

First True Stories

Hereward the Watchful



Written by Christina Eastwood

Hereward the Watchful

Hereward the Wake, who is often called Hereward the Watchful, lived at the time of the Battle of Hastings. A Norman called William the Conqueror had invaded England, defeated the King at that time whose name was Harold and made himself King instead. Hereward the watchful, like a lot of other people, did not like the Normans ruling the country.

He made a plan to try and stop the Norman King from conquering his land. Just like Alfred the Great, he chose an area of Marshland to defend from the King. Marshland was easier to defend as it was harder for the enemy to get across it to attack you. He chose the Isle of Ely (pronounced Eely).

You can find Ely on a map. Nowadays it is

not an island as the water has been drained away and it is now good land that can be built upon. The Isle of Ely was a good place to live. A man living at that time wrote about it. He said that it had good rich soil where lots of grass grew. This made it good for cows and sheep to graze. In the water around it there were plenty of eels (which is where the isle got its name from) which could be caught with nets, and other large fishes. There were also lots of birds, like herons, ducks and geese.

It was on **June 2nd**, 1070, four years after the Battle of Hastings, that Hereward the Wake and his men burned down the Abbey at Peterborough. If you look at your map again, you will see that Peterborough is not that far from Ely. They arrived at the abbey early in the morning in their many ships and tried to enter the abbey, but the monks would not let them. So Hereward and his men set fire to it and burned all the monk's

houses and all the houses in the town except one. They ignored the monk's cries to stop. Hereward and his men then carried away all of the treasures of the monastery, books, gold, silver, money and ornaments and said they were keeping it safe from the Normans. When nothing was left that was valuable, they returned to the Isle of Ely in their ships.

You can imagine that William the Conqueror was not pleased when he heard what had happened. He wanted to be rid of Hereward. And so, in 1067 he and his men went to the Isle of Ely and started to try and make a track (called a causeway) through the water, across the marsh to the isle. William set a witch in a tower to shout curses at Hereward and his men. Hereward burned them all down, witch and all. At last the monks who lived on the Isle of Ely began to get worried that when William did get across he would be very angry and

want revenge (their own back). So the monks showed William's men how to get onto the island. Now, Hereward and his men had to flee. Hereward had failed and England continued to be under the cruel rule of the Normans.



Ely in modern days - a beautiful place

Can you find Ely on a map?

Things to do:

Once you have read this book, you can find more activities in the lesson that accompanies this book in the lesson for the 2nd June on the Christian Home Education Website:

<https://christianhomeeducation.weebly.com/june.html>

