



**HORRIBLE HISTORIES**

# LONDON



Get the  
whole **GORY**  
STORY of  
**LOATHSOME**  
LONDON



**TERRY DEARY** *Illustrated by* **MARTIN BROWN**

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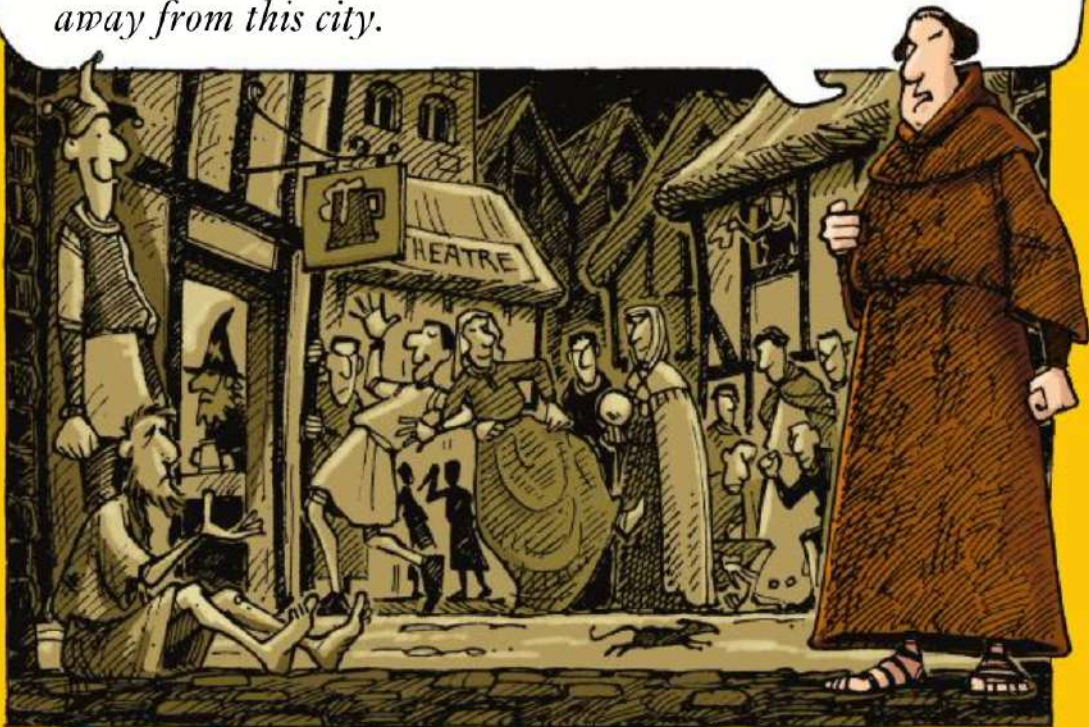




# Introduction

Here are two cities, A and B. Which would YOU like to live in? City A?

*I warn you! You will find all the evil of the world in that city. Do not go to the dances, do not mix with the wicked women, do not play dice, do not go to the theatre or the pub. It is full of actors, fools, villains, drug-sellers, fortune-tellers, tricksters, robbers, magicians and common beggars. If you want to keep away from evil, then stay away from this city.*

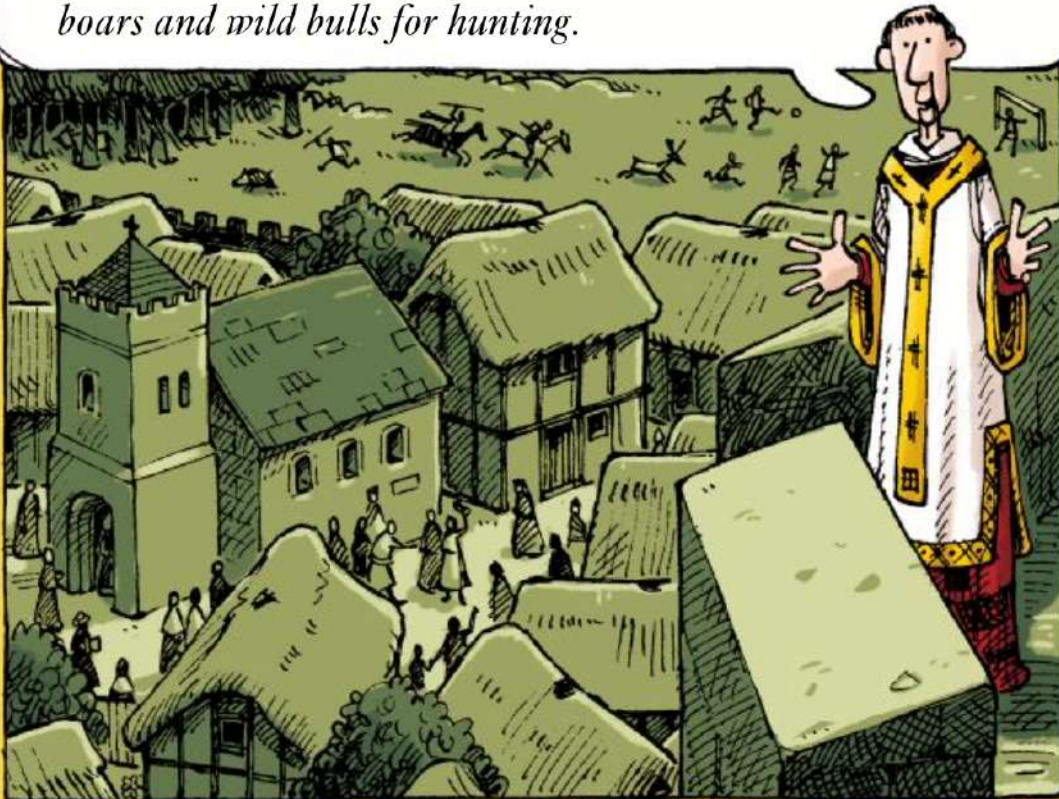


That was written around the year 1190 by a monk called Richard. He also said this place was full of ‘tatterdemalions’ – tramps as ragged as scarecrows.

What a place! You wouldn’t want to go there, would you? It sounds like the most horrible place in history. I’m sure you’d rather live in City B...



*Of all the great cities in the world this is the most famous. It is far greater than all the others. It has fine weather, good Christian people, strong walls, fine women and excellent men. They enjoy good sport. Their houses have beautiful gardens full of trees. Outside the city are pleasant meadows with streams of clear water. There are forests with stags, boars and wild bulls for hunting.*



That was also written around the year 1190 by a priest called William FitzStephen. William did say that this city had a problem with 'idiots who drink too much'. Apart from that it sounds a great place to live.

So travel back in time to 1190. Would you choose City A? That's Loathsome London. A disgusting and dangerous place.

Or City B? That's London too. A wonderful and charming place.

That's the trouble with history. You just don't know who to believe, do you?



To really get a fair and honest picture of the past you need a book that will tell you all the good AND the bad things about a piece of history. But...

*Horrible Histories* warning: This is NOT the book to give you a fair and honest picture of London!

This book will only tell you the horrible bits of London's history – about the bad, not the brave, the horrible, not the happy, the dreadful, disgusting and dirty, not the dear, drippy and delightful.

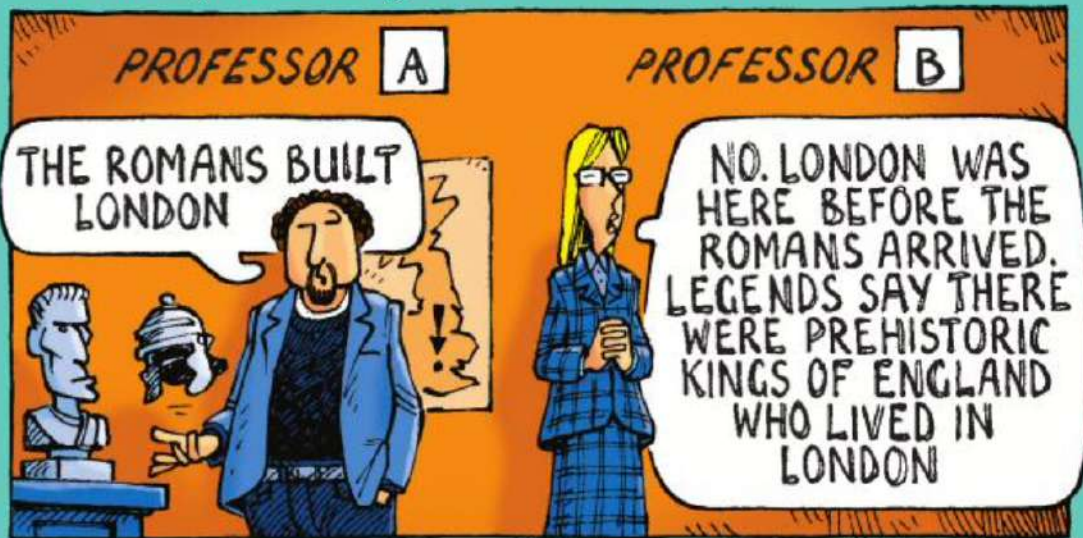
Let's listen to people like revolting Richard and forget wet William.





# Ancient London Timeline

Here's a rough horrible historian's guide to ancient London. It's a mixture of the legends, the lies and the truth – historians just can't agree which is which.



Well maybe Prof B is right. An old legend says that in 1100 BC, a king called Brutus came from Troy and settled in Britain. He travelled around and finally chose a spot on the banks of the Thames to be his capital. He called it New Troy. He was buried at the White Hill – where the Tower of London is today. He defeated two giants, Gog and Magog, and took them back to London to guard the gates of the city.



The legend goes on to say that in 863 BC Bladud became King of the Britons – the people of Britain. The historian Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote:



This prince Bladud was a very clever Man and taught magic in his Kingdom. He also practised magic till he tried to fly to the upper Region of the Air with Wings he had made himself. He fell down upon the Temple of Apollo in the City of Trinovantum (London), where he was dashed to pieces.

This temple was probably where Westminster Abbey now stands. So if you see a red splat on a Westminster pavement you may have found the blood of Bladud.

130 BC King Lud rules in London. Lud turns New Troy into a great city with walls and palaces. It was named after him – Lud-dum. He is buried in the place we now call Ludgate. (Sounds a Lud of rubbish.)

55 BC Cassivellaunus is King of Britain and faces a new threat – the Romans are coming, led by Julius Caesar. Caesar is not welcome so he goes home after just three weeks. He leaves behind his sword, stuck in the shield of Cassivellaunus's brother. The sword is still seen in London's coat of arms. The red cross is the





sign of the English saint, St George, and the dragons are the ones he killed. (Some rather boring people say it is the sword that beheaded St Paul in Rome.)

54 BC Julius Caesar is back – maybe he wants his sword. Jules charges through London and forces Cassivellaunus to make peace. But he leaves again before winter storms cut him off from his friends in France. Clever man.

AD 43 The Romans return, this time to stay for a few hundred years. But...

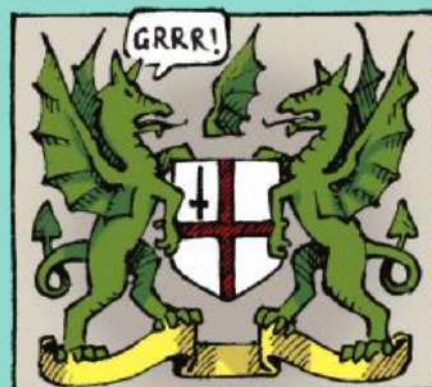
AD 60 Queen Boudica rebels. She destroys Colchester then burns and wrecks London.

AD 100 The Romans have rebuilt London with nice new walls to keep bad Brits like Boudica out. They also name this city the capital of Britannia. It still is.

AD 850 Now it's the Vikings' turn to trash London. They do such a good job that it won't be rebuilt till AD 886.

AD 961 Fire and plague in London. Not the last time these twin terrors will torment Londoners...

AD 982 The Vikings are back but THIS time the Londoners give them a good kicking. A monk wrote...





The people of London did more slaughter than you would ever think city people could

Vicious for the Vikings. But their relatives will be back in...

1066 The Normans arrive ... and Normans were just Vikings who had moved to northern France. Norman leader William the Conqueror is crowned at Westminster on Christmas Day. Riots and slaughter follow. Happy Christmas!

1071 A fire wrecks the wooden buildings so Will the Conk begins building the terrible Tower of London in stone.



## Elephant and Castle

If the Londoners had newspapers in 54 BC the front page might have looked like this:





The London legend Cassivellaunus had been attacking cool Jules for weeks and at last Caesar had had enough. He marched up to the Thames. Of course there was only one place to cross – London. So the brainy Brits barricaded the London crossing with sharp stakes.

But the rotten Roman had the answer. He covered an elephant in armour and put a tower on its back. The jumbo creature waded through the stakes to stake his place in history. Roman soldiers sat in the tower and fired arrows and stones down on the battered Brits.

Cassivellaunus said, 'We retreated to the woods. Some of the lads were a bit scared of the great grey beast. They're still in the woods and they don't want to come out. Ever. Looks like it's curtains for Cassivellaunus. I know when I'm beat. I plan to make peace with Caesar.'



Romans crossing by Jumbo

But news is coming in that storms have wrecked much of Caesar's fleet down on the south coast. If he doesn't leave soon he'll be trapped in Britain through the winter and he won't want that. The latest reports say he's heading back as fast as his legs will carry him – or, at least, as fast as his elephant's legs will carry him.

The good old British weather comes to our rescue yet again.



## Bloody Boudica

Some Brits were pleased to see the Romans – Brits who liked baths and bullying barbarians. But Big Boudica was a quaint queen who was NOT in love with the legions. She led her Iceni people to ravage the Romans. It was massacre and murder.

A horrified Roman said...



