

= Gunpowder Plot =

The Gunpowder Plot of 1605 , in earlier centuries often called the Gunpowder Treason Plot or the Jesuit Treason , was a failed assassination attempt against King James I of England and VI of Scotland by a group of provincial English Catholics led by Robert Catesby .

The plan was to blow up the House of Lords during the State Opening of England 's Parliament on 5 November 1605 , as the prelude to a popular revolt in the Midlands during which James 's nine @-@ year @-@ old daughter , Princess Elizabeth , was to be installed as the Catholic head of state . Catesby may have embarked on the scheme after hopes of securing greater religious tolerance under King James had faded , leaving many English Catholics disappointed . His fellow plotters were John Wright , Thomas Wintour , Thomas Percy , Guy Fawkes , Robert Keyes , Thomas Bates , Robert Wintour , Christopher Wright , John Grant , Ambrose Rookwood , Sir Everard Digby and Francis Tresham . Fawkes , who had 10 years of military experience fighting in the Spanish Netherlands in suppression of the Dutch Revolt , was given charge of the explosives .

The plot was revealed to the authorities in an anonymous letter sent to William Parker , 4th Baron Monteagle , on 26 October 1605 . During a search of the House of Lords at about midnight on 4 November 1605 , Fawkes was discovered guarding 36 barrels of gunpowder ? enough to reduce the House of Lords to rubble ? and arrested . Most of the conspirators fled from London as they learned of the plot 's discovery , trying to enlist support along the way . Several made a stand against the pursuing Sheriff of Worcester and his men at Holbeche House ; in the ensuing battle , Catesby was one of those shot and killed . At their trial on 27 January 1606 , eight of the survivors , including Fawkes , were convicted and sentenced to be hanged , drawn and quartered .

Details of the assassination attempt were allegedly known by the principal Jesuit of England , Father Henry Garnet . Although he was convicted of treason and sentenced to death , doubt has been cast on how much he really knew of the plot . As its existence was revealed to him through confession , Garnet was prevented from informing the authorities by the absolute confidentiality of the confessional . Although anti @-@ Catholic legislation was introduced soon after the plot 's discovery , many important and loyal Catholics retained high office during King James I 's reign . The thwarting of the Gunpowder Plot was commemorated for many years afterwards by special sermons and other public events such as the ringing of church bells , which have evolved into the Bonfire Night of today .

= = Background = =

= = = Religion in England = = =

Between 1533 and 1540 , the Tudor King Henry VIII took control of the English Church from Rome , the start of several decades of religious tension in England . English Catholics struggled in a society dominated by the newly separate and increasingly Protestant Church of England . Henry 's daughter , Elizabeth I , responded to the growing religious divide by introducing the Elizabethan Religious Settlement , which required anyone appointed to a public or church office to swear allegiance to the monarch as head of the Church and state . The penalties for refusal were severe ; fines were imposed for recusancy , and repeat offenders risked imprisonment and execution . Catholicism became marginalised , but despite the threat of torture or execution , priests continued to practise their faith in secret .

= = = Succession = = =

Queen Elizabeth , unmarried and childless , steadfastly refused to name an heir . Many Catholics believed that her Catholic cousin , Mary , Queen of Scots , was the legitimate heir to the English throne , but she had been executed for treason in 1587 . The English Secretary of State , Robert Cecil , negotiated secretly with Mary 's son , James VI of Scotland , who had a strong claim to the

English throne as Elizabeth 's first cousin twice removed . In the months before Elizabeth 's death on 24 March 1603 , Cecil prepared the way for James to succeed her .

Some exiled Catholics favoured Philip II of Spain 's daughter , Infanta Isabella , as Elizabeth 's successor . More moderate Catholics looked to James 's and Elizabeth 's cousin Arbella Stuart , a woman thought to have Catholic sympathies . As Elizabeth 's health deteriorated , the government detained those they considered to be the " principal papists " , and the Privy Council grew so worried that Stuart was moved closer to London to prevent her from being kidnapped by papists .

Despite competing claims to the English throne , the transition of power following Elizabeth 's death went smoothly . James 's succession was announced by a proclamation from Cecil on 24 March , which was generally celebrated . Leading papists , rather than causing trouble as anticipated , reacted to the news by offering their enthusiastic support for the new monarch . Jesuit priests , whose presence in England was punishable by death , also demonstrated their support for James , who was widely believed to embody " the natural order of things " . James ordered a ceasefire in the conflict with Spain , and even though the two countries were still technically at war , King Philip III sent his envoy , Don Juan de Tassis , to congratulate James on his accession .

For decades , the English had lived under a monarch who refused to provide an heir , but James arrived with a family and a future line of succession . His wife , Anne of Denmark , was the daughter of a king . Their eldest child , the nine @-@ year @-@ old Henry , was considered a handsome and confident boy , and their two younger children , Princess Elizabeth and Prince Charles , were proof that James was able to provide heirs to continue the Protestant monarchy .

= = = Early reign of James I = = =

James 's attitude towards Catholics was more moderate than that of his predecessor , perhaps even tolerant . He promised that he would not " persecute any that will be quiet and give an outward obedience to the law " , and believed that exile was a better solution than capital punishment : " I would be glad to have both their heads and their bodies separated from this whole island and transported beyond seas . " Some Catholics believed that the martyrdom of James 's mother , Mary , Queen of Scots , would encourage James to convert to the Catholic faith , and the Catholic houses of Europe may also have shared that hope . James received an envoy from the Habsburg Archduke Albert of the Southern Netherlands , ruler of the remaining Catholic territories after over 30 years of war in the Dutch Revolt by English @-@ supported Protestant rebels . For the Catholic expatriates engaged in that struggle , the restoration by force of a Catholic monarchy was an intriguing possibility , but following the failed Spanish invasion of England in 1588 the papacy had taken a longer @-@ term view on the return of a Catholic monarch to the English throne .

During the late 16th century , Catholics made several assassination attempts against Protestant rulers in Europe and in England , including plans to poison Elizabeth I. The Jesuit Juan de Mariana 's 1598 *On Kings and the Education of Kings* explicitly justified the assassination of the French king Henry III ? who had been stabbed to death by a Catholic fanatic in 1589 ? and until the 1620s , some English Catholics believed that regicide was justifiable to remove tyrants from power . Much of the " rather nervous " James I 's political writing was " concerned with the threat of Catholic assassination and refutation of the [Catholic] argument that ' faith did not need to be kept with heretics ' " .

