

## GUY FAWKES TRAIL

### **A Walk exploring the (several!) birthplaces and haunts of one of York's most famous sons- Guy Fawkes of Gunpowder Plot fame**

**Stonegate.** The probable birthplace of Guy Fawkes. Also meant to have been born in Petergate (in Guy Fawkes Tavern) and Bishopthorpe, so either had a very athletic mother, or else she nipped out for a quick drink during childbirth! It is not certain where he was born, but his parents probably lived in this property on Stonegate (see plan). This equates to No. 32-4 Stonegate. He was baptised in St. Michael-le-Belfrey Church, and the parish boundary runs to South of No. 32. Bounded on other side by Starre Inn which goes back to at least 1644 and probably 100 years earlier, as was a prebendal house of one of York Minster Canons. So it was Guy Fawkes "local"!

The house is recorded in 1579 as leased by Dean and Chapter of York to Edith Fawkes at 10/- p.a. It was in 1540 in tenure of William Harrington, Grocer, who as Lord Mayor of York in 1536, opened gates of City to Pilgrimage of Grace. He left it by will to his son-in-law William Fawkes and his wife Helen/Ellen. Ellen Fawkes, Guy's grandmother, seems to have lived with her son-in-law in this property until her death in 1575.

By 1617 George Hobson owned the property. He was described as 'drunken, violent, riotous and foul-mouthed'. He was however sober enough to witness conveyance of Guy Fawkes land in Clifton to Anne Skipsey in 1592.

**High Petergate.** Guy Fawkes Tavern.

"Guy Fawkes Birthplace" is erroneous, and due to misunderstanding of lease referring to North side of Stonegate, and the subsequent tracing of the property through leases, makes it clear it had the Starre Inne on its north side.

No. 23 also said to be birthplace of Guy Fawkes. Originally belonged to vicars choral, and sub let to others. Suggested that was often let to those fleeing justice, or during sanctuary. Church sold it in 1867. There is a room on roof called outlaw's room and this may be a reference to it. Also legends of Jacobite Rebels and Dick Turpin, as well as Guy Fawkes hiding here!

### **St. Michael-le-Belfrey**

Guy Fawkes baptised here on 16th April, 1570. Original baptismal entry in Minster Library, and copy in church.

C.1530 William Fawkes married and settled in St. Michael-le-Belfrey parish: he was Guy's grandfather. He was a church lawyer, and appointed by Archbishop Edward Lee as lawyer in Archbishop's consistory court. This connection with Archbishop may have given rise to story of his birth in Bishopthorpe, and it is possible the Fawkes may have had a country house in Bishopthorpe and a town house in York. There is also a tradition that Guy Fawkes ancestors were Flemish: probably due to the unusual name and Guy's later military service in Flanders..

William Fawkes' second son Edward followed his father into church courts, and became Advocate in Archbishop's consistory court. Was protestant, as regularly appears in list of communicants at St. Michael-le-Belfrey. Married one Edith; not much known of her family. They had a daughter who died a baby in 1568 and who was baptised/buried in St. Michael-le-Belfrey. Guy Fawkes 1570, followed by Anne and Elizabeth in 1572 and 1575. All baptised in St. Michael-le-Belfrey.

### **York Minster - West Front**

Helen/Ellen Fawkes, Guy's Grandmother, died in 1575 and buried with her husband in York Minster. Edward Fawkes died in 1579 and buried near his parents in Minster.

Near Maple tree stood consistory court where Guy's father and grandfather once practised law. (Consistory court now by Zouche Chapel - South Choir Aisle). Can also see Minster Library where Guy's baptismal entry kept.

When Edward Fawkes died, he left no will, so his widow Edith got possession of his property, rather than Guy, who was under age. The two daughters, Anne and Elizabeth, went to live with their Uncle Thomas Fawkes, who was a member of Merchant Adventurers Guild.

About 1581-2 Edith Fawkes re-married Dionis Bainbridge of Scotton (between Knaresborough and Ripley) and moved away with Guy. Here he moved into catholic circles and probably now became a catholic. Here he came into contact with many of the conspirators, such as John and Christopher Wright, the Winters and Percys. Guy Fawkes went to school till 1588 when he reached 18 he worked on his fathers estate until he reached 21.

