

Shakespeare's New Place

In the late fifteenth century Hugh Clopton built a large house adjacent to the Guild Chapel. There followed a series of owners until 1597 when Shakespeare bought the house, New Place, from the Underhill family. He paid £120 for the property and this included orchards, barns and fields. The house was in 'great ruine and decay and unrepayred' so he undertook extensive work to update and improve the building. It was his family home for 19 years and he died there aged 52 years on 23 April 1616. He bequeathed New Place to his daughter Susanna and her husband Dr. John Hall, but his wife Anne continued to live there until she died in 1649. On Susanna's death the house was left to her only daughter Elizabeth and the house remained her property until her death in 1670. William Shakespeare's direct line ended with Elizabeth as she had no children. New Place was eventually sold to Sir Edward Walker whose daughter, Barbara, married into the Clopton Family. Sir John Clopton rebuilt the front wing of the house as a marital home for his son Hugh. After Hugh's death the Rev. Francis Gastrell bought the house. In 1756, so incensed by the intrusion of 'tourists', he felled a mulberry tree said to have been planted by Shakespeare. In 1759 he had the house demolished after a dispute over Poor Law taxes.

After passing through various owners the site and grounds of New Place became the property of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in 1884 after being gifted by the Stratford Corporation.

Between 1862-4 a Shakespeare scholar, James Halliwell-Phillips undertook an excavation of the site. He unearthed some of the foundation walls of the building. However, a major archaeological excavation of the site, started in March 2010, has helped the Trust understand the site of New Place in even more detail.

Facing Chapel Street was the 'gatehouse range' with a central gateway access for small carts and pedestrians. The ground floor provided the servant's quarters and a stairway lead to the first floor and the long gallery. The five roof gables provided a decorative feature providing extra light to the long gallery.

The courtyard was where the well was sited. There was a service range running alongside Chapel Lane. This provided the brewery, pantry and cold storage pit and general utility rooms. The cookhouse was separated from the main building for fire safety. Large gates allowed horses access to the stables and grounds beyond the cook house.

To the rear of the courtyard was the Open Hall originally built by Hugh Clopton in 1485. This range would have been the main focal point for Shakespeare and his family. Fragments of a brick feature suggest that he added an external chimney stack to the building, thus providing extra comfort to this living area.

The new New Place

Background

To mark the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust has reinvented the site of New Place. The aim was to unlock the spirit of Shakespeare within a garden setting and make it relevant to all visitors.

Highlights

- 1 The Gatehouse.
 - Elm and oak, handmade nails, bronze studs shows grandeur of the house.
 - Coat of arms (John Shakespeare was awarded a coat of arms in 1596. Once he died William was able to call himself a gentleman).
 - Quote from the play *The Tempest*.
- 2 Tudor Strongbox – deed to the house, money, elaborate locking system.
- 3 Silver ship – an age of adventure and discovery.
- 4 The Terrestrial Sphere – the world Shakespeare knew. The Terrestrial Sphere is taken from the main contemporary map of the period, with areas yet to be discovered clearly missing. Unlike most globes, the axis of the one at New Place runs straight through Stratford-upon-Avon, putting the town and New Place at the centre of Shakespeare's universe.
- 5 The Armillary Sphere – Shakespeare lived at a time when new sciences were emerging and man's knowledge of the world was expanding. Our earth is placed at the centre as it was then believed to be.
- 6 Play Pennants and Sonnet Ribbons – 38 plays and 154 sonnets.
- 7 His Mind's Eye – the focal point for the story of Shakespeare's creative genius.
- 8 Desk and Chair – shows his life as a working writer and the power of creativity.
- 9 Circular Bench – sit and contemplate Shakespeare's life and work.

The Knot Garden

Background

It was first constructed between 1919-20 following a design by Ernest Law. He was a Trustee of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and his many talents included being an expert in garden history. It was based on an illustration by Thomas Hill 1577. Knot gardens were fashionable amongst the wealthy. Shakespeare himself probably did not have such a garden as he needed his land for food and grazing livestock.

Highlights

- 1 Symmetrical patterns.
- 2 His plays refer to over 150 different types of flowers and herbs.
- 3 Includes - Lavender, thyme, hyssop oregano and wormwood as well as marigolds etc.
- 4 Copy of Shakespeare's gold signet ring in centre of garden.

