

# THE GUNPOWDER PLOT



“Disappointed by the failure of James I’s peace treaty negotiations with Spain to improve their position, a handful of young Catholic gentlemen from the Midlands, some of whom had been involved in previous plotting, decided to take action.

At their centre was the charismatic Warwickshire gentleman Robert Catesby. In May 1604 he proposed a plan to blow up the King, together with the House of Lords and the House of Commons during the ceremonial opening of Parliament.”

Source: Parliament.uk

## *Temple Connections: Conspirators*

### *Francis Tresham (c. 1567-1605)*

The Treshams had for some generations been fellows of the society. Francis Tresham (who was engaged in the plot) and whose brothers were both Inner Temple members was not summoned by the Privy Council and committed to the Tower of London until Tuesday, 12th November, up to which date he is presumed to have been living in the Temple. The examinations showed that the Treshams had for some generations been active Catholics, and that they had been engaged in intrigues not only during the few years of King James, but also during the long reign of Queen Elizabeth. They were cousins of Catesby and of the two Winters. Francis Tresham was never brought to trial, having died in the Tower on the 22nd December, 1605. After his death his estates were confiscated, and he was in other respects dealt with as a conspirator.



Source: A Calendar of the Inner Temple Records, Vol. II

## *Robert & Thomas Winter (Wintour) (1568-1606) and (1571 or 1572-1606)*

"The Middle Temple had admitted the Winter brothers, Thomas and Robert in 1590, who were both tried alongside Guy Fawkes and executed with him."



Source: Inner Temple Yearbook 2013/2014

## *Temple Connections: Prosecution*

"On 27th January, 1605-1606, the surviving conspirators were brought to trial in Westminster Hall before a special commission ... The Crown was represented by Attorney-General, Edward Coke"

Source: Trial of Guy Fawkes, ed. Carswell. 1934.

## *Sir Edward Coke (1552-1634)*

Adm CI 1571; adm IT 1572; call 1578; bench 1590;  
Treasurer 1595-7; SG 1592; AG 1594; knt 1603;  
serjeant 1606; CJCP 1606; CJKB 1613-16; MP 1589;  
Speaker 1593

"Sir Edward Coke achieved an unenviable notoriety by the vindictive mode in which he prosecuted all the accused, especially the priests, and one at least of the conspirators was a resident within our inn."

Source: A Calendar of the Inner Temple Records, Vol. II



*"For treason is like a tree, whose root is full of poison, and lieth secret and hid within the earth, resembling the imagination of the heart of man, which is so secret as God only knoweth it."*

*Sir Edward Coke*



# *After the Trial*

Francis Tresham died in the Tower of London on 23 December 1605. The eight surviving conspirators were tried in Westminster Hall on 27 January 1606. All were condemned to death for treason.

Four men - Sir Everard Digby, Robert Winter, John Grant and Thomas Bates - were executed on 30 January 1606 in St Paul's Churchyard.

The other four - Guy Fawkes, Thomas Winter, Ambrose Rookwood and Robert Keyes - were executed just outside Westminster Hall, in Old Palace Yard, the following day.

The heads of the two ringleaders, Percy and Catesby, who had been killed earlier at Holbeach House in Staffordshire, were set up on the 'Parliament House'.



## *Subsequent Legislation*

### *Thanksgiving Act 1605*

"An order was made, in commemoration of the escape of the king and the parliament, that henceforth no case should be argued as heretofore on Sunday night, or on the 5th of November, being the day of the King's Majestie's deliverance that now is, and for many generations a bonfire was lighted at the inn gate on each succeeding anniversary of gunpowder day. The expulsion of non-conforming papists was also enforced from time to time."

Source: A Calendar of Inner Temple Records

## C A P. I.

An Act for a Publick Thanksgiving to Almighty God every Year on the fifth Day of  
*November.*

‘ **F**Orasmuch as Almighty God hath in all Ages shewed his Power and Mercy in the miraculous and  
‘ gracious Deliverance of his Church, and in the Protection of religious Kings and States; (2) and  
‘ that no Nation of the Earth hath been blessed with greater Benefits than this Kingdom now enjoyeth;  
‘ having the true and free Profession of the Gospel under our most gracious Sovereign Lord King *James.*  
‘ the most great, learned and religious King that ever reigned therein, enriched with a most hopeful and  
‘ plentiful Progeny, proceeding out of his Royal Leins, promising Continuance of this Happiness and  
‘ Profession to all Posterity: (3) The which many malignant and devilish Papists, Jesuits and Seminary  
‘ Priests, much envying and fearing, conspired most horribly, when the King’s most excellent Majesty  
‘ the Queen, the Prince, and all the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, should have been  
‘ assembled in the Upper House of Parliament upon the fifth Day of *November* in the Year of our Lord  
‘ one thousand six hundred and five, suddenly to have blown up the said whole House with Gun-

*"It is a curious fact that until recently the English people held only one event in their history as worthy of annual commemoration."*

*Source: Trial of Guy Fawkes, ed. Carswell. 1934.*

## *Books held at the Inner Temple Library*

Trial of Guy Fawkes and others: the Gunpowder Plot.  
ed. Carswell, D. (1934)

What gunpowder plot was. Gardniner, Samuel  
Rawson (1897)

Thomas Winter’s confession and the gunpowder plot.  
Gerard, John (1898)

A narrative of the Gunpowder Plot. Jardine, David  
(1857)

A true and perfect relation of the whole proceedings  
against the late most barbarous traitors, Garnet a Jesuit  
and his confederats. (1606)

