

An extract from Samuel Pepys' Diary - Written in 1665



June 7th

... it being the hottest day that ever I felt in my life, and it is confessed so by all other people the hottest they ever knew in England in the beginning of June - we went to the New Exchange and there drunk ale; We then went o Foxe hall to the Spring-garden and there walked an hour or two with great pleasure, trying to set our minds at ease from worrying about our fellow sailors and my Lord Sandwich, that we have had no news of them. Here stayed, pleasantly walking and spending little till 9 at night

This day, much against my Will, I did in Drury-lane see two or three houses marked with a red cross upon the doors, and "Lord have mercy upon us" writ there - which was a sad sight to me, being the first of that kind that to my remembrance I ever saw. It put me into an ill thought of myself and my smell, so that I was forced to buy some roll tobacco to smell to and chew - which took away the apprehension.

[Houses infected by the Plague had to have a red cross one foot high marked on their door and were shut up - often with the victims inside. Tobacco was highly prized for its medicinal value, especially against the Plague. It is said that at Eton one boy was flogged for being discovered not smoking.]

June 15th

The Duke of Yorke not yet come to town. The town grows very sickly, and people to be afeared of it - there dying this last week of the plague 112, from 43 the week before - whereof, one in Fanchurch-street and one in Broadstreete by the Treasurer's office.