

The Shakespeare Club of Stratford-upon-Avon

The 930th meeting of the Shakespeare Club of Stratford-upon-Avon took place on Tuesday 14 January 2020, when Sam Dastor performed a selection of Shakespeare's sonnets, with brief commentary. The meeting was chaired by Mary Reardon.

Mr Dastor is a professional actor who has worked in many leading companies including the Royal Shakespeare Company. He has performed the sonnets in many venues over the years including Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey. His enthusiasm for Shakespeare's sonnets began when he was a teenager and they have continued to absorb him ever since. Mr Dastor is convinced that they are biographical, telling the story of Shakespeare and his relationships.

He believes them to be the greatest love poems in the language, though much overlooked compared with *Venus and Adonis*, which was reprinted many times during Shakespeare's lifetime while the sonnets were printed only once. Commentators and editors have always tried to heterosexualise these poems in spite of many of them being clearly addressed to a young man with whom the poet was in love.

Mr Dastor recited thirty-nine of the poems in the order in which they were originally printed, giving a short introduction to each poem or group of poems. His skill as a speaker of poetry and intelligent commentary was very much enjoyed by the members of the Club and after questions the meeting closed at 9pm.