

Sunday Schools

Robert Raikes (right) is generally credited with starting the Sunday School movement, although it was not his own idea. Raikes, a well-to-do newspaper owner from Gloucester saw that “on Sunday the street is filled with multitudes of little wretches who, released on that day from their employment, spend their time in noise and riot, cursing and swearing” and decided something needed to be done.



In 1780, he started a Sunday School for the “undisciplined and illiterate” children employed in the local pin factories. The scheme proved very successful, with many church groups starting their own schools, teaching reading and religious instruction. The schools were maintained by subscription, collections after

special church services and proceeds from bazaars. These schools were free so girls as well as boys could learn to read. In 1830, the Stamford Mercury estimated that the cost of schooling 200 children was £20 - £5 for books and £15 for rent. Sunday Schools provided the only free education for most children until state schools were established in the late 1800s.

Barton's Sunday Schools

Until 1850 more children obtained a very elementary education in the town's Sunday Schools than in the Day Schools. Sunday School education was free, and was the only education children of the poor could get before going to work at a young age.



Barton's Primitive Methodist Sunday School, 1914

By 1814 Sunday School education was well established by the Church of England, the Congregationalists and the Wesleyan

Methodists. By 1856 over five hundred children attended Sunday Schools in the town when the population of the town was 1,800. Around this time, most likely based on the success of Sunday Schools in the town, efforts were underway to improve day-school provision which was inadequate.