



ARCHIVUM

Blundell's School Archive Newsletter

Photo in the archives of one of the statues that used to sit outside Old Blundell's. Date unknown.



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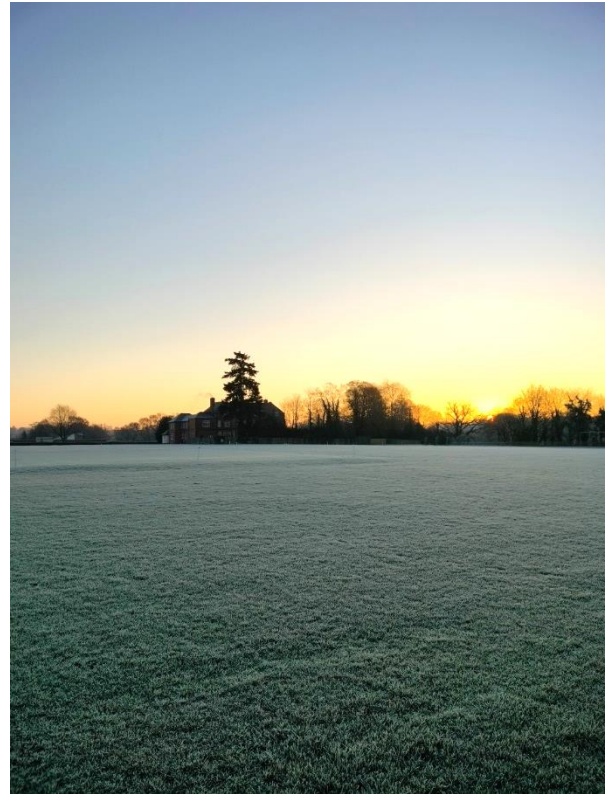
WELCOME TO ARCHIVUM

Happy New Year to *Archivum* readers near and far! I am writing up this edition following a fascinating morning of archive related training: 'An Introductory Course to Oral History Projects' run by Sarah Lowry at the Oral History Society. Sarah has twenty plus years of experience in the field, currently working on a big project with the Royal College of Physicians of London and has been an excellent guide to the theory behind oral history and the practical and legal requirements for recording these. I had the opportunity to rub shoulders with lots of PhD students and other archivists and hear all about their own projects, thus giving me some further good ideas for my own oral history project which should be underway in the coming months. As always, the Archive is busy but it has been a pleasant start so far to 2023.

CELF

‘Housekeeping’: what’s been occurring in January

Anyone still based in the South West will know how varied the weather has been here this month. Some days it has been blasting a gale and flooding (the Exe Valley Road had to shut at one point as the road by the Fisherman’s Cot was impassable!) whilst other days it has been beautifully crisp – my view over Big Field has been truly glorious at times in the morning frost. With things being a little quieter in terms of public outreach and enquiries I have used the opportunity this month to get on top of some of the practical side of the Archive: the appraisal and inventorying of new materials; reviewing the storage of certain items for preservation purposes (we now have some new storage for some of the medals, for example); working on the behind the scenes planning for the future digitising of the archives and upcoming anniversaries (2025 looks set to be a great year with 50 years of female students and the bicentenary of R.D. Blackmore’s birth); arranging the digitisation of various materials including Brian Jenkin’s video about Old Blundell’s from 1995 and organising the return of R.D. Blackmore items from an exhibition at Dulverton Heritage Centre.



Big Field in the morning frost; January 2023



Blundell’s First XV c. 1880

One particularly interesting enquiry this month was from Rugby School, who are putting together an interactive map of institutions all over the world with a long history of playing the sport for its bicentenary. As you know, we are very proud here of our rugby heritage. Our first recorded mention of the sport comes from *The Blundellian* in 1861, and our first recorded ‘rugger’ match comes from 1868 when we played Tiverton RFC. Initially, rugby was played on the Green in front of the Old School where our style was noted for its preference for ‘kick-and-rush’ hacking tactics. From 1870 the School moved to having a dedicated pitch in accordance to the new Rugby Rules and the rest, as they say, is history, with Clem Thomas and Richard Sharp playing on their national sides, and Exeter Chiefs and Gloucester counting Old Blundellians as team members to this day. I will let you know when their new website is available to share with you!

