

= Ambrose Rookwood =

Ambrose Rookwood (c . 1578 ? 31 January 1606) was a member of the failed 1605 Gunpowder Plot , a conspiracy to replace the Protestant King James I with a Catholic monarch . Rookwood was born into a wealthy family of Catholic recusants , and educated by Jesuits at Flanders . His older brother became a Franciscan , and his two younger brothers were ordained as Catholic priests . Rookwood , however , became a horse @-@ breeder . He married the Catholic Elizabeth Tyrwhitt , and had at least two sons .

He was enlisted into the plot in September 1605 by Robert Catesby , a religious zealot whose impatience with James 's treatment of English Catholics had grown so severe that he conspired to blow up the House of Lords with gunpowder , killing the king and much of the Protestant hierarchy . With the other conspirators he had recruited , Catesby also planned to incite a rebellion in the Midlands , during which James 's nine @-@ year @-@ old daughter Princess Elizabeth would be captured , and installed as titular queen . Rookwood 's stable of fine horses was essential for the uprising to succeed .

The explosion was planned to coincide with the State Opening of Parliament on 5 November 1605 , but the man left in charge of the gunpowder stored beneath the House of Lords , Guy Fawkes , was discovered there and arrested . Rookwood fled the city , and informed Catesby and the others of the plan 's failure . Together the remaining conspirators rode to Holbeche House in Staffordshire , where on 8 November they were attacked by the pursuing Sheriff of Worcester and his men . Catesby was killed , but Rookwood survived , and was imprisoned in the Tower of London .

Rookwood and the survivors were arraigned on 27 January 1606 in Westminster Hall . Pleading not guilty , he claimed to have loved Catesby " above any worldly man " . His subsequent request for mercy was ignored , however , and he was hanged , drawn and quartered on 31 January , in the Old Palace Yard at Westminster .

= = Early life = =

Born sometime about 1578 , Ambrose Rookwood was the second of four sons born to Robert Rookwood and his second wife , Dorothy Drury , the daughter of Sir William Drury and Elizabeth Sothill . During his first marriage to Bridget Kemp , Robert had sired four sons , but all predeceased their father .

The Rookwood family had lived at Stanningfield in Suffolk for 300 years . Wealthy , and staunch Catholics , the authorities viewed them as trouble @-@ makers . Ambrose 's Papist cousin Edward had spent ten years in prison for his faith , but in 1578 he entertained Queen Elizabeth I at his home , Euston Hall . It was an expensive visit that made a serious dent in the family 's finances , and which neutered their influence for years thereafter . Ambrose 's parents had been imprisoned for their recusancy , and he was indicted on the same charge in February 1605 . However , he was apparently happy to advertise his faith ; in the summer of 1605 he commissioned a London cutler , John Craddock , to place a Spanish blade into a sword hilt engraved with the story of the Passion of Christ . As such weapons were generally worn in public , it was " a potentially dangerous statement of faith " .

Ambrose and two of his brothers , Robert and Christopher , were educated by Jesuits at Saint @-@ Omer , then in Flanders . Both brothers became priests (Ambrose 's elder brother , Henry , became a Franciscan) , and his half @-@ sisters Dorothea and Susanna became nuns . Ambrose married into the Tyrwhitts , a prominent family of Catholics from Kettleby in Lincolnshire , and with his wife Elizabeth (cousin to Robert Keyes) had at least two sons , Robert and Henry . According to the Jesuit Oswald Tesimond , Rookwood was " well @-@ built and handsome , if somewhat short " , which he compensated for by his taste in extravagant clothing . In author Antonia Fraser 's opinion , this affectation was somewhat inappropriate at a time when " clothes were supposed to denote rank rather than money " . On his father 's death in 1600 , Rookwood inherited Coldham Hall , which subsequently became a refuge for priests . The following year he joined the Earl of Essex 's abortive rebellion against the government , for which he was captured and held at Newgate Prison .

