

SYSTEM AND PLUG MEANS FOR PLUGGING A CONDUIT

This invention relates to flow control apparatus used in well conduits. The invention specifically relates to apparatus utilizing plug means having a prong which is attached to a running tool and lowered into a well conduit to be operated to seal and lock in a landing nipple in the well conduit.

Flow conduits in producing wells are usually equipped with landing nipples to receive various flow controls required during the operating life of the well. While performing remedial well services in a well, it is sometimes necessary to install a plug in a landing nipple to prevent flow in either direction in the conduit. Examples of various forms of plugs or plug chokes are shown on page 126 of the "Otis General Sales Catalog" OEC 5338, a publication of Otis Engineering Corporation, P.O. Box 819052, Dallas, TX 75381-9052. Illustration MS 485 on page 126 shows a form of plug having a prong installed therein. Installation of this plug, in a landing nipple in a well conduit, requires a running tool to be attached to the plug lock mandrel. The running tool and lock

mandrel are lowered on wireline or pumped down the well conduit and the lock mandrel is operated to seal and lock in the landing nipple and the running tool is manipulated to release from the lock mandrel and be raised or pumped back to surface. Next, the prong is connected to another running tool on the surface. The prong running tool and prong are then lowered into the well conduit and down into the plug locked in the landing nipple. The prong seals inside the plug closing the plug to flow and the prong running tool is manipulated to release the prong and is raised back to surface. When it is desirable to remove this plug from the landing nipple, a prong pulling tool must be lowered into the conduit to latch into the prong and raise the prong out of the plug and back to surface.

According to one aspect of the present invention, there is provided apparatus for plugging flow through a lock mandrel comprising a valve housing connectable to said lock mandrel and having flow ports therethrough, prong means in said valve housing, said prong means being longitudinally moveable from an open position permitting flow through said housing ports to a closed position preventing flow through said housing ports, means for locking said prong means in closed position, and means for releasably retaining said prong means in said valve housing.

The apparatus may be so arranged that, when connected to a running tool for installation in a landing nipple, an internal flow passage is formed for fluids

displaced while it is being lowered into the well conduit. After the apparatus has been installed in a landing nipple, it can be arranged that the flow passage is closed to flow and is locked closed, so automatically closing the apparatus to flow when the running tool is released therefrom.

In one form of the invention, the plug means has a lock mandrel with seals and a prong is releasably attached to the plug, while both the plug means and lock mandrel with prong are releasably attached to a running tool to be lowered into a well conduit having a landing nipple. Both plug means and prong are installed in the landing nipple at the same time saving another run to install a prong in the plug means. The plug means has a valve body with flow ports connected below the lock mandrel seals. Seals on the prong are positioned below the ports, while the plug means is being lowered into the conduit, to permit displaced fluid to flow through the ports up through the prong and out the top of the running tool.

After the lock mandrel has been operated to seal and lock the plug means in the landing nipple, the running tool is released by applying an upward force to the running tool sufficient to shear a first pin connecting the running tool to the plug lock mandrel. Continued upward movement of the running tool moves seals on the prong to above and below the valve body ports, closing said ports of the plug means to flow, and shears a second

pin releasing the running tool from the prong. The closed plug means prevents flow in either direction through the landing nipple and conduit.

By way of example, the invention will be further illustrated with reference to the accompanying drawings.

In the drawings:

Figs. 1A, 1B, 1C and 1D is a half sectioned drawing in elevation showing plug means according to the invention, with the prong releasably connected and with the plug means connected to a running tool, ready to be lowered for installation in a landing nipple in a well conduit.

Fig. 2 is a cross-sectional drawing along line 2-2 of Fig. 1.

Fig. 3 is a cross-sectional drawing along line 3-3 of Fig. 1.

Fig. 4 is a cross-sectional drawing along line 4-4 of Fig. 1.

Fig. 5 is a cross-sectional drawing along line 5-5 of Fig. 1.

Fig. 6 is a fragmentary view of Fig. 1 showing the plug means installed in a landing nipple.

Fig. 7 is a fragmentary view of Fig. 1 showing the running tool disconnected from the installed plug means.

Fig. 8 is a fragmentary view of Fig. 1 showing the plug means closed to flow.

FIG. 9 is a fragmentary view of FIG. 1 showing the running tool disconnected from the prong.

FIGS. 10A and 10B is a drawing in elevation and partial section showing the installed plug means from which the running tool has been disconnected and raised to surface.

FIGS. 11A and 11B is also a drawing in elevation and partial section of the plug means after installation and after the prong has been disconnected and raised to surface.

FIGS. 1A, 1B, 1C and 1D show the plug means 10 which includes a locking mandrel 11 with seals 11a, keys 11b, a valve 12 and a cap 13 having a bore 13a. The valve housing 12a is connected and sealed to the lower end of the lock mandrel and the cap is connected and sealed to the lower end of the valve housing. A running tool 14 engages lock mandrel fishing neck 11c and is connected to the plug means with the first (weaker) shearable pins 15 (see also FIG. 4) and to a prong 16 with second (stronger) shearable pin 17 (see also FIG. 3). The prong is slidably mounted for longitudinal movement in the plug means and is releasably retained in the plug means by a third (strongest) shearable pin 18 (see also FIG. 5).