*The British enjoyed robbing and nothing else. The deaths at Colchester and London were about 70,000. The British could not wait to cut throats, hang, burn and crucify.*

In the smoking ruins of London you could see:

- 30,000 corpses of men, women and children
- bodies floating down the Thames
- heads cut off and stuck on poles
- bodies hanging from trees

The Romans defeated her in the end. Legend says she is now buried under platform eight of King's Cross Station. (She must be chuffed.) The place where the station was built by the Great Northern Railway in 1852 was called Battle Bridge, the site of her last battle with the Roman army.

But, before you start digging, there is another legend that says she is buried at Primrose Hill in London.

*Horrible Histories* note: A fine statue of Boudica and her daughters was put at the end of Westminster Bridge in 1902. The warrior queen is shown defending London ... which is a bit odd because she hated the place and tried to smash it and ash it.



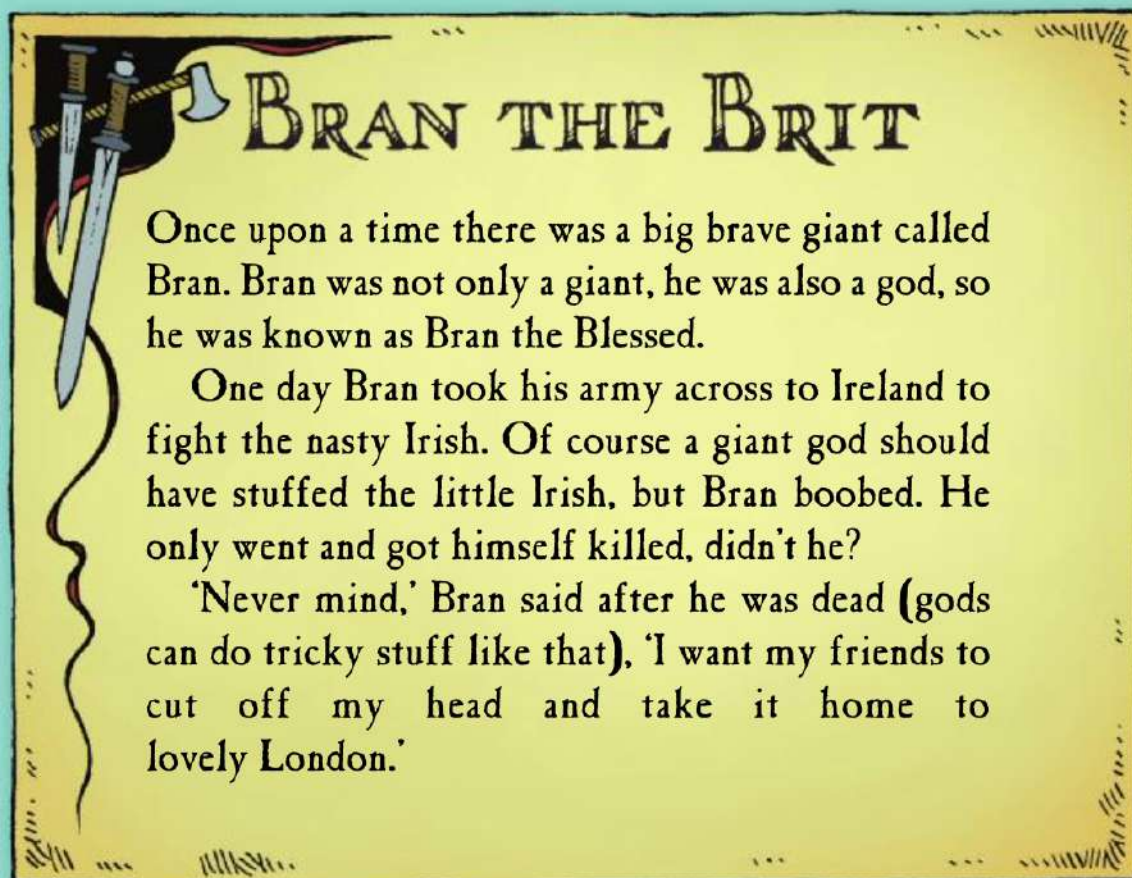
## Bran's brains

The Romans finally left Britain around AD 410. The country was then attacked by savage Saxons who made straight for London from northern Germany. By AD 470 the city was almost abandoned by the Brits. Britain was in the 'Dark Ages'.

Then, so they say, the famous King Arthur came along to save the south from those vicious villains the Saxons, as well as the Scots and the Irish.

Maybe you'd like to tell this Dark Ages bedtime story to a little brother or sister – a brother or sister that you want to scare so they have nightmares and wet the bed.

If you believe that stuff about Arthur ... the sword in the stone, the Round Table, the Lady of the Lake and Merlin the magician and all that ... then you may believe the story of Bran the Brit and you may believe there are fairies at the bottom of your garden.





'Won't it hurt?' one of his simple soldiers said.

'No,' Bran said. 'I'm dead.'

So they cut off his head. It was a very big head so it must have taken a lot of chopping and hacking and sawing. As they sailed back home Bran's head said, 'Bury my head beside the body of Brutus. Bury it in the White Hill. So long as my head is there then I will protect Britain. No one can invade our lovely land.'

The head was buried ... but we don't know if it kept talking after it was buried. Probably not, because the soil would get in its mouth wouldn't it? Where was I? Oh, yes. The dead head should have lived happily ever under BUT...

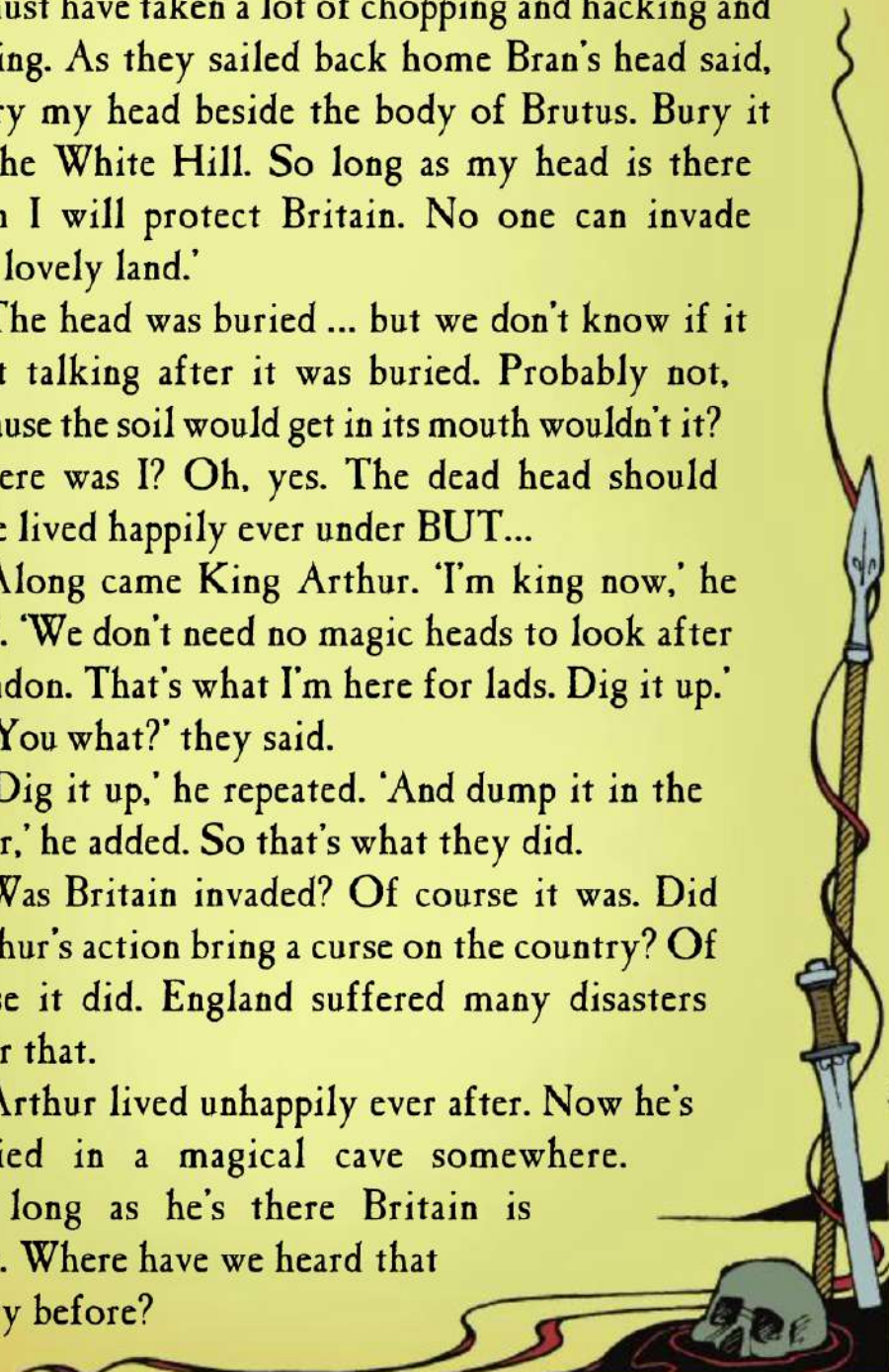
Along came King Arthur. 'I'm king now,' he said. 'We don't need no magic heads to look after London. That's what I'm here for lads. Dig it up.'

'You what?' they said.

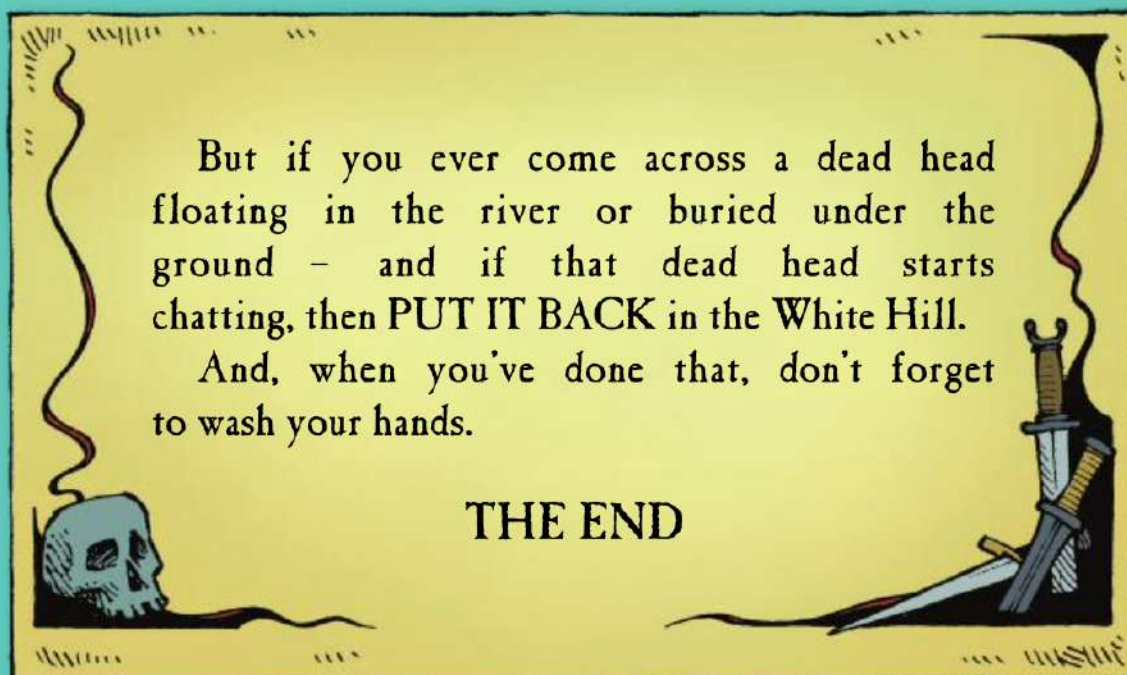
'Dig it up,' he repeated. 'And dump it in the river,' he added. So that's what they did.

Was Britain invaded? Of course it was. Did Arthur's action bring a curse on the country? Of course it did. England suffered many disasters after that.

Arthur lived unhappily ever after. Now he's buried in a magical cave somewhere. So long as he's there Britain is safe. Where have we heard that story before?







