access to the small room was through a doorway in the partition frame which is still in use. This room was not heated and did not, as now, give on to the street. (Plate III)

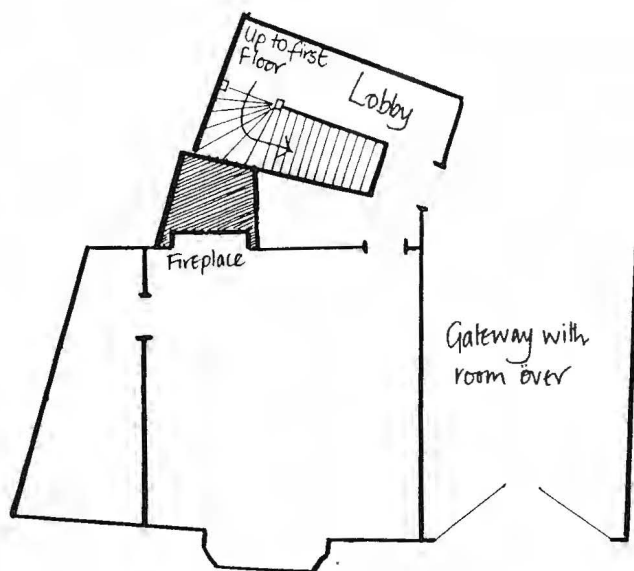
On the first floor, there was a main room and small room as on the floor below, but slightly larger because of the projection of the jetty over the street. The partition between has been removed, but the mortices are



Outbuildings behind the Shrieve's House, the west face.
Drawing by Richard Harris



First floor



Ground floor

Plan of the ground and first floors showing probable layout of the house as rebuilt in the early 17th century.

clearly visible. Over the carriageway is another room, its floor at a higher level. The original doorways to these rooms are still in use in the north wall.

Half a storey higher is the original access to a rear attic through a doorway framed through the wall plate of the rear wall. A pair of principal rafters are framed into the top of the wall plate on either side of the doorway. These are also original, and form the start of the roof of the range of buildings running northwards.

Access to the attic above the carriageway is now through a doorway cut through the main tie beam, but the original arrangement is not discoverable; it is possible that the attic floor in this bay has been inserted, and the chamber over the carriageway was open to the rafters of the roof.

This arrangement corresponds roughly with the 1597 inventory, which lists, for instance, a hall and 'parler next the Hall' on the ground floor, a 'chamber over the little parler' and two chambers over the hall on the first floor, and a cockloft. However, it lists these rooms only after 'the new buyldings', which, from the 1599 survey appear to be the rear range. Moreover, the evidence of 1619, an order to Elizabeth Rogers to construct 'upon all the forefront' of premises she had already rebuilt, 'a good and substantial and sufficient building' suggests very strongly that the front building at least post-dates the second fire of 1614, but rebuilt on the plan of the previous one. To sum up, the fire of 1595 may have only required the rebuilding of the rear wing, completed by 1599; the fire of 1614 destroyed the front, still derelict in 1619, and possibly also the rear range again, although this had been repaired by then. The front range was then rebuilt in its present form.

The People of the House

The research into the leaseholders of 40 Sheep Street has brought to light an extraordinary continuity of tenure, far longer than that of most freehold dwellings. From 1542 until 1760 the house remained in the hands of people who were connected to one another by marriage or direct descent, while a similar sequence of tenure ran from 1786 to 1840.

William Sheryve

In the first extant lease of 1542,¹⁰ the house is stated to have previously been in the tenure of William Sheryve (or Shrif or Shreve, in the infinitely creative spelling of the time). Of William nothing is known save that in a muster roll of 1536 he is listed in Sheep Street as an archer.¹¹ John Jefferies, his successor in the house, was already a

neighbour in Sheep Street, mustered as a 'bylman'.

Intriguingly, the name of Sheryve, a man not apparently prominent in the public affairs of the town, was still attached to his house 15 years after he had vacated it. On 14 October 1557, Jefferies was warned by a meeting of the town council that he should 'well and sufficiently repair his tenement in Shypstret... the same called Shreves hous' before the feast of the birth of St. John the Baptist, on pain of forfeiting his lease.¹² This name does not reoccur but was the basis for renaming the house in the twentieth century.

John Jefferies (? - 1566)

The first surviving lease to John Jefferies of Stratford-upon-Avon, yeoman, states that the house, previously in the tenure of William Sheryve, stands between the lands of Phillips and Welsh.¹³ The term was 41 years, the annual rent 10 shillings. There was also due a chief rent to the lord of the manor, given as 'vjd' in 1590, and probably the same at this date.¹⁴ It was Jefferies' obligation under the lease to build, maintain and repair the property as necessary - a duty, as we have seen, he did not always fulfill.

Quite a lot is recorded about John Jefferies. The parish registers of Stratford survive only from 1558, but the evidence of his public career suggests he was born about 1500 or a little earlier. He was a Bridge Warden of the Gild in 1526 and 1529 and a Proctor, or Treasurer, from 1532-4.

A lease of the same date as that for the house gave him tenure of a close or field near the highway towards Evesham,¹⁵ and he also became an alderman of the Gild that year, thus being a party of both the first and second part in his leases - no uncommon thing, for the Gild and later the Corporation, did not hesitate to favour their own when granting leases. One other of John's leases survives, of 12 October 1557, for the dunghill at the lower end of Sheep Street, one of three official sites in Stratford, for which he paid 2s 6d. a year and which no doubt was invaluable in his farming activities.¹⁶ The Charter of 1553 instituted the Common Council of Stratford as fourteen Aldermen, together with fourteen capital Burgesses, to be chosen by the Aldermen. It also named these first Aldermen, and John Jefferies' name is sixth on the list.¹⁷ He was a regular attender at Council meetings until six months before his death.

His public life does not seem to have been adversely affected by his

Catholic faith, although in 1559, on the accession of the Protestant Queen Elizabeth, he was obliged to sue for pardon for 'treasonable acts' committed in the reign of Mary. He was pardoned for all acts up to the beginning of the new Queen's reign and fined 26s 8d.¹⁸

Besides the properties rented from the Corporation, he leased 'ground' from Mr. Welsh, including at least two closes near the Bridge; also 'Bylls Close', Mr. Hall's ground, Mr. Phillips' ground and the 'Guylde ground'.¹⁹ Thus, despite living in the middle of the town, he was a working yeoman, with lands perhaps no more dispersed than those of many farmers in the days before the Enclosures.

