

Seventeenth century London

Part 3

A photograph of a multi-story building engulfed in flames. A firefighter is visible on a ladder on the left side of the frame. The scene is dark and smoky, with bright orange and yellow fire visible through the windows and from the top of the building. The overall tone is somber and urgent.

The fire takes hold...



Fire fighting equipment





Fire fighting...!

The fire
heads to the
river...

The fire was blown from the Fish Street Hill area towards huge warehouses by the Thames, where traders worked and London's poor would frequent and sleep.

Many of these warehouses (some of which were owned by the East India Trading Company) were packed with all manner of very flammable products – including hay, paper and barrels of tar...



London's docks



The fire
reaches the
river...

When the fire reached them, they exploded. Smoke everywhere, plumes of toxic gases, people fleeing for their lives. According to reports, some materials spontaneously combusted even before the flames had reached them, due to the intense temperatures radiating onto the material, in a phenomenon called flashover.

The burning of the warehouses was a key moment in the fire. It destroyed huge amounts of property.



Scrambling for their lives...

Extract from
diary of
Samuel
Pepys 2nd
Sept 1666

By and by Jane comes and tells me that she hears that above 300 houses have been burned down to-night by the fire we saw, and that it is now burning down all [Fish-street](#), by [London Bridge](#). So I made myself ready presently, and walked to [the Tower](#), and there got up upon one of the high places, [Sir J. Robinson's](#) little son going up with me; and there I did see the houses at that end of the bridge all on fire, and an infinite great fire on this and the other side the end of the bridge; which, among other people, did trouble me for poor little [Michell](#) and our Sarah on the bridge.

So down, with my heart full of trouble, to the Lieutenant of the Tower, who tells me that it begun this morning in [the King's baker's](#) house in [Pudding-lane](#), and that it hath burned [St. Magnus's Church](#) and most part of Fish-street already. So I down to the water-side, and there got a boat and through bridge, and there saw a lamentable fire. Poor Michell's house, as far as the [Old Swan](#), already burned that way, and the fire running further, that in a very little time it got as far as the [Steeleyard](#), while I was there.

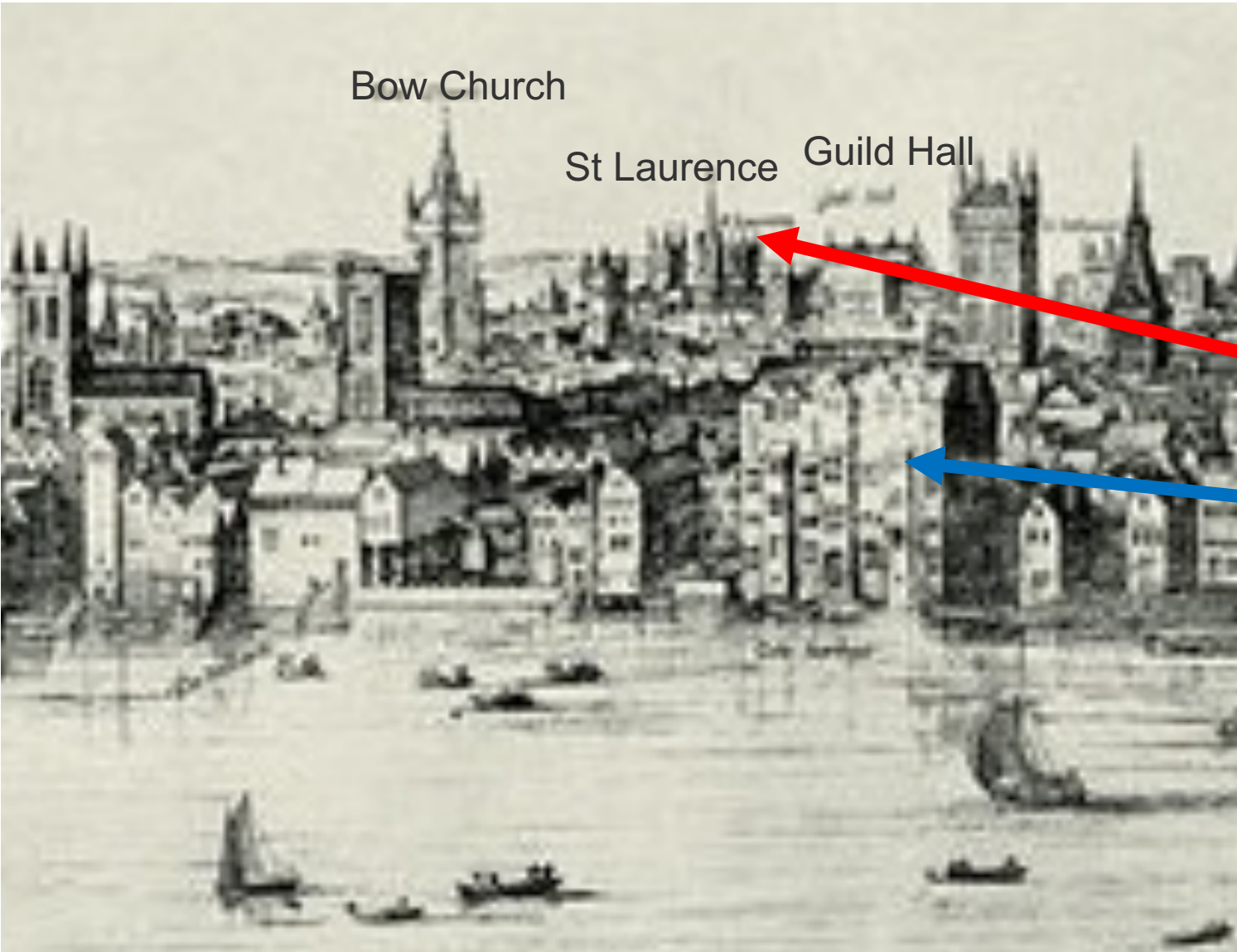
Everybody endeavouring to remove their goods, and flinging into [the river](#) or bringing them into [lighters](#) that layoff; poor people staying in their houses as long as till the very fire touched them, and then running into boats, or clambering from one pair of stairs by the water-side to another. And among other things, the poor pigeons, I perceive, were loth to leave their houses, but hovered about the windows and balconys till they were, some of them burned, their wings, and fell down.