New Year 7 Scheme of Work: Rugby, Recriminations and Rascals

I was approached by Acting Head of English, Leah Thomas and Acting Second in Department, Hannah Perrin-Haynes at the end of last term about assisting them in redeveloping the Non-Fiction Scheme of Work for Year 7. The idea was to make the topic more appealing to the pupils by basing it around school history. I was able to dig around the archive for them, to share the following: letters and images from the late 1870s/early 1880s about the moving of the Old School to the current Horsdon Site; match reports and photos for Rugby from the early 1960s; the account of the School Boy Rebellion of 1787 and the memoir of Bamfylde Moore Carew, a famous 17th century scoundrel, who ran away from Blundell's to pursue a career in petty crime (and hopefully if time allows over the next decade, I am in the midst of researching a biography of him and have an forthcoming edition of the Rebellion – so watch this space!). The feedback seems to be that this has gone down really well with Year 7. I managed to grab a couple the other day to see what they thought as I was passing through SH and I leave you with a few quotes.... clearly the collab has gone well!

"I liked looking at the match reports – they were interesting and helped me to improve my vocabulary." – Freddie

"It's been fun seeing how naughty some of the students were." – Mattie

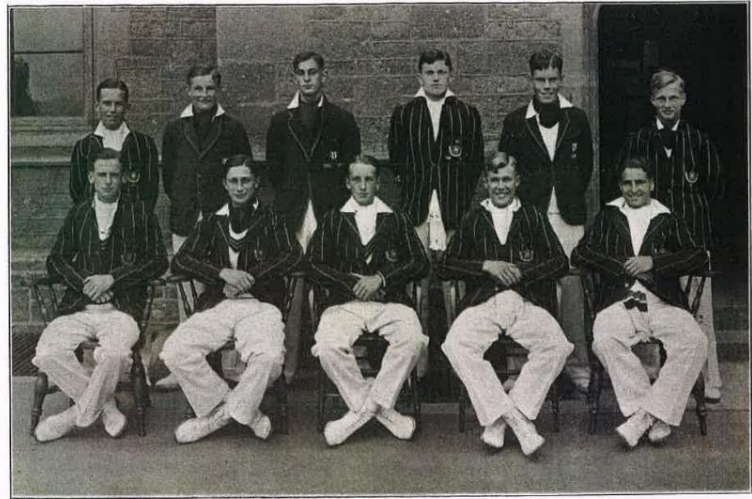
"I love how devious, brave and cunning he [Carew] was." – Barney

"I liked learning about the boy [Carew] going on adventures, and how the school has changed." – Briony



Above: Some of the watercolour images from 'A new and accurate history of the Rebellion against the usurper, Thomas Wood, by an honourable party of young men students at Blundell's School in the year 1787.'

Richard 'Dick' James



THE 1st XI.

One particularly interesting enquiry this month came from the archivist at Monkton School in Bath. They are putting together a database with biographies of former pupils who fought in the Second World War and wanted to find out more about Old Blundellian, Richard 'Dick' Whitfield James.

I was able to assist in finding records of his time at school. A member of Westlake, he was a monitor as well as an outstanding sportsman playing for both the First XI and First XV where he was described as 'a determined and enthusiastic cricketer' and 'a good defensive player; a strong tackle, allied to excellent kicking powers, made him an extremely difficult man to pass' in The Blundellians of 1932-3.

Thanks to this correspondence, I now have lots of interesting details of his post Blundell's career. He went on to become a solicitor and played for Blackheath RFC and then Bath. He was commissioned in the war as 2nd Lieutenant in the 4th Battalion, Somerset Light Infantry. Having landed in Normandy in June 1944 and following the death of his commanding officer early upon the battalion's arrival, he was charged with taking Hill 112, near Caen. The regiment history says: "Lieutenant Colonel James had only been in command for the past fourteen days and had already made the Battalion very much his own. Now his superb leadership and personal example were to inspire in his officers and men courage and tenacity never surpassed throughout the long campaign." Sadly during heavy shelling, he was killed by machine gun fire in the neck (nearly severing his head), whilst directing his own artillery from a tree. For his gallantry he was awarded the Territorial Decoration.

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Can you help?

I am looking for materials, particularly photos, from the 1990s. I appreciate these are precious memories that you might want to keep – but if you are happy for me to have a loan to scan anything you might have, they would be very welcome additions to the collection.