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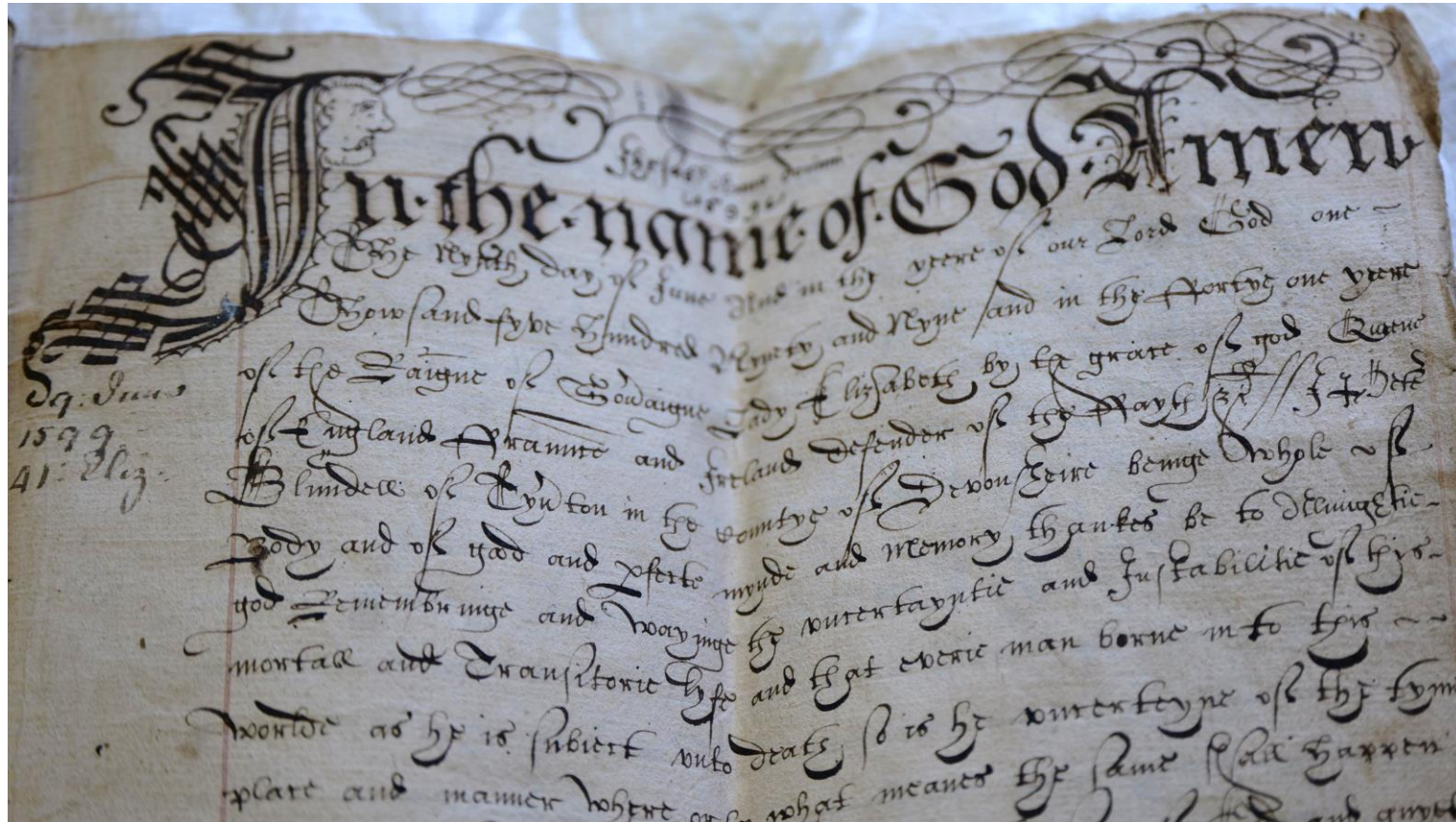
Echoes of  
Eternity:  
Blundell's  
Archives in  
the long 17th  
Century





Blundell's Archive is a mixed collection of 22,000 legal documents, wills, registers, photographs, paintings, ceramics, textiles and audio/video recordings dating back to around 1350.

The purpose of this virtual exhibition is to showcase the School's 17<sup>th</sup> century items and holdings to a wider audience with a bit of contextual knowledge.



This is one of the many copies held by the archives of Peter Blundell's will which was written in 1599. This copy was written in 1601. It lays out in great detail Blundell's vision of the school, for which he left £20,000 of his fortune, made as a cloth merchant in London.

