

6th January

Memory verse:

Therefore **if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.** 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Map work and a tale

Get out your atlas and see if you can find the **Isle of Axholme** in Lincolnshire. Don't look for it in the sea off the Lincolnshire coast because this "isle" is inland! The Isle of Axholme was surrounded by rivers, water and marsh until the seventeenth century when the Dutch engineer Cornelius Vermuyden (1595–677) drained the marshes. As well as plenty of interesting history, the isle has its own special tale that dates back all the way to the middle ages. It goes like this:



In the 14th century, long before the drainage of the marsh, much of the Isle was owned by John De Mowbray. Lady de Mowbray, his wife, was out riding one day towards **Westwoodside** on the hill that separates it from **Haxey**.¹ If you are able to look at the contour lines on a map you will see that it is only a very little hill. But in that flat part of the country it is just the place for a windmill as you can see from the picture above. Can you see the sign for a windmill on the OS map? Look at the numbers on the contour lines. How many metres above sea level is the top of the hill?

As Lady Mowbray rode over the little hill her silk riding hood blew away in the wind. Working in the field nearby were thirteen farm labourers. They rushed to help their lady and chased the hood all over the field. It was finally caught by one of them, but being too shy to hand it back to such a great personage, he gave it to one of the others to hand back to her. Lady Mowbray thanked the labourer who had returned the hood and said that he had acted like a Lord, whereas the shy labourer who had actually caught the hood she rather unkindly called a Fool. So amused was she by this act of chivalry and the resulting chase, that she donated 13 acres (just over 5 modern hectares) of land on condition that the chase for the hood would be re-enacted each year.

And they did. In fact they still do! The re-enactment over the centuries has become known as "The Haxey Hood" and it still takes place on January 6th every year. Villagers dress up as the medieval Lord, the Fool and twelve "Boggins" representing the farm labourers. In a huge game rather like rugby they form a scrum (they call it a "sway") and compete for possession of a leather tube representing the original hood instead of a ball!

The proceedings begin with a speech by the Fool which always ends with the mysterious words:

Hoose agen hoose,
toon agen toon,
if a man meets a man knock 'im doon,
but doan't 'ot 'im.

Can you translate them?²

Play a wide game

Have you ever played a wide game? These are games that, like the Haxey Hood game, are played on a wide field, park or campsite generally involving two teams.³

¹ Look on an Ordnance Survey map if you can. They are available here: <https://www.bing.com/maps/>

² House against house, town against town, if a man meets a man, knock him down but don't hurt him.

³ <https://youthgroupgames.com.au/category/wide/>

This is how Baden Powell describes how to play Flag Raiding or Capture the Flag in his book *Scouting for Boys*.

This game is for two patrols, or a larger number divided into two parts, each under one Patrol-leader. Three flags (signalling flags will do) are posted within a given tract of country at about 20 yards apart. It rests upon the judgment of the leader of the defending party to choose the spot. He then posts his patrol not less than 200 yards from the flags, and the game begins.

The attackers send out Scouts to discover (1) where the flags are, (2) where the outpost is placed. They then try and reach the flags and carry them off without being seen by the outpost. One Scout may not take away more than one flag. The defending patrol may not come within the 200 yards of the flags, and to capture one of the raiders they must have at least two Scouts within 10 yards of him, and call out "hands-up."

At a signal given by one of the Patrol-leaders or an umpire, to show that time is up, all must stand up in their places, to see how near the raiders are, and the exact position of the outpost. It is a great point for the Patrol Leaders to keep their own patrols in touch.

If they like the attackers can arrange a false alarm on one side, while a single Scout makes for the flags from the opposite direction and secures one.

At night lanterns can be substituted for flags.

A simpler variant is often used nowadays and can be great fun if there are a group of you such as a home education group or outing. If there are fewer of you available, adults can join in and the game can be adapted to be a little less "wide".

- Find an open area. The bigger the better, and obstacles such as trees, bushes, and large rocks help make the game more fun.
- You also need flags (one per team). Each flag should be about the same size and brightly coloured.
- Anything such as items of clothing or even beanbags will do.
- You need to divide the players into teams. You must have at least two teams but if there are a lot of you you can have four. A good number of adult "umpires" can be useful.
- Now you need to divide the playing area into equal-sized territories, one for each team. You can use chalk, cones, tape, or landmarks such as trees to mark boundaries and make sure each player understands the lay of the land.
- Next place one flag into each territory. This can be done by a representative from each team or by the "umpires". The flag can be mostly hidden, but some part of it must be visible. Once it's placed, the flag can't be moved by its home team.
- All players must begin at a neutral location on the edge of the playing area. When the game begins, players try to cross into opposing teams' territories to grab their flags. Some teams might strategise beforehand and designate some players as seekers (who aim to grab the opposition's flag(s)) and others as guards (who will protect their own flag).
- Some organisers of this game include a rule that players must not be within a certain distance of their own flag e.g. arm's length or a specified number of paces unless an opponent is present. This prevents teams guarding their flags too closely.
- When a player is in an opposing team's territory, they can be "captured" i.e. tagged by that team's players. If a player is tagged, he must perform a task (decided on before the game begins) such as three push-ups or running round the boundary of their territory before returning to their own territory. In some versions of the game, captured players are sent to "jail" and must be tagged by a teammate to be freed. This is a less good option on a cold day

as it is better to keep moving rather than stand around in “jail” !

