

Topic Page: [Pepys, Samuel \(1633 – 1703\)](#)

Summary Article: **Pepys, Samuel**

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(pēps), 1633–1703, English public official, and celebrated diarist, b. London, grad. Magdalene College, Cambridge, 1653. In 1656 he entered the service of a relative, Sir Edward Montagu (later earl of Sandwich), whose secretary he became in 1660. That same year he started as a clerk in the navy office and by 1668 he was an important naval official and owned a considerable estate. In 1672 he was made secretary to the admiralty. He sat in the Parliament of 1679, but he was charged with betraying naval secrets to the French in the same year. He was briefly imprisoned in the Tower but was vindicated and freed in 1680. In 1684 Pepys was reappointed secretary to the admiralty and was made president of the Royal Society. The accession of William III forced him into retirement, where he wrote his *Memoirs ... of the Royal Navy* (1690).

Pepys left his valuable library, including his diary in cipher, to his nephew John Jackson and in turn to Magdalene College, Cambridge. His diary was discovered there in 1728 and nearly a century later was partially deciphered and first published (1825). An almost full text was edited by H. B. Wheatley (10 vol., 1893–99), but a complete edition did not appear until after World War II. One of the most famous diaries of all time, an intimate record of the daily life and reflections of an ambitious, observing, and lusty young man, it extends from Jan. 1, 1660, to May 31, 1669, when failing eyesight forced him to stop writing. Pepys's diary gives a graphic picture of the social life and conditions of the early Restoration period, including eyewitness accounts of the great plague (1665) and the great fire of London (1666).

See the diary (new ed. by R. Latham and W. Matthews, 10 vol., 1970-83) and

the abridgment of the diary (ed. by Morshead, O. F. , 1960);

Pepys's letters (ed. by Heath, H. T. , 1955);

biography by C. Tomalin (2002);

studies by P. Hunt (1958), C. Emden (1963), O. A. Mendelsohn (1963), M. H. Nicolson (1965), I. E.

Taylor (1967), R. Barber (1972).

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