



## **Notes for Journalists**

**Listed here are a few facts and figures, designed to act as a potted history of The Shrieve's House, The Falstaff Experience-Tudor World and Stratford-Upon-Avon.**

### **Stratford-Upon-Avon**

Stratford-Upon-Avon is small market town in Warwickshire, with lots of beautiful old buildings and just happens to be the birthplace of arguably the most famous and influential dramatist in the world – William Shakespeare!

By the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the land was owned by the Bishop of Worcester, who divided the area into 29 plots in 1196. 40 Sheep Street was one of those plots.

The plot consists of a private house at the front, and a building at the back, which now houses the museum.

### **The Shrieve's House**

40 Sheep Street has been known as the Shrieve's House for 500 years - named after the first known tenant, William Shrieve, an archer to King Henry VIII's army.

During its long history it has witnessed religious persecution (John Jefferies, tenant, convicted of "treasonably acts" for being a catholic); the plague in 1564; Civil war (English Civil War troops were billeted here and it was also used as a makeshift hospital) and fire in 1595, which burnt down much of the building.

Several mayors have lived in the property, John Woolmer in 1651 the first Mayor of Stratford; Edward Gibbs, known as 'The Shakespeare Architect' in 1871 (converting

the Swan and Maidenhead in Henley Street in 1864) and Eleanore Waldron in the 1956 (along with her husband, who has previously been a mayor!).

During the reign of Elizabeth I John Jeffries he was sued for pardon for 'treasonable acts' committed under Mary's reign for his Catholic practices. He recanted his faith in 1559 and was subsequently pardoned and fined 26 shillings and 8 pence. However, his Catholic faith did not prevent him from leading a rich civic life and priestholes in the building suggest he continued his faith in private.

In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, the property was the Three Tunns Tavern, run by William Rogers. William Roger was the uncle of William Walker, Shakespeare's Godson, and also the inspiration, it is said, for his famous comic character Falstaff.

William Rogers married Elizabeth Walker who continued the tenancy after his death. She bore him eight children and, unusually for the time, raised seven to adulthood. Their daughter, also called Elizabeth, was born in 1582 and married Matthew Morris.

***“Whilst it is clearly desirable for any property within Stratford to stake a claim on its favourite son, it is a claim that the Shrieve's House can make with some validity”*** (The Shrieve's House, Stratford Society, 1987).

During the forty-six year tenancy of Elizabeth Rogers (1578-1624) it is not unreasonable to assume the playwright spent time within its walls. Elizabeth Roger's nephew, William Walker, was Shakespeare's godson, bequeathed twenty shillings in the author's will. Added to that her son-in-law, Matthew Morris and also her cousin John Greene, were co-Trustees of the Bard's property in Blackfriars.

Elizabeth Roger's daughter (also Elizabeth) who is thought to have met her husband, Matthew Morris through their mutual association with Susannah Shakespeare (the poet's daughter) and her husband, Dr John Hall. The relationship between Matthew and John was a long-standing one, for John's father, Dr William Hall of Acton, in 1607 bequeathed to his 'servant' Matthew Morris all of his books on alchemy, astronomy and astrology, with the wish that Matthew should tutor John in these subjects should he later show interest.

In fact Susannah and her husband and Elizabeth Morris and her husband were so close they named their children after each other. The first two daughters born to the

Morris were named Susannah and the first son, John - on to subsequent children were the names of Elizabeth and Matthew given. Susannah and her husband John named their only child Elizabeth.

### **The Falstaff Experience**

In 1999, Steve Devey took over the building and turned into a museum about Stratford. In 2004 he started up the night time side of the business – the ghost tours and ghost hunts, after numerous ghostly sightings.

### **Tudor World**

In October 2007 Janet and John Ford took up the mantle and upgrade of the whole of the exhibits, concentrating on Tudor history. An independent museum, the upkeep of this historic Tudor building is maintained purely from the revenue from the visitors. No grants or government money is received.

### **What is there to see at Tudor World?**

Tudor World is a modest-sized museum, albeit around two 2,000 square feet. The authentically themed recreations take the visitor back in time to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. They will walk past a plague cottage, along a Tudor street and end up in the privy chamber of King Henry VIII, to name just a few of the exhibits.

Full of fascinating facts, it is ideal for schools, visitors and those interested in Tudor history.

The small outside courtyard feature, flourishes in the summer and abridged Shakespeare plays are held.

### **What is there to see at the Falstaff Experience?**

The Falstaff Experience is very much the night time side of the site. Spooky lantern-lit ghost tours are held every evening, with four tours on Thursdays, Friday and Saturdays.

Weekend overnight ghost hunts happen throughout the year in this famously haunted building, investigated by the Most Haunted team.

In the Great British Ghost Hunt for the Make-A-Wish Foundation, Falstaff's came second (only just) as the most haunted building in the UK.

## **Tudor World as a family day out**

Although very young children may find the exhibits too atmospheric, the recreations hold a good appeal for children and there are often shows or quizzes to keep them amused.

School groups in particular find the experience educational and fun.

In the museum shop, there is a selection of gifts that offers something to everyone – from Shakespeare and Tudor fans, to children's rings and activity sets – including our 'branded' products of mugs, magnets, thimbles and colouring sets.

## **Awards**

The present owners, Janet and John Ford, took over the business in October 2007. However, even within this short time they have won a Godiva Silver Award for Best Visitor Attraction in Warwickshire and Coventry (voted for by the public) 2008 and an award for second most paranormally active location in the UK on the Great British Ghost Hunt (as recorded on the night of 11<sup>th</sup> October 2008 simultaneously with all the most famous haunted buildings in Britain).

During their second year they won Godiva Gold Award for Best Visitor Attraction in Warwickshire & Coventry 2009 and Chiltern Railways Attraction of the Year 2010.

## **Further information and contact details**

More information, opening times and up-to-date prices, along with photos can all be found on the Falstaff Experience / Tudor World website at [www.falstaffexperience.co.uk](http://www.falstaffexperience.co.uk), but if you have any further questions, please feel free to contact:

Ben Pugh  
The Falstaff Experience-Tudor World  
Phone: 01789 298070  
Email: [benfalstaffexp@gmail.com](mailto:benfalstaffexp@gmail.com)

