



A Dutchman by the name of Crispijn van de Passe (the Elder) created this image depicting some of the Gunpowder-Plot conspirators. History tells us that the artist, who lived c. 1565-1637, never met the plotters, but he created this drawing circa 1605.

A copy of van de Passe's illustration is maintained by the National Portrait Gallery in London. Its curators tell us [more about it](#):

This print includes the only contemporary portrait of Guy Fawkes and other members of the plot to destroy the Houses of Parliament in 1605. The names of the conspirators are inscribed in Latin above their portraits. The text below describes the events of the plot and the fate of the conspirators. It is written in Latin, French and German, which indicates the international audience for this image.

The drawing includes eight of the conspirators:

- Thomas Bates (died 1606), Conspirator
- Robert Catesby (1573-1605), Plot originator and Conspirator.
- Guy Fawkes (1570-1606), Conspirator.
- Thomas Percy (1560-1605), Conspirator.
- Robert Winter (died 1606), Conspirator.
- Thomas Winter (1572-1606), Conspirator and brother of Robert Winter.
- Christopher Wright (1570?-1605), Conspirator.
- John Wright (1568?-1605), Conspirator and brother of Christopher Wright.

Who were these men (many of whom were related)? What were they hoping to accomplish by blowing up the House of Lords on the day Parliament opened in 1605?

They knew that King James I (of England) and VI (of Scotland)—the son of Mary, Queen of Scots—would attend the opening of Parliament during November of 1605. The Prince of Wales (heir to the throne) would be with his father, as would the Queen Consort and other members of the royal family.

A Protestant—whom the conspirators viewed as more anti-Catholic than his predecessor (Queen Elizabeth I)—James was the target of the gunpowder conspirators. If a massive explosion killed the King, and his heir, Princess Elizabeth (the King's daughter) could take the throne (and be manipulated by regents who would restore the Catholic faith in Britain).

The Leicestershire County Council tells us more about the conspirators:

The people involved in the Gunpowder Plot were a mixture of courtiers, gentlemen, soldiers and a servant, but were all Catholic. They did not suddenly decide to take action, the idea of killing an unjust ruler had been considered for sometime and as it had not been explicitly denounced by the Pope, the plotters believed they had his support.

They also hoped that Catholic Spain, an old enemy of Protestant England, would step in to help; in fact a certain Guido Fawkes had been dispatched to Spain to discuss such aid. However, the signing of the Anglo-Spanish peace treaty in August 1604 killed off any hope of help from abroad. Now alone, the plotters were forced to act.

The main conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot had been involved in political uprisings before. Robert Catesby, Francis Treasham, Jack Wright and Thomas Wintour had all been involved in the 'Essex uprising' of February 1601. They hoped to seize power at court and take control of the old and frail Queen Elizabeth, but they failed miserably and the Earl of Essex was executed and Catesby fined three thousand pounds, forcing him to sell his home.

It was in late 1604 that Catesby, now desperate as all sources of help had dried up, hatched the plot to destroy the present government, kill the king and replace him with his young daughter Elizabeth.

Many of the plotters were related to each other, either by birth or by marriage, which meant that they felt that they could trust each other more.

Because he was caught with the gunpowder Fawkes, for two days, was the only suspect. After two days of awful torture, he finally admitted his role in the conspiracy. When asked why he had so much gunpowder, Fawkes reportedly said:

... to blow you Scotch beggars back to your native mountains.

Although Fawkes was slated to endure a brutal execution, for his role in the Gunpowder Plot, he had other plans. Instead of dying the gruesome death of a traitor, he leapt to his death on the 31st of January, 1606. Although his body was still quartered, posthumously, Fawkes had deprived the government of further torturing him.

Things have changed, at the Houses of Parliament, since Fawkes tried to blow them up. The cellar where he was hiding with his gunpowder barrels, for example, is no more. It - among other things, such as the famous tapestries which once adorned the House of Lords - was destroyed in the fire of 1834.

Click on the image for a closer inspection.

Credits:

Image, depicting a German-language version of van de Passe's 1605 drawing, online via [Education Scotland](#).

Image depicting execution of the Gunpowder-Plot conspirators, by an unknown artist, online via Education Scotland.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Guy-Fawkes-and-the-Gunpowder-Plot>

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