



Vale and Downland Museum – Local History Series

Education In Childrey

by Pam and Ken Childerly

At the time of writing of this article (1986) several of our village schools are threatened with closure. Sparsholt lost its school in the 1960s when most of the children transferred to Childrey, and now Childrey is about to suffer the same fate. This means that, after 460 years, education in the village will come to an end.

Childrey was fortunate in that at one time members of the wealthy Fettiplace family lived in the village. In 1526, among several other bequests, William Fettiplace provided for a Chantry and a Chantry priest. As part of his duties, for which he was paid £8 per annum, he was directed to conduct a school for the children of the Parish. It was probably the first in the country where it was laid down that they were to be taught in English.

At the dissolution of the Chantries the Endowments were saved, probably because of the educational directions, and the Chantry priest became schoolmaster only. Chantry House or Cantorist House was the residence of the priest, the school and Almshouses for three poor Bedesmen until 1732, when George Fettiplace built a new school and Almshouses.

William Fettiplace gave very detailed instructions for the appointment of the priest and his duties, as seen by the following extracts from his will:-

In the first place he willed and ordained that he teach the boys the alphabet, the Lord's Prayer, the Salutation of the Angel, the Apostles' Creed, and all other things necessary for serving the priest at mass, together with the psalm De Profundis and the collects, together with the prayers customary for the dead, also that he should teach them to say grace at dinner as at supper.

Then he willed that he should instruct and teach the aforesaid boys in English, the fourteen articles of faith, the ten commandments of God, the seven mortal sins, the seven sacraments of the church, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven works of mercy, as well corporal as spiritual, the five bodily senses, and the manner of confession, all which he judged and considered necessary not only for the boys themselves, but for all other families and persons where they reside, in order that they might instruct those who be ignorant in the premises.

Also he willed that he should teach them good manners, and before everything to fear God and keep his commandments, and especially not to lie, and to honour their parents, and in church to serve God devoutly.

Also he willed that the aforesaid chaplain should exact or require nothing from the poor and from those who dwelt in the parish of Childrey for the instruction and reformation of the same; nevertheless, if anything shall be offered to him freely and gratuitously for his diligence, he did not wish to prohibit him from taking it.

And he willed that, if the Chaplain was promoted or beneficed, or if he were found notoriously forsworn in his observation of the ordinance, or if he were openly immoral, or kept or bred hunting birds, or hunted regularly, or were unbearably quarrelsome with the people of the vill of Childrey or of other adjoining vills, or were branded notoriously with any notable crime which might cause or bring infamy upon the said Chantry, and upon such branding did not lawfully purge himself, then Queens College were empowered to remove him, or in the alternative to reform him by suspending his salary.

In 1732, Sir George Fettiplace built a new school consisting of a single room, a schoolmaster's house and Almshouses, and gave more land to Queens College for the trust. The boys of the village were taught in this school until the present building was opened in 1913. The old building was then used as a potting shed in the manor garden until the 1970s. Although very faint, the original inscription is still to be seen, but the Fettiplace Coat-of-Arms was removed and presented to Segsbury School. Latterly the whole building has fallen into decay. Only the outer wall now remains forming part of the Manor boundary.

George Fettiplace also made an endowment of £6-10s. per annum to some dame or master "who shall be obliged to teach girls of the inhabitants of Childrey to read English and catechise them, and to work their needles". The endowment was appropriated to the Fettiplace school and girls were taught side by side with the boys until 1844. At this time the Rev. Whittingham built the girls' school, converting an old cottage on a piece of roadside wasteland close to the boys' school. This building passed from rector to rector, the repairs and upkeep also being his responsibility. There was no school playground and the children played between the school corner and Cantorist House, there being no danger from traffic.

When the present school opened in 1913 the old girls' school became the parish room but the cost of maintaining it became a liability for succeeding rectors. For a short time in the 1950s it became a youth club, but with the death of the then rector and the amalgamation of several parishes, it was sold and converted into a private dwelling house.

The Wesleyans had their own school in part of the Chapel building from about 1849. In 1853 the Shippery charity provided £10 per annum to pay the schoolmaster/mistress of the Wesleyan School, and "the residue from the £10 to be distributed among the poor in warm and useful clothing"!