## The London mummy

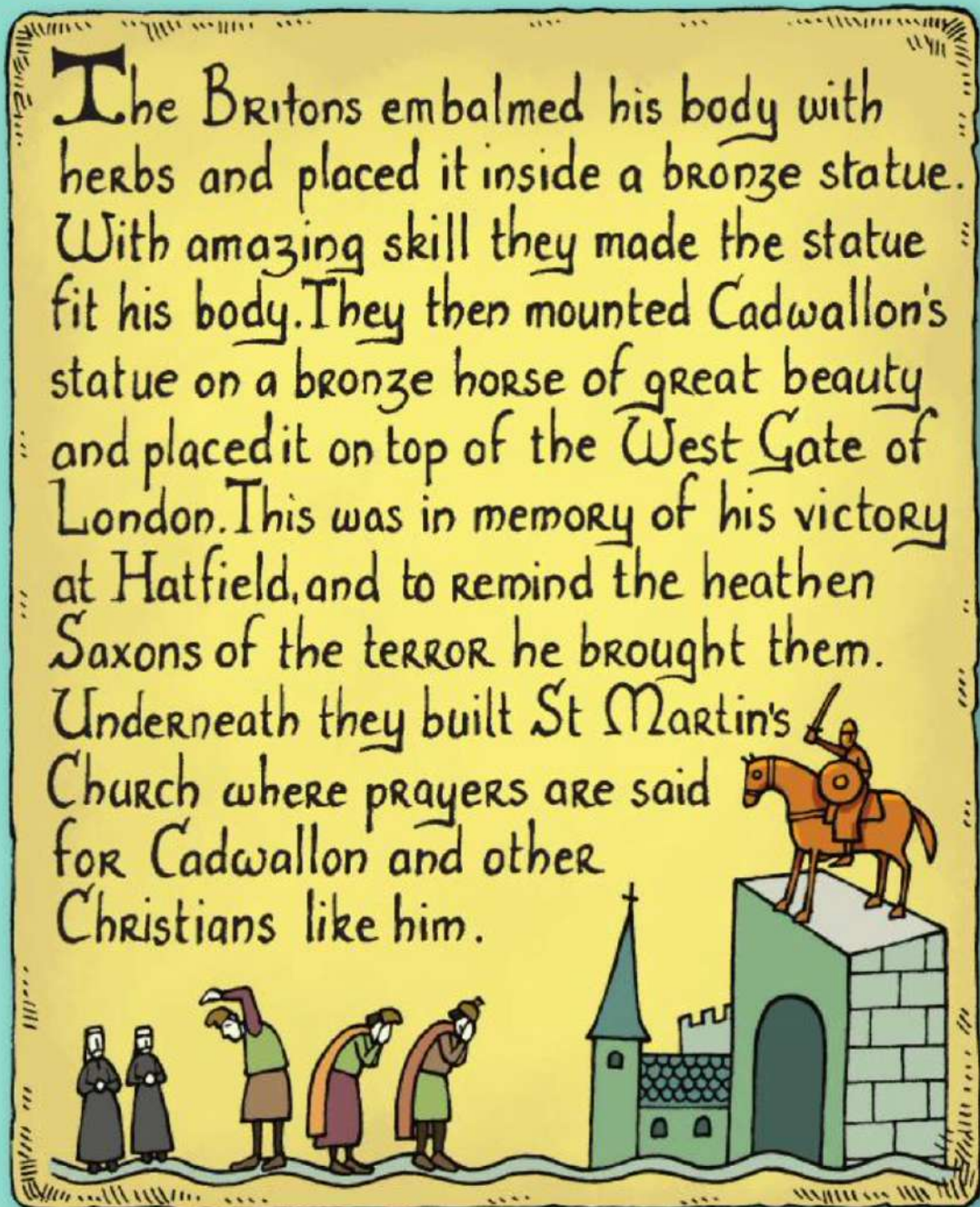
In AD 634 King Cadwallon died. He was a Welsh king who had defeated the Saxons in the north.

He was not a nice man. The historian Bede said...





Geoffrey of Monmouth said Cadwallon died peacefully of old age and was 'embalmed' – mummified. This must have been quite a sight.



Other historians say Cadwallon was killed in battle 300 miles away. A London mummy was a bit unlikely. Cadwallon codswallop in fact.



# Terrible Tower

Bran's big head may be gone but Brutus must still be buried there on White Hill. Hundreds of years later, in 1078, the Normans came along and built a castle there. It is known as 'The Tower of London' – and in the past thousand years it's had a grim, gruesome and peculiar history.

It is guarded by soldiers in fancy dress called 'Beefeaters' and by ravens. Some people believe that if those ravens ever leave the Tower then England will be destroyed. (Yes, that story again.)

But those ravens WON'T leave. Firstly because they have their big beaks stuffed with food every day, and secondly because they have their wings clipped so they can't fly.

Here are a few bird-brained facts the Beefeaters don't tell visitors...

1 The ravens are fed on rabbit meat and biscuits soaked in blood. Each raven eats about 220 g a day. That's a lot of dead bunnies. (If you want a job as a Tower raven then start eating blood-soaked biscuits for tea.)



2 The ravens are given egg once a week – which is a bit like a cannibal eating children. For a special treat they are given a whole rabbit to tear apart. If you fancy raw rabbit then you are raven mad.



3 The royal astronomer John Flamsteed told King Charles II that the birds were spoiling his work. (Probably pooping on his telescope.) The King ordered them all to be killed but he was told that would bring bad luck. Instead he said six could stay. Good luck for six ravens, bad luck for Flamsteed.



4 There are supposed to be six ravens at the Tower all the time. They keep eight in case a couple fall sick and hop the twig. A bit like subs on a football team.

5 Even clipped ravens can escape. In the Second World War (1939–1945) there was just one raven left – the rest were probably driven off by the bombing.

### **Take your Tower terror pick**

How would you like to die? If you ended up in the Tower of London then you had a lovely choice.

Which would you choose?

### **Beheaded**

The Tower is famous as London's chopping centre, yet only seven people have been beheaded there over the years. Most victims were taken outside to Tower Hill so the people of London could watch. Over 150 died out there.

In 1601 Queen Elizabeth I's old boyfriend, the Earl of Essex, rebelled against her. She sent him to the Tower for the chop. We have a report on the event, but we don't have the Earl's story. Maybe it would look like this....



I HAVE TO SAY, CHAPS, IT IS NOT A PLEASANT WAY TO GO. FOR A START THEY BUILD A PLATFORM A METRE ABOVE THE GROUND SO EVERYONE CAN COME AND GAWP AT YOU. THEN YOU DON'T GET TO KNEEL AND PUT YOUR HEAD ON THE BLOCK-AT LEAST I DIDN'T. OH, NO, I HAD TO LIE FACE DOWN WITH MY THROAT RESTING ON A LOG OF WOOD. AND THEY DON'T USE A HEADSMAN'S AXE, YOU KNOW. A COMMON WOOD-CUTTERS AXE WAS ALL I GOT. AND WORST OF ALL THE BLOKE WASN'T EVEN A GOOD SHOT. **THREE** CHOPS TO GET MY OLD NOGGIN OFF AT THE NECK. JOLLY BAD SHOW IF YOU ASK ME!



*Did you know...?*

If you go to the Tower of London you will see a metal sign that says...



Another sign gives the names of seven people who died on that spot.

Except they **DIDN'T** die there! The sign is a fraud.

That sign was put up because Queen Victoria wanted one to mark the place where Anne Boleyn died. But Victorian historians put the sign in the wrong place.



The truth is, Anne Boleyn got the chop in the middle of the parade ground, at least 50 metres away from the sign. The Earl of Essex and five others also died there.

### Smothered

In 1483 King Edward IV died and his 12-year-old son became Edward V ... for a few weeks. But before he could be crowned, young Edward and his little brother went to the Tower and were never seen again.

Their Uncle Richard had himself crowned as Richard III – so of course he got the blame for killing them. We will never know for certain if he did. But one story says the boys were smothered to death...

UNCLE RICHARD WAS EVER SO KIND. I MEAN HE DIDN'T WANT US TO SUFFER, DID HE? HE DIDN'T HAVE US CHOPPED OR BEATEN OR BURNED. NO. KIND OLD RICHARD WAITED TILL WE WERE ASLEEP AND THEN HE SENT HIS MEN TO SMOTHER US. IT WAS ALL VERY PAINLESS. THEY WRAPPED US IN OUR MATTRESSES AND HELD THEM OVER OUR FACES TILL WE COULDN'T BREATHE. IT WAS ALL OVER VERY QUICKLY. ONE OF THE KILLERS WAS CALLED WILL SLAUGHTER. WHAT A CUTE NAME FOR A MURDERER!





Nearly 200 years later, in 1674, some workmen discovered a box with the bones of two boys. Are they the bones of the missing princes? No one is sure. The bones are resting in Westminster Abbey – their gravestone says the boys were smothered with pillows.

Pillows or a mattress – the end was still the same: two kids croaked.

### Stabbed

Maybe the Princes were not Richard III's first victims. In 1471 the slightly dotty King Henry VI was killed at the tower so Richard's brother Edward IV could take the throne.

There is a story that claims Richard was to blame. Richard probably didn't do it himself but it's pretty certain Henry VI died nastily...

I WASN'T THE KING OF ENGLAND ONCE-I WAS KING OF ENGLAND *TWICE*. BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT. I LOST THE THRONE, THEN WON IT BACK AGAIN. THEN FINALLY LOST IT AT THE BATTLE OF TEWKESBURY. BUT WHEN I LOST IT THAT SECOND TIME THEY PUT ME IN THE TOWER. THE KILLERS CREPT IN WHILE I SLEPT AND I SLEPT AS THEY CREPT. I SLEPT AND SLEPT, THEY CREPT AND CREPT. THEN THEY STUCK A DAGGER IN MY HEAD. DAGGER IN HEAD. DEAD. DEAD HEAD. THEY SAID I WAS MAD. NOT MAD, JUST SAD. TOO BAD.





## Drowned

And maybe the Princes weren't even Richard's second victims. There is a story that he killed his other brother, George. Old Georgie had been a naughty boy and plotted against big brother, King Edward IV. He had to go and it was said that Richard was given the job. Maybe that's why he let George choose the execution method...

MY DEAR LITTLE BROTHER RICHARD CAME TO ME AND SAID, 'I HAVE TO EXECUTE YOU. HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO DIE?' AND I SAID, 'OLD AGE! HA! ONLY JOKING, RICHIE OLD BRUV.' ANYWAY WE HAD A FEW DRINKS AND A BIT OF A THINK AND THAT'S WHEN I HAD THE IDEA. 'I WANT TO BE DROWNED-DROWNED IN WINE!' SO GOOD OLD RICHIE FETCHED A BARREL OF BEST MALMSEY WINE. WE DRANK HALF OF IT AND THEN HE DUNKED ME IN THE OTHER HALF. I DIED-BUT I DIDN'T WHINE ABOUT IT



## Poisoned

Sir Thomas Overbury was not so lucky. He upset King James I and was locked up in the Tower. But his enemies decided to kill him. Slowly. Very slowly. In fact it took him six months to die.



A POWDER WAS SPRINKLED OVER MY FOOD INSTEAD OF SALT-IT WAS THE SLOW BUT DEADLY POISON ARSENIC. I HAD VOMITING AND DIARRHOEA. I ASKED FOR A CURE-THEY GAVE ME POWDER OF DIAMONDS -GROUND GLASS THAT MADE MY MOUTH AND STOMACH BLEED. THEN CANTHARADIN (FROM CRUSHED BEETLES) WAS ADDED TO MY ONION SAUCE TO CAUSE SWELLING. THEY FINISHED ME OFF WITH MERCURY POISON. THEY BURIED ME IN THE TOWER CHAPEL



Over for Overbury. King James was upset – he didn't want to get the blame for killing a prisoner. The cook was executed. Overbury must have enjoyed that!

### Fallen

Oddly, some people didn't enjoy their stay at the Tower. They tried to escape. A Welsh prince, Gruffudd, was locked up by King John from 1211 till 1215. Then he was locked up by his own father in 1228 for six years. And finally he was imprisoned by his own brother in Wales in 1239 and handed over to King Henry III.

A regular little jailbird. But the Tower wasn't *that* bad. Gruff had his wife for company. And he was put in the comfortable Great Keep. Yet he tried to escape.



I MADE A ROPE OUT OF MY BEDCLOTHES, SOME TABLECLOTHS AND THE CURTAINS. I TIED IT TO THE END OF THE BED AND THEN I CLIMBED OUT OF THE WINDOW. ALL THESE YEARS IN PRISON MEANT I DIDN'T GET A LOT OF EXERCISE. AND I ATE RICH FOOD IN THE TOWER. WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY IS, I WAS A BIT HEAVY. ALL RIGHT I WAS *FAT*. AND BOY SCOUTS HADN'T BEEN INVENTED BACK IN 1244. MY KNOTS WERE USELESS. MY ROPE PARTED AND I FELL. I BROKE MY NECK. STILL, I DIDN'T DIE IN PRISON AS MY ENEMIES WANTED!



So there you have some of the ways to die in the Tower of London. Many must have died under torture, of course. Some will have croaked from the cold, the damp and the terrible food inside the grim, grey walls. Some might have even died of the deadliest killer of all – old age.

Which would you choose?

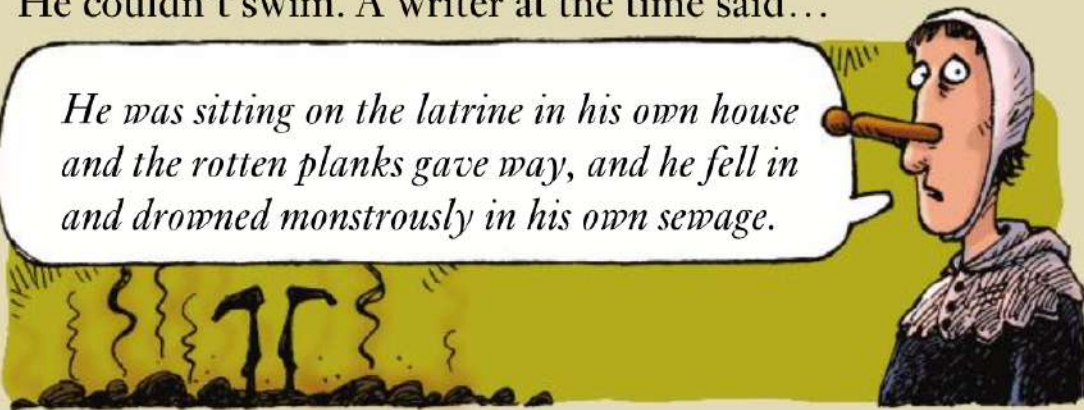
*Did you know...?*

One of the horriblem London deaths was that of Richard the Raker. And it didn't happen at the Tower. Richard's job was to rake the poo out of the toilet pits. These smelly pits lay under London houses and they filled up fast.



In 1326 Richard the Raker slipped and fell into a pit. He couldn't swim. A writer at the time said...

*He was sitting on the latrine in his own house and the rotten planks gave way, and he fell in and drowned monstrosly in his own sewage.*



So be careful next time you visit the boys' toilets at your school. (Sorry, I have no knowledge of the girls' toilets. Surely they can't be as bad?)



# Middle Ages

## London Timeline

London in the Middle Ages was smelly. People emptied their toilet pots into the street. Still, a piddle shampoo was not the worst thing that happened to people in Middle Ages London.

1189 Richard I is crowned. Loathsome Londoners celebrate by murdering 30 Jewish merchants. A story had gone around that Richard had ordered their massacre. He hadn't. It was all a big mistake. Oooops! It's their idea of fun.

