

= Francis Tresham =

Francis Tresham (c . 1567 ? 23 December 1605) , eldest son of Sir Thomas Tresham and Merial Throckmorton , was a member of the group of English provincial Catholics who planned the failed Gunpowder Plot of 1605 , a conspiracy to assassinate King James I of England .

Tresham joined the Earl of Essex 's failed rebellion against the government in 1601 , for which he was imprisoned . Only his family 's intervention and his father 's money saved him from attainder . Despite this , he became involved in two missions to Catholic Spain to seek support for English Catholics (then heavily persecuted) , and finally with the Gunpowder Plotters .

According to his confession , Tresham joined the plot in October 1605 . Its leader , Robert Catesby , asked him to provide a large sum of money and the use of Rushton Hall , but Tresham apparently provided neither , instead giving a much smaller amount of money to fellow plotter Thomas Wintour . Tresham also expressed concern that if the plot was successful , two of his brothers @-@ in @-@ law would be killed . An anonymous letter delivered to one of them , William Parker , 4th Baron Monteagle , found its way to the English Secretary of State , Robert Cecil , an event which eventually proved decisive in the conspiracy 's failure .

Historians have long suspected that Tresham wrote the letter , a hypothesis that remains unproven . Catesby and Wintour shared the same suspicion and threatened to kill him , but he was able to convince them otherwise . He was arrested on 12 November and confined to the Tower of London . In his confession , he sought to allay his involvement in the plot , but never mentioned the letter . He died of natural causes on 23 December 1605 .

= = Family and life before 1605 = =

Born in about 1567 , Francis Tresham was the eldest son of Sir Thomas Tresham , of Rushton Hall in Northamptonshire , and Merial Throckmorton , daughter of Sir Robert Throckmorton of Coughton in Warwickshire . According to the antiquary Anthony Wood , Tresham was educated in Oxford at either St John 's College or Gloucester Hall or both , although biographer Mark Nicholls mentions that there appears to be no other evidence to corroborate that claim . He married Anne Tufton , daughter of Sir John Tufton of Hothfield in Kent , in 1593 . The couple had three children , twins Lucy and Thomas (b.1598) , and Elizabeth . Thomas died in infancy , Lucy became a nun in Brussels , and Elizabeth married Sir George Heneage of Hainton , Lincolnshire .

Tresham 's father , born near the end of Henry VIII 's reign , was regarded by the Catholic community as one of its leaders . Thomas was received into the Catholic Church in 1580 , and in the same year he allowed the Jesuit Edmund Campion to stay at his house in Hoxton . For the latter , following Campion 's capture in 1581 , he was tried in Star Chamber . Thomas 's refusal to fully comply with his interrogators was the beginning of years of fines and spells in prison . He proclaimed the accession of James I to the English throne , but the king 's promises to Thomas of forestry commissions and an end to recusancy fines were not kept . His finances were seriously depleted by fines of £ 7 @, @ 720 for recusancy , and the spending of £ 12 @, @ 200 on the marriages of six daughters meant that when he died in 1605 , his estate was £ 11 @, @ 500 in debt .

Author Antonia Fraser suggests that as a young man Francis became " resentful of his father 's authority and profligate with his father 's money . " Authors Peter Marshall and Geoffrey Scott describe him as possessing a " somewhat hot @-@ headed nature " , while another source calls him a " wild unstayed man " . The Jesuit priest Oswald Tesimond wrote that he was " a man of sound judgement . He knew how to look after himself , but was not much to be trusted " . While still young he assaulted a man and his pregnant daughter , claiming that their family owed his father money . Tresham spent time in prison for this offence .

