

Box CE VC Primary

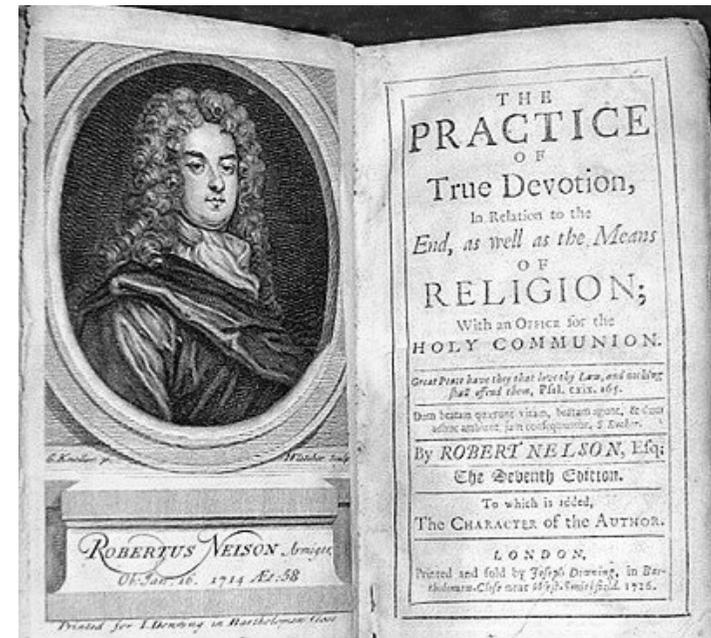
300th Anniversary Celebration Readings

2008

1) Parson George Millard

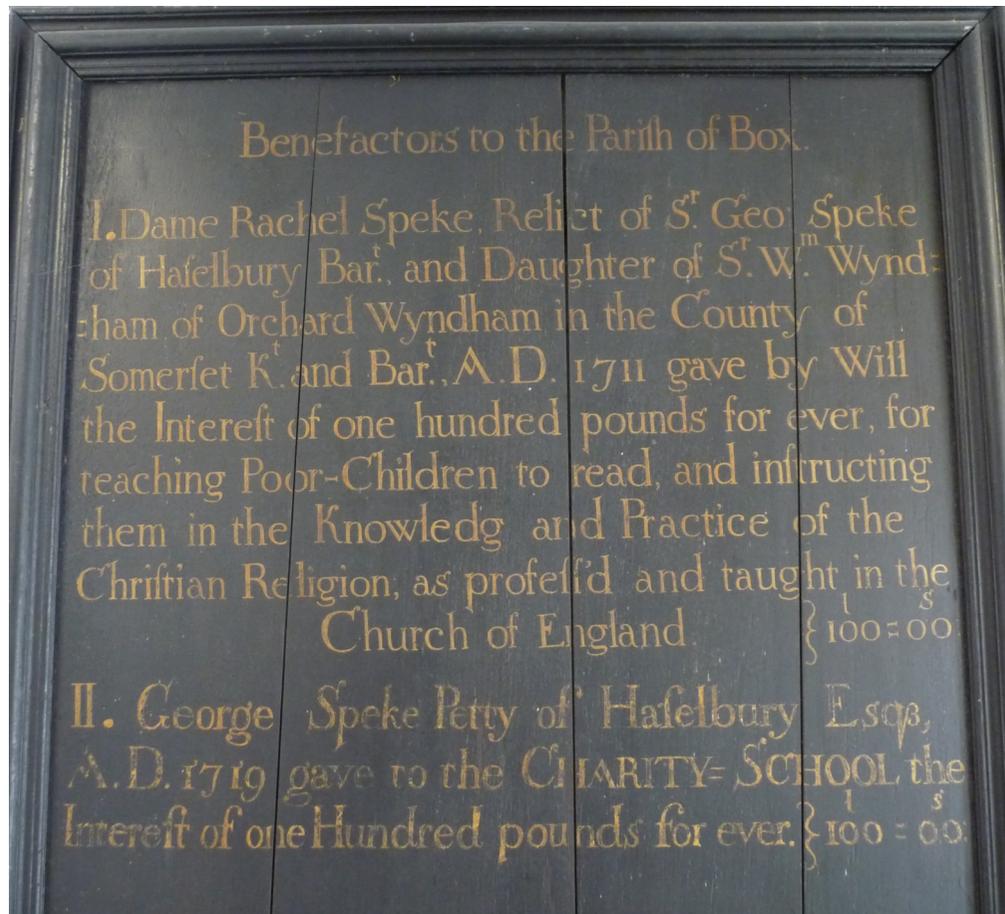
Parson George Millard came to Box in 1707 fired with enthusiasm for the newly formed "Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge". He saw education as a means of lifting the poorest out of their plight. Education would also 'gentle the masses' and make the country safe from revolution and lawlessness.

