

The Gears of Avon & Other Tragedies

Gear Technology's bimonthly aberration — gear trivia, humor, weirdness and oddments for the edification and amusement of our readers. Contributions are welcome.



As part of the Addendum Team's never-ending quest to improve the overall cultural tone of the gear industry, we bring you the following: April 23 is the

432nd birthday of William Shakespeare.

No matter how much you remember from those long-ago lit classes, we'll bet you didn't know that in addition to his many other talents, Shakespeare was a gear engineer.

What, you say? You don't remember this from high school English? Well, maybe you just weren't paying attention.

Allow us to quote you chapter and verse, or, more accurately in this case, act and scene number.

Shakespeare appreciated the eagerness with which gear engineers approach their work. From act 1, scene 4, of *Henry VI, Part II*, we hear: "To this

gear, the sooner the better." And from *Richard III*, act 1, scene 4, "Come, shall we to this gear?"

He also understood the tragedy of gear failure. In *Troilus & Cressida*, act 1, scene 1, Pandarus laments, "Will this gear ne'er be mended?"

And he knew how committed gear engineers are to their work. In *Henry VI, Part II*, act 3, scene 1, the Duke of York promises: ". . . I will remedy this gear ere long./Or sell my title for a glorious grave." (Now there's a guy who may be taking his work a bit too seriously.)

So that we "vex not the ghosts" of our English professors, we are obliged to point out that we're being "satirical rogues." "Gear" in Elizabethan times was used to mean any kind of business or arrangement; in Shakespeare's case, often something not very nice, like assassination or betrayal, which the Bard seems to know a whole lot more about than he does about gear engineering.

And On Other Fronts . . .

While lurking in the library for evidence of Elizabethan gear manufacturing (you didn't think we made this stuff up, did you?), we came across an artifact that pre-dates Shakespeare by a couple of hundred years. The following is from a contract signed in 1344 by an early gear engineer, Walter Lorgoner of Southwark, with the administrators of St. Paul's Cathedral, London:

"The said Walter shall make a dial for the clock of the same church with roofs and all manner of apparatus appertaining to the said dial and for turning the angel in front of the clock so that the said clock may be good and suitable and profitable to show the hours of the day and night. The said clock is to remain without defects, and in case defects shall be found afterwards in the same clock, the said Walter binds himself by this indenture to make the repairs whenever he shall be summoned by the ministers of the Church. And for this work well and duly done and completed, the aforesaid Dean and Chapter shall pay him six pounds sterling—and the said Walter shall find at his own cost the iron, brass, and all manner of other things for carrying out the said work; and shall have for himself the old apparatus which will no longer serve."

No mention of holidays, vacations, coffee breaks or a health care plan. Just thought you'd want to know that before you quit your day job looking for greener pastures or a career in the theater. ☉



The Addendumeter. If you've read this far on this page and enjoyed it, please circle 214.