On 8 February 1601 he joined the Earl of Essex in open rebellion against the government . Essex 's aim was to secure his own ambitions , but the Jesuit Henry Garnet described the young men who accompanied him as being interested mostly in furthering the Catholic cause . Captured and imprisoned , Tresham appealed to Katherine Howard , but was rebuked . His sister , Lady

Monteagle , alerted his cousin John Throckmorton , who turned to " three most honorable parsons and one especiall instrument " for help . The identity of these individuals is unclear , but Tresham was promised freedom on the condition that over the next three months his father pay £ 2 @, @ 100 to William Ayloffe , to " save his lyef attainer in bloode . " He was released on 21 June . The experience did not dissuade him from engaging in further conspiracies ; in 1602 and 1603 he was involved in the missions to Catholic Spain made by Thomas Wintour , Anthony Dutton (possibly an alias of Christopher Wright) and Guy Fawkes , later dubbed by the English government as the Spanish Treason . However , upon James 's accession to the throne , he told Thomas Wintour (secretary to Tresham 's brother @-@ in @-@ law William Parker , 4th Baron Monteagle) , that he would " stand wholly for the King " , and " to have no speech with him of Spain . "

= = Introduction = =

English Catholics had hoped that the persecution of their faith would end when James succeeded Elizabeth I , as he appeared to hold more moderate views toward Catholics than his predecessor . But Robert Catesby , a religious zealot also imprisoned for his involvement in the Essex rebellion , had grown tired of James 's supposed perfidy and planned to kill the king . He hoped to achieve this by blowing up the House of Lords with gunpowder and inciting a popular revolt to install James 's daughter Princess Elizabeth as titular Queen .

Catesby had recruited 11 fellow Catholics to his cause but was running out of money . Even with his debts , with an annual income of over £ 3 @, @ 000 Tresham was one of the wealthiest people known to the plotters , and Catesby 's mother was Anne Throckmorton , an aunt of Tresham 's . The two cousins had been raised together and shared a close relationship .

Despite their shared upbringing and involvement in the Spanish Treason , the conspirators chose not to reveal the plot to him until 14 October 1605 , shortly after his father died , and just weeks before the planned explosion . According to his confession , the meeting took place at the home of Tresham 's brother @-@ in @-@ law , Lord Stourton , in Clerkenwell . Tresham claimed to have questioned Catesby on the morality of the plot , asking if it was spiritually " damnable " . Catesby replied that it was not , at which point Tresham highlighted the danger that all Catholics would face should the plot succeed . Catesby replied , " The necessity of the Catholics " was such that " it must needs be done " . He wanted two things from Tresham : £ 2 @, @ 000 , and the use of Rushton Hall ; Catesby received neither . Tresham had no money to spare , his father 's debts having reduced his inheritance , although he paid a small sum to Thomas Wintour , on the understanding that the latter was to travel to the Low Countries . Following the meeting , he hurried back to Rushton Hall and closed his household , taking care to hide family papers (not discovered until 1838) . He then returned to London with his mother and sisters , and on 2 November acquired a licence to travel abroad with his servants and horses .

= = Monteagle letter = =

Later in October , during a meeting at which Tresham was present , the conspirators discussed the fates of several notable Catholic peers . Foremost in Tresham 's thoughts were the lives of two brothers @-@ in @-@ law , William Parker , 4th Baron Monteagle , and Edward Stourton , 10th Baron Stourton , but Catesby proclaimed that " the innocent must perish with the guilty , sooner than ruin the chances of success . " As the last few details were being finalised that month , on Saturday 26 October Monteagle received an anonymous letter while at his house in Hoxton . It contained the following message :

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 its meaning , Monteagle delivered it to the English Secretary of State , Robert Cecil .

Tresham has long been suspected as the letter 's author . Mark Nicholls states that he almost certainly wrote it , pointing to the fact that once Catesby was made aware of its existence he immediately suspected Tresham and went with Thomas Wintour to confront him . The two threatened to " hang him " , but " with such oaths and emphatic assertions " Tresham managed to convince the pair of his innocence , the next day urging them by letter to abandon the plot . Antonia Fraser suggests that Catesby and Wintour 's decision to believe him should not be disregarded . While making his deathbed confession in the Tower of London , Tresham failed to mention the letter ; an omission which in her opinion makes no sense if he is to be regarded as its author , especially considering that its recipient was by then being credited as the country 's saviour . Author Alan Haynes views Tresham as the most likely culprit , but raises the possibility that Cecil penned the letter himself , to protect a source .