= = Enlisted = =

In August 1605 Rookwood joined the Jesuits Henry Garnet and John Gerard on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St Winefride 's Well in Holywell . Late in September , he was approached by Robert Catesby , Thomas Wintour and John Wright , and invited to join what became known as the Gunpowder Plot . English Catholics had hoped that the persecution of their faith would end when James I came to the throne , as his attitude appeared to be moderate , even tolerant towards Catholics . In Catesby 's view however , James had reneged on his promises . He therefore planned to kill the king by blowing up the House of Lords with gunpowder , and then inciting a popular revolt to install James 's daughter , Princess Elizabeth , as titular Queen . To this end he had already helped enlist nine Catholics into the conspiracy , but was running out of money and needed to recruit more men . Rookwood was a horse @-@ breeder , and his stable of fine mounts at Coldham Hall was needed for the Midlands uprising . He had been asked to supply them with gunpowder about a year earlier , under the pretence that it was for William Stanley 's regiment in Flanders ? no longer an illegal operation due to the recent Treaty of London ? but otherwise provided no funds for the conspiracy .

Although unverifiable , his wife 's relationship to Robert Keyes may mean that Rookwood already suspected that something was being planned . He was at first concerned for the welfare of the Catholic lords who would be present at the explosion , but his compunction was alleviated when Catesby promised him that they would be tricked out of attending Parliament that day . Any lingering doubts Rookwood had were removed by Catesby 's lie that the Jesuits had given the scheme their approval . Rookwood had stayed with the Wintours at Huddington Court , and that month with the Catholic Lacons at Kinlet Hall , but at Cateby 's behest he rented Clopton House near Stratford , and moved there after Michaelmas . He took with him several Catholic religious symbols , such as chalices , crucifixes , vestments , Latin books and praying beads . These were concealed in a cellar built by the Jesuit Nicholas Owen .

Toward the end of October he joined Keyes at his lodgings in London . A few days before the planned explosion he changed his mind about the sword he had ordered John Craddock to make , and had the cutler replace the grip with a gold one . The modified sword , which in total probably cost Rookwood more than £ 20 , was delivered on 4 November .

= = Discovery = =

The existence of the plot had been revealed in an anonymous letter delivered ten days earlier to William Parker , 4th Baron Monteagle , warning him to keep away from Parliament . On the evening of 4 November the authorities made a search of the House of Lords , where they discovered one of the plotters , Guy Fawkes , guarding a hoard of explosives . He was immediately arrested .

Fawkes had posed as a servant of fellow plotter Thomas Percy , and it was therefore Percy 's name that appeared on the first arrest warrant issued by the government . News of Fawkes 's capture soon spread through London , prompting Christopher Wright (brother of John) to rush to Thomas Wintour , and tell what had happened . Wintour guessed that the government was looking for Percy , and told Wright to travel to Percy 's lodgings and " bid him begone " . While Wintour lingered , Christopher Wright and Percy left the city , followed by Keyes , and then Rookwood . A renowned horseman , Rookwood covered 30 miles in two hours on a single horse . Using various steeds he had left along the route , he passed Keyes at Highgate , and then Wright and Percy at Little Brickhill near Dunstable . He caught up with Catesby , who had left the previous day to prepare the uprising , and told him what had happened in London . The group , which now included Catesby , his servant Thomas Bates , both Wright brothers , Percy and Rookwood , rode on to Dunchurch .

While Fawkes was being tortured , on 6 November the government began to round up anyone they thought might be involved . Rookwood 's servants , still in the house their master had so hastily departed , were questioned on the same day . His belongings at Clopton ? including several incriminating Catholic symbols ? were also taken , and by the time the plotters had reached Catesby

's family home at Ashby St Ledgers , Rookwood 's name was among the list of suspects drawn up by the Lord Chief Justice . The fugitives continued on to Dunchurch , where they met the recently recruited conspirator Everard Digby , with his hunting party . The next day the group stole horses from Warwick Castle , although with his fine cortège , Rookwood avoided the town . They then collected stored weapons from Norbrook , and continued on to Huddington . The party tried in vain to expand their number , but were shunned ; no one was prepared to risk being labelled a traitor . Father Garnet , contacted at Coughton Court by Bates , wrote Catesby a letter in which he implored the group to stop their " wicked actions " , before himself fleeing .

