

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, with some 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 Field of-Lane 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 suburbs, 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 Easterly Wind fomented it, and kept it burning all that day, and the night following, spreading it self up to Grace-Church-Street, and downwards from a compass to the Water-side as far as the Tower Church in the Strand.

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 fireworks, but all in vain, the Fire rising upon the Timber and Rubbish, 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 it, calling upon and helping the people with their Guards, and a great number of Artillery and Gunners unwearyingly assisting therein, for which they were rewarded with a thousand blessings from the most afflicted 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 abated to lose its force on that side, so that on Wednesday morning we began to hope well, and His Royal Highness's never declining or slackening his Personal Care, thought 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, at a place called the Lower end of Coleman-officer, at the end of Bishop-Baldwin's, by the following, as it is upon the end of Bishop's Street, and London-Mall-Herby, at the Westward in Cornhill, at the Church in Fenchurch-Street, near Fishmongers-hall in Minster-Lane, at the middle of New-Lane, and at the Tower-Gate.

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 sparks (as is supposed) from a Pile of Wooden Timber, 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 together to it, who are all imprisond, 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 the Strand, and blown forwards in all ways 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 Sins, 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 sat hourly 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 Albemarle, 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 some 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 Mariners 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 happening when hath been given from in this sad and deplorable Accident, whereas at any time since it hath been exposed 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 their care is not to prevent the fire, but to prevent the spreading of their persons with very small assistance in all parts of the Town, sometimes seem to be intermixed with those who laboured in the assistance, 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 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 are.

Monday, Aug. 10. Since a day passed wherein some Prices are not bought in by our Privy-counsellors, among the rest, one of them of six Guns, has lately sold on a very good price, and is bound for Denmark, and in return for it, a Noble 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 Hope of Guelders laden with 1799 Barrels 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 here.

Tuesday, Sept. 4. Yesterday arrived here 2 Olerias laden with Salt, from the North, from whence they came the 12 of August last, and report the Dutch to be still there, there with his Fleet of about 40 Sails, great and small, Men of war, and Fire-ships, whereof 3 Dutch, and were making all the preparations they could for the Sea, but their going out was uncertain.

Wednesday, Sept. 5. On Friday morning arrived here the Signioria de Grazia, a Venetian Vessel, hired by Mr. Archbishop Wellesley, who laded Currants and Oyle at West and Galley, and were bound for London, by the way the Venetians, Maldivians, and other Italians, with whom he was married, designed the destruction of the Merchants 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 Merchants, who they wounded in several places, and had undoubtedly killed him, but that Captain Loy in the Pilony, a Privateer, came by Providence to his rescue, and seizing 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 hisher, 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 Riggings, Sails, and Tackle.

Friday, Aug. 18. On the 14. instant, his Grace, the Lord Lovelant, came late to Killybegs, intending from thence to visit all the most considerable places in his Majesty's Kingdom, and to see the state of the same. 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 Militia generally settled in a very good posture.

London, Printed by Tho. Newcomb, 1666.

Monday 6, Septemb. 6. The account of our Bill of Mortality for this last week, runs thus; buried all in Deaths 1654. Whereof of the Plague 147. Buried at the Pest-houses 12.

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

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

Also Alderman Merywell, and Alderman Beckwell, who were chosen for the office of Justice, being likewise preferred in their places, do intend to sit in a few days in our next Sessions.

The general Post-Office is for the present hold at the two Black Pillars in Bridge-Street, over against the Fleeca Tavern in Queen's Garden, till a more convenient place can be found in London.

Apple-cheeks in St. Alstons Road, Sept. 2. On the 2. inst. past, by six in the morning our Fleet weighed anchor, and sailed, but proving 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.