1196 William Fitz Osbert kills the Archbishop of Canterbury's guard and is hanged at Tyburn (Hyde Park Corner today). He is the first of around 50,000 who will be hanged at Tyburn over the centuries.

1261 Henry III is at war with his barons (led by Simon de Montfort). Henry hides in the Tower as Italian monks are murdered in the streets. Queen Eleanor is stoned by Londoners. She has to shelter in St Paul's Cathedral. When Henry finally wins in 1265, de Montfort's supporters are punished.

1305 William Wallace, Scottish rebel, is hanged, drawn and quartered in London ... that's to say hanged till he was half dead, slit





open so his guts could be drawn from his body and thrown on a fire, then beheaded and cut into quarters. Wallace's death is very slow – long-drawn-out, in fact.

**1338** Attacks from France and poor harvests mean starvation for many in the south. In London, people are trampled to death in queues for bread. There are even reports of cannibalism. Loathsome – but luscious – Londoners.

**1348** Plague arrives.

**1381** An army of peasants from Kent and Essex march on London. They do something no one has done before or since – they capture the Tower of London. The Archbishop of Canterbury and the King's treasurer are killed. The King, Richard II, is only 14 at the time but tricky young Dicky has their leader killed. They give up and go home. End of a pleasant peasant holiday in London.



## The Black Death

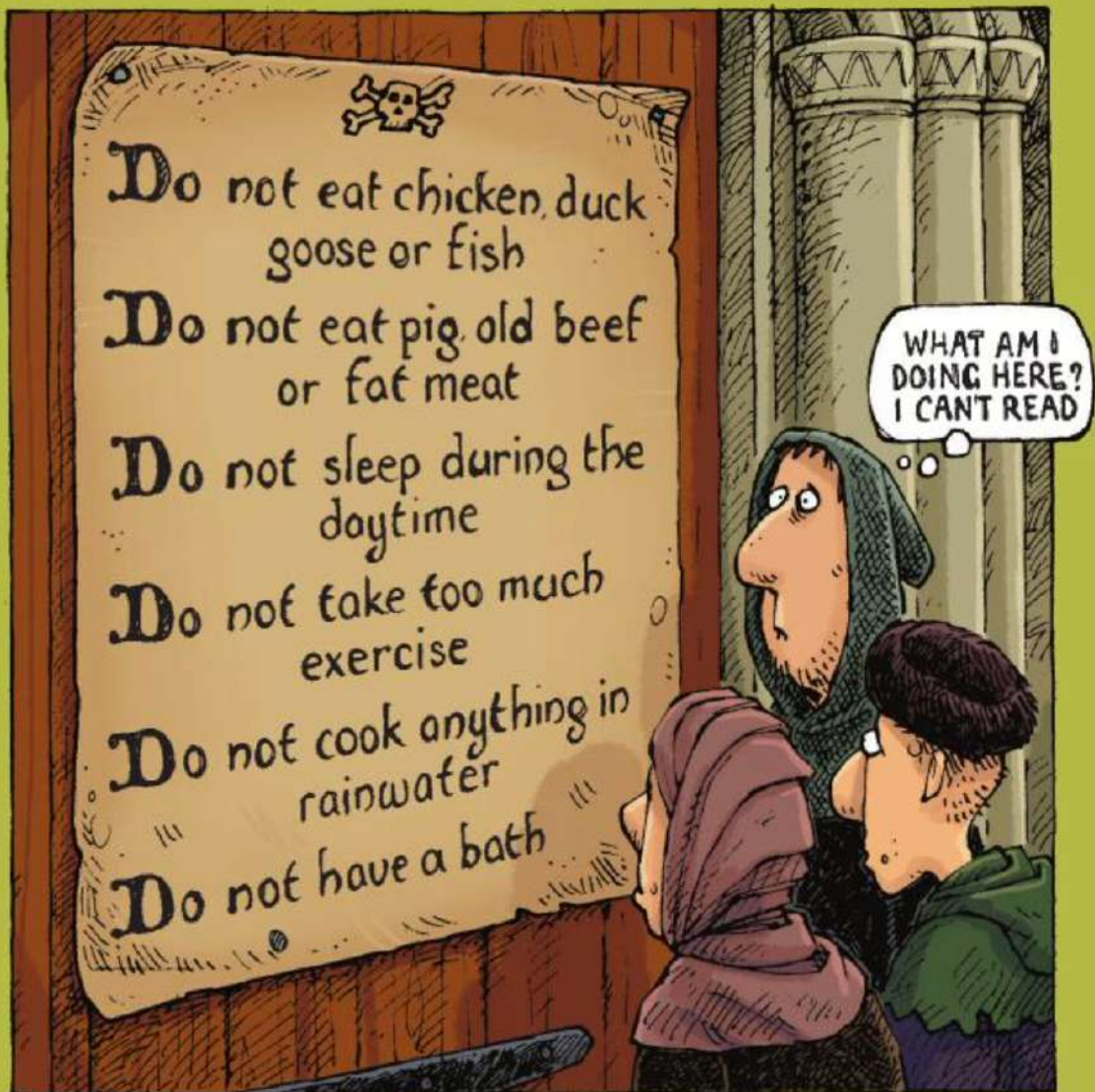
Fleas carry the plague from rats to humans. Don't blame the poor little rats! They catch the plague and die too.

For three or four days you feel fine. Then you start to sweat, can't sleep, shake and throw up. By the next day you have a terrible headache, feel dizzy, can't stand



bright light and have pain in your gut and legs. On the third day your eyes become bloodshot and your tongue swells and turns white. This later goes brown or yellow. You get swellings under your arms, on your neck or at the tops of your legs. Death follows soon after.

Of course there were cures. The priests said wicked people caught the plague – so say your prayers. They also gave this advice:



They seemed to think anything touched by water was a danger. Wrong!





Wrong again!

In London they believed loud noises would drive the plague away. They rang church bells (till the bell ringers died of plague) and even fired cannon.

You'd probably be pleased to catch plague to get some peace.

### **Poll-taxed,<sup>1</sup> poll-axed**

In the 1300s the English people were told to pay extra tax. This was to cover the cost of wars in France. Everyone over the age of 15 on the council's list of names had to pay, except monks, nuns and priests.

In 1377 over 1,250,000 people paid.

In 1380 only 800,000 people paid.

If you are any good at sums then you will know 450,000 people 'disappeared' in three years.

<sup>1</sup> A 'poll' is a head so a 'poll tax' was a tax on heads ... if you have a head then you are taxed. If you have no head then you are not taxed. If you want to dodge the tax then simply leave your head in bed. No one will notice.



Was it the plague? No.

Was it alien kidnappers? No.

These people went into hiding to dodge their taxes.

In 1381 the peasants marched on London to sort out the young King Richard II. They wanted to tell him how unfair this tax was – the poor paid as much as the posh. It was called ‘The Peasants’ Revolt’. Apart from robbing and burning the homes of rich people the peasants did something quite shocking. Thomas Walsingham reported...

*The peasants headed for the royal rooms at the Tower of London. Who would believe it but this mob dared to enter the rooms of the King and his mother with their filthy sticks. They lay and sat on the King’s bed. Several asked the King’s mother to kiss them.*



The King’s chief tax collector, Hales, was dragged out to Tower Hill where his head was lopped off and stuck on London Bridge. (The skull ended up in a cupboard in a Suffolk house and it’s still there.)

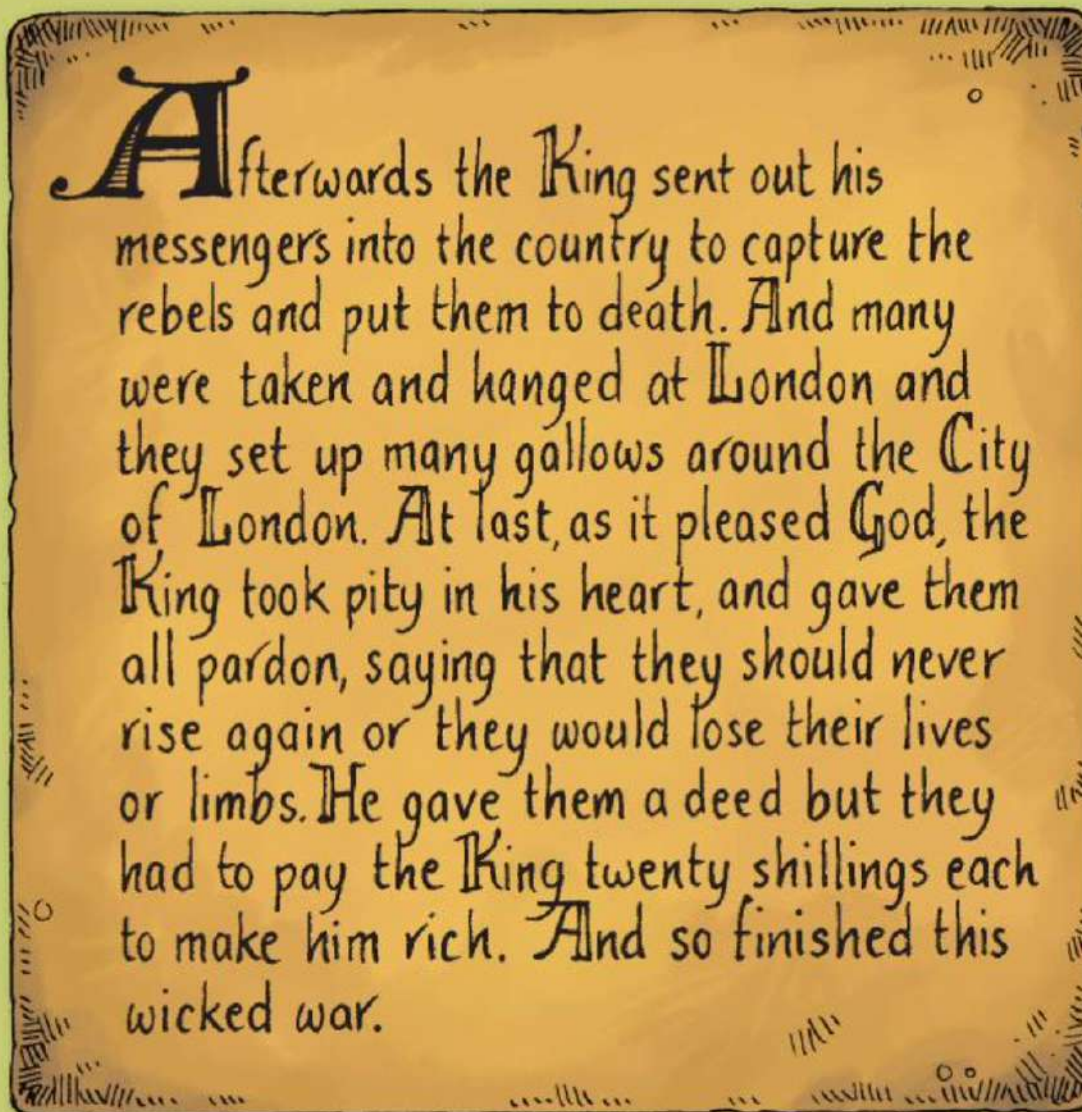
The rebels also broke open the London prisons and set the criminals free. The warden of Southwark Prison ran for cover to Westminster Abbey. Holy buildings were supposed to be ‘safe’ places. But the rebels dragged him out and lopped off his head too.

London Bridge must have been filling up! Wonder if they had a warning sign?





How did it all end? A book of the time said...



Afterwards the King sent out his messengers into the country to capture the rebels and put them to death. And many were taken and hanged at London and they set up many gallows around the City of London. At last, as it pleased God, the King took pity in his heart, and gave them all pardon, saying that they should never rise again or they would lose their lives or limbs. He gave them a deed but they had to pay the King twenty shillings each to make him rich. And so finished this wicked war.

So Little Dicky came out of it quite well!

### **Not the Dick Whittington story**

Dick Whittington is famous. The pantomime story says he was heading for London to seek his fortune but lost heart. He was heading home when the bells rang out and called, 'Turn again Whittington!' He turned back, made his fortune (with the help of his rat-catching cat), married the beautiful girl and lived happily ever after.



Of course London people WOULD tell that story – ‘Come to London and get rich!’ is the message.

Let’s face it, ‘Come to London and get plagued, imprisoned, bombed or beheaded’ is more likely. But then no one at all would go to London and Sunderland would become capital of England.

The TRUTH about Richard Whittington (1350–1423) is a bit more boring:

- He DIDN’T take a cat to London.
- He trained as a cloth merchant and made his money by lending money to the King.
- King Richard II forced London to take Rich Whittington as mayor.

The cat story was made up 200 years after Rich Richie had gone to his grave. A stone at Highgate Hill showed where he was supposed to have turned back to London. In 1964 the cat was added to the stone.

The Real Richard married Alice Fitzwarren, but they died with no children. He left his money for the good of London. What sort of goodies did the lucky Londoners get?

- a) public toilets
- b) prisons
- c) a home for cats

*Answer: a) and b) ... so, next time you have a widdle in a London toilet, say ‘Thank you, Dick!’*

But there is another story that tells how a man from Swaffham in Norfolk made his fortune by LEAVING London. It’s just as likely as the Dick Whitandcat pantomime story. Here is the ‘Panto of the Poor Peasant Farmer’...