### **Union Terrace Car Park**

Here stood the 'Free School' which Guy attended as a boy. Excavated by York Archaeological Trust in 1970's and they Excavated the site of the school, and found urinals Guy Fawkes must have used!

School connected to Minster goes back to C.700, but was in parlous state at Reformation. Refounded 1556-7 by Queen Mary and King Philip as the Free School, in the Horse Fair. Under the patronage of the Dean and Chapter with endowments in Bootham and the tithes of the Rectory of Stillingfleet. Later moved in 18thC to St. Andrew's Church, and in 1833 to Minster Yard and 1844 to Clifton. Present St. Peter's School have a bonfire, but don't burn a guy as don't think it right to burn an old boy!

### **Gillygate**

Here there was a barn and garth which Guy Fawkes inherited when he was 21. He rented it for 2 guineas per annum to Christopher Lomley. He also rented half his property of 11 acres in Clifton to Mr. Lomley. The rest - 6½ acres - was sold in 1592 to Anne Skipsey for £29.13.4d. He spent all this money in high living, and left England in 1593. He took employment as a soldier of fortune with the King of Spain in the Spanish Netherlands (now Flanders, Belgium and Holland). Here he specialised in mining the defences of towns and blowing up siegeworks. He was with the Hapsburg Archduke Albert at the capture of Calais in 1596, and visited Madrid in 1601. In Flanders adopted Spanish version of his name 'Guido'. In 1605 joined Gunpowder Plot to destroy English Government and start a catholic revolt.

### **King's Manor**

Visited by James VI of Scotland on his way South to become James I of England in 1603. James I Protestant but his wife, Anne of Denmark, Catholic, and there were hopes of greater toleration of catholics under his rule, but these hopes were dashed, hence plot. The plot was to blow up the Government - King, Lords, Commons and Bishops, plus Royal Family at State Opening of Parliament on 5th November, 1605. Guy Fawkes posed as a servant of Henry Perry, a member of court, and hired cellars under St. Stephen's Chapel, where State Opening was to be, and stored bales of wool there, concealing 32 cwt of gunpowder. The cellar may have been deliberately made available by the Government, to trap Guy Fawkes. He was probably set up!

The plot misfired when one of the conspirators, Tresham, warned his relative Lord Monteagle, in a letter not to go to the State Opening, saying there would be a "terrible blow". The letter was shown to the King, who had the cellars searched, and Guy Fawkes was caught red-handed with a fuse in his pocket.

### **Bootham Bar**

He was taken to the Tower and tortured on the rack until he gave up the names of the conspirators which he initially refused to do.

He is described as being of tall athletic stature, and being thriftless, but determined. He had unflinching integrity, but the resolution of a man prepared to go to any bloody end, convinced of his own right. He was defiant and fearless on his arrest.

He was tried in Westminster Hall on 27th January, 1606, and several days later executed with his fellow conspirators by hanging, drawing and quartering, near the Palace of Westminster. He was so weakened by torture that he slipped on the gallows and so was dead by hanging before the drawing and quartering.

Almost immediately there was rejoicing with bonfires, and effigies of Guy (and the Pope and King of Spain) burnt. Fireworks had appeared by the mid 17thC.

In many villages and towns blazing tar barrels rolled along streets and down hills featured in ceremonies, as they still do in Lewes, Sussex, where they still burn an effigy of the Pope. Also bell-ringing used to feature in celebrations in years gone by. Many of the bonfires involved acts of vandalism or intimidation (see attached poems) - rather like current day 'Trick or Treat'. In Yorkshire 'Parkin' eaten.

November 5th became an official holiday in 17thC, a very protestant one; it was one of the few to survive the rule of Oliver Cromwell, who abolished many festivals such as Christmas. Paradoxically November 5th survived, though it celebrated the defeat of a plot aimed at destroying the Monarch - which the Civil War did do.

It is said he was the only man to go to Parliament with the right idea! Or like many since, he went to Parliament having been selected to do a job, but failed to carry out his promises!