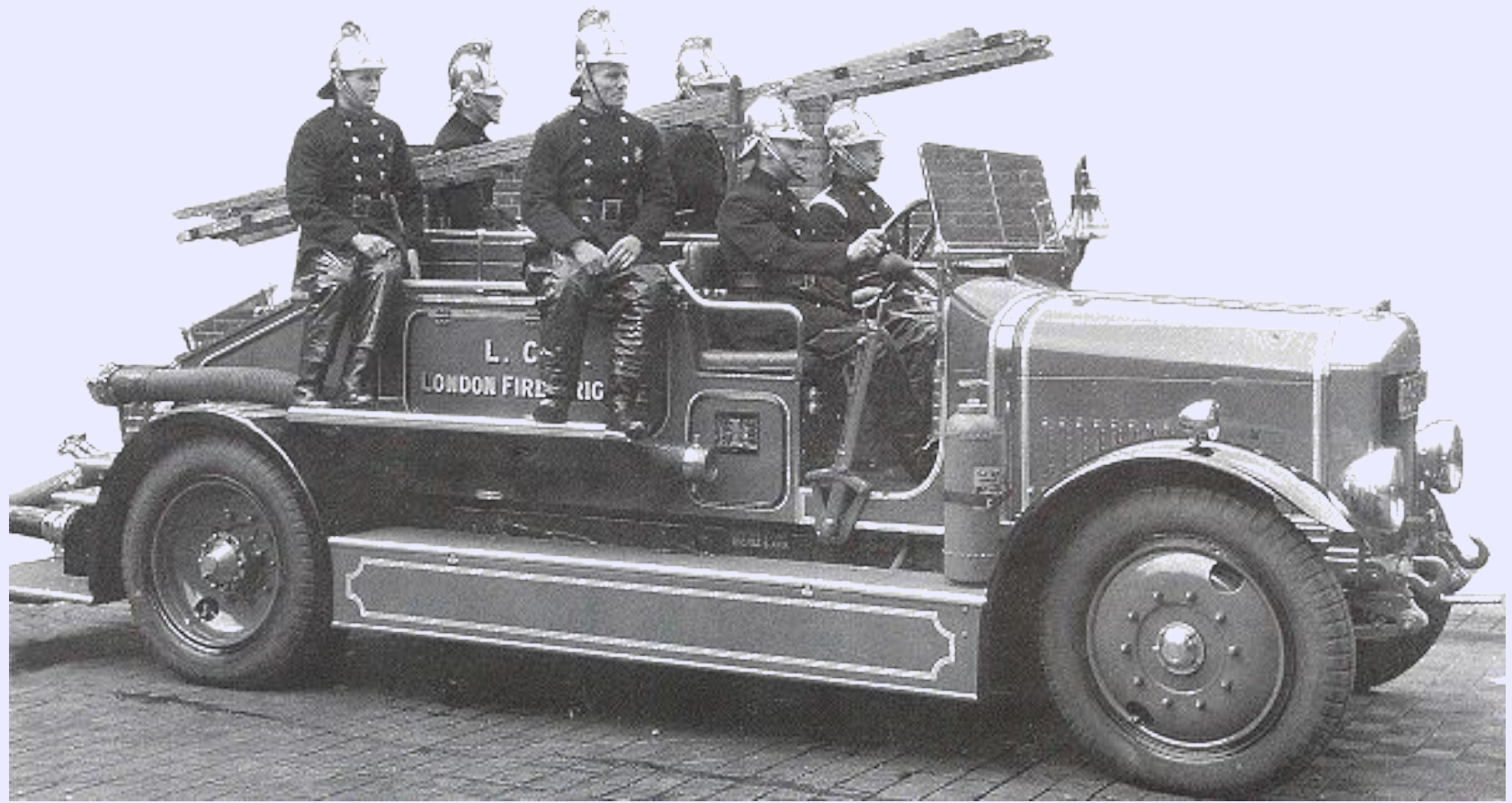
The 11. of 7. in the morning we were under way, and stood a Course towards the one foot-board, till about 11. at noon, when off Boffy Cliff we discovered the Enemy bearing S. and by E. whereupon we steered S. E. being assisted by this S. E. wind of the Gallies, but yet we sail not so well, but that this 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 quelt the Dutch were dead, seeing them near us, and some of our Irons, 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 Levant with some few ships, and finding the Dutch were gone away from us towards Cadix, we shot at Caspale after them, and found some of them newly Arrived, and others standing in, but as our approach, they got all under sail, and stood for Cadix Road, halting in close to the shore, being fore to weather us, if we push the Point, the Wind then E. by N. and E. N. E. as much as we could carry our top sails half mast high: Whereupon 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 return to St. Helen's 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 Riprapes sands, etc. the Andrew and the Hope 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 Sands, and with great difficulty got off again.

Dutch, 8. Sept. This afternoon the Dutch Fleet weighed from Ballew 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.