

“LONDON’S BURNING!”

**Люберцы
2009**

The Fire

The fire started on the night of the 2nd of September 1666 in a house that belonged to Thomas Farynor. He was the king's official baker. One night, Thomas finished work and prepared to leave. However, this time he forgot to put the fire in his oven out. Later that night, the embers set light to some wood that was nearby. By one o'clock in the morning, three hours after Thomas had gone to bed, the house and shop were well alight. Thomas woke to find the house full of smoke and escaped with his wife, daughter and maid. They went through an upstairs window, then onto the roof, however, the poor maid was too frightened because it was so high and she stayed in the house, becoming the first victim of the fire. As Thomas was leaving the fire was getting worse and worse.



London 1666

At the time, London was “perfect” for burning. The houses were in narrow streets and the buildings were practically on top of one another. Also, tar was often used to build the houses and this burned wonderfully. To make matter worse, a strong wind blew that morning and the fire spread rapidly. Things got especially bad when the fire reached Thames Street where there were lots of warehouses full of flammable materials such as oil, alcohol, straw and coal.





The Fire Burns

The man in charge of dealing with the fire was Mayor Budworth. At first he didn't take the fire very seriously, and apparently said the infamous words: "A woman might piss it out!"

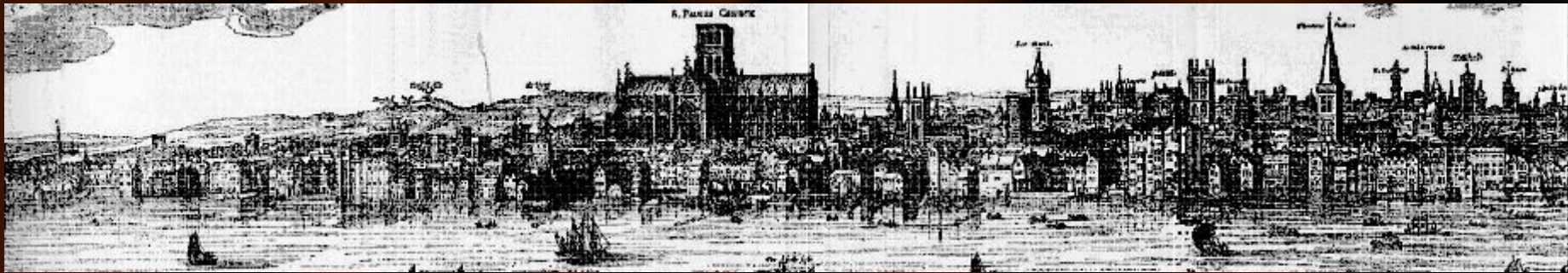


The Fire Burns

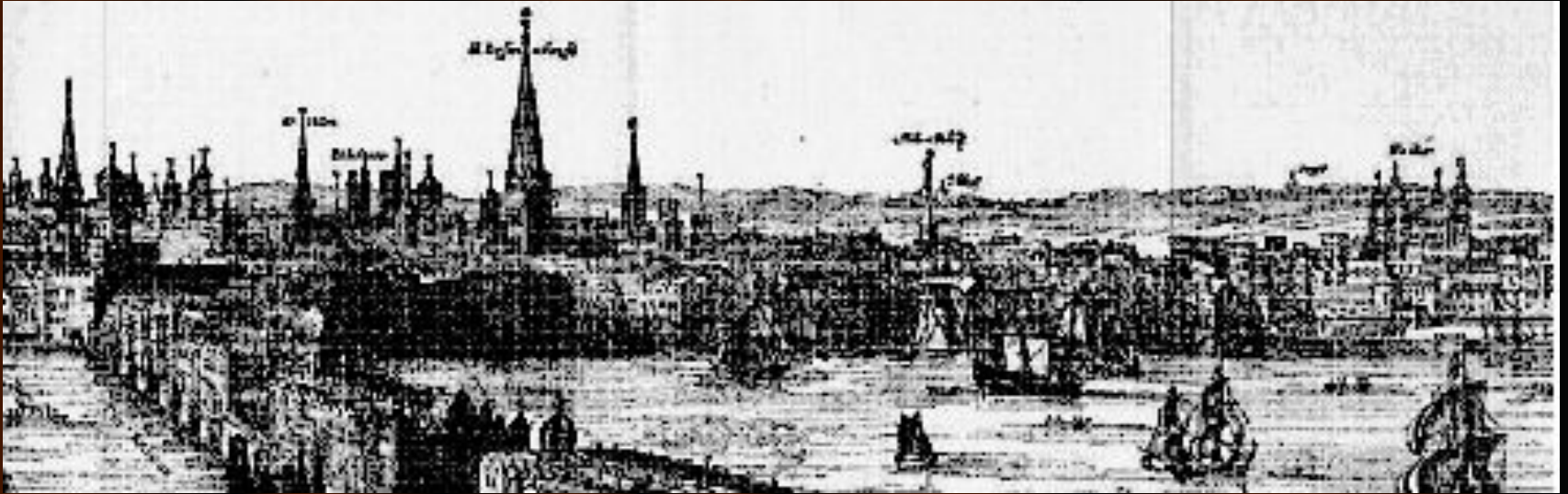
He went back to sleep, but was woken up shortly afterwards to find that the fire was getting serious. And by this time it was all too late. His advisers suggested destroying houses to create fire breaks. The Lord Mayor was initially concerned about who would pay for this deliberate damage. However, the king thought this was a good idea and ordered gangs of volunteers to blow up houses to stop the advancing fires. Unfortunately, the results weren't very affective as the fire raged for three more days through the City. The fire eventually burned out at Temple Church near Holborn Bridge. Then, just when everyone thought it was safe, the fire suddenly flared up again.