At least until 1578, the land on either side of the house was not built upon, and, as the plots belonged respectively to Mr. Phillips and Mr. Welsh, may have formed part of John's leaseholdings. His house thus stood in open ground, divided from its neighbours only by low earth walls or 'mounds' upon which trees may have grown. The timber-framing of the house was probably infilled with wattle and daub and the roof may have been thatched. In sheds at the rear, his inventory notes hay, corn, timber, a sow, a hog and some ducks.

John was buried on 3 August 1566.²⁰ His will, dated 27 July and the inventory of his possessions taken after his death both survive in a damaged condition. Of the inventory, only about £20 of a total value of £57 17s 8d is accounted for on the fragments. Even in this truncated list, no less than nine beds with all the 'thynges thereunto appertayninge' are mentioned.

John's wife Margaret was the executrix and residuary legatee of his will, receiving as well as leases for various fields, 'all my house ... during the tyme of her wydowhood', she to comply with all the terms of the lease.

Margaret Jefferies (? - 1594)

One term of a Corporation lease was that it could only be assigned by the lessee (except by written licence of the Bailiff and Burgesses) to his wife or children, or, if a woman, to her children. In this case the lease could be assigned to Margaret or to John or William Jefferies, John the elder's sons. But Margaret was their stepmother, previously the widow of one William Rogers.²² So, when, in September 1578, she asked for a new lease in her own name, although John's still had five years to run, it was probably so that she could assign it to her own son, another William Rogers, who was to marry Elizabeth Walker in June of the following year.²³ Certainly, in a list of Corporation property of

1582, it is stated that 'Wyllm Rogers holdeth one Tenement con Appurtenances granted unto Margaret Jefferies.'²⁴

'Margareta Jeffres, vidua' was buried on 24 February 1594, twenty-eight years after her husband, John.²⁶

William Rogers (? - 1597)

In September 1589, William Rogers was elected one of the Sergeants at the Mace, an office he held until his death.²⁷ Though commanding only a token salary of 15 shillings a year, together possibly with the provision of a buff leather livery and boots, this was a position of some civic importance. Among his duties were: to warn the Councillors of the times of meetings; to deliver summonses to court to wrongdoers, and in cases of persistent non-appearance, to arrest, and to attend at all ceremonial occasions.

Besides his official position, William was a mercer and also kept a tavern in his house. From the many dishes mentioned in the inventory taken after William's death, it is clear that food as well as drink was served.

After the fire of 1595 and subsequent rebuilding, William was granted a lease in his own name, but he did not live long to enjoy his new house; he was buried on 21 January 1597.²⁸

William's will, if he made one, has not survived, but the *post mortem* inventory of his possessions has, showing a total value of £31 8s 6d. Most rooms now had a glazed window, as well as glass 'in the entry' and 'goinge upp the Stairs'. The house was well-furnished. Five beds are mentioned, also two trundle beds, which could be pushed under another bed during the day. There were plenty of tables, both 'joined' and trestle, with benches and stools, and two chairs in the Hall. William and Elizabeth probably slept in the parlour, for that is where his wearing apparel was inventoried, with at least one of the children in a trundle bed.

Elizabeth Rogers, née Walker (? - 1624)

Of the eight children born to her, Elizabeth Rogers, unusually for the time, raised seven to adulthood. The sons were Richard (1580-? 1645), John (1585- ? 1620) and Morris (1590-1621). Apart from Margaret, who was born and died in 1593, all the daughters, Elizabeth, born 1582, Alice, 1588, Ursula, 1591, and a second Margaret, 1594, lived well into their seventies. Their survival may have owed something to the fact that none married until she was past thirty, thus evading many of the too-often fatal childbearing years.

There is no evidence that Elizabeth continued to keep the tavern, but, widowed and with so many young children to support, she would probably have needed to.

In Stratford-upon-Avon it is clearly desirable for any house of the right age to be able to claim that Shakespeare crossed its threshold; for the Shrieve's House, this claim can be made with some validity. Elizabeth's brother was Henry Walker, whose son William was the poet's godson, bequeathed 20 shillings in his will. Whether or not the two families were directly related, both were certainly cousins in some degree to the lawyer brothers, Thomas and John Greene. Her brother Henry and 'my loveing cousin John Greene of Bridgetown' were named by Elizabeth as overseers of her will. This same John was appointed by Shakespeare to be a trustee of his house in Blackfriars, London. The co-trustee was Mathew Morris, husband to Elizabeth's eldest daughter.

Elizabeth was buried on 4 August 1624, having made her will only the day before. She asked that she be buried 'near the grave of my wellbeloved husband William Rogers' in Stratford graveyard. After leaving 2 shillings to the church, 20 shillings to Richard, two brass pots to Alice and her son, and much pewter and linen to the as-yet-unmarried Ursula and Margaret, she bequeathed the rest of her property to be divided equally among 'my son in law Mathew Morris his wife and children.'³⁰

Elizabeth Morris, née Rogers (1582-1660) and Mathew Morris (?)

The Shakespeare connection continues in this generation; indeed, it seems not unlikely that Elizabeth and Mathew met through the poet's elder daughter Susannah and her husband, Dr. John Hall. The relationship between John and Mathew was a long-standing one, for John's father, Dr. William Hall of Acton, in 1607 bequeathed to his 'servant' Mathew Morris all his books on alchemy, astronomy and astrology, with the wish that Mathew should tutor John in these subjects should he later show interest.³¹

The first two daughters, born to the Morrisses were named Susannah, the first son, John - only to subsequent children were the names of Elizabeth and Mathew given. And it may be no coincidence that the Halls' only child was christened Elizabeth.

The Morrisises probably lived in Shrieve's House with the widow Rogers from their marriage on 13 October 1613, for in a tithe account of 1618, Mr. Morris is listed as paying 2 shillings in Sheep Street.³² A rent roll

entry of 1626 reads 'Assignes of Elizabeth Rogers in occupation Mathew Morris'.³³ Unfortunately, not all rent rolls gave names, but by 1635, the house had passed to the second Rogers daughter, and the rent was being paid by her husband Robert Bellamy.³⁴

No more is recorded of Mathew in Stratford, but 'Susanna daughter of Elizabeth Morris widow' died there in 1652, and Mistress Elizabeth Morris was buried there on 28 May 1660, aged 78.

