

## **Resurgam: St Paul's Cathedral and the Phoenix**

St Paul's Cathedral is a famous sight on London's skyline.

Did you know that there has been a Cathedral in this part of London for over one thousand years?

The one we see today is actually the 5<sup>th</sup> version of St Paul's Cathedral.



So what happened to all the others? Well, over the hundreds and hundreds of years of history there have been disasters and difficulties that Londoners have had to deal with.

Every time something has happened that destroyed the Cathedral and other parts of the city, Londoners have worked together to pick themselves up, encourage each other and start all over again.

Being able to have the strength to hope and find new possibilities in the face of hardship is called **resilience**.

**The tale of St Paul's Cathedral is a story of resilience, a story of hope and a story of love.**



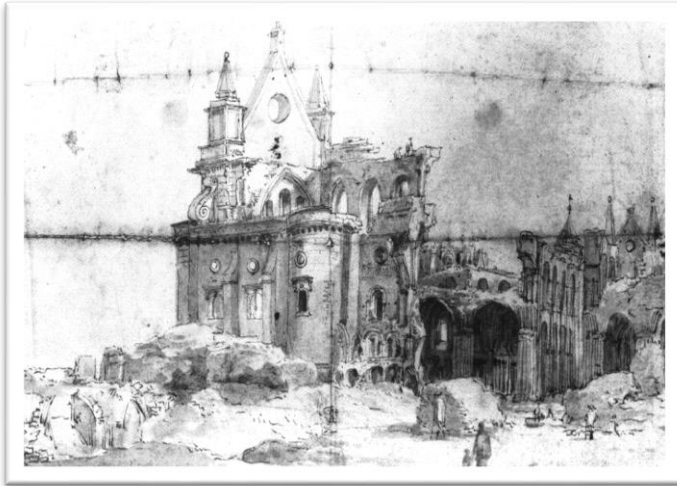
In 1666 the tragedy that struck London was the **Great Fire**. In less than a week, nearly the whole city was burnt down in a dreadful fire that had started in a little baker's shop. Hundreds of streets, many churches, markets and businesses were destroyed and even the old stone Cathedral, the biggest building in the whole city, burnt down to the ground.

Thousands of Londoners had run away to find safe places around the edge of the city, watching with despair as their homes went up in smoke.

**Can you imagine how the people might have felt?**

## Rebuilding St Paul's

That same week, the King realised he needed to act quickly to rescue London from this terrible state. He knew some very clever and thoughtful people who would be able to help.



**Sir Christopher Wren** was chosen to lead the team of designers and builders who could sort out the site of the Cathedral and rebuild the rest of the City of London.

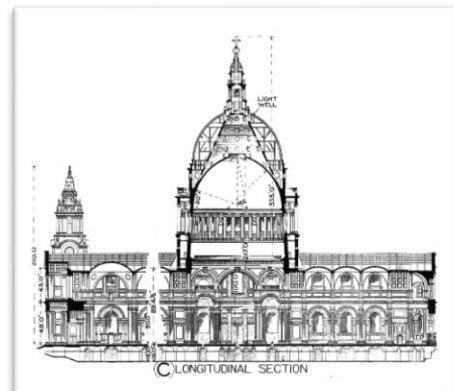
The King saw Sir Christopher Wren's plans and instructed that London should be brought out of this disaster as quickly as possible. Everyone worked together to clear away the burnt debris of the old city and find a way to start again.

At the place where the pre-fire Cathedral had been, Sir Christopher Wren was planning a new Cathedral. He said he wanted to make a strong, useful and beautiful building for the people.

**He wanted it to give them a feeling of hope that their city could rise to new life from the ashes of the disaster.**

There was to be a special feature for the top of the building that would have an important, hidden meaning. No one had ever built a roof like this before, in the whole of England. It was to be a **dome**.

For Wren, this dome would reach up to the sky, for everyone around the city to see. He believed that the Cathedral could be a place of hope and prayer and a community space of peace. His decorative designs inside the Cathedral were to display the beauty of nature and creation, and the circle shape of the dome would be like the never-ending, encircling love of God.



## The Phoenix



One day, when he was meeting his team on site, Sir Christopher instructed a workman to find a piece of stone to mark out the middle of the building. The man brought a broken old piece of a gravestone from a pile of rubble. As they placed it on the ground, they realised it had the word '**Resurgam**' written on it. This is from the Latin language and means '**I will rise again**'.