Pepys' View

Our best account of the Fire comes from the diaries of Samuel Pepys. He was an important person at the time (the Secretary of the Admiralty) and he watched the destruction from a safe position across the Thames. "It made me weep to see it," he said. "The churches, houses, and all on fire and flaming at once. And a horrid noise the flames made, and the cracking of houses."



Pepys' View



Here are some more of Pepys' impressions:

“Poor people staying in their houses till the very fire touched them, and then running into boats, or clambering from one pair of stairs by the waterside to another. And among other things, the poor pigeons. They were loath to leave their houses, and hovered about the windows and balconies till some of them burned their wings and fell down.

THE LONDON GAZETTE.

Published by Authority.

From Monday, Septemb 3, to Monday, Septemp 10, 1666.

Whitehall, Sept. 8.

THE ordinary course of this paper having been interrupted by a sad and lamentable accident of Fire lately hapned in the City of *London*: it hath been thought fit for satisfying the minds of so many of His Majesties good Subjects who must needs be concerned for the Issue of so great an accident, to give this short, but true Account of it.

On the second instant, at one of the clock in the Morning, there hapned to break out, a sad in deplorable Fire in *Pudding-lane*, near *New Fish-street*, which falling out at that hour of the night, and in a quarter of the Town so close built with wooden pitched houses spread itself so far before day, and with such distraction to the inhabitants and Neighbours, that care was not taken for the timely preventing the further diffusion of it, by pulling down houses, as ought to have been; so that this lamentable Fire in a short time became too big to be mastered by any Engines or working near it. It fell out most unhappily too, That a violent Easterly wind fomented it, and kept it burning all that day, and the night following spreading itself up to *Grace-church-street* and downwards from *Cannon-street* to the Water-side, as far as the *Three Cranes in the Vintrey*.

