

EPWORTH OLD RECTORY – WORKING WITH SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

Epworth Old Rectory is the childhood home of John and Charles Wesley and their family. Their father Samuel Wesley was the Rector for the Parish of St. Andrew from 1695 to 1735 and it was in this house that nine of the ten Wesley children received their first education from their mother Susanna. The eldest child, Samuel, was already away at school in London when the family moved to Epworth, but he still benefited from Susanna's advice through many letters. So much emerged from this house. John and Charles were profoundly influenced by their mother's methodical and disciplined systems of education and they followed her example in the way they lived and the way they developed the Methodist movement. The Rectory was the home to the successive rectors of Epworth until 1954 when it was purchased by the Methodist Church and refurbished as a museum. It now enables visitors to experience what life was like for an early 18th century Rector's family, and to see what made this family special.

SCHOOL VISITS TO EPWORTH OLD RECTORY

A schools' programme offers a breadth of experience with activities such as pottery, portraits, Susanna's home-school in costume and being a house and garden detective. The programme has been developed in conjunction with local primary schools. It is curriculum-based and flexible so that it can be tailored to the needs and wishes of any school. A small charge applies.

EPWORTH OLD RECTORY VISITS TO SCHOOLS

However we are also offering to visit your school free of charge. Below is an outline of some examples, but others can be developed if the school has particular areas they would like to explore:

1. Assemblies –
 - a. Using a portrait of Charles Wesley, volunteers would show the children elements within the portrait which indicate the sort of man he was. They would then explain that he wrote over 6000 hymns, asking the children how easy/hard they find it to write one poem. A few lines of a hymn by Charles Wesley will be read and explained to help the children appreciate his ideas and the way he worked with words. The children will be asked if they know of any of his hymns and the assembly would end with the singing of either 'Love Divine' or 'Hark the Herald Angels sing' (depending on the season)
 - b. Using a picture of the famous fire at Epworth Old Rectory, volunteers would explain what happened in February 1709 when this wood and thatch house was burned to the ground and that the fire was probably started deliberately. All the family escaped except 5 year old John Wesley who was pulled out of an upper window just as the roof fell in. His mother Susanna declared that he was a 'brand plucked from the burning' and she vowed to take special care of him. That incident made him also believe that he had been saved for a special purpose. The volunteers will help the children to understand the influence this had on John Wesley's life.

- c. The children would be shown a portrait of Susanna Wesley. Using her account of her method of educating her children, the children in the assembly will be helped to think of differences between her methods and those of today. Her pattern for the day will be described, as well as her methods of disciplining her children. How would the children in the school react to her kindly strictness? Why do they think she took such care over her children's education? The differences between the usual experience for girls in the 18th century and today will be explored – showing why Susanna was unusual in taking equal care over her daughters' and her sons' early education. The assembly would end with a prayer by Susanna Wesley.
2. Classroom visits and interviews – two volunteers in costume would visit the school for one morning or afternoon and call in on several classes. They would be dressed as Susanna Wesley and John Wesley and would be in character (as far as possible) for the duration of the visit. Classes would prepare questions in advance and be ready to engage in conversation with the characters. The aim would be to introduce the children to life in the early 18th century and to the impact that these two people had on 18th century society and history. Some of the stories of the Wesleys' lives and their ongoing relevance and impact today, would emerge through these conversations.
3. Storytelling – volunteers would spend time with groups of children telling a particular story from the history of the Old Rectory and Epworth. These could include : the drainage of the Isle of Axholme and its effect on local people, the unpopularity of Samuel Wesley, the experiences of the seven Wesley sisters, Susanna Wesley's achievements despite her difficult life, the story of the Rectory fire, John Wesley's preaching from his father's grave in Epworth churchyard.

For classroom visits and storytelling, it would be beneficial to the school and volunteers from the Old Rectory if the volunteers could have a discussion in advance of the visit with the appropriate class teacher.

We would also value the opportunity of meeting members of school staff either formally or informally at the end of our visit.

For more information please contact:

Claire Potter, Development Manager at Epworth Old Rectory

Telephone: 01427 872268

Email : curator@epwortholdrectory.org.uk