

2<sup>nd</sup> June

## Memory verses

**I do set my bow in the cloud**, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. [And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant, which *is* between me and you and every living creature of all flesh;] and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

Genesis 9:13-15

## Something to read from History

Hereward the Wake (the Watchful) burns down Peterborough<sup>1</sup>

In 1066 the Norman, William the Conqueror, invaded England from France, defeated King Harold at Hastings and took the crown. But the Battle of Hastings was not the end of all resistance to Norman rule. The last Englishman who held out against the Normans was Hereward the Wake.

Hereward (1035-c.1072) chose an island among marshes, and prepared to defend it. Perhaps he thought that in time Englishmen would recover their courage, and gather round him as they had done round Alfred who had also defended himself from marshes in Somerset in days gone by. Hereward selected the **Isle of Ely** which was in quite a different part of the country. It is not an island now, for the marshes have been drained and produce fertile crops of corn. But in Hereward's time it could only be reached by boat. It was eight miles long and six broad. A French knight of William's time has told us what it looked like. "The island," he says, "is richly supplied; it has many kinds of grass, and in goodness of soil surpasses all England. Its charming fields and pastures make it most pleasant. It is remarkable for its beasts of the chase, and is very rich in flocks and herds. In the eddies at the watergates innumerable eels are caught with nets [which is why it is called Ely!], also large pike, pickerels,<sup>2</sup> perch, roach, burbot<sup>3</sup> and lampreys which we call water-snakes. Many people say that salmon are sometimes caught there, and also the royal fish, the sturgeon. There one can find geese, teal, coots, didappers,<sup>4</sup> water crows<sup>5</sup>, herons and ducks more than man can number in winter or at moulting time. I have seen a hundred, or even three hundred, caught at once, sometimes with bird lime, sometimes in nets or snares."

On **June 2<sup>nd</sup>** 1070, four years after the Battle of Hastings, Hereward the Wake and his men ransacked the abbey and burned down the town of **Peterborough**. They were helped by Danes or Vikings sent by Sweyn II of Denmark who's grandfather Sweyn Forkbeard, father of Canute King of England, had briefly been king of England before Canute.

The Peterborough clergy were told that Hereward and his band intended to pillage their abbey because they had heard that King William had taken the Abbey from Brand, Hereward's uncle, and given it to a Norman abbot named Turnold. Turnold had already arrived at **Stamford** with his Norman followers.

Early in the morning the outlaws came with many ships and tried to enter the abbey but the monks would not let them in. So they set fire to it and burned all the monks' houses and all the houses of the town but one.

The monks begged them to stop but their pleas were ignored. The outlaws stormed into the monastery and carried away gold and silver treasures and ornaments, money, robes and books

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1 Adapted from Owen, Evan, *What Happened Today* Volume 2 Available on the *Mothers' Companion* Flashdrive. <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com> and Bell, J J *Piers Ploughman Histories* Junior Book VI (London, 1924)

2 Pike-like fish.

3 Freshwater cod.

4 Little grebe.

5 Dictionary says this is a coot but he's already mentioned coots so perhaps a moorhen?

everything of value that they could find.

“We are taking your treasure to save it from the Normans,” they told the monks.

When nothing was left worth taking, the outlaws returned to their ships and sailed to Ely.

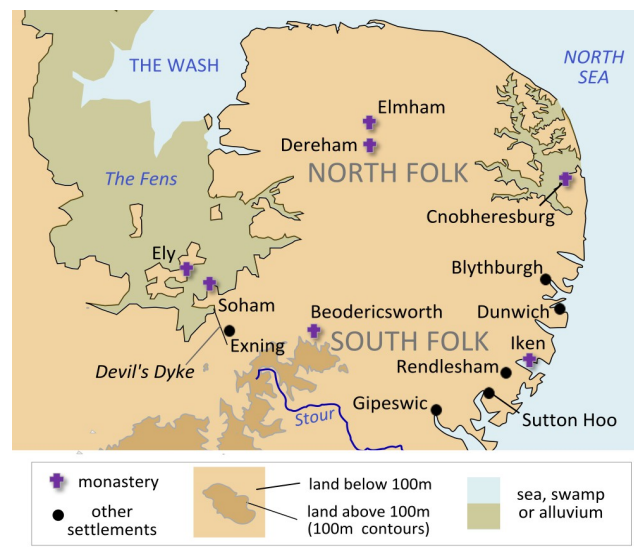
Soon the Abbott Turnold arrived with 160 armed Normans. They found the town a smoking ruin but the outlaws and the Danes were gone.

