

Shakespearean Authorship Trust



Sir Walter Raleigh/Raleigh,

Dates:

1554-1618

Brief Background:

Education: Oriel College, Oxford. Middle Temple, Inns of Court, London.

Languages: Fluent French, Latin and Italian.

Born in a comparatively humble Devonshire farmhouse but related to the oldest and most influential families in the West Country. Half-brother to Sir Humphrey Gilbert, great-nephew to Katherine (Kat) Astley, governess, then First Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Elizabeth 1st. Rose to become a favourite of Elizabeth but fell foul of King James 1st, was arrested on a trumped-up charge of treason, tried and sentenced to death but imprisoned in the Tower and regarded as 'Civily dead' for twelve years. Released to sail to Guiana in search of gold, failed, and was executed on previous charge.

Raleigh was much more than a mere courtier who received monopolies and titles from his Queen. He was also a soldier, sailor, explorer, scholar, politician, philosopher, scientist, chemist, historian and student of astronomy. (Knowledge of all these pursuits is to be found in the Shakespeare plays). He read voraciously, even making room for a trunk-full of books on his sea voyages, and wrote at every stage of his eventful life - pamphlets, essays, poetry, a best-selling travel book, verse petitions, commendatory verses, epitaphs, a vast history book (also a best-seller) and innumerable letters.

A Taste Of The Case:

- Raleigh had a connection to Shakespeare of Stratford - his wife's cousin Mary married Edward Arden of Park Hall.
- He was close to Christopher Marlowe, replying jokingly in verse to Marlowe's *Passionate Shepherd* to his Love.
- He was close to Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke. She begged her younger son to plead with King James for Raleigh's life, while her older son introduced Carew Raleigh (Sir Walter's heir) at court after his father's death. Both Herbert brothers were, of course, dedicatees of the First Folio.
- Many of the sonnets mirror Raleigh's life experiences, his philosophy and his (often despondent) moods.
- Events in his life tarry surprisingly well with the accepted dates and spirit of the plays.
- Several unusual phrases in the plays are used by him in his letters.
- References to his voyages are to be found in: *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *As You Like It*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, *Love's Labours lost*, *All's Well That Ends Well* and *The Tempest*.
- Adaptations of his poems occur in *Hamlet* and *The Merchant of Venice*.
- Ben Jonson, who must have known the true author, tutored Raleigh's son Wat for a while and wrote a poem to accompany the front-piece of Raleigh's *History of the World*.

Reason for hiding identity:

Throughout his adult life, Raleigh sought to become a Privy Councillor. Even while in the Tower, he hoped and worked for release and eventual advancement. Writing for the public stage would hardly have improved his career while Elizabeth was on the throne. When James came to power he hated Raleigh 'above all others' - had he discovered him as author he would certainly have banned performance of the plays, as he attempted to ban Raleigh's *History of the World*.

Angela McGarry is completing the final stage of a novel citing Raleigh as 'Shakespeare' and currently researching for her non-fiction book on the same subject.

Links

www.luminarium.org/renlit/raleghessay.htm

Books

Shakespeare and Sir Walter Raleigh Henry Pemberton, Haskell House, June 1980

Sir Walter Raleigh Raleigh Trevelyan, Allen Lane-Penguin, 2002

Sir Walter Raleigh Robert Lacey, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973

The Letters of Sir Walter Raleigh Edited by Agnes Latham and Joyce Youings, University of Exeter Press, 1999

www.shakespeareanauthorshiptrust.org.uk