

William Shakspere – the Recorded Facts

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By 1890, some ten facts were known about the life of William Shakspere of Stratford. All else in his supposed biographies was either anecdote or invention or deduced from the works of Shakespeare. Since then, the sifting of millions of documents in the forlorn hope of finding something to relate Shakspere to Shakespeare, or at least show he was a writer, has revealed more about his life than we know of almost any of his peers. Sadly, though, for the orthodox theory the new discoveries showed no connection between him and the writer Shakespeare. Records now held for William Shakspere, including some other relevant people, are listed below.

Readers need to know, for the dating of the records, that New Year's Day was changed in 1753 from Lady Day (25th March) to the present 1st January. Most writers use the second of these even for Shakspere's lifetime and we will do the same to be consistent. This may cause discrepancies between our dates and those in a few other records but that can be easily checked. These others put the first draft of Shakspere's will as January 1615, as it was prior to New Year's Day on 25 March: here we give it as January 1616.

Entries put in square brackets are almost certain, though they have been deduced. Within the above records, where there is more than one entry on the same matter – as with the four for William Shakspere's case against Addenbrooke in 1608 – only one has been included here unless others add extra relevant information on him.

1552	Father John Shakspere fined for keeping midden in Henley Street
1556	Father John named as Glover
1556	Father John appointed as "Taster of Bread and Ale"
1556	Father John sues Henry Field (later father of Richard) for 4½ tons of barley
c. 1557	[Father John and mother Mary née Arden married]
1558	First daughter Joan baptised as Shakspere
1558	Father John buys Henley Street property
1558	Mother Mary bequeathed father's land at Wilmecote
1560	First daughter Joan buried
1561	Father John made Stratford Chamberlain
1562	Daughter Margaret baptised as Shakspere (dies in infancy)
26 Apr 1564	Son William baptised as Shakspere at Holy Trinity Church, Stratford
4 July 1565	Father John made Stratford Alderman
13 Oct 1567	Brother Gilbert baptised as Shakspere
1568	Father John made Stratford Bailiff
5 Apr 1569	Sister Joan (second of that name) baptised as Shakspere
1569	Father John sues debtor who has purchased wool
1570	Father John charged with usury, fined 40s (£1200 today)
1571	Father John made Deputy Bailiff
28 Sept 1571	Sister Anne baptised as Shakspere
Jan 1572	Father John goes to London on Stratford business
1572	Father John charged with illegal wool dealing at Westminster
1573	Warrant for Father John over debt for £30 (named as whyttawer – a whitener of skins)