An initial gift of money came from Dame Rachel Speke meant that George Millard was able to set up a small school in two rooms in church over the vestry. When it began the school had fifteen boys and fifteen girls.



2) Table of benefactors

We have the table of benefactors with the school's original trust deed in our extension which states that the school was established: 'for teaching the poor children to read and instructing them in the knowledge and practice of the Christian religion as professed and taught in the Church of England'.



3) The curriculum

To learn to read there were 'horn books' that looked like table tennis bats. From this it was straight on to the Book of Common Prayer and the Holy Bible. From success at reading they were taught basic arithmetic and learnt to 'cast accounts'. All pupils were taught spinning and knitting. The Church Catechism and the weekly Collects were learned by heart. The children were provided with clothing - coats, and caps in the "Hazlebury livery". Unfortunately we don't know what colour this was.



4) The school choir

When the church was 'rebuilt' in 1713, a gallery was added to accommodate the charity children. But best of all - the people learned to sing. This was new. Millard ordered a copy of 'The Singer's Guide'. For two hours a day the children were taught the new art of sacred music. When they were ready, they delighted the astonished congregation with their proficiency. An adult church choir was proposed. The first week 160 turned up for practice. Soon the children were in demand far and wide to demonstrate to other churches what music could do.



5) Springfield House

The school rapidly grew and needed to move out of the church to a bigger building. Some locals opposed the expansion of the school. The jealous and the short-sighted considered educating the poorest to be 'unfitting'. An answer was to hand: 'Schools of Industry' with a greater emphasis on practical tasks - in other words, the 'workhouse'. With help from the widow of Henry Hoar of Stourton, Springfields Workhouse was built and the school had the top floor and loft.

A separate staircase kept pupils away from the inmates of the workhouse.



6) George Millard and George Mullins

In 1738 George Millard died and so began the next phase of the school. George Mullins introduced fee paying boarders who lodged in the cottages behind Springfields. They paid 20 guineas a year plus 1 guinea for washing!



7) School Inspectors

The school's third era begins in 1811 when the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge handed its school work over to the National Society. From 1831 government grants helped the growing demand for schools and an Inspectorate was formed to monitor value for money. By the 1850s Springfield was in a state of such disrepair that it was a case of 'mend it or end it'.



8) Girls and Infants

The girls and infants were taught in a schoolroom in Henley. The girls school room was often overcrowded and the many infants, some very young, meant that the school was very noisy. Miss Elliott often complained about this in the log books. For example in 1864 she wrote: 'a great many babies present who made the school rather noisy'.

Her majesties inspectors also commented on such difficulties in their report in 1868: 'The staff is quite inadequate for the 124 children present at my inspection. The 53 infants quite spoil the mistress's efforts among the older classes who are in the same room as them ... Discipline as good as could be expected where so many infants are in the same room as the elders and where desk accommodation is inadequate.



9) The new school

Once again it was the parson who saved the day - this time, Rev Edward Gardiner. The new standards of the 1870 Act were met by a pooling of all available resources - the sale of the land and an amalgamation brought about by closing the school at Springfield and a school in Ditteridge and the school in Henley. The model building, with gothic stone work and an Italianate tower, was opened in 1875. It cost £2 700 with the capacity for 400 children in three schools for boys, girls and infants. Preparation for the opening of the school seems to have been inadequate as Miss Collins, the headmistress complained, 'The routine of the school is very irregular, there being no desks or other apparatus in the room.' The following week she commented on the 'inefficient warming of the school room'.