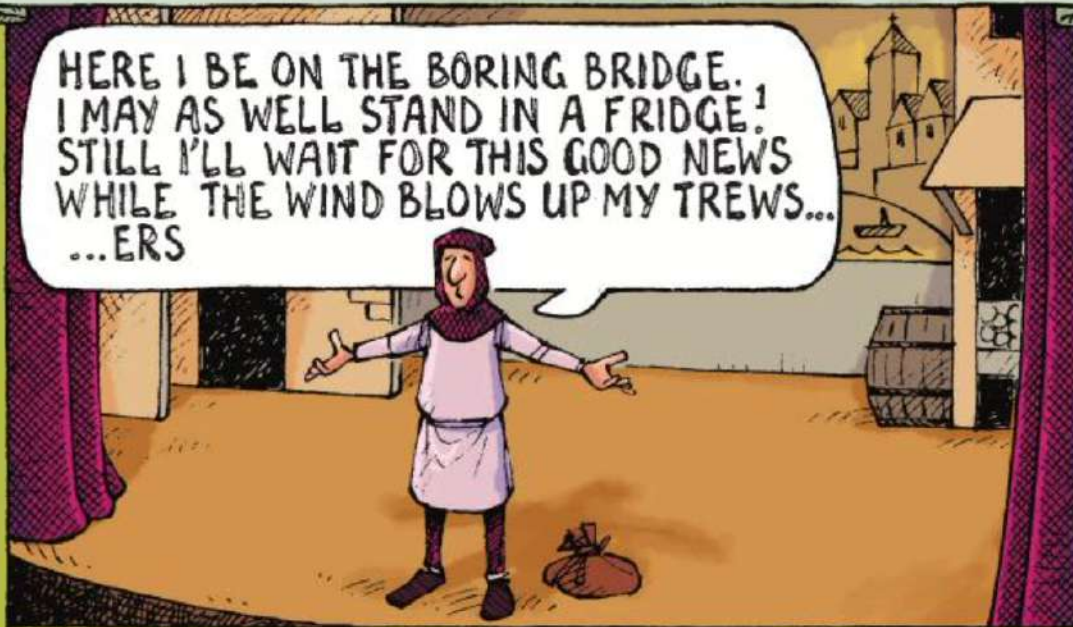
*A farmer from Swaffham had a strange dream*

ON LONDON BRIDGE JUST WAIT AROUND.  
YOU'LL HEAR OF GOLD BELOW THE GROUND!  
GO THERE NOW AND DO NOT DITHER,  
DO NOT WANDER HITHER-THITHER



*So off he went to London where he shivered  
on the bridge*

HERE I BE ON THE BORING BRIDGE.  
I MAY AS WELL STAND IN A FRIDGE!<sup>1</sup>  
STILL I'LL WAIT FOR THIS GOOD NEWS  
WHILE THE WIND BLOWS UP MY TREWS...  
...ERS



1 Fridges have not been invented,  
For this tale let's just pretend it.  
Why is this all done in rhyme?  
'Cos it is a pantomime...  
...stupid.



*After three days a shopkeeper wondered what he was up to...*

YOU WATCHING ME YOU SMELLY PEST?  
I MAY JUST CALL FOR YOUR ARREST.  
LONDON TOWN IS FULL OF DANGERS,  
WE HATE PEDLARS, WE HATE STRANGERS



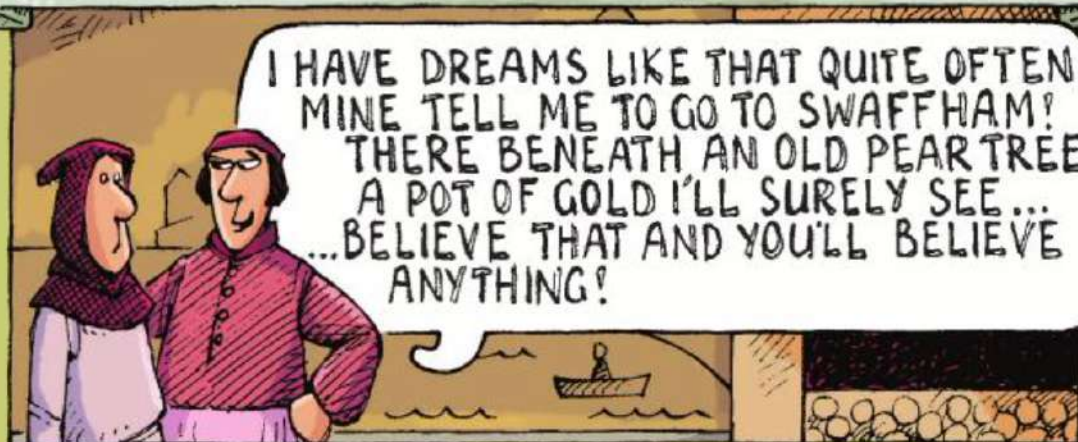
*So the farmer told him...*

I DON'T MEAN NO HURT OR HARM  
I'VE JUST COME DOWN FROM ME FARM.  
I HAVE HAD A DREAM OF GOLD.  
STANDING HERE I WILL BE TOLD...  
...WHERE IT IS

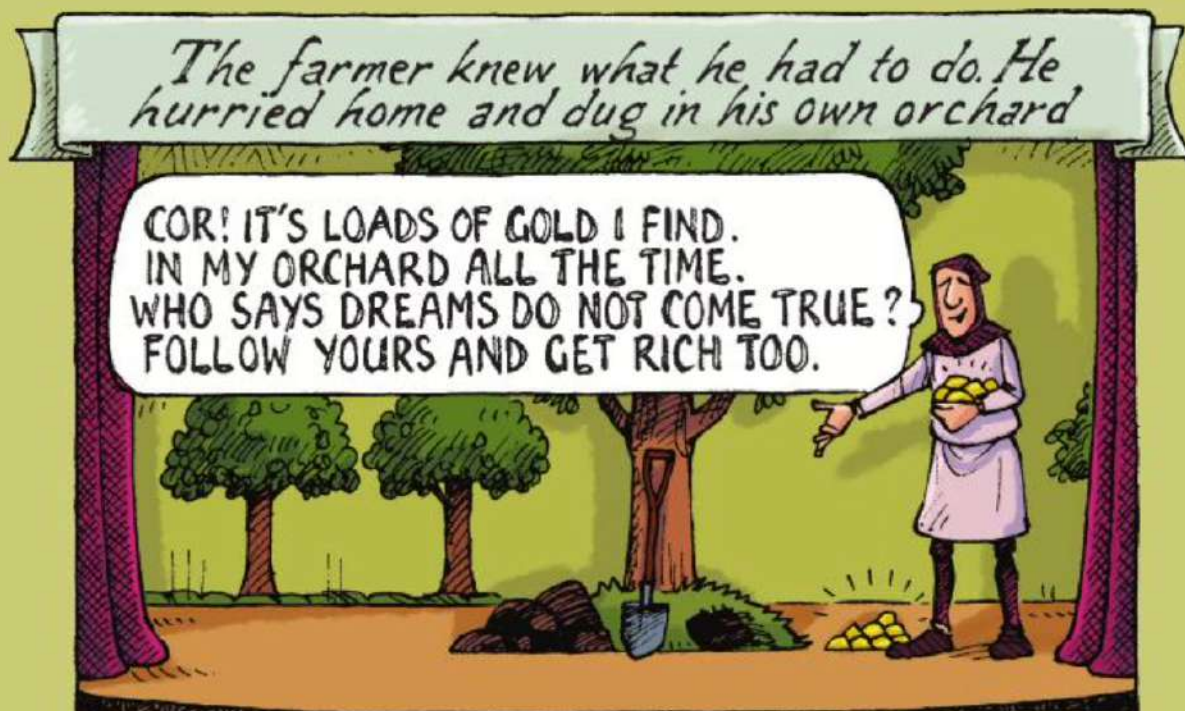


*The shopkeeper laughed and sneered,  
sneered and laughed*

I HAVE DREAMS LIKE THAT QUITE OFTEN.  
MINE TELL ME TO GO TO SWAFFHAM!  
THERE BENEATH AN OLD PEAR TREE  
A POT OF GOLD I'LL SURELY SEE...  
...BELIEVE THAT AND YOU'LL BELIEVE  
ANYTHING!







Which just goes to prove that old English proverbs are right. You know the ones ... a friend in need is a pain in the neck, a bird in the hand will poo in your palm, and red sky at night means your eyes are probably bloodshot.

*Did you know...?*

Londoners have had some odd ideas. Cats like their home and, if the owners move, the cats won't stay in the new house. How did a Londoner get a cat to stay at a new home in the Middle Ages? Picked it up by the tail and swung it once around the room. And that's a true tale. (The cat was probably too dizzy to find the door after that.)



# Awful for Animals

In prehistoric times – before London was built – there must have been sharks in Soho and wolves in Wapping, crocodiles snapping in Shoreditch and hyenas – who probably just came for a good laugh.

Then London was built. London has been a horrible place for many humans. It has also been awful for animals.

There was...

## Bear-baiting

London had bear-gardens since the time of Henry II (1154–1189). A bear would have its teeth and claws removed, then it was chained to a post by a back leg or by the neck. Trained dogs were sent to attack it. This was called 'baiting'.

The Dutch scholar Erasmus, writing about 1500, said...

*There are many herds of bears kept in England just to be baited. Sunday is the favourite day for these sports.*



Hentzner, a German traveller writing in 1598, described the bear-garden at Bankside in London as a sort of a theatre for the baiting of bulls and bears.

*It sometimes happens they are killed on the spot; fresh ones are immediately supplied in the place of those that are wounded or tired.*





He also describes the whipping of a blinded bear for 'fun'. A famous baiting took place before Queen Elizabeth in 1575, for which 13 bears were provided. Richard Laneham was amongst the guests. He wrote:

*It was a very pleasant sport to see. To see the bear, with his pink eyes, tearing after his enemies; the nimbleness and cunning of the dog against the strength and experience of the bear: if he were bitten then see him get free with biting, with clawing, with roaring, with tossing and tumbling; and when he was loose to shake his ears two or three times with the blood and the slaver hanging about his face.*



## **Bull-baiting**

It wasn't just bears that suffered and died in the bear-pits of London. Bulls did too. A hundred years after Elizabeth baited her last bear it was still going on ... but not everyone enjoyed it so much. Some even felt sorry for the animals. John Evelyn wrote in his now-famous Diary in 1670:

*I went with some friends to the bear-garden, where there was cock-fighting, dog-fighting, bear and bull-baiting, it being a famous day for all these butcherly sports, or rather barbarous cruelties. The bulls did exceedingly well, but the Irish wolf-dog was best when it beat a cruel mastiff. One of the bulls tossed a dog into a lady's lap, as she sat in one of the boxes quite high above the arena. Two poor dogs were killed, and it all ended with the ape on horseback. I am most heartily weary of these crude and dirty pastimes.*





By the 1800s people were trying to ban these sports. But when Tsar Nicholas I of Russia visited England he was taken to see a bull-baiting.

The bull's nose was blown full of pepper to drive it wild. Tricks to make a bear mad included putting dried peas in its ear or tying fireworks to its back.

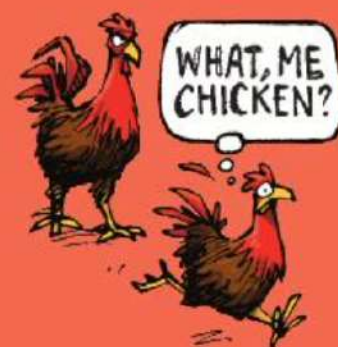
Bear-baiting and bull-baiting were banned by law in 1835. Many people ignored the ban and went ahead anyway. There was a bull-baiting event at London's Agricultural Hall in 1870.

So much for the law.

## Cock-fighting

Cock-fighting was banned in 1849 (but still goes on in London, in secret, today).

Sometimes fighting cockerels are pecked to death. Sometimes their hearts are stabbed by sharp spurs fastened to claws.



## Dog-fighting

Dog-fighting was also banned but still goes on today. In London in the 1800s you could get advice on how to train your dog to kill ... and win fights and make you money.







A writer in the 1850s complained you couldn't get to see many dog-fights in pubs, like you could in the old days. But there were plenty of dog-fights in the homes of rich men, where they were hidden from the law.



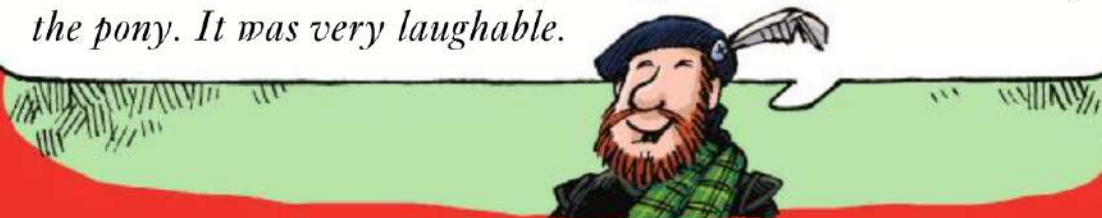
## Horse and pony-baiting

From time to time there was horse-baiting in London. On one occasion the horse actually won. The crowd was furious and tore tiles off the roof of the theatre till the horse was brought back and attacked by more dogs.

The crowd wasn't happy till the horse was dead.

The Paris Garden in Southwark was the chief bear-garden in London. A Spanish nobleman of the 1580s was taken to see a pony baited. The pony had an ape tied to its back.

*The animal was kicking amongst the dogs, while the ape clung to its back and screamed. The dogs hung from the ears and neck of the pony. It was very laughable.*



We do not know what the pony thought of it.

In 1790 a pony was trained to kill sheep for 'sport'. The report said...

*The pony seized a sheep and bit and kicked it till it died. It then separated the head from the neck and ate nearly two quarters of the sheep.*

Today this sort of thing would get you barred from the Pony Club.

(Or baa-ed.)



## Badger-baiting

When bear-baiting became illegal some cruel London 'sportsmen' turned to killing badgers with dogs. In the 1700s they would nail a badger's tail to the floor then set dogs to kill it.

## Bad for bunnies

Regent's Park Zoo is a popular place to visit in London. In the 1870s you could see the boa constrictor snake being fed ... with a live rabbit.

The writer William Thackeray was horrified. He said...

*Yes – swallowing a live rabbit, sir, and looking as if he would have swallowed one of my little children after it.*



That would stop them rabbitting on.



