

Saint Alexander Briant

Born 1556: Somerset. Graduate of Hart Hall, Oxford.

Alexander Briant was raised as a Protestant but was converted to Catholicism and attended the English College in Rheims. He was Ordained on 29th March 1578.

He returned to Somerset as a Catholic missionary in August 1579. On 28th April 1581, Alexander was found at a house in London used by Father Robert Persons. Robert Persons

was closely associated with Edmund Campion, both of whom were sought by the authorities. Alexander was arrested and taken to the Tower. Pressed to reveal Father Robert's whereabouts; he had needles pushed under his nails and was racked and starved. John was unmoved by threats from Thomas Norton, the torturer, to 'make him a foot longer than God had made him', and disclosed nothing.

During his imprisonment, he wrote to the Jesuits, asking to be admitted to the Society of Jesus. He was accepted during his last weeks. Briant was condemned to death with six other priests on 16th November 1581 at Westminster. Whilst in prison, Alexander made himself a small wooden cross, and gripped it tightly at all times, even during his trial. In the courtroom it was wrested from him. He told the judge, 'You can take it out of my hands, but not out of my heart.' The cross was later bought by Catholics, and is now at the English College in Rome. On 1st December 1581 Alexander Briant was hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn with Ralph Sherwin and Edmund Campion who had been arrested in July.

