

# The Great Fire of London





The famous 'Great Fire of London' started on Sunday 2 September 1666 in a bakers shop.



The shop was in 'Pudding Lane' and belonged to Thomas Faynor who baked for the King.





The baker forgot to put out the fire he used to bake bread. Some fire wood was set alight and the fire began.



The buildings in London at the time were made of wood so they burnt very easily.



The Great Fire of London, 1666. Lieve Verschuer.

The buildings were also very close together, so the fire spread from one street to another quickly.





The very strong wind blowing also helped the fire to spread quickly across the city of London.



There were no firemen or fire engines so people tried to put the fire out with buckets of water.





Old St. Paul's on Fire.

The fire destroyed many buildings in London. They were later rebuilt using bricks instead of wood.



Samuel Pepys kept a diary of what he saw during the fire. He watched the fire from across the River Thames.



Published by Authority.

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

The ordinary course of this Paper having been interrupted by a Sad and Lamentable Accident of Fire lately happened in the City of London: It hath been thought fit to furnish the minds of many of His Majesty's good Subjects, who much needs be concerned for the safety 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 & Deplorable Fire, in a *Wool-stee* near *New Fish-street*, which filling out at the hour of the night, and in a quarter of the Town to the southward with wooden pitched houses, spread it self to the houses day, and with such distraction to the Inhabitants and Neighbourhood, that care was not taken for the timely preventing the further diffusion of it by pulling down houses, as might have been, so that this lamentable Fire in a short time became too big to be mastered by any Engines or working men. It fell out most unhappily too, that a violent East-Wind followed it, and kept it burning all that day, and the night following, spreading it self up to *Grace-Church-street*, and downwards to the *Water-side* as far as the *Three Crowns* in the *Parish*.

The People in all parts about it distracted by the violence 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 fire-works, but all in vain, the Fire being upon the *Timber* and *Wool*, and to continue at it, even through thick fumes, and ending in a bright Flame all Monday and Tuesday, notwithstanding His Majesty's own, and His Royal Highness's indefatigable and personal pains to apply all possible remedies to prevent its calling upon aid and helping the people with their Goods, and a great number of Money and Gunny unavailably assisting therein, for which they were requited with a thousand blessings from the most distressed people. By the favour of God the Wind blowed a little on Tuesday night, and the Flames meeting with the assistance of the Temple, by little and little it was not good to lose its force on that side, so that on Wednesday morning we began to hope well and His Royal Highness's never desisting 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*, *Piccadilly*, *St. Dunstons*, *Cripplegate*, near the lower end of *Colman-off-street*, at the end of *White-church-lane*, and at the upper end of *White-church-lane*, and *Leaden-hall-street*, as the *Wardens* in *St. Dunstons*, at the Church in *St. Dunstons*, near *White-church-lane*, and at the middle of *White-church-lane*, and at the *Three Crowns*.

On Thursday by the blessing of God it was wholly beat down and extinguished; but so as that Evening it unhappily burnt out again fresh at the *Temple*, by the falling of the *Wool* (as is supposed) from a Pile of Wooded *Wool*, but His Royal Highness's, who watched there the whole night in Person, by the great Labour and vigilance used, and especially by applying Powder to blow up the Houses about it, before day stood happily extinguished.

Several Strangers, Dutch and French, were, during the Fire, apprehended, that upon finding that they consorted much with the Fire, who are all imprisoned, and Informations

prepared to make a severe Inquisition thereof by my Lord Chief Justice Keeling, assisted by some of the Lords of the Privy Council, and four principal Members of the City, notwithstanding which suspensions, the manner of the burning all along in *St. Dunstons*, and blown forwards in all its way by strong Winds, maketh us conclude the whole was an effect of an unhappy chance, or to speak better, the heavy hand of God upon us for our Sin, flowing as the terror of his Judgment in punishing the fire, and immediately after, his merciful and never enough to be acknowledged Mercy, in putting a stop to it, when we were in the last danger, and that all attempts for the quenching it, however industriously prosecuted, seemed ineffectual. His Majesty then far busily in Council, and ever since hath continued making rounds about the City in all parts of it where the danger and mischief were greatest, till this Morning that he hath from His Grace the Duke of *Albani*, 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 feasonable Orders given for plucking down 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 several Stores of War lodged in the Tower were entirely saved: And we have further this infinite cause particularly to give God thanks that the fire did not happen in any of those places where his Majesty's Naval Stores are kept, so as though he hath pleased God to visit us with his own hand, he hath not by disarming us with the means of carrying on the War, subjected us to our Enemies.

