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Birmingham academics and Channel 4's Time Team reveal the secrets of the playwright's house

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Channel 4's Time Team joined a group of archaeologists as they excavated the site of William Shakespeare's house, New Place, in Stratford on Avon.

We spoke with Kevin Colls, professional archaeologist and researcher part of the Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity team working on the '**Dig for Shakespeare (/schools/historycultures/departments/caha/news/2011/dig-for-shakespeare.aspx)** ' project, that helped the Time Team to explore the secrets of the Bard's home.

What were you most surprised about finding during your dig of Shakespeare's house?

I think that we were all surprised just how much was still preserved beneath the ground at this site. The site has a complex history with at least two, perhaps three, distinctly different houses built on exactly the same piece of land. So we were unsure how much of Shakespeare's house was still present.

What can a person's house tell you about their character and home life? And what does Shakespeare's tell you about his?

The house that you own can tell others much about you as a person. It can indicate wealth and status, how you use the space in the house, what activities take place there. In the 17th century there were no dustbin collections so households buried their domestic rubbish in the back garden, and so archaeological excavations here can tell us about what the residents were eating, drinking, making and ultimately breaking. Shakespeare's house and land in Stratford points towards a wealthy man with a certain high standing in the town at the time of his death in 1616. We also know his family or household servants were making many implements and dress accessories from animal bone.

Did the dig reveal any intriguing questions about Shakespeare that you would like to delve into further?

The work at the site is continuing throughout the summer where we plan to continue to expose further remains of the house and once completed we can look to create virtual reconstructions based on the archaeological evidence and documentary sources.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

The project, although directed by archaeologists from the University, is actually a community excavation where anyone can sign up and get involved in the excavation. Over 200 people each year help us out on site and a further 80,000 people visit the site as it represents one of the properties owned by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford Upon Avon. The season of fieldwork begins at the end of March and further information can be gathered on the SBT website.

The Time Team Special was broadcasted on Sunday 11 March. Re-watch this on **Time Team's 4oD channel (http://www.channel4.com/programmes/time-team-specials/4od)** .

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