

Shakespeare Club of Stratford-upon-Avon

The 901st meeting of the Shakespeare Club took place at Mason Croft on Tuesday 8 March 2016. On the occasion of the 2016/7 presidential evening Dr Susan Brock welcomed this year's President Peter Kyle, Chairman of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, in conversation with Professor Stanley Wells, himself twice Club President .

Mr Kyle began with a question to the Club 'What does the Club want to do and/or be on its 200th anniversary in 2024?' and left the audience to ponder the answer while he spoke about his experiences and enthusiasms which led him to Shakespeare. These included an inspirational teacher of history, a love of language and poetry, a theatre group in Wallsend on Tyne, where he was born, drama training at Bretton Hall, and then a move into contemporary dance, working at first with Marie Rambert. His transition from performer to arts administrator was marked by his appointment as county advisor for dance in Leicestershire and he went on to found the National Youth Dance Company, was in charge of dance and mime at the Arts Council and Chief Executive of Scottish Ballet. His first major post was running the Hexham arts centre which led indirectly to Shakespeare's Globe through collaboration and friendship with Mark Rylance. As Chairman there for twelve years he saw the Globe through the transition from a construction project to a credible artistic organisation, which he likened to the challenges of the Trust's new initiative to set up the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in America. There were many parallels between the Globe and the Trust, including educational links.

Mr Kyle's ambitions for the Trust were to find synergies between its educational work, its ability to live on its own resources and an international outlook. The New Place project due for completion this year was, he felt, an opportunity for the reinvention of the Trust and there was part for the Club in taking that reinvention forward. He had always been more interested in the body of work than Shakespeare the man. Mr Kyle concluded by expressing his ambition to bring together all UK Shakespeare organisations including the RSC, Shakespeare's Globe and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and to answer the question 'Where does the Trust sit in its own town, in its county and in its country?'

After questions the meeting finished at 9pm.