It must be observed, That this Fire happened in a part of the Town, where though the Commodities were not very rich, yet they were so bulky, that they could not well be removed, so that the Inhabitants of that part where it first began have sustained very great loss: But by the best Enquiry we can make, the other parts of the Town, where the Commodities were of greater value, took the Alarm so early, that they saved most of their Goods of value, which possibly may have diminished the loss, though some think that if the whole industry of the Inhabitants had been applied to the stopping of the Fire, and not to the saving of their particular Goods, the success might have been much better, not only to the Publick, but to many of them in their own Particulars.

Though this sad Accident it is scarce to be imagined how many persons were necessitated to remove themselves and Goods into the open Fields, where they were forced to continue some time, which could not but work compassion in the beholders, but His Majesty's Care was most signal in this occasion, who, besides his Personal Pains, was frequent in Consulting all ways for relieving these distressed persons, which produced so good effect, as well by His Majesty's Proclamations, and the Orders issued to the Neighbour Justices of the Peace to encourage the lending in Provisions to the Marlers, which are probably known, as by other Directions, that when His Majesty, seeing that other Orders might not yet have been sufficient, had Commanded the Virtualler of his Navy to send Bread into *Stons-Fields* for the relief of the Poor, which for the more speedy supply, he sent in Baskets out of the Sea Stores, it was found that the Marlers had

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been already so well supplied, that the people, being unaccustomed to that kind of Bread, declined it, and so it was returned in great part to his Majesty's Stores again, without any sale at all.

And we cannot but observe, to the satisfaction of all his Majesty's enemies, who endeavour to persuade the world abroad of great parties and dissensions, as some against his Majesty's Government; That a greater influence of the afflictions of this City, could never be brought upon him, had been given from this sad and deplorable Accident, whereas if any time had been expended from the losses, distraction, and almost desperation of some persons in their private fortunes, thousands of people not having had habitations to cover them. And yet, when it is thought that the danger had been so great, that in all this time it hath been so far from any appearance of designs or attempts against his Majesty's Government, that his Majesty and his Royal Brother, out of their concern to prevent the fire, respectively expending their persons with very small assistance in all parts of the Town, gentlemen seem to be intermixed with those who laboured in the business, yet nevertheless there hath been observed so much as a murmuring word to fall from any, but on the contrary, even those persons whose losses rendered their conditions most desperate, and so to be the objects of others prayers, beholding those frequent instances of his Majesty's care of his people, forget their own misery, and fill the streets with their prayers for his Majesty, whose goodness they seem to compassionate before they can be thought of.

Monday, Aug. 10. Since a day passed wherein some Prices are not bought in by our Privy-council, among the rest, one of them of six Guns, has lately fallen on a very good price, and is bound for Denmark, and in return for it, a *Natural* Son of the King of Denmark, her (as 'tis said) a *Natural* Son of the King of Denmark, *Sept. 3.* A French Vessel called the *Hop* of *Guilford* laden with 1799 bales of Butter, and 4000 Pipes of Lead, was put aboard about a league to the southward of this Town, and fell in pieces, but the Goods are most of them saved and preserved for the Owners, it being one of those vessels that brought over the Lord Douglas's Regiment, and was prepared to land home.

Tuesday, Sept. 4. Yesterday arrived here 2 *Overies* laden with Salt, from *Spain*, from whence they came the 12 of *August*, and report the *Dutch* to be small Men of war, and Fire-ships, wherof 3 *Dutch*, and were making all the preparations they could for the Sea, but their guns were unaccustomed.

Wednesday, Sept. 5. On Friday morning arrived here the *Sigaria* of the *Gravel*, a Venetian Vessel, hired by Mr. *Arthur* *Wayne* *Mercant*, who laded Currants and Oyle at *Port* and *Gallipoly*, and were bound for *London*, by the way the *Venetians*, *Malgasins*, and other Italians, with whom he was married, designed the destruction of the *Mercant* and their belonging to *Spain*, intending afterwards to carry off the *Ship* with its tackle, and in execution of their purpose had fallen upon the *Mercant*, when they wounded in several places, and had undoubtedly killed him, but that Captain *Loy* in the *Philips*, a *Privateer*, came by Providence to his rescue, and seeing their principals, secured them from further attempts.