The people in all parts about it, distracted by the vastness of it, and their particular care to carry away their Goods, many attempts were made to prevent the spreading of it by pulling down Houses, and making great Intervals, but all in vain, the Fire seizing upon the Timber and Rubbish, and so continuing it set even through those spaces, and raging in a bright flame all Monday and Tuesday, not withstanding His Majesties own, and His Royal Highness's indefatigable and personal pains to apply all possible remedies to prevent it, calling upon and helping the people with their Guards; and a great number of Nobility and Gentry unweariedly assisting therein, for which they were requited with a thousand blessings from the poor distressed people. By the favour of God the Wind slackened a little on Tuesday night & the Flames meeting with brick buildings at the *Temple*, by little and little it was observed to lose its force on that side, so that on Wednesday morning we began to hope well, and his Royal Highness never despairing or slackening his personal care wrought so well that day, assisted in some parts by the Lords of the Council before and behind it that a stop was put to it at the *Temple*

Church, near *Holborn-bridge*, *Pie-corner*, *Aldersgate*, *Cripple-gate*, near the lower end of *Coleman-street*, at the end of *Basin-hall-street* by the *Postern* at the upper end of *Bishopsgate-street* and *Leadenhall-street*, at the *Standard* in *Cornhill* at the church in *Fenchurch street*, near *Cloth-workers Hall* in *Mineing-lane*, at the middle of *Mark-lane*, and at the *Tower-dock*.

On Thursday by the blessing of God it was wholly beat down and extinguished. But so as that Evening it unhappily burst out again a fresh at the *Temple*, by the falling of some sparks (as it supposed) upon a Pile of Wooden buildings; but his Royal Highness who watched there that vyhole night in Person, by the great labours and diligence used, and especially by applying Powder to blow up the Houses about it, before day most happily mastered it.

Divers Strangers, Dutch and French were, during the fire, apprehended, upon suspicion that they contributed mischievously to it, who are all imprisoned, and Informations prepared to make a severe inquisition here upon by my Lord Chief Justice *Keeling*, assisted by some of the Lords of the Privy Council; and some principal Members of the City, notwithstanding which suspicion, the manner of the burning all along in a Train, and so blown forwards in all its way by strong Winds, make us conclude the whole was an effect of an unhappy chance, or to speak better, the heavy hand of God upon us for our sins, shewing us the terror of his Judgement in thus raising the Fire, and immediately after his miraculous and never to be acknowledged Mercy, in putting a stop to it when we were in the last despair, and that all attempts for quenching it however industriously pursued seemed insufficient. His Majesty then sat hourly in Council, and ever since hath continued making rounds about the City in all parts of it where the danger and mischief was greatest, till this morning that he hath sent his Grace the Duke of *Albermarle*, whom he hath called for to assist him in this great occasion, to put his happy and successful hand to the finishing this memorable deliverance.

