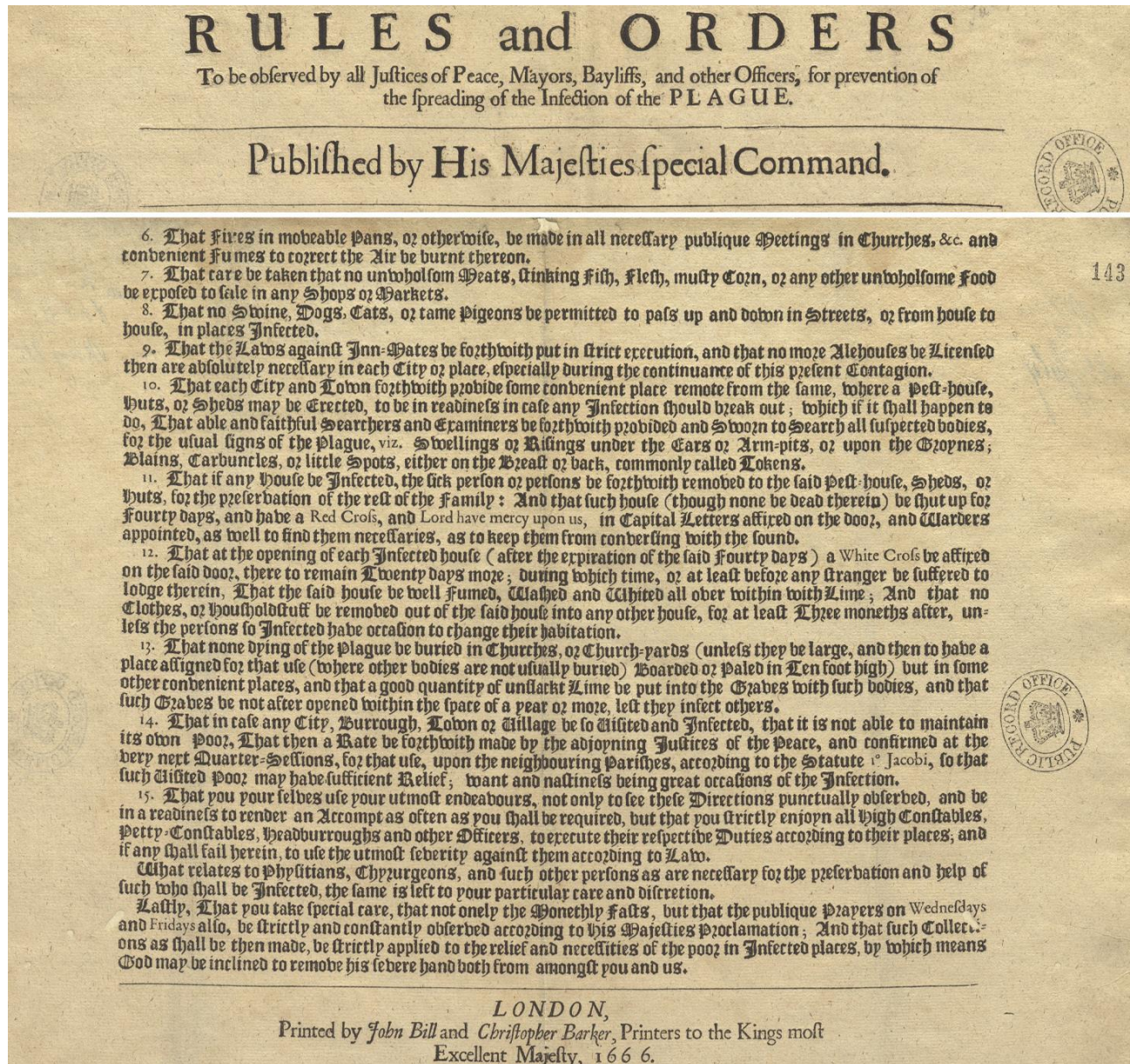


Source Two - Orders for the prevention of the plague 1666



These are the orders for the prevention of the plague, made by the King in 1666.

How do orders 6, 7 and 8 aim to prevent the plague?

How long were infected houses shut up for?

What plague symptoms are described in these orders?

Which order suggests that plague was not a new problem in the 17th century?

Do you think any of these orders would have helped to prevent plague? Give reasons for your answer

Which officials concerned with the plague are named in this source? Make a list

In what ways does the source suggest that people at the time saw the plague as a punishment from God?

These orders are very strict, yet most people followed them. Can you suggest why?

Transcript

RULES AND ORDERS

To be observed by all Justices of Peace, Mayors, Bayliffs, and other Officers,
for prevention of the spreading of the Infection of the PLAGUE.

Published by His Majesties Special Command. ..