Alice Bellamy, née Rogers (1588-1665) and Robert Bellamy (?-1638)

Alice was 31 when she became the second wife of Robert Bellamy, only five months after the death of his first wife Joan, who left him with three small daughters in need of a mother.

Robert and Alice had five or six more children, of whom four are mentioned in his will.³⁵ A currier and yeoman, Robert was well-to-do. It was to the second son, Robert (1622- ?) that he left 'all that house or tenement of mine standinge in the Sheep` Street in Stratforde aforesaid, with all the backside, garden and all the Appurtenances thereunto belonginge ... to enjoye the same for and duringe the whole term of the lease by which I hold it.' The bequest was to take effect when he became 21, but it was his mother who continued to pay the rent until the lease was surrendered in 1655, so one must conclude that Robert either died or moved away. The only daughter, 11-year-old Elizabeth, was simply left 'to Alice my wife to be provided for', Alice being residuary legatee -but it was through Elizabeth that Shrieve's House was to remain in the hands of Margaret Jefferies' descendants. The elder Robert was buried five days after he made his will on 15 September 1638.

During the Bellamys' tenure, the house must always have been let to under-tenants, reflecting a very usual practice among well-to-do Stratford citizens; leasing property from the Corporation at rents which must have become increasingly artificially low, in order to sub-let at a profit. The rent roll of 1653 reads 'The widow Bellamy assignee of Elizabeth Rogers one tenement in present tenure of Thomas Lucas.'³⁶

Alice's will was nuncupative, declared to her brother-in-law, Robert Fitzhugh and only written down after her death.³⁷ She bequeathed to her step-daughter Joan Jackson, 'my bedd that I now lye uppon with all that belongs to it', to each of her sisters, Ursula Fitzhugh and Margaret Arnoll, one of her gowns, and everything else she possessed to 'my sonne in lawe John Woolmer and Elizabeth his wife.' The will is

invaluable, for, as this marriage is not recorded in the parish registers, it is the only means of knowing that the family connection in the tenure of Shrieve's House was not broken when John Woolmer was granted the lease in 1655.³⁸ Alice was buried nearly three weeks after she declared her will, on 25 March 1665, aged 77.

John Woolmer (c.1625-1710) and Elizabeth, née Bellamy (1627-1708)

John Woolmer is the most well-known Stratfordian to have leased Shrieve's House, for it was he who negotiated the new Borough Charter with Charles II in 1664, and under it, ended his term as Bailiff as the first Mayor of Stratford. He was Mayor again in 1677-8 and 1694-5.

An ironmonger by trade, he came of a family which had been prominent in the town since the end of the sixteenth century and continued to be so until the mid-eighteenth century. His birth is not recorded in Stratford; he lived, according to his monument, to be 85, being buried on 16 July 1710.³⁹ Despite bearing ten living and one stillborn children between 1649 and 1668, his wife Elizabeth lived to be 81 and was buried on 20 October 1708.

The family home of the Woolmers since about 1595 was the large house at the corner of High Street and Ely Street. The Hearth Tax returns for 1662 show that John Jr. was then sharing the house with his father, as two separate establishments.⁴⁰

The same returns, and those for 1664, show that Thomas Lucas still dwelt in Shrieve's House, paying, in 1662, eight shillings on four hearths. In all subsequent Hearth Tax years, only three hearths were taxed. Today, there are four hearths, three downstairs and one up, and it may have been the latter that was conveniently ignored, an apparently not uncommon form of tax evasion. The parish registers do not record the birth, death or marriage of Thomas Lucas, but the baptisms of seven children appear between 1635 and 1652. The Hearth Tax Returns show that by 1670, and at least until 1674, the tenant of the house was Mr. Richard Browne. His wife died in 1666 and he himself was buried in November 1681; otherwise he does not appear in the parish registers.

Although John's lease was for 41 years, he surrendered it for a new one, again of 41 years, in December 1670.⁴¹ He paid a £30 fine for the first lease, only 5 shillings for the second, and the annual rent remained at ten shillings.

In 1691 this lease also was surrendered and, for a £5 fine, a 51-year

lease⁴² was granted to John's third son, Thomas Woolmer, who had already been paying the rent since at least 1688.⁴³ As he married just a month after Richard Browne's death, he may have been in occupation since then.

Thomas Woolmer (1656-1732)

Thomas Woolmer, an attorney, served for fifty four years as Town Clerk of Stratford. According to his memorial tablet in the church, he was 'a Person honest, diligent and well-skilled in the business of life, generous in his way of living, courteous in his conversation (who spoke no evil of other People nor gave them cause to speak evil of him) a trusty Friend, a kind Relation, a useful neighbour and commendable in all parts of life.'⁴⁴

Thomas married Anne Parker in Bath and they had six children, of whom Elizabeth, Theodosia and Mary died in infancy, Anne and John predeceased him and only Katherine, the youngest by several years, survived him. His wife died in 1704, and the lines on the memorial tablet Thomas raised to her are touching: 'Mirror of curtesie addio Till ye last Trump thy Life renew; Belov'd of all; of all bewail'd; - O that our Tears might thee have bail'd.'⁴⁵ Thomas never remarried.

It seems likely that Thomas lived in Shrieve's House for many years. He also, from 1688, leased a messuage and gatehouse divided into two cottages on Waterside, the rent of which was joined with that of the house in leases from 1726 until 1816. In 1712, with his brother Joseph, Thomas bought the house now known as 'Hall's Croft' in Old Town, traditionally the home of John and Susannah Hall, but at this time in the occupation of Thomas Cookman, who married Thomas's niece, Decima Woolmer of Bath.⁴⁶ He moved there soon afterwards, sub-letting Shrieve's House (for which he renewed his lease in 1726 for 51 years)⁴⁷ to a Mr. Lent at least from 1719 to 1726. Thomas died on Christmas Day 1732 and was buried three days later. His will, made four months earlier, has curious features. Elaborately lawyerly in style, it is mainly concerned to ensure that if his daughter should die childless, none of *his* property should go to her husband's family, even directing that if the couple tried to obstruct his trustees in carrying out the terms of the will, Katherine should be disinherited in favour of his niece, Grace Hatton of Bath (née Woolmer). Katherine's husband was allowed the household goods only if he paid £100 for them. Since Thomas refers to his daughter as 'my dear Kitty,' one must suppose that it was her husband whom he disliked or distrusted.⁴⁹

