

ROTATION MECHANISM

This invention relates to a rotation mechanism and, in particular, to a rotation mechanism for use in rotating an element which is located within a pressure containing housing.

The specific application of the present invention is to a type of wellhead system known as "Tie back" which is used on wells with pre-drilled casing strings which are suspended at the seabed or mud line. Whilst specifically applicable to this type of wellhead system, the invention may be used in other applications in which rotation of an element in a pressure containing housing is required.

In order to connect pre-drilled casing strings to a wellhead at the surface, which is typically located on a production platform, a means has to be provided in the surface wellhead to place the mudline to surface (tie back) casing strings in tension.

This requires that the casing suspension mechanism (hanger) within the wellhead provides a means of adjustment which conventionally comprises a threaded hanger landing ring. This ring is mounted on the casing hanger and is rotated, such that it is moved axially down the body of the casing hanger whilst the hanger is held at the required tension by tubular members that pass back to the surface. The landing ring is rotated by means of an engaging tool, which is in turn rotated by tubular members passing back to the surface, these tubular members being external to and concentric with the internal tubular member which are holding the casing hanger in tension. The landing ring is rotated down the body of the casing hanger until it abuts a landing shoulder such that the applied tension on the hanger cannot be released.

However, such an arrangement introduces problems in handling, given the concentric tubular members, and increases the number of manipulations down the well (i.e. trips with a tool) which adds significant cost to the drilling operation.

Accordingly, the present invention aims to provide a system which eliminates the requirement for an external tubular member to provide the means of rotating the threaded hanger landing ring, but which still maintains the pressure integrity of the housing.

According to the present invention, there is provided a system for rotating an element inside a pressure containing housing, the mechanism comprising;

a pressure containing housing having an opening through a wall of the housing into an internal chamber in which, in use, the element to be rotated is located;

a bushing located within the opening;

5 a worm gear rotatably mounted in the bushing, the worm gear being offset from the axial centre of the bushing such that rotation of the bushing moves the worm gear between an extended position in which the thread of the worm gear is intended to engage an element in the chamber and a retracted position in which the thread is not intended to engage an element in the chamber.

10 Thus, the present invention provides a simple to operate worm gear which can be moved into or out of engagement with the element which is to be rotated, such that, when in engagement, rotation of the worm gear causes rotation of the element within the pressure containing housing. Thus, the present invention allows the casing hanger to be run, tensioned and adjusted using a single trip down the
15 drilled hole as the rotation mechanism is clearly in place, whereas previously it was necessary to have three trips, one to run a tool to tension the hanger and one to tension it and one to adjust the tension as the hanger and lock it in place.

Preferably, the retracted position of the worm gear allows the element within the internal chamber to be removed axially from the chamber, i.e. it does not extend
20 into the chamber. Preferably, in the extended position, the thread on the worm gear extends into the chamber in order that it can engage with the element which is to be rotated.

The system preferably further comprises pressure containing seals between the bushing and the housing to ensure that the integrity of the pressure containing
25 housing is maintained.

A handle is preferably provided for rotating the bushing, such that the movement of the bushing into or out of engagement with an element within the pressure containing housing can be carried out by hand. Alternatively, a motor or other suitable drive means may be provided for rotating the handle. Typically, the
30 handle will be adjusted by hand when the wellhead is at the surface, although there may be situations in which the wellhead is located subsea, in which case a motor or other drive means will be necessary in order to rotate the bushing.

The bushing is preferably rotatable about 180°, although other suitable ranges of operation are envisaged.

A drive means is preferably provided for rotating the worm gear and this drive means may include a handle for manual operation or, alternatively, may include a motor for rotating the worm gear.

The worm gear is preferably substantially tangential to the chamber.

5 One example of the present invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which;

Figure 1 shows a sectional view of a running tool with an adjustment sleeve in place;

10 Figure 2 is a cross-sectional view of the present invention with the worm gear retracted;

Figure 3 is a cross-sectional view of the present invention with the worm gear engaged and a sleeve in the well bore;

Figure 4 shows a three dimensional, partial section view of the present invention with the worm gear disengaged; and

15 Figure 5 shows a three D sectional view of the present invention with the worm gear engaged and a sleeve in the well bore.

Figure 1 shows a wellhead housing 10 which is connected to the drilling system, typically comprising the blow out preventors (not shown), by means of a drilling adaptor 11. The drilling adaptor 11 contains the rotation mechanism of the invention which is illustrated in Figures 2 to 5.

20 A casing hanger 12 having a bore 13 therethrough is mounted on a hanger running tool 14. A drive sleeve 15 having an external thread of helical grooves or teeth 37 is mounted such that it is slidable axially and rotatable about the outer portion of the hanger running tool 14. The hanger 12 is to be located in well bore 16 and, using the present invention, tensioned and adjusted in a single trip.

