

The Shakespeare Club of Stratford-upon-Avon

On Tuesday 8 December the 935th meeting of the Shakespeare Club of Stratford-upon-Avon took place virtually. This Presidential Meeting took the form of a recorded discussion between its distinguished President, Sir Stanley Wells and Rev Dr Paul Edmondson.

He was introduced by Professor Russell Jackson, who has known him since the 1970s as both a student and professional colleague. He paid tribute to Sir Stanley as an encourager of his students, bringing humanity and humour into the work of Shakespeare academics.

The discussion centred around questions sent in by Club members in advance. One questioner asked who had most influenced Stanley in his long career. He mentioned several past Directors of the Shakespeare Institute (a role which he himself held for many years), biographer Samuel Schoenbaum, actors Laurence Olivier, Edith Evans and Judi Dench, and directors Tyrone Guthrie, Peter Hall, John Barton and Gregory Doran. He was also given the opportunity to talk about which research, and books, he had most enjoyed working on, and commented that his recent work on Shakespeare's Sonnets, in collaboration with Paul Edmondson, has been most enjoyable. One questioner asked him to comment on new directions in research, to which he responded that work on Shakespeare's collaborative practices were changing our view of the man and his work. Other questions asked him about productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and about how the study and performance of Elizabethan and Jacobean plays might have developed if Shakespeare had not existed.

He spoke with enthusiasm about Shakespeare's writing. He claimed that it is clear, reading the plays in the order they were written, that Shakespeare did not repeat himself, but relished setting himself new challenges.

Sir Stanley has now been the Club's President three times and first addressed the Club in 1959. Now ninety years of age, he described himself as a "venerable institution", just as the Club is. Thanks were offered to Sir Stanley and to Paul Edmondson for a unique and enjoyable discussion, and to Russell Jackson. The recording, available for several days to members and those on the Club's mailing list, was accessed 252 times.