

4th February

Memory verse:

Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

Luke 11:35

See the lesson for 30th January for information about this memory verse.

Map work and two true stories today, one about fire and one about water

Water Rescue!¹

Before you read the story find **Canvey Island, Foulness Island** and **Wallasea** in you atlas. If you look at an Ordinance Survey map you will see why the area needs flood defences.

Wednesday, February 4th 1953, was zero hour for two hundred cattle on what was then known as Ringwood Farm, on **Foulness Island**, in Essex.

For four days, ever since the walls that protected the low-lying island from the sea had been breached in one of the worst storms of the century, the animals had been isolated on a patch of ground in the churchyard slightly higher than the surrounding countryside. Up to their middles in water, hungry and too terrified to move, they stood huddled together in a waste of swirling, muddy water.

Local RSPCA inspectors had tried all the tricks they knew to coax the cattle to safety but the poor creatures were paralysed with terror. The men tried to tempt them by dropping quantities of hay on the water under their noses. They had tried this before on other farms and found that when the starving animals saw and smelt the food they would start to move and could then be led to safety. It was like dangling a carrot in front of a donkey. But at Ringwood farm even this trick failed.

What could the RSPCA men do? In desperation they jumped out of their boats, wading to their waists in the freezing water, and tried to drive the animals before them. They began to move, slowly, hesitantly, rolling their eyes in fear. Then one of the leaders took fright, reared up and plunged straight back into the middle of the other animals. Another attempt had failed, and, dodging the lumbering animals the Inspectors regained their boats and made their way back to the house.

That night a conference was held and it was proposed that, as it had proved impossible to save the animals, it would be kinder to have them slaughtered than leave them there to die of starvation and exposure.

The RSPCA officials pleaded for one more chance. They had a plan, but it would need the help of army DUKWs or “Ducks”, vehicles that could run on land and float in water.

When the army agreed to help, the RSPA man were given their last chance and after a couple of hours sleep they set off again at 4 'o clock in the morning.



Again they tried to tempt the cattle with hay, and again the animals would not budge. So one of the inspectors jumped into the water and with the help of some other men he managed to rope a couple

¹ Adapted from Owen, Evan, *What Happened Today?* Book 1 available on the *Mothers' Companion* flashdrive <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com/>

of bullocks.

The ropes were fastened to one of the Ducks, and slowly it began to pull the bullocks forward, slipping and sliding in the water. When they found that the ground was still there and that they would not sink, they walked more easily towards the raised roadway and safety. Behind them, one after another, came the rest of the 200 cattle, on their way to food and a safe resting place.

During those terrible days the RSPCA, with many helpers from the flooded farms, saved over ten thousand animals from starvation and drowning. Most of the animals had been rescued by Saturday night, with the final sixteen dairy cows leaving by barge on Sunday morning. 400 cattle, 14 calves, 28 horses, 72 sheep, 6 lambs, 3 pigs, 670 chickens, 100 ducks, 2 dogs, 10 rabbits, 4 budgerigars and the 16 dairy cows were rescued in total.

Bush Fire!²³

Before you do this exercise, find **Australia** on a globe or in an atlas. Locate the state of **Western Australia**. Find the City of **Perth** on the **Swan River**. If you have a very good map you will see **Forrestdale**⁴ a little to the south east of the city.



“Fourteen houses have been destroyed and another 3 damaged by a bush fire burning in Jarrah forests and farmland near the historical timber town of Dwellingup 70km south east of Perth, Western Australia,” said the news bulletins in Australia on Sunday, **February 4, 2007**. In the picture you can see the big Australian fire tenders taking on water near Forrestdale during the fire.

Have you heard about bush fires? Sometimes in the summer when there has been no rain for many weeks the trees and shrubs of the Australian bush get very dry. Then they will catch fire easily. Just a careless throwing away of a match or even the sun's rays concentrated through a piece of broken bottle will kindle a blaze that will quickly get out of control and burn for days. Once the fire gets a hold, buildings can be destroyed, homes lost and lives endangered. Tragic and frightening as bush fires are, they are not always altogether bad. Some Australian trees have seeds that will only germinate if they are first subjected to the intense heat of a bush fire. Scientists think that perhaps bush fires are a natural occurrence that are part of the life-cycle of the Australian bush. In the past controlled burning has been used to prevent the build up of under-brush that can spread fire. Nowadays conservation considerations prevent this and more bush fires may be the unintended result. However, whether or not that is the case, bush fires are certainly dangerous and destructive things as far as people and buildings are concerned.

In February 2007, at the height of the Australian summer, there was a very serious bush fire to the south-west of the Perth, the capital city of Western Australia. One of the sad things about this fire was that it was started deliberately. Just imagine lighting a tiny match and spreading such awful danger and destruction!

2 Information from Trinitarian Bible Society *Quarterly Record* 580 July/September 2007. Adapted from an exercise on Volume 6 of the *Mothers' Companion* flashdrive. Available from <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com/>

3 Most of Foulness is now inaccessible due to the MOD site. However, there is a museum about which you can download a leaflet here: <https://www.qinetiq.com/en/shoeburyness/conservation-and-archaeology/foulness-heritage-centre>

4 Named after John Forrest an early Australian pioneer.

It happens that in this area in **Forrestdale** is a very special college, the Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship Bible College of Western Australia. The college aims to train pastors, evangelist, teachers and Christian leaders to help all the churches in Western Australia and most of the students are aboriginal people. At the college they study the Bible and they always use the Authorised Version translation when working in English because as an officer of the Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship explained, “many of our aboriginal people... find it to be the best translation to read and from which to memorise Scripture.” In their holidays the students from the college often go on field trips to remote areas of the state distributing Bibles among their people. At the time of the fire the college had just put up a new lecture and administration block so that up to seventy students could study together and also to give space for evening classes for aboriginal people from the local churches.

Once the fire began to rage in the Forrestdale area people had to be evacuated for safety and that included everyone in the Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship Bible College. As the flames raced towards the buildings the college staff and students watched from a safe distance. How they prayed that God would spare their college, its new buildings which had cost so much money, its precious books and no doubt Bibles ready for distribution among the aboriginal people! Alas, the flames went straight through the whole college property and nothing could possibly survive that raging fire. The students and teachers were so sad. Couldn't God have turned the fire away from the college? “Not our will but thy will be done,” they prayed with heavy hearts.

The next day when the fire was spent they were able to return to see what was left of their dear college. Imagine how their sorrow was turned to joy when they discovered that not one building, not one vehicle, not one piece of equipment was damaged! Even the grass on the college lawns was still green and the garden flowers full of colour although all around there were burnt trees. God had answered all their prayers, he had been with them in the fire just as he was with Shadrach, Mishach and Abed-nego all those years ago.

Vocabulary work:

join each word to its meaning in the passage

| | |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| bush | strengthened by being pulled together |
| concentrated | sent or taken away |
| endangered | office work |
| germinate | wild countryside |
| aboriginal | come to life |
| administration | native of a particular place |
| evacuated | put in peril |

Imagine you are one of the students. Write two contrasting paragraphs the first describing the day of the fire and the second describing the next day. You could illustrate your paragraphs with a drawing.

Do you know the story of Shadrach, Mishach and Abed-nego? You can read it in Daniel chapter 3.