

In May 1665, when Charles II was king, there was an outbreak of plague in London. This was caused by a bacteria spread by the bites of fleas which had been carried to England on black rats.



Towards the end of August 1665, a parcel of cloth was sent from London to Eyam and delivered to a tailor called George Viccars. During its journey, the cloth had got damp and so was put in front of the fire to dry.





Just two days later, George developed a fever and swellings and rose-red rash covered his body. He died less than one week later on 7<sup>th</sup> September. Then Edward Cooper, a four year old living in the same house died on 22<sup>nd</sup> September.



Then the neighbours started to become ill.

Peter Hawksworth next door died on 23<sup>rd</sup> September. Thomas Thorpe from Rose Cottage on the other side died on 26<sup>th</sup> September and his daughter Mary on 30<sup>th</sup> September.

Other people died in houses across the road.



People began to get scared and a few of them packed up and left.

This included the Bradshaw family who lived at Bradshaw Hall. Their house is now a ruin.



Many others also wanted to flee but they were persuaded not to by the vicar, William Mompesson and his friend, Thomas Stanley.

They agreed to draw an imaginary circle about ½ mile around the village that none of them would go beyond.





William Mompesson wrote to the Earl of Devonshire at Chatsworth asking him to help the people of Eyam. Food and other supplies would be brought very early in the morning by people from nearby villages.

To make sure that the plague couldn't be passed on to them, the money would be left for them either in running water or in vinegar.



During the summer of 1666, when the plague was at its worst, and more people than ever were getting sick and dying, William Mompesson decided it wasn't safe for people to be together in an enclosed space like a church.

So he decided to gather people outdoors for the church services instead, in a deep valley called the Cucklett Delf.

Here they could sit on a grassy slope opposite the rock pulpit, at a safe distance from each other. William Mompesson would stand near the edge of the arch to say prayers and talk to the people.





William Mompesson's wife, Catherine died on 25th August 1666 - just before the plague ended.

Her grave can be found in the churchyard near the cross.



The last person to die, on 1st November 1666, was Abraham Morten – a farm worker in his late twenties. He was just one of 18 members of his family killed by the plague.

Estimates of the number of people killed by the plague vary but it was between 260 and 370 people; a much higher mortality rate than in London.