Laurence Pountney Hill

Laurence Pountney Hill is named from the church of St Laurence Pountney, one of 34 churches burnt in the Great Fire that were not rebuilt. Its churchyard continued in use as a burial ground and survives today as a secluded garden. The name *Pountney* derives from [Sir John Pulteney](#), a wealthy Merchant who, in the fourteenth century, endowed the church with a college of priests and built Coldharbour House nearby. In Tudor times, this large rambling house was known as the [Manor of the Rose](#) and housed the Merchant Taylors' School where [the Poet, Spenser](#), was educated.

In 1666 The Great Fire consumed the church of St Laurence Pountney, the Manor of the Rose and scores of timber-framed houses in the vicinity.





Bow Church

St Laurence Guild Hall

Laurence Pountney Hill area

Manor of the Rose was in Suffolk Lane, here...

Coldharbour was a medieval mansion that stood on the north bank of the River Thames just east of the site of the present Cannon Street Station. Part of its site is now occupied by Watermark House.



St Laurence Pountney

You can occasionally come across little patches of garden, often fenced in, sometimes belonging to adjoining buildings and sometimes apparently belonging to nobody. A closer look might reveal the occasional headstone, even a tomb chest.

These are the burial grounds of lost City churches, which remained in use after the Great Fire into the 1850s...



VISSCHER'S VIEW OF LONDON 1616

The **Visscher panorama** is an engraving by [Claes Visscher](#) (1586-1652) depicting a [panorama of London](#). It shows an imagined view of [London](#) in around 1600. The engraving was first published in [Amsterdam](#) in 1616.

We'll return to this wonderful engraving later...



St Mary Abchurch is a Church of England church off Cannon Street in the City of London.

Dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, it is first mentioned in 1198–1199. The medieval church was destroyed in the Great Fire of London in 1666 and replaced by the present building by Sir Christopher Wren.

<https://www.stmaryabchurch.org.uk/history>



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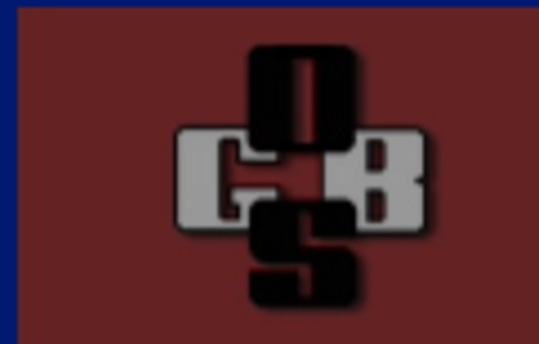
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Next Event

2nd February 2023 (1pm)

