

Samuel Pepys' Diary – January 1, 1660 (Abridged Version, Annotated)

This excerpt, based on Kenneth Branagh's narration of Samuel Pepys's diary, captures Pepys's opening entry for January 1, 1660 — the first day of the Restoration year. The left column presents the text as heard in the Branagh narration, while the right column offers historical and contextual notes.

Pepys's Diary (Branagh Version) Historical & Contextual Notes

Blessed be God, at the end of the last year I was in very good health, without any sense of my old pain but upon taking of cold.

Pepys opens with gratitude — a common 17th-century expression of piety. He refers to lingering pain from his 1658 kidney-stone operation, an event he celebrated each year thereafter.

I lived in Axe Yard, having my wife and servant Jane, and no more in family than us three.

Axe Yard was a modest street near Westminster, where Pepys lived with his wife Elizabeth and their maid Jane. His 'family' meant everyone residing under his roof.

The condition of the State was thus: viz the Rump of Parliament, after being disturbed by my Lord Lambert, was lately returned to sit again. The officers of the Army all forced to yield. Lawson lies still in the river, and Monk is with his army in Scotland.

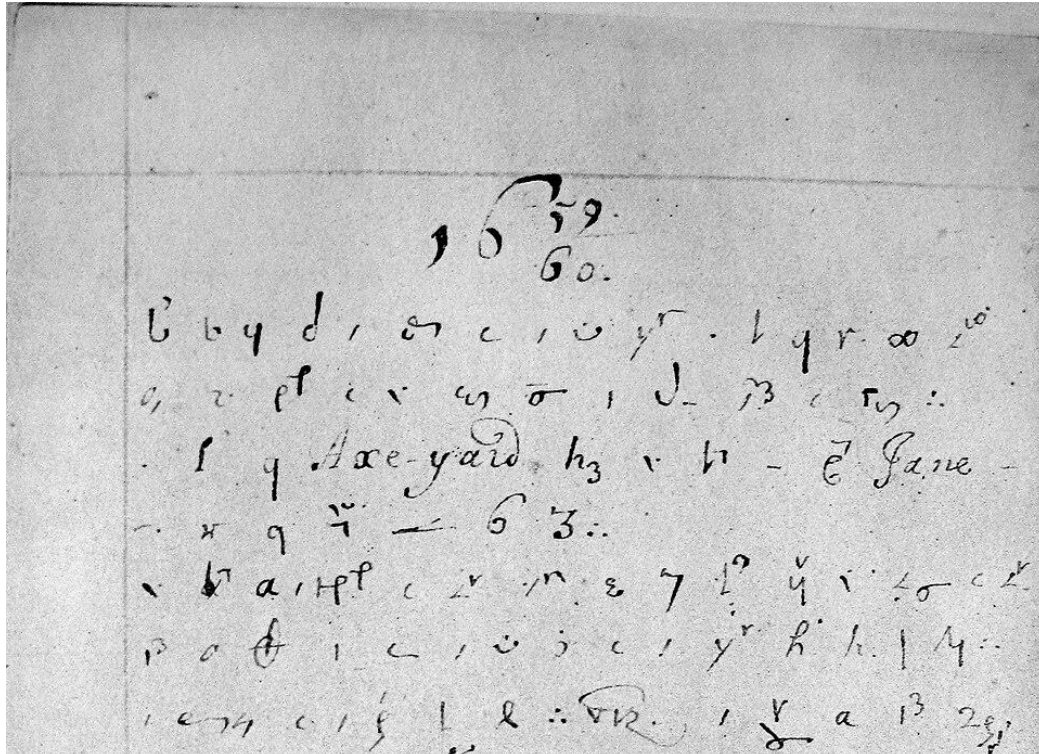
Pepys summarizes England's chaotic political situation. The 'Rump Parliament' (the remainder of the Long Parliament) had briefly been expelled by General John Lambert. Admiral Lawson's fleet waited on the Thames; General George Monk's army, in Scotland, was poised to intervene — actions that would soon restore Charles II.

The new Common Council of the City had sent Monk their sword-bearer to acquaint him with their desires for a free and full Parliament, which is at present the desires and the hopes and expectation of all.

London's new civic leaders appealed to General Monk for the restoration of a 'free and full Parliament' — code for ending military rule and returning to lawful monarchy. Pepys notes the growing national expectation of change.

My own private condition very handsome, and esteemed rich, but indeed very poor, besides my goods of my house and my office, which at present is somewhat uncertain — Mr. Downing, master of my office.

Pepys reflects wryly on his finances: outwardly prosperous, inwardly struggling. His reference to 'Mr. Downing' is to Sir George Downing, his superior and namesake of Downing Street. Pepys worked under him as clerk in the Exchequer and Secretary to the Council.



Sample of January 1st, 1660, entry, written in Shelton's Tachygraphy shorthand.