

Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot



Guy Fawkes was a member of a group of English Catholics who planned to blow up the Houses of Parliament and to kill King James I and most of the Protestant aristocracy of England, on November, 5th, 1605. During that period Catholics were persecuted in Protestant England and the conspirators aimed to a revolt in the Midlands.

One of the many members of the so-called *Gunpowder Plot*, Fawkes had the role to set fire to the explosives, placed under the Parliament.

The *Gunpowder Plot*

The plotters decided to rent a house near the River Thames to conceal the gunpowder, and when they learnt that a coal merchant had vacated a cellar under the House of the Lords, immediately took it. They stacked 36 barrels of gunpowder under a pile of coal, and while the other conspirators left London to arrange the subsequent rebellion for a Catholic monarch, Guy Fawkes was left in the cellar, ready to set fire to the barrels.

A Letter to the Lords

But one of the conspirators had a brother-in-law in the *House of the Lords* and wrote him a letter advising him to stay away from the Houses of Parliament on November, 5th. Scared to death, the man immediately took the letter to the Secretary of State.

On the night of November 4th the cellars under the Parliament were inspected, and Guy Fawkes found, with matches in his pockets. He was taken to the Tower of London, interrogated and executed, along with the other conspirators of the *Gunpowder Plot*.

November 5th: Guy Fawkes' Night

Nowadays, on *Guy Fawkes' Night* British kids make a “Guy” (a doll filled with straw) and take him around the streets shouting “penny for the guy”. All money collected is spent on treats at the parties which follow, in front of enormous bonfires. Everyone is happy, remembering how Monarchy was saved.

Now answer these questions:

- 1) Who was Guy Fawkes?
- 2) What was the Gunpowder Plot?
- 3) Who was the King of England in 1606?
- 4) Why did the plotters take the barrels under the Houses? How many were they?
- 5) How was the plot discovered?
- 6) What is a “Guy”?
- 7) What happened to Guy Fawkes after he was discovered?
- 8) Who shouts “penny for the guy” and why?
- 9) What is a bonfire? Have you ever seen one?
- 10) Why do you think everybody is happy on *Guy Fawkes' Night*?