

10<sup>th</sup> July

### Memory Verse:

**If God be for us, who can be against us?** He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Romans 8:31b-32

### Watching the weather

Are you keeping a weather chart? What is the weather like today? Oscar Alan Denton had the job of keeping a weather chart for the United States Weather Bureau and on **10<sup>th</sup> July** 1913 he made a record breaking entry on his chart.

July is a hot months sometimes:

*Hot July brings cooling showers,  
Strawberries and Gilly Flowers.*

says Sara Coleridge in her pretty rhyme, "Months". However these lines apply to weather in Britain and Mr Denton was in Death Valley, California, one of the hottest places on earth. No strawberries or cooling showers for him!



I would be very surprised if you looked at the thermometer today and discovered it stood at almost 57°C or 134°F. That would be extremely hot! It is, in fact, the hottest temperature ever recorded on earth and it was the entry Mr Denton made on his chart. That is, it was the highest *recorded* temperature but, of course, that does not mean there have never *been* hotter temperatures. The further back in history we go the less likely there is to be a record of a temperature measurement and there are plenty of places, even today where no one is taking any readings.

The measurement made that day was recorded at a place called Furnace Creek. It is 58 metres below sea level and the wather station there was established in cooperation with the U.S. Weather Bureau. Caretaker and foreman, Oscar Alan Denton, endured a week of extreme heat in July 1913. He recorded daily temperatures that were not far off 53°C. Then on 10 July, Mr Denton went out to read the temperature as usual. He reported later:

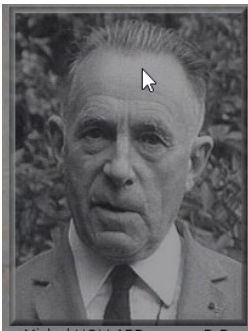
It was so hot that swallows in full flight fell to the Earth dead. When I went out to read the thermometer with a wet Turkish towel on my head, it was dry before I returned.

He recorded 134 degrees Fahrenheit (56.7 degrees Celsius), the highest recorded temperature on Earth. Denton's reading was surpassed by a 1922 report from Libya, but this was discounted as an error by an investigation held in 2012 which questioned the accuracy of the equipment and the skill of the observer.

If you have a weather chart and can add the temperature this is excellent. If you have a suitable thermometer, you need to put it in a good place to get the most accurate reading. This should be somewhere that does not get direct sunlight but is not in complete shade. Shade will give a lower reading and direct sunlight a higher one. Keep your weather records carefully and be as accurate as

you can if you use a thermometer. Who knows? Your records might prove very interesting in the future.

### A story to read from World War Two<sup>1</sup>



Today is the anniversary of the birth of Michel Hollard<sup>2</sup> DSO (1898 – 1993) sometimes described as “the man who saved London”.<sup>3</sup>

Do you look out for those round blue plaques on buildings that mark where someone famous was born or lived? As far as I know there is no blue plaque to Michel Hollard. But if you ever walk down Grove Road, Mile End in London's Tower Hamlets, take a careful look at the graffiti-covered railway bridge that crosses the road. If you search carefully you will find *it* carries a blue plaque marking the spot where in 1944 the first flying bomb or V1 fell on England.

The flying bomb was one of the most devastating weapons developed by the Germans and used against civilian populations in the Second World War. The one that fell on that railway bridge in Mile End killed six people and damaged many houses as well as the important London to Liverpool railway line.

At one point the Germans were firing over 100 a day of these terrifying missiles at the South East of England and well over 9000 were fired in all. My mother remembers sheltering in an air-raid shelter in South East London at this period and listening to the sound of a V1, or doodlebug, as they were called passing over. All the while you could hear the engine you were safe. As soon as that sound stopped you knew that the missile's engine had cut and it was about to fall – somewhere else you hoped. Charles Fraser Smith recalled: “I remember one falling within a third of a mile of me, killing a hundred people and shattering thousands of windows.”<sup>4</sup>

The German's had intended to fire 50,000 V1s. But something happened to stop them. Britain's Bomber Command was able to destroy many of the launch sites of these weapons thanks to information provided by secret agents, especially Michel Hollard and his team. Most agents worked as a network and used radio to receive and pass messages. Hollard was different. He gathered together a group that was completely unconnected with the official network in order to decrease the danger, were he to be discovered, of implicating others. They never passed information by radio or telephone, often relying on simple signals such as a barn door being left open to indicate that the Swiss border was clear of German patrols.