Katherine Makepeace, née Woolmer (1700-1760)

From Thomas' will, in which he left his 'dear Kitty' £10 a year to dispense in charity, we may guess she was benevolent. She had been baptised on 3 April 1700 and had married William Makepeace on 27 April 1728. The marriage was childless. She died on 8 December 1760 and was commemorated on her father's monument as 'possessor of all her father's virtues'. William had been baptised at St. Nicholas, Warwick, on 15 April 1698, son of William and Mary Makepeace,⁵⁰ had matriculated in 1715 at Merton College, Oxford, had gained his B.A. in 1719 from Oriel College and had become a barrister-at-law of the Middle Temple in 1723. He died on 11 November 1739,⁵¹ (but not in Stratford) and his will was proved at Canterbury. Incidentally, it required that Katherine pay £100 if she wanted her father's household goods -that item in Thomas' will apparently still rankled!⁵²

Probably the Makepeaces lived at Hall's Croft and Katherine continued there as a widow, though eventually it came into the hands of William's brother and residuary legatee, Edmund Makepeace. Shrieve's House, however, for which Katherine paid the rent after William's death, may have formed part of her marriage settlement as it clearly belonged to her at her own death in 1760. Her executrix was Mary Ives, spinster of Gainsborough, Lincs., the grand-daughter of Thomas' eldest brother John. On 24 February 1761, Mary Ives obtained licence from the Corporation to assign and sell the lease to one William Jones.⁵³

And so at last, after 164 years, the house passed out of the hands of the direct descendants of Margaret Jefferies.

William Jones (? -1786)

At the time of the assignment of the lease, William was a yeoman living at Snitterfield. Whether or not he continued to farm, he now became a maltster and, even if not in an ancestral line of tenure, became the first of an occupational line of dealers in grain which was to last almost unbroken for about 150 years.

The assigned lease was the residue of Thomas Woolmer's term of 51 years from 1726, and accordingly, in 1776, William paid £65 for a new 41-year lease, still at a rent of 10 shillings plus the 4 shillings for the two cottages on Waterside.⁵⁴ The schedule now included a new feature - a malthouse; according to the Chamberlain's accounts, this had been added not later than 1765.⁵⁵

When William died in July 1786, he was a fairly wealthy man. His

principal legatee and executrix, his niece Ann Furkin, was able to discharge his debts and funeral expenses as well as legacies amounting to £240 out of his personal estate and leasehold property, 'leaving a considerable overplus,' and there was freehold property as well.⁵⁶ Ann married another legatee, William's wife's nephew, Thomas Forester, of Staffordshire, and their son, born in 1787, was christened William Jones, no doubt in grateful memory. Ann and her husband obtained the licence of the Corporation to assign the lease of the house, and on 29 August 1786 sold it for £106 to Richard Woods, maltster, of Stratford.⁵⁷

Richard Woods (c.1735-1798)

Richard Woods had married, on 25 July 1779, a Mary Bellamy. The couple had five children, of whom only John, born in July 1783 and Mary, born in July 1788, survived childhood. Richard was buried, aged 63, on 2 April 1798. According to a survey of 1801, Mary Woods continued in the malting business⁵⁸ and also continued to pay the rent of the house and the two cottages in Waterside until her death, in April 1803, aged 53.

The grave of Richard and Mary Woods is still to be seen in Stratford church-yard; on the reddish headstone, near the north transept, are commemorated as well their three children who died young.

John Woods (1783-1816)

John Woods, who lived for thirty years in The Shrieve's House, began to pay the rent from 1804. Also a maltster, he married, on 21 June 1807, Elizabeth Bellamy, presumably a cousin. The marriage was childless.

In March 1817, William Jones' 41-year lease was due to expire, and on 4 September 1816, John was granted a new 21-year term.⁵⁹

During the previous thirty years or so, as Corporation leases expired, the old rents that had obtained since at least the mid-sixteenth century were replaced by more realistic ones. The rent of The Shrieve's House was one of the last in Sheep Street to be altered - and the increase was a large one to £30 a year; and this despite the fact that the two cottages on Waterside were relinquished.

There were also additional requirements of the tenant; he must lay down along the whole front of the premises 'a Flagging Stone pavement of the width of four feet' and he must, at his own charge, and within the space of twelve months, 'stucco the front of the house from the Ground to the first floor and rough cast and colour the remainder part'. Thus, now, if not earlier, the house assumed the appearance it



The Shrieve's House in 1899, without dormers and with its front completely stuccoed.

shows in the photograph of 1899. (Plate IV)

Unhappily, John did not survive the signing of the lease by so much as a month, being buried on 1 October 1816, aged only 33.

Elizabeth Woods paid the rent for the next two years, but from 1819 it was paid by yet another maltster, John Bachelor, who had married the widow on 16 August that year. They had one child, John, baptised in November 1820. John, supplier of malt to the Corporation from 1830-33 (after which the item ceases to appear in the Corporation accounts), owned two houses in High Street and a cottage in Ilmington,⁶⁰ but actually lived in The Shrieve's House. John Woods' lease expired in 1837, and a draft 44-year lease for John Bachelor was drawn up on 7 August that year, at an annual rent of £35. However, a note on it states that the lease was never executed, 'Mr. Bachelor having abandoned his intention of taking a lease.'⁶¹ He continued, instead, as a yearly tenant, at the new rent, until halfway through 1840. The draft schedule, for the first time gives a list of fixtures, thus:

