

## Shakespeare Club of Stratford-upon-Avon

**The 916th meeting of the Shakespeare Club, which took place on Tuesday 13 March 2018,** was a presentation by Dr Paul Edmondson and Professor Ewan Fernie, “New Places: Shakespeare and Civic Creativity” chaired by Susan Brock. Their talk focussed on a number of projects showcased in their newly published book with the same title, which was inspired by their conviction that Shakespeare should be made to matter beyond education and the theatre. The term ‘Civic Shakespeare’ had been coined by the speakers with Tobias Doering of the University of Munich to refer specifically to forms of engagement with Shakespeare aimed at the general public, that might take place in the streets or in other civic spaces spilling beyond the boundaries of schools, universities, theatres and similar institutions.

Their own contributions to the book represented two approaches: affirmative, sentimental and passionate, witness Paul Edmondson’s rewriting of the last 14 minutes of Wagner’s *Die Meistersinger* as a reflection in verse of Shakespeare’s life, the work dedicated to the Deutsche Shakespeare Gesellschaft. Or critical, political and radical such as Ewan Fernie’s collaboration with Katherine Craik to write a play about Pericles’ Marina as if her story were real, acknowledging the play’s connections with Syria, migration and radical chastity. The cities of Verona and Venice had both used Shakespeare - *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice* respectively – to tell their own histories, both true and imaginative, for their own citizens and visitors. And the book also contained accounts of work in Germany and the United States.

The speakers claimed David Garrick as the first proponent of civic Shakespeare in his Stratford Jubilee of 1789 which pioneered new forms of celebration in the planned procession of Shakespeare characters and Garrick’s own Shakespeare Ode. And the Shakespeare Club itself had its foundation in the same idea. After questions from the audience, the meeting closed at 9.15pm when members reconvened for drinks in the Conservatory.