= = = Early plots = = =

In the absence of any sign that James would move to end the persecution of Catholics , as some had hoped for , several members of the clergy (including two anti @-@ Jesuit priests) decided to take matters into their own hands . In what became known as the Bye Plot , the priests William Watson and William Clark planned to kidnap James and hold him in the Tower of London until he agreed to be more tolerant towards Catholics . Cecil received news of the plot from several sources , including the Archpriest George Blackwell , who instructed his priests to have no part in any such schemes . At about the same time , Lord Cobham , Lord Grey de Wilton , Griffin Markham and

Walter Raleigh hatched what became known as the Main Plot , which involved removing James and his family and supplanting them with Arbella Stuart . Amongst others , they approached Henry IV of France for funding , but were unsuccessful . All those involved in both plots were arrested in July and tried in autumn 1603 ; Sir George Brooke was executed , but James , keen not to have too bloody a start to his reign , reprieved Cobham , Grey , and Markham while they were at the scaffold . Raleigh , who had watched while his colleagues sweated , and who was due to be executed a few days later , was also pardoned . Stuart denied any knowledge of the Main Plot . The two priests , condemned by the pope , and " very bloodily handled " , were executed .

The Catholic community responded to news of these plots with shock . That the Bye Plot had been revealed by Catholics was instrumental in saving them from further persecution , and James was grateful enough to allow pardons for those recusants who sued for them , as well as postponing payment of their fines for a year .

On 19 February 1604 , shortly after he discovered that his wife , Queen Anne , had been sent a rosary from the pope via one of James 's spies , Sir Anthony Standen , James denounced the Catholic Church . Three days later , he ordered all Jesuits and all other Catholic priests to leave the country , and reimposed the collection of fines for recusancy . James changed his focus from the anxieties of English Catholics to the establishment of an Anglo @-@ Scottish union . He also appointed Scottish nobles such as George Home to his court , which proved unpopular with the Parliament of England . Some Members of Parliament made it clear that in their view , the " effluxion of people from the Northern parts " was unwelcome , and compared them to " plants which are transported from barren ground into a more fertile one " . Even more discontent resulted when the King allowed his Scottish nobles to collect the recusancy fines . There were 5 @, @ 560 convicted of recusancy in 1605 , of whom 112 were landowners . The very few Catholics of great wealth who refused to attend services at their parish church were fined £ 20 per month . Those of more moderate means had to pay two @-@ thirds of their annual rental income ; middle class recusants were fined one shilling a week , although the collection of all these fines was " haphazard and negligent " . When James came to power , almost £ 5 @, @ 000 a year (equivalent to over £ 10 million in 2008) was being raised by these fines .

On 19 March , the King gave his opening speech to his first English Parliament in which he spoke of his desire to secure peace , but only by " profession of the true religion " . He also spoke of a Christian union and reiterated his desire to avoid religious persecution . For the Catholics , the King 's speech made it clear that they were not to " increase their number and strength in this Kingdom " , that " they might be in hope to erect their Religion again " . To Father John Gerard , these words were almost certainly responsible for the heightened levels of persecution the members of his faith now suffered , and for the priest Oswald Tesimond they were a rebuttal of the early claims that the King had made , upon which the papists had built their hopes . A week after James 's speech , Lord Sheffield informed the king of over 900 recusants brought before the Assizes in Normanby , and on 24 April a Bill was introduced in Parliament which threatened to outlaw all English followers of the Catholic Church .

= = Plot = =

The conspirators ' principal aim was to kill King James , but many other important targets would also be present at the State Opening , including the monarch 's nearest relatives and members of the Privy Council . The senior judges of the English legal system , most of the Protestant aristocracy , and the bishops of the Church of England would all have attended in their capacity as members of the House of Lords , along with the members of the House of Commons . Another important objective was the kidnapping of the King 's daughter , third in the line of succession , Princess Elizabeth . Housed at Coombe Abbey near Coventry , the Princess lived only ten miles north of Warwick ? convenient for the plotters , most of whom lived in the Midlands . Once the King and his Parliament were dead , the plotters intended to install Elizabeth on the English throne as a titular Queen . The fate of Princes Henry and Charles would be improvised ; their role in state ceremonies was , as yet , uncertain . The plotters planned to use Henry Percy , Earl of Northumberland , as

Elizabeth 's Protector , but most likely never informed him of this .

= = = Initial recruitment = = =

Robert Catesby (1573 ? 1605) , a man of " ancient , historic and distinguished lineage " , was the inspiration behind the plot . He was described by contemporaries as " a good @-@ looking man , about six feet tall , athletic and a good swordsman " . Along with several other conspirators , he took part in the Earl of Essex 's rebellion in 1601 , during which he was wounded and captured . Queen Elizabeth allowed him to escape with his life after fining him 4 @, @ 000 marks (equivalent to more than £ 6 million in 2008) , after which he sold his estate in Chastleton . In 1603 Catesby helped to organise a mission to the new king of Spain , Philip III , urging Philip to launch an invasion attempt on England , which they assured him would be well supported , particularly by the English Catholics . Thomas Wintour (1571 ? 1606) was chosen as the emissary , but the Spanish king , although sympathetic to the plight of Catholics in England , was intent on making peace with James . Wintour had also attempted to convince the Spanish envoy Don Juan de Tassis that " 3 @, @ 000 Catholics " were ready and waiting to support such an invasion . Concern was voiced by Pope Clement VIII that using violence to achieve a restoration of Catholic power in England would result in the destruction of those that remained .

According to contemporary accounts , in February 1604 Catesby invited Thomas Wintour to his house in Lambeth , where they discussed Catesby 's plan to re @-@ establish Catholicism in England by blowing up the House of Lords during the State Opening of Parliament . Wintour was known as a competent scholar , able to speak several languages , and he had fought with the English army in the Netherlands . His uncle , Francis Ingleby , had been executed for being a Catholic priest in 1586 , and Wintour later converted to Catholicism . Also present at the meeting was John Wright , a devout Catholic said to be one of the best swordsmen of his day , and a man who had taken part with Catesby in the Earl of Essex 's rebellion three years earlier . Despite his reservations over the possible repercussions should the attempt fail , Wintour agreed to join the conspiracy , perhaps persuaded by Catesby 's rhetoric : " Let us give the attempt and where it faileth , pass no further . "

Wintour travelled to Flanders to enquire about Spanish support . While there he sought out Guy Fawkes (1570 ? 1606) , a committed Catholic who had served as a soldier in the Southern Netherlands under the command of William Stanley , and who in 1603 was recommended for a captaincy . Accompanied by John Wright 's brother Christopher , Fawkes had also been a member of the 1603 delegation to the Spanish court pleading for an invasion of England . Wintour told Fawkes that " some good frends of his wished his company in Inglad " , and that certain gentlemen " were uppon a resolution to doe some whatt in Inglad if the pece with Spain healped us nott " . The two men returned to England late in April 1604 , telling Catesby that Spanish support was unlikely . Thomas Percy , Catesby 's friend and John Wright 's brother @-@ in @-@ law , was introduced to the plot several weeks later . Percy had found employment with his kinsman the Earl of Northumberland , and by 1596 was his agent for the family 's northern estates . About 1600 ? 1601 he served with his patron in the Low Countries . At some point during Northumberland 's command in the Low Countries , Percy became his agent in his communications with James . Percy was reputedly a " serious " character who had converted to the Catholic faith . His early years were , according to a Catholic source , marked by a tendency to rely on " his sword and personal courage " . Northumberland , although not a Catholic himself , planned to build a strong relationship with James in order to better the prospects of English Catholics , and to reduce the family disgrace caused by his separation from his wife Martha Wright , a favourite of Elizabeth . Thomas Percy 's meetings with James seemed to go well . Percy returned with promises of support for the Catholics , and Northumberland believed that James would go so far as to allow Mass in private houses , so as not to cause public offence . Percy , keen to improve his standing , went further , claiming that the future King would guarantee the safety of English Catholics .

