

Jillian Snyder
Report

I first want to offer my profound thanks for allowing me to participate in the Sir Stanley Wells Studentship in Stratford-upon-Avon. I found my time to be immensely helpful in helping to nuance the claims of my dissertation, both large and small. The research seminars, which I was informed began only this year, gave me a chance to discuss my research with a mixture of specialists and non-specialists, allowing me to articulate it in an informal setting. I appreciated this exercise because it gave me an opportunity to focus my time and then to reflect upon what I learned.

The suggestions for both resources and church visits provided by those who attended yielded several fruitful lines of inquiry. At the Birthplace Trust itself, I especially found helpful the many books on the history of Stratford-upon-Avon and Warwickshire in general. Because my research focuses on the impact of religious change, those books gave me places to explore and pointed me to specific ways in which the Reformation had affected people and spaces. They offered a strong complement to what I actually saw in the churches themselves. Additionally, I found working at the Shakespeare Institute a wonderful experience because of its many sources and lovely setting.

Perhaps the most profound contribution to my research offered by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust came from the opportunity to visit various churches and the properties maintained by the Birthplace Trust itself. Much personal benefit came from the sensory experiences within these spaces. I'll briefly describe two of these experiences. The first came when I attended Evensong at Holy Trinity Church. I was sitting in the pews (which I realize were a later addition to the church) and gazing upon the angels in the nave, which led me to reflect upon the sheer amount of pre-Reformation architecture and items that still existed in the church. Then, during my visit to Shakespeare's New Place, I reached up to grasp a mulberry on the tree and was struck at not only its size, but also how much the juice resembled blood, deepening my understanding of the Pyramus and Thisbe episode at the conclusion of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. These observations are perhaps slight, but as a future professor and current scholar, they concretized aspects of Shakespeare's life and his plays that will later enhance my research.

Future suggestions for the program would include keeping the research seminars for students and perhaps, in the initial letter, suggesting that students explore the library collections themselves before arriving. Doing so would allow Studentship holders to have a better sense of what they are looking for. I had to do just that for a departmental application, and it gave me a sense of the SBT's collections before I arrived.

I also want to use this opportunity to give a special thanks to Cait, who was extremely accommodating and professional arranging details for our arrival in Stratford and sending along information about plays and other events. Her assistance made the Studentship an excellent experience.