10) The war

At the start of the war in 1939 plans were drawn up by Wiltshire County Council to build double seated trench shelters for schools to seat approximately 50 children. During the war years the number of pupils in the school increased as many children were evacuated to Box. In 1942 there were 43 evacuees in the school, the majority of them came from London and other evacuees came from Hastings, Southampton, Portsmouth, Middlesex, West Sussex, Surrey, Bath and Barking. A teacher from Kensington, in London, was evacuated with the children. The school wasn't big enough for all of the extra pupils so the Methodist hall was used as a classroom.



11) The extension

By 2003 the school was one of the most overcrowded schools in Wiltshire. There were 175 children on roll but space for only 145. The two mobile classrooms were in a state of disrepair and the school desperately needed another classroom. There wasn't space for a third mobile on the playground so the only solution was to build a three class extension to the school. In July 2005 the extension was completed and for the first time in years the whole school could be taught in the same building.



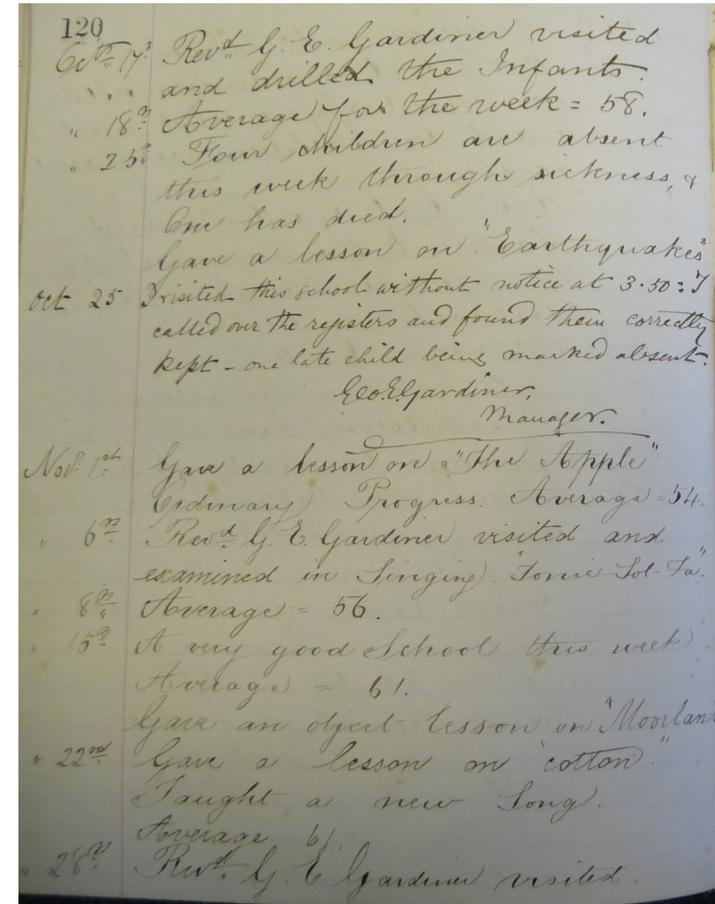
12) Refurbishing the school

Since the extension was built much of the rest of the old part of the school has been refurbished, the hall, the kitchen, the staffroom, the corridors and the toilets! We will continue to develop the learning environment and very soon it is hoped that play space will be increased with the purchase of the old school garden.



13) Documentation

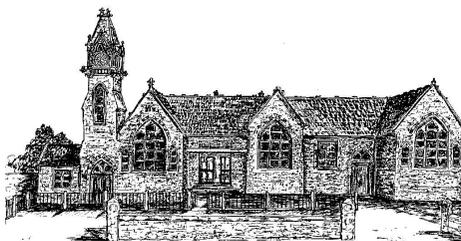
Our school is one of the oldest in the country. Very few schools have such a varied, interesting and well documented history. We hope that the school continues to thrive for many more centuries. In the years to come we hope that the children at the school will remember our 300th anniversary.



Thank you for coming to share in our celebrations, we hope you enjoy our fireworks.

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