

Train Up a Child



One hundred and eighty years ago, on the 6th September 1844, the foundation stone was laid for the Church School on Queen Street as part of a ceremony that must have brought Barton to a standstill.

This school was Barton's first Church or parish School and it was called Barton National & Infants School when it opened in January 1845. The School lasted for 133 years, and when it closed in 1978 it was replaced by Barton St. Peter's Church of England School, with some pupils relocating to the town's other new school at Bowmandale.

The Queen Street School Preservation Trust was set up in 1993 to save the building which had fallen into disrepair. Once it was realised that the building had a unique link with a nineteenth century pioneer of infant education, Samuel Wilderspin, the Trust managed to raise the funds to repair and reopen it as a school museum in 2009.

The organising committee at the time decided to include an Infant School which was a fairly new idea at the time, and it invited Mr. Samuel Wilderspin to set it up. The Infant School part of the building was designed by him as a Model School to demonstrate his System and train teachers. Few other buildings linked to Wilderspin have survived, and this is now the only restored Wilderspin School and Playground in the world.

Historic England has described it as *"one of the most important schools in England."*

As part of Heritage Open Days in September we are going to re-create the ceremony of 6th September 1844 and the procession of children who met at St. Mary's Church and then marched through the town to the site where the school was to be built. After a speech and prayers the children had tea in the George Inn while the ladies took tea in the Temperance Hall (the Assembly Rooms today).

We'll not march through the town, but we will start at St. Mary's Church where there will be a display about the construction of the School, and we'll walk along Burgate to Queen Street for a re-creation of the laying of the foundation stone ceremony. The children will take part in what was called an "Exhibition Lesson" in the Joseph Wright Hall where an audience will hear about Mr. Wilderspin's System and which will be demonstrated by the children. Refreshments will then be served in the Playground Garden and there will be an opportunity to view the real Infant Schoolroom of Mr. Wilderspin and the rest of the school museum.

On Sunday 8th September we will begin at St. Mary's Church at 1.45pm, and arrive at the Joseph Wright Hall for a Exhibition Lesson at 2.30pm. Spectators may watch the procession and join the audience in the Hall at 2.30pm. Refreshments in the Playground will be served from 3pm and the children will be ready to go home or visit the museum from 3.30pm.

The event is being organised by education staff and volunteers from the Wilderspin & National School Museum assisted by colleagues from the Braton Heritage Project who will supervise the children. Parents and family members are warmly welcome to join in the fun and celebrate Heritage Open Days 2024. **Participating children should be accompanied by an adult.**

These plans may change over the summer and we'll update everyone involved in September and let everyone know the final itinerary and register everyone taking part.