**Will and probate of Peter Blundell of 1599; handwritten; dated 28.4.1601.**



**Detail from the will and probate of Peter Blundell,  
dated 28.4.1601.**

He was very explicit about who the school was for – it was to be for 150 boys for the most part born and bred in Tiverton before the age of six. Other students could be admitted if space allowed ('known as foreigners') with the agreement of ten Tiverton householders.

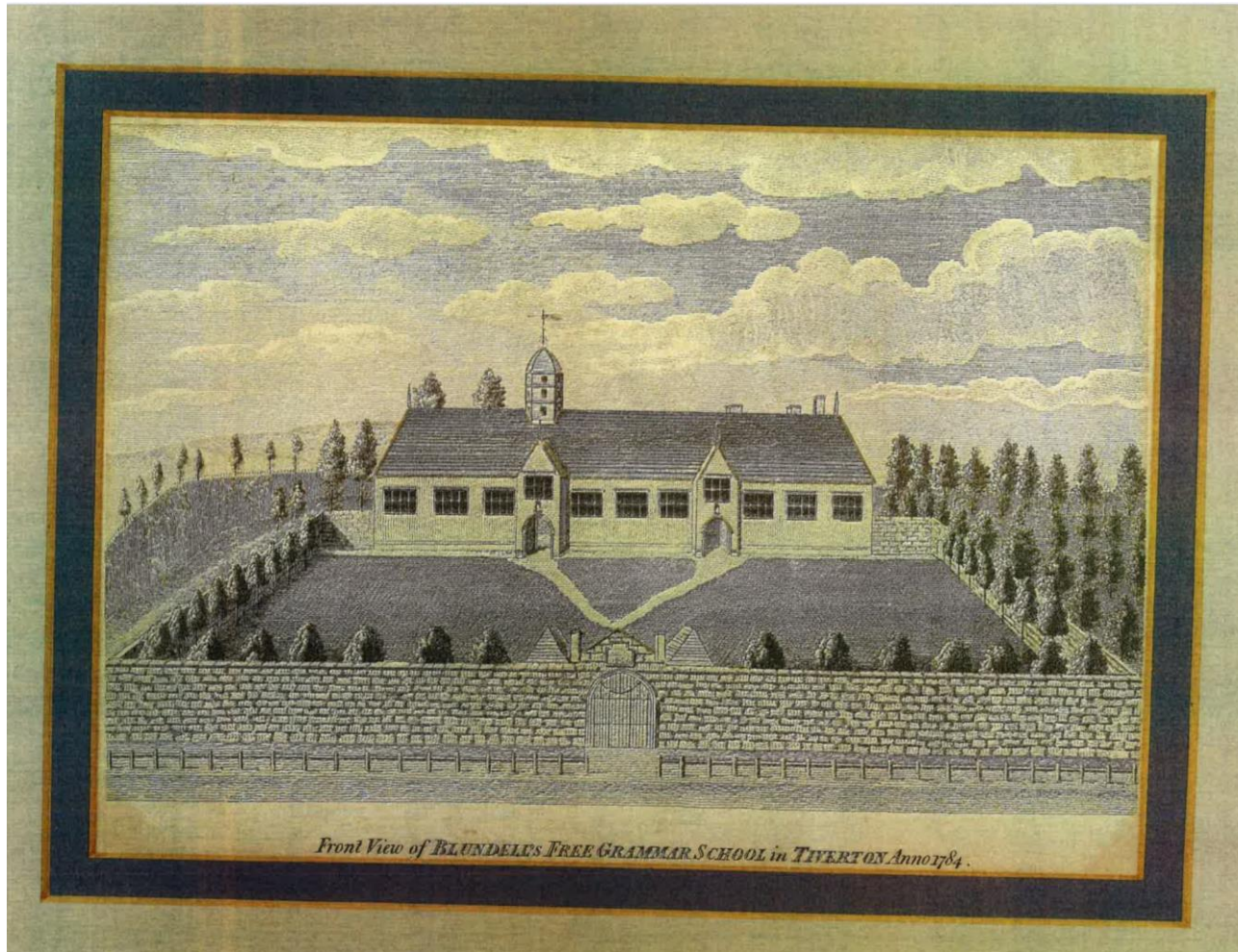
He went into detail in terms of the design – for example he stated that it should be 100 feet by 24 feet, with a hall, buttery and kitchen, with glass windows, barred with iron bars, oak supports, with a partition down the middle.



**Portrait of Sir John Popham of Wellington  
(1531-1607)**

This is one of our portraits of Sir John Popham. Sir John was the Chief Justice of England and described by Blundell as ‘my dear and honourable friend’. As one of the will’s executors he oversaw the foundation of the school after Blundell’s death in 1601.