= = Fugitive = =

I doe acknowledge that uppon thursday morninge beeing the 7th of November 1605 my selfe and all the other gentlemen (as I doe remember) did confesse o ' sinnes to one Mr. Hamonde Preeste , at Mr. Robert Wintour his house , and amonges other my sinnes I did acknowledge my error in concealing theire intended enterprise of poudre agaynste his Ma and the State , having a scruple in conscience , the facte seeminge to mee to bee too bluddye , hee for all in generall gave me absolution without any other circumnstances beeing hastned by the multitude that were to come to him .

Rookwood was proclaimed a wanted man on 7 November . He went to confession and with the rest of the group took the sacrament ? in Fraser 's opinion , a sign that none of them thought they had long to live . Through pouring rain they rode to Hewell Grange , helping themselves to further arms , ammunition and money , and finally reached Holbeche House , on the border of Staffordshire , at about 10 : 00 pm that night . Tired from three days of riding , they spread in front of the fire some of the now @-@ soaked gunpowder taken from Hewell Grange , to dry out . A stray spark landed on the powder , and Rookwood , Catesby , John Grant and another man were caught up in the resultant conflagration . Rookwood and Catesby were described as " reasonably well " , but Grant was blinded .

Several of the conspirators disappeared into the night , but Rookwood , Catesby , the Wright brothers , Percy and Grant stayed on . They didn 't have long to wait ; by 11 : 00 am the next day the house was surrounded by 200 of the Sheriff of Worcester 's men . In the ensuing battle , Wintour was shot in the shoulder . John and Christopher Wright were each killed . Catesby and Percy were reportedly both killed by a single musket ball . Rookwood was also shot , but survived and was quickly captured . His belongings should by right have been seized by the government , but his elaborate sword apparently proved to be too great a temptation for the Sheriff 's men , and disappeared without trace . Rookwood and the others were taken first to Worcester , and then to the Tower of London . Those conspirators still at large were rounded up shortly after .

= = Trial and execution = =

Watched in secret by the king and his family , the surviving conspirators were arraigned in Westminster Hall on 27 January 1606 . Some of the prisoners hung their heads " as if their hearts were full of doggedness " , while others were nonchalant . All except Digby pleaded " Not Guilty " . Defending himself , Rookwood claimed that he had been enlisted into the plot through his friendship with Catesby , " whom he loved above any worldly man " . He admitted that he could not expect mercy , but asked for it anyway , so as not to leave a " blemish and blot unto all ages " .

His pleas were in vain . Three days later , Digby , Robert Wintour , John Grant and Thomas Bates were hanged , drawn and quartered at the western end of St Paul 's churchyard . The following day , Rookwood , Thomas Wintour , Robert Keyes and Guy Fawkes were tied to wattled hurdles and dragged by horse from the Tower , to the Old Palace Yard at Westminster ? a longer route than had been suffered by their fellow conspirators . Rookwood had asked to be informed when he passed by his lodgings in the Strand , so that he could open his eyes and see his wife , waiting at the window . He shouted " Pray for me , pray for me ! " According to Father Gerard (who was not then present) , Elizabeth answered , " I will , and be of good courage . Offer theyself wholly to God . I , for my part ,

do as freely restore thee to God as He gave thee unto me . " For the rest of the journey he kept his eyes closed , in prayer . Thomas Wintour was the first that day to be hanged and then killed . Rookwood was next , and made a short speech to the assembled audience . He was repentant , asking God to bless the king , queen , and their " royal progeny " , but " spoil [ed] all the pottage with one filthy weed " by beseeching God to make the king a Catholic . Nevertheless , he seems to have been left to hang for longer than the others , before suffering the remainder of his grim sentence .