25 With reference now to Figures 2 to 5, the drilling adaptor 11 which helps to define the well bore 16 and acts as a pressure containing housing. A worm gear 17, connected to an integral shaft 18, is located within a typically tangential bore 19, the tangential bore 19 opening into the well bore 16. In Figure 2, the worm gear 17 is shown in the retracted position in which it does not extend into well bore 16 to any extent.

30 The worm gear 17 and its integral shaft 18 are rotatably mounted within a bushing 20 which has an eccentric bore 21. The bushing 20 is supported by bearing rings 22 such that it is rotatable within bore 20. A flange 23 retains the

bushing and thrust bearings 24 ensure the freedom of movement of the bushing when under internal pressure. Seals 25 and 26 contain pressure from within the well bore 16.

5 A handle 27 for rotating the bushing is provided and is clearly marked to indicate the position in which the worm gear 17 is engaged and the position in which it is disengaged from the sleeve 15. A lock pin 28 controls the 180° rotation of the bushing to engage or disengage the worm gear. Ports 29, 30 and 31 provide means for flushing and lubricating the mechanism.

10 In the disengaged position, the worm 17 is clear of the well bore 16 allowing full access down the well in the conventional manner.

In the engaged position shown in Figure 5, the worm 17 engages with the mating profile of the helical drive gear or sleeve 15. This item is slidably mounted, both axially and rotationally, on hanger running tool 14 and it is secured by a retaining ring 32. The hanger running tool 14 is connected to the hanger 12 by means of a thread 33 and pressure seals 34. A hanger adjustable landing ring 35 is threaded to the lower part of the hanger running tool, with the adjustable landing ring 35 being fluted and slotted to allow the flow of drilling fluids to pass the landing ring.

15 Mating extensions (not shown) at the lower extremity of the helical drive gear or sleeve 15 engaged with slots (not shown) in the hanger adjustable landing ring 35.

A proposed installation procedure is as follows;

(1) The rotation mechanism, i.e. the worm gear, bushing and handle etc, is placed and locked in the retracted position as shown in Figures 2 and 4.

25 (2) The hanger 12 with the casing string 40 attached is then run into the well using hanger running tool 14 and the casing string engaged in the mud line hanger system.

(3) The required tension is then applied to the tie back string (i.e. the casing string 40) by the running tool landing string 41. At this time, the hanger adjustable landing ring 35 is clear of the landing shoulder 36 in the high-pressure housing 10.

30 (4) The worm is then engaged, by rotating the handle through 180° and locked in the engaged position in Figures 3 and 5. This means that the worm 17 is engaged with mating teeth 37 on the helical drive gear 15.

(5) Rotation of the worm shaft 18, either by hand or with a powered actuator, causes the worm 17 to rotate the helical drive gear 15 which in turn rotates the landing ring 35. This rotation causes the landing ring 35 to move down axially on the hanger 12, thereby pulling the helical drive gear 15 down with the ring, as the
5 helical drive gear is free to slide both axially and rotationally around the hanger running tool 14.

(6) When increased resistance is obtained this indicates that the hanger adjustable landing ring 35 is in contact with the landing shoulder 34 in the wellhead
10 10. At this time, the weight on the landing string 41 is relaxed.

(7) The worm gear is then placed and locked in the retracted position shown in Figures 2 and 4 such that the worm 17 no longer engages with the teeth 37 on the helical drive gear. Subsequent rotation of the landing string would release the hanger running tool 14 from the hanger 12, thereby allowing retrieval of the landing string and running tool to the surface, complete with the helical drive gear.

CLAIMS

1. A system for rotating an element inside a pressure containing housing suitable for use with a hydrocarbon wellhead, the mechanism comprising:
 - 5 a pressure containing housing having an opening through a wall of the housing into an internal chamber in which, in use, the element to be rotated is located;
 - a bushing located within the opening; and
 - a worm gear rotatably mounted in the bushing, the worm gear being
10 offset from the axial centre of the bushing such that rotation of the bushing moves the worm gear between an extended position in which the thread of the worm gear is intended to engage an element in the chamber and a retracted position in which the thread is not intended to engage an element in the chamber.
- 15 2. A system according to claim 1, wherein the retracted position of the worm gear allows the element within the internal chamber to be removed axially from the chamber.
- 20 3. A system according to either claim 1 or claim 2 wherein, in the extended position, the thread on the worm gear extends into the chamber.
4. A system according to any of claims 1 to 3 wherein, in the retracted position, the thread of the worm gear is outside of the chamber.
- 25 5. A system according to any one of claims 1 to 4, further comprising pressure containing seals between the bushing and the housing.
6. A system according to any one of the preceding claims, further
30 comprising a handle for rotating the bushing.
7. A system according to any one of the preceding claims, further comprising a motor for rotating the bushing.

8. A system according to claim 6, wherein the handle is intended to be operated manually.
9. A system according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the
5 bushing is rotatable between 0 and 180°.
10. A system according to any one of the preceding claims, further comprising drive means for rotating the worm gear.
- 10 11. A system according to claim 10, wherein the drive means includes a handle for manual operation.
12. A system according to claim 10, wherein the drive means includes a motor for driving the worm gear.