

The Great Fire of London

Once, the city of London was built from houses of wood, with houses built so close together that there was just enough room to walk between them.

In the middle of London, close to the river, there was a bakery. The baker's son was called Jack. Jack didn't go to school. Instead he helped his Dad in the shop.

Every day he'd start by chopping wood for the oven.

Then he'd light the oven.

Then he'd mix up the flour and water and yeast and knead the dough.

Cut out the loaves.

And bake them in the oven.

One morning Jack woke up to the smell of burning. He jumped out of bed and ran down stairs.

"FIRE!" he shouted.

Someone had left the door of the oven open. A piece of burning wood must have jumped out of the oven and set fire to wood shavings on the floor. There were flames everywhere.

Jack woke up his family and they rushed down to the river with buckets and ran back to the house. (In those days there were no taps, and no space for a wagon with water to move between the houses.)

By the time they got back the whole building was on fire. They threw the buckets of water in the fire but it just hissed and fizzed into the flames.

The wind blew the fire to the next house down the street, and then next, and then next.

Jack shouted "Wake up! Wake up!" and soon everyone was out in the street running to the river for water, but it spread too fast.

Soon the bakery was just a pile of ash

Soon the whole street was gone as the fire started to spread in all directions.

The fire was travelling too fast to stop it with buckets of water, so the mayor made a plan.

People knocked down houses in a circle around the fire so it could not spread any further.

They worked with axes and saws and ropes, knocking down home after home, but the fire was too fast and caught them before they had finished.

In the end they brought gunpowder and blew up a ring of houses around the fire. Finally it was stopped. 13,200 people had lost their homes and 87 out of 109 churches destroyed.

Jack and his Dad built a new home on the ruins of the old one and soon they were selling bread again.

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Then he'd light the oven

Then he'd mix up the flour and water and yeast and knead the dough

Cut out the loaves

And bake them in the oven

But this time he was careful to make sure the oven door was always closed!

When they built the new houses they made sure there were roads between them so water trucks could get to any fire, and so the fire would not spread so far again.