Thursday, Sept. 6. On the first instant, a small French Vessel with Ballast, taken by one of our Frigates, was sent to *Wich*, and by the way ran on ground in the storm, but by the assistance of several persons got off, being rescued, which the *Lyphens* of all her *Ruggings*, *Sayles*, and *Tackle*.

Friday, Aug. 18. On the 14. instant, his Grace, the Lord *Lowmant*, came late to *Kilcomyn*, intending from thence to visit all the most considerable places in *Wester*. The Lord *Chancellor* is well recovered, and was yesterday abroad, and intends speedily to follow. All Countries are in very good order, the Taxes no more heard of, and the *Religion* generally edified in a very good posture.

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Monday 6, Septemb. 6. The account of our Bill of Mortality for this last week, runs thus; Buried all in *Dissent* 166. Whereof of the *Plague* 147. Buried at the *Post-houses* 19.

Tuesday, Septemb. 7. Yesterday his Grace the Lord General parted hence for *London*, leaving the Fleet retired after their late *Victory*; and ready to put to Sea again with the first fair wind.

Office is hereby given, That Sir *Robert* *Vincent* is now settled in the *Eastern* house near the middle of *Broad-street* in *London*, where he intends to manage his affairs (as formerly in *Lambeth*) being by his good providence of all his concerns, almost twenty four hours before the *Twelve* five o'clock in the afternoon.

Also *Admiral* *Meswell*, and *Alderman* *Bacwell*, with divers others of *Lambeth*, being likewise preferred in *Stons-Fields*, do intend to settle in a few days in our *Streets*.

The general Post-Office is for the present hold at the two Black Pillars in *White-church-street* over against the *Fleecem* Tavern in *Green* *Church*, till a more convenient place can be found in *London*.

Apple-chutes in *St. Alstons* Road, Sept. 2. On the 2. inst. at five in the morning our Fleet weighed anchor at *Stons*, but being a calm and the tide against us, we were forced to come again to an Anchor, before we had made a league of way, and so laid that day without the intelligence of the Enemy.

The 11. of 9. in the morning we were under way, and stood a Course towards the *one* *four* *four*, till about 11. at noon, when off *Stons* cliffs we discovered the Enemy bearing S. and by E. wherupon we steered S. E. being assisted by this S. E. wind of the *Gallies*, but yet we sail not so well, but that this Ship struck upon the sand, but was so fortunate as to get off again without prejudice: Which Ship brought us into better order to fight afore the Enemy, with the *White* *Squadron* in the Van, and the *Blue* in the Rear, till 12. at night, keeping the Wind, at which time we quest the *Dutch* were dead, seeing them near us, and some of our *Termen* mult ships and the Enemy firing which made us sack also, and stand to the Northward.