It has been argued that one Blundell’s motivations for setting up the school was as a counter to the tumultuous religious upheaval of the preceding century post the reformation, to ensure that a generation of boys were educated in the Tiverton area to uphold protestant values. Certainly, if this was the case, this was a cause that Sir John Popham could get behind.



We do not have an image from this period of the school. This is our earliest image in the collection from 1784. We are not even entirely sure if 1604 is the date that teaching commenced, or whether it marks the foundation of the physical building. Certainly, we know Sir John was actively canvassing for teachers as early as 1601.

**Loose card; mounted black and white engraving of Blundell's School, in 1784, by W. Thomas; date produced c. 1790**



*Sketched & Drawn in Stone by M<sup>rs</sup> Doulton.*

*Printed by W. Haskell, Exeter.*

**Engraving by B. Rudge of Interior of Blundell's School;  
date produced c. 1860.**

Equally, we cannot be sure what the inside looked like in this period. All our images such as this, date from much later but match up with what Blundell prescribed in his will.

There were two teachers in this period, the Master and the Usher. Each would have overseen four to six 'forms' of boys who would have largely learned by rote on their knees (Blundell's Will doesn't mention desks). The curriculum was largely Latin and rhetoric, although other subjects such as mathematics and geography were made available for an additional fee.

Part of the partition screen survives in the care of the National Trust, who currently manage the Old Blundell's site. It was repurposed in the 1920s into this hat stand but you can still see the original 17<sup>th</sup> features of the screen.



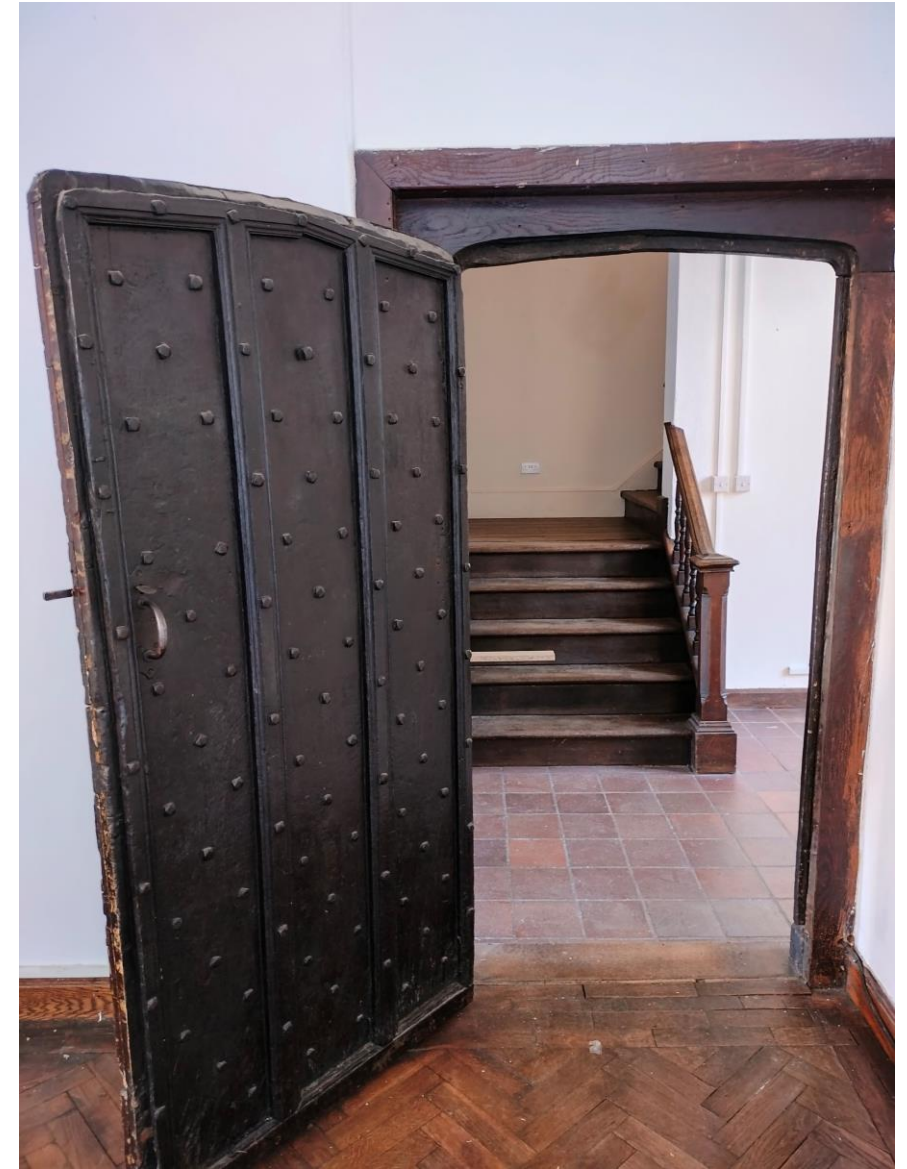
**Hat stand, 1920s held by the NT at Old Blundell's**





