

= Robert and Thomas Wintour =

Robert Wintour ( 1568 ? 30 January 1606 ) and Thomas Wintour ( 1571 or 1572 ? 31 January 1606 ) , also spelt Winter , were members of the Gunpowder Plot , a failed conspiracy to assassinate King James I. Both were related to other conspirators , such as their cousin , Robert Catesby , and a half @-@ brother , John Wintour , also joined them following the plot 's failure . Thomas was an intelligent and educated man , fluent in several languages and trained as a lawyer , but chose instead to become a soldier , fighting for England in the Low Countries , France , and possibly in Central Europe . By 1600 , however , he changed his mind and became a fervent Catholic . On several occasions he travelled to the continent and entreated Spain on behalf of England 's oppressed Catholics , and suggested that with Spanish support a Catholic rebellion was likely .

As a momentum was building behind a peace settlement between the two countries , Thomas 's pleas fell on deaf ears . Instead , in 1604 he decided to join with Catesby , who planned to restore England to Catholicism by killing the king , and inciting a popular revolt in the Midlands , during which James 's daughter , Princess Elizabeth , would be installed as titular queen . Thomas returned to the continent and again failed to elicit Spanish support , but instead met Guy Fawkes , with whom he returned to England . Robert , a devout Catholic who inherited Huddington Court near Worcester , joined the conspiracy the following year .

The plot began to unravel following the delivery of an anonymous letter to William Parker , 4th Baron Monteagle , warning him to stay away from Parliament . Thomas and Catesby confronted Monteagle 's brother @-@ in @-@ law , the recently recruited Francis Tresham , threatening to kill him , but Tresham managed to convince them of his innocence . At that stage Thomas reportedly asked Catesby to abandon the scheme , to no avail . When Fawkes was captured at about midnight on 4 November 1605 , Thomas fled to Robert 's house at Huddington . Catesby and most of the others spent two days travelling across the Midlands attempting to incite a rebellion , but with an ever @-@ diminishing group of supporters they eventually settled at Holbeche House in Staffordshire , and waited for government forces to arrive . Thomas , by then reintegrated into the group , chose to remain with them , and in the ensuing firefight was shot in the shoulder , and captured . Robert , who had left before the battle , evaded capture until January 1606 .

Much of what is written about the plot is based on Thomas 's confessions , given in the Tower of London in November 1605 . The brothers were tried on 27 January 1606 , and hanged , drawn and quartered several days later in London .

= = Family and life before 1604 = =

Robert ( b . 1568 ) and Thomas Wintour ( b . 1571 ? 72 ) were sons of George Wintour of Huddington Court in Worcestershire , and his wife Jane ( née Ingleby ) , daughter of Sir William Ingleby of Ripley Castle near Knaresborough . A sister , Dorothy , married another conspirator , John Grant . Two agnate half @-@ siblings , John and Elizabeth , resulted from their father 's marriage to Elizabeth Bourn , following Jane 's death . Their paternal grandparents were Robert Wintour of Cavewell in Gloucestershire , and his wife Catherine , daughter of Sir George Throckmorton of Coughton in Warwickshire . As scions of the Throckmortons , they could therefore claim a kinship with plotters like Robert Catesby and Francis Tresham . Their maternal uncle Francis Ingleby , a Catholic priest , was hanged , drawn and quartered at York in 1586 , a fact which in the opinion of historian and author Antonia Fraser , " could hardly have failed to leave a stark impression upon the Wintour family . " The Wintours took their name from the Welsh Gwyn Tour ( White Tower ) . ' Wyntour ' was sometimes used in signatures , but not ' Winter ' ( as the brothers are commonly named ) .

A faithful Catholic , Robert was married to Gertrude Talbot , daughter of the recusant John Talbot of Grafton . He inherited the Tudor Huddington Court near Worcester , along with a significant fortune with which he was known to be generous . Under Robert , Huddington Court became a known refuge for priests . The proclamation for his capture , issued following the plot 's failure , described him as " a man of mean stature , and rather low than otherwise ; square made , somewhat stooping

