

8th January

Memory verse

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

See the lesson for 3rd January for information on this verse.

Something to read about archaeology¹



The City of London goes back to Roman times and perhaps before but, of course much of the Roman remains have been underneath other buildings for hundreds of years. Whenever a building in the City is demolished there is a scramble to do as much archaeological excavation as possible on the site before the constructors come along and put a new building on top again. When Bucklersbury House was demolished in 2010 to make way for the new Bloomberg Building (pictured left) there was great excitement for when Bucklersbury House was constructed after the war to replace badly bomb-damaged

shops, a Roman temple was discovered. However, at that time, all that could be done was to remove the entire remains, placing valuable artefacts on display at the London Museum and moving the outlines of the buildings to an open air site nearby. It was assumed that this would have destroyed anything else that might have been there leaving the most recent excavation with nothing to find.

But there was something that had escaped the attention of the earlier excavators: a hoard of writing tablets, the type that consist of (often a pair of) wooden boards with one surface covered in black wax. With the aid of a stylus, writing can be scratched into the wax. The tablets had cursive² Latin writing on them and one of them, dated 8th January 57AD is the oldest financial document from the City of London – still a financial centre today. A few years later the city would be destroyed by Boudica.

One of the tablets mentions the Roman name for London predating what was previously thought to be the first mention of the name (by the historian Tacitus in his *Annals*) by fifty years. There are lists of residents in the city including slaves, merchants, soldiers and politicians. A Gaulish nobleman Julius Classicus is mentioned who is known from other sources to have joined in a revolt in 69AD.

The tablets had been preserved in the mud of the (now underground) River Walbrook. Although the wax no longer remained on the tablets, special imaging techniques revealed the writing where faint marks were visible on the wood itself.

Something to do

You can use the same technique to do some drawing or writing yourself. There are instructions in the lesson for 18th July. If you did that lesson last year you could adapt it now for writing rather than drawing. Your memory verse would be an ideal thing to scratch into your art work.³

1 Image of Bloomberg Building By The wub - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=90127100> Information from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhm-n09PGEI> and other sources.

2 Flowing or joined up writing. Can you do cursive writing? It is very valuable as it can be written more quickly than writing that is not joined – when you have practised it a lot that is!

3 There are also instructions to be found here: <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/members-area/kids/roman-england/make-your-own-roman-tabula/> this version uses Plasticine rather than wax. A method using melted wax can be found here: <https://quatr.us/romans/make-wax-tablet-ancient-greece-project.htm>

A letter to read – and to write

Later on this year we will be looking at the work of the evangelist George Whitefield. 1739. The Welsh evangelist Howell Harris (1714-1773) heard about the work that God was doing through Whitefield and he rejoiced. Then to his joy he got a letter from Whitefield himself. How encouraged he was! And how pleased to be able to reply with details of the work that was going on in Wales. He wrote back on **January 8th** 1739.

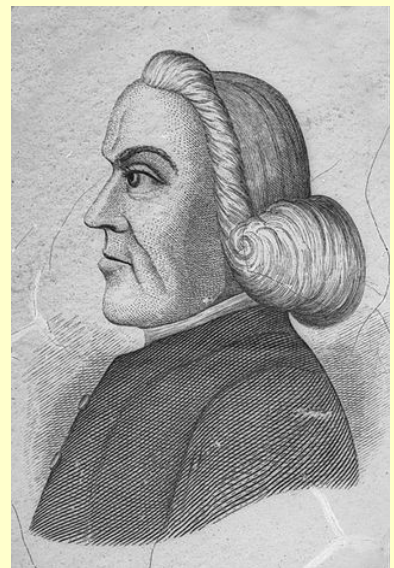
GLAMORGAN,
Jan. 8th, 1739.

DEAR BROTHER,

—I was most agreeably surprised, last night, by a letter from you of the 20th past... Though this is the first time of our correspondence, yet, I can assure you, I am no stranger to you . When I first heard of you and your labours and success, my soul was united to you, and engaged to send addresses to heaven on your behalf... I little thought our good Lord and Master intended I should ever see your handwriting. I hope we shall be taught more and more to admire the wonderful goodness of God in His acts of free grace; sure no person is under such obligations to advance the glory of His free goodness and grace as this poor prodigal. But, alas, how little sense have I in my soul of all His wonderful blessings! Pray for me, that I may find my heart more drawn out in love and praise to Him. Oh , how ravishing is it to hear of such demonstrations of the divine love and favour to London; and, to make your joy greater still, I have some more good news to send you from Wales. There is a great revival in Cardiganshire, through one Mr. D. Rowlands, a church clergyman; and he has been much owned and blessed in Carmarthenshire also. We have also a sweet prospect in Breconshire, and part of Monmouthshire; and in this county where I am now the revival prospers; there is also here a young dissenting minister of much use, who also is a man of universal charity. There is such another in Montgomeryshire. I have been twice there, and there seems to be some shining beams of the gospel of grace. There are two or three young curates in Glamorganshire (where now I am) that are well wishers to religion; and we have one exceeding sweet and valuable man with us in Breconshire; but enemies are many and powerful; therefore I beg the help of your prayers, and the prayers of all your brethren, that God would stand up for His cause and interest against all His visible and invisible enemies...

Oh ! that we could do more for so loving a Master , that His very enemies, by seeing our innocent behaviour and fruitfulness and love , etc. , may be brought to glorify the Redeemer and to think well of His ways , etc. I am in a great hurry, as I am called away to discourse now quickly, yet I could not drop this opportunity without obliging you, and were you to come to Wales, I hope it would not be labour in vain; but I leave this to Him that knows best how to dispose of us. I hope the faithful account I have given you of the benefit I have received from you will excite you to send again a line to him that would be sincerely

Yours in Christ Jesus H[owell]. H[harris].



Howell Harris style of writing is not one we would use today. Do you understand what he is saying? If you find it difficult, ask a grown up to help you and write a “translation”. Is it hard to understand because he uses words we do not usually use or is it difficult because he says things we would not usually say these days?

Howell Harris was obviously most encouraged to get the letter for Whitefield. Is there someone you could encourage or help by writing a short letter?

Some research to do

Today is the anniversary of the death in 1956 of missionaries Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Peter Fleming, and Roger Youderian. You may have some missionary books at home – or perhaps in your church library – which you could use to find out about what happened on that day in Ecuador. When you have found out the story, consider how what happened relates to today's memory verse.