



Great Fire of London

Quotes from the diary of Samuel Pepys:

Sunday, 2 September 1666

“It began in the King’s baker’s house on Pudding Lane . . .”

“Jane called us up, about 3:00 in the morning, to tell us of a great fire they saw in the City....”

“By and by Jane comes and tells me that she hears above 300 houses have been burned down tonight . . .”

“So I down to the waterside, and there saw a lamentable fire. Everybody endeavouring to remove their goods, and flinging into the river, or bringing them into lighters that lay off. Poor people staying in their houses as long as till the very fire touched them, and then running into boats or clambering from one pair of stair by the waterside to another.”

“I did tell the King and Duke of York what I saw, and that unless his Majesty did command houses to be pulled down, nothing could stop the fire . . .”

“At last met the Lord Mayor in Canning Street, ... To the Kings’s message, he cried like a fainting woman, “Lord what can I do? I am spent! People will not obey me. I have been pulling down houses. But the fire overtakes us faster than we can do it.”

“. . . with ones face in the wind you were almost burned with a shower of fire-drops.”

Monday, 3 September 1666

“About 4 a-clock in the morning, my Lady Batten sent me a cart to carry away all my money and plate and best things to Sir W Riders at Bennall Greene; which I did, riding myself in my nightgown in the Cart; and Lord to see how the streets and the highways crowded with people, running and hiding and getting carts at any rate to fetch away things. I am eased at my heart to have my treasure so well secured.”

“Lord! To see how the streets and highways are crowded with people, running and riding and getting of carts . . .”



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Tuesday, 4 September 1666

“Now begins the practice of blowing up of houses ... which at first did frighten people more than anything. But it stopped the fire where it was done . . .”

Wednesday, 5 September 1666

“ . . . our feet ready to burn, walking through the town among red hot coals!”

“ . . . I walked into the town and found Fenchurch Street, Gracious Street and Lombard Street all in dust. The Exchange a sad sight, nothing standing there, of all the statues or pillars, but Sir Thomas Gresham’s picture (statue) in the corner . . . I also did see a poor cat taken out of a hole in the chimney, joining to the wall of the Exchange, with hair all off the body, and yet still alive.”

“But it is a strange thing to see how long this time did look since Sunday, having been always full of variety of actions, and little sleeps, that it looked like a week or more, and I had forgot, almost the day of the week.”