

Legal and Tax records relating to Shakespeare



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1596, William Wayte "swore before the Judge of Queen's Bench that he stood in danger of death, or bodily hurt," from "William Shakspere" and three others. "The magistrate then commanded the sheriff of the appropriate county to produce the accused ... who had to post bond to keep the peace, on pain of forfeiting the security" (@ Schoenbaum 146).

The entry reads (translated from Latin): "England. Be it known that William Shakspere, Francis Langley, Dorothy Soer wife of John Soer, and Anne Lee, for fear of death [ob metum mortis] and so forth. Writ of Attachment issued and directed to the Sheriff of Surrey, returnable the eighteenth of St. Martin" (Public Record Office, Court of King's Bench, Controlment Roll, Michaelmas Term 1496, K.B. 29/234).

15th November 1597, Shakspere is named in the King's Remembrancer Subsidy Roll as a tax defaulter in Bishopgate ward who failed to pay an assessed 5s (E. 179/146/354).

1st October 1598, in the King's Remembrancer Subsidy Roll, Shakspere is listed as a tax defaulter who failed to pay an assessed 13s.4d (E. 179/146/369).

1598/9, in the Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer Accounts of Subsidies, Shakspere is listed among those in Bishopgate ward who have moved out of the district (E. 359/56).

6th October 1599, Shakspere is among those listed in the Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer Residuum London accounts as delinquents owing back-taxes (E. 372/444).

"The marginal note Surrey, and the reference to 'Residuum Sussex', added later, signify that Shakespeare had migrated across the river to the Surrey Bankside" (@ Schoenbaum 163).

6th October 1600, Shakspere is listed in the Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer Residuum Sussex accounts (E. 372/445) and a "tax bill of 13s.4d. is still outstanding. The notation Episcopo Wintonensi in the left-hand margin indicates that the Court of Exchequer had referred the dramatist's arrears to the Bishop of Winchester, whose liberty of the Clink in Surrey lay outside the sheriff's jurisdiction. The natural inference is that Shakespeare now lived in the Clink, although it is a curious fact that his name has not been traced in any of the annual lists of residents of the Clink parish (St. Saviour's) compiled by the officers who made the rounds to collect tokens purchased by churchgoers for Easter Communion, which was compulsory" (@ Schoenbaum 163).

1604, Shakspere sued the apothecary Philip Rogers for 35s.10d plus 10s damages, seeking to recover the unpaid balance on a sale of twenty bushels of malt and a small loan (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, MS. ER 27/5).

17th August to 7th June 1609, Shakspere brought law suit against John Addenbrooke for £6, plus 24s. damages.

Shakspere won and an order was issued for Addenbrooke's arrest. Addenbrooke failed to appear in court and an attempt was made to force Addenbrooke's surety, the blacksmith Thomas Horneby, to pay the full amount (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Misc. Doc. V, 116; Misc Doc V, 139; Misc Doc V, 127a; Misc Doc V, 127b; Misc Doc V, 115; MS. ER 27/6; MS. ER 27/7).

1611, in a Stratford Court of Chancery Bill of Complaint (Richard Lane et al. versus Dominus Carewe et al., Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Misc. Doc. II, 11), the "complainants, of whom Shakespeare was one, asked that the other tenants pay their portion of the mean rent of £26.13s.4d. reserved for John Barker, who held the original lease on the tithes" (@ Schoenbaum 193). William Combe answered the complaint, agreed to pay more than twice what he had been, and asked that the other tenants pay their share (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Misc. Doc. X, 9).

11th May 1612 to 19th June Shakspere was called into court and asked to resolve a dispute regarding the amount offered by him as dowery when he helped negotiate a marriage in 1604.

(Public Record Office, Court of Requests, Belott v. Mountjoy; etc.). "Only Shakespeare himself could resolve the question ... but what the portion was, or when it was to be paid, Shakespeare could not say..."

The witness likewise professed ignorance of 'what implementes and necessaries of houshold stuff Mountjoy gave with Mary' (@ Schoenbaum 210-3).

We have a record of Shakespera's signature for the deposition. See [The six signatures](#)

26th April 1615, on a Court of Chancery bill of complaint, Shakspere is listed among those who sought to obtain Blackfriars property documents (@ McMichael 17).

May 1615, Thomasina Ostler's court plea has a list of shareholders for the Globe Theater and Blackfriars property which includes Shakspere's name (@ McMichael 17).

John Shakespeare, Shakespeare's father was fined for wool dealing.
(Public Records Office.)