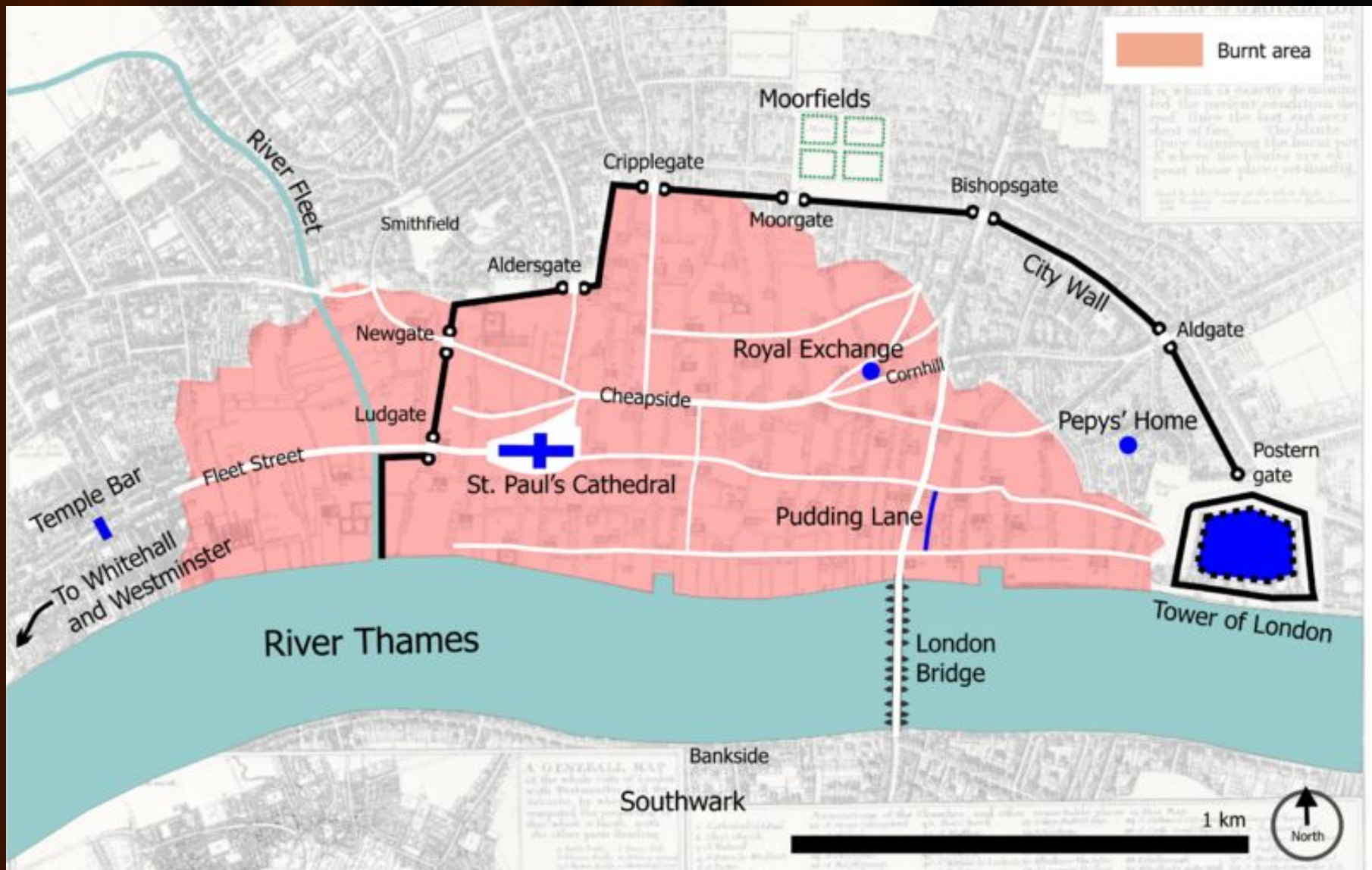
About the *Tower* the seasonable orders given for plucking down the Houses to secure the Magazines of Powder was more especially successful, that part being up the Wind, notwithstanding which it came almost to the very Gates of it. So as by this early provision the general Stores of War lodged in the *Tower* were entirely saved: And we have further this intimate cause to give God thanks, that the Fire did not happen where

The Cost

The fire destroyed much of medieval London; and within 5 days the city which Shakespeare had known had ceased to exist. The destruction included 87 churches (including St. Paul's Cathedral), 13.200 houses and 6 people (officially). The fire also destroyed goods and possessions worth many millions of pounds. In total, 80% of the city was destroyed. Some people lost everything, and over the following years thousands of people went to prison because they could no longer pay their bills.

St. Paul's ruins





The Benefit

However, there is a positive side to all this. The fire also put an end to the Great Plague. This disease was carried by rats and most of them were killed in the fire. The number of plague victims dropped rapidly after the fire.

The Monument

There's construction commemorating the fire that you can visit. It's called the Monument and it's a 70 meter column. The architect Sir Christopher Wren proposed putting a statue of Charles II on top, but Charles objected as he didn't want to be associated with the disaster. In the end, Sir Christopher Wren put a simple bowl with flames coming out of it.



