

Celebrate 400 years of Shakespeare's legacy in 2016

Shakespeare's England is gearing up for 23 April when the region celebrates 400 years of William Shakespeare's legacy. 2016 commemorates 400 years since the death of the world famous playwright and this special anniversary year is a unique opportunity to visit his home of Stratford-upon-Avon and the surrounding area. Shakespeare's England will celebrate his legacy with a range of exciting new exhibitions and events including a new immersive theatrical experience at the Royal Shakespeare Company; a reimagining of Shakespeare's final home, New Place, and Shakespeare's Schoolroom will open for the first time to the general public.

The **Shakespeare Birthplace Trust** is transforming New Place, the site of Shakespeare's family home in Stratford-upon-Avon for the last 19 years of his adult life, to create a new heritage landmark where visitors can discover Shakespeare at the height of his success. The re-imagining of this unique site will be the single most significant Shakespearian project anywhere in the world to commemorate his legacy. Visitors will be able to walk in Shakespeare's footsteps through a new threshold on the site of his gatehouse and trace the footprint of his family home in a contemporary landscape setting. Commissioned artworks and displays will evoke a sense of family life and the 26 major works written during Shakespeare's ownership of New Place. A new exhibition will throw light on Shakespeare the family man, homeowner and successful entrepreneur, featuring rare and important artefacts relating to his life at New Place, many of them on display for the first time.

The **Royal Shakespeare Company** (RSC)'s season includes productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, *Cymbeline*, *Doctor Faustus*, *Don Quixote* and *The Alchemist*. A major new exhibition, *The Play's The Thing*, will open in June in The Swan Theatre front of house areas. It will celebrate the magic of Shakespeare on stage and reveal the secrets and stories from 100 years of theatre-making in Stratford-upon-Avon. The Other Place is the RSC's research and development hub, and home to the Company's new studio theatre, rehearsal rooms and costume store and café bar. It will reopen in April and a new discovery tour will take visitors on a journey from *Page to Stage*, from the first day of rehearsals to the first performance, with an opportunity to look inside the RSC's store of 30,000 costumes for the very first time. As part of the annual Birthday Celebrations on 23 April, the RSC will offer a fun-packed day of free outdoor events for all the family, including a breath taking show by acrobatic company, Mimbre, inspired by Shakespeare's stories. The day will end with a spectacular free firework display. For those who can't make it to Stratford, *The Shakespeare*

Show (working title) will be broadcast live on BBC2.

A unique collaboration between the RSC and the BBC, this special evening, hosted by David Tennant, will celebrate Shakespeare's legacy across all the arts.

A major restoration project has made the ambitious vision of the Trustees of King Edward VI School, the school which William Shakespeare attended in Stratford-upon-Avon, possible. **Shakespeare's Schoolroom & Guildhall** will open as a heritage attraction of international significance in April. Visitors will be able to experience the place, not far from his Birthplace, where Shakespeare was educated and inspired to become the world's greatest playwright, and to learn of the extraordinary history of the building and the civic history of the town. Built between 1418 - 20, the Guildhall, described by historian and broadcaster, Michael Wood, as 'one of the most atmospheric, magical and important buildings in the whole of Britain', was last renovated in the 1890s. The building will undergo major restoration and new interactive displays, filmed performances, a Tudor lesson and an 18th century classroom will bring Shakespeare's story to life. With over 400 years of involvement in the social and religious aspects of the town, including Shakespeare's father's leading role in the council – there are plenty of stories to uncover.

The RSC has commissioned a brand new self-guided tour to mark the anniversary. **Shakespeare Steps** invites people to follow in the footsteps of the world's most famous playwright. The free self-guided tour, which involves eight locations, will run alongside Stratford's historic spine. At each stop visitors can follow footsteps and speech bubbles painted on pavements that work as instructions for acting out mini dramas. The tour is available from 23 April and a free map is also available to guide visitors, give them historical background and features a treasure hunt challenge for children. Shakespeare Steps starts at Shakespeare's Birthplace and other locations include Shakespeare's New Place, Guildhall, and Holy Trinity Church before finishing at the RST.

Visit Stratford-upon-Avon for the annual **Shakespeare Birthday Celebrations** on 23 & 24 April for a weekend of pageantry, pomp and performance. Crowds will line the streets as actors, foreign diplomats, civic dignitaries and local children join a 1,000-strong grand Birthday Procession through the streets on the Saturday as Stratford pays tribute to the most famous playwright and poet who was born and died on the same day – 23 April. Starting at the Town Hall the procession will wind its way through the town to Shakespeare's Birthplace and return passing his School before arriving at the altar of Holy Trinity Church.