William wanted to rid England of all resistance to his rule. Hereward was a thorn in his side and would have to be removed. In 1071 William led his men to the island of Ely and began to make a wooden causeway, or road, through the water. The peasants of the fens were glad to carry bundles of wood to make the road, for Hereward's men made raids into the country round about foraging for food. To encourage his men William set up a witch on a tower to yell curses at Hereward and his friends; Hereward set fire to the reeds and burned the causeway, tower, witch and all. But William went on fighting. At last the monks, who lived in a monastery on the island, began to fear that when the Norman's entered, they would take a dreadful revenge. So they showed William's men how to enter the island, and Hereward and his men had to flee. The causeway, which William made, continued for centuries to be the road from Cambridge to the Isle. Today it can still be seen; but it is only a field track now.

No one really knows how Hereward met his end but England was under the thumb of the cruel Normans; his resistance had failed.

### Map Work

Compare this map with a modern one in an atlas to see how much the fens have changed. In the days of Hereward even the rivers differed from those we see now. Look at a modern map and find the **Ouse** running west to east and joining the **Cam** and then going North past **Ely**. The River Cam has not changed so much but the lower part of the Ouse, the West River, flowed east to west and joined the Great Ouse. It then flowed north and to the *left* of Ely. Not only has artificial drainage (in the seventeenth century particularly) altered the fens, but even in earlier times great floods would sometimes occur, altering the course of rivers and estuaries.



Amitchell125 at English Wikipedia

### Something to listen to

Even today the fenland has its own unique character with its vast expanse of sky, its canals and drains, its far horizons and its windmills. The composer Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) loved the solitary feel of the fenlands. His *In the Fen Country* captures the atmosphere completely. Find a recording of *In the Fen Country* to listen to.<sup>6</sup>



<sup>6</sup> You can hear it here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7R9RA\\_BR\\_p0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7R9RA_BR_p0)

## Dressing up

If you still have your Viking costume from 12<sup>th</sup> May, it can be adapted into a Norman costume. You will definitely need swords this time, though. Norman shields were different to those of the Vikings. They had a rounded top and a pointed bottom. You could make your own out of cardboard.<sup>7</sup>

A cardboard sword can be made and wrapped in kitchen foil to give a realistic appearance. If you do this paint the hilt brown to look like wood.<sup>8</sup> A Norman would have worn his helmet with some chain mail to protect his neck but your Viking helmet from 12<sup>th</sup> May will do – or you could decide to be William himself and make a cardboard crown! For a Norman lady the best thing would be a tall cardboard cone hat, covered with fabric if you have time or just with some floaty net curtaining or similar light fabric – even tissue paper – hanging from the top.<sup>9</sup> Tape or ribbon either side to tie under the chin would help keep it in place. Torfrida, Hereward's wife seems to have had to rough it a bit (!) so maybe an improvised cloak with some jewellery over your Viking dress without the apron would do. When you are all set, open a tin of salmon and prepare a grand *Norman feast at Ely* by adding some of the bread we learned about on 12<sup>th</sup> May!

## Something to think about

How do we know about Hereward the Wake? How can we find out about things that happened so long ago? Archaeologists can discover things about cities such as Peterborough by digging down under the modern city. Evidence of fire such as happened at Peterborough can often be found and even dated although not usually to an exact year. However, for details of the life of a character like Hereward we need written sources. Without these we might know that Peterborough was burned in the eleventh century but not by whom or why. We might be left guessing in which case we might say, well, perhaps it was a Viking attack. That would be a good guess and near the truth; after all, who was it that helped Hereward?

However, we know much more because Hereward and his deeds are recorded in documents from the time. There is the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, (especially the version that was written at Peterborough Abbey), also there is William the Conqueror's great land survey the Domesday Book and last and, perhaps most interesting of all there is the *Gesta Herewardi*. This last book is a Latin translation made in the twelfth century (about 1109–31) of an older book in an old form of English called *Middle English*. When the translator was making this translation, he tells us, he found there were gaps in the old book because it was damaged. He filled in the gaps from oral tradition. That is, he asked people who remembered hearing about Hereward to tell him. How long after the fire of Peterborough was he making his enquiries? Would anyone have been alive from Hereward's time? Try to think of an event that happened or a person that lived about the same number of years ago from today. Who might you ask if you wanted to find out what happened then or what that person was like by means of oral history?

In fact, the *Gesta Herewardi* and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle do not always agree. The *Gesta Herewardi* says Hereward burned Peterborough after the defeat at Ely while the Anglo Saxon Chronicle says it happened before. How might this difference have happened?

Have you been keeping your diary? It is always a good thing to do. Not only does it help you remember the things that have happened but you never know what a help it might be to people in the future who would like to know what life was like in your times. Historians might one day be as grateful for your diary as they are for the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle nowadays! More about diaries tomorrow, God willing.

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7 You can see how to make a very realistic one here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGZ8QTD7-iE> (Best watched with the sound muted.) Something simpler would do though.

8 Here is how to do it: <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/easter/preparing-for-easter-adventure-quests/how-to-make-a-cardboard-sword>

9 Something like this would be good: <https://www.firstpalette.com/craft/princess-cone-hat.html>