11 Mar 1574	Brother Richard baptised as Shakspere
1575	Father John buys two houses (one next to his in Henley Street)
1576	Father John applies for coat of arms
1576	Father John stops attending Council meetings
1578	Father John mortgages wife's house at Wilmecote to relative, Edmund Lambert
1578	Father John excused poor tax
1578	Father John sells part of his property
1578	Father John named as "whyttawer"
1578	Father John sued for £30
1579	Father John sells and mortgages more of his property
4 Apr 1580	Sister Anne buried as Shakspere
3 May 1580	Brother Edmund baptised as Shakspere
1580	Father John fined £20 in Westminster as a pledge for his conduct
Summer 1580	Father John seeks "sureties of peace" against his creditors for fear of death
August 1582	[In Stratford with Anne Hathaway at conception of daughter Susanna]
27 Nov 1582	Licence issued for marriage of William Shaxpere with Anne Whateley
28 Nov 1582	Bond issued to ensure propriety of marriage of William Shagspere and Anne Hathaway
Winter 1582	Father John witness in Chancery suit about his in-law Ardens' estates
26 May 1583	Daughter baptised as Susanna Shakspere
April 1584	[William with his wife, now Anne Shakspere, in Stratford at conception of twins Hamnet and Judith]
2 Feb 1585	Twins Hamnet and Judith baptised as Shakspere
Jan 1586	Father John issued with order for debt, but has no goods to distrain
Sept 1586	Father John removed as Alderman for 10 years' non attendance
1588	Father John and mother Mary begin unsuccessful against John Lambert for return of Mary's property (William added as plaintiff)
Mar 1592	Father John recorded absent from church "for fear of process for debt"
Sept 1592	ditto (though never fined for absences)
1592	Father John appointed to value assets of Henry Field (father of Richard) on his death
15 Mar 1595	Payment to William (and others) for play for the Queen at Greenwich, Christmas 1594
11 Aug 1596	Son Hamnet buried as Shakspere
20 Oct 1596	Application for coat of arms for Father John renewed (sketch of Arms produced, later marked "No, without right")
before Oct 1596	Recorded living in Bishopsgate, London
Oct 1596	Pursued for 5 shillings London taxes
29 Nov 1596	Writ in Southwark for William and three others to keep peace
4 May 1597	Purchased New Place, Stratford, nominally for £60
15 Nov 1597	Reported in London for default of 5 shillings taxes
1597	Father John restarts case over lost Wilmecote lands
1598	Recorded living in St Saviour's parish, London
Jan 1598	Richard Quiney asks William about investing in Stratford land
24 Jan 1598	A. Sturley letter to R. Quiney says William interested in tithes
4 Feb 1598	Recorded as owning corn and malt at Stratford at time shortage (and living at New Place)
1598	Received 10d (£25 today) for load of stone at Stratford
1598	Received 20d for wine to host visiting preacher
1 Oct 1598	Recorded as defaulter on London taxes in Billingsgate
25 Oct 1598	Letter from R. Quiney to William asking for £30 loan (letter not sent)
30 Oct 1598	Letter from A. Quiney to son R. Quiney asking him to bring William's money

4 Nov 1598	A. Sturley writes to R. Quiney urging pursuit of William's loan
1598	Noted as hoarding 80 bushels (3 tons) of malt, etc. at lean time
1598	Recorded in "Enrolled Subsidy Account" at Stratford
28 Dec 1598	Assists in transfer of timbers to build Globe in Southwark
early 1599	Recorded owing taxes in Billingsgate
21 Feb 1599	William with others becomes lessee/shareholder in Globe
1599	Refused right to join his arms with the Park Hall Arden arms
1599	Recorded as owing taxes in St Helen's Parish, London
1599	Recorded as owing taxes in Clink in Southwark
1599	Recorded hoarding corn and malt at lean time
1600	First of William's nephews (son to Joan Hart) baptised
1600	Sued a John Clayton in Queen's Bench for 1592 loan of £7
6 Oct 1600	Tax arrears of 1 mark (13s 4d) in London
March 1601	Thomas Whittington's will bequeaths to the poor 40 shillings he is owed by Anne Shakspere (William's wife)
1601	Renews application for coat of arms
8 Sept 1601	Father John buried as Shakspeare (with no added "Gent")
1602	Named as player in draft coat of arms
13 Mar 1602	Mannigham records joke about William and Burbage as actors
1602	Referred to as <i>Generoso</i> (implying coat of arms now awarded)
1 May 1602	Buys land in Stratford for £320, brother Gilbert standing in at the exchange of contracts
1602	Legal proceedings over New Place deeds
1602	Thomas and Lettice Greene take apartment in New Place
28 Sept 1602	Buys cottage and land in Stratford for £80
1603	Named by James I as Groom of the Chamber
19 Mar 1603	Named as member of newly formed "King's Men"
15 Mar 1604	Issued with red cloth for entry of James I into London
18 Mar 1604	The Greenes' daughter baptised, named after Anne Shakspere
1604	Lodging with Mount joys, Silver Street, London. (Negotiates marriage settlement for their daughter)
24 Oct 1604	Lessee of cottage at Rowington at 2s 6d per week
July 1604	Sues Mr Rogers (Stratford) for debt of 35s for 20 bushels of malt
1605	Left 30s in will of Augustine Phillips, less than Heminges and Burbage, same as Condell
24 July 1605	Invests £440 in Stratford area tithes
21 [Jan 1606	Shown owing Mr Hubaud of Stratford £20
Easter 1606	Daughter Susanna named for non-attendance at church
5 June 1607	Daughter Susanna marries Puritan Dr John Hall as "Shaxspere" - William gives dowry of land
12 Aug 1607	Edward son of brother Edmund buried as Shackspeere in London
31 Dec 1607	Brother Edmund buried in London as Shakespeare
21 Feb 1608	Granddaughter Elizabeth Hall baptised
17 Jan 1608	The Greenes' son baptised, named after William Shakspere..
July 1608	Brother Richard fined 1s.0d by Ecclesiastical Court
9 Aug 1608	With others, William took 21 year lease on Blackfriars theatre
1608	Sues Mr Addenbrooke (Stratford) for £6 debt
9 Sept 1608	Mother Mary buried as Shaxspere
16 Oct 1608	Stands Godfather to William Walker of Stratford
1609	Pursues Addenbrooke's surety, Mr Horneby, for £6
6 Apr 1609	Makes payment to poor relief in Southwark
1609	Brother Gilbert summoned to appear at Court of Requests

