

Shakespeare Club of Stratford-upon-Avon

The 915th meeting of the Shakespeare Club which took place on Tuesday 13 February 2018, was a delightful evening of theatrical anecdotes delivered by actor Robert Lister and titled an 'Actor's Life for Me'. The meeting was chaired by Susan Brock.

Mr Lister introduced himself at length, covering his 50-year career in radio drama (including *The Archers*), in legitimate theatre in the UK (at the RSC, Regent's Park Open Air Theatre and elsewhere) and on tour, in musical theatre (playing the male lead in *Trelawny* at the Bristol Old Vic in 1972), in ballet, doing voiceovers and train platform announcements. His point was not vanity or self-promotion but to demonstrate that an actor could do so much (he had been in employment all his working life except for a period of six months) and still not be a household name. He was one of many thousands of actors who were not stars but who enjoyed a successful career in the theatre for the love of acting, travelling and companionship. He had attended Dulwich College, a school founded by Shakespeare's fellow actor Edward Alleyn, and intended to be a journalist but was won to the stage by a student production of *Philoctetes*. He told tales of his acting experiences, especially on tour with the New Shakespeare Company in India and the Middle East, of understudying Ian Richardson, of productions which did not go quite according to plan, of personalities and adventures. His favourite Shakespeare character was Prospero and he still had ambition to take the role of the Player King in *Hamlet*. His enthusiasm, humour and memorable speaking voice certainly crowned him the player king of the evening.

After questions from the audience, the meeting closed at 9pm when members reconvened for drinks in the Conservatory.

The speakers at the next meeting on 13 March will be Rev. Dr. Paul Edmondson, Head of Research, The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and Professor Ewan Fernie, of the Shakespeare Institute. Their subject will be 'New Places: Shakespeare and Civic Creativity' and they will discuss their shared efforts to fuse scholarship and creativity, bringing Shakespeare into the public sphere beyond the theatre, the seminar room and the private study. The meeting will take place as usual at Mason Croft, Church St., Stratford-upon-Avon at 7.45pm. Admission is £3 for visitors and is free for students. All are welcome.