The running tool 14 and lock mandrel 11 shown are substantially the same as the inserting tool and locking device of U.S. Patent 3,208,531 to J. W. Tamplen, to the specification of which reference can be made for further details. Only the core of

the referenced inserting tool has been modified to receive the prong 16 of the present example and prong 16 is releasably connected to the core with pin 17.

The plug means and prong could be utilized with any lock mandrel and running tool which can be installed to seal and lock in a landing nipple in a well conduit.

Prong 16 is mounted for longitudinal movement and releasably connected in bore 19a in running tool core 19 by shearable pin 17. The prong includes an upper section 20 on which are carried seals 21 and to which is connected a retainer 22. The upper section is provided with a fishing neck 23, having a pulling flange 23a, holes for receiving pin 17 and a number of flow ports 24. The retainer retains seals 21 on the upper section and has an upper shoulder 22a and a lower shoulder 22b. Releasably positioned below the lower shoulder of the retainer by pin 18 (see Fig. 5) is a ring 25. A flow passage 26 extends longitudinally through prong 16.

A c-ring (cut ring) 27 is expanded by the larger outside diameter of the retainer above shoulder 22a into a groove formed by bore 13a in the cap and the lower end of valve housing 12a, which has flow ports 12b and a seal bore 12c, which is sealingly engaged by seals 21.

To install the described plug means in a landing nipple in a well conduit, the plug means is first connected to an appropriate running tool and lowered into the well conduit. While it is being lowered in the conduit, valve 12 is

open and displaced liquid may flow through ports 12b and 24 into passage 26, out the top of prong upper section 20, through running tool openings 14a (see FIG. 2) and slots 14b in the running tool. As the plug lock mandrel 11 enters landing nipple 28, mandrel seals 11a sealingly engage landing nipple seal bore 28a and the lock mandrel has been operated so that keys 11b locate and are locked in the landing nipple recesses 28b as shown in FIG. 6.

After the plug means is sealed and locked in the landing nipple, upward force on the running tool shears first pin 15 and moves the prong (via unsheared pin 17) and seals 21 upward in valve housing seal bore 12c (see FIG. 7).

FIG. 8 shows further upward movement of the running tool has moved seals 21 to above and below ports 12b in valve housing 12a, closing valve 12 and plug 10 to flow by preventing flow between the outside of the plug means and flow passage 26. Ring 27 has moved inwardly under retainer upper shoulder 22a, locking the prong in up valve closed position. Upward movement of prong ring 25 is prevented when c-ring 27 contacts the lower end of the valve housing and prevents further upward movement of prong 16.

Further upward force on the running tool shears pin 17 (see FIG. 9), releasing the running tool from the prong for removal from the well conduit.

FIGS. 10A and 10B show the plug means sealed and locked in the landing nipple. Valve 12 is closed and flow

through the plug means, landing nipple 28, and the well conduit is prevented.

To remove the described plug means from the well conduit landing nipple, an appropriate pulling tool (not shown) is lowered to latch onto pulling flange 23a on prong 16. Sufficient upward force is placed on the prong through the connected pulling tool to shear third shearable pin 18 disconnecting prong 16 from plug means 10. As prong 16 and seals 21 are raised out of the plug means for retrieval to surface, valve flow ports 12b are reopened to flow, as shown in Figs. 11A and 11B and pressure inside and outside the plug means will equalise. An appropriate pulling tool is now lowered to latch into lock mandrel fishing neck 11c for unlocking the lock mandrel from the landing nipple and retrieving plug means 10 back to surface.



CLAIMS

1. Apparatus for plugging flow through a lock mandrel comprising:

- (a) a valve housing connectable to said lock mandrel and having flow ports therethrough;
- (b) prong means in said valve housing, said prong means being longitudinally moveable from an open position permitting flow through said housing ports to a closed position preventing flow through said housing ports;
- (c) means for locking said prong means in closed position; and
- (d) means for releasably retaining said prong means in said valve housing.

2. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the prong means comprise:

- (a) an upper section having flow ports therethrough; and
- (b) seal means on said upper section below said flow ports.

3. The apparatus of claim 2 wherein the upper section has a fishing neck thereon.

4. The apparatus of claim 2 or claim 3 wherein the means for locking said prong means in closed position



comprise:

- (a) a retainer connected to the prong upper section below the seals;
- (b) upper and lower shoulders on said retainer; and
- (c) a c-ring around said retainer, said c-ring positioned in a bore in the cap and engageable with the lower end of the valve housing.

5. The apparatus of claim 4 wherein the means for releasably retaining the prong means comprise:

- (a) a ring around the retainer, below said lower retainer shoulder, said ring engageable with the lower end of the c-ring; and
- (b) a shearable pin releasably positioning said ring on said retainer.

