

Shakespeare's Coming Home!

The Town Council needs to raise £45,000 for the restoration of the Shakespeare statue that David Garrick gave to the people of Stratford-upon-Avon in 1769. It's the one in the niche on the front of the Town Hall, and it's falling to pieces because the lead is badly corroded. But we all love that statue, and it's based on the statue in Westminster Abbey. It is an icon of the Jubilee and the beginning of our local economy, based on Shakespeare.

Groups from around the town are going to be reading Shakespeare's complete works (38 plays, 2 narrative poems, the Sonnets and 'A Lover's Complaint') from Tuesday 1st to Saturday 12th March, from 'the prick of noon' until 'the chimes at midnight' each day.

The project is called *Shakespeare's Coming Home* and the restored statue is to be unveiled on Saturday 23 April 2022.



Our vision is for communities to come together and take part – in the reading, or in the listening, of individual plays. Dame Harriet Walter hopes to read the part of Rosalind in *As You Like It*, and Dame Janet Suzman hopes to read Cleopatra. I'm asking other actors to make guest appearances, but the works overall will be simply read, speech by speech, round the room with anyone who would like to take part.

We're looking for around 20 readers to take part in each work – with a minimum of £25 sponsorship per person per work. The target is to raise at least £500 per work. Our sponsorship sums will be doubled because of the Pragnell Pledge to the people of Stratford: the jewellers, George Pragnell Ltd, will match-fund what we raise – up to £22.5K! This means we have to raise £22.5K, so every £25 is effectively £50 or £100 because of the Pragnell Pledge! We can surely raise £22.5K – with the help of so many good people and organisations.

The project is to be launched in early December with *The Stratford Herald* as media partner. Over 20 weeks (until 23 April), they would like to know the stories of some of those taking part, so there could be a nice feature on your organisation and its work.

Revd Dr Paul Edmondson
The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

King John

The Stratford Society has agreed to contribute to the campaign by making a donation of £500 towards the restoration of the statue. We will participate with a reading of *King John*. This will take place on **Saturday 5 March**, 11am to 2.00pm in the Town Hall. You may volunteer for any of the parts. All of the parts for which there are no volunteers will be read in turn by the company. The play has 2,648 lines and will take about 2 hours 40 mins to read.



We are delighted that Dr Anjna Chouhan, Senior Lecturer in Shakespeare Studies at the Shakespeare Centre (SBT), who is an authority on the play, has agreed to lead a workshop with all the participants on **Thursday 17 February** to help us prepare for the reading.

The Life and Death of King John, a history play by William Shakespeare, dramatises the reign of John, King of England (ruled 1199–1216), the youngest son of Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine and the father of Henry III of England. It is believed to have been written around 1595, but was not published until 1623, when it appeared in the First Folio.

The characters in the play are (major parts in bold):

King John – King of England

Eleanor – the Queen Mother, widow of Henry II

Prince Henry – his son, later King Henry III

Blanche of Castile – John's niece

Earl of Essex – an English nobleman

Earl of Salisbury – an English nobleman

Earl of Pembroke – an English nobleman

Lord Bigot – Earl of Norfolk

Peter of Pomfret – a prophet

Philip Faulconbridge – also known as Philip the Bastard; natural son of Richard I of England

Robert Faulconbridge – his half brother; legitimate son of Sir Robert Faulconbridge

Lady Faulconbridge – their mother; widow of Sir Robert Falconbridge

James Gurney – her attendant

Lady Constance – widow of Geoffrey II, Duke of Brittany

Arthur – her son, King John's nephew, claimant to the English throne

Sheriff

Two Executioners

English Herald

English Messenger

King Philip – King of France

Louis the Dauphin – his son

Viscount of Melun

Châtillon – French ambassador to England

Hubert de Burgh – citizen of Angiers and later a follower of King John

Citizen of Angiers

French Herald

French Messenger

Duke of Austria

Cardinal Pandolf – legate from Pope Innocent III