15 Abchurch Lane



The GB Overprints Society
50th Anniversary



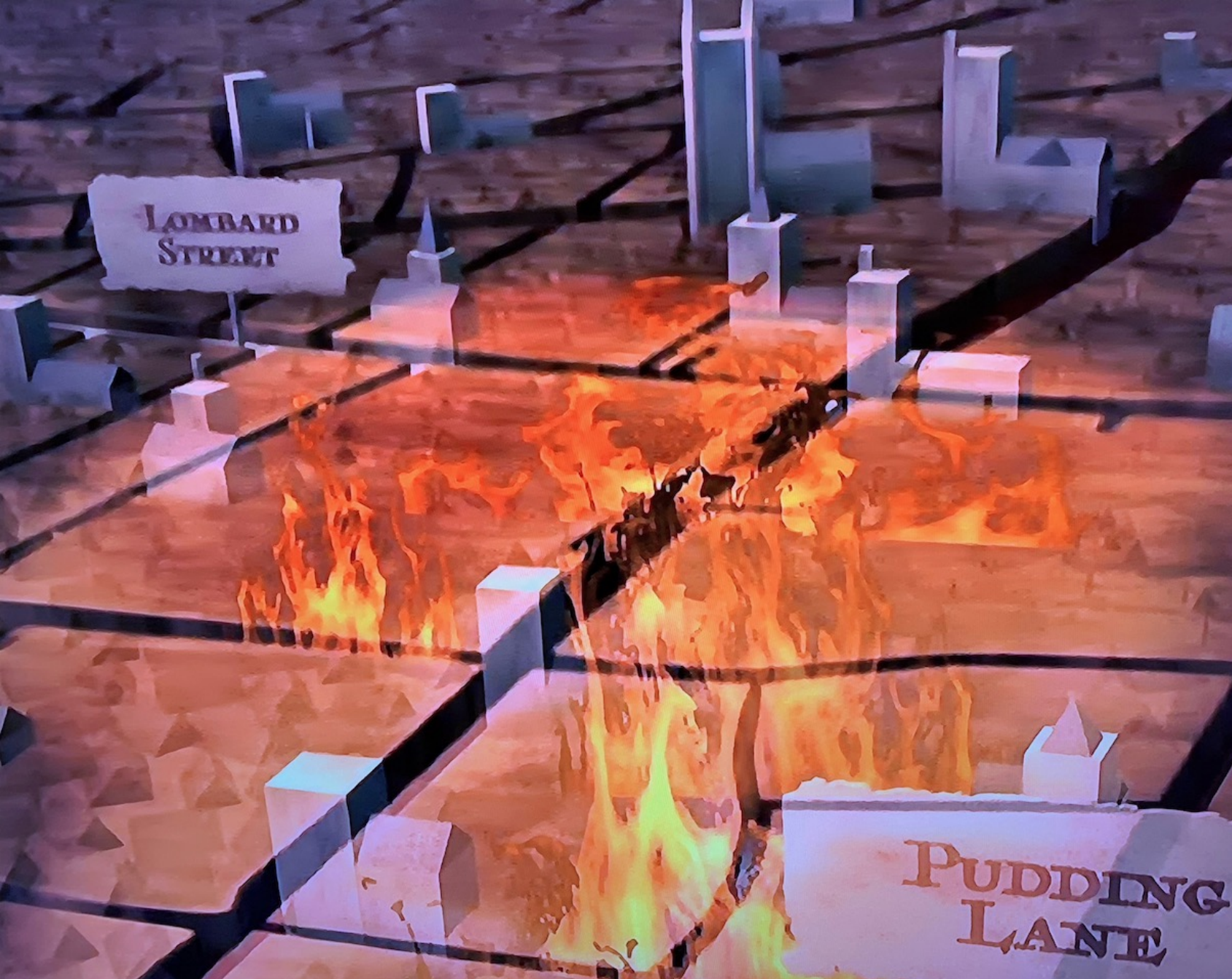


Lombard Street -
home to wealthy
merchants and
financiers at the time
of the Great Fire...



Lombard Street -
home to wealthy
merchants and
financiers at the time
of the Great Fire...

They would be forced
to flee with whatever
belongings they could
carry with them...



Monday 3rd September

The fire is raging across
the City...

(image from the BBC TV
documentary, [The Great
Fire](#))

Pope's Head Alley

The alley though is named after a famous and long-lived pub that was located near the current site, the Popes Heade Tavern, which can be traced back to at least 1465, and lasted well into the 18th century. It's said that the pub was renamed the Bishops Head for a short while during King Henry VIII's break from Rome but renamed back when things calmed down.

[Pepsys' Diary](#) mentions the tavern - which was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666 and later rebuilt - as a venue for some business dealings he had as well as dining with friends. Old maps of London show this alley as directly opposite [Post Office Court](#), but today it's a few yards to the east. The current site of the alley was occupied by other buildings, so no alley could have been there. The actual location of the alley was [lined with](#) printers and shops, and had a reputation for being an area favoured by children for its early toy shops.

<https://www.ianvisits.co.uk/articles/londons-alleys-popes-head-alley-20501/>