# Terrible Tudor and Slimy Stuart Timeline

London in the Middle Ages was dangerous, dirty and disgusting. Then along came the Tudors and, boy, did things change!

Er ... no, actually, they didn't. You lovers of the lousy side of London will be pleased to know the Horrible Henries and the Smelly Stuarts were simply differently disgusting...

**1517** The loathsome Londoners are fed up with Italian bankers having all the money. They plan to massacre them on May Day. But the government catches some rebels and has them hanged, drawn and quartered. The hangman invents a scaffold on wheels so he can take it round London and give everyone a look. One writer says, 'They were just poor younglings.' So, Henry VIII had kids executed.

**1587** Plotters plan to kill Queen Elizabeth I and put Mary, Queen of Scots on the English throne. The plotters are captured and taken to Holborn to be executed horribly – hanged till they are half dead then have their guts and naughty bits cut off and thrown on a fire in front of their eyes. Their deaths were so cruel





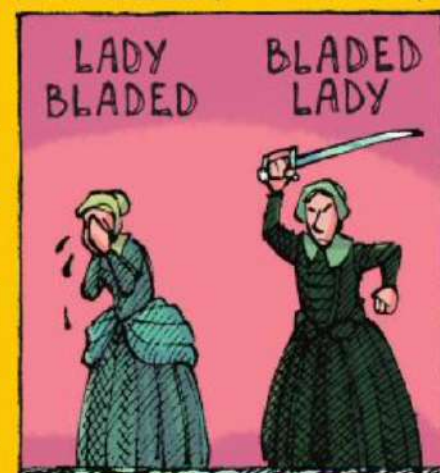
even Queen Elizabeth was shocked.

**1603** Old Mother Shipton dies up in Yorkshire. But she has seen into the future and says, 'London in 66 will be burned to ashes.' Sixty-six minutes? Sixty-six years time? Or in 1666? We'll have to wait and see.

**1642** King Charles I has a row with Parliament and goes to war with it. Charlie's chaps (Cavaliers) battle with Parliament's people (Roundheads). In this English Civil War London is the place for protest. London women march for peace. Soldiers fire blanks to try to scare them – the women laughed. So the soldiers fire real bullets, kill a woman, and the laughing stops. One woman has her nose cut off in the fighting and an old woman is arrested for waving a rusty sword. She is carried off with her hands tied behind her back. A dangerous dame?


**1649** Charles I has his head lopped off at Whitehall – outside the banqueting hall. It's enough to put you off your banquet! That's what he gets for fighting against people power.

**1659** At Enfield the army officers are taking over the 'common' land – the place where the village people graze





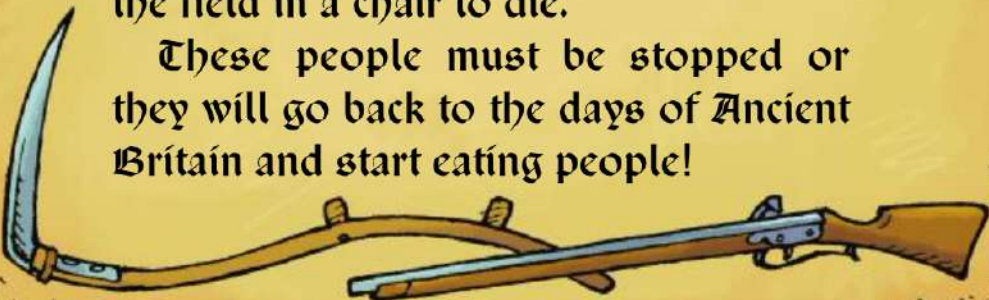
their cattle – to plant corn. The army thinks its corn is more important than the commoners' cows. The villagers have nowhere for their animals and are furious. So they break down the new fences and let their cows trample and eat the corn. The army sends in 15 soldiers. They are attacked by 150 villagers. A report at the time described the scene...



The soldiers were not able to drive out the cattle. Instead they were attacked by the local people armed with pitchforks, long scythes and axes. The soldiers tried to retreat but their sergeant was slashed on the leg and cut on the head. The other soldiers had run out of bullets and had to surrender.

The local people lost two men and a woman in the battle with many more wounded. The sergeant was carried off the field in a chair to die.

These people must be stopped or they will go back to the days of Ancient Britain and start eating people!





**1665** Plague kills 70,000 Londoners. It kills even more of the poor little rats that spread it. They are saved when...



**1666** London's burning. It is still a city of wood and wattle. When a fire starts in a baker shop at Pudding Lane it burns down most of the old city, 13,200 houses and St Paul's Cathedral. Some say it is a curse from the ghost of King Charles I – why did he wait 17 years? Some say it is Mother Shipton's magical forecast come true.<sup>1</sup>



### **The Dorchester Old Man – 1665**

Every single person who ever lived in London has a story to tell. But some are more tragic than others. This one is horrible – and horribly sad...

We'll never know his name, only that he came from London.

The streets were empty that hot summer – except for the rats and the corpses. The people were dying faster than they could bury them. Huge pits were filled with corpses and covered over.

Fresh corpses were stacked in the streets, waiting. They swelled and they smelled till the carters came and carried them away.

<sup>1</sup> Great guess Mother S. But she also said the world would end in 1881. We're still waiting.



The old man looked around the bare room with wooden walls and a cool stone floor. His wife lay on the filthy straw mattress, her face twisted with the last pains. A dead rat lay at her feet.

He scratched and shuffled to the door. 'Goodbye, girl,' he muttered as he opened the door gently and let in the heat from the street. The door was decorated with a roughly painted red cross. 'They'll stop me if they catch me, you know,' he said to his wife. She didn't reply.

The street was empty. He took one last look. 'Someone will be along to ... to see to you soon,' he promised. 'Goodbye.'

The old man clutched the bundle of food and a few coins to his skinny chest. He blinked in the sun and limped down the street on his thin-soled shoes. He turned his face away from the pitiful pile of bodies at the corner of the street.

Somewhere a bell clacked and a voice croaked, 'Bring out your dead!'

'You'll have to go and get her,' he muttered and turned towards the west.

By the time the sun was setting he was out of the stinking city. He sat beneath a hedge, breathed the grassy air and felt better.

After a few bites of the dry bread from his pack he curled up and fell asleep. In the dark his dreams were haunted by visions of bodies, bloated and blue-spotted. He saw devils coming to haul him away to Hell and throw him into a bottomless burial pit. He screamed and woke.



The man licked some dew off the grass to quench his thirst and rose stiffly to his feet. He shook his ragged clothes and coughed. 'Not dead yet, then,' he croaked and set off with the warm morning sun on his back.

Before he'd gone a mile, a wagon of hay passed him. 'Going far?' the driver asked.

'Dorchester,' the old man said. 'That's where I was born. That's where I might as well die.'

The carter reached down a hand and pulled the old man up alongside him. 'I'm headed that way,' he said.

They travelled for two days before they reached the ancient town. The old man remembered the great church but so much else had changed. He remembered the laughing faces of his childhood. Now there were scowls and spitting hatred.

'We're a clean town here,' a woman said and waved a wooden cross at him. 'We don't want your London plague pests here. Get out!' she cried. 'Get out!'

A crowd began to gather at the market square. 'I'm not from London,' the old man whined.

'Liar!' the woman said – and she was right.

He stretched out a shaking hand. 'I have money.'

'All the money in the world won't buy you a place in Dorchester,' she snarled. She bent down and picked up a stone. 'Get out of our town,' she spat.

He staggered out of the town as the people showered him with stones and curses. At last he found an old shepherd's hut with tumbling wattle walls and a storm-blown roof. It stood on the edge of a steep quarry. He sank on the cool earth floor and curled up.







That night the sweating started. Then the pain in the armpits. His head burned with fever. He wanted water, but he was too weak to drink it.

He slept and dreamed. He woke ... and thought he was still dreaming. The hut was moving. In the morning light he could see clearly now through his crusted eyes. He could feel the wall of the hut pushing at him. It rolled him forward.

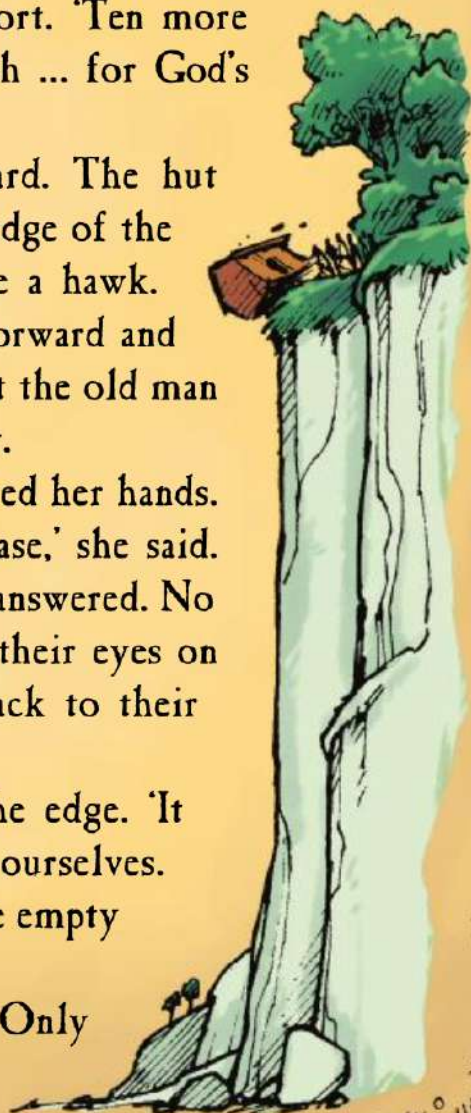
The old man heard the people of Dorchester grunting and hissing with effort. 'Ten more feet,' someone whispered. 'Push ... for God's sake, push!'

The old man rolled forward. The hut began to tilt as it reached the edge of the quarry. It hung in the air like a hawk. Then like a hawk it toppled forward and down, faster and faster. It swept the old man to his death in the quarry below.

The Dorchester woman dusted her hands. 'A quicker death than the disease,' she said. 'We did him a favour.' No one answered. No one looked at her. They kept their eyes on the ground as they hurried back to their homes.

The woman looked over the edge. 'It wasn't murder - we had to save ourselves. It wasn't murder,' she said to the empty air. 'Not really.'

She never knew his name. Only that he came from London.

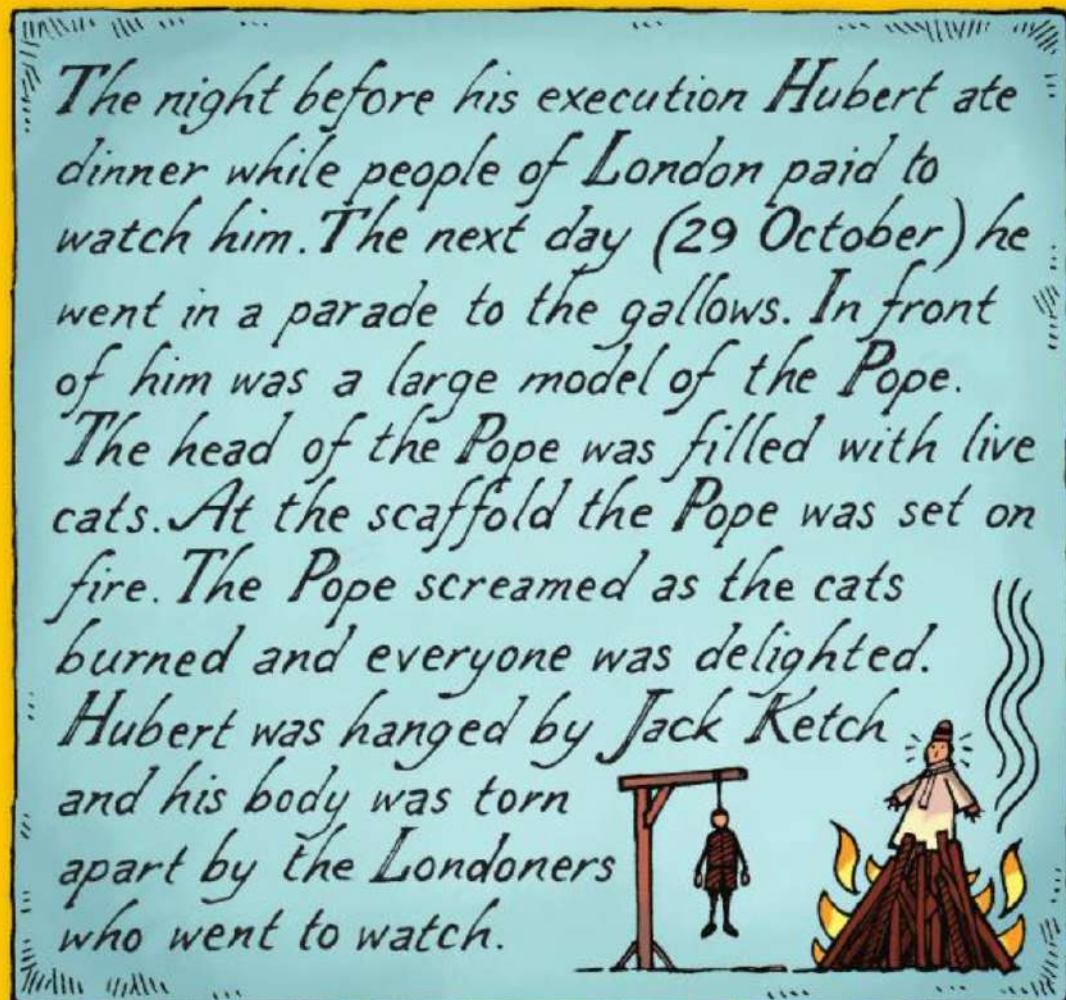




## London's burning

Back in 1605 people worried that the Catholics were going to take over the country when Guy Fawkes plotted to blow up the King. In 1667 they *still* feared the Catholics and so the Catholics got the blame for burning down London in the Great Fire.

