



St. Mary's Lighthouse at Whitley Bay - one of the locations for The Shakespeare Club's tour

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Shakespeare Club takes to the road

Iconic buildings and locations across the North East will play host to a series of discussions exploring some of Shakespeare's most famous plays.

Seaton Delaval Hall at Seaton Sluice, St. Mary's Lighthouse at Whitley Bay, The Word in South Shields and St. Nicholas' Cathedral and The People's Kitchen in Newcastle have all been chosen as venues for The Shakespeare Club reading group.

Set up by Northumbria University academic Adam Hansen, the monthly club

has been based at Newcastle's Lit and Phil for the last four years, providing an informal opportunity for people to explore what Shakespeare means to them.

Now the club is going on tour, with Dr Hansen carefully selecting venues which have a particular connection with Shakespeare's work, allowing readers to gain a greater insight into some of the Bard's best-loved plays.

As Dr Hansen explains: "Whatever you know or don't know about Shakespeare, everyone's opinion is valued, and the Shakespeare Club was set up so people can share their ideas about Shakespeare's plays.

"Over the last four years at the Lit and Phil we have worked our way through the Complete Works of Shakespeare and so were looking for a new challenge. Taking the club on the road seemed like the next step."

Each of the venues on the tour has a specific connection with the play being discussed there. For example, Seaton Delaval Hall has close links with the play Othello, with Sir Francis Blake Delaval hiring the Drury Lane Theatre in London in 1751 to stage his own production of the play, in which Delaval family members took the leading roles.

St Mary's Lighthouse was chosen as the venue for The Tempest as it is situated on an island, just like Shakespeare's tragicomedy featuring Prospero, Miranda and Caliban.

And the People's Kitchen will provide the backdrop for King Lear – a play in which the main character finds himself homeless, providing a poignant message about the redistribution of wealth in an unequal society.

It is hoped the workshops will appeal to a wide variety of readers. Ten free copies of the plays have been made available at each venue in an attempt to make the club as inclusive as possible.

Dr Hansen said: "We wanted to remove any barriers to people taking part in the Shakespeare Club, so secured funding to provide free copies of the plays which will be given out on a first come first served basis at each of the venues.

“While we were based at the Lit and Phil we had a great mix of people attending, including English Literature students of different ages, teachers, actors and people who had studied Shakespeare at school and wanted to rediscover his work.

“The discussions will be very much led by the group and we’re really looking forward to seeing how these venues contribute to how readers connect with the plays.”

Dr Hansen believes Shakespeare’s work is as relevant today as during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and that it can provide a starting point for wider discussions about modern-day issues.

“We live in very divided times and it is possible to use literature like Shakespeare as common ground to allow people to talk about the big issues affecting them and the world which are reflected in his work and linked to modern times.”

The tour dates announced so far are:

- 25 April (6.00-7.30 PM) – *Othello* at [Seaton Delaval Hall](#)
- 30 April (7.00-8.30 PM) – *The Tempest* at [St. Mary’s Lighthouse, Whitley Bay](#)
- 18 May (5.30-7.00) – *Hamlet* at [St. Nicholas’ Cathedral](#)
- 23 May (6.00-7.30 PM) – *The Tempest* at [The Word, South Shields](#)
- 1 June (3.00-4.30) – *King Lear* at The People’s Kitchen, Newcastle

For more information about the Shakespeare Club, please contact Dr Adam Hansen, at Northumbria University on 0191 243 7193 or email adam.hansen@northumbria.ac.uk

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Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk

07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk

07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk