

= Everard Digby =

Sir Everard Digby (c . 1578 ? 30 January 1606) was a member of the group of provincial English Catholics who planned the failed Gunpowder Plot of 1605 . Although he was raised in a Protestant household , and married a Protestant , Digby and his wife were converted to Catholicism by the Jesuit priest John Gerard . In the autumn of 1605 he was part of a Catholic pilgrimage to the shrine of St Winefride 's Well in Holywell . About this time he met Robert Catesby , a religious fanatic who planned to blow up the House of Lords with gunpowder , killing James I. Catesby then planned to incite a popular revolt , during which a Catholic monarch would be restored to the English throne .

The full extent of Digby 's knowledge of and involvement in the plot is unknown , but on Catesby 's behest Digby rented Coughton Court and prepared a " hunting party " , ready for the planned uprising . The plot failed however , and Digby joined the conspirators as they took flight through the Midlands , failing to garner support along their way . Digby left the other fugitives at Holbeche House in Staffordshire , and was soon captured and taken to the Tower of London .

Digby was tried on 27 January 1606 . Despite an eloquent defence , he was found guilty of high treason , and three days later was hanged , drawn and quartered .

= = Early life = =

Everard Digby was the son of Everard Digby , and Maria Digby (née Neale) , daughter of Francis Neale of Keythorpe in Leicestershire . He was also a cousin of Anne Vaux , who for years placed herself at considerable risk by sheltering Jesuit priests such as Henry Garnet . According to author Roy Digby Thomas , the Digby family may have been founded during the Norman conquest of England , when William the Conqueror was accompanied by Almar , who settled at Tilton in Rutland . Sir John Digby (d . 1269) served on two crusades , and by 1418 Sir Everard " Greenleaf " Digby was Lord of Tilton and owner of the manor at Drystoke , and Rutland 's member of Parliament . Sir Everard lost his life (and his family much of their fortune) fighting in 1461 for Henry VI against Edward IV . The family had a reversal of fortune in 1485 when Sir Everard 's sons fought for the victorious Henry VII at the Battle of Bosworth Field . Digby may have been related to the 16th @-@ century scholar , Everard Digby .

In 1596 , while still a teenager , he married Mary Mulshaw , a young heiress who brought with her Gayhurst House in Buckinghamshire . By all accounts their marriage was a happy one , and they had two sons ; Kenelm was born in 1603 at Gayhurst , and John in 1605 . Unlike other English Catholics , Digby had little first @-@ hand experience of England 's recusancy laws . Following the death of his father he had been made a ward of Chancery and was raised in a Protestant household . His wife Mary was converted to Catholicism by the Jesuit priest John Gerard . When Digby fell seriously ill , Gerard used the occasion to convert him also , and the two subsequently became close friends , " calling eachother [sic] ' brother ' when we wrote and spoke " . Gerard was godfather to Digby 's eldest son , Kenelm , and the Digbys also built a hidden chapel and sacristy at Gayhurst .

Digby frequented the court of Elizabeth I , and became informally associated with the Elizabethan gentlemen pensioners . His marriage had significantly expanded his holdings , however , and possibly for this reason he left court to manage his estates . He was apparently an unforgiving landlord , as his tenants in Tilton petitioned the Crown for redress when he failed to honour the expensive leases granted them by his father . He added to his property in Buckinghamshire by buying land in Great Missenden , and a month after the queen 's death his social station was elevated when on 24 April 1603 he was knighted by James I at Belvoir Castle . Four days later he was present for Elizabeth 's funeral in London .

= = Robert Catesby = =

In late August or early September 1605 , Digby , his wife and their secret Jesuit chaplain Edward Oldcorne joined a pilgrimage organised by , amongst others , Henry Garnet and Anne Vaux . The

party had set out from White Webbs at Enfield Chase , heading for the shrine of St Winefride 's Well at Holywell , and had occasionally stopped along the way to collect more followers . As the thirty or so pilgrims returned from Holywell in mid @-@ September , they stopped at Rushton Hall where Sir Thomas Tresham had recently died , and then continued on to Digby 's seat at Gayhurst .

On 21 October Digby , his wife , Garnet and Vaux were at Harrowden celebrating a delayed Feast of St Luke . While there he met Robert Catesby , who at some point asked him to swear an oath of secrecy before introducing him to what later became known as the Gunpowder Plot . English Catholics had hoped that the years of persecution they suffered during Elizabeth 's reign would end when James I came to the throne , as his attitude appeared moderate , even tolerant towards Catholics . In Catesby 's view however , James had reneged on his promises , and he had quickly lost patience with the new dynasty . He therefore planned to kill James by blowing up the House of Lords with gunpowder , and then inciting a popular revolt during which a Catholic monarch would be restored to the throne . Catesby had enlisted the aid of other Catholics , but had borne much of the scheme 's financial cost and was running out of money . The group had therefore agreed to expand their numbers . To this end Catesby had recruited Ambrose Rookwood ? a young and wealthy Catholic with a stable of fine horses ? and a wealthy cousin , Francis Tresham .

The extent of Digby 's knowledge of the plot is unknown , but in the opinion of author Alan Haynes , Digby was shocked by what he heard , and asked what would become of some of their Catholic friends . Catesby replied " Assure your selfe that such of the nobilitie as are worth the saving shalbe preserved and yet knowe not of the matter . " None of their friends would be caught in the explosion . He asked if Catesby had spoken of the matter with Garnet , or any other Jesuits ; although Catesby was in no doubt that the Jesuits disapproved of any such action , he lied and said that he would not act without their approbation . Catesby then named the other conspirators , and promised Digby that as soon as they reached Gayhurst he would demonstrate that their religion allowed such acts of regicide , thus dissuading the young lord from confessing to Garnet and discovering the Jesuit 's opinion of the matter . Catesby told him to rent Coughton Court from the head of the Throckmorton family , so that he would " the better to be able to do good to the cause [kidnap Princess Elizabeth] " . From there , he was to organise a hunting party (in reality a group of armed men on horseback) and be ready for some kind of military manoeuvre . Digby also provided monetary assistance ; he promised £ 1 @,@ 500 after fellow plotter Thomas Percy failed to pay the rent due for several properties in Westminster .

= = Hunting party = =

On 2 November at Gayhurst , while making preparations for his hunting party , Digby was visited by Gerard . Having noticed that the house was almost completely empty , the Jesuit asked him if there was " any matter in hand " and if Garnet knew of it . Keen not to implicate Gerard , despite being told less than two weeks earlier that the plot had Jesuit approval , Digby told him that there was nothing he knew of " or could tell him of " . Although Gerard later used this conversation to defend himself against those who accused him of involvement in the plot , he lived to regret not being given the opportunity to dissuade Digby from his course .

Two days later Digby and his servants were ensconced at the Red Lion inn , in Dunchurch , where his hunt was to take place . He took with him several items of clothing , including " a white satin doublet cut with purple " . Also present , but uninvolved , were his uncle , Sir Robert Digby , Humphrey Littleton and his nephew Stephen Littleton . They ate supper , before being joined by fellow conspirator John Grant and a friend . Also invited was the stepbrother of plotters Robert and Thomas Wintour , John Wintour . They attended a mass the next morning , conducted by a Father Hammond , before the party moved on .

Around midnight on 4 November , Guy Fawkes was discovered guarding the gunpowder the plotters had placed beneath the House of Lords , and arrested . Those conspirators still in London soon took flight for the Midlands , finding along the way those who had already left to prepare for the planned uprising . They met Digby and his party at Dunchurch . Catesby told Digby that the king and Salisbury were dead , and " if true Catholics would now stir , he doubted not that they might procure

to themselves good conditions " . Digby was won over , but many of his party were less than impressed at being so badly deceived , and worse , being associated with treason . One of his servants asked Digby what would happen to them ; Digby told him that although he was aware of their ignorance , " but now there is no remedy " .

= = Flight = =

On 6 November the fugitives raided Warwick Castle and managed to secure more horses , before moving on to Norbrook to collect stored weapons . From there they continued their journey toward Huddington . Catesby ordered his servant (and fellow plotter) Thomas Bates to deliver a letter to Father Garnet at Coughton Court . Catesby and Digby asked Garnet to excuse their recklessness , before asking for his help in raising an army in Wales . Garnet 's reply begged them to stop their " wicked actions " , and to listen to the Pope 's teachings . When the priest tried to comfort Mary Digby , also at Coughton Court , she burst into tears .

With their ever @-@ decreasing band of supporters , the remaining fugitives arrived at Huddington at about 2 : 00 pm . Any expectation they had of support began to vanish ; almost everyone they met showed concern only for their own safety , fearful of being involved with traitors . The next morning they rode through the rain , stopping briefly to help themselves to supplies from the home of the absent Lord Windsor at Hewell Grange . Still the locals refused to have anything to do with them ; Digby later admitted that " not one man " joined them . They arrived that night at Holbeche House on the border of Staffordshire , and tired and desperate , spread out some of the now @-@ soaked gunpowder in front of the fire , to dry out . A spark from the fire landed on the powder and the resultant flames engulfed Catesby , Rookwood , Grant , and another man .