6. Apparatus for plugging and controlling flow through a lock mandrel comprising:

- (a) a valve housing connectable to said lock mandrel, said valve housing having ports for flow therethrough;
- (b) a cap connected on said valve housing; and
- (c) a prong between an open position permitting flow through said ports and a closed position preventing flow therethrough, said prong including
an upper section having flow ports
therethrough, seals thereon below said upper



section flow ports, and a retainer having upper and lower shoulders thereon, said retainer being connected on said prong upper section below said seals,

a c-ring around said retainer, said c-ring being positioned in a bore in said cap and engageable with the lower end of said valve housing and

a ring around said retainer below said lower retainer shoulder, said ring being engageable with the lower end of said c-ring and said ring being releasably positioned on said retainer by a shearable pin.

7. A system for plugging a conduit comprising:
- (a) a landing nipple in the conduit;
 - (b) plug means for sealingly engaging and locking in said landing nipple, said plug means including a lock mandrel, valve means in said plug means for controlling flow therethrough, a cap connected to said valve means, prong means in said plug means, said prong means being longitudinally moveable from an open position, permitting flow through said valve means, to a closed position closing said valve means to flow, locking means in said plug means for locking



said prong means in closed position, and means releasably connecting said prong means in said plug means; and

- (c) a running tool for sealingly engaging and locking said plug means in said landing nipple, said running tool being releasably connected to said lock mandrel by a first shearable pin, and said prong means being releasably connected to said running tool by a second shearable pin.

8. The system of claim 7 wherein the first shearable pin requires less force to shear than the second shearable pin.

9. The system of claim 7 or claim 8 wherein the landing nipple has recesses and a seal bore therein.

10. The system of claim 9 wherein the lock mandrel includes keys and has seals thereon, said seals being sealingly engageable in the landing nipple seal bore and said keys being lockable in the landing nipple recesses.

11. The system of any one of claims 7 to 10 wherein the prong means comprise:

- (a) an upper section having flow ports therethrough; and
- (b) seal means on said upper section below said flow ports.



12. The system of claim 11 wherein the valve means comprise:

- (a) a valve housing connected to the lower end of the lock mandrel, said housing having flow ports therethrough and a seal bore therein above and below said flow ports; and
- (b) the upper prong section seal means sealingly and slidably mounted for longitudinally movement in said valve housing seal bore.

13. The system of claim 11 or claim 12 wherein the locking means in the plug means comprise:

- (a) a retainer connected to the prong upper section below the seals;
- (b) upper and lower shoulders on said retainer; and
- (c) a c-ring around said retainer, said c-ring positioned in a bore in the cap and engageable with the lower end of the valve housing.

14. The system of claim 13 wherein the means releasably connecting the prong in the plug means comprise:

- (a) a ring around the retainer below said lower retainer shoulder, said ring engageable with the lower end of the c-ring; and
- (b) a third shearable pin releasably positioning



said ring on said retainer.

15. The system of claim 14 wherein the third shearable pin requires more force to shear than either of said first or second pins.

16. A system for plugging a conduit comprising:

(a) a landing nipple in the conduit, said landing nipple having recesses and a seal bore therein;

(b) plug means for sealing and locking in said landing nipple, said plug means including

a lock mandrel having seals thereon and locking keys, said seals being sealingly engageable in said landing nipple seal bore and said locking keys being lockable in said landing nipple recesses, valve means in said plug means for controlling flow through said plug means, said valve means including a valve housing connected to the lower end of said lock mandrel, said housing having flow ports therethrough and a seal bore therein above and below said flow ports, a cap being connected to the lower end of said valve housing, prong means including an upper section having flow ports therethrough and seals on said upper section below said flow ports, said upper section seals being sealingly and



slidably mounted for longitudinal movement in said valve housing seal bore, said prong means being longitudinally moveable from an open position, permitting flow between the outside and inside of said valve housing through said valve housing flow ports and said upper section flow ports, to a closed position preventing flow between the outside and inside of said valve housing, locking means in said plug means for locking said prong means in closed position including a retainer connected to said prong upper section below said prong upper section seals, upper and lower shoulders on said retainer, and a c-ring around said retainer, said c-ring positioned in a bore in said cap and engageable with the lower end of said valve housing, and means releasably connecting said prong means in said valve housing and plug means including a ring around said retainer below said lower retainer shoulder, said ring being engageable with the lower end of said c-ring, and a third shearable pin releasably positioning said ring on said retainer; and

(c) a running tool for sealingly engaging and locking said plug means in said landing nipple, said running tool being releasably connected to



said lock mandrel by a first shearable pin, and said prong upper section being releasably connected to said running tool by a second shearable pin.

17. The system of claim 16 wherein the first shearable pin requires less force to shear than the second shearable pin and the second shearable pin requires less force to shear than the third shearable pin.

18. Apparatus for plugging flow through a lock mandrel constructed and arranged for use and operation substantially as described herein with reference to the accompanying drawings.

19. A system for plugging a conduit constructed and arranged for use and operation substantially as described herein with reference to the accompanying drawings.
