

EVENTS BEYOND LIVING MEMORY: THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON (Y2)

Summary

The Great Fire of London was a major fire that happened in London from Sunday 2nd September to Thursday 6th September 1666.

The fire destroyed:

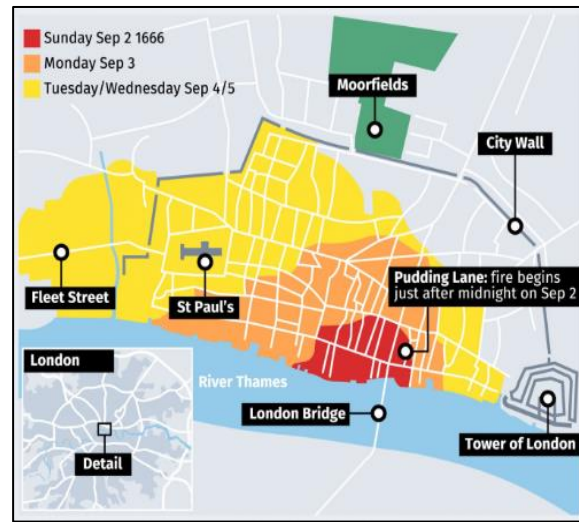
- 13200 houses (the homes of 70,000 people);
- 87 churches;
- St. Paul's Cathedral;
- Lots of other buildings

The fire started in a bakery on Pudding Lane. A spark from the oven set the fire going.

Only 6 deaths were reported. But, many historians think that there were lots more deaths.

The heat of the fire may have reached 1,600°C!

Map showing the spread of the fire.



Answers to Important Questions

HOW DID THE FIRE START?		The fire started around 1am in Thomas Farriner's bakery, on pudding lane. The most likely cause was a spark from an oven falling onto something close by. The flame soon spread to nearby streets.	Did you know? Farriner always claimed that the fire was not his fault.
WHY DID THE FIRE SPREAD SO QUICKLY?		It had been a long and dry summer. Houses at the time were mostly made of wood and were built very close together - a strong wind and flammable objects helped to spread the fire across them.	Did you know? Lots of tar was found near the bakery, spreading the fire.
DID MANY PEOPLE DIE?		Records show that only 6 people died in The Great Fire of London. However, people think that many other deaths were not recorded. Death of poor people was not normally recorded at the time.	Did you know? Many historians think that lots of people actually died in the fire.
WHERE WAS THE MAYOR?		The Lord Mayor of London at the time was Si Thomas Bloodworth. People at the time said that he didn't act quickly enough, which let the fire spread around London without being stopped.	Did you know? People think that he seemed scared after hearing of the fire.
WHO PUT THE FIRE OUT?		There was no fire brigade in London at the time, so Londoners had to try and put out the fire themselves. They used leather buckets, water squirts, and fire hooks, to pull buildings down.	Did you know? Gunpowder was also used to bring down houses.
WHAT HAPPENED AFTERWARDS?		After the fire had been put out, investigations were held to find out its cause, the people who started it, and to make plans so that it couldn't happen again. The city began to be rebuilt.	Did you know? Houses were mostly rebuilt using brick and were built further apart.
HOW DO WE KNOW ABOUT ALL OF THIS?		People wrote about it in newspapers and in letters (for example, Samuel Pepys' diary). Also, artists painted pictures of the fire burning.	Did you know? Jan Griffier's is the most famous painting of the fire.

Vocabulary

- Leather Bucket
- Thames
- London
- Houses of Parliament
- Black Death
- Bonfire Night
- Streets
- Bakery
- Fire Break
- Extinguish
- Blaze
- Fire Hooks
- Flammable

Key People



Samuel Pepys (1633-1703)

Samuel Pepys wrote a famous diary about the fire. He was in the city as the fires happened and so his diaries are trusted as being very reliable. He was only a quarter of a mile away from Pudding Lane when it started!

Thomas Farriner (1615-1670)

Thomas Farriner was the owner of the bakery on Pudding Lane where the fire started. He and his children escaped the fire, but his maid died in the flames. Sometime after the fire, he returned to his work as a baker.



King Charles II (1630-1685)

Charles II was the King of England at the time of the fire. People did not think he was a good king before the fire. However, he helped to stop the fire, and helped people after it, which made people like him more.

Robert Hubert (1640-1666)

Robert Hubert was a man from France, who was executed after confessing to starting the fire. He said that he threw a grenade through the window of the bakery. As we now know, he was innocent!



Sir Christopher Wren (1632-1723)

Sir Christopher Wren was one of the most respected architects at the time of the Great Fire of London. He was given the task of rebuilding 52 of the churches that were destroyed by the fire. He redesigned St Paul's Cathedral, which became the tallest building in London from 1710 up until 1967. He was given a knighthood for his work rebuilding the city. Wren was a talented man, who was also a skilled mathematician and scientist. His scientific work was praised by other famous scientists at the time – like Isaac Newton!

Top 10 Facts!

1. Before the fire began, there had been a drought that had lasted for over 10 months!
2. People whose homes had burnt down lived in tents, in fields around London, until their houses were rebuilt.
3. Sir Christopher Wren designed a memorial for the Great Fire, which still stands today.
4. It took 6 years to build and is 61 metres high.
5. There were rumours Catholics or the French had started the fire, but these were untrue.
6. Samuel Pepys reported seeing smoke coming from London roofs 6 months after the fire!
7. King Charles gave rewards to people who were helping to put out the fire.
8. London had just been through the plague, which killed 100,000 people.
9. 436 acres of London were destroyed.
10. The first London home insurance company opened in 1680. 10 years later, 1 in 10 houses were insured.

Timeline of The Great Fire of London

- 1am – The fire starts in Pudding Lane
- houses already destroyed.
- Houses pulled down to prevent the fire spreading.
- 8pm – St. Paul's Cathedral catches fire.
- 6th Sept 1666: 8am – The fire is put out.
- 25th Sept 1666: A group is set up to look into what caused the fire

- 10th Oct 1666: A day of fasting is held to remember the fire.
- 27th Oct 1666: Robert Hubert is hanged for starting the fire, but is later found to be innocent.
- 22nd Jan 1667: The committee finds that the fire was in fact an accident.
- 1677 – A monument to The Great Fire of London is finished.