



Bonfire Night is celebrated in Great Britain on November 5th each year.

Why do we celebrate Bonfire Night?

It was November 5th 1605 and King James I had just survived a plot to kill him by a group of Catholic men who no longer wanted him on the throne.

The men had planned to blow up the Houses of Parliament when King James was inside, but it wasn’t to be. The plan failed, the men were arrested and charged with treason (a crime against king and country).

The following year, in 1606, King James ordered everyone to celebrate by lighting bonfires to remind them of what could have happened if the plan had succeeded the year before.

This has developed in to a yearly tradition all over the country, with people lighting bonfires and fireworks to remember that famous night over 400 years ago.

The Gunpowder Plot

The plot to kill the king has become known as The Gunpowder Plot and is one of this country’s most famous stories.

In 1604, a group of Catholic men, led by Robert Catesby, began meeting in secret to discuss their dislike for King James I.

The best way to get rid of him, they decided, was to use gunpowder to blow up the Houses of Parliament, killing the king instantly. On November 5th 1605, the men were ready to put their plan into action.

The group of men had planted barrels of gunpowder in the cellars of Westminster Palace. A man named Guy Fawkes had agreed to be the one to light the fuse and then make his escape across the river Thames.

Unfortunately, an anonymous letter had been sent to Lord Monteagle, warning him not to attend parliament that day. The letter made

Lord Monteagle suspicious and he decided to show it to the king.

King James ordered Westminster to be searched and Guy Fawkes was found with the gunpowder in the cellar. He was arrested and taken to the Tower of London for questioning.

Guy Fawkes eventually gave the names of the other men in the group and they were all arrested, charged with treason and executed.

Bonfire Night Traditions

Today, we celebrate bonfire night in many different ways. We still light bonfires, often with a ‘guy’ on the top, who represents the original Guy Fawkes.

Fireworks are used to light up the night sky and remind us of the explosions that didn’t happen on that night in 1605. They came in many different shapes, colours and sizes.

Some people attend special firework displays, while others buy their own fireworks and put on their own displays in their gardens.

 5 Fun Facts about The Gunpowder Plot

1. . Many people believe that Guy Fawkes was the leader of the group of 13men plotting to kill the king, but he wasn’t. It was a man named Robert Catesby.

1. . The cellars are still searched each year before the opening of parliament in November. The guards use lanterns to search for anyone who might be down there hiding gunpowder.

1. . The original cellar where Guy Fawkes was found was destroyed in a fire in 1834.

1. . There were 36 barrels of gunpowder hidden in the cellar with Guy

Fawkes. Scientists today believe that the Houses of Parliament would have been completely destroyed.

1. . Guy Fawkes did not die from being hung by the neck. He threw himself off the scaffold before he could be executed, dying from a broken neck and therefore missing out on his final punishment.