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ARCHIVIUM

Blundell's School Archive Newsletter



School Team at Bisley, 1903

WELCOME TO ARCHIVIUM

Welcome to *Archivium*, the new newsletter for the Blundell's School Archive.

I have recently taken over the role of Archivist alongside my teaching role in the History Department from long-standing member of staff, award-winning local historian Mike Sampson who has lovingly spent the past 16 years maintaining and expanding the School's collection. Mike Sampson, who many of you will know from the OB Day Exhibition and OB lunches stepped down from the post in December and we wish him a very restful retirement.

The purpose of this newsletter is to share with you what goes on in the Archives here, and to showcase some of our existing material as well as new acquisitions which may be of interest to the School Community.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter - if you have any queries or questions about the Archive please be in touch!

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INTRODUCING CATHERINE FLAVELLE

I want to use this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Archivist. Growing up with Hampton Court on my doorstep, coupled with regular trips to family holiday homes in the West of Ireland and North Norfolk where I had the pleasure of exploring a variety of historical sites from Iron Age souterrains to medieval abbeys, it was always going to be the case that History was going to be a big interest of mine. One of my favourite memories growing up was playing in the Norman Castle in the field behind my great aunt's house in Co. Galway. In an era before health and safety, myself and my cousins took great joy in clambering up to the top and exploring the 'dungeons' during our summer holidays.

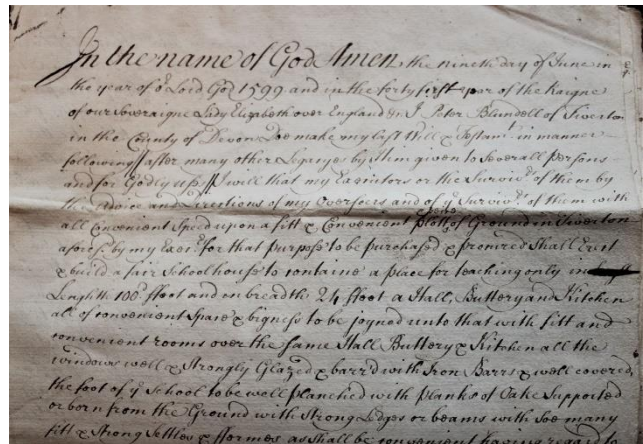


Following my time at St Catherine's School, I went to read Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic at New Hall, University of Cambridge, before embarking on a career as a History and Politics Teacher at a variety of Schools and Further Education settings in the Midlands and the Devon over the past 11 years. I have now been at the School teaching History since 2017, and was a Teaching Fellow of the Historical Association, 2018-21. When we are not travelling Europe's archives for my husband's research (he's an Associate Professor of Medieval History at Exeter), we enjoy taking our two young daughters, Clara and Lettie, to the same historic sites that I enjoyed as a child. After all, what is more exciting than having your very own castle playground!



NEW ROLE, NEW CHALLENGES

My first few weeks in the role have been varied to say the least. Thumbing through the carefully inventoried boxes and shelves of material (there are over 20,000 items currently in the collection, the earliest dating to 1456) I was instantly transported back to my palaeography lectures at the Parker Library in Cambridge. As a historian, I always get a real thrill from handling objects produced by people living in times long past – seeing what they were interested in and what made them click.



Among my early discoveries while familiarising myself with the material was this copy of Peter Blundell's Will (one of several held here). Written in gorgeous flowing script it is a beautiful document and one of enormous importance for the School as our institution's existence hinges on the kind benevolence of his bequest.

Other items that have caught my interest have included Victorian copies of the Blundellian (handwritten and illustrated) by the students themselves (see overleaf the charming rendition from 1866 of a *Pescatorial Dilemma*). As the current Editor of the Blundellian it has been fascinating to track the changes in the publication across the past 160 or so years and it's certainly given me some food for thought.



I've found swords, seventeenth century wills, Victorian photographs, old schoolbooks (some of which are several hundreds of years old) among other treasures. Many amusing anecdotes can be found in the various punishment books and Common Room meeting notes of yesteryear, from the OTC boys being told not to bring their bayonets to class in 1917 to high spirited FH boys kidnapping a local horse in a bid to ride it in the 1960s.



I have recently welcomed Elsie and Bella from Year 9 who have asked to come up on a weekly basis to help me as part of the volunteering section of their D of E Award. They have already proved a delight and are keen to contribute to this newsletter with what they have discovered so please keep a look out for this!

Beyond caring for its physical contents, the Archive has a longstanding symbiotic relationship with both the OB Club and the Development Office so much of the rest of my time the past couple of weeks (when I'm not teaching over in the History Department) has been dealing with a variety of queries and projects for them. One of the more exciting things that has come out of this has been discussions with various quarters regarding a pathé reel of the 1936 Russell. Whilst not a new item (it has been inventoried a while!) it has certainly opened-up some interesting discussions regarding the digitising of the Archives and how to share our collection with the School Community, members of the public and academics.

Can you help?

As part of an enquiry from the Netherlands we are looking for a photograph of Allan Leslie "Ginger" Stooke Hallett (DB 1937-41). Stooke Hallett died in 1946 after a distinguished career in the RAF. If anyone has a photograph of him or is in touch with extended members of the Stooke Hallett family can you please be in touch at archive@blundells.org



HOW TO DONATE MATERIAL

Part of the archivist's role involves the continued expansion of the collection and as part of sorting through donations and bequests I came across this beautiful item. Left to us by a member of the Waldron Family, this 1920s Cooper 100 inch slide rule really is a thing of beauty and a rare survival, particularly in this superb condition and will hopefully form part of the OB Day Exhibition in June. If you are interested in leaving any material to the Archive, we are always keen to expand the collection, but please be in touch first with either myself or the Development Office so we can check that we are able to accommodate the material.

