

The Gunpowder Plot 1605

The problem with this story is that it's such a well known story that over time it has been added to, so much so that it is difficult to know what really happened !

In 1603 **James I** became King of England. James was not a Catholic and he was persuaded by parliament to introduce new laws against the Catholics. This upset many Catholics. In 1604 a group of Catholics decided to do something about it. The Plan was the idea of **Robert Catesby**. The plan was to blow up Parliament (the House of Commons and the House of Lords) on the day it opened. This was an important day so all the M.P's and the King would be there. They hoped a new king would be fairer to Catholics.

Catesby told his friends **Thomas Percy**, **John Wright** and **Thomas Winter** who all decided they needed an explosives expert. **Guy Fawkes** was an explosives expert who came from near York. Catesby then went to **Francis Tresham** for money to fund the plot. Legend has it that Percy rented a cellar in a house near to the House of lords. They then got **Christopher Wright** and **Robert Winter** to help with the digging of the tunnel.

They started to move the gunpowder in a dig a tunnel to the House of Lords but hit two problems. The first was that they were so near the River Thames that the tunnel started to fill with water. The second was that the walls to the House of Lords were so thick that they could not break through them. It was clear the idea would not work.

But then the plotters had a stroke of luck. Firstly the opening of Parliament was delayed to November 5th 1605. Secondly, a cellar room became available to rent under the House of Lords ! The plotters rented it. **Robert Keys** was given the job of guarding the old room while they moved the 36 barrels of gunpowder to the new cellar. The barrels were moved to the new cellar and hidden behind firewood. Fawkes was then left to guard it and when the time was right set fire to it. The rest of the plotters went into hiding at a house in the Midlands.

Lord Monteagle was a Catholic M.P. His cousin was Francis Tresham one of the plotters. On the 26th of October 1605 Lord Monteagle was about to sit down to dinner when he received an anonymous letter. The letter warned Monteagle not to attend the opening of parliament as " they shall receive a terrible blow". Monteagle took the letter to the kings Chief Minister **Robert Cecil** (also known as **Lord Salisbury**) Cecil showed the letter to the king.

On the morning of November 4th 1605 the king ordered a search of the cellars. They found the pile of wood and a man called '**Johnson**'. Later that same day the King ordered a second search and they found the gunpowder. Johnson was arrested.

In the Tower of London Johnson was tortured and admitted he was Guy Fawkes. Four days later he confessed to the plot. The other plotters were in hiding in the Midlands. Soldiers surrounded the house and several including Catesby and Percy were shot dead. The survivors including Fawkes were found guilty of High Treason . In January 1606 the plotters were hung, drawn and quartered. Their hearts were cut out and their insides were burned in public.

Still to this day Parliament is searched on November 5th.