Michel Hollard worked in Dijon about 100 miles from the border with Switzerland. His job was to buy timber for a French company from suppliers all over the place and he had to do a lot of travelling, generally by train. He found a way of crossing the border secretly into Switzerland. Once in Switzerland, he could send documents and photographs to the British military attaché. He found out much useful information and sent it on in this way. Then in 1943 he heard about something new that the Germans were building about 30 miles inland from the French coast. He decided to go himself and take a look.

Michel Hollard was a Christian and a descendant of an old Huguenot<sup>5</sup> family, the Monods. What better then, than to “become” a Protestant Welfare Worker and, armed with a case full of Bibles and Christian books dealing with moral issues, he asked if he could go and distribute them on the site in

1 Information from Charles Fraser-Smith, *Men of Faith* (Carlisle, 1986) and other sources.

2 Permission for image sought by email from <https://www.jean-maridor.org> 20/10/2022.

3 Lieutenant-General Sir Brian Gwynne Horrocks, KCB, KBE, DSO, MC gave him this title.

4 Charles Fraser-Smith, *Men of Faith* (Carlisle, 1986) p.31.

5 For information about the Huguenots see the lesson for 23<sup>rd</sup> August.

question. The officials thought this would be a good idea: the men on the site were cut off from their families and exposed to all the moral dangers this poses and a pastor with such literature would be just what was needed.

Once inside the site, Hollard managed to change places with one of the workmen. He soon found that the Germans were installing big launching ramps pointing towards London and other targets. Using a special miniature camera supplied by the British he was able to pass information via Switzerland. Photos and information were hidden in special hollowed out shaving brush handles or dummy batteries to reach their destination undiscovered. Now Hollard could only wait. What use would be made of his information?

While Hollard waited anxiously, the photos he sent were studied in enormous detail in Britain. Models of the site were constructed to help train pilots. The site was small so pinpoint accuracy was needed. Forty-eight mosquito planes, flying very low to avoid the enemy radar were able to completely destroy the launch site by bombing. At high speed they returned home successful. Michel Hollard was personally able to inspect the damage and report back.

But this was not enough. Hollard and some friends, using just bicycles, went on to map the details of almost 100 launch sites before Hollard was finally betrayed and captured by the Germans. The German's tortured him, hoping to get information about others. "God gave me wonderful deliverance in tiring them before me," was all he would say of this experience. He was later forced to work in a German factory making machine gun parts. Many of the machine guns that passed through his hands went out with key parts missing as he removed them and disposed of them at great personal risk.

As the end of the war loomed, the Germans decided to get rid of prisoners by packing them into old ships that were set adrift in the North Sea with engines running and no crew. The idea was that allied aircraft would challenge the vessels and they would be unable to reply and so would be bombed. This actually happened to two such ships. When Hollard realised what was happening he was in the dark and appalling conditions of the German ship *Thilboek* along with many other prisoners. Raising his voice as high as he could to enable the other prisoners to hear him he said:

My friends, our turn has come to set out. We are all afraid. This is the moment to show what sort of men we are. Some of us are believers, or claim to be. Christ said, "When two or three or more are gathered together in my name there shall I be, and they shall not call on me in vain." We shall now make a chain with our hands and I will pray for help....

Oh, God, come to our aid. Whatever happens, we beseech you to protect our wives and our children and guard them, in the name of Jesus Christ.

The vessel was attacked by allied planes but there is some confusion now as to exactly what happened. At least one source I have read claims that the Swedish Red Cross took possession of the ship shortly after Michel had prayed. He certainly lived to be reunited to with his family and friends.

