

# Seventeenth century London

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Part 7



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.

The Rose and The Globe theatres...



**The evening of Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> September** - the wind changes direction and the fire heads towards the Tower of London. There were over 9,000 barrels of gunpowder being stored there – if it had ignited, it would have been a huge and devastating explosion.

We don't have a definitive number of deaths (estimates are just six) - which is strange since records of people dying were scrupulously kept at the time (everything you could imagine, and more).

The printing press, therefore the reporting, of deaths broke down in the time of the Great Fire. This suggests that many people could have died, however, some historians feel that it would have been known and talked about. One historian believes that (Neil Hanson) vast numbers of people died in the fire, but because they were the poor they went unrecorded.

London's poor occupied large swathes down by the river – the very place that was quickly burnt to the ground. It is possible that the bodies could have been completely incinerated by the fire (750C for 60-90 mins is required). The very young, the very old, the sick and the infirm and lame. We know that the fire was hot enough to do this.

By Weds afternoon, 5<sup>th</sup> September, tearing down the streets is beginning to work. At 4pm in the afternoon, the wind finally drops. This led to the fire having less ferocity.

Wind and fire breaks (inc. clearing rubble) had their effect.

By Weds evening, two thirds of buildings in the city walls destroyed, the Great Fire was over. But the City was on its knees.

**By Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> September** - the flames are largely extinguished.

Large refugee camps were set up around London (for example, in Hampstead Heath).

London's starving residents were saved by the fact that it was September, and the food from around the country was coming down to London. The govt organised temporary emergency markets for people to sell and buy produce.

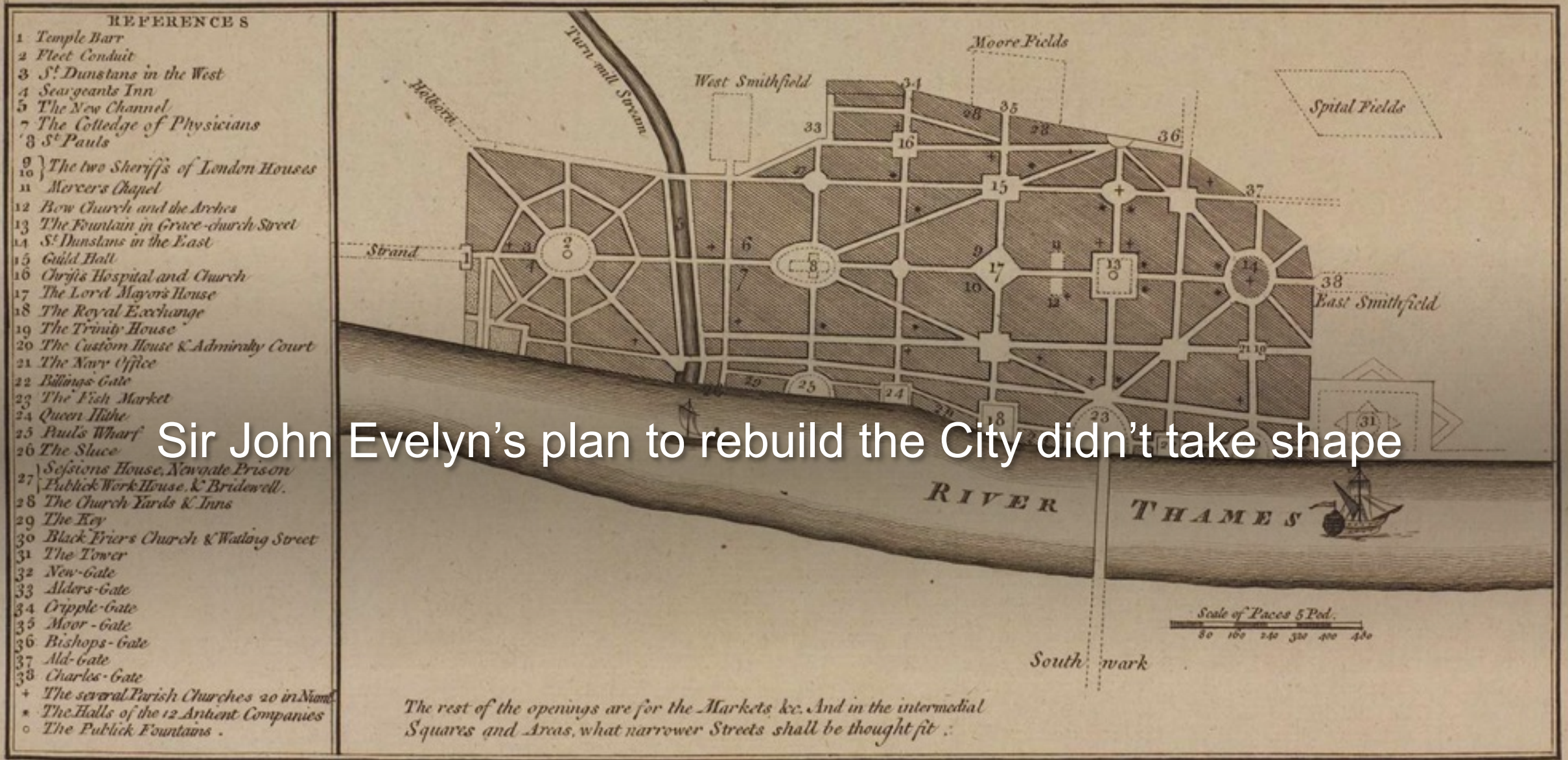
Plus, military rations were released – e.g. army and navy biscuits were provided (though not really taken up – very hard!) - people needed money.

