

October 10th

Memory verse

Blessed be the Lord my strength

which teacheth my hands to war,
and my fingers to fight: Psalm 144:1

Map work¹

Get out your atlas; we are going to visit a very remote place!



It might surprise you to know that the town pictured above is Edinburgh! That is, it is Edinburgh of the Seven Seas on **Tristan da Cunha**, a tiny island in the South Atlantic, nearly 2,000 miles from **Capetown**, South Africa, one of the loneliest islands in the world.

Jonathan Lambert, an American from Massachusetts, settled on the island in 1810 with two friends. He called Tristan and two nearby islands “The Islands of Refreshment” and hoped to establish there a little colony, far away from the troubles of America and Europe. He drew up a constitution binding himself and his friends to “principles of hospitality and good fellowship”, and designed a flag for his tiny kingdom. Unfortunately he was drowned with one of his friends before he could put his plans into action.

Many people think that they can escape from the evils in the world by settling on an uninhabited island. However we cannot escape evil that way. Do you remember the lesson for 29th March about Pitcairn Island? It is not the *place* which makes evil things happen but the *people*. Everyone is

¹ Adapted from Owen, Evan, *What Happened Today?* Book 3 available on the *Mothers' Companion* flashdrive <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com/>

sinful. We can escape from the awful penalty for sin, not by going to a remote place like an island, but by trusting in Jesus who died to save us.

A few years later Tristan was taken over as a British military post and in 1817, when the garrison was withdrawn, one soldier, Corporal William Glass, remained behind with his wife and a few companions. As the months passed their numbers increased as they were joined by seamen from passing ships and by some women from St Helena.

In October 1961, there were about 280 people living on Tristan, many of them direct descendants from the original settlers. The establishment of a weather station on the island during the war, and the setting up of a fish-canning factory in 1947 had brought more prosperity to Tristan than its inhabitants had known during the whole of its history.

Yet on **October 10th**, 1961, the island was abandoned. Two ships took off all the fishermen and farmers and their families and set them down on a nearby island to await the outcome of a series of volcanic eruptions on Tristan from a crater that had been silent for perhaps thousands of years. The flow of lava and the earth tremors had made the island temporarily unfit to live on and the islanders, of whom only a handful had ever been off the island, were then taken to Britain.

There is a happy ending to this story. When the volcanic activity died down it was found that the settlement on the island, Edinburgh, was undamaged and almost all the islanders returned to their homes.²

Where did the island get its unusual sounding name? Tristão da Cunha (c. 1460 – c. 1507), the Portuguese navigator, was the first to sight the island and he named it after himself.



Use your atlas to find the places highlighted in **green**. The military post established on Tristan in 1816 by the British was put there to stop enemies planning to rescue a famous prisoner from captivity on St Helena. Who was the Prisoner?³ Find **St Helena** in your atlas. How far is it from Tristan da Cunha?⁴

Something to listen to

Some things have a very long tradition behind them. Today is the anniversary of one of the best loved pieces of choral music in the English language. Handel's Coronation Anthem, *Zadok the Priest*, was first performed on **October 10th** 1727 during the coronation of King George II and Queen Caroline. The words of the anthem (see below) are adapted from 1 Kings 1 but what I did not know until I did some research for this lesson was that these same words have been used for *every* English coronation since that of King Edgar at Bath Abbey in 973AD!⁵ That is a tradition that stretches back over a thousand years. I wonder if Handel knew this when he wrote his anthem!



² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4EIF8awm90> has interviews and information about life on the island today.

³ Napoleon.

⁴ Illustration: By Brian Gratwicke from DC, USA - Tristan da Cunha Afternoon light (Panorama), CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=47700295>

⁵ Not in modern English, of course, Probably in Latin *Unxerunt Salomonem Sadoc sacerdos et Nathan Propheta...*

Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anointed Solomon king.
 And all the people rejoiced and said:
 God save the King! Long live the King! God save the King!
 May the King live for ever. Amen. Hallelujah.