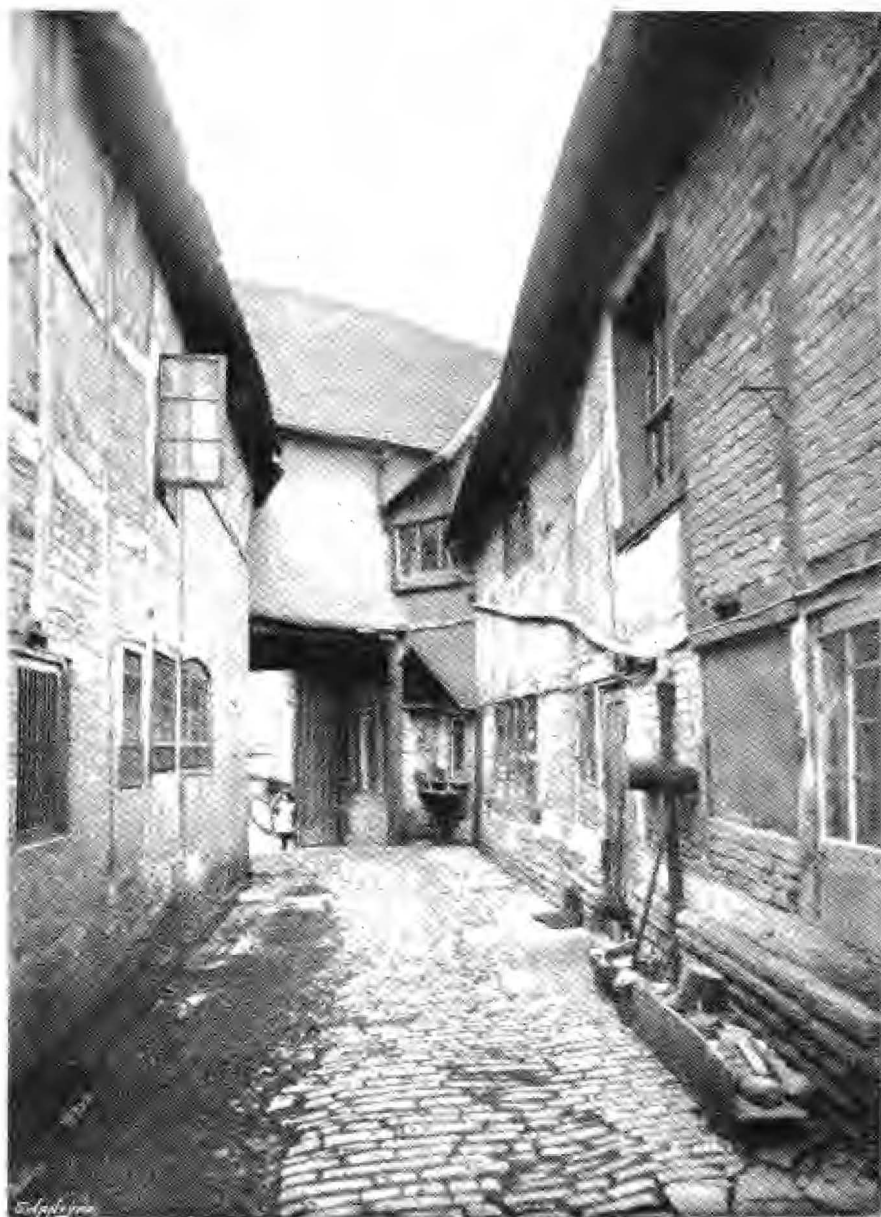
'In the Parlour Marble Chimney piece with Grate with two Coves; In the Kitchen Oven Grate Crane and back and ash Grate, Deal painted cupboard with four sliding doors and shelves; In the Passage Painted Beaufitt with back and shelves, Rail and six hat pegs; In the front Chamber, bath stone grate; In the back Chamber, bath stone grate and Chimney piece; In the Closet, Two rails and twelve pegs, One do and six iron do; In the Brewhouse, Sinkstone and brickwork, Ironing board and back with two iron supports, Grate and ironing stove and crane, Fifty gallon Copper Furnace stack, lid and grate, Small do; In the yard, lead pipe and trap tap to Cistern; In the Garden, Four line Posts; In the House and Yard, Four bells and twelve cranks and wire.'

That draft lease adds that the parlour chimney piece is excepted from the list of fixtures to be left *in situ*; however, it still appears in the next lease.

John died on 19 November 1842.

Edward Gibbs (1810-1888)

It was seven years after the expiry of the last lease before a new one was taken up. From part way through 1840 for three years, Isaac Coburn was a yearly tenant, at a reduced rent of £31 10s.⁶² Also a maltster, he had married Jane Pimm in 1834, and had five children at the time of the 1841 census.



A view of the courtyard in 1896.

In 1844, Edward Gibbs, already in occupation, took up a 31-year lease at the much reduced annual rent of £16.⁶³ Since 1816, the rent of the Shrieve's House had been by far the highest in the street, which had perhaps made it difficult to lease.

Edward appears to have been an ambitious and competent man. At the time of the baptism of his eldest daughter Mary, in 1836, he was merely a plasterer; the lease gives his occupation as builder. By 1847, he was a surveyor, apparently the one always employed by the Corporation; in an 1850 directory, he appears as 'joiner, builder, architect, surveyor and land agent.' In 1852, as architect, he drew plans for alterations to the Town Hall and the Grammar School. He was Mayor in 1871.

Though he moved to Ely Street in 1850, he continued to pay the rent of The Shrieve's House, leaving it void for five years, according to the Corporation accounts.⁶⁴

Edward Gibbs died at 26 Ely Street (or Ely Place) at 9.35 a.m. on 27 April 1888,⁶⁵ leaving everything to his only surviving daughter, Ann, wife of Henry Holtom, architect. His monument, a mournfully draped cross, stands not far from the Woods grave in Stratford churchyard, and commemorates as well his wife Ann and daughters Sarah and Mary.

Joseph Adkins (1816-1878)

Joseph Adkins was baptised at St. Mary's, Warwick, on 4 March 1816, son of Mary and Joseph Adkins, labourer.⁶⁶ It would appear that the family moved to Stratford very soon afterwards, having children baptised there in 1818 and 1820. Joseph is listed in the 1851 census as a coal dealer, living at what is now No. 32 Sheep Street.

In 1855 he moved into the Shrieve's House, remaining there until 1872, when he removed to 21 Broad Street.⁶⁷ Various censuses show that his wife's name was Esther and that they had at least five children, Thomas, William and Sarah Hannah (twins), Samuel and Clara.

