

Excerpts from the Diary of Samuel Pepys

July 20 Walked home past Redriff, where I hear the Plague is, and indeed it is almost everywhere. My Lady Carteret did this day give me a bottle of Plague Water.

July 26 Sad news of the death of so many, the bell is always going. The sickness is got into our Parish this week.

July 30 It is a sad noise to hear our bell to toll and ring so often, either for deaths or burials.

August 12 The people die so that it now seems that they are willing to carry the dead to be buried by daylight. The nights are not long enough to do it. The Lord Mayor commands people to be inside by nine at night so that the sick may leave their houses for air and exercise.

August 16 To the Exchange, where I have not been for a great while. But, Lord, how sad a sight it is to see the streets empty of people. Two shops in three are shut up.



August 30 Went out and met with Hadley, our clerk, who, when I asked him how the Plague goes, told me that it increases much, and much in our Parish. For, he

said, there died nine this week. This is very bad and it must be so in other places.

August 31 In the city died this week 7,496, and of them 6,102 of the Plague. But it is feared that the true number of the dead this week is near 10,000. Partly because the poor cannot be taken account of and partly because others will not have any bell rung for them.



Samuel Pepys

September 14 The first decreases we have yet had in the Plague since it began.

September 20 But, Lord, what a sad time it is to see no boats upon the river and grass grows all up and down Whitehall and nobody but poor wretches in the streets. Worst of all, the number of deaths from the Plague has increased about 600 more than last week.

October 26 The Exchange pretty full and the town begins to be lively again, though most shops are shut up.

November 22 Great hopes of a further decrease, because of this day being a very exceeding hard frost.



January 5 What staring to see a nobleman's coach in town again, and porters everywhere to bow to us. A delightful thing it is to see the town so full of people again. Shops begin to open again, though in many places they are all shut.

January 10 To our grief the Plague is increased this week from 70 to 89.

January 22 To the Crown Tavern and there met the first meeting of the Gresham College since the Plague. Doctor Goddard did fill us with talk in defence of his and his fellow physicians going out of town in the Plague time. He said that most of their patients had gone out of time.

February 4 My wife and I the first time together at church since the Plague.

February 7 It was a fast day for the Plague. I stayed at home all day long to set things in order in my rooms.

INVESTIGATION

1. What kind of evidence is this? Give a reason for your answer.
2. How reliable do you think it is?
3. Does this evidence have any limitations?
4. Look carefully at all the diary entries. Choose THREE which tell you the town was almost deserted. State the date and quote a phrase or sentence which backs up your choice. (Remember to use quote marks "" when you extract something direct from the source.
5. What evidence is there that the plague is increasing between July 30th and August 16th? Remember to identify and quote from your chosen sources
6. How many people does Pepys think died in the week of August 31st. Why is he not sure of the facts?
7. Choose THREE entries which suggest that the plague is growing less. Again identify and quote evidence from the sources.
8. How did the plague affect the normal business and life of the capital?
9. How did a doctor try to excuse himself and other doctors for escaping to the country?
10. Look at February 4th. What might be inferred (suggested) from this entry and why?

EXTENSION WORK

Write a short biography on Samuel Pepys, using the internet and/or the library for resources.