

It was against this background that the Gunpowder Plot was hatched. At the heart of this was Guy Fawkes, a man of York who was also a mercenary and a soldier on the hunt for gunpowder. As this needed to be fresh to be of use, it was conceivable that the whole scheme would not have come to anything anyway.

There was always going to be a moment when the conspirators had to decide to press ahead. This involved finding storage for arms and ammunition. Several Warwickshire houses were used.

Curiously it was widely known that the Plot was a live issue even though support from abroad was not forthcoming. The conspirators got so far as assembling at the Lion Inn at Dunchurch, though Fawkes himself was in London where cellars were being searched. Supporters rallied round but ultimately Catholics were rounded up and those at the centre of the Plot were hanged, drawn and quartered. Only Digby pleaded his guilt.

Graham Sutherland concluded his challenging talk with some key questions. Was Catesby responsible for the Plot or was the whole affair a ruse devised by Cecil? We may never know the real answers but with the four hundredth Anniversary in the offing it seems a good time to re-open the inquest. Our speaker did that in some style.

As a postscript Jeremy Gibson revealed a direct Banbury link with the Plot. William Knight, Banbury's leading personality, in his will of 1631 left to his grandson: "the yron crowe[bar] given me by Sr Walter Cope's Ladie, being the same the traiterous Papiste dugg under the Parl'mt House withall." Walter Cope was a younger brother of Sir Anthony Cope of Hanwell, M.P. for Banbury.

Thursday 12th February 2004.

The History of Deddington Castle – Chris Day.

Sadly, because of illness, Mr Lethbridge was unable to deliver the advertised talk on 'Oxfordshire churches', so at short notice our member Chris Day stood in with an excellent and comprehensive account of one of Britain's smaller castles. In the late 1940s and in the 1970s this attracted the attention of archaeologists who identified the remains of late Saxon buildings along with associate artefacts.

Since these investigations, the site has been traced back to an Iron Age hill fort. The clue to this revised dating was the steep earthworks.

The defensive quality of the structure was greatly enhanced in the eleventh and twelfth centuries by the addition of stone which must have made the three and a half acre site most impressive.

By 1190 the settlement of Deddington had been split into three manors. One of these embraced the castle which by then belonged to the Dives family, supporters of Richard the Lionheart. This was about the peak of its importance, as from 1281 and on into the fourteenth century the castle diminished in size. Indeed stones were removed as they were needed for repair and construction purposes, partly in Deddington itself.