

Deepening Understanding

YR2 Report

Great Fire of London by Beth Gascoigne-Owens



Sunday 2nd September 1666

On the 2nd of September 1666, the Great Fire of London started near London Bridge in London. Thomas Farriner was the King's baker and he had been baking bread in his bakery on Pudding Lane. However, Thomas had left some embers in the oven and in the early hours of the morning they started a fire. It spread very quickly. Farriner and his children were woken by the smell of smoke and managed to escape the flames. Sadly, their maid could not escape because she was too frightened to move. She became the first victim of the Great Fire of London.

The Following Days

The fire was fierce and spread very fast throughout the city. It spread quickly for many reasons:

1. The buildings were made from wood and had thatched roofs so they burnt easily and quickly.
2. The timber was very dry because it had been a hot and dry summer.
3. Strong winds blew the flames further and faster.
4. The houses were built too closely together so the fire spread from one building to another very easily.



A Plan of Action

The people of London panicked and some tried to escape in boats on the River Thames with their most special belongings. However, others thought of plans to try to stop the huge flames which continued to grow and spread.

One problem was that the fire services weren't like ours today. People tried to extinguish the fire using leather buckets full of water but this was too slow. They also tried to use water squirts but these did not work because the fire was too large.

King Charles II decided to try to stop the flames by ordering people to tear down houses and blow up buildings using gunpowder to create something called a 'fire break'. He thought that if there was no wood for the fire to burn, it would eventually stop. These gaps in the path of the flames meant that by Thursday 6th September, the fire had burnt out. King Charles and London were safe.

The Destruction

So what was the damage of this horrible fire? Amazingly, only 4 people were known to die but there was a lot of damage to the buildings of the city. Thousands of homes had been destroyed and 87 churches had been burnt to the ground. One of London's grandest cathedrals called St Paul's Cathedral was ruined.

What Happened Next?

London worried that all of this would happen again. All of the damage caused London to create a Fire Service to prevent and stop any future fires. A monument was positioned near to the place that the fire began. It was built to remember the fire and celebrate the damaged parts of the city being fixed and rebuilt.

Further Information

If the Great Fire of London has interested you, perhaps you could now find out about the people who lived during this time. How about starting with journalist Samuel Pepys? Why do you think he was important in 1666?