A mad Frenchman called Robert Hubert *said* he had started the fire – even though he hadn't. And, of course, the French were Catholics. He was sentenced to hang. A report of the day gave the gruesome details...



When the writer says 'everyone was delighted' he did not mean the cooked cats were delighted – they were a-lighted.



# Cool for Criminals

Over the centuries thousands of horrible people have lived in London. Here are a few you would NOT want to invite round for tea...

**NAME:** *Bloody Bonner (real name Bishop Edmund Bonner)  
1500-1569*

**DETAILS:** *Catholic then Protestant then Catholic Bishop - whatever was best for him*

**NOTES:**

*Mary Tudor wanted Protestants burned alive. Bonner was the man to catch them and burn them. He was quite happy to have children executed. Bonner tried to get men like Thomas Thomkins (a weaver) to become Catholic in 1556. When Tommy Thom refused his hands were burned over candles. When he still refused Bloody Bonner sent him to be burned all over at Smithfield. The beastly bishop held his burnings on holidays so all London could come and watch the fun. He had hundreds executed. He died unloved, buried at midnight so avenging enemies wouldn't try to destroy the coffin.*

**MIGHT SAY:** *'Come on, baby, light my fire.'*





**NAME:** Richard Topcliffe  
1532-1604



**DETAILS:** Queen Elizabeth I's  
torturer-in-chief in the 1590s

**NOTES:** One member of Parliament said that Topcliffe was so friendly with the Queen he had seen her legs and knees. He enjoyed whipping, burning, chopping and stretching Catholic priests. He liked to stand them on a stool, hang them by the wrists with chains, then take the stool away. He even built a torture chamber at his own home in Westminster.

**MIGHT SAY:** 'I like to "rack" my brains to think of new tortures !'

**NAME:** George Abbott  
1562-1633



**DETAILS:** Archbishop of  
Canterbury

**NOTES:** When a preacher disagreed with him Archbishop George had him whipped 36 times and put in the pillory for hours on a freezing November day. There the preacher had his face branded, his nose slit and his ears cut off before he was sent to prison. Then the Archbishop shot a man with an arrow. King James agreed that the victim shouldn't have got in the way of the Archbishop's arrow. George was not punished.

**MIGHT SAY:** 'That'll teach the idiot to walk in front of a loaded bow.'



**NAME:** Moll Cutpurse (real name Mary Frith) 1584 - 1659

**DETAILS:** Queen of thieves, pickpocket turned gang-leader

**NOTES:** Tomboy as a child, grew up as tough and crafty as any man to become London's top thief. When she stole a farmer's watch he had her arrested. The constable took the watch to court - but when he got there he found the watch had been pinched from his pocket. She was set free. She was arrested for dressing as a man and her hobby was training dogs to kill bears in the bear garden.

**MIGHT SAY:** 'When I'm around you have to "watch" yourself.'



**NAME:** Jack Ketch  
1663 - 1686

**DETAILS:** London executioner

**NOTES:** The clumsiest axeman in history. He took at least eight chops to get the Duke of Monmouth's head off in 1685. After chop one Monmouth looked up and after chop three Ketch threw his axe away. Monmouth told him to get on with it. Ketch had to finish off the job with a knife. (The head was later stitched back on so Monmouth's corpse could have its picture painted.)

**MIGHT SAY:** 'Ooops! Sorry, I'll try again. Ooops! And again! Oooooops!'





**NAME:** Catherine Hayes - died 1726

**DETAILS:** Landlady of a tavern called  
'The Gentleman in Trouble'

**NOTES:** In 1726 she cut off her husband's head and threw it into a bucket. She then scattered other bits of his body around London. The head was found and stuck on a pole in a London churchyard; a sign said, 'Do you know who this belongs to?' Cruel Cath was arrested and sentenced to death. But the punishment for killing a husband wasn't hanging - it was burning alive. She was one of the last women ever to be burned at Tyburn.

**MIGHT SAY:** 'I'll be the toast of the town.'

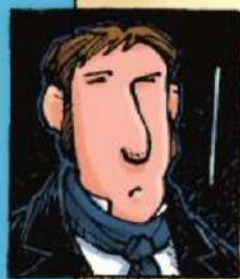


**NAME:** Thomas Henry Hocker - died 1845

**DETAILS:** Murderer of James Delarue,  
February 1845

**NOTES:** Tom Henry dressed in his long black coat, went out and killed James Delarue. Most people would run away. But terrible Tom hung around. When a policeman discovered the body Tom sprang out from behind some trees, singing to himself. He then began to chat to the policeman and said 'It's a nasty job,' and took hold of the dead man's hand. He was hanged!

**MIGHT SAY:** 'I'm a killer, you're a bobby. Ooooh, this is a nasty jobby. Tra-la-la.'



<sup>1</sup> They gave it a good scrub first so it didn't look too horrible. Bet you're pleased about that.



**NAME:** *The London Monster*  
around 1789-90

**DETAILS:** *Attacked, stabbed and slashed London women in the street*

**NOTES:** *A charming man who asked a lady to smell his flowers. But the flowers hid a spike that he jabbed in her face. His other method was to hide in bushes, jump out and stab a lady in the bum. A maker of paper flowers, Rhynewick Williams, was arrested and the attacks stopped. But many people believed he was innocent.*

**MIGHT SAY:** *'The police will never get to the bottom of the mystery - but I ALWAYS get to the bottom!'*



**NAME:** *Jack the Ripper*  
around 1888

**DETAILS:** *Murdered at least six women.*

**NOTES:** *His victims were cut up by someone who seemed to know how the human body is put together. A doctor, perhaps? The killer sent letters to the police and named himself 'Jack the Ripper'. Police Chief Charles Warren trained bloodhounds to catch Jack - but ended up being chased across Tooting Common by his own hounds! Most likely suspect is lawyer Montague John Drutt. He drowned himself in the Thames... the murders stopped.*

**MIGHT SAY:** *Never caught. I had a few slices of luck.*





## Quaint and quirky vile villains

London has seen some quaint and cruel criminal activity through its history. Here are a few examples...

### 1 Body for sale

In the 1700s the corpses of hanged men could be handed over to doctors for cutting up. The idea was that the surgeons could show students how the inside of a body worked. It was also a horrible 'extra' punishment for the criminal.

In April 1739 a shoemaker was hanged and then carried off to the surgeons. But his kind friends rescued his body and took it back to his widow.

She didn't want it!

The body-snatchers tried to sell it (very cheaply) to London surgeons.



No one wanted it.

They dumped the body in a shallow grave in St George's Fields.



## 2 Thieves' vinegar

When the Black Death came to London in 1349 the thieves had a great time. They just walked into the houses of the plague victims and robbed them. (If you have died from the plague you are not going to stop them, are you?)

After a time people noticed that the thieves never seemed to catch the plague themselves. They asked the thieves...



So the doctors started to sell this idea to people scared of catching the plague.



It seemed to work.



### 3 Pedal power and policemen

London policemen were given exams to see if they knew the law. The exams were not written – the policemen were not very good at writing. Instead they were spoken. The policeman had to learn the answers off by heart.

Some of the crimes that took place in London were quite shocking. Here are some of the test questions from 1864 ... can you guess the answers?

Replace the \*!?! with the correct answer.

- a) IS IT A CRIME IF THE RIDER OF A BICYCLE RIDES IN A FURIOUS AND A RECKLESS MANNER AND KNOCKS DOWN AND INJURES A PERSON? \*!?!  

- b) IS IT AN OFFENCE TO DISTURB SOMEONE IN A HOUSE BY RINGING THE DOOR BELL OR KNOCKING WITHOUT A GOOD REASON? \*!?!  

- c) IF A NUMBER OF PEOPLE BOO AND HISS A PLAY OFF THE STAGE CAN THEY BE CHARGED? \*!?!  

- d) FROM WHERE MAY A POLICEMAN MOVE A DEAD BODY? \*!?!  

- e) WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF A BUILDING COLLAPSED BURYING SEVERAL PEOPLE INSIDE? \*!?!  




- Answers:*
- a) 'It is a crime.' (It still is.)
  - b) 'It is an offence but the policeman must catch the offender doing it.' (So knocking on doors and running away could get you thrown into jail. Don't do it ... well, not on my door.)
  - c) 'They can.' (To boo and hiss a teacher out of the classroom was allowed.)
  - d) 'From a street anywhere the public may see them. But not from a house.'
  - e) 'Blow my whistle to call for help.'

*Did you know....?*

The first police were on London's streets in 1829. The first dead policeman was on the streets less than a year later.

Constable Grantham tried to arrest two drunks in north London and was kicked to death.

#### 4 Highway to heaven

Jack Collett (1659–1691) robbed people on the road. But curious Collett liked to carry out the robberies dressed as a bishop.

One night he lost his bishop's clothes in a card game. He set out to rob a coach so he could buy some new priestly clothes.

Who did he happen to stop? The Bishop of Winchester.





Not only did he nick the Bishop's clothes but a purse of fifty gold pieces too.

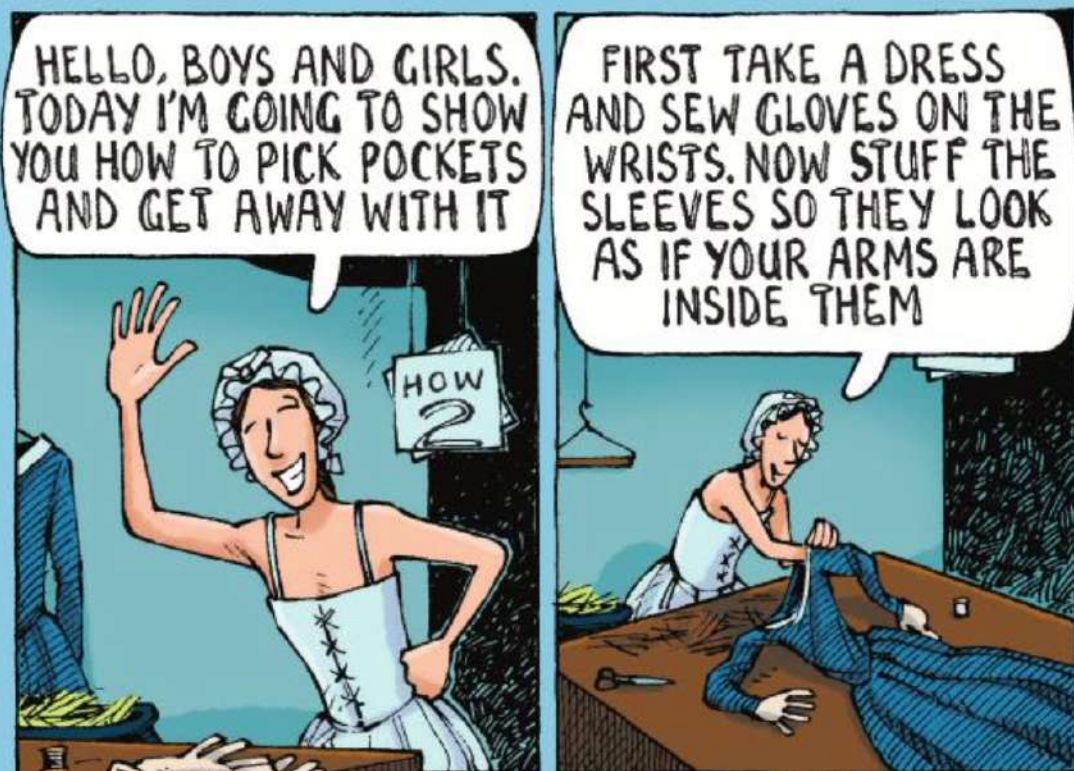
Jolly Jack was later caught breaking into a Smithfield church to rob it and was hanged at Tyburn.

### 5 Dive for gold

A London pickpocket was known as a 'diver'.

In the early 1700s Mary Young was so good at picking pockets she was known as 'Jenny Diver'. This Irish woman practised for two hours a day till she was an expert. One of her tricks was to wait at the bottom of the steps at a church. As a rich gentleman walked past she would hold out her hand so he could help her up the steps. When she let go of his hand his wedding ring would be missing.

And she even made a special costume to help her pocket-picking pilfering. Here's what she did ... do NOT try this at home.





NOW MAKE A NEAT SLIT  
IN THE SIDES OF THE  
DRESS SO YOUR ARMS CAN  
SLIP OUT OF THE SIDES



NOW SLIP THE DRESS  
OVER YOUR HEAD AND  
GO TO CHURCH. SIT NEXT  
TO SOME RICH LADIES



YOUR HANDS APPEAR TO BE  
IN FRONT OF YOU. IN FACT  
YOUR REAL HANDS ARE  
SLIPPING OUT AND ROBBING  
THE PURSES OF THE LADIES



JUST REMEMBER, DON'T  
GET CAUGHT OR YOU  
COULD BE EXECUTED.  
HERE'S ONE THEY HANGED  
EARLIER



Jenny Diver was caught and 'transported' to the prison colony in Virginia, America. A rich friend paid for her to sail back to London.

She was caught again, transported again and went back to London again.

She was caught again ... and hanged.

This time she didn't go back.