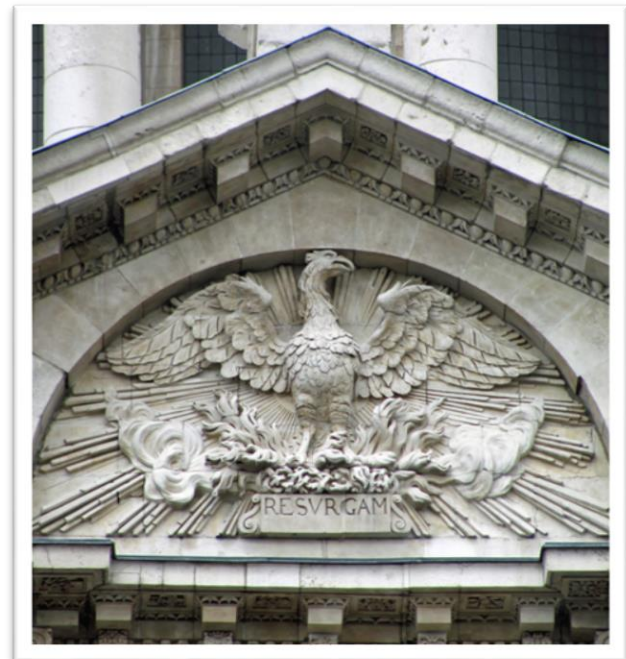
Sir Christopher thought about this for a while; it reminded him of an ancient mystical story about a special bird that would die down into a burning nest but then be born again from the flames, rising back to new life. This bird is a mythical creature, named in stories from cultures around the world. Perhaps you have heard of it? It is called a **Phoenix**.

As he saw the Londoners working hard together to rebuild their city and their Cathedral, Wren wanted to re-tell this story of resilience and renewal, to encourage everyone to keep going and to hold on to their hope for new life.

He asked a gifted, artistic stonemason to carve a beautiful picture of the Phoenix on the outside of the building. Anyone who went past would be able to see the strong, majestic and fearless bird rising from the flames. Perhaps it would help them to think of all the stories they knew about the history of London, where people of the city have needed to work together to bring new life and possibilities to the place where they live.

After 35 years of hard work, the Cathedral was finished, sitting right in the heart of the new city that had been rebuilt by the resilient people of London.

It is the same building that you will find there today, just over 350 years after the Great Fire. It is a strong and useful building, inviting the people of London to come and enjoy their special community meeting place. **And we hope that one day soon you will be able to come and visit, to find out about this unique Cathedral and to sit and experience its beauty.**





## Activity: Become an Architect

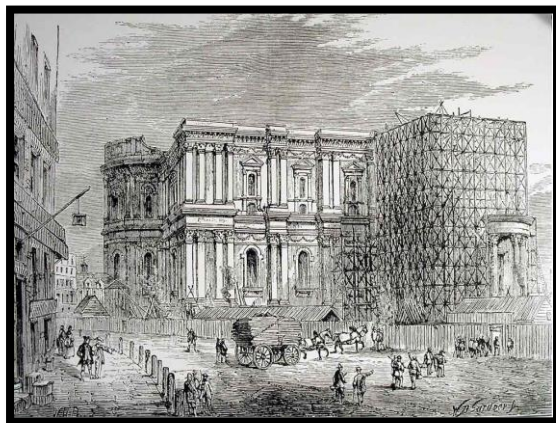
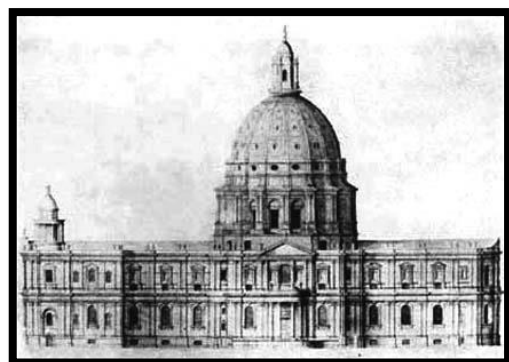
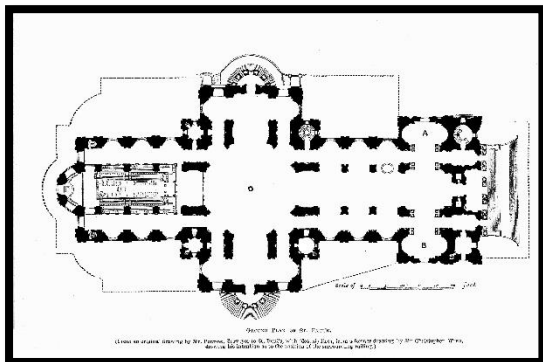
### Could you be a designer and architect like Sir Christopher Wren?

Have a look at the plans he drew and the ideas he had.

It took 35 years for his St Paul's Cathedral to be built.

Now it is your turn to imagine a special new building for London.

How big and tall will it be? What shape will it be? What will the people of London use it for?



**Do you think you could draw a picture or make a 3D model of your design?**

**Think about what you might need and ask your adult at home for:** empty boxes, cartons or bottles, coloured paper or card, pictures from old magazines, glue or tape, and scissors.

Have fun designing and building!

**Share a picture of your creation with us @stpaulsedu.**  
**We look forward to welcoming you to St Paul's Cathedral soon!**