The Great Garden

Background

Part of Shakespeare's purchase of New Place in 1597 included a portion of land known today as the Great Garden. Fruit, vegetables and herbs were grown here to supply food and provide ingredients for making medicines. There were also two barns for storing grain and malt. There would have been stables for horses. Chickens were kept for their eggs, cows and goats provided milk for making cheese and pigs grazed to supply meat.

The foundation stone of Stratford's first purpose built theatre was laid in the Great Garden on 23 April 1827. In 1872 it staged its last performance, *Hamlet*, and that same year the building was demolished.

Highlights

- 1 The Mulberry Tree – James I had hoped to develop a silk industry but silkworms prefer the white mulberry and he bought the red/black version.
- 2 The American sculptor Greg Wyatt's nine sculptures primarily cast in bronze (*The Tempest*, *Macbeth*, *Henry IV part I and part II*, *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *A Winter's Tale*, *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, *Julius Caesar*.)
- 3 The Wild Bank – formed from the soil removed during the Knot Garden creation.

Ground Floor Exhibition

Background

You are standing in the house, that was built in about 1530, next door to New Place. Known today as Nash House, it was once owned by Thomas Nash, who married Shakespeare's granddaughter, Elizabeth Hall, in 1626.

Room Highlights

- 1 Exemplification of a fine. An 'exemplification' is an official copy of a legal action known as a 'fine'. This records Shakespeare's purchase of New Place 4 May 1597. Shakespeare paid for this copy to be made to prove his ownership of New Place.
- 2 There is a timeline concerning Shakespeare's life and the story of New Place.
- 3 There is a video about New Place including the recent role of archaeological evidence.
- 4 There are drawers, in the white model of New Place, which contain objects depicting life at New Place:

Home Entertainment

Anne Shakespeare and her daughters would have been involved in the daily running of New Place. They would have had staff like cooks, washer women and gardeners. However, life was not all work. Games and pastimes have survived from this period to show there was some time for relaxation. e.g. marbles, doll.

A Family Wedding

Shakespeare's daughters Susanna and Judith live at New Place until they were married. Susanna married John Hall when she was 24 and Judith married Thomas Quiney when she was aged 31. Both weddings were held at Holy Trinity Church. Susanna received 107 acres of land in Stratford. e.g. brooch, thimble, cutlery sheath.

Writing at home

Shakespeare took inspiration from a number of reference books, including the Bible, classical texts like Ovid, English Chronicles, Greek romances and Italian comedies. He wrote about two plays a year. e.g. pestle and mortar, candlestick.

Food and Drink

A small kitchen at New Place was located in the service range, along with the brewery for making beer. Fruit vegetables and herbs were grown in what is now the Great Garden and used to feed the household and preserved for the winter months when fresh food was scarce. e.g. apple corer, cooking pot.

Social Life

Having guests to eat and stay at your home was a major part of Tudor culture. Much like today these social gatherings were an opportunity to display your status through your possessions e.g. wine beaker, posy trencher.

Commuting To and From London

Shakespeare owned New Place for 19 years but he was often away from home in London.

- 1 The Map of Stratford – shows the many occupations in the town 1570-1630.
- 2 Column capital – dates from 1702 when New Place was rebuilt by Sir John Clopton. It was recovered after the property was demolished.
- 3 The Stratford Corporation Cupboard of Boxes – made in 1595 by local men. A large oak cupboard with 12 drawers. It is like a filing cabinet to keep the town's governing body's records e.g. property leases, minute books etc.

First Floor Exhibition

Highlights

- 1 A video style presentation provides information about Shakespeare's daily family life at New Place.
- 2 The Will Showcase which provides information about Shakespeare's death and will.
- 3 The Shakespeare Family Tree.
- 4 In the Family Activities area there is the opportunity to use the various paintings / sketches to try to build a basic replica of New Place from wooden building blocks.
- 5 Do not forget to use the VIEWING PLATFORM to look over the site especially the Knot Garden.

Find out more about the Primary education courses offered at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust
www.shakespeare.org.uk/education/schools



Be part of Shakespeare Week and register at www.shakespeareweek.org

