

## THE SHAKESPEARE CLUB OF STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

**The 872nd meeting of the Shakespeare Club took place at Mason Croft on Tuesday 11 September 2012.** The meeting was chaired by Lady Deb Follett who introduced Patrick Spottiswoode, Director of Globe Education, whose subject was "'Why Didn't Shakespeare Give Me More Rhymes": Rhyming Couplets: Did Shakespeare Have An End In Mind?'.

Mr Spottiswoode set the scene with an overview of a literary debate about the role of rhyme between poets Samuel Daniel and Thomas Campion in the first years of the 1600s. Campion argued for a sparing use of rhyme, while Daniel, appointed Poet Laureate in 1599, himself wrote in rhyme and defended its use while criticising blank verse for 'running on'. Having set himself the task of reading all the plays written in England in Elizabeth's reign in the last year, Mr Spottiswoode reported that all were in rhyme until Gorboduc, which experimented with blank verse, and Supposes the first English prose comedy. Turning to Shakespeare he noted that he employed a variety of verse forms selected for dramatic effect, with the most common being rhyming iambic pentameters, and then asked the audience to estimate the number of rhyming couplets in the plays. Richard Morris came nearest to the correct answer, 3352. The highest number in a single play was in Love's Labour's Lost with a significant use in the plays of Shakespeare's mid career.

Mr Spottiswoode focussed on two uses for couplets - leaving and loving - with a prodigious display of statistics. For example of the 821 scenes in Shakespeare's plays, 379 end in rhyming couplets, 223 in prose and 219 in blank verse. He gave examples of rhyme in death speeches and to mark delayed exits. Turning to love, he spoke of the cliché of the rhyming lover in Shakespeare's time, and proceeded to demonstrate how the playwright used shared sonnets in Romeo and Juliet to bind the young lovers.

After questions and an enthusiastic vote of thanks for a witty and erudite talk, the meeting closed at 9pm.