

The Shakespeare Club of Stratford-upon-Avon

On 12 May 2022 the Shakespeare Club of Stratford-upon-Avon held its 947th meeting at the Holy Trinity Parish Centre. "The Jaggard Story: the life and times of a Stratford bookshop" was an entertainment devised by Andy Jaggard and his sister Anthea Carter telling the story of their grandfather William Jaggard and his son Gerald.

Captain William Jaggard was a "remarkable, difficult and eccentric" man. Born in Berkshire he moved to Leamington Spa, then to Liverpool where he opened his own bookshop. He undertook the cataloguing of the Earl of Warwick's collection of books, an experience that triggered the project that would obsess him for 20 years, the creation of his Shakespeare Bibliography listing all editions of Shakespeare's plays as well as criticism of them. Shortly before the publication of this important work in 1911, Jaggard moved to Stratford-upon-Avon to found another bookshop, The Shakespeare Press at 4 Sheep Street.

Jaggard shared the surname of the printer of Shakespeare's 1623 First Folio and one of the ambitions of his life was to prove direct descent from that first Jaggard. He was unable to do this during his lifetime but his grandchildren now hope to prove it.

William Jaggard was a colourful character who became friends with a number of important Shakespeareans including Caroline Spurgeon though he disagreed with the great biographer Sidney Lee and fell out with many important townspeople in Stratford.

Many stories of William Jaggard's life were told including his attempts to sell Henry Clay Folger a copy of the First Folio. Folger was an American millionaire obsessed with collecting Shakespeareana whose collection subsequently became the Folger Shakespeare Library. A series of letters shedding light on these negotiations have recently been uncovered at the Folger. Jaggard died in 1947 and the bookshop was taken over by his son Gerald, a very different character.

The shop closed in 1964 and remained empty until it was bought and rebuilt by Bob Chambers. Mr Chambers was present at the event and described the restoration work carried out before opening the shop as the Vintner wine bar and restaurant.

This lively presentation was enjoyed by an audience of around 60 people including members of the Club, members of the Stratford Society, and friends of the Jaggard family.