

## Shakespeare Club of Stratford-upon-Avon

The 938<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Shakespeare Club of Stratford-upon-Avon took place virtually on Tuesday 9 March 2021 when a lecture by Dr Miranda Kaufmann based on her book *Black Tudors* was followed by a recorded Question and Answer Zoom session between the speaker and members. The recorded session was made available to members and visitors on YouTube.

In the lecture, Dr Kaufmann spoke about three Black Tudors. Jacques Francis was a skilled diver from West Africa, one of a team brought in to help salvage items from Henry VIII's sunken flagship the *Mary Rose*. Edward Swarthy joined Sir Edward Wynter on Drake's voyage to the Caribbean and worked for him at his manor house in Lydney in Gloucestershire. In 1597 Swarthy was commanded to whip another of the servants in the household, a man of high status who eventually became Mayor of Bristol. Mary Fillis arrived in London from Morocco as a child and became a servant in an affluent household in the 1580s before changing her employment to work as a seamstress, and converting to Christianity. None of these people were slaves, but were paid and free to change their employment. Evidence of their lives comes from documents such as court depositions which slaves could not have made.

Colonialism, the slave trade and the influx of people from the Caribbean in the mid-twentieth century have all affected our views of black people in the UK, and Dr Kaufmann's research attempts to correct misconceptions about the lives of black people in pre-colonial times.

In the Q&A that followed Dr Kaufmann explained that much research was being done to track down more black people living in the UK in the early modern period, and noted that nobody as yet has discovered any evidence that black people worked in the theatre.

The Question and Answer session was viewed online 83 times.