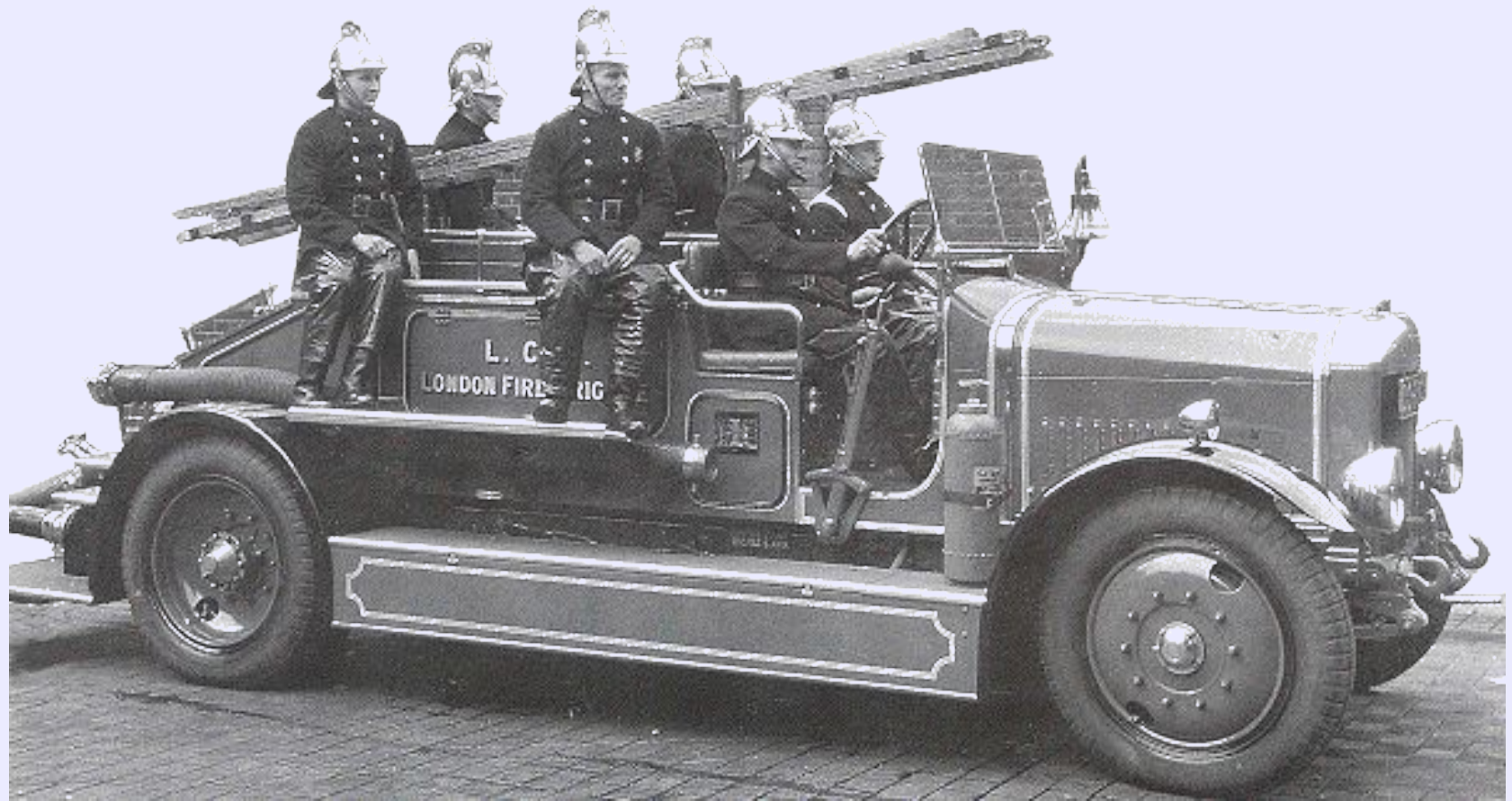
Sept. 3. We saw the Vice-Admiral of the *Blow* in the *Lacross* with some few ships, and finding the *Dutch* were gone away from us towards *Calcut*, we shot at *Calcut* after them, and found some of them *Reddy* *Anglicans*, and others standing in, but as our approach, they got all under sail, and stood for *Calcut* Road, halting in close to the shore, being fore to weather us, if we pass the Point, the Wind then E. by N. and E. N. E. as much as we could carry our top sails half mast high: Wherupon we lay by, fore of the place, till all our Fleet came up: but then the storm growing greater, and having no hopes, by reason of the ill weather, of attempting farther upon the Enemy, who durst not adventure out of the shelter of the shore, it was found best to lay by, and bring the Fleet together, and the next day to break our *Retreat* to *St. Helens* Bay, the place appointed for our Rendezvous, as the most proper situation to hinder the enemies conjunction with the *French*, we being ready with the first fair Wind to seek out the Enemy.

In the storm two of our ships struck upon the *Riprap* sands, *etc.* the *Andrew* and the *Happy* *Return*, but got well off again: The rest of our Fleet in good condition, what loss the Enemy sustained by the storm we know not, only were assured, they were forced to blow up one of their greatest ships; another a *Flag-ship* wholly disabled, was seen driving before the wind; and that several others of them were much damaged and disabled: and of the rest, four we could get run upon the *Sand*, and with great difficulty got off again.

Dutch, 8. Sept. This afternoon the *Dutch* Fleet weighed from *Bulow* Road, and are now standing towards their own Coast.

The fire was burning for four days. Luckily only 4 people were reported to have died.





After the fire a fire service was set up in London to make sure that it did not happen again.



A monument was made to remember the 'Great Fire of London'. It still stands in London today.