; near 40 years of age ; his hair and beard brown ; his beard not much , and his hair short . " The Jesuit John Gerard wrote that he was " esteemed in his life to be one of the wisest and most resolute and sufficient gentlemen in Worcestershire " . Gerard 's appraisal of Thomas was just as complimentary . He was apparently an intelligent , witty and educated man , who could speak Latin , Italian , Spanish and French . " He was of mean stature , but strong and comely and very valient , about 33 years old or somewhat more . " Thomas worked as a servant to William Parker , 4th Baron Monteagle . He was educated as a lawyer , but following several years of dissipation travelled to Flanders and enrolled in the English army . He fought against Catholic Spain in the Low Countries , France and possibly against the Turks in Central Europe . However , by 1600 his views had changed ; citing his belief in the injustice of fighting against the power of Catholic Spain , like his elder brother he became a passionate Catholic . Travelling as ' Mr Winter of Worcestershire ' , from 24 February 1601 he spent 13 days in Rome for the jubilee , and later that year and into 1602 travelled to Spain , to petition the Council on behalf of the Catholic rebels left leaderless by the execution of Robert Devereux , 2nd Earl of Essex . Father Henry Garnet , perhaps thinking that the purpose behind Thomas 's visit was to gain financial support for impoverished English Catholics , sent him to Superior Father Joseph Creswell , who made the introductions to the Spanish . This trip to Spain later became the first of two visits to be dubbed by the English government as the Spanish Treason , but Thomas 's timing was unfortunate , coming as it did so soon after Spain 's failed attack in Ireland , and he received only vague assurances of their support . In England he met with the Spanish embassy Don Juan de Tassis , who in August 1603 landed at Dover to help negotiate an Anglo @-@ Spanish treaty . Tassis quickly realised that any chance of a successful Catholic rebellion was unlikely , and discounted Thomas 's claim that , with funding , " 3 @,@ 000 Catholics " would be available for the cause . After meeting with King James he wrote to Spain emphasising the need to prioritise peace with England over the freedom of her Catholics .

= = Thomas meets with Robert Catesby and John Wright = =

According to contemporary accounts late in February 1604 Thomas 's cousin , Robert Catesby , invited him to his house in Lambeth , but Thomas was indisposed and could not attend . Catesby sent a second letter that Thomas did respond to , and when he arrived he found his cousin with John Wright , a devout Catholic and a renowned swordsman . Catesby planned to re @-@ establish Catholicism in England by blowing up the House of Lords during the State Opening of Parliament , killing the king . Thomas did not immediately recoil from the idea . As a former soldier he was a practical man , and he agreed with Catesby that should the plot succeed , it would " breed a confusion fit to beget new alterations " . He also offered a warning of the price of failure : " the scandal would be so great which the Catholic religion might hereby sustain , as not only our enemies , but our friends also would with good reason condemn us . " He nevertheless agreed to join the conspiracy , and as Catesby had not entirely given up hope of foreign support ? " because we will leave no peaceable and quiet way untried " ? Thomas returned to the continent .

In Flanders he met Juan Fernández de Velasco , 5th Duke of Frías and Constable of Castile , who was holding court there before his journey to England to conclude the Treaty of London . Thomas again stressed the plight of English Catholics , hoping to influence the forthcoming treaty negotiations due to take place at Somerset House in London . The Constable was " friendly rather than forthcoming " . Thomas also met the Welsh spy Hugh Owen , and Sir William Stanley , who were both disparaging of Catesby 's hopes of Spanish assistance . Owen did , however , introduce Thomas to Guy Fawkes , a committed Catholic who had served under Stanley as a soldier in the Southern Netherlands . Although at that time the plotters had no detailed plans , Thomas told Fawkes of their ambition to " do somewhat in England " , should Spanish support be lacking . In late April therefore the two men returned together to Catesby 's lodgings at Lambeth , and told him that despite positive noises from the Spanish , " the deeds would nott answer " .

= = Robert joins = =

With the addition to the conspiracy of Thomas Percy ( John Wright 's brother @-@ in @-@ law ) , the five plotters met at the Duck and Drake inn , in the fashionable Strand district of London , on 20 May 1604 . From hereon Thomas Wintour remained at the heart of the conspiracy . The group leased properties in London , one in Lambeth for storing the gunpowder that was rowed across the Thames to its destination . His confession has the plotters digging a tunnel toward their target during one of the several prorogations of Parliament , abandoned when the chamber directly beneath the House of Lords became available .

Following the meeting in May Catesby enlisted the aid of several more Catholic men , including Robert Wintour . On the same day he was admitted to the plot , 25 March 1605 , the conspirators also purchased the lease to the undercroft they had supposedly tunnelled near . It was into this room that 36 barrels of gunpowder were brought , but when in late August Thomas and Fawkes made an inspection of the gunpowder , they found that it had decayed ( separated ) . Thus , more gunpowder was brought in .