The 17<sup>th</sup> Century had its own system of financial relief. People were encouraged to dig into their own pockets and support those affected through the churches. The church provided “poor relief”. A month after the fire, Charles II issued a proclamation, asking all churches across England to raise money. Yorkshire £1200 and Devon £1500 were the most generous.

England was at war, just recovering from the plague the previous year. So not everyone could afford it.

Homeless people were becoming restless soon after the fire was out. Fire courts were set up to compensate people for their losses and to resolve disputes (remember: no insurance). Most people rented, remember. Most leases said that they had to pay for any damage caused, AND continue to pay rent for buildings even though if they no longer existed!

Charles II said the fire was an Act of God, and people had to pay! 25% of people never returned to where they used to live.



Sir John Evelyn's plan to rebuild the City didn't take shape

*Sir John Evelyn's Plan for Rebuilding the City of London after the Great Fire in 1666.*

# New fire regulations were introduced after the Great Fire

These regulations were issued by the City of London on 8 May 1667 as a follow up to the Rebuilding Act of February 1667 and set a standard for the kinds of new buildings allowed in the City after the Great Fire of London. The new buildings had to be faced in brick and houses next to each other were to be the same height.

New houses had to be made from brick, wooden jetties were banned. The number of stories allowed for a house was restricted. For the first time, London had rows of brick terraces.

London's physical layout changed. Most of the rubble was spread over the streets to level the ground.

Just 10 years afterwards, most of the city was up and running.

In 1986, the Worshipful Company of Bakers issued an apology on Thomas Farriner's behalf!

<https://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/objects-and-stories/great-fire-london-how-science-rebuilt-city>



At the Court at WHITEHALL the eighth of May 1667.

Present

The KING's most Excellent Majesty,

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|---|--|---|--|
| His Royal Highness the Duke of YORK,<br>Lord Arch-Bishop of Canterbury,<br>Lord Chancellor,<br>Lord Privy-Seal, | The Duke of Alenquer,<br>Marquis of Dorchester,<br>Lord Chamberlain,<br>Earl of Bridgewater,<br>Earl of Berkshire,<br>Earl of Suffolk, | The Earl of Carlisle,<br>Earl of Cranes,<br>Earl of Leinster, Earl of Middleton,<br>Lord Arlington,<br>Lord Ashley, | Mr. Comptroller,<br>Mr. Secretary Morice,<br>Mr. Chancellor of the Duchy,<br>Sir William Coventry. |
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An ORDER made by the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Common Council of the City of London, of the 7<sup>th</sup> of April last, in the ensuing words, (viz.)

