

THE SHAKESPEARE CLUB OF STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

The 866th meeting of the Shakespeare Club took place at Mason Croft on Tuesday 13 December 2011. The Reverend Dr Paul Edmondson took the chair and introduced Professor Stanley Wells, Shakespeare Club President -- for the second time—in this 2011-12 season. He listed his achievements of which the cornerstones were the Oxford Shakespeare edition and a trilogy of books about Shakespeare, his life and works: *Shakespeare: A Dramatic Life*, *Shakespeare for All Time* and *Shakespeare and Co*.

The theme of the conversation was 'Shakespeare and I' beginning with Professor Wells' first literary encounter with Shakespeare at Kingston on Hull Grammar School, guided by a charismatic English teacher, and where Sonnet 29 ('When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes') woke him up to Shakespeare's language. Attracted by the theatre and, especially, music, Professor Wells read English at University College London where he was taught by an outstanding group of Shakespeare scholars. After a few years as a schoolmaster in Hampshire he became, almost by coincidence, a postgraduate at the Shakespeare Institute in the 50s where, in due course, he became Senior Fellow.

As Director of the RSC Summer School from the 1970s he tried to make the Institute a meeting ground for the University and the theatre. Surprisingly, Professor Wells declared that the idea of bringing together the worlds of the theatre and the academy was doomed to failure because each had its own mindset and creativity and because the theatre was not, in his opinion, interested in the academic view. In answer to the question what makes a great Shakespearian, Professor Wells replied that one must love -- must be moved -- by Shakespeare. Tracing a distinguished career which included: Governor of the Royal Shakespeare Company; editor of the most innovative edition of Shakespeare of the twentieth Century for Oxford University Press; Director of the Shakespeare Institute; a Trustee and eventually Chairman of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Professor Wells declared that he felt his greatest achievement was as a teacher and that teaching was the essence of his work and being.

Professor Wells took questions from the audience and the meeting finished at 9pm. A recording of the conversation can be found at <http://bloggingshakespeare.com/what-makes-a-good-shakespearian>.