The anthems Handel wrote for the coronation of George II, including *Zadok the Priest* are deliberately designed for the place in which they were to be first sung, Westminster Abbey. This is a vast, reverberating space where intricate details would be lost but strong contrasts work well. Handel had large forces available to him: the choir of the Chapel Royal with forty-seven extra singers and an orchestra that could have numbered as many as 160. That is not large by modern standards but for the eighteenth century it was huge.

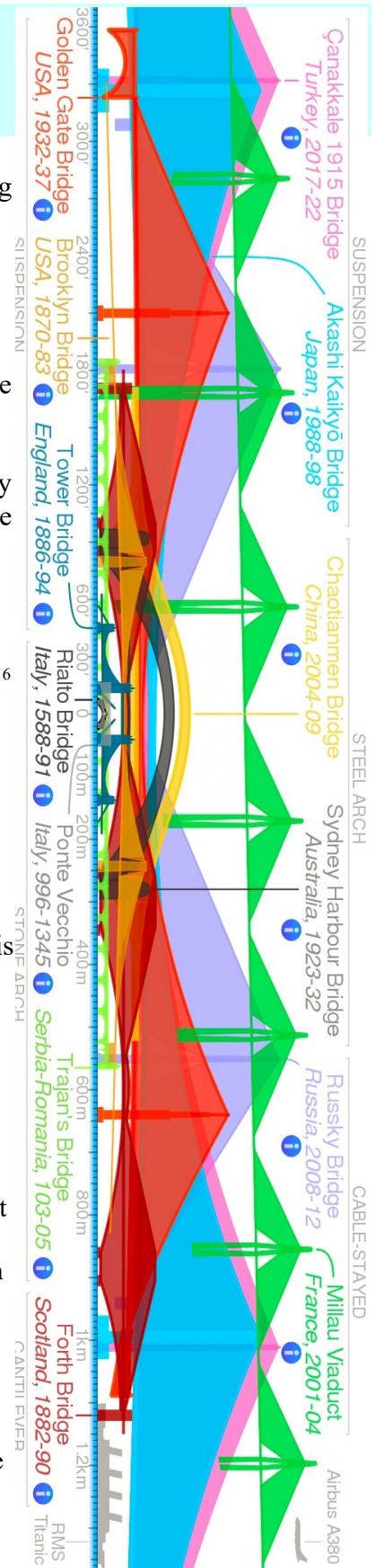
However, I am sorry to say that the performance did not go smoothly on the day. One of the anthems was missed out altogether due to “the negligence of the choir of Westminster” and *Zadok the Priest* was sung in the wrong part of the service. Another anthem ended “in confusion”. This did not stop *Zadok the Priest* becoming very popular. Handel's anthem has been sung at every coronation since, and on many other occasions. Find a recording and listen to it today.⁶

“May the King live for ever. Amen.” Does this strike you as an odd phrase? It occurs more than once in the Bible. In Nebuchadnezzar's day it was an expected form of address to the pagan ruler: “O king, live for ever,” say his Chaldean wise men in Daniel 2:4. It sounds rather a silly form of flattery as they and Nebuchadnezzar all knew that he, like everyone else, would die one day. But here it is different: “May the King live for ever. Amen.” is not a salutation: it is a prayer. It is a prayer for the king's soul. It is a prayer we can all pray for our sovereign that he will hear and obey the call of the gospel. You could add it to your own prayers today.

Something to make⁷

On 10th October 2001, construction work began on the longest cable-stayed bridge in the world, the Millau Viaduct. It is a road bridge and it spans the River Tarn in Southern France. Designed by British architect Sir Norman Foster it is also the tallest bridge in the world. The diagram on the right shows it in comparison to other famous bridges and a jet liner and the Titanic for scale.

This would be a good day to make your own bridge. Lego is good and K'nex or Meccano even better for bridge building but you can use almost anything, even cardboard. If you did this activity on 30th of June see if you can improve on it today. How big a gap can you bridge? Measure it and try again to see if you can find a way of spanning a bigger gap. The lessons for 15th March and April 9th have more on bridges and more suggestions for making your own bridges.



⁶ You can hear the present choir of Westminster Abbey singing it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MIXgOO9-RI>

⁷ Illustration By cmglee, Yzmo - Comparison of notable bridges.svg En mary titanic.svg, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=46175068>