

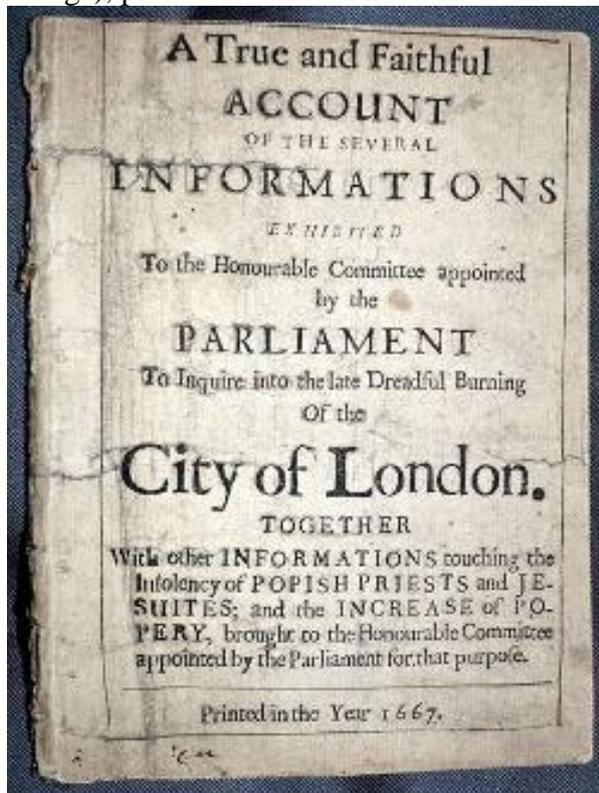
## The Great Fire of London (15/07/2017)

**Did you know that Wiltshire may very well have provided the arsonist that led to the Great Fire of London?** – A parliamentary enquiry was held after the fire and despite evidence to the contrary, it was accepted that the fire was deliberate and a man was executed – but not the man who was thought responsible!!! A Warrant was issued for the arrest of John Woodman but ‘he was gone out of the Country’! Woodman had declared the Thursday before the fire started on the Sunday, that he ‘**would see London alight**’.

It is an open question as to how the fire started, but most people think it was accidental including members of the enquiry but a **Robert Hubert** was found guilty and hanged!!

### **Did Chippenham play a role in the Great Fire of London?**

There is a Blue Plaque on the front wall of 32 – 34 Market Place, Chippenham marking the building as formerly being the Lyon Inn. It is believed that it was here that one John Woodman of Kelloway, a village 3 miles north east of Chippenham (little now remains of the village), plotted the Great Fire of London.



The Museum of London holds a transcript of the parliamentary inquiry into the fire, the following extracts of which are worth reading:

Page 3 of the Report (the start of the Report) reads:

*Upon the second of September 1666. the Fire began in London at one Farriners House, a Baker in Pudding-Lane, between the hours of one and two in the Morning, and continued burning until the sixth of September following; consuming, as by Surveyors appears in Print, three hundred seventy three Acres within the Walls of the City of London, and sixty three Acres three Roods yet standing within the Walls unburnt. Eighty nine Parish Churches, besides Chappels burnt. Eleven Parishes within the Walls yet standing. Houses burnt, thirteen thousand two hundred. etc. (No mention of the (6) lives lost!?)*

The report goes on to clearly indicate that a John Woodman was in the area at the time of the fire and had made comments suggesting an intent to initiate proceedings.

A section from page 8 of the transcript, including the original spellings, reads as follows:

*William Ducket Esq, a Member of the House, informes, That one Henry Baker of Chippenham in the County of Wilts, coming from Market with one John Woodman of Kelloway in the same Country, the Thursday before the Fire began in London, they had some discourse about the buying of a yoke of fat Bullocks, wherein they differed, because Woodman who was to sell them was desired to keep them a while in his hands; But the said Woodman denyed so to do, for that as he alleadged, he could not stay in the Country till that time which Baker would have them delivered to him in, and being asked whether he was going, he refused to tell, Asking what he had to do to make that question, But riding a little farther, the said Woodman exprest these words, You are brave blades at Chippenham, you made Bonfires lately for beating the Dutch; but since you delight in Bonfires, ye shall have your Bellies full of them ere it be long: Adding, that if he lived one week longer, he should see London as sad a London as ever it was since the world began. And in some short time after, he should see as bloody a time as ever was, since England was England. This discourse was not much taken notice at that time it was spoken, But when the City of London was Burnt, the said Henry Baker gave this Information to the said Mr. Ducket. And whereupon he issued out his Warrant to apprehend Woodman, but he was gone out of the Country, and cannot be heard of since.*

#### **False Confession**

A Robert Hubert confessed, either because he was mentally unstable or “probably by an extreme form of torture”, to starting a fire in [Westminster](#). However, this story proved unsatisfactory, and his confession changed upon learning that the fire never reached Westminster. Having learned that the fire started in [Pudding Lane](#), in the house of the baker Thomas Farriner (or Farynor), he then claimed to have thrown a crude fire grenade through the open window of the Farriner bakery. He claimed to have acted with accomplices, who stopped the water cocks to sabotage the effort to put out the fire. Hubert’s confessed motive was, apparently, that he was a French spy, and an agent of the Pope. His story was never convincing (**he was at sea at the time of the fire**) but his confession to the setting of the fire that destroyed four fifths of London was accepted and Londoners, needing a scapegoat, hanged him. After the hanging, a mob tore his body to bits before it could be passed to surgeons for dissection.

(We are not currently able to provide a link to the full report)