1610	Legal proceedings confirming ownership of New Place
1610	Completes purchase of 20 acres at Stratford begun in 1602
1611	Legal proceedings over William's tithe holdings
Mar 1611	Thomas Greene leaves apartment at New Place
1611	Contributed to cost of Stratford Parliamentary Bill
1611	Leases Stratford barn to Robert Johnson for £22
1611	Issues bill over Combe family default on rent
1611	Interest on William's tithes of £60 (£36,000 today)
11 May 1612	Witness in Belott-Mountjoy case: name on testimony place of mark is "Willm Shakp"
3 Feb 1612	Brother Gilbert buried (Stratford) as Shakspere
28 Jan 1613	John Combe (Stratford) leaves William £5 in will
4 Feb 1613	Brother Richard buried (Stratford) as Shakspeare
10 Mar 1613	Buys Blackfriars Gatehouse for £140: name on purchase place of mark is "William Shakspar"
11 Mar 1613	Takes mortgage for Blackfriars Gatehouse: name document in place of mark "Wm Shaksper"
31 Mar 1613	Receives 44s (also Burbage) for <i>impresa</i> for 6th Earl of Rutland (there is a query over the identities here)
29 June 1613	Globe burnt down
26 Oct 1613	With others, William takes share of new lease on Globe site
30 June 1614	Globe back in business
10 July 1614	Left £5 in will of John Combe
5 Sept 1614	Noted as owning 127 acres of land at Stratford
28 Oct 1614	Given surety against losing tithe income over enclosure
17 Nov 1614	In London with son-in-law John Hall to meet Stratford Town Clerk (Greene) over enclosures
23 Dec 1614	Meets Town Clerk, Thomas Greene in London, and regularly through 1615 in London and Stratford
26 Apr 1615	Launches "friendly" proceedings to obtain deeds of Blackfriars Gatehouse
May 1615	Prematurely mentioned as being dead in case Ostler-v-Heminges (daughter sues Heminges for taking husband's shares in Globe)
1615	Named with respect to land enclosures at Stratford
10 Jan 1616	Will drafted
1616	Noted in Jonson's Folio with actors in <i>Every Man Out Of His Humour</i> (1598) and in <i>Sejanus</i> (1603)
10 Feb 1616	Daughter Judith marries Thomas Quiney: causes William to change will
Feb/March 1616	Judith becomes pregnant, carrying boy who will be baptised Shaksper Quiney
12 Mar 1616	Thomas Quiney excommunicated for marrying in Lent without licence
24 Mar 1616	Thomas Quiney punished for getting another woman pregnant
25 Mar 1616	Will finalised showing link to Globe shareholders – name "Shakspere" three times on will in place of a mark with first name as "William", "Willm" and "William"
15 April 1616	Burial of William Shakspere Gent