Shortly after this , Catesby recruited the last three conspirators , Sir Ambrose Rookwood , Sir Everard Digby and Francis Tresham . The latter 's involvement in the plot has long been the subject of controversy , as on 26 October his brother @-@ in @-@ law William Parker , 4th Baron Monteagle , received an anonymous letter while at home , warning him to stay away from Parliament . Thomas went with Catesby to confront Tresham on the matter , threatening to " hang him " if he did not exonerate himself . Tresham managed to convince the pair that he was innocent , but Thomas then tried unsuccessfully to persuade Catesby to abandon the plot . His pleas were in vain ; Catesby 's position was echoed by Percy , who at a meeting of the three in London on Sunday 3 November , said that he was ready to " abide the uttermost trial " . On the same day , Robert and three others stayed at the home of John Talbot of Grafton , his father @-@ in @-@ law . His friends were Robert Acton and his two sons , plus servants . The group left the following morning with extra horses supplied by Everard Digby , and travelled to Coventry .

= = Failure and capture = =

Monteagle had delivered the letter to the English Secretary of State , Robert Cecil , 1st Earl of Salisbury , and on Saturday 2 November ( about a week later ) the Privy Council decided to undertake a search of Parliament . The following Monday , during the first search , Thomas Howard , 1st Earl of Suffolk , noticed the huge pile of faggots in the corner of the cellar beneath the House of Lords . The king insisted that another search be made , and about midnight another party , this time led by Thomas Knyvet , 1st Baron Knyvet , discovered Fawkes and arrested him .

News of Fawkes 's capture soon spread throughout London , including the Strand , where Christopher Wright , John Wright 's brother , overheard the commotion . He immediately went to Thomas , who was staying at the Duck and Drake inn . As Fawkes had given his name as " John Johnson " , servant of Percy , it was for the latter that the government 's first arrest warrant was issued . Thomas guessed as much , and told Wright to go to Percy and " bid him begone " . As the rest of those conspirators still in London fled the city , undaunted , he went over to Westminster to try and discern what he could . In author Alan Haynes 's opinion , this demonstrated an impressive degree of trust in Fawkes 's ability to confound his interrogators , but when Thomas heard for himself that the treason had been uncovered , he left for Huddington , stopping at his sister 's house in Norbrook along the way .

The fugitives reached Catesby 's family home of Ashby St Ledgers at about 6 : 00 pm . Not wanting to implicate his mother , Catesby sent a message to Robert , who had just recently arrived there , asking to meet just outside the town . There he told him that Fawkes had been captured . At Dunchurch they collected Everard Digby and his ' hunting party ' , which included Robert and Thomas 's half @-@ brother , John Wintour . He had been invited to join them on 4 November . The next day the group raided Warwick Castle for supplies , something that Robert strongly objected to as it would create " a great uproar " in the country , and later arrived at Huddington Court , where they met Thomas . Early the next morning Huddington 's occupants went to confession and took the Sacrament at Mass ? in Fraser 's opinion , a sign that none of them thought they had long to live .

They collected further arms and munitions from Hewell Grange , but trying to recruit more people to their cause they were met with disdain ; while the conspirators considered themselves to stand for " God and country " , the men of Hewell Grange replied that they were for " King James as well as God and Country " . Late that night , pulling a sodden cart full of weapons and armour behind them , they arrived at Holbeche House , near Kingswinford in Staffordshire . Robert was asked if he would go and see if he could elicit any help from his father @-@ in @-@ law , John Talbot . He refused , and Thomas went instead , with Stephen Littleton . Talbot was , however , loyal to James , and sent them away , claiming that their visit was " as much as his life was worth " . While returning to Holbeche , they received a message that Catesby , Rookwood , John Grant and another man were dead , and the rest apparently fled . Tired and desperate , the plotters had attempted to dry their soaked gunpowder in front of the fire , only for a stray spark to ignite it . While Littleton chose to leave , begging his companion to follow his example , Thomas continued on to Holbeche , where he found the remaining plotters alive , but injured .

