

Gunpowder Plot Confidential – Factsheet 1



10 fascinating facts about Guy Fawkes

1. He was originally **baptised a Protestant**. His father died when he was eight years old and his mother, who came from a Catholic family herself, married a Catholic man called Denis Bainbridge. Guy Fawkes converted to Catholicism as a teenager
2. Guy attended **St. Peter's School in York**, which still exists today. Two of his schoolfellows, Jack and Kit Wright, were also later part of the Gunpowder Plot.
3. It was **Robert Catesby**, not Guy Fawkes, who was the leader of the Gunpowder Plot. Fawkes was approached to join the plotters because he had been a soldier fighting as a mercenary overseas for the Catholic Spanish King against the Protestant Dutch and knew how to lay a train of gunpowder.
4. Guy Fawkes was also known by two other names: '**Guido' Fawkes**, which he adopted after a mission to Spain to persuade the Spanish King to consider invading England and taking the throne from King James I. It is thought he decided to start using it to signal his links with the Catholics in Italy and Spain. He signed his confession with this name after he was tortured on the rack in the **Tower of London**. The other name he used was '**John Johnson**', an alias designed to conceal his identity at the time of the plot. This was the name he gave when he was first arrested in the storeroom beneath the **House of Lords** where the King and parliament were due to meet on **5th November 1605**.
5. Besides religious differences, another reason Guy Fawkes wanted to get rid of **James I** was because he was Scottish. He shared this prejudice with many other people in England who did not like the thought of a Scottish king sitting on the English throne; though it is unlikely most of them would have been prepared to act on their prejudices.
6. After Guy Fawkes was arrested and taken to the Tower of London for questioning, he held out for several days before finally giving the authorities some names and further details of what the plotters had intended. His **strength and fortitude** were remarked upon by King James himself.
7. Although he was sentenced to a **traitor's death** – to be hung then drawn and quartered while still alive – he suffered only the hanging in the end as the fall from the ladder was enough to break his neck.

8. He was **executed** on 31st January 1606 with three fellow plotters – Ambrose Rookwood, Tom Wintour, and Robert Keyes – in the Old Palace Yard at Westminster, **opposite the House of Lords, the scene of his crime.**
9. Today the word '**guy**' means a person or a man, but many linguists and historians believe that the original meaning comes from the burning of effigies of Guy Fawkes on bonfires to mark the thwarting of the plot.
10. There is an island named after Guy Fawkes. The **Isla Guy Fawkes** is in the Galapagos, part of Ecuador, in South America.

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