It must not be imagined that because Joseph dealt in coal, the barn and outbuildings became coal stores; his business premises were at the Canal Bridgefoot, now part of the town park on the Bancroft, but then a complex of wharves and warehouses. The inventory⁶⁸ taken after Joseph's death records 'Cow, hay and implements', worth £45 12s 0d; and as he rented a close in Bridgetown from the Corporation for some years during his occupancy of the Shrieve's House⁶⁹ it is likely that the back premises there retained the agricultural air they had commonly had.

Joseph died on 9 April 1878, survived by his wife and three of his children.

Steele, Paine, Neale

After Joseph's departure, it was many years before No. 40 was occupied again for any length of time. John Steele paid the rates from 1872-77; the directories give his occupation as 'cowkeeper'. The house was then void until July 1878, when Clement Paine moved in, staying until part way through 1881. Before and after these dates, Paine was at 55 Henley Street, where he had a furniture shop and pawnbrokerage, on the site of the present Midland Electricity showrooms.⁷⁰ He had in fact been born, around 1839, in Sheep Street, where his father, William, shoemaker, was a sub-tenant at No. 5 at least from 1831 to 1861.⁷¹

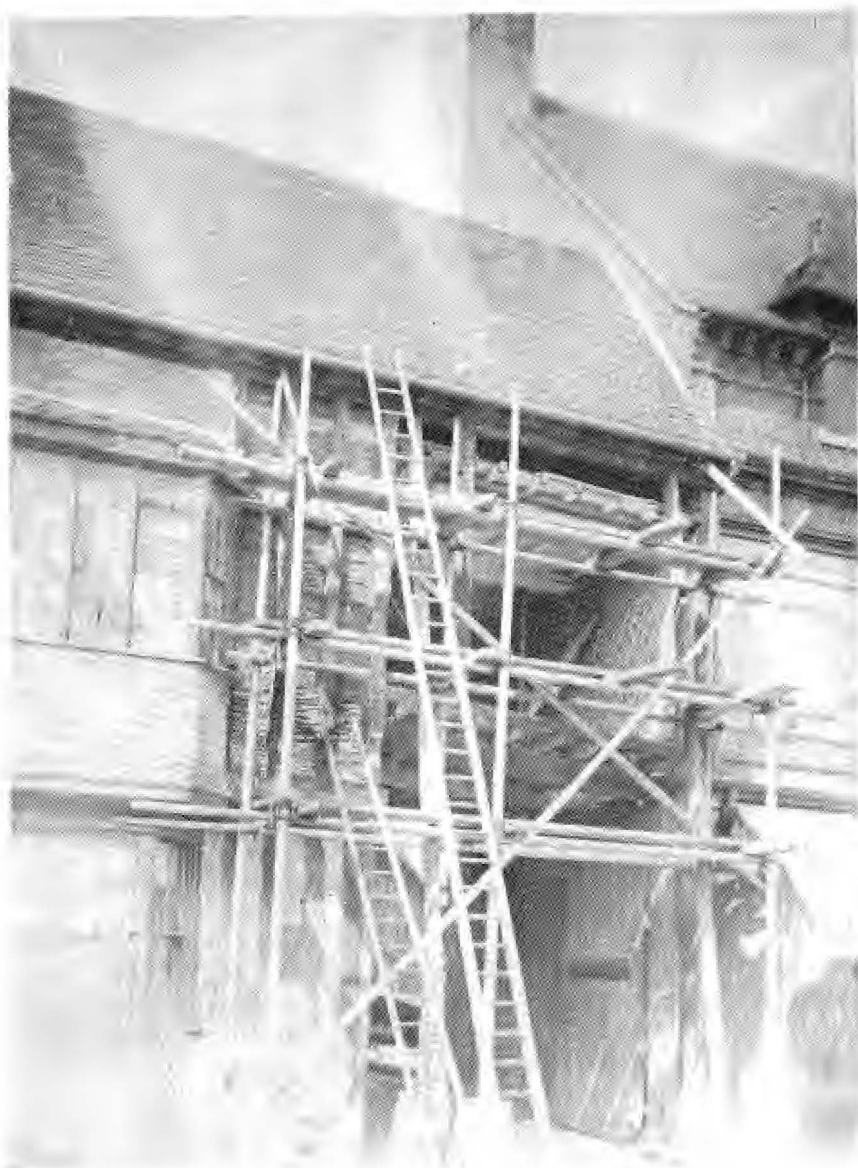
At the 1881 census, No. 40 was again void, but Richard Neale, hay, corn and straw dealer, moved in, in the latter part of the year, remaining until the summer of 1891. From 1885 he was also paying rates on No. 39, where George John Beesley was registered as a non-rate-paying voter, becoming in 1889, the ratepayer instead of Neale. In 1891 he also replaced Neale as ratepayer at No. 40, at the same time relinquishing No. 39. All this may indicate that Beesley worked for Neale, eventually taking over the business.

Richard Neale was buried on 17 November 1892, said to be 69 years of age.

George John Beesley (c.1831-1913)

The name of G.J. Beesley, corn dealer, can just be distinguished on the noticeboard above the door of No. 40 in the 1899 photograph. He ceased to be a ratepayer there from June 1909 being succeeded by M.C. Ashwin and Son, agricultural implement agents and coal and corn merchants (with premises also in Union Street) until 1913. A Charles Harbage, listed in the directories as a 'manager' was a non-rate-paying resident during the same period.

Beesley's business may have got into difficulties following the claim made against him when his carter, James Oliver Ward, died as the result of injuries arising from his work; Beesley had to pay £135 (the equivalent of three years' wages) to his wife and children.⁷² Possibly this led to his business being taken over by Ashwin. In any case, he was already an old man, being 81 years of age when he was buried on 16 October 1913. It was around 1908, apparently, that the stucco was removed from the front of the house. As the illustrations show (plate 6 & 7) this also involved replacing most of the timbers above the



Restoration work in progress, 1908.

gateway, the opening up of the window above the present front door and the renewal of the ground floor bay window.⁷²

Oliver Baker began to pay the rates on No. 40 in 1914, being granted a 14-year lease, backdated to 1914, on 31 December 1920.⁷³ The rent was £35 a year. It seems that he only used the rear part, as a warehouse, for his antique shop was at 10 Chapel Street, and he himself lived at The Dower House, Old Stratford. Alfred Edgar Barnett, registered as a non-rate-paying voter, presumably lived in some portion, or all, of the house.