= = Surrender = =

Catesby and fellow conspirators Thomas Percy , John Wright and his brother Christopher were killed by the Sheriff of Worcester 's men early on 8 November , but Digby had already left to give himself up (the only conspirator to do so) . With two servants , possibly Bates and his son , he took several horses and hid in nearby woods . Their tracks were soon found however , and with some hesitation (Digby had intended to surrender himself to someone more worthy) , early that morning he presented himself to the most senior @-@ looking of his adversaries . While Digby was taken to the Tower of London , Gayhurst was ransacked ; the servants ' belongings were stolen , the livestock was sold cheaply , and Mary Digby was left destitute . The sheriff later remarked " All goods are carried away , even to the very floor of the great parlour . " At the Tower , Digby 's two trunks of clothing were searched , and found to contain £ 100 in gold , and £ 50 in white money . William Waad , Lieutenant of the Tower , asked if he could take £ 50 to pay for Digby 's food and bedding .

Digby unsuccessfully sought an audience with James to try and explain himself , in Fraser 's opinion suggesting either that the extent of his involvement was limited , or that he was " astonishingly naive and trusting of his sovereign 's forgiveness . " While imprisoned he busied himself with writing secret letters , smuggled from the Tower and not rediscovered until Kenelm Digby 's death in 1675 . Although he was fortunate not to suffer the fate of Guy Fawkes , who was tortured on several occasions , one of these letters hints that it had been " in a fashion , offered " . He described his refusal to cooperate with his interrogators , boasted of his deceit , and how there was nothing he could do to make the plot appear less abhorrent to fellow Catholics . Digby also carved an inscription on the wall of his cell , extant as of 1996 .

= = Trial and execution = =

Digby was tried on the same day as seven of his surviving co @-@ conspirators , in Westminster Hall , on Monday 27 January 1606 . As the king and his family watched in secret , the charges against the plotters were read aloud . Alone amongst them Digby pleaded " Guilty " , and was tried

on a separate indictment . Dressed in a black satin suit and " tuff taffetie gown " , he gave a short and moving speech , defending his actions by explaining his affection for Catesby , and the cause of his religion . He accused King James of reneging on his promises of toleration for Catholics , and told of his fears of harsher laws against recusancy . He also pleaded on behalf of his family , that they should not pay for his actions , before making a final request to be beheaded . His words fell on mostly deaf ears . The prosecution poured scorn on James 's supposed perfidy , and ridiculed Digby for asking for leniency where he would have given none . Along with the other plotters , he was found guilty . As they were led from the hall , Digby exclaimed : " If I may but hear any of your lordships say , you forgive me , I shall go more cheerfully to the gallows . " The reply came back , " God forgive you , and we do . "

He spent his last few days in the Tower writing letters to his wife and his sons , urging the two brothers to avoid the examples set by figures such as Cain and Abel . He also wrote poetry :

Who 's that which knocks ? Oh stay , my Lord , I come :

I know that call , since first it made me know

Myself , which makes me now with joy to run

Lest he be gone that can my duty show .

Jesu , my Lord , I know thee by the Cross

Thou offer 'st me , but not unto my loss .

Digby was hanged , drawn and quartered early on Thursday 30 January . Throngs of spectators lined the streets as he was strapped to a wattled hurdle , and alongside Robert Wintour and John Grant was dragged by horse to the western end of Old St Paul 's Cathedral churchyard . Thomas Bates was delivered in a similar fashion , but from the Gatehouse Prison . Armed guards interspersed along the route were there to defend against any possible rescue , but did not keep the miscreants ' families from witnessing the fate of the four men . Cold and grubby , Digby was the first of the four to face the executioner . He mounted the scaffold and addressed the audience , telling them that he knew he had broken the law , but that morally , and in the eyes of his religion , he had committed no offence . He asked for God 's forgiveness , and the country 's , and protested the Jesuits ' and Father Gerard 's innocence . He refused the attentions of a Protestant clergyman , speaking to himself in Latin , before saying goodbye to his friends .

Digby was then stripped of his clothing , except for his shirt . Murmuring " O Jesus , Jesus , save me and keep me " , he climbed the ladder and was hanged for a short period . The executioner cut the rope , and Digby fell back to the scaffold , wounding his forehead . Fully conscious , he was taken to the block and castrated , disembowelled , and quartered . Wintour , Grant and Bates followed . The remaining four conspirators suffered similar fates the following day , at the Old Palace Yard in Westminster .