= = = Initial planning = = =

The first meeting between the five conspirators took place on 20 May 1604 , probably at the Duck and Drake Inn , just off the Strand , Thomas Wintour 's usual residence when staying in London . Catesby , Thomas Wintour , and John Wright were in attendance , joined by Guy Fawkes and Thomas Percy . Alone in a private room , the five plotters swore an oath of secrecy on a prayer book . By coincidence , and ignorant of the plot , Father John Gerard (a friend of Catesby 's) was celebrating Mass in another room , and the five men subsequently received the Eucharist .

= = = Further recruitment = = =

Following their oath , the plotters left London and returned to their homes . The adjournment of Parliament gave them , they thought , until February 1605 to finalise their plans . On 9 June , Percy 's patron , the Earl of Northumberland , appointed him to the Honourable Corps of Gentlemen at Arms , a mounted troop of 50 bodyguards to the King . This role gave Percy reason to seek a base in London , and a small property near the Prince 's Chamber owned by Henry Ferrers , a tenant of John Whynniard , was chosen . Percy arranged for the use of the house through Northumberland 's agents , Dudley Carleton and John Hippisley . Fawkes , using the pseudonym " John Johnson " , took charge of the building , posing as Percy 's servant . The building was occupied by Scottish commissioners appointed by the King to consider his plans for the unification of England and Scotland , so the plotters hired Catesby 's lodgings in Lambeth , on the opposite bank of the Thames , from where their stored gunpowder and other supplies could be conveniently rowed across each night . Meanwhile , King James continued with his policies against the Catholics , and Parliament pushed through anti @-@ Catholic legislation , until its adjournment on 7 July .

The conspirators returned to London in October 1604 , when Robert Keyes , a " desperate man , ruined and indebted " was admitted to the group . His responsibility was to take charge of Catesby 's house in Lambeth , where the gunpowder and other supplies were to be stored . Keyes 's family had notable connections ; his wife 's employer was the Catholic Lord Mordaunt . Tall , with a red beard , he was seen as trustworthy and , like Fawkes , capable of looking after himself . In December Catesby recruited his servant , Thomas Bates , into the plot , after the latter accidentally became aware of it .

It was announced on 24 December that the re @-@ opening of Parliament would be delayed . Concern over the plague meant that rather than sitting in February , as the plotters had originally planned for , Parliament would not sit again until 3 October 1605 . The contemporaneous account of the prosecution claimed that during this delay the conspirators were digging a tunnel beneath Parliament . This may have been a government fabrication , as no evidence for the existence of a tunnel was presented by the prosecution , and no trace of one has ever been found . The account of a tunnel comes directly from Thomas Wintour 's confession , and Guy Fawkes did not admit the existence of such a scheme until his fifth interrogation . Logistically , digging a tunnel would have proved extremely difficult , especially as none of the conspirators had any experience of mining . If the story is true , by 6 December the Scottish commissioners had finished their work , and the conspirators were busy tunnelling from their rented house to the House of Lords . They ceased their efforts when , during tunnelling , they heard a noise from above . The noise turned out to be the then @-@ tenant 's widow , who was clearing out the undercroft directly beneath the House of Lords ? the room where the plotters eventually stored the gunpowder .

By the time the plotters reconvened at the start of the old style new year on Lady Day , 25 March , three more had been admitted to their ranks ; Robert Wintour , John Grant , and Christopher Wright . The additions of Wintour and Wright were obvious choices . Along with a small fortune , Robert Wintour inherited Huddington Court (a known refuge for priests) near Worcester , and was reputedly a generous and well @-@ liked man . A devout Catholic , he married Gertrude Talbot , who was from a family of recusants . Christopher Wright (1568 ? 1605) , John 's brother , had also taken part in the Earl of Essex 's revolt and had moved his family to Twigmore in Lincolnshire , then known as something of a haven for priests . John Grant was married to Wintour 's sister , Dorothy , and was lord of the manor of Norbrook near Stratford @-@ upon @-@ Avon . Reputed to be an

intelligent , thoughtful man , he sheltered Catholics at his home at Snitterfield , and was another who had been involved in the Essex revolt of 1601 .

= = = Undercroft = = =

In addition , 25 March was the day on which the plotters purchased the lease to the undercroft they had supposedly tunnelled near to , owned by John Whynniard . The Palace of Westminster in the early 17th century was a warren of buildings clustered around the medieval chambers , chapels , and halls of the former royal palace that housed both Parliament and the various royal law courts . The old palace was easily accessible ; merchants , lawyers , and others , lived and worked in the lodgings , shops , and taverns within its precincts . Whynniard 's building was along a right @-@ angle to the House of Lords , alongside a passageway called Parliament Place , which itself led to Parliament Stairs and the River Thames . Undercrofts were common features at the time , used to house a variety of materials including food and firewood . Whynniard 's undercroft , on the ground floor , was directly beneath the first @-@ floor House of Lords , and may once have been part of the palace 's medieval kitchen . Unused and filthy , its location was ideal for what the group planned to do .

In the second week of June Catesby met in London the principal Jesuit in England , Father Henry Garnet , and asked him about the morality of entering into an undertaking which might involve the destruction of the innocent , together with the guilty . Garnet answered that such actions could often be excused , but according to his own account later admonished Catesby during a second meeting in July in Essex , showing him a letter from the pope which forbade rebellion . Soon after , the Jesuit priest Oswald Tesimond told Garnet he had taken Catesby 's confession , in the course of which he had learnt of the plot . Garnet and Catesby met for a third time on 24 July 1605 , at the house of the wealthy catholic Anne Vaux in Enfield Chase . Garnet decided that Tesimond 's account had been given under the seal of the confessional , and that canon law therefore forbade him to repeat what he had heard . Without acknowledging that he was aware of the precise nature of the plot , Garnet attempted to dissuade Catesby from his course , to no avail . Garnet wrote to a colleague in Rome , Claudio Acquaviva , expressing his concerns about open rebellion in England . He also told Acquaviva that " there is a risk that some private endeavour may commit treason or use force against the King " , and urged the pope to issue a public brief against the use of force .

According to Fawkes , 20 barrels of gunpowder were brought in at first , followed by 16 more on 20 July . The supply of gunpowder was theoretically controlled by the government , but it was easily obtained from illicit sources . On 28 July , the ever @-@ present threat of the plague again delayed the opening of Parliament , this time until Tuesday 5 November . Fawkes left the country for a short time . The King , meanwhile , spent much of the summer away from the city , hunting . He stayed wherever was convenient , including on occasion at the houses of prominent Catholics . Garnet , convinced that the threat of an uprising had receded , travelled the country on a pilgrimage .

It is uncertain when Fawkes returned to England , but he was back in London by late August , when he and Wintour discovered that the gunpowder stored in the undercroft had decayed . More gunpowder was brought into the room , along with firewood to conceal it . The final three conspirators were recruited in late 1605 . At Michaelmas , Catesby persuaded the staunchly Catholic Ambrose Rookwood to rent Clopton House near Stratford @-@ upon @-@ Avon . Rookwood was a young man with recusant connections , whose stable of horses at Coldham Hall in Stanningfield , Suffolk was an important factor in his enlistment . His parents , Robert Rookwood and Dorothea Drury , were wealthy landowners , and had educated their son at a Jesuit school near Calais . Everard Digby was a young man who was generally well liked , and lived at Gayhurst House in Buckinghamshire . He had been knighted by the King in April 1603 , and was converted to Catholicism by Gerard . Digby and his wife , Mary Mulshaw , had accompanied the priest on his pilgrimage , and the two men were reportedly close friends . Digby was asked by Catesby to rent Coughton Court near Alcester . Digby also promised £ 1 @,@ 500 after Percy failed to pay the rent due for the properties he had taken in Westminster . Finally , on 14 October Catesby invited Francis Tresham into the conspiracy . Tresham was the son of the Catholic Thomas Tresham , and a cousin

to Robert Catesby ? the two had been raised together . He was also the heir to his father 's large fortune , which had been depleted by recusant fines , expensive tastes , and by Francis and Catesby 's involvement in the Essex revolt .

Catesby and Tresham met at the home of Tresham 's brother @-@ in @-@ law and cousin , Lord Stourton . In his confession , Tresham claimed that he had asked Catesby if the plot would damn their souls , to which Catesby had replied it would not , and that the plight of England 's Catholics required that it be done . Catesby also apparently asked for £ 2 @,@ 000 , and the use of Rushton Hall in Northamptonshire . Tresham declined both offers (although he did give £ 100 to Thomas Wintour) , and told his interrogators that he had moved his family from Rushton to London in advance of the plot ; hardly the actions of a guilty man , he claimed .

= = = Monteagle letter = = =

The details of the plot were finalised in October , in a series of taverns across London and Daventry . Fawkes would be left to light the fuse and then escape across the Thames , while simultaneously a revolt in the Midlands would help to ensure the capture of Princess Elizabeth . Fawkes would leave for the continent , to explain events in England to the European Catholic powers .

The wives of those involved and Anne Vaux (a friend of Garnet who often shielded priests at her home) became increasingly concerned by what they suspected was about to happen . Several of the conspirators expressed worries about the safety of fellow Catholics who would be present in Parliament on the day of the planned explosion . Percy was concerned for his patron , Northumberland , and the young Earl of Arundel 's name was brought up ; Catesby suggested that a minor wound might keep him from the chamber on that day . The Lords Vaux , Montague , Monteagle , and Stourton were also mentioned . Keyes suggested warning Lord Mordaunt , his wife 's employer , to derision from Catesby .

On Saturday 26 October , Monteagle (Tresham 's brother @-@ in @-@ law) received an anonymous letter while at his house in Hoxton . Having broken the seal , he handed the letter to a servant who read it aloud :

My Lord , out of the love I bear to some of your friends , I have a care of your preservation . Therefore I would advise you , as you tender your life , to devise some excuse to shift your attendance at this parliament ; for God and man hath concurred to punish the wickedness of this time . And think not slightly of this advertisement , but retire yourself into your country where you may expect the event in safety . For though there be no appearance of any stir , yet I say they shall receive a terrible blow this Parliament ; and yet they shall not see who hurts them . This counsel is not to be condemned because it may do you good and can do you no harm ; for the danger is passed as soon as you have burnt the letter . And I hope God will give you the grace to make good use of it , to whose holy protection I commend you .

Uncertain of the letter 's meaning , Monteagle promptly rode to Whitehall and handed it to Cecil (then Earl of Salisbury) . Salisbury informed the Earl of Worcester , considered to have recusant sympathies , and the suspected papist Henry Howard , 1st Earl of Northampton , but kept news of the plot from the King , who was busy hunting in Cambridgeshire and not expected back for several days . Monteagle 's servant , Thomas Ward , had family connections with the Wright brothers , and sent a message to Catesby about the betrayal . Catesby , who had been due to go hunting with the King , suspected that Tresham was responsible for the letter , and with Thomas Wintour confronted the recently recruited conspirator . Tresham managed to convince the pair that he had not written the letter , but urged them to abandon the plot . Salisbury was already aware of certain stirrings before he received the letter , but did not yet know the exact nature of the plot , or who exactly was involved . He therefore elected to wait , to see how events unfolded .

= = = Discovery = = =

The letter was shown to the King on Friday 1 November following his arrival back in London . Upon reading it , James immediately seized upon the word " blow " and felt that it hinted at " some

stragem of fire and powder " , perhaps an explosion exceeding in violence the one that killed his father , Lord Darnley , at Kirk o ' Field in 1567 . Keen not to seem too intriguing , and wanting to allow the King to take the credit for unveiling the conspiracy , Salisbury feigned ignorance . The following day members of the Privy Council visited the King at the Palace of Whitehall and informed him that , based on the information that Salisbury had given them a week earlier , on Monday the Lord Chamberlain Thomas Howard , 1st Earl of Suffolk would undertake a search of the Houses of Parliament , " both above and below " . On Sunday 3 November Percy , Catesby and Wintour had a final meeting , where Percy told his colleagues that they should " abide the uttermost trial " , and reminded them of their ship waiting at anchor on the Thames . By 4 November Digby was ensconced with a " hunting party " at Dunchurch , ready to abduct Princess Elizabeth . The same day , Percy visited the Earl of Northumberland ? who was uninvolved in the conspiracy ? to see if he could discern what rumours surrounded the letter to Monteagle . Percy returned to London and assured Wintour , John Wright , and Robert Keyes that they had nothing to be concerned about , and returned to his lodgings on Gray 's Inn Road . That same evening Catesby , likely accompanied by John Wright and Bates , set off for the Midlands . Fawkes visited Keyes , and was given a pocket watch left by Percy , to time the fuse , and an hour later Rookwood received several engraved swords from a local cutler .

Although two accounts of the number of searches and their timing exist , according to the King 's version , the first search of the buildings in and around Parliament was made on Monday 4 November ? as the plotters were busy making their final preparations ? by Suffolk , Monteagle , and John Whynniard . They found a large pile of firewood in the undercroft beneath the House of Lords , accompanied by what they presumed to be a serving man (Fawkes) , who told them that the firewood belonged to his master , Thomas Percy . They left to report their findings , at which time Fawkes also left the building . The mention of Percy 's name aroused further suspicion as he was already known to the authorities as a Catholic agitator . The King insisted that a more thorough search be undertaken . Late that night , the search party , headed by Thomas Knyvet , returned to the undercroft . They again found Fawkes , dressed in a cloak and hat , and wearing boots and spurs . He was arrested , whereupon he gave his name as John Johnson . He was carrying a lantern now held in the Ashmolean Museum , Oxford , and a search of his person revealed a pocket watch , several slow matches and touchwood . The barrels of gunpowder were discovered hidden under piles of faggots and coal . Fawkes was taken to the King early on the morning of 5 November .

= = = Flight = = =

As news of " John Johnson 's " arrest spread among the plotters still in London , most fled northwest , along Watling Street . Christopher Wright and Thomas Percy left together . Rookwood left soon after , and managed to cover 30 miles in two hours on one horse . He overtook Keyes , who had set off earlier , then Wright and Percy at Little Brickhill , before catching Catesby , John Wright , and Bates on the same road . Reunited , the group continued northwest to Dunchurch , using horses provided by Digby . Keyes went to Mordaunt 's house at Drayton . Meanwhile , Thomas Wintour stayed in London , and even went to Westminster to see what was happening . When he realised the plot had been uncovered , he took his horse and made for his sister 's house at Norbrook , before continuing to Huddington Court .

The group of six conspirators stopped at Ashby St Ledgers at about 6 pm , where they met Robert Wintour and updated him on their situation . They then continued on to Dunchurch , and met with Digby . Catesby convinced him that despite the plot 's failure , an armed struggle was still a real possibility . He announced to Digby 's " hunting party " that the King and Salisbury were dead , before the fugitives moved west to Warwick .

In London , news of the plot was spreading , and the authorities set extra guards on the city gates , closed the ports , and protected the house of the Spanish Ambassador , which was surrounded by an angry mob . An arrest warrant was issued against Thomas Percy , and his patron , the Earl of Northumberland , was placed under house arrest . In " John Johnson 's " initial interrogation he

revealed nothing other than the name of his mother , and that he was from Yorkshire . A letter to Guy Fawkes was discovered on his person , but he claimed that name was one of his aliases . Far from denying his intentions , " Johnson " stated that it had been his purpose to destroy the King and Parliament . Nevertheless , he maintained his composure and insisted that he had acted alone . His unwillingness to yield so impressed the King that he described him as possessing " a Roman resolution " .

= = = Investigation = = =

On 6 November , the Lord Chief Justice , Sir John Popham (a man with a deep @-@ seated hatred of Catholics) questioned Rookwood 's servants . By the evening he had learnt the names of several of those involved in the conspiracy : Catesby , Rookwood , Keyes , Wynter [sic] , John and Christopher Wright , and Grant . " Johnson " meanwhile persisted with his story , and along with the gunpowder he was found with , was moved to the Tower of London , where the King had decided that " Johnson " would be tortured . The use of torture was forbidden , except by royal prerogative or a body such as the Privy Council or Star Chamber . In a letter of 6 November James wrote : " The gentler tortours [tortures] are to be first used unto him , et sic per gradus ad ima tenditur [and thus by steps extended to greater ones] , and so God speed your good work . " " Johnson " may have been placed in manacles and hung from the wall , but he was almost certainly subjected to the horrors of the rack . On 7 November his resolve was broken ; he confessed late that day , and again over the following two days .

= = = Last stand = = =

On 6 November , with Fawkes maintaining his silence , the fugitives raided Warwick Castle for supplies and continued to Norbrook to collect weapons . From there they continued their journey to Huddington . Bates left the group and travelled to Coughton Court to deliver a letter from Catesby , to Father Garnet and the other priests , informing them of what had transpired , and asking for their help in raising an army . Garnet replied by begging Catesby and his followers to stop their " wicked actions " , before himself fleeing . Several priests set out for Warwick , worried about the fate of their colleagues . They were caught , and then imprisoned in London . Catesby and the others arrived at Huddington early in the afternoon , and were met by Thomas Wintour . They received practically no support or sympathy from those they met , including family members , who were terrified at the prospect of being associated with treason . They continued on to Holbeche House on the border of Staffordshire , the home of Stephen Littleton , a member of their ever @-@ decreasing band of followers . Tired and desperate , they spread out some of the now @-@ soaked gunpowder in front of the fire , to dry out . Although gunpowder does not explode unless physically contained , a spark from the fire landed on the powder and the resultant flames engulfed Catesby , Rookwood , Grant , and a man named Morgan (a member of the hunting party) .

Thomas Wintour and Littleton , on their way from Huddington to Holbeche House , were told by a messenger that Catesby had died . At that point , Littleton left , but Thomas arrived at the house to find Catesby alive , albeit scorched . John Grant was not so lucky , and had been blinded by the fire . Digby , Robert Wintour , John Wintour , and Thomas Bates , had all left . Of the plotters , only the singed figures of Catesby and Grant , and the Wright brothers , Rookwood , and Percy , remained . The fugitives resolved to stay in the house and wait for the arrival of the King 's men .

Richard Walsh (Sheriff of Worcestershire) and his company of 200 men besieged Holbeche House on the morning of 8 November . Thomas Wintour was hit in the shoulder while crossing the courtyard . John Wright was shot , followed by his brother , and then Rookwood . Catesby and Percy were reportedly killed by a single lucky shot . The attackers rushed the property , and stripped the dead or dying defenders of their clothing . Grant , Morgan , Rookwood , and Wintour were arrested .

= = Reaction = =

Bates and Keyes were captured shortly after Holbeche House was taken . Digby , who had intended to give himself up , was caught by a small group of pursuers . Tresham was arrested on 12 November , and taken to the Tower three days later . Montague , Mordaunt , and Stourton (Tresham 's brother @-@ in @-@ law) were also imprisoned in the Tower . The Earl of Northumberland joined them on 27 November . Meanwhile the government used the revelation of the plot to accelerate its persecution of Catholics . The home of Anne Vaux at Enfield Chase was searched , revealing the presence of trap doors and hidden passages . A terrified servant then revealed that Garnet , who had often stayed at the house , had recently given a Mass there . Father John Gerard was secreted at the home of Elizabeth Vaux , in Harrowden . Elizabeth was taken to London for interrogation . There she was resolute ; she had never been aware that Gerard was a priest , she had presumed he was a " Catholic gentleman " , and she did not know of his whereabouts . The homes of the conspirators were searched , and looted ; Mary Digby 's household was ransacked , and she was made destitute . Some time before the end of November , Garnet moved to Hindlip Hall near Worcester , the home of the Habingtons , where he wrote a letter to the Privy Council protesting his innocence .

The foiling of the Gunpowder Plot initiated a wave of national relief at the delivery of the King and his sons , and inspired in the ensuing parliament a mood of loyalty and goodwill , which Salisbury astutely exploited to extract higher subsidies for the King than any (bar one) granted in Elizabeth 's reign . Walter Raleigh , who was languishing in the Tower owing to his involvement in the Main Plot , and whose wife was a first cousin of Lady Catesby , declared he had had no knowledge of the conspiracy . The Bishop of Rochester gave a sermon at St. Paul 's Cross , in which he condemned the plot . In his speech to both Houses on 9 November , James expounded on two emerging preoccupations of his monarchy : the divine right of kings and the Catholic question . He insisted that the plot had been the work of only a few Catholics , not of the English Catholics as a whole , and he reminded the assembly to rejoice at his survival , since kings were divinely appointed and he owed his escape to a miracle . Salisbury wrote to his English ambassadors abroad , informing them of what had occurred , and also reminding them that the King bore no ill will to his Catholic neighbours . The foreign powers largely distanced themselves from the plotters , calling them atheists and Protestant heretics .

= = = Interrogations = = =

Sir Edward Coke (pronounced " Cook ") was in charge of the interrogations . Over a period of about ten weeks , in the Lieutenant 's Lodgings at the Tower of London (now known as the Queen 's House) he questioned those who had been implicated in the plot . For the first round of interrogations , no real proof exists that these people were tortured , although on several occasions Salisbury certainly suggested that they should be . Coke later revealed that the threat of torture was in most cases enough to elicit a confession from those caught up in the aftermath of the plot .

Only two confessions were printed in full : Fawkes 's confession of 8 November , and Wintour 's of 23 November . Having been involved in the conspiracy from the start (unlike Fawkes) , Wintour was able to give extremely valuable information to the Privy Council . The handwriting on his testimony is almost certainly that of the man himself , but his signature was markedly different . Wintour had previously only ever signed his name as such , but his confession is signed " Winter " , and since he had been shot in the shoulder , the steady hand used to write the signature may indicate some measure of government interference ? or it may indicate that writing a shorter version of his name was less painful . Wintour 's testimony makes no mention of his brother , Robert . Both were published in the so @-@ called King 's Book , a hastily written official account of the conspiracy published in late November 1605 .

Henry Percy , Earl of Northumberland , was in a difficult position . His midday dinner with Thomas Percy on 4 November was damning evidence against him , and after Thomas Percy 's death there was nobody who could either implicate him or clear him . The Privy Council suspected that Northumberland would have been Princess Elizabeth 's protector had the plot succeeded , but there

was insufficient evidence to convict him . Northumberland remained in the Tower and on 27 June 1606 was finally charged with contempt . He was stripped of all public offices , fined £ 30 @, @ 000 (about £ 5 @. @ 9 million in 2016) , and kept in the Tower until June 1621 . The Lords Mordaunt and Stourton were tried in the Star Chamber . They were condemned to imprisonment in the Tower , where they remained until 1608 , when they were transferred to the Fleet Prison . Both were also given significant fines .

Several other people not involved in the conspiracy , but known or related to the conspirators , were also questioned . Northumberland 's brothers , Sir Allen and Sir Josceline , were arrested . Anthony @-@ Maria Browne , 2nd Viscount Montagu had employed Fawkes at an early age , and had also met Catesby on 29 October , and was therefore of interest ; he was released several months later . Agnes Wenman was from a Catholic family , and related to Elizabeth Vaux . She was examined twice but the charges against her were eventually dropped . Percy 's secretary and later the controller of Northumberland 's household , Dudley Carleton , had leased the vault where the gunpowder was stored , and consequently he was imprisoned in the Tower . Salisbury believed his story , and authorised his release .

= = = Jesuits = = =

Thomas Bates confessed on 4 December , providing much of the information that Salisbury needed to link the Catholic clergy to the plot . Bates had been present at most of the conspirators ' meetings , and under interrogation he implicated Father Tesimond in the plot . On 13 January 1606 he described how he had visited Garnet and Tesimond on 7 November to inform Garnet of the plot 's failure . Bates also told his interrogators of his ride with Tesimond to Huddington , before the priest left him to head for the Habingtons at Hindlip Hall , and of a meeting between Garnet , Gerard , and Tesimond in October 1605 . At about the same time in December , Tresham 's health began to deteriorate . He was visited regularly by his wife , a nurse , and his servant William Vavasour , who documented his strangury . Before he died Tresham had also told of Garnet 's involvement with the 1603 mission to Spain , but in his last hours he retracted some of these statements . Nowhere in his confession did he mention the Monteagle letter . He died early on the morning of 23 December , and was buried in the Tower . Nevertheless he was attainted along with the other plotters , his head was set on a pike either at Northampton or London Bridge , and his estates confiscated .

On 15 January a proclamation named Father Garnet , Father Gerard , and Father Greenway (Tesimond) as wanted men . Tesimond and Gerard managed to escape the country and live out their days in freedom ; Garnet was not so lucky . Several days earlier , on 9 January , Robert Wintour and Stephen Littleton were captured . Their hiding place at Hagley , the home of Humphrey Littleton (brother of MP John Littleton , imprisoned for treason in 1601 for his part in the Essex revolt) was betrayed by a cook , who grew suspicious of the amount of food sent up for his master 's consumption . Humphrey denied the presence of the two fugitives , but another servant led the authorities to their hiding place . On 20 January the local Justice and his retainers arrived at Thomas Habington 's home , Hindlip Hall , to arrest the Jesuits . Despite Thomas Habington 's protests , the men spent the next four days searching the house . On 24 January , starving , two priests left their hiding places and were discovered . Humphrey Littleton , who had escaped from the authorities at Hagley , got as far as Prestwood in Staffordshire before he was captured . He was imprisoned , and then condemned to death at Worcester . On 26 January , in exchange for his life , he told the authorities where they could find Father Garnet . Worn down by hiding for so long , Garnet , accompanied by another priest , emerged from his priest hole the next day .