Oliver Baker was the son of Samuel Henry Baker, painter and etcher of Birmingham, and was educated as an artist by his father and at the Birmingham School of Art. Between 1883 and 1896, he exhibited six times at the Royal Academy; he also exhibited at other London and provincial galleries. Besides this, he was the author of four books on historic and antiquarian subjects, including *Shakespeare's Warwickshire*. A Fellow of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers, he was an early member of the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments.⁷⁴ He continued in the shop in Chapel Street, but from 1933, No. 40 is also listed in the directories as an antique shop, with Chapel Street being given up after 1937.

It is difficult to imagine quite how the premises were divided among their various uses during this period, perhaps in some ways the nadir of the house's history. From 1914 to at least 1934, Alfred Barnett resided there, while directories also list Arthur Britten, dental surgeon (1925-7); Alfred Salmon, optician (1928-9); Frederick Jones, smith (1925-7); Herbert Smith, ringmaker (1930); William Payne Sr., ringmaker (1931); the Rt. Reverend B. Matthews BA, curate of Holy Trinity (1931); Christian Science Church (1933); while Mrs. D.A. Phillips resided there at least from 1942-5.

Oliver Baker died, at his home, The Stone House, Bearley, on 8 April 1939, aged 83. He was married to Emily, daughter of W.H. Wall of Stoke Priors, Worcs., and their son Geoffrey took over the antique business at the Shrieve's House. According to the directories, he was still there in 1950, but had gone by 1953.

Eleanore Waldron (c.1886-1981)

Eleanore Florys Waldron came to Stratford in 1919, when her husband, Thomas Noden Waldron, founded his business, T.W. Waldron Ltd., stampers and piercers, there.



The Shrieve's House around 1910, following the removal of the early 19th century stucco.

Both Mrs. Waldron and her husband were active in civic affairs. He was Mayor in 1937, she in 1956. Mrs. Waldron was a Life Trustee of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and, in 1972, in acknowledgement of a lifetime of devoted service to the town, was made a Freeman of the Borough. On the lighter side, she was a keen gardener, and was renowned in the town for the variety both of her buttonhole posies and her hats.⁷⁵ When Mr. Waldron died in 1947, Mrs. Waldron decided to move from Hidcote Court into Stratford and chose Shrieve's House, partly inspired by her husband's lifelong interest in it. By this time, the house was in a wretched state, with leaking roof, bulging walls and much woodwork missing. There was a real danger of its demolition, despite being scheduled as an Ancient Monument.

Mrs. Waldron's application for a lease (for the house only, the barn was not included) was granted on condition she spent at least £2000 on repairs. In the event, as her 14-year lease, at £52 per annum, states, she spent over £10,000.⁷²

Francis Yorke, of Stratford and Birmingham, an authority on Tudor architecture, was consulted on the restoration and the work was carried out by William Sappcote & Sons Ltd., church restoration specialists, who later worked on Shakespeare's Birthplace, the Guild Chapel and Hall's Croft.⁷³

The structure was found to be basically sound - only one beam in the cellar had to be replaced by a steel girder. Many doors and wainscotting were missing and were replaced using sixteenth century oak from a house being demolished in Leicestershire. Some of the staircase treads also had to be replaced. Two dormers were inserted in the roof with windows handmade to match the originals, using old glass, by the firm of Thomas William Camm of Smethwick. The stone plinth supporting the ground floor bay was removed and replaced by the present brackets. (Plate 8) Mrs. Waldron lived in the Shrieve's House until 1979. She died on 16 July 1981 in her 95th year.

Ann Bannister

The daughter of C. Perry and his wife, Violet, Ann Bannister trained as a dress designer at the Birmingham School of Art.

She married Anthony Bannister in 1960 and they had three daughters, Josephine, Lucy and Katherine.

In 1975 Ann started an interior decoration business in one room at The Webb, Shottery, later moving to The Old School, Alderminster and opening an antique, furniture and decoration shop.



The Shrieve's House following the 1951 alterations. The dormers have been added and the stone plinth below the bay window removed.

When the lease of Shrieve's House became available, attracted like Mrs. Waldron before her by the idea of preserving an important part of Stratford's history, she undertook the mammoth task of restoring the by-now near-derelict barn as a shop and the house as her home. So, for the first time since the turn of the century, 40 Sheep Street became again what it had usually been during its long lifetime - both the residence and work place of its occupant. Her architect was Stephen Alan Wright, Coventry City chief restoration architect, and the builders once again William Sappcote Ltd. Indeed, two of the craftsmen had worked on the restoration of thirty years before.

In the house, the main work was refurbishing, although the beam beneath the wall between dining room and hall had to be replaced by another. In the barn, much care was taken to use both old materials and old techniques in the restoration - for example, the end wall, a concrete repair job, was replaced with wattle and daub infilling, while the upper floor, still with the original cow dung and lime finish, was carefully covered up to preserve it. Throughout the work barley and other grain appeared, relics of the barn's long use as a grain store for both corn dealers and maltsters. (Plate 9)

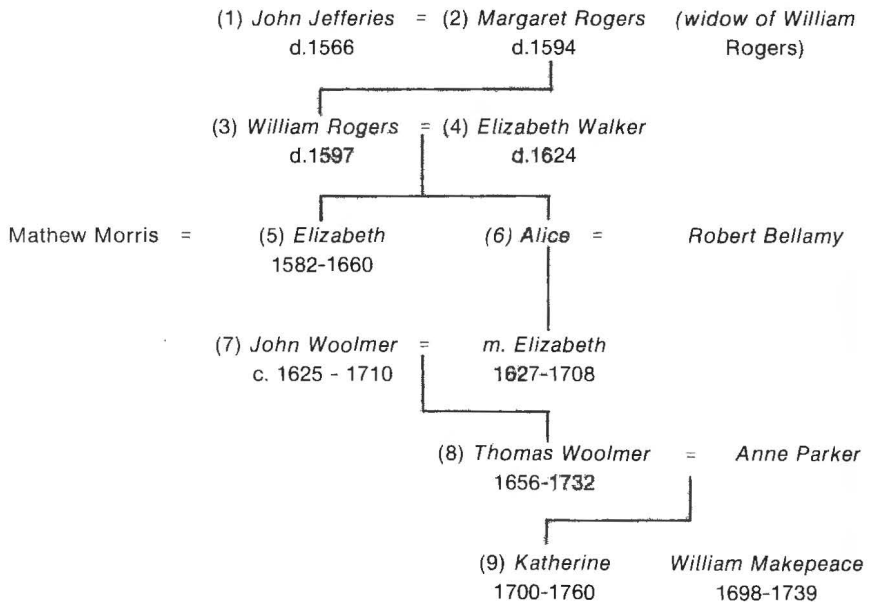
At the time of writing, very sadly, Shrieve's House is losing its centuries of enclosed peace and privacy behind the great oak gates, as the building to the east is demolished, making the house part of a new shopping precinct.



