

The Great Fire of Nantwich Tour



What do you know about the **Great Fire of London**?
Where might you find out more?

Today we are going to learn about the **Great Fire of Nantwich**, and you can think about what was different, and what was the same. For a start, the Great Fire of Nantwich was in 1583. Do you think that was before, or after, the Great Fire of London?

The Cocoa Yard



Start your tour in the Cocoa Yard, which is just off Hospital Street (the entrance is opposite Chrissies and Arabella).



Today the Cocoa Yard is normally quite a peaceful place. If you listen carefully, you might hear birds singing. In the past, it was very different.



Can you see any clues about what used to be here in the past?
See if you can find a large brick chimney. Look for the plaque which tells you what used to be here. Walk round the back of the chimney. What do you think it was used for?



This is the site of the Carriage Manufactory. They used to make carriages here, like the ones in the old picture below. Nantwich was an important town in the past, partly because of the industries here, which made things people needed.



Have a look at this picture of an old carriage. What materials is it made from? Look at the carriage, the wheels, the straps on the horses.



Did you manage to work it out? The carriage was made of wood and metal. The fire in the chimney would be used to heat up the metal, so they could beat it into shape.

The straps on the horses were made of leather. This was one of the other industries in Nantwich. Leather comes from cows, and there are a lot of cows near Nantwich today, and in the past – we are surrounded by great pastureland! So there was a ready supply of cow skins.

Another thing which was needed to make leather was salt. In the past, salt was made in Nantwich in “wyche houses” - hence the name, NantWICH! Can you think of any other local towns which end in “wich”?

So Nantwich had important industries. Can you name three of them?

After the Great Fire of Nantwich, something happened which did not happen after any of the other great fires. We will find out what that is later on!



Walk up to the Hospital Street end of the Cocoa Yard. Look across Hospital Street at the buildings.



What are the buildings made of today?
What would they have been made of at the time of the Great Fire of Nantwich, in 1583?
Are the buildings close together, or a long way apart?
Is the road wide, or narrow?
On a windy day, can you imagine how a fire would spread?



We call buildings from the time of the Fire of Nantwich, Tudor buildings. This is because the kings and queens at the time had the surname, Tudor. The buildings were made from wood, and wattle and daub. After the tour, see if you can find out what wattle and daub is made from. The roof would have thatch, which was made of hay or straw. Do you think Tudor buildings would burn? Why?

The Church



Turn left along Hospital Street for a short distance, cross carefully, and take the right turn, up a narrow cobbled street, Church Lane. Why do you think it is called Church Lane?

Walk up to the top of the lane and stop outside St Marys Church.



What is the church made from?

Do you think it would burn?

Look up. What can you see? Are there faces looking down at you?

Can you see a tower?

What do you think might be in the tower?



St Marys Church is made of sandstone. Like all stone, it would not burn – so the people of Nantwich took shelter there when the town was on fire. In Tudor times, there were no fire alarms, but the church tower had bells, and these were rung to warn the people about the fire.

So the church was a fire shelter and a giant fire alarm! 2000 people lived in Nantwich in 1583, and just two died in the fire. So the church did a good job!

The Crown Hotel



Walk through the Square and turn right up the High Street. Stop opposite the Crown Hotel.



Look at the Crown Hotel, and Caffè Nero. These are Tudor buildings, made of wood and wattle and daub. What do you notice about the wood? What is the difference between the wood in the two buildings?



Caffè Nero has wiggly patterned wood. If you were a Tudor and you wanted to show off to the neighbours, you would decorate your house with expensive patterned wood. So we can see that, although this building is a cafe now, it used to be a Tudor house, owned by someone who wanted to show everyone how wealthy they were.

Now look at the Crown Hotel. It has straight wood. If you did not have as much money for your building, you would use the cheaper, straight wood. So buildings with the straight wood were hotels and inns. The Crown Hotel was still the Crown Hotel hundreds of years ago, at the time of the Fire of Nantwich!



Look at the building behind you. Do you notice anything about the wood on that one? Was it a house, or a hotel?

Look at the building at the top of the street, on the left, with the clock on it. Was it a house, or a hotel?



Here is a picture of it. It used to be called the Bear Hotel. Why do you think it had this name?



In Tudor times, people did not have televisions, mobile phones or Xboxes. Hotels would entertain their guests to stop them from getting bored. If you look carefully at the Crown Hotel, on the top floor there was a long gallery where people could go to meet friends, dance and play games. The Bear Hotel had four bears, and the bears were made to dance.





Can you dance like a bear?
Would we make bears dance these days?



Around the corner from the Bear Hotel lived a man named Nicholas Brown. He was brewing beer in his house on the evening of 10th December 1583. He made his fire too big. It spread across the floor. It spread to the walls. It spread to the roof. Oh no! It spread to the next building! It spread to the Bear Hotel! The owner of the Bear Hotel did not want his bears to get burnt, so he let them go free.....



Imagine you are a bear, and you have just been freed. Would you run out of the town, to the fields and woods? You're feeling a bit hungry. You aren't afraid of humans, and you can smell people's dinners cooking. It smells very tasty. Would you run into the town, and try to steal someone's dinner?



I am afraid the bears ran into the town! Now the fire was spreading through the town, and four wild bears were running round! Imagine rushing to your door to escape the fire, only to find bears running around the town! People were so afraid of the bears, that they were not able to go and fetch water to put the fire out. It burnt for 20 days! 200 buildings were destroyed. None of the buildings the other side of the river burnt down. Why do you think that was?



Can you remember the name of the man who started the fire, brewing beer? That's right, it was Nicholas Brown. Here is a poem, to help you remember:
Nicholas Brown
Burnt down the town!

The Queen's Aid House



Walk back down the High Street, chanting:
Nicholas Brown
Burnt down the town!
Stop at the top of Castle Street, just past the bookshop, and face the opposite side of the street.



Can you see this building? The picture itself is part of history, as it is no longer Square News.

Do you remember I told you that something happened in Nantwich, which did not happen after any of the other fires? The town was so important, that Queen Elizabeth I gave the people of Nantwich £1000 to help rebuild – and allowed them to collect money from other towns. The people of Nantwich were so grateful, that they put a plaque on this house which has a poem to say thank you. It's high up on the second floor, and printed on this sheet in case you cannot see it.



Can you read the poem out loud, all together?
Do you notice anything about the spelling? Why do you think this is?
Can you see any other words written on the building? What do they mean?
Was the building originally a house or a hotel?

Nantwich Museum



Now carry on walking, on the right hand side of Pillory Street, till you are opposite Nantwich Museum.



Look at the wooden structure. What do you think this was used for? It is called a pillory.

Can you reach up to put your hands through the holes?

What do you think it would be like, to be punished in a pillory?

Do you know about any other punishments from Tudor times?



Nicholas Brown (what did he do?) was put in the pillory as a punishment for burning down the town.

Do you think the people of Nantwich were cross with him?

What do you think they would throw at him?

Opposite you is Nantwich Museum. We look forward to welcoming you there soon. Inside, you can find out more about the Fire of Nantwich and the exciting and turbulent history of our town!



And finally....



Have a look at the maps below. **Map 1** shows where the fire started – Nicholas Brown's house! If you have time, see if you can use the map to find out where it was. Have the road names changed in the last 440 years?

 Map 2 shows how far the fire spread. If you want to explore further, see if you can follow the route of the flames from Nicholas Brown's house around the town. Don't get singed!

Map 1



Map 2

