

= Robert Keyes =

Robert Keyes was a member of the group of provincial English Catholics who planned the failed Gunpowder Plot of 1605 , a conspiracy to assassinate King James I by blowing up the House of Lords during the State Opening of Parliament on 5 November 1605 . He was the sixth man to join the plot .

Unlike several other conspirators Keyes was not a particularly wealthy man . He was trusted by Robert Catesby , the plot 's author , with guarding the explosives stored at the latter 's lodgings in London . When the plot was uncovered he fled the city , and was captured several days later in Warwickshire . He was subsequently tried with his co @-@ conspirators , found guilty , and in January 1606 hanged , drawn and quartered .

= = Life before 1604 = =

Born in about 1565 , Robert Keyes was the son of the Protestant Rector of Staveley in North Derbyshire . His mother was a daughter of Sir Robert Tyrwhitt of Kettleby in Lincolnshire , and related to the Catholic Babthorpes of Osgodby . Keyes ' first cousin Elizabeth Tyrwhitt was married to another member of the plot , Ambrose Rookwood . By 1604 , Robert had converted to Catholicism . His wife Christina , a widow when he married her , was the governess for the children of Henry Mordaunt , 4th Baron Mordaunt , at Drayton in Northamptonshire , and for this Keyes gained the use of horses and other amenities .

= = Gunpowder Plot = =

English Catholics had hoped that the persecution of their faith would end when the apparently more tolerant King James I succeeded Queen Elizabeth I , but Robert Catesby , a Catholic zealot from Ashby St Ledgers , remained unimpressed by the new royal dynasty . He therefore planned to kill James by blowing up the House of Lords with gunpowder , following which he would help incite a popular revolt to install James 's daughter , Princess Elizabeth , as titular Queen . His role being to guard the gunpowder and other items stored at Catesby 's house in Lambeth , Keyes joined the conspiracy in October 1604 .

The Jesuit priest John Gerard described Keyes as " a grave and sober man , and of great wit and sufficiency " . Father Oswald Tesimond claimed that Keyes had " tasted persecution himself , having lost his goods because of it " while historian and author Cyril Northcote Parkinson 's image of him was of a " desperate man , ruined and indebted " . Tall , with a red beard , despite his relative poverty Catesby declared him " a trusty honest man " , and may have paid him for his services . Like fellow plotter Guy Fawkes , he was thought capable of looking after himself . Several conspirators expressed concerns about the safety of fellow Catholics who would be at Parliament on the day of the planned explosion ; Keyes was particularly worried about Lord Mordaunt , his wife 's employer . Thomas Percy was concerned for his patron , Henry Percy , 9th Earl of Northumberland , and the Lords Vaux , Montague , Monteagle and Stourton were also mentioned . Keyes 's suggestion to warn Lord Mordaunt was treated by Catesby with derision , when he answered that " he would not for the chamber full of diamonds acquaint him with the secret , for that he knew he could not keep it . "

Keyes and his cousin @-@ in @-@ law Ambrose Rookwood spent the night before the planned explosion at the house of an Elizabeth More , near Temple Bar . They were visited late that evening by Fawkes (in charge of the explosives beneath the House of Lords) who collected a watch left by Percy , for timing the fuse . Several hours later , however , Fawkes was discovered guarding the explosives , and arrested .

= = Failure and death = =

When Keyes heard that Fawkes had been captured he took to his horse and fled for the Midlands .

He was overtaken at Highgate by Rookwood , who was rushing to inform Catesby and the others of what had transpired . After he and Rookwood had caught up with Catesby , Percy , Thomas Bates , and John and Christopher Wright , Keyes left the group , and headed instead for Lord Mordaunt 's house at Drayton , where he went to ground . He was identified as a suspect on 6 November , and captured several days later .

The conspirators were tried on 27 January 1606 at Westminster Hall . Despite entering pleas of not guilty (only Digby professed his guilt) , all eight were found guilty . They were each allowed to speak " wherefore judgement of death should not be pronounced against them " . Keyes made no attempt to excuse his actions , claiming that " death was as good now as at any other time " , preferable to living " in the midst of so much tyranny " . The Jesuit Oswald Tesimond wrote in his Narrative of Keyes 's defence :

He claimed that his motive had been to promote the common good . That is , he hoped that his native land would be turned back to the Catholic faith . The violence of the present persecution had driven him also to take part in the conspiracy .

On 31 January 1606 Keyes , Rookwood , Thomas Wintour and Fawkes were taken to the Old Palace Yard in Westminster , to be hanged , drawn and quartered . Rookwood and Wintour were the first to ascend to the gallows . Grim @-@ faced , Keyes went " stoutly " up the ladder , but with the halter around his neck he threw himself off , presumably hoping for a quick death . The halter broke , however , and he was taken to the block to suffer the remainder of his sentence .