## 6 Hanging around

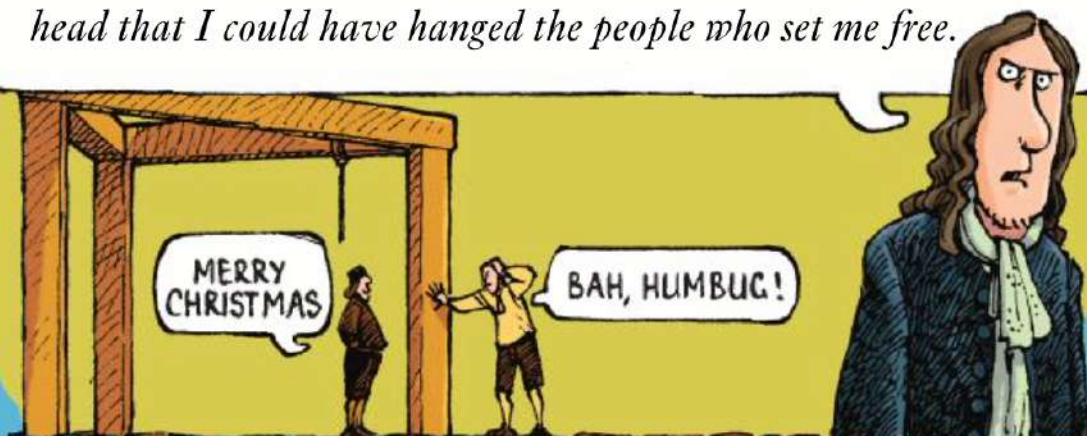
It was Christmas Eve 1705. On the day you hang up your Christmas stocking, John Smith was hanging by the neck at Tyburn prison. He was a housebreaker who had been sentenced to die on the scaffold.

Christmas Eve is not a nice day to die ... and John Smith DIDN'T die. After he'd been hanging for quarter of an hour a pardon arrived. The executioner cut the rope.

John Smith told his story...

*I remember a great pain caused by the weight of my body. My spirits were in a great uproar, pushing upwards; when they got into my head I saw a great blaze of glaring light that seemed to go out of my eyes with a flash. Then the pain went.*

*When I was cut down I got such pins-and-needles pains in my head that I could have hanged the people who set me free.*



John became known as 'Half-hanged Smith'.

But he hadn't learned his lesson. He was arrested two more times for hanging crimes. The first time he was set free.

The second time he looked doomed. The judge was about to send Half-hanged to be fully hanged when Smith's luck struck again. The judge dropped down dead. Smith went free.

They should have changed his name again – to 'Lucky' Smith.



## 7 Shoplifter shopped

Mary Jones had two young children. In 1770 her husband was dragged off to fight in the navy ('press-ganged') leaving Mary penniless.

Mary Jones went into a shop on Ludgate Street and slipped some cloth under her coat. When the shopkeeper saw her she put the cloth back. So, really, she stole nothing.

Still she was arrested and taken to court. She spoke up for herself...

*I was never in debt till my husband was press-ganged. Now I've no bed to lie on, nothing to give my children to eat and they are almost naked. I may have tried to take the cloth – I hardly knew what I was doing.*



The law officers spoke up for her...

WHAT SHE SAYS IS TRUE. HER HUSBAND IS FIGHTING IN THE FALKLANDS AND SHE FELL INTO DEBT. SHE TRIED SELLING FURNITURE TO BUY FOOD BUT NOW IT'S ALL GONE, SHE IS NOT A CRIMINAL





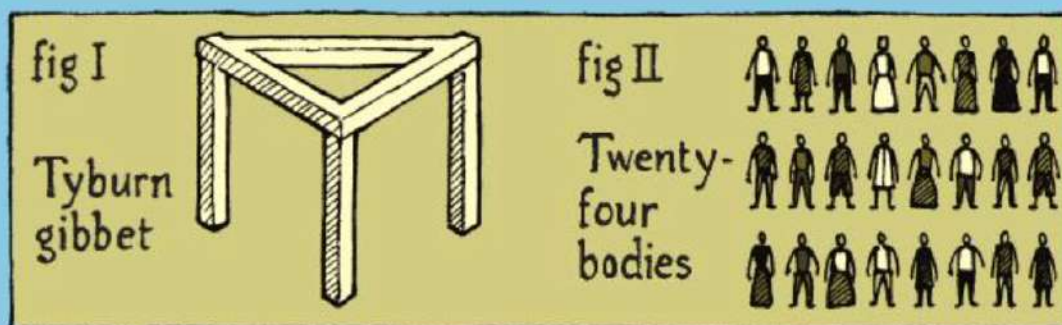
So, of course, she should have been set free and helped. But the shopkeepers of Ludgate Street had other ideas...



Mary Jones was hanged. She was 18 years old.

## 8 Taking turns

For 800 years criminals were hanged at Tyburn. The 'gibbet' was a triangle (see below) and eight people could be hanged from each side – 24 at once.



For the first 300 years they climbed ladders with ropes around their necks. The ladders were taken away and they choked on the ropes. Twisting the ladder away was called 'turning off' a criminal.

Later a cart was used. A Swiss visitor, Cesar de Saussure, wrote about it in the 1720s...



On the day of execution the prisoners, wearing a sort of white linen shirt over their clothes and a cap on their heads, are tied two together and placed on carts with their backs to the horses' tails. These carts are guarded and surrounded by officers on horseback, each armed with a sort of pike.

One often sees criminals going to their deaths quite carefree, others so shameless that they fill themselves full of liquor and mock at those who are in misery. When all the prisoners arrive at Tyburn they are made to climb onto a very wide cart. A cord is passed round their necks and the end fastened to the gibbet, which is not very high. The priest who is also on the cart makes them pray and sing a few verses of hymns. The relatives are allowed to mount the cart and say farewell.

When the time is up - that is to say about a quarter of an hour - the priest and relations get off the cart, the executioner covers



the eyes and faces of the prisoners with their caps, and lashes the horses that draw the cart, which slips from under the men's feet. In this way they remain all hanging together.

You often see friends and relations tugging at the hanging men's feet so that they should die quicker and not suffer.

The bodies and clothes of the dead belong to the executioner. If relatives wish for them they must buy them from him. Any bodies that have no friends to bury them are sold to surgeons to be cut up.

You see the most amusing scenes with the messengers the surgeons have sent for the bodies. People in the crowd who hate them often fight them.

These scenes are most interesting - the noise and the muddle is amazing. It can all be seen from rows of seats built near the gibbet.



## 9 Widow's woe

Not all women wept when they were widowed by the hangman. There is a terribly true tale told about Dick Hughes. On his way to the gallows in 1709 he happened to meet his wife. She climbed on to the cart with him, as she was allowed to do, and they had a chat that really upset her. It went like this...



But, let's face it, it was a nice thought – and she could always use the rope as a washing line, couldn't she?

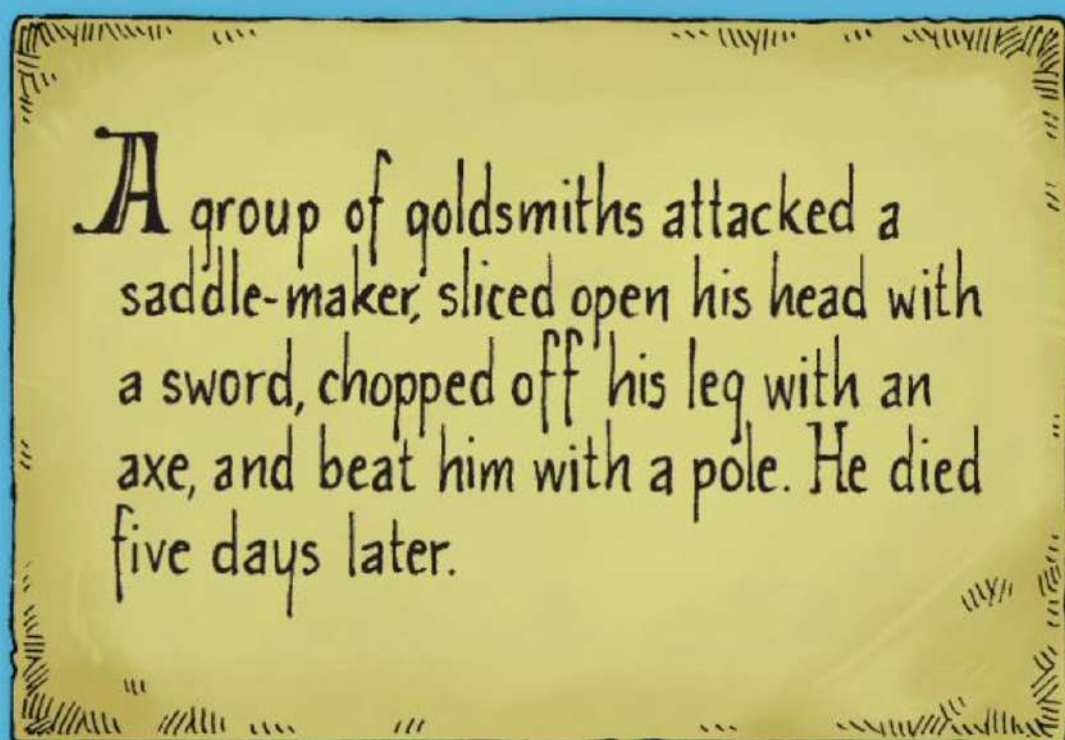


## 10 Horrible hooligans

Young men have always caused trouble in London. In the Middle Ages teenage boys learned a trade by becoming a student with a craftsman – the boys were called ‘apprentices’ and they were a lively lot.

For a start, apprentices from one trade would fight with apprentices in another trade – a bit like rival football supporters today.

In the 1200s a report said...

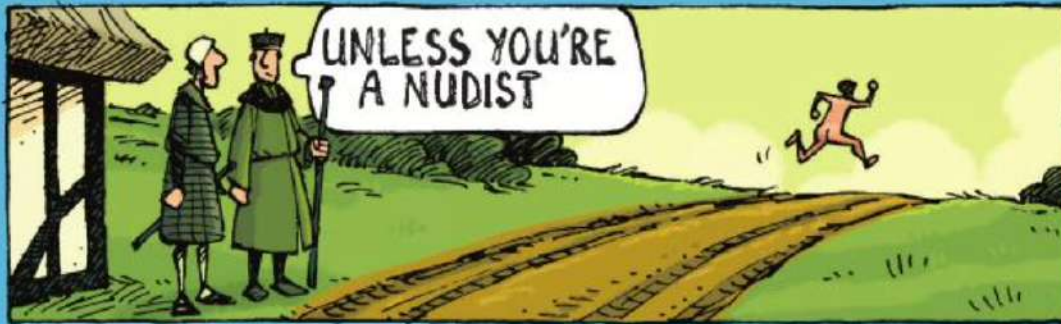


Of course they weren't always serious attacks. One apprentice took his bow and fired his arrows into a crowd of people ... for a laugh. He killed an innocent person who probably didn't see the joke.

The law officers didn't have police cars or helicopters, but they did have one power that today's police do not have. What could the law do to you around 1250 that it can't do today?



a) Take all your clothes away so you can't leave the house.



b) Take your doors and windows out so you can't hide your crimes.

c) Take your food away and starve you till you behave yourself.

*Answer: b) A butcher called William Cok, in Cockes Lane, had 11 doors and five windows removed by the law. Bet that left him without a sausage.*



# The Loathsome London Quiz

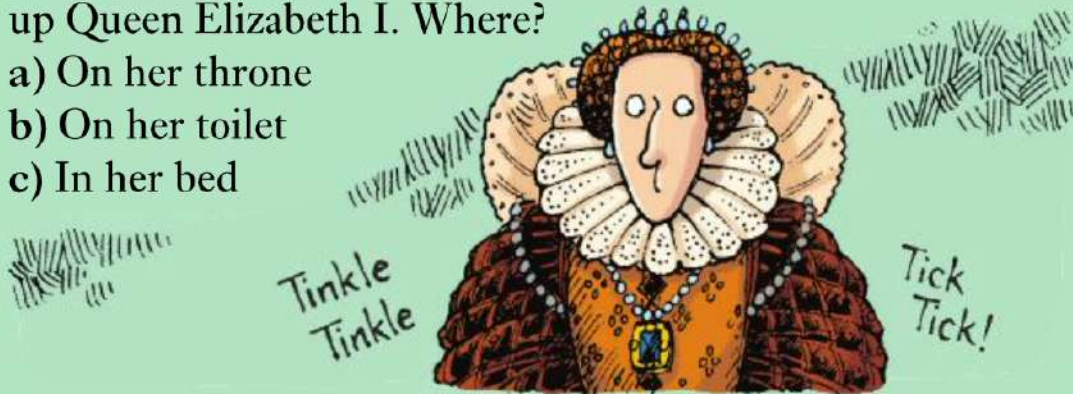
1 Isambard Kingdom Brunel checked his dad's Thames tunnel using a 'Diving Bell' – a large bell with seats inside that was lowered into the water. Who did he take with him?

- a) His mum
- b) His dad
- c) Queen Victoria



2 In 1605 Guy Fawkes plotted to blow up King James in Parliament. But 18 years before that there was a plot to blow up Queen Elizabeth I. Where?

- a) On her throne
- b) On her toilet
- c) In her bed



3 In 1780 Londoners believed there was a plot to destroy London, far worse than the Guy Fawkes plot. What was it?

- a) To bomb London from hot air balloons
- b) To flood London
- c) To blow up London with bombs fastened to dogs

4 In 1768 some London soldiers killed rioters in 'The Massacre of St George's Fields'. William Allen was killed. What had he done?

- a) Thrown a stone at a magistrate
- b) Passed a stone to his friend who threw it at a magistrate
- c) Nothing



5 In 1829 Robert Peel formed the London police force. Hundreds of men joined – but half of them were soon sacked. Why?

- a) They spent too much time getting drunk.
- b) They spent too much time picking on small people and refused to arrest big burglars.
- c) They kept trying to arrest posh people when their real job was to arrest poor people.

6 In 1850 Ann Wood went to court. The judge said, ‘If you wanted to do it, why didn’t you do it and get it done with?’ What had Ann Wood tried to do?

- a) Keep her slum house clean
- b) Drown her cat’s kittens
- c) Drown herself



7 If you saw Horny Winkle’s Horse in Victorian London, what would you see?

- a) A beef and rhubarb pie served as a birthday treat
- b) A rough children’s game
- c) A torture machine that forced your feet into your mouth



8 Colonel Thomas Blood almost got away with stealing Charles II’s crown jewels from the Tower in 1671. Who may have helped him?

- a) King Charles II
- b) Rocky the Raven
- c) Benny the Beefeater

