

THE GREAT PLAGUE

Max the time-travelling mouse investigates the deadly Great Plague – England's last major plague that took hold of London...

In 1665, London experienced one of its warmest summers. In the poorest districts, filth filled the streets and the plague, which began in Feb, had taken hold. In May, 43 people died, but by the plague's peak in September, 7,165 died in just one week! Bodies lay in the streets.

Can't stop, readers! I'm off!

There's a plague raging through 17th century London and everyone's dropping like flies!

Tsk! Typical poor people, such layabouts!

The symptoms of bubonic plague were swift and painful, with an 80% chance of death. First you would get red blotches, then painful big blisters and finally a big sneezing fit followed by death.

It also hurts when I do this.

Then, you've definitely had it.

The famous nursery rhyme 'A Ring-a-Ring of Roses' actually describes dying from the plague.

The government did little to address the problem. But, once the numbers of dead started piling up the issue couldn't be avoided.

Perhaps there is a pattern emerging..

It was decided that if you had one family member infected, then the whole family was locked indoors for 40 days. You had a big red cross painted on your door to warn people.

Typical. I paid 30 guineas for a new door only last week!

The plague was being spread by fleas on the backs of rodents who lived in all the filth. Unfortunately no one would discover this connection for 200 years, so they blamed cats and dogs and hundreds of thousands of them were killed.

See ya loser!

Ha! Ha!

With no cats or dogs to curtail them, rat numbers went up, spreading the plague even further!

Parish boundaries were guarded to stop people leaving and spreading the disease. The only way you could leave is if you had a special certificate. These became worth more than gold!

Look, I have this swimming certificate...

All the wealthy Londoners who could afford the certificates fled the city!

Plague 'doctors' would try to cure victims with crazy remedies, including putting frogs and leeches on their painful blisters. In truth, these so-called doctors had no training and made no difference whatsoever.

Big leather coat, hat and gloves.

Beak filled with perfume to ward off supposed poisonous airborne disease.

Stick to poke victims.

A quack doctor if ever I saw one!

Eventually, the cold winter killed off the rodents and fleas and the worst of the plague was over. All the wealthy Londoners moved back home.

Hooray!

Home, sweet home!

A few months later in 1666, the Great Fire of London destroyed most of the old city and the plague was once and for all wiped out.

Rats.

Around 100,000 Londoners died in the Great Plague of 1665. The bodies were piled into huge pits, many of which lie under the capital's streets and parks!

Something to think about while you enjoy your picnic!

THE END