

Gunpowder Plot

Background

- The Gunpowder Plot was a failed attempt to assassinate King James I of England (James VI of Scotland) and his heir – Prince Henry, during the Opening of Parliament on November 5th, 1605.



Background

- Before the 16th century, like its European neighbours, England was an unquestionably Roman Catholic country.
- English Catholics had expected more religious tolerance under James I compared to the reign of his predecessor, Elizabeth I. James's wife, Anne of Denmark, was a Catholic, and the king initially appeared sympathetic to English Catholicism.
- However, these hopes were dashed in early 1604 when in a speech to Parliament James I said he 'detested' the Catholic faith. Days later, he ordered all Jesuit and Catholic priests to leave the realm.

The plotters

- James I came to the English throne in 1603 and signed a peace treaty with Catholic Spain in 1604, ending the Anglo-Spanish War (1585–1604). For some Catholics, this was a terrible blow to their hopes that Spain might invade England and re-impose Catholicism.



The plotters

- Catesby and the core group of conspirators first met and swore an oath of secrecy on 20 May 1604. At first they had planned to tunnel beneath the Houses of Parliament, but in 1605 they were able to rent a cellar located directly beneath the House of Lords.



Background

- Dozens of barrels of gunpowder were moved in, and explosives expert Guy Fawkes prepared to ignite the cache during the Opening of Parliament.

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