### Something to do

Did you notice the clever way Hollard and his friends contacted each other by means of prearranged signals? Here is an idea that you could adopt – just for fun not because there are any enemies about. If you are fortunate enough to have a friend who lives not far from you, get together and decide on some signals and messages. Does a pebble on your garden wall mean, "I'm not at home today"? Or maybe a twig stuck in a particular place in the flower bed means, "See you tomorrow"? Perhaps

you could have a secret “post box” somewhere between your houses where you can leave messages for each other. See what you can work out between you. If you have no one with whom you can play this game but have some brothers and sisters try a “secret” postbox in your own house or garden and leave messages for each other.

### A story to read from Japan<sup>6</sup>

We learned about Dr Hepburn in the lesson for 13<sup>th</sup> March. This story is about his Japanese friend Okuno Masatusuna. He was baptized in July 1872. It is not known now which day exactly in July so we will remember him today.

Those who loved him best called him Okuno. His full name was Okuno Masatusuna. He was a great Japanese gospel preacher. He travelled all over Japan preaching the gospel and singing the story of Jesus, for Okuno was a poet as well as a preacher. He printed a fine Japanese hymn book and he, himself, wrote many beautiful Christian hymns. When the children of Japan sing our children’s hymn, “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know,” they use the words that Okuno wrote when he turned that pretty hymn into Japanese.



What a strange life he lived! He was, first of all, a Buddhist student and then a soldier, and then a Confucian wise man. And he was a bad, wicked, evil man and then a Christian, who was ready for every good work. When he was a soldier he wanted his friend who was a traitor to become king, and was willing to die for him. The old Buddhist priest told him that in order to succeed and win the throne for his friend, he must pray and sacrifice to his gods. He did everything the priest told him to do. He fasted until he almost starved. He bathed himself in ice water every morning for months. He sat for hours on a rough coarse mat keeping watch before the idols and saying prayers. He traveled on foot to many, many temples and prayed in over a thousand shrines. He sent his servants to pray in the temples in all the villages until they had offered sacrifice for him before fifteen thousand other sacred shrines.

But there was no answer from these blocks of wood and stone. Okuno was disappointed and angry, and returning to the temples, he knocked down the idols, trampled upon the sacred images and became a bad and hateful man. Then he heard about the Lord Jesus and he resolved to learn about Him. Perhaps He would help Okuno. He was not disappointed. No one who ever came to the Lord Jesus in faith, was ever turned away, for has He not said in John 6:37, “Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out”? No one who ever came to Jesus was ever sent empty away. Okuno found it so.

How holy and good he found Jesus to be as compared to the sinful, wicked priests that he had to do with for so long. In the presence of Jesus, Okuno realized what a great sinner he was. But grace taught him that the Lord Jesus had died upon Calvary’s cross to put all those sins away. He learned that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. Okuno believed, and was saved.

What a change took place in his heart and life. The dear Lord Jesus became his Friend in his loneliness, and he went on happily and bravely in the strength that He gives to all those who trust Him. In those days in Japan it meant death for anyone to teach about Jesus, but Okuno was not afraid. Drawing his finger across his neck, he said with a smile, “They may cut off my head but they

<sup>6</sup> By kind permission of Bible Truth Publishers/Verdades Biblicas.

cannot hurt my soul.”

Dr. Hepburn, who translated the Bible into the Japanese language, tells of how had it not been for Okuno he never could have done that great work. Okuno was eyes and hands and heart for Dr. Hepburn. He lived to be a dear old man, a scholar, a saint, and a great blessing to his people.

The circumstances under which he lived would have made today's memory verse very precious to Okuno.

### Something to find out



Today is the birthday of the French reformer Jean Calvin (1509-1564). As today's lesson is already so long I have not written about him here. Instead, use your own books and encyclopedias to find out why he is such an important figure in history and how God used him to bring the truth of the Bible back to light in dark times. When you have finished reading you could make some notes and turn them into a paragraph (or two) about the reformer.