

Fire Courts.

Following the Great Fire of London, Parliament established a system of Fire Courts. They were overseen by 22 judges from the Kings Bench and met over the next 5 years, to settle all differences being debated between landlords and tenants of burnt buildings.

Any disputes were heard in the Courts and the Judges decided on fair outcomes. They came to speedy decisions about who was able to rebuild and who should pay for the new buildings. This of course pleased the surveyors in charge of reorganising the city and ensured that the city could be rebuilt as soon as possible.



Fire Court Judge Sir Hugh
Wyndham

Credit: Guildhall Art Gallery, City of London



Fire Court Judge's Table

Credit: Guildhall Art Gallery, City of London

The Act for the Rebuilding of the City of London was passed by Parliament in February 1667. It proposed that all new buildings had to be constructed of brick or stone against the future dangers of fire.

It imposed a maximum number of houses and storeys per house to prevent overcrowding. Some streets and lanes were widened and plans for the new halls, exchanges and public buildings were completed.

The ancient system of Guilds that regulated who could work in the City was reformed and a call was put out to 'all carpenters, bricklayers, masons, plasterers & joiners' to help with reconstruction.

This opened opportunities for workers to come from other parts of the country and Europe, bringing vibrant, multi-cultural influences to London.

As an example, the rebuilding of St Paul's benefitted from this specialist skillset; the French ironworker Jean Tijou was employed to produce the decorative metalwork and fences and the Dutch sculptor Grinling Gibbons worked on the stonework and woodcarving of the cathedral.