



London's Inferno

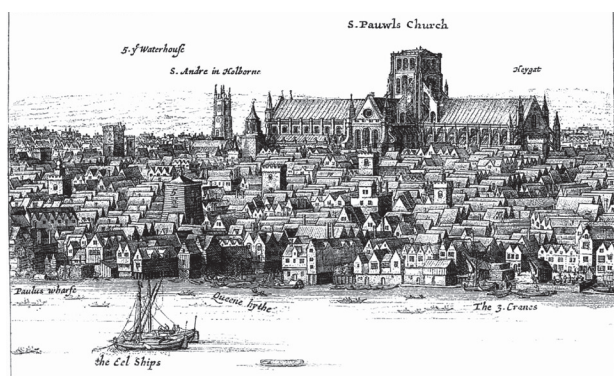


image courtesy London Fire Brigade Museum

This summer has seen destructive wildfires rage across California, Arizona, Texas and other states. In Alberta, Canada, about 88,000 people had to be evacuated from their homes because of wildfires.

Wildfires generally start in areas of forest or brush. They may then spread to nearby buildings.

But fires were once huge threats to cities, as well. This year marks the 350th anniversary of the Great Fire of London, which almost completely destroyed the city.



London was a crowded city full of winding streets and wooden structures.

A dry city

In 1666, most buildings in London were constructed of timber rather than stone or brick. They were sealed with pitch, a tarlike substance, and many roofs were made of thatch, or straw. Some chimneys were even made of wood!

City officials passed laws forbidding building with flammable materials, but they weren't well enforced.

Narrow streets

Many of London's streets had originally been built for foot traffic or wheelbarrows. They were so narrow that in many roadways, the upper stories of houses on either side of the road were almost touching.

There were a few fire engines, but the narrow, winding and bumpy streets made them hard to maneuver. People used leather buckets and "squirts" to fight fires.



image courtesy London Fire Brigade Museum

About 300,000 people lived in London and its suburbs at the time of the fire. Night watchmen called out to Londoners: "Midnight. Look to your lock, your fire and your light, and so goodnight!"

A dry season

London was suffering a drought, or extended period without rain, that fall. Rivers were nearly dry, and wells and aqueducts held very little water. (An aqueduct is a manmade channel for moving water from one place to another.)

A terrible disease called the plague had spread through London the year before, killing tens of thousands. People were more afraid of getting sick than they were of their city burning.

Mini Fact:

Some people escaped the fire by heading to the Thames River. This painting was made by an unknown artist around 1700.

The baker's oven

The Great Fire of 1666 began at the Pudding Lane home and baker's shop of Thomas Farynor. It was a windy night, and the flames spread down the lane toward the Thames River. The fire burned warehouses full of flammable materials and more than 13,000 homes.

Samuel Pepys observed the fire and told the king the houses in its path must be pulled down. But with the strong wind, the fire could jump large gaps between buildings. Finally, the Royal Navy used gunpowder to blow up houses that would fuel the flames.

In the fire's wake

After three days, the wind shifted, and the fire blew toward the river. After it was put out, only six people were reported to have died, but experts believe the number was higher.

St. Paul's Cathedral was destroyed, as were two prisons and 87 churches.

King Charles II and Parliament declared the fire to be an "act of God," but many believed Farynor's ovens to have been the source of the flames. After two years, Farynor moved back into Pudding Lane in a rebuilt home and shop. He died before the end of 1670.

Resources



On the Web:

- fireoflondon.org.uk/game
- bbc.in/29kMgNW

At the library:

- "All About The Great Fire of London 1666" by Pam Robson
- "You Wouldn't Want to Be in the Great Fire of London!" by Jim Pipe

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of the Great Fire of London are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



- AQUEDUCT, BAKER,
- BUILDING, CATHEDRAL,
- CHIMNEY, CITY,
- DROUGHT, DRY, FUEL,
- LONDON, NARROW,
- OVEN, PARLIAMENT,
- PITCH, PLAGUE, RIVER,
- TIMBER, WATER,
- WILDFIRE.

C C R R E T A W P N C C P M F
 O H E E P A R L I A M E N T G
 Z I V K P Q M F T P K W D N E
 T M I A C U U H C H O E I V P
 I N R B Z E E Y H R G D M L N
 M E W I L D F I R E L U A Z E
 B Y K H R U V A L I U G O M V
 E T N A P C N J U Z U F D R O
 R I L K I T F B T E B Y N R D
 M C C F N O D N O L W G P J Y

Cook's Corner

Monterey Jack and Cheddar Cheese Ball

You'll need:

- 8 ounces grated Monterey Jack cheese
- 8 ounces grated cheddar cheese
- 1 cup reduced-fat mayonnaise
- cayenne pepper to taste
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 1/2 cup chopped green onions
- 1 1/2 cups strawberry or raspberry preserves



* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

What to do:

1. Mix cheeses, mayonnaise, cayenne pepper, pecans and onions together in a large bowl.
2. Mold into rounded ball and chill in refrigerator for 2 hours.
3. When ready to serve, top with strawberry or raspberry preserves. Serve with crackers.

7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.



1. someone next door (8) _____
2. moving to music (7) _____
3. not imaginary (4) _____
4. large rock (7) _____
5. needing a drink (7) _____
6. large squeezing snake (6) _____
7. where bats live (4) _____

THIR	CA	ER	THON
LD	ING	GH	STY
RE	BOU	DANC	NEI
PY	AL	BOR	VE

Answers: neighbor, dancing, real, boulder, thirsty, python, cave.

Mini Jokes



- Erin: How does a beaver use the computer?
 Eric: He logs on!

Eco Note



Did you know that most lawns need only 1 inch of water per week? Do the inch test: Set three containers of the same size (such as aluminum cans) in the grass: one close to the sprinkler, one a medium distance away and one far away. Turn on the sprinkler and see how long it takes for 1 inch of water to collect in each can. Add the times together and divide by 3. This is how long you need to water your lawn each week.

adapted with permission from "The New 50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth" by The Earthworks Group, Andrews McMeel Publishing (andrewsmcmeel.com)

For later:

Look in your newspaper for stories about firefighting.

Teachers:

For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: bbs.amuniversal.com/teaching_guides.html

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