= = = Trials = = =

By coincidence , on the same day that Garnet was found , the surviving conspirators were arraigned in Westminster Hall . Seven of the prisoners were taken from the Tower to the Star Chamber by barge . Bates , who was considered lower class , was brought from the Gatehouse Prison . Some of the prisoners were reportedly despondent , but others were nonchalant , even

smoking tobacco . The King and his family , hidden from view , were among the many who watched the trial . The Lords Commissioners present were the Earls of Suffolk , Worcester , Northampton , Devonshire , and Salisbury . Sir John Popham was Lord Chief Justice , Sir Thomas Fleming was Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer , and two Justices , Sir Thomas Walmsley and Sir Peter Warburton , sat as Justices of the Common Pleas . The list of traitors ' names was read aloud , beginning with those of the priests : Garnet , Tesimond , and Gerard .

The first to speak was the Speaker of the House of Commons (later Master of the Rolls) , Sir Edward Philips , who described the intent behind the plot in lurid detail . He was followed by the Attorney @-@ General Sir Edward Coke , who began with a long speech ? the content of which was heavily influenced by Salisbury ? that included a denial that the King had ever made any promises to the Catholics . Monteagle 's part in the discovery of the plot was welcomed , and denunciations of the 1603 mission to Spain featured strongly . Fawkes 's protestations that Gerard knew nothing of the plot were omitted from Coke 's speech . The foreign powers , when mentioned , were accorded due respect , but the priests were accursed , their behaviour analysed and criticised wherever possible . There was little doubt , according to Coke , that the plot had been invented by the Jesuits . Garnet 's meeting with Catesby , at which the former was said to have absolved the latter of any blame in the plot , was proof enough that the Jesuits were central to the conspiracy ; according to Coke the Gunpowder Plot would always be known as the Jesuit Treason . Coke spoke with feeling of the probable fate of the Queen and the rest of the King 's family , and of the innocents who would have been caught up in the explosion .

Each of the condemned , said Coke , would be drawn backwards to his death , by a horse , his head near the ground . He was to be " put to death halfway between heaven and earth as unworthy of both " . His genitals would be cut off and burnt before his eyes , and his bowels and heart then removed . Then he would be decapitated , and the dismembered parts of his body displayed so that they might become " prey for the fowls of the air " . Confessions and declarations from the prisoners were then read aloud , and finally the prisoners were allowed to speak . Rookwood claimed that he had been drawn into the plot by Catesby , " whom he loved above any worldly man " . Thomas Wintour begged to be hanged for himself and his brother , so that his brother might be spared . Fawkes explained his not guilty plea as ignorance of certain aspects of the indictment . Keyes appeared to accept his fate , Bates and Robert Wintour begged for mercy , and Grant explained his involvement as " a conspiracy intended but never effected " . Only Digby , tried on a separate indictment , pleaded guilty , insisting that the King had reneged upon promises of toleration for Catholics , and that affection for Catesby and love of the Catholic cause mitigated his actions . He sought death by the axe and begged mercy from the King for his young family . His defence was in vain ; his arguments were rebuked by Coke and Northumberland , and along with his seven co @-@ conspirators , he was found guilty by the jury of high treason . Digby shouted " If I may but hear any of your lordships say , you forgive me , I shall go more cheerfully to the gallows . " The response was short : " God forgive you , and we do . "

Garnet may have been questioned on as many as 23 occasions . His response to the threat of the rack was " Minare ista pueris [Threats are only for boys] " , and he denied having encouraged Catholics to pray for the success of the " Catholic Cause " . His interrogators resorted to the forgery of correspondence between Garnet and other Catholics , but to no avail . His jailers then allowed him to talk with another priest in a neighbouring cell , with eavesdroppers listening to every word . Eventually Garnet let slip a crucial piece of information , that there was only one man who could testify that he had any knowledge of the plot . Under torture Garnet admitted that he had heard of the plot from fellow Jesuit Oswald Tesimond , who had learnt of it in confession from Catesby . Garnet was charged with high treason and tried in the Guildhall on 28 March , in a trial lasting from 8 am until 7 pm . According to Coke , Garnet instigated the plot : " [Garnet] hath many gifts and endowments of nature , by art learned , a good linguist and , by profession , a Jesuit and a Superior as indeed he is Superior to all his predecessors in devilish treason , a Doctor of Dissimulation , Deposing of Princes , Disposing of Kingdoms , Daunting and deterring of subjects , and Destruction . " Garnet refuted all the charges against him , and explained the Catholic position on such matters , but he was nevertheless found guilty and sentenced to death .

== Executions ==

Although Catesby and Percy escaped the executioner , their bodies were exhumed and decapitated , and their heads exhibited on spikes outside the House of Lords . On a cold 30 January , Everard Digby , Robert Wintour , John Grant , and Thomas Bates , were tied to hurdles ? wooden panels ? and dragged through the crowded streets of London to St Paul 's Churchyard . Digby , the first to mount the scaffold , asked the spectators for forgiveness , and refused the attentions of a Protestant clergyman . He was stripped of his clothing , and wearing only a shirt , climbed the ladder to place his head through the noose . He was quickly cut down , and while still fully conscious was castrated , disembowelled , and then quartered , along with the three other prisoners . The following day , Thomas Wintour , Ambrose Rookwood , Robert Keyes , and Guy Fawkes were hanged , drawn and quartered , opposite the building they had planned to blow up , in the Old Palace Yard at Westminster . Keyes did not wait for the hangman 's command and jumped from the gallows , but he survived the drop and was led to the quartering block . Although weakened by his torture , Fawkes managed to jump from the gallows and break his neck , thus avoiding the agony of the gruesome latter part of his execution .

Steven Littleton was executed at Stafford . His cousin Humphrey , despite his cooperation with the authorities , met his end at Red Hill near Worcester . Henry Garnet 's execution took place on 3 May 1606 .

== Aftermath ==

Greater freedom for Roman Catholics to worship as they chose seemed unlikely in 1604 , but the discovery of such a wide @-@ ranging conspiracy , the capture of those involved , and the subsequent trials , led Parliament to consider introducing new anti @-@ Catholic legislation . In the summer of 1606 , laws against recusancy were strengthened ; the Popish Recusants Act returned England to the Elizabethan system of fines and restrictions , introduced a sacramental test , and an Oath of Allegiance , requiring Catholics to abjure as a " heresy " the doctrine that " princes excommunicated by the Pope could be deposed or assassinated " . Catholic Emancipation took another 200 years , but many important and loyal Catholics retained high office during King James I 's reign . Although there was no " golden time " of " toleration " of Catholics , which Father Garnet had hoped for , James 's reign was nevertheless a period of relative leniency for Catholics , and few were subject to prosecution .

