

8th March

Memory verse

My times are in thy hand. Psalm 31:15

Here is a very easy verse for even young ones to learn.

The great Victorian preacher Charles Spurgeon helps us to understand this verse:

“My times”, that is to say, my ups and my downs, my health and my sickness, my poverty and my wealth – all those are in the hand of the Lord, who arranges and appoints according to his holy will the length of my days, and the darkness of my nights.

Something to read and something to sing

Edward John Dent (1790-1853), Queen Victoria's clockmaker, died on 8th March. He was famous in his own day for the accuracy of his clocks. There are many things that affect the accuracy of a mechanical clock. Temperature change is one, as the metals in the clock mechanism expand when warm and contract when cooler. Although the amount is very small it can make a difference. Edward Dent experimented with ways of correcting the effects of temperature change in clocks. He also experimented with clock springs trying out springs made of steel, gold and even glass. He also invented navigation and surveying compasses. But Edward Dent is now most well known for having built what is probably the most famous clock in the whole world! This clock is pictured on the right do you know what clock it is and where?



If you answered “Big Ben” you would be correct, although that is strictly the name only of the clock's hour bell.¹ Edward Dent began work on the clock in the year he died and it was uncompleted at his death on 8th of March. His son Frederick finished the clock and the following year it was installed in the clock tower of the Houses of Parliament. It is a tribute to the skill of the Dents, father and son, that the clock is still recognised for its great accuracy. It only varies by around 4 seconds in a year. The little “tune” that the bell plays is included in the Optional Resources files for today, together with the words of the prayer that goes with it which is taken from Psalm 37. The words are to be found inside the clock room of the tower. Even a tiny child could learn to sing this and understand its lovely meaning.

An experiment to do

Are you surprised to read that metal expands (gets bigger) if it is heated? If you can do this experiment you will see for yourself that this happens.

You will need:

Some bare copper wire about 90cm to a metre long
a table

something firm to which you can fasten the wire

a pile of books

something to use as a weight which you can tie to the end of the wire

3 or 4 candles

3 or 4 old saucers or plates

¹ You can listen and watch the bell chime here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqslA_CKub8

Place the pile of books on the edge of the table. Fasten the wire to the support. The support should be about 60cm from the edge of the table. Stretch the wire over the table and let it hang over the pile of books. Fasten the weight to the wire that hangs down. The weight will hold the wire tight. When the weight has settled and is not moving, mark its position – perhaps with chalk on the leg of the table. Now place the candles under the wire standing upright. Stand them on old saucers to catch any drips of wax and protect the table. Light the candles. You can fix them onto the saucers with a couple of drips of melted wax. Move the candles from place to place under the wire so that the whole length is heated. After doing this for about five minutes mark again the position of the weight. What do you notice?² Why has this happened?³

A poem to learn

The poem on the right by Henry Twells (1823–1900) is on an old clock in Chester cathedral. It describes the way time seems to speed up as we grow older and ends with a warning that makes us understand the need to “make our calling and election sure” as Peter explains in 2 Peter chapter 1.

This little poem makes a very good recitation piece. Younger children may enjoy imitating the paces mentioned in the poem with actions. Can you think of a gesture that would indicate “gone”?

Something to make

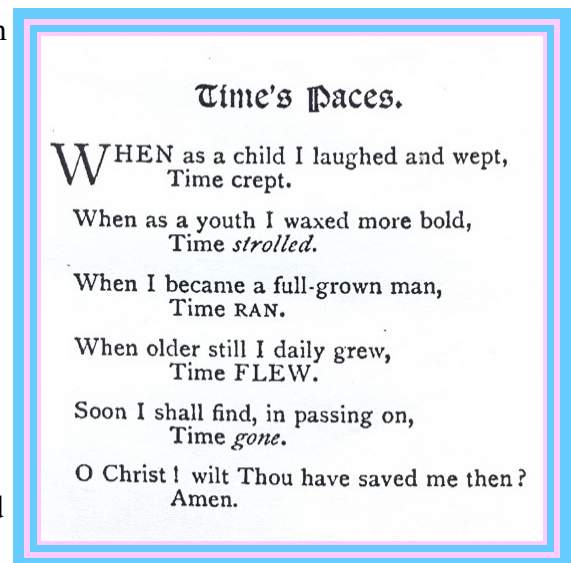
If you would like to make your own clock from cardboard there are instructions in the lesson for 14th April.

Something to do outdoors

Have you ever wanted to be an archaeologist? It is exciting work looking for artefacts that show how people lived in the past but it is slow and painstaking too, literally sieving through soil and debris looking for tiny things. It can take many years of patient examining and cataloguing before an archaeological site will reveal all its secrets.

In Nubia, in the middle valley of the River Nile in Egypt stood a massive temple, the Great Temple of Abu Simbel. The four colossal statues of Pharaoh Rameses II that seem to guard the entrance are over 20 metres high. The middle toes of the statues' feet are well over a metre long! It was in **March** 1813 that the Swiss traveller, Johann Burckhardt, discovered the temple buried in sand from desert storms. He tried to dig away the sand from the entrance and failed but his friend Giovanni Battista Belzoni cleared the sand away in 1817. In fact the whole area was rich in archaeological sites from ancient Nubian civilization waiting to be discovered and explored. For the next one hundred and forty or so years the temple could be examined and archaeologists could make digs to document and examine the surrounding area. Expeditions could be mounted to explore the whole valley and find what lay under the sand. But then disaster loomed.

A massive dam was planned for the River Nile to create hydro-electricity and irrigation and flood control for farming in Egypt. The middle valley of the Nile was to be flooded to make a huge lake. Abu Simbel's temple and all the other things, discovered or undiscovered were to be covered by water! On the **8th March** 1960 an international campaign was launched to try to save Abu Simbel's temple and to mount a massive archaeological exploration of the ancient Nubian civilization, remnants of which were buried under the valley's sands. The British Egyptologist Harry Smith, head



² You should see the weight has dropped a little.

³ The metal has expanded and so the wire is a little longer.

of the Egypt Exploration Society, led a team which made the final survey of Lower Nubia. They used a boat to travel up the Nile Valley from the South stopping to survey and often walking twenty to thirty miles a day to reach sites located by aerial survey which had not been previously explored. The sites were examined and everything seen was recorded in a day book but many wonderful archaeological sites still remained that were not well surveyed. When the waters rose, it was not only the homes and livelihoods of about 60,000 people, mostly Nubians that were lost, it was the ancient sites of their history as well.



But what about the great temple of Abu Simbel? That was saved by moving the whole massive structure onto an artificial hill constructed above the reservoir in 1968. All the huge statues were dismantled and cut up, all the walls and carvings were removed and everything was reassembled so that tourists could visit a site that looked just as it had done in its original place.

You may not live in the Nile Valley but you almost certainly live in a place that has been inhabited for hundreds if not thousands of years. If you dig around you will be surprised what you find. The rubbish thrown out by one generation becomes the archaeological artefacts of the next! Just digging around in your own garden can lead to the discovery of pieces of china, old bottles, buttons or coins for instance. These are all archaeological artefacts however old they are. The Optional Resources files for today include a guide produced by The Collection (Art and Archaeology in Lincolnshire)⁴ which tells you how to do archaeology in your back garden exactly as a real archaeologist would. You can follow these guidelines – or just dig more informally. Please make sure you have permission to dig before you start though!

⁴ Permission requested 30/01/21.