[Orders 1-5 say that no stranger was allowed to enter a town unless they had a certificate of health. No furniture was to be removed from an infected house. There were to be no public gatherings such as funerals and all houses were to be kept clean.]

... ..

6. That Fires in moveable Pans, or otherwise, be made in all necessary publique [public] Meetings in Churches, &c. and convenient Fumes to correct the Air be burnt thereon.

7. That care be taken that no unwholsom Meats, stinking Fish, Flesh, musty Corn, or any other unwholesome Food be exposed to sale in any Shops or Markets.

8. That no Swine, Dogs, Cats or tame Pigeons be permitted to pass up and down in Streets, or from house to house, in places Infected.

9. That the Laws against Inn-Mates be forthwith put in strict execution, and that no more Alehouses be Licensed then are absolutely necessary in each City or place, especially during the continuance of this present Contagion.

10. That each City and Town forthwith provide some convenient place remote from the same, where a pest-house, huts, or sheds may be erected, to be in readiness in case any Infection should break out; which if it shall happen to do, That able and faithful Searchers and Examiners be forthwith provided and Sworn to Search all suspected bodies, for the usual signs of the plague, viz. Swellings or Risings under the Ears or Arm-pits, or upon the Groynes [groin]; Blains, Carbuncles, or little Spots, either on the Breast or back, commonly called Tokens.

11. That if any House be Infected, the sick person or persons be forthwith removed to the said pest-house, sheds, or huts, for the preservation of the rest of the Family: And that such house (though none be dead therein) be shut up for fourty days, and have a Red Cross, and Lord have mercy upon us, in Capital Letters affixed on the door, and Warders appointed, as well to find them necessaries, as to keep them from conversing with the sound.

12. That at the opening of each Infected house (after the expiration of the said Fourty Days) a White Cross be affixed on the said door, there to remain Twenty days more; during which time, or at least before any stranger be suffered to lodge therein, That the said house be well Fumed, Washed and Whited all over within with Lime; And that no Clothes, or Householdstuff be removed out of the said house into any other house, for at least Three months after, unless the persons so Infected have occasion to change their habitation.

13. That none dying of the Plague be buried in Churches, or Church-yards (unless they be large, and then to have a place assigned for that use (where other bodies are not usually buried) Boarded or Paled in Ten foot high) but in some other convenient places, and that a good quantity of unslakt Lime be put into the Graves with such bodies, and that such Graves be not after opened within the space of a year or more, less they infect others.

14. That in case any City, Burrough, Town or Village be so visited and Infected, that it is not able to maintain its own poor, That then a Rate be forthwith made by the adjoining Justices of the Peace, and confirmed at the very next Quarter Sessions, for that use, upon the neighbouring Parishes, according to the Statute 1 Jacobi [James 1], so that such visited poor may have sufficient Relief; want and nastiness being great occasions of the Infection.

15. That you your selves use your utmost endeavours, not only to see these Directions punctually observed, and be in a readiness to render an Accomt [Account] as often as you shall be required, but that you strictly enjoyn all high Constables, petty Constables, Headburroughs and other Officers, to execute their respective

Duties according to their places; and if any shall fail herein, to use the utmost severity against them according to Law.

What relates to Physitians, Chysurgeons, and such other persons as are necessary for the preservation and help of such who shall be Infected, the same is left to your particular care and direction.

Lastly, That you take special care, that not onely [only] the Monethly Fasts, but that the publique prayers on Wednesdays and Fridays also, be strictly and constantly observed according to his Majesties Proclamation; And that such Collections as shall be then made, be strictly applied to the relief and necessities of the poor in Infected places, by which means God may be inclined to remove his severe hand both from amongst you and us.

Glossary

affixed – attached

Alehouses – places where ale (beer) was sold

Bayliffs – bailiffs, officials who could enforce written orders issued by a court and carry out arrests

Blains – sores, blisters

Boarded or Paled – fenced

Burrough – any place larger than a village

Carbuncles – harmful tumours, caused by inflammation of the skin

Chysurgeons – surgeons

Contagion – epidemic

enjoyn – direct, order

expiration – end of the time limit

forthwith – immediately

habitation – place where people live

Headburroughs – officers with the same role as petty constables

herein – in this

high Constable – officer with duties and powers to keep the peace

Fumed – treated with fumes

Justice of the Peace – magistrate with the power to deal with lesser crimes, perform marriages and administer oaths

large – wealthy, important

pest-house – a plague hospital, there were five in London holding about 600 people

petty Constable – officer whose task was to keep the peace

Physitians – physicians, doctors

Proclamation – public announcement

Quarter Sessions – a local court of limited powers that sat every three months

Relief – public assistance, aid

render – give

Searchers – officials appointed to view dead bodies and report on the cause of death

unwholsom – unhealthy

viz.- that is

Warders – guards or watchers of the locked up houses