- Players are safe and can't be captured when they cross back to their own team's territory.
- The game ends when one team has successfully grabbed the flag(s) from the other team or teams and returned to their own territory. If you have more than two teams, you must decide how the winner will be determined. Must one team gather all other team flags or just a majority?

A hymn to sing



John Fawcett (1740-1817), was born into a poor family on 6th January. He was an orphan by the time he was twelve and apprenticed to a tailor. This remarkable preacher, author and poet was completely self-educated, studying by the light of a candle at night. It was the preaching of George Whitefield⁴ that led to his conversion at the age of 16 and it was not long after this that he began preaching himself.

If you look at this picture of him you will notice that he is sitting beside a bookcase crammed and “double parked” with books. On the spine of two volumes you can see the words *Devotional Family Bible*. This is one of several books Fawcett wrote himself. It was popular in his lifetime and I would love to see what it contained.

According to one description he followed each expository section with a paragraph of “aspirations” to guide the feelings of his readers. Sadly the book seems to be very rare nowadays and no one has reprinted it.



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As a pastor John Fawcett will always be associated with the Yorkshire town of Hebden Bridge which you can see in the picture above. First at Wainsgate chapel and then at later at Ebenezer Chapel he laboured steadily and God blessed his ministry, enabling him to build up a thriving congregation in the town. When he first arrived the people at Wainsgate were “...all farmers and shepherds, poor as Job’s turkey;⁵ an uncouth lot whose speech one could hardly understand, unable to read or write; most of them pagans cursed with vice and ignorance and wild tempers. The Established Church had never touched them; only the humble Baptists had sent an itinerant preacher there and he had made a good beginning...”⁶ Fawcett helped the people in the baptist churches understand the urgent need for evangelism. He could see that they had let this important work lapse

4 See the lessons for 1st July and 8th February for more on George Whitefield.

5 This American expression alludes to the fact that even farm animals suffer if their owner is poor.

6 Albert Bailey quoted in <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-blest-be-the-tie-that-binds>.

and it was this important emphasis of his preaching that was so valuable in Hebden Bridge and elsewhere.

Perhaps because of his own difficulties as a youngster John Fawcett was very concerned to help young men train to be preachers. He also ran a school where poor children could be taught to read. At the time there was a great deal of poverty in the north of England. Fawcett himself was poor because his congregation could not afford to pay him more than a very small salary. Many of the best preachers in this part of the country had similar backgrounds to Fawcett's and their humble dress and manner of speech caused them to be looked down upon – sometimes even by their fellow believers from other parts of the country. Fawcett himself was aware of this and wrote in the preface to his *Hymns Adapted to the Circumstances of Public Worship and Private Devotion*:

I blush to think of these plain verses falling into the hands of persons of an elevated genius, and refined taste. To such, I know, they will appear flat, dull and unentertaining.... If it may be conducive, under divine blessing to warm the heart or assist the devotion of any humble Christian in the closet, the family or the house of God, I shall therein sincerely rejoice, whatever censure I may incur from the polite world.

Soon John Fawcett's powerful preaching became known more widely in the country. He was invited to London to preach at Dr Gill's chapel in Southwark⁷ on behalf of Dr Gill who had become too ill to preach. Here he made such an impression that he was asked to succeed Dr Gill as pastor. John Fawcett accepted this invitation. He told his congregation of his decision and they were very sad to think of his leaving them. The day came for him to leave Hebden Bridge. His few possessions were packed up and ready for the move to London. But his heart was heavy. How could he leave his dear friends who needed him? They gathered round in tears, frankly imploring him not to leave them.

He could not do it. He stayed at Hebden Bridge. The cart was unloaded and letter of explanation was written to the Chapel in Southwark. It is thought that out of this experience came the hymn "Blest be the tie that binds."

Blest be the tie that binds
our hearts in Christian love;
the fellowship of kindred minds
is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne
we pour our ardent prayers;
our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
our comforts and our cares.

We share our mutual woes,
our mutual burdens bear,
and often for each other flows
the sympathizing tear.

When for a while we part,
this thought shall soothe our pain;
that we shall still be joined in heart,
and hope to meet again.

⁷ Later became New Park Street and then the Metropolitan Tabernacle as it is today.

This glorious hope revives
our courage by the way;
while each in expectation lives
and waits to see the day.

From sorrow, toil, and pain,
and sin, we shall be free;
and perfect love and friendship reign
through all eternity.

This comforting hymn became very popular on both sides of the Atlantic. The story of the tune to which it is usually sung nowadays is also interesting. Lowell Mason (1792-1872) was a pioneer of European style musical education in America.⁸ He was convinced that everyone can and should learn to sing and he conducted choirs, wrote music and taught children to sing despite his own very humble background, which is reminiscent of John Fawcett's. A fellow pioneer of general musical education in Switzerland was Johann Georg Nageli (1773-1836). The two men had similar aims and objectives and when Nageli died Mason acquired many of his manuscripts. These included many hymn tunes and one of them "Dennis" was selected by Mason for use with "Blest be the tie that binds" which has been used for these words ever since both in England and America.

Today's Optional Resources files include the music score and a piano version to help you learn the tune if you do not know it already. For more about Hebden Bridge see the lesson for 9th April.

8 See the lesson for 26th September for the story of his more talented predecessor William Billings.