

Fire of London glossary

LONDON
MUSEUM

This is a glossary of key words relating to the story of the Great Fire of London of 1666. Can you **FIND** all these words on the Great Fire of London website at fireoflondon.org.uk?



Alderman – a senior official in the City of London.

Candle snuffer – an object used to put out the flame of a candle by pinching its wick to stop it burning.

Carters – people who hired or drove carts. Some carters realised that they could charge lots of money during the fire, as people were desperate to escape.

City of London – the historic centre of London. The area is still called this today, even though the rest of London has grown much larger around it.

Cresset lamp – a type of lamp used in the 1600s. They lit the way outside people's homes by burning a rope soaked in a liquid which burned well.

Embers – fragments of burning material left as a fire dies. They can remain very hot and restart fires, and many were visible for a long time after the Great Fire.

Fire court – a special group set up after the fire where judges could make decisions about disagreements between building owners and the people who lived in them. Many people disagreed about who should pay for the rebuilding of properties.

Fire hook – a large rod with a hooked end. These were used to pull down damaged houses or to remove houses to try and stop the fire spreading.

Fire posts – positions set up around the city to act as firefighting bases. Each had 30 soldiers and 100 local volunteers.

Fire squirt – a pump used to suck up water and then squirt it at the fire (pictured below). At least two people were needed to use them, as they were so large and heavy!

Gunpowder – a kind of explosive. This was used to blow up houses to try and stop the fire spreading from one building to the next.

Hearth tax – a fee that people paid to the king. It was based on how many hearths (fireplaces) were in each house.



Fire squirt, c.1666



Insurance – a system set up after the fire where people paid a fee to a company so that they would get money back if their possessions or home were damaged or destroyed in the future.

Jettied houses – houses where the top levels of the house leant over into the street. These kinds of houses made it easier for the fire to spread, as it was not far for it to leap from one house to the next.

Looters – people who stole things during and after the disaster.

Privy Council – a group of advisers to the king.

Proclamation – an important announcement or instruction from the king (pictured right). King Charles II issued some royal proclamations during London's recovery after the fire.

Rege Sincera – this was the name used by someone who wrote a detailed account of the fire and what happened afterwards. It wasn't their real name (it means 'from a sincere ruler' in Latin), and they used it to keep their real identity a secret. We still don't know for sure who 'Rege Sincera' was!

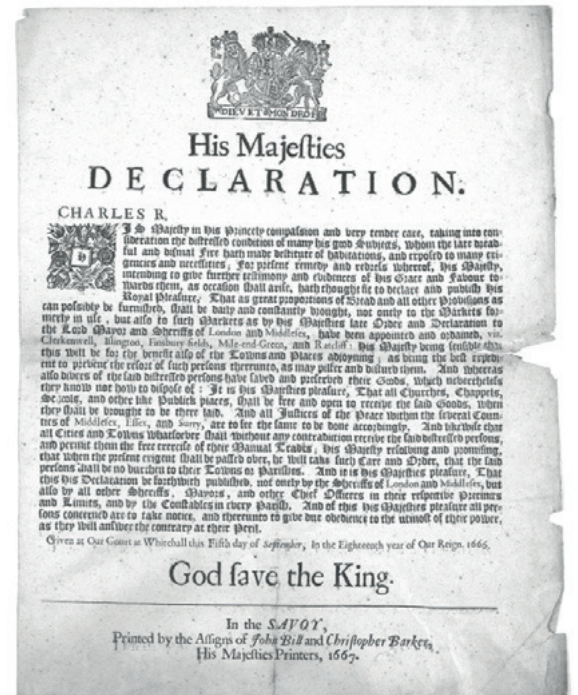
Rushlights – lights that were used at the time of the fire. They worked by burning dried rushes (plants) covered in a greasy material.

Strike-a-light – a metal object used to start fires by creating a flame. Striking the metal against a piece of flint (stone) would produce a small spark to light a fire.

Tracery – a name for carved and decorated stone, like the kind that was inside St Paul's Cathedral at the time of the fire. We have found some sections of this stone remaining, which help us to imagine what the inside of the cathedral would have looked like.

Truckle bed – a light, simple bed that was often mounted on wheels. Servants often slept on them. They could be moved out of sight when not being used. During the fire, they were probably used to rescue people who were unable to walk.

Virginal – an old instrument with a keyboard, similar to a piano. It can also be called a 'pair of virginals'. They were very valuable objects and so people may have wanted to try and save these from the fire. Samuel Pepys said he saw a boat escaping on the river with a pair of virginals in it.



Royal proclamation, 5 September 1666