By 1862/3 the value of the educational charities was:-

William Fettiplace	-	£8- 3-0
George Fettiplace	-	£9-15-6
Shippery's	-	£10- 0-0
Godfrey's	-	£3- 5-6 - paid through the rector to the girls' school

In 1870 the first steps were taken towards compulsory education, when families who could not afford to pay would be excused fees. In 1874 there is a reference in the Vestry book to a meeting held to discuss the best means to meet the requirements of the Education Act. Dr Pears, the rector, offered to enlarge the Rector's Schoolroom (i.e. the Girls' School) and be responsible for the salary of a certificated mistress and other school expenses.

By the turn of the century the Wesleyan School was known as the Infants School (starting at 4 years old), and the Boys' and Girls' Schools had become the "Childrey Fettiplace Endowed Mixed School".

In 1913 the present Primary school was opened. Unusually for a rural area, it was not affiliated to the church. When Ascension Day was still recognised as a holiday for children attending church schools, Childrey and Garston Lane were the only local schools to work that day! Until Icknield School opened in 1956, the children completed their education at Childrey, except for the few who qualified for the Grammar School, and there could be as many as 120 on the roll. Some of the Educational Charities were then used to help the Grammar School children with the cost of uniform and other expenses.

As a footnote and to show that some things do not change, the following are extracts from the school log books written between 1870 and 1910: -

1870 Commenced school with only three boys out of twenty - many playing truant.

1871 Mother called to admit boy, he was under age and not overclean, I declined.

1879 School attendance officer called today and informed me that he was going to attend to his duties more earnestly.

Closed school yesterday and today consequent on school desks being used at Sparsholt Flower Show.

1837 Recitations submitted to H.M. Inspector:-

Std. 1. The Blind Boy

Std. 2. The Beggar Man

Std. 3. Battle of Blenheim

Std. 4. Llewelyn and his dog

Std. 5. Lay of the Last Minstrel

Std. 6. Shakespeare King John

1888 Outbreak of Typhoid.

At this time several references "that infants not being taught in manner suitable to their age and interfering with older children" - therefore causing withholding of grant (payment by results!).

1897 No more infants to be admitted - 5 boys lately transferred are all weak in almost every subject - English Grammar and History are new to them.

Adverse reports continued and in 1902 H.M. Inspector said the teaching is too mechanical and English is neglected. The Assistant ought to spend a week in Oxford to study better methods.

1910 School closed (for the day) as Childrey Benefit Society used the room for their Annual Dinner.



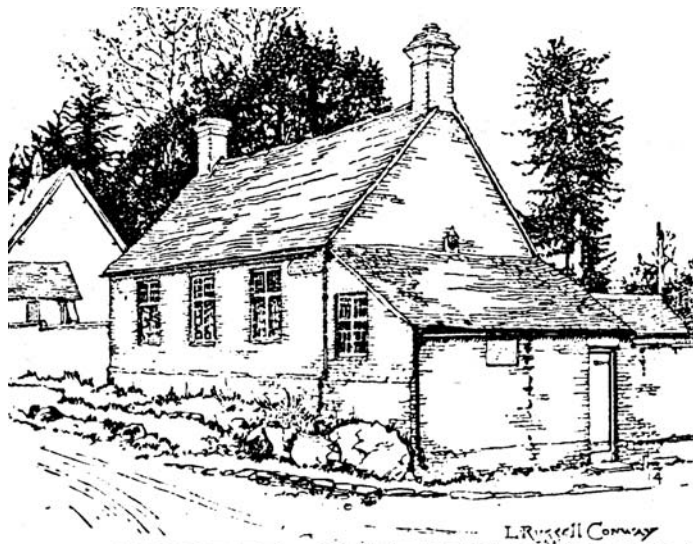
Childrey - 1930s? - 'The Old School' - view looking west.(v-chd038)



Childrey - 1930s? - 'The Old School' - east end, view looking west.
(A tree from the Rectory broke the roof in the 1940s) (v-chd047)



Childrey – ‘The Old School’ stone dedication plaque in wall (v-chd062)



Childrey - 'The Old School' - view looking north-west - sketch by L Russell Conway, in Victoria County History, Oxfordshire Vol IV (v-chd081)

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