**Seventeenth-century details on the hat stand held by the NT at Old Blundell's**

Whilst the original building has been played around with a fair bit since the 1880s, there are still plenty of 17<sup>th</sup> century original features in the building, including the wainscoting in some rooms, beams, windows, fireplaces and doors. There are plenty of nods to these in the current Horsdon site, particularly in our current library, and round the Headmaster's study.



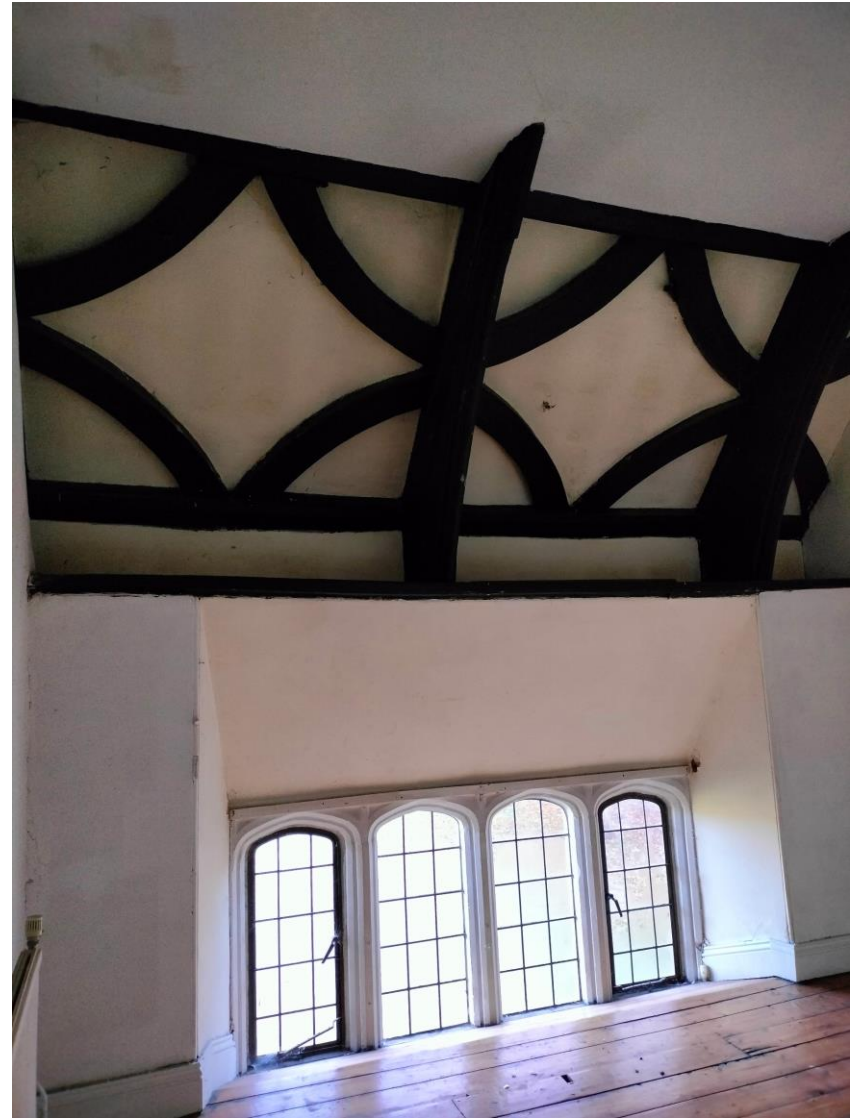
**One of the many original doors at Old Blundell's**



**Large open fireplace at Old Blundell's**



**Original door at Old Blundell's**



**Original design features in Old Blundell's**



**Windows at Old Blundell's**



Not all of our 17<sup>th</sup> century physical objects are held by the National Trust, however. Beyond our paintings of Sir John Popham, we have two early 17<sup>th</sup> century chairs, belonging to the Master and the other to the Usher. Both are kept on display in Ondaatje.