**I**t is Ordered, That the Surveyors take special care, that the Town-Shoemakers of all Trades be range of an equal height with their houses, so far as shall be convenient, and there to make Treads by their Directions.

And that they do encourage and give Directions to all Builders by agreement made, That the Ornaments and Possessions of the front-Facings be of rubbed-Timber: and that all the upper part of the walls may be base of rough-Timber evenly squared, as all rubbed, at the pleasure of the Surveyors, so that the Builders may otherwise enrich their fronts as they please.

That if any person appears shall build in any Street or Lane of Stone or Brick on any side of the Street or Lane (except one in the street) for so many houses as the Surveyors shall see fit, that the upper Rooms or Chimneys may be set back from the street with convenient Treads to be made, as shall be seen, or better, and Treaders of Iron or Stone, as to have their backs for the greater ornament of the Buildings: the Surveyors, or one of them, shall exercise their authority therein as the Commission by Re-building, who shall have liberty to give leave for the same, if they see cause.

That in all the Streets no Signs shall be set up, but the Signs shall be fixed against the Facades, as some other convenient part of the Side of the house.

It is Ordered that a Pollen shall be made on the North side of Newgate for Convenience of Foot-passengers, and that the Houses which shall be rebuilt to run straight on a level Line from the Church-houses on the North side thereof, between the Church of St. Dunstons and the Church of St. Dunstons, as the Surveyors shall see fit, as the Surveyors shall see fit.

And that the Surveyors shall take care for the good setting out of all party-Gates and Ways, and no person be permitted to build till that be done: whereby, by permission of any Christian in the taking of such Surveyors, and if all Conventicles and Companies that may arise between the Surveyors, it is Ordered, That no Builder shall lay his Foundation, until the Surveyors, or one of them, consenting to the same, shall have set out, and in the party-Gates and Ways equally set out, and that all persons who shall be concerned in the Surveyors' Directions concerning the Surveyors shall be bound to the said Foundations.

And that by the following that, and all other ancient Charges of Building, Building out, raising the Kettle, and Surveyors of the Streets and Ways, and Surveyors, before by the Surveyors, as such Surveyors shall be taken, so repair to the Chamber of London, and there enter his Name, with the place where his Building is to be set out, and to pay to the Chamberlain the Summe of six Shillings right pence for every Foundation to be set out. For which the Chamberlain shall give Receipts: upon Receipt of which Receipts the Surveyors shall proceed to set out such persons Foundations.

And it is Ordered, That all persons who have already laid any Foundations shall forthwith pay into the Chamber of London six Shillings right pence for every Foundation.

And the Court is commanded and advised that all straight and narrow Passages, which shall be found convenient by common Trade and Convenience, and shall receive the M A J E S T I E' Order and Approbation, shall and may be enlarged and made wider, and where necessary, before the 1<sup>st</sup> day of May next ensuing, as shall be fitting by the Surveyors, and Commissioners thereof, and set out accordingly.

Whereof late Inhabitants of Freedom, intending to Re-build their houses which are formerly built backward of other Foundations near adjoining, and being liberty to advance their houses, that the whole Front on a straight Line to the Commission laid down to the Surveyors, or the Right Honourable the Lord High Chancellor of England, and the other Lords shall appear thereof, and receive the M A J E S T I E' Approbation to the same: and the Commission to be given for other persons in other places, where it shall be found convenient.

And it is Ordered, That the Commission by Re-building be printed, the Privileges thereof as the Right Honourable the Lord High Chancellor of England and the other Lords, and that the same (if they receive the M A J E S T I E' Approbation) shall be forthwith printed and published.

Which being this day presented to the Board by the Right Honourable the Lord High Chancellor of England, the same was allowed and approved of; and it was Ordered that the same be punctually observed in every part thereof. And all persons concerned are required and commanded to yield due obedience and conform themselves thereunto.



St Paul's Cathedral

Barbican complex

Bank of England

'The Gherkin'

London Bridge

Monument to the fire

# Mapping the spread of The Great Fire of London 1666

10km





A scale model of London set up on the Thames in 2016 (to mark the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the catastrophic event)  
([images courtesy of Arup.com](https://www.arup.com))