Visit the **Holy Trinity Church** where Shakespeare was baptised and buried and where you can see the graves of Shakespeare, his wife Anne Hathaway and other family members. From April - August the Church will be hanging seven specially commissioned paintings from

its central pillars, each one inspired by one part of Shakespeare's famous 'Seven Ages of Man' soliloquy. The art installation will be displayed with accompanying explanatory literature. Stratford born artist Jonathan Waller is creating the mixed media pictures and has work in collections at both the Tate Gallery and New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In honour of the anniversary, **The Collegiate Church of St Mary** in Warwick is proud to present a major exhibition featuring the Shakespeare First Folio (1623) and a first edition of the King James Bible (1611). "*Shakespeare 400: History, Heritage & Faith*" will provide visitors with the rare opportunity of seeing these two iconic texts, 'twin pillars' of Western society, on display together. The exhibition will run from 16 April - 30 June. Admission fees are £3.50 for Adults, £2.50 for Children and Concessions and £6.50 for a family ticket. Dame Judi Dench will open the exhibition on 21 April at 8pm and will be sharing her passion for Shakespeare and the importance of her Christian faith. (tickets for the gala event are £17.50/£15.50).

Discover '*The Secret of Shoes*' at **Bicester Village**, a celebration of the world's preferred guilt-free pleasure. Visit dedicated pop-up boutiques from the ever-covetable Penelope Chilvers and for sartorially minded men, Joseph Cheaney & Sons. These join the panoply of luxury footwear brands already available at Bicester Village, including Rupert Sanderson, Salvatore Ferragamo, Bally and Gina. From 1 April, every footwear brand is dialling up its shoe offering with limited-edition styles and extensive collections. Bicester Village will also be offering a complimentary shoe shining service every Thursday to Sunday during April.

You can even meet Master Shakespeare in person, as he gives tours of his beloved home town of Stratford-upon-Avon. William will guide visitors along the beautiful streets and past wonderful old buildings whilst relating tales of his life and works. From birth to grave, he will take visitors through his life history and the town in the 16th century. Tours take place every Saturday and holidays at 2pm from **Tudor World** in Sheep Street. The cost is £5 for adults, £4 concessions, £3 children, £13 family ticket (2 adults & 2 children), 5 and unders are free.

Visitors can experience more than 1,100 years of jaw-dropping history at **Warwick Castle**. Dazzling shows and attractions, heaps of gruesome history and awesome birds of prey, all set in 64 acres of beautiful grounds and gardens make Warwick Castle a fun, action-packed and unforgettable day out! Stay overnight year-round in a deluxe Tower Suite or enjoy Mediaeval Glamping in summer. As from 1 July, visitors will be able to stay in the new Knights' Village featuring 28 lodges set in the wooded idyll of the attraction's estate. Prices start from £203* per lodge per night including breakfast and 2 day Castle entry, based on 4 adults sharing a 2 bedroom Woodland Lodge. Visit www.Warwick-Castle.com/Sleepovers.

See an intimate folk concert performed in the Tudor Stables at **Kenilworth Castle** on Saturday 11 June. Two time BBC Folk Award winners Greg Russell & Ciaran Algar are firmly established and respected within the British folk music world. The duo, who have two critically acclaimed albums, give live performances bursting with energy and humour.

Compton Verney will be the regional hub for the Capability Brown 300 celebrations in 2016. The art gallery will feature a year-long display about its landscape and the other Brownian landscapes in the region. Visitors will see a new Visitor Welcome Centre, the recreation of Brown's original Georgian pathways, new interpretation points and the opportunity to see the progress on the restoration of the Brownian chapel. In the spring Compton Verney will work with the RSC on an exhibition which will map key themes within Shakespeare's plays which have inspired artists across the ages.

The new look **British Motor Museum** opened its doors to the public on Saturday 13 February following a £1.1m refurbishment. Previously known as the Heritage Motor Centre, the Museum is now a modern and immersive display of British motoring history. The new Collections Centre also opened on the 13 February, allowing public access for the first time to an additional 250 cars from the reserve collections of the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust and the Jaguar Heritage Trust. The British Motor Museum will also celebrate the Festival of the British Car in 2016 with a range of themed events, activities and lectures.

Hill Close Gardens in Warwick will host a special 'Lost and Found' event from 9 - 10 July to celebrate the gardens being saved, restored and open to the public in 2006. The gardens will bring to life previous Victorian ploholders and the subsequent dereliction of the hedged gardens. Reminders will be set around the gardens and summerhouses as they are today; reconstructed to capture the planting and personality of their original gardeners.

The Stratford-upon-Avon Literary Festival, set in the home of the world's greatest writer, is one of the most respected literary festivals in the UK, attracting thousands of people who share one passion: a love of books, writing and reading. The Festival celebrates its 9th year in 2016 from 24 April to 1 May with an exciting and diverse programme of debates, celebrity author events, workshops, current affairs and events for children.