Views of the barn before and after conversion.

Appendix I

One Family tenure of 40 Sheep Street, 1542-1760



Appendix II

Occupants of 40 Sheep Street with dates of occupancy as known or conjectured

John Jefferies	1542 - 1566
Margaret Jefferies	before 1566 - 1594
William Rogers	before 1566 - 1595
Elizabeth Rogers	1578 - 1624
Elizabeth (Morris)	1582 - ? 1626
Thomas Lucas	before 1653 - ? 1664
Richard Browne	? 1672 - ? 1681
Thomas Woolmer	? before 1688 - 1719
Katherine Makepeace	1700 - 1719
Mr. Lent	1719 - 1726
William Jones	1760 - 1786
Richard Woods	1786 - 1798
John Woods	1786 - 1816
John Bachelor	1819 - 1840
Isaac Coburn	1841 - 1843
Edward Gibbs	1844 - 1850
Joseph Adkins	1855 - 1872
John Steele	1872 - 1877
Clement Paine	1878 - 1881
Richard Neale	1881 - 1891
George Beesley	1891 - 1909
Oliver Baker (shop/storage)	1914 - 1939
Geoffrey Baker	1939 - 1952
Eleanore Waldron (house only)	1950 - 1981
Ann Bannister (whole building)	1981 -

Sources cited in the text

N.B. Unless otherwise stated, all records are in the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office and all parish register details are from the Holy Trinity, Stratford, registers.

1. *Minutes and Accounts of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon and other Records*, Dugdale Society (hereafter referred to as *Minutes and Accounts*), i, p.ix.
2. BRT 1/3/120 - 154.
3. DR 362/48/1.
4. BRU 8/12/11.
5. PR 148/5.
6. BRU 15/12/11.
7. BRU 8/12/18.
8. *The Accounts of the Chamberlains of the Borough of Stratford, 1609-1619*, ed. J.O. Halliwell, p.35
9. BRU 8/12/31.
10. See below (no. 13)
11. *A Muster Roll of Able Men in Stratford-upon-Avon and its Neighbourhood in the 28th year of Henry VIII (1867)*, p.13.
12. *Minutes & Accounts*, i, p.77.
13. BRT 1/2/602.
14. *Minutes & Accounts*, iv, p.98. The chief rent for a burgage plot was set at 12d in 1196; this therefore nicely confirms that the Shrieve's House stands on a half burgage.
15. BRT 1/2/592.
16. BRU 8/12/2.
17. *Minutes & Accounts*, i, p.xxvi.
18. *ibid*, p.xlv.
19. DR 362/48/1 - will.
20. *The Register of Stratford-upon-Avon: Burials, 1558-1653*, (1905), p.17.
21. DR 362/48/1.
22. BRU 12/8/219.
23. BRU 8/12/8: *Register of Stratford-upon-Avon: Marriages, 1558-1812* (1898), p.9.
24. BRU 15/7/107.
25. *Minutes & Accounts*, iv, pp.149, 161.
26. *Register of Burials*, p.52.
27. *Minutes & Accounts*, iv, p.67.
28. *Register of Burials*, p.57.
29. PR 148/5.
30. PR 133/7a.
31. Fripp, *Shakespeare Man and Artist*, (1938), p. 669.
32. Vestry Minute Book, BRT 8/1, p.2.
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34. Chamberlains' Accounts, BRU 4/2.

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38. BRU 8/12/31.
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42. BRU 8/12/36.
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45. *ibid.*, p.205.
46. DR 231.
47. BRU 8/12/41.
48. BRU 4/5.
49. ER 2/160.
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51. *Alumni Oxoniensis*, 1715-1886, iii, p.904.
52. DR 589/2.
53. BRU 8/12/47.
54. BRU 8/12/51.
55. BRU 4/7.
56. ER 4/539.
57. BRU 8/12/52.
58. ER 1/8, p.415.
59. BRU 8/12/55.
60. DR 325/448 - will.
61. BRR 10/158/2.
62. BRR 16/1.
63. BRR 10/26.
64. The 1851 census, though, seems to indicate that a James Smith, maltster, and his lodger, John Wilson, tea dealer, were then in occupation. But, as James, aged 49, was probably the son born in 1802 to Mary and Timothy Smith, farmer and maltster, and who at the 1841 census was living with his widowed mother at no. 39, it is possible that he was still inhabiting part of that building.
65. DR 325/1242 - letter from Ann Holtom.
66. Parish Registers of St. Mary's, Warwick, Warwick Record Office.
67. *Post Office Directory*, 1872.
68. DR 325/384.
68. DR 325/384.
69. BRR 16/4.
70. *Directories*, 1875 and 1884.
71. Censuses, 1841 and 1851 and Chamberlains' Accounts.
72. DR 325/2368.

- 72a. See also BRR 2/7/6, pp.2, 7, 13.
73. BRR 10/82.
74. DR 506, obituary.
75. *The Stratford upon Avon Herald*, 17 July 1981.
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77. Article in the Warwickshire and Worcestershire Magazine, ? 1958.

Stratford-upon-Avon Papers

This is the second in a series of authoritative monographs which the Stratford-upon-Avon Society intend to publish in the coming years on important Stratford buildings and monuments. We see this project as important not only in contributing to our knowledge of the town's history, but also in raising general awareness of the town's architectural heritage. Both these aims are incorporated in our constitutional Aims and Objectives:

1. To stimulate public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of the area of the Town and its surroundings.
2. To encourage the preservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity or historic interest.
3. To pursue these ends by means of meetings, exhibitions, lectures, publications, other forms of instruction and publicity, and promotion of schemes of a charitable nature.

Already published

1. *The Town Hall, Stratford-upon-Avon*, by Mairi Macdonald, 1986

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