

Shakespeare Club of Stratford-upon-Avon

The 907th meeting of the Shakespeare Club took place on Tuesday 14 February 2017.

Dr Will Tosh, of Shakespeare's Globe Education, spoke about 'Playing Indoors; Performing Early Modern Drama in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse', chaired by Dr Paul Prescott.

For members of the audience who had not experienced the new indoor theatre space at Shakespeare's Globe, Dr Tosh described the key elements of the theatre named after the Globe's founder, the most important being lighting by candles. Shakespeare's company had looked for an indoor space in London from the 1590s but did not perform at the Blackfriars until 1609 after which the whole repertory was likely to have been performed in both indoor and outdoor theatre. Unlike the Globe the Sam Wanamaker was not an historical reconstruction. It was smaller than the Blackfriars, there were no seats on the stage and the shape was different. Based on some theatre plans from the 1660s by John Webb, a pupil of Inigo Jones, the Sam Wanamaker was an archetype of an indoor theatre and was being used to continue questions asked at the Globe: What can the space tell us about the plays that were written for it? What can it tell us about relationships between actors and audience? How does sound and light work, especially what in terms of the relationship between candlelight and stage action?

Dr Tosh described a number of Research in Action workshops held in front of paying audiences but outside the performance programme to look at cruxes in performance, primarily lighting, music and the use of a discovery space. Using stage directions in Ben Jonson's *Catiline* (performed at the Blackfriars in 1611), Ford's *Tis Pity She's a Whore* and *Love's Sacrifice*, Marston's *The Wonder of Women* and *The Tempest*, Dr Tosh explained how these workshops helped to understand how these plays worked. The conclusion was that audiences in such spaces neither expected nor got what he termed a 'unitary' experience. Depending on the position of the seat they saw something different, but not necessarily worse. Even more than the Globe the Sam Wanamaker theatre forced audiences to consider the play experience as multi-valent.

After questions and a raffle the meeting closed at 9pm.