

Shakespearean Authorship Trust



William Shakspere

Dates

26th April 1564: 'Gulielmus filius Johannes Shakspere' (William son of John Shakspere) entered into the baptismal register of the Holy Trinity parish church, Stratford.

25th April, 1616: The burial of 'Will Shakspeare gent' is recorded in the Stratford parish register

Education

Unknown. It is assumed he attended the local grammar school, though no records exist to substantiate this. His name does not appear in any university records of the time.

Marriage

27th November 1582: an entry in the Bishop of Worcester's Register recorded the grant of a marriage license to 'wm Shaxpere et Anna whateley.'

28th November 1582: an entry in the Bishop of Worcester's Register records the marriage of 'willm Shagspere ... and Anne hathwey.'

The latter refers to the man who has passed down to us as the great writer. The births of his children are recorded in Stratford in 1583 and 1585 (twins).

London

In 1592 Shakspere seems to have been known as an actor in London. How he came to be in London and how he became an actor are unknown. No records exist which explain this transformation. By 1596, it appears he was also something of an entrepreneur. He invested much of his earnings in buying property and land in his hometown. In 1598, plays began appearing under his name. In 1599, he became part-owner of the Globe Theatre. It is believed he retired to Stratford sometime between 1610 and 1613 (again, no evidence exists to substantiate this).

The Case

William Shakspere is the conventional candidate. Many plays appeared under the name of 'William Shakespeare', 'Shake-speare' or 'Shakspeare' from 1598, culminating in the collected works (The First Folio) in 1623 (seven years after his death). Ben Jonson (among others) celebrates 'the author William Shakespeare' in the preface of this text, and the following poems link the author with the Shakespeare Memorial in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon. Many plays contained in this collection had not been heard of before or had not been attributed to Shakespeare previously. Many of these plays were written between 1592 and 1598 and had appeared anonymously when first published. In 1598, Francis Meres (in *Palladis Tamia, Wits Treasury*) refers to Shakespeare as a playwright excellent "for Comedy, witness his *Gentlemen of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Love[s] Labours Lost*, his *Love Labours Won*, his *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and his *Merchant of Venice*; for Tragedy his *Richard the 2*, *Richard the 3*, *Henry the 4*, *King John*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Romeo and Juliet*."

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