

**Francis Young, ed..** *Rookwood Family Papers, 1606-1761*. Suffolk Records Society Series. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2016. Illustrations. 184 pp. \$45.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-78327-080-4.

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**Commissioned by** Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth (Red Deer College)

This is an impressively edited collection of documents on the Rookwoods of Coldham in Suffolk. It stems, I assume, in part from the editor's earlier research and publications on the Gage family, two of whom were responsible for taking over and arranging the Rookwoods' papers.

Editing archival records might not seem like the most exciting branch of the historical profession. But the fact is that the reassembly of, in this case, gentry family records remains essential to the way that we approach many aspects of the post-Reformation period in Britain. It is crucial if one wants to say anything sensible about the social and political structures that generated these records. These are also, as it happens, the volumes that stay on the shelves years after this or that fashionable theory or ludicrously overblown monograph have long been forgotten.

The Rookwood family has a high profile within the English Catholic community and its historical memory. Though it was hardly the only such family to suffer adversity, it was certainly unfortunate in attracting disaster in successive generations. But the Rookwood pedigree reminds one of the high incidence of intermarriage among the Catholic gentry and the web of connection that, to some extent, served to protect these people in an often hostile environment. While there are a number of families whose names we tend to asso-

ciate with Catholicism in the post-Reformation period, many of them also had conformist and even Protestant branches. There are rather fewer whose marital associations were as solidly Catholic as the Rookwoods' tended to be.

The Rookwoods also constituted a classic case of what some other Catholics would have seen as the colonization of the natural leaders of the community by aspiring, grasping, and thoroughly dangerous clergy (Jesuit priests, for the most part) who brought their patrons to disaster even as they sucked out of them the resources that could have benefited the entire community. Particularly in the later sixteenth century, Catholics who thought that more control ought to be exercised over the Catholic fraction of the national church, preferably via some form of episcopal government, detected what they regarded as the malign control of such families (especially) by Jesuit clergy. One of those clergy, John Gerard SJ, was indeed in the Rookwood family circle. The way in which, in his well-known autobiographical sketch of his missionary endeavors, he described his evangelizing of East Anglia might be taken to be a positive rendering of the entirely negative account that his critics set out—notoriously during the Archpriest dispute beginning in the later 1590s.

As the editor explains, there must at one time have been many more family papers, and the se-

ries printed here begins only in 1606. It appears that the search of Coldham Hall on November 10, 1605, resulted in the destruction of the Rookwood family papers gathered up to that point. This reminds us that we have to keep a sense, if possible, not just of what is available to us in the archives but also of what was once there, which we know or suspect to have been lost. The volume, however, has a very full and authoritative introduction and traces the history of the family and its vicissitudes over approximately two centuries.

One of the highlights of the documentation presented here is the evidence for the family's library. As Francis Young says, it contained a major corpus of English Catholic authors' writings, and Thomas Gage and Elizabeth Rookwood also drew up a "bibliography" of English Catholic authors and their works. These serve as an indicator of the ideological and literary interests of the family at the time that the collection was brought together.

The only thing that one might have liked to see was a more detailed Rookwood family tree, but I appreciate that it might have been very difficult to get such a thing into the volume—the Gage family tree alone is fearsome in its complexity. The book is splendidly produced with color plates.

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