From July – October, **Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum** will host an exhibition '*The Art of Deception: The work of the Leamington camouflage group in the Second World War*'. A section of the Civil Defence Camouflage Establishment was based in Leamington from 1939 to 1944. The exhibition will provide an account of the complex tasks of aerial surveillance, design, testing and production of camouflage undertaken.

The **Warwick Folk Festival** will take place from 21 - 24 July and will showcase a new concert venue as well as a new home for ceilidh dancing events within Warwick School. The Festival brings together leading names from around the world and has something for everyone from dedicated folk fans to music lovers with a wide range of tastes and styles including blues, rock, country and funk.

Go Cotswolds, who provide small group tours of the Cotswolds from Stratford-upon-Avon, celebrate their 2nd birthday in 2016. The tours offer visitors the opportunity to experience the Cotswolds with a local taking in towns and villages such as Chipping Campden, Broadway, Stow-on-the-Wold and Bourton-on-the-Water, as well as sights and beauty spots including Broadway Tower, Dover's Hill and the Rollright Stones.

Playbox Theatre will celebrate the anniversary with a series of events including productions, special events, live music from Tudor England, films and interactive projects. Shakespeare has been central to the work at Playbox Theatre since its inception in 1986 with their productions being seen in the UK, USA, Europe and Japan. In 2008 they created a unique training and performance programme for young people wishing to develop their skills in classical theatre; *Shakespeare Young Company* is now in its 7th year and recently presented 4 projects in Santa Monica. Playbox Theatre will present *California. Games + Thrones*, an interactive retelling of Shakespeare's Henry VI which opens in Warwick on 23 April.

Orchestra of the Swan (OOTS), one of the UK's leading chamber orchestras, has its home in Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon. OOTS's 2016 season includes a performance with Tamsin Waley-Cohen, nominated by Birmingham Town Hall/Symphony Hall for the prestigious European Concert Hall Organisation's Rising Stars programme in the 2016/17, with her flawless interpretation of Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto (12 April at Stratford ArtsHouse) and a special Shakespeare 400 anniversary concert with a new work by Dobrinka Tabakova, their resident composer, and the Lark Ascending by Vaughan Williams, voted Britain's favourite piece of classical music (21 April at Holy Trinity Church).

The stunning lakeside setting of **Ragley Hall** will again play host to the final night of the UK's premier picnic concert series as the Battle Proms returns on Saturday 13 August. In 2015 a record breaking crowd of over 7,000 invaded the grounds of Ragley for an evening of sublime classical music, carefully choreographed Spitfire and cavalry displays, dramatic cannon fire and a stunning firework finale! The 58th Game Fair will also return to Ragley from 29 – 31 July and in 2018 for its special 60th anniversary. This will be the third time Ragley Hall has hosted the event which is expected to attract more than 100,000 visitors.

Take a 5 night tour with a professional Shakespearean actor with **Discover Shakespeare's Way** from 7 – 11 October. Visitors can now trace the 146 mile journey from the Globe Theatre on London's South Bank to the banks of the River Avon in the comfort of a luxury transported tour. The journey offers a tailor-made package of theatre visits, behind the scenes tours, luxury transport and top quality accommodation. Tour leader, James Howard, is a professional actor who has performed in Shakespeare's plays for more than 15 years, and has worked for the National Theatre, Donmar Warehouse and the RSC.

Johnsons Coach & Bus Travel has launched a new fun initiative to raise money for charity and to tie in with the anniversary. Johnsons have produced thousands of masks of Shakespeare's face and are encouraging passengers to wear a mask on board their buses and coaches and share their image on social media using the hashtag 'bardonboard'. Each month Johnsons will choose a passenger wearing the mask in the most unusual or creative location and the winner will receive a £20 High Street voucher. Johnsons have also named their coaches and Stratford based buses after Shakespearean characters so look out for Tybalt, Falstaff, Lady Macbeth and even Titus Andronicus. To get your free mask ask the driver or call into Johnsons' office in Henley-in-Arden.

Visit **The Fleece Inn** near Evesham, a renowned National Trust-owned public house, which hosts many interesting events during the year. Highlights include an Asparagus Family Fun Day on 30 May and annual Asparagus Auctions on 29 May & 5 June.

For more suggestions and information on accommodation please visit

<http://shakespeares-england.co.uk/shakespeare-2016>

Or follow the online conversation at #Shakespeare2016

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Notes to editors

Shakespeare's England is the official destination management organisation for Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick Districts. It is a public-private sector partnership representing the leading tourism businesses and organisations in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwick, Royal Leamington Spa, Kenilworth and surrounding market towns and villages. For more information visit please visit <http://shakespeares-england.co.uk/about-us>

More information on Shakespeare's England can be found at www.shakespeares-england.co.uk www.facebook.com/ShakespearesEngland and Twitter [@ShakespearesEng](https://twitter.com/ShakespearesEng)

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