= = Revealed = =

Although he was already aware of certain stirrings even before he received the letter , Cecil did not yet know the exact nature of the plot or who was involved and had elected to watch to see what would happen . When Monteagle 's letter was shown to the king on Friday 1 November , James felt that it hinted at " some strategem of fire and powder " , perhaps an explosion exceeding in violence the one that killed his father , Lord Darnley , in 1567 . The following day , members of the Privy Council visited James to inform him that a search would be made of the Houses of Parliament , " both above and below " . Meanwhile , Tresham again urged Catesby and Wintour to abandon the scheme , but his attempts were in vain . Fellow plotter Thomas Percy said he was ready to " abide the uttermost trial " , and subsequently on 4 November Catesby and several others left London for the Midlands to prepare for the planned uprising .

Fawkes was arrested while guarding the explosives shortly after midnight on 5 November 1605 . Calling himself John Johnson , he was at first interrogated by members of the King 's Privy Chamber , but on 6 November James ordered that " John Johnson " be tortured . His will finally broken , he revealed his true identity on 7 November , and on 8 November he began to name some of those with whom he was associated . Tresham 's complicity was not revealed until the following day , although he was attributed with only a minor role . But while his compatriots had fled London the moment they discovered that Fawkes had been captured , Tresham had stayed in the city . He was arrested on 12 November and transferred to the Tower three days later . Catesby and several other plotters were killed on 8 November , during an armed siege at Holbeche House in Staffordshire .

= = Death = =

Although at first he was uncooperative , on 13 November Tresham confessed to being involved in the plot , outlining his version of events to his interrogators . Moving his family from the safety of Rushton was , he pointed out , not the action of a man who believed he was taking them into " the very mouth and fury " of the plot . He admitted to the government that he was guilty only of the plot 's concealment , denying that he had ever been an active member of the conspiracy , although by the end of the month he had also admitted his involvement in the Spanish Treason of 1602 ? 1603 . He claimed to have persuaded Thomas Wintour and Thomas Percy to postpone the explosion , and that he had planned to inform the king 's secretary Thomas Lake of a " Puritan conspiracy " . Fraser views much of his confession as " highly partial ... not only for his own sake but for that of his wife and children " , and important in serving to highlight his unreliability .

Tresham suffered from a strangury caused by an inflammation of his urinary tract , and in December 1605 his health began to decline . Lieutenant of the Tower William Waad , wondering if Tresham would live long enough for justice to take its course , described his condition as " worse

and worse " . Tresham preferred the services of a Dr Richard Foster over those of the Tower 's regular doctor Matthew Gwinne ; apparently Foster understood his case , indicating that it was not the first occasion on which he had treated him . During his last days he was attended by three more doctors and a nurse , along with William Vavasour , a rumoured illegitimate child of Thomas Tresham and possibly Francis 's half @-@ brother . As Tresham 's wife , Anne , was apparently too upset , Vavasour wrote Tresham 's deathbed confession and also an account of his last hours . Tresham apologised to the Jesuit priest Henry Garnet for implicating him in the Spanish Treason , and used the rest of his deathbed confession to protest his innocence . Anne and William read prayers at his bedside ; he died at 2 : 00 am on 23 December . Despite not being tried , his head joined those of Catesby and Percy on display at Northampton , while his body was thrown into a hole at Tower Hill . His estates passed to his brother Lewis . Tresham 's apology never reached its intended target , and his letter , along with the discovery of Garnet 's Of Equivocation , found among the " heretical , treasonable and damnable books " at Tresham 's chamber in the Inner Temple , was used to great effect by Sir Edward Coke in Garnet 's trial . The priest was executed in May 1606 .