While several including Robert and his half @-@ brother John chose to vanish into the night , Catesby , Percy , the Wright brothers , Grant , Rookwood and Thomas remained . Thomas asked them what they intended to do ? " We mean here to die " . Thomas replied " I will take such part as you do " . Richard Walsh , Sheriff of Worcester , arrived with a vigilante force of about 200 men early on 8 November . Thomas was the first to be hit , in the shoulder , while crossing the courtyard . The Wright brothers were next , followed by Rookwood , still injured from the explosion the night before . Catesby and Percy were dropped by a single lucky shot . The sheriff 's men then proceeded to strip the defenders of their valuables , but Thomas was saved by the sheriff 's assistant . His fine sword , ordered and paid for four months previously , apparently proved too great a temptation for the Sheriff 's men , as it was never seen again . He and the others were taken first to Worcester , and then to the Tower of London . Despite a proclamation of 18 November naming them as wanted men , Robert Wintour and Stephen Littleton managed to evade capture until 9 January 1606 . They spent about two months hiding out in barns and houses ; at one point they were forced to restrain a drunken poacher who happened upon their hiding place . They were eventually discovered at the house of Humphrey Littleton in Hagley , after a cook , John Finwood , informed on them . Humphrey managed to escape , but was captured at Prestwood , in Staffordshire .

= = Thomas 's confession = =

Historically , much of what is written about the Gunpowder Plot is derived from Thomas 's confession , signed on 23 November 1605 ; details of the so @-@ called Spanish Treason were added three days later . One of only two confessions printed in the King 's Book ( a highly partial contemporary account of the affair ) , Thomas Wintour 's was the only account the government had of a plotter who had been involved from the beginning ; Guy Fawkes , weakened by days of torture , may have been at the heart of the group , but he was not at its first meetings . However , Antonia Fraser views the document with suspicion , not least because Thomas 's signature , ' Thomas Winter ' , differs from his normal signature , ' Thomas Wintour ' ( it was the former that was invariably used by the government ) . The signature , possibly forged by lieutenant of the Tower of London William Waad , was made only weeks after Thomas had been shot in the shoulder during the siege at Holbeche House . Biographer Mark Nicholls views the difference in signatures as a significant and puzzling lapse , if a " master forger " is presumed to be responsible for the document . He views the handwriting on the confession as " convincingly that of Winter [ Wintour ] " , pointing out that it appears to be the work of an author , not an editor , and written as a draft for the King 's Book . This is a view that generally , Alan Haynes agrees with : " no one has ever made a solid and sensible suggestion about why a government @-@ employed forger ( say Thomas Phelippes ) would deliberately make such an error in a crucial state document " .

Another of Fraser 's concerns is Waad 's report to Salisbury on 21 November : " Thomas Winter doth find his hand so strong as after dinner he will settle himself to write that he hath verbally declared to your Lordship adding what he shall remember " ? or rather , what he was told to remember . A draft of Thomas 's confession , in Coke 's handwriting , places extra weight on the

involvement of the Jesuits . Thomas 's confession also details his account of the mine supposedly dug toward Parliament , not mentioned in Fawkes 's first confession .

= = Trial and death = =

The trial of the eight surviving conspirators began on Monday 27 January . The two brothers were brought with the other plotters by barge from the Tower ( Catebsy 's servant , Thomas Bates , arrived from the Gatehouse Prison ) , to Whitehall . They were kept in Star Chamber , before being led into Westminster Hall . Charged with high treason , and with no defence counsel , the outcome was never in doubt . The Spanish Treason was a feature of Attorney General Edward Coke 's rhetoric , although the Spanish king was " reverently and respectfully spoken of " . The Jesuits , such as Henry Garnet , were condemned . Each of the brothers ' confessions were also read aloud . While in the Tower , Robert and Fawkes had shared adjacent cells , and were able to speak to each other . However , their private conversation was secretly recorded , and read aloud during the trial .

When asked if he had anything to say , " wherefore judgement of death should not be pronounced " , Thomas spoke of his regret at having introduced Robert to the plot , and asked to be hanged on his behalf as well as his own . Robert merely begged for mercy . At the end of the trial , the jury pronounced them all guilty of high treason .

Everard Digby , Robert Wintour , John Grant and Thomas Bates were executed on Thursday 30 January 1606 . Dragged by horse to Old St Paul 's Cathedral , Robert was the second to be executed , praying quietly to himself before he was hanged , drawn and quartered . The following morning , the remaining four were dragged to the Old Palace Yard at Westminster , opposite the building they had planned to destroy . Thomas was the first to mount the scaffold . It was customary to grant the condemned a speech , but Thomas , " a very pale and dead colour " , said it was " no time to discourse : he was come to die " . He absolved the Jesuits of any involvement in the plot , asked for Catholics to pray for him , and declared his adherence to the Roman religion . He was hanged for only a few seconds , and then taken to the block for the remainder of his grim sentence . Their half @-@ brother John was executed at Red Hill near Worcester , on 7 April .