

Guy Fawkes (1570 - 1606) was a member of a group of provincial English Catholics who planned to destroy the houses of parliament with gunpowder, in London, in 1605. It became known as the "Gunpowder Plot".

Guy Fawkes fought for Catholic Spain in the "Eighty Years War" against Holland. While he was in Spain, he tried to gain support for a Catholic rebellion in England, but without success. He later met Thomas Wintour, who went to England with him, and Wintour introduced him to Robert Catesby, who was planning to assassinate King James I and restore a Catholic monarch to the throne. They rented a room under the House of Lords, and Guy Fawkes was put in charge of the gunpowder, which they stored there.



The king's guards were told, by an anonymous letter, to search Westminster Palace, and on the morning of November 5th, they found Guy Fawkes guarding the explosives. He was arrested, and over several days, he was questioned and tortured. He finally confessed to the plot to kill the king.

A few minutes before his planned execution on January 31st, Fawkes fell from the hanging platform and broke his neck, thus avoiding the agony of being hanged, drawn and quartered (common at the time). It is not known if he deliberately fell, or if it was an accident.

The failure of the Gunpowder Plot has been commemorated in Great Britain every year on November 5th since 1605. The event is known as "Guy Fawkes Night". The celebrations include burning an effigy of Guy Fawkes on a bonfire, and fireworks. It is a very popular event with young children.

