

Book Review

SIR HENRY NEVILLE WAS SHAKESPEARE: THE EVIDENCE.

by John Casson and William D. Rubinstein

2016, Amberley Publishing.

This is the ninth book (including an e-book) to be written about Sir Henry Neville as the man who was responsible for writing the Shakespeare canon. Both Professor Rubinstein and Dr. John Casson have written previous books on Neville. This is the first time they have co-authored a book. There are 12 chapters and an exciting appendix which will whet the appetite of anyone interested in the whodunit of the Shakespeare Authorship Question. The chapters cover the entire canon of the plays and poetry of Shakespeare and are accompanied by many quotes that aptly describe the circumstances being portrayed. Casson and Rubinstein use previously unpublished sources from the library at Audley End House where Sir Henry Neville's annotated books are now housed. Documents, letters and notebooks written by Sir Henry Neville himself 400 years ago and preserved in various archives have been carefully and clearly reproduced. The formation of Neville's handwriting has been explained with examples taken from his own correspondence. This book (319 pages) can be read as a stand-alone copy in its own right, but is far more rewarding if one has read the previous books on Sir Henry Neville and his family, who lived at Billingbear near Windsor, and had Court connections with most of the English Royal Houses from William the Conqueror onwards.

All the books written about Neville, with his friends, acquaintances, playwrights, the Globe, Blackfriars, Court and the Tower of London, have been meticulously researched and recorded. It is this attention to detail in every respect, especially historical facts, that has collectively built an extremely firm foundation for other scholars to build upon and all this is under-pinned by research from primary sources. There is no way Sir Henry Neville, who wished to be anonymous in his own time, will crumble into dust - as do the other authorship candidates - he left far too many reliable clues for future generations to follow once he was revealed by the code in the Dedication to the 1609 edition of *Shake-speares Sonnets*. As the book reveals there is so much more to discover: this is only the tip of the iceberg, much is yet to come.

On a critical note I would have liked to view an appendix of a transcript of Sir Henry Neville's fathers' Last Will and Testament (referred to in chapter 3) and more whole original Neville letters with verbatim transcripts. Not all members of the general public are able to visit the establishments where they are housed (for one reason or another) and rely on published documents as their means to enable them to visualize life-styles. For example the Will would give

further reading material on household furniture, embroidery, clothes/fashion, food, how big the farms were, good or bad harvests etc. With whole letters we could then read biographies of the people the letters were sent to, discovering local history, archaeology in the surrounding area and wider European history. People often look at things differently from scholars as they have keen interests themselves.

Anyone who has ever glanced at a Shakespeare play or who can vaguely quote a few words from the Bard's vast canon should read this highly enthralling and entertaining book and its previous companions. They will not be disappointed.

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by Casson and Rubinstein is £14.99 from Amazon or most good Bookshops.

Beatrice Gale, 2016