The playwright William Shakespeare had already used the family history of Northumberland 's family in his Henry IV series of plays , and the events of the Gunpowder Plot seem to have featured alongside the earlier Gowrie conspiracy in Macbeth , written some time between 1603 and 1607 . Interest in the demonic was heightened by the Gunpowder Plot . The King had become engaged in the great debate about other @-@ worldly powers in writing his Daemonology in 1597 , before he became King of England as well as Scotland . Inversions seen in such lines as " fair is foul and foul is fair " are used frequently , and another possible reference to the plot relates to the use of equivocation ; Garnett 's A Treatise of Equivocation was found on one of the plotters . Another writer influenced by the plot was John Milton , who in 1626 wrote what one commentator has called a " critically vexing poem " , In Quintum Novembris . Reflecting " partisan public sentiment on an English @-@ Protestant national holiday " , in the published editions of 1645 and 1673 the poem is preceded by five epigrams on the subject of the Gunpowder Plot , apparently written by Milton in preparation for the larger work . The plot may also have influenced his later work , Paradise Lost .

The Gunpowder Plot was commemorated for years by special sermons and other public acts , such as the ringing of church bells . It added to an increasingly full calendar of Protestant celebrations that contributed to the national and religious life of 17th @-@ century England , and has evolved into the Bonfire Night of today . In What If the Gunpowder Plot Had Succeeded ? historian Ronald Hutton considered the events which might have followed a successful implementation of the plot , and the destruction of the House of Lords and all those within it . He concluded that a severe

backlash against suspected Catholics would have followed , and that without foreign assistance a successful rebellion would have been unlikely ; despite differing religious convictions , most Englishmen were loyal to the institution of the monarchy . England might have become a more " Puritan absolute monarchy " , as " existed in Sweden , Denmark , Saxony , and Prussia in the seventeenth century " , rather than following the path of parliamentary and civil reform that it did .

= = = Accusations of state conspiracy = = =

Many at the time felt that Salisbury had been involved in the plot to gain favour with the King and enact more stridently anti @-@ Catholic legislation . Such conspiracy theories alleged that Salisbury had either actually invented the plot or allowed it to continue when his agents had already infiltrated it , for the purposes of propaganda . The Popish Plot of 1678 sparked renewed interest in the Gunpowder Plot , resulting in a book by Thomas Barlow , Bishop of Lincoln , which refuted " a bold and groundless surmise that all this was a contrivance of Secretary Cecil " .

In 1897 Father John Gerard of Stonyhurst College , namesake of John Gerard (who , following the plot 's discovery , had evaded capture) , wrote an account called What was the Gunpowder Plot ? , alleging Salisbury 's culpability . This prompted a refutation later that year by Samuel Gardiner , who argued that Gerard had gone too far in trying to " wipe away the reproach " which the plot had exacted on generations of English Catholics . Gardiner portrayed Salisbury as guilty of nothing more than opportunism . Subsequent attempts to prove Salisbury 's involvement , such as Francis Edwards 's 1969 work Guy Fawkes : the real story of the gunpowder plot ? , have similarly foundered on the lack of any clear evidence .

The cellars under the Houses of Parliament continued to be leased out to private individuals until 1678 , when news of the Popish Plot broke . It was then considered prudent to search the cellars on the day before each State Opening of Parliament , a ritual that survives to this day .

= = = Bonfire Night = = =

In January 1606 , during the first sitting of Parliament since the plot , the Observance of 5th November Act 1605 was passed , making services and sermons commemorating the event an annual feature of English life ; the act remained in force until 1859 . The tradition of marking the day with the ringing of church bells and bonfires started soon after the Plot 's discovery , and fireworks were included in some of the earliest celebrations . In Britain , the 5th of November is variously called Bonfire Night , Fireworks Night , or Guy Fawkes Night .

It remains the custom in Britain , on or around 5 November , to let off fireworks . Traditionally , in the weeks running up to the 5th , children made " guys " ? effigies supposedly of Fawkes ? usually made from old clothes stuffed with newspaper , and fitted with a grotesque mask , to be burnt on the 5 November bonfire . These guys were exhibited in the street to collect money for fireworks , although this custom has become less common . The word guy thus came in the 19th century to mean an oddly dressed person , and hence in the 20th and 21st centuries to mean any male person .

November the 5th firework displays and bonfire parties are common throughout Britain , in major public displays and in private gardens . In some areas , particularly in Sussex , there are extensive processions , large bonfires and firework displays organised by local bonfire societies , the most elaborate of which take place in Lewes .

According to the biographer Esther Forbes , the Guy Fawkes Day celebration in the pre @-@ revolutionary American colonies was a very popular holiday . In Boston , the revelry took on anti @-@ authoritarian overtones , and often became so dangerous that many would not venture out of their homes .

= = = Reconstructing the explosion = = =

In the 2005 ITV programme The Gunpowder Plot : Exploding The Legend , a full @-@ size replica

of the House of Lords was built and destroyed with barrels of gunpowder . The experiment was conducted on the Advantica Spadeadam test site , and demonstrated that the explosion , if the gunpowder was in good order , would have killed all those in the building . The power of the explosion was such that the 7 @-@ foot (2 @. @ 1 m) deep concrete walls (replicating how archives suggest the walls of the old House of Lords were constructed) were reduced to rubble . Measuring devices placed in the chamber to calculate the force of the blast were themselves destroyed by the explosion ; the skull of the dummy representing King James , which had been placed on a throne inside the chamber surrounded by courtiers , peers and bishops , was found a considerable distance from the site . According to the findings of the programme , no one within 330 feet (100 m) of the blast could have survived , and all of the stained glass windows in Westminster Abbey would have been shattered , as would all of the windows in the vicinity of the Palace . The explosion would have been seen from miles away , and heard from further away still . Even if only half of the gunpowder had gone off , everyone in the House of Lords and its environs would have been killed instantly .

The programme also disproved claims that some deterioration in the quality of the gunpowder would have prevented the explosion . A portion of deliberately deteriorated gunpowder , of such low quality as to make it unusable in firearms , when placed in a heap and ignited , still managed to create a large explosion . The impact of even deteriorated gunpowder would have been magnified by its containment in wooden barrels , compensating for the quality of the contents . The compression would have created a cannon effect , with the powder first blowing up from the top of the barrel before , a millisecond later , blowing out . Calculations showed that Fawkes , who was skilled in the use of gunpowder , had deployed double the amount needed .

Some of the gunpowder guarded by Fawkes may have survived . In March 2002 workers cataloguing archives of diarist John Evelyn at the British Library found a box containing a number of gunpowder samples , including a compressed bar with a note in Evelyn 's handwriting stating that it had belonged to Guy Fawkes . A further note , written in the 19th century , confirmed this provenance , although in 1952 the document acquired a new comment : " but there was none left ! "