

2<sup>nd</sup> August

Memory verse:

**The Lord is thy keeper:**

the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.

Psalm 121:5

This verse is a comfort to all Christians. No matter where we are or what happens to us the Lord is looking after us. Younger children can learn the words in bold.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1870 the world's first underground railway opened. It was certainly not a very long lived one! It was also not a locomotive hauled railway but rather one in which the passengers sat in a wooden car on rails which was pulled by cables from one end of the tunnel to the other. This was accessed by steam powered lifts at each end of the tunnel.

The railway in question was the The Tower Subway beneath the Thames in London.<sup>1</sup> You can see the old entrance tower in the picture.



If you did the lesson about Tower Bridge on 30<sup>th</sup> June you will remember that in the nineteenth century London's docks were growing. New docks opened at Rotherhithe on the south bank of the river and alongside them industrial and residential areas. The people who lived and worked there could not cross the river by bridge without going a considerable distance to London Bridge. London Bridge itself also became congested with traffic. The Tower subway was an attempt to address this issue by providing a way across that did not involve using one of the bridges. The tunnel is 410 metres long and was dug out of the London clay by means of a cast iron shield. The great engineer Brunel<sup>2</sup> had tunnelled under the Thames earlier but the Tower Tunnel was not only shorter but much smaller in diameter which made the job considerably easier. Despite this, however, the tunnel closed after only a few months of operation – the owners had gone bankrupt.

The Tower Tunnel then re-opened as a foot tunnel. Here is a description of walking through the Tower Tunnel; it does not sound a very pleasant experience!

...I disappeared from the world indeed, going down a lighted spiral staircase which buries itself in the earth on the right bank of the Thames, opposite the Tower. I went down and down between two dingy walls until I found myself at the round opening of the gigantic iron tube, which seems to undulate like a great intestine in the enormous belly of the river. The inside of this tube presents the appearance of a subterranean corridor, of which the end is invisible. It is lighted by a row of lights as far as you can see, which shed a veiled light, like sepulchral lamps; the atmosphere is foggy; you go along considerable stretches without meeting a soul; the walls sweat like those of an aqueduct; the floor moves under your feet like the deck of a vessel; the steps and voices of the people coming the other way give forth a cavernous sound, and are heard before you see the people, and they at a distance seem like great shadows; there is, in short, a sort of something mysterious, which without alarming causes in your heart a vague sense of disquiet. When then you have reached the middle and no longer see the end in either direction, and feel the silence of a catacomb, and know not how much farther you must go, and reflect that... over your head vessels are passing, and that if a crack

1 Permission sought from *Londonist* for picture 14/04/21 <https://londonist.com/london/secret/the-tower-subway-the-secret-thames-tunnel-that-s-150-years-old>

2 See lessons for 9<sup>th</sup> April and 23<sup>rd</sup> April.

should open in the wall you would not even have the time to recommend your soul to God, in that moment how lovely seems the sun! I believe I had come a good part of a mile when I reached the opposite opening on the left bank of the Thames; I went up a staircase, the mate of the other, and came out in front of the Tower of London.

From *Jottings about London* by Edmondo De Amicis (1846–1908)

When Tower Bridge was built, the Tower Tunnel was abandoned as a means of crossing the Thames. For many years it carried water pipes and electrical cables. During WW2 it was damaged but not breached by a bomb that fell in the Thames. Nowadays although there are pipes and cables inside the tunnel they are relics of the past, as far as I can find out, and not functioning. You can see what the inside of the tunnel looks like today in the picture on the right.<sup>3</sup>



### Something to think about

“...you would not even have the time to recommend your soul to God...” What does the writer mean by this expression? Can we “recommend our souls to God”? If so when should we do so? How does this relate to this week's memory verse?

### Something to make

In 6<sup>th</sup> of May's lesson about the Channel Tunnel there were suggestions for your own tunnel making activities which would also go well with today's lesson. Do them today if you did not do them in May or do them again if you enjoyed them! If you can find some large cardboard boxes, these would also make a good crawling tunnel if fixed together. Younger children just love crawling through a tunnel. Older ones might like to compete at crawling through without making the boxes move. An umpire would be needed to watch from the outside of the tunnel.

### Do some research

The story of Hannibal (c.247-183BC) and his elephants is told in detail in the lesson for 19<sup>th</sup> October. If you have done that lesson you will remember that Hannibal was the famous Carthaginian general who came near to defeating the Romans at the height of their power. In 216 B.C. Hannibal fought one of the most famous battles ever, the Battle of Cannae, on 2<sup>nd</sup> August and won a decisive victory.

Cannae is one of those names – like Blenheim, Austerlitz, Gettysburg, Ypres, Alamein – which have a permanent place in the history of warfare. It appears in modern military textbooks, and will probably go on appearing as long as men, and not missiles, fight battles. The theory of “double envelopment” which was the basis of the massive German offensive in 1914 – the Schlieffen plan – was based on tactics which Hannibal employed beside the Aufidus [Ofanto River] over 2000 years before. His battle plan was one of the simplest that he ever employed, but the result was as deadly as an atom bomb.

This quotation is from Leonard Cottrell's famous 1960 book about Hannibal, *Enemy of Rome*. Cottrell was a popular historian and journalist who had a gift for making the past come alive. He travelled in the steps of Hannibal before writing the book as well as doing much painstaking research. Do some research using your own encyclopaedias and find out who were the antagonists

<sup>3</sup> By kind permission of Matthew Williams by email 15/04/21.

at Blenheim, Austerlitz, Gettysburg, Ypres and Alamein. What were the dates of these battles? Use your Atlas to find out where Cannae is and locate the other battles as well. If you want to find out more about the topic of military tactics you could look up “double envelopment” or “pincer movement” and “the Schlieffen plan” in your own encyclopaedias. Older children may enjoy reading Cottrell's book – request it from the library.