

Shakespeare Documents Gain Prestigious UNESCO Status

Friday 20 June, London: Last night in Edinburgh it was announced that a unique series of Shakespeare documents held at The National Archives were accepted on to the UNESCO Memory of the World UK Register. The papers relating to the playwright's life and work were nominated by The National Archives, together with a set from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

The UK Register complements the UNESCO Memory of the World International Register, which is a catalogue of documentary heritage of global significance and outstanding universal value.

Clem Brohier, Acting Chief Executive and Keeper of The National Archives said

"We are extremely pleased that the Shakespeare documents held here at Kew have been awarded this international recognition. It is testament to their importance not only to the UK but to the literary and cultural world globally. They provide a tangible connection to Shakespeare allowing us to get closer to a man who died nearly 400 years ago yet continues to have an unparalleled influence on language and culture in the UK and beyond."

The documents held by The National Archives form the largest collection of its kind and features nearly half of all known contemporary references to the bard's life. The collection provides a priceless perspective on Shakespeare's life in London. They show him appearing as a resident in the Elizabethan city, with the documentary trail then charting his rise in fortune, both professional and financial, reaching the heady heights of success at Court.

The significance of the "Shakespeare Documents" relates directly to William Shakespeare's unrivalled literary achievements, his status as England's national poet and the global cultural impact of his work. This material has been discovered as a result of painstaking research in the centuries since his death. All the nominated documents are handwritten sources, two of which held by The National Archives have Shakespeare's signature on them. This, combined with their historic and cultural significance underlines their irreplaceability.

Examples of the Records Include

[C66 / 1608](#) Enrolment of letter patent issued under warrants carrying the signet and privy seal authorising Shakespeare and his companions to perform plays throughout the realm under royal patronage.

[AO 3 / 908 / 13](#) Account of Edmund Tylney, Master of the Revels for 1604-5 listing plays performed at Court.

[PROB1/4](#) William Shakespeare's will (bearing his signature) made 25 March 1616 and authenticated 22 June 1616

In 2016 there will be an opportunity to see some of the most significant records relating to Shakespeare and his life as The National Archives stages a programme of events to mark the 400th anniversary of the playwright's death.

For media enquiries please contact Press Office, The National Archives on 0208 392 5277 or e-mail: press@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Notes to editors:

About The National Archives:

For the record, for good...The National Archives is a government department and an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). As the official archive of the UK government and England and Wales, we look after and make available to the public a collection of historical records dating back over 1,000 years, including records as diverse as Domesday Book and MI5 files.

Our 21st-century role is to collect and secure the future of the record, both digital and physical, to preserve it for generations to come, and to make it as accessible as possible. We do this by devising technological solutions to ensure the long-term survival of public records and working to widen access to our collection. The National Archives also advises on information management across government, publishes all UK legislation, manages Crown copyright and leads the archive sector. We work to promote and improve access to public sector information and its re-use. www.nationalarchives.gov.uk www.legislation.gov.uk

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About the UK Memory of the World Register

The first inscriptions to the UK Memory of the World Register were announced in July 2010 to highlight documentary heritage which holds cultural significance specific to the UK. The UK Register helps raise awareness of some of the UK's exceptional, but lesser-known documentary riches by awarding them with the globally-recognised Memory of the World status. As of 2013, there were 41 items and collections on the UK Register. For more information about the Memory of the World Register, click [here](#)