

## Evelyn and his Whale

Maybe you keep a diary, or maybe you know somebody who does. Diaries are useful as they tell us what has happened in the past.

John Evelyn lived near London and he kept a diary. On June 3rd 1658 he wrote in his diary about an event that took place near his home, which backed onto the River Thames.

John wrote that a large whale had come up the River Thames from the sea. Lots of people had flocked to see it, by water, horse, coach and on foot, from London and all around. It was first seen near Greenwich when the tide was out (low). The whale died on the shore and it was studied.

Here is what they learned about the whale:

It was 58 feet long. (That's about one and a half double-decker buses long!)

It was 16 feet high. (About three times as tall as a man)

It had black skin like leather.

It had very small eyes, a great tail, only two small fins and a peaked (pointed) snout.

It had a mouth so wide a man could have stood up in it.

It didn't have any teeth but sucked 'slime' through its 'whalebone' and a very narrow throat that could not have swallowed even a small fish.

The people were amazed that so huge an animal could live just by eating 'slime'. The slime is what we call plankton. Plankton lives in water. The Whale he described we now know as a Right Whale or a Black Whale and they are now very rare in our seas.

We do have Humpback Whales though, and they feed in the same way as John's whale. Here you can see some whales swimming in our seas:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=S5xzgUyIH0Y&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=S5xzgUyIH0Y&feature=emb_logo).

Whales do still occasionally come up the River Thames by accident, but sadly they usually die before they can get back to the sea.

We read about a big fish that swallowed Jonah in the Bible. Was it a whale? You can find out more here!

<https://answersingenesis.org/kids/bible-questions/did-a-whale-swallow-jonah/>

Why not see if you can draw a whale by drawing around your hand? See the Optional Resources for instructions!