**17<sup>th</sup> century Master's Chair in Ondaatje**



We also have the 'school staffe' which was presented to the first Head Porter, Edward German, in 1699 which has been used ever since for ceremonial occasions, most recently our *Salvete Scholastici* service.

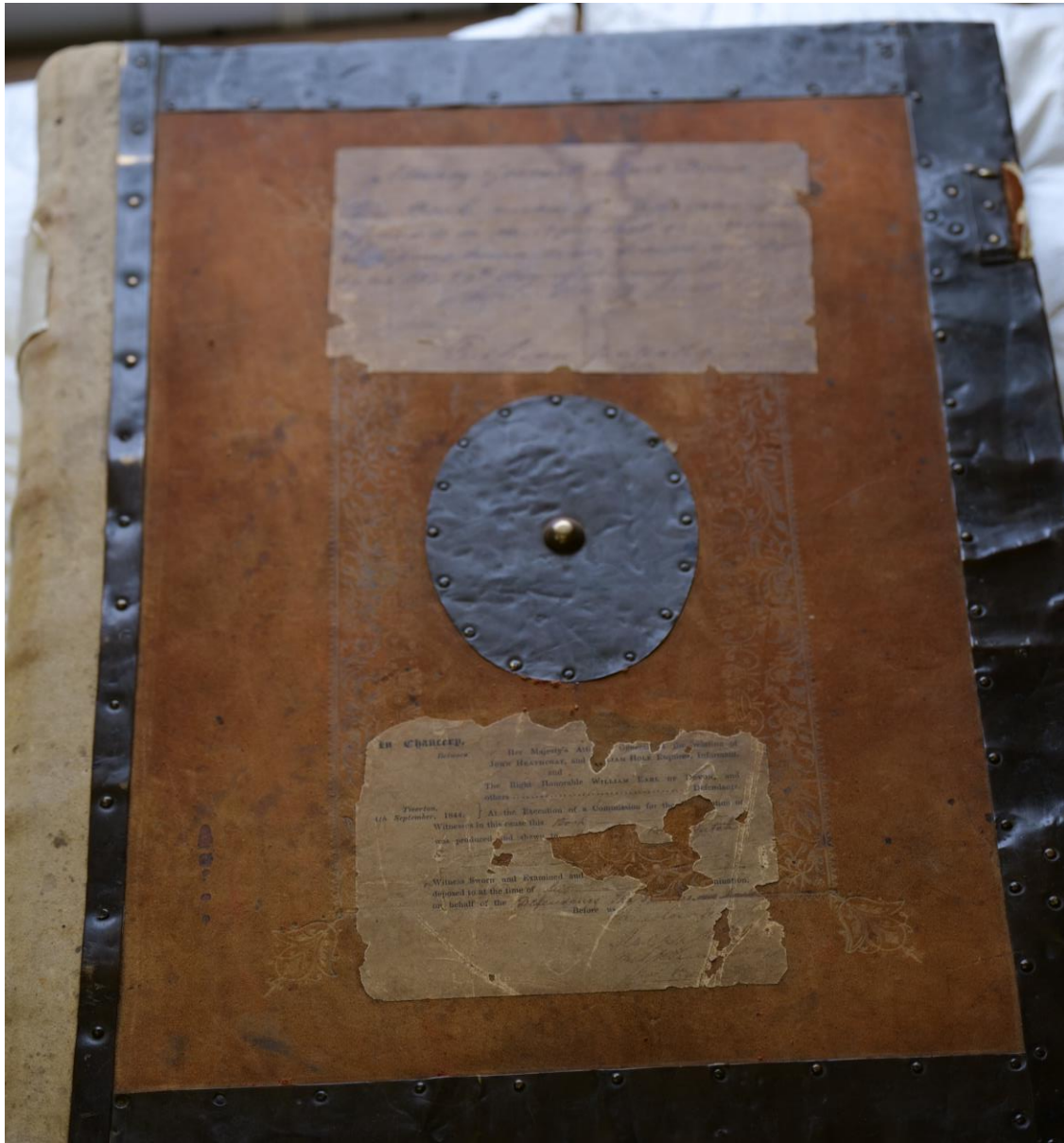
**Photograph of the Head Porter carrying the 'school staffe' in the tercentenary celebrations in 1904.**



Finally, the school holds this trunk, known affectionately as Peter Blundell's 'Tuckbox' which we believe was used to bring Peter Blundell's personal archive from London to the school. This included all the legal documents pertaining to his estate, which date back to 1456.

**Peter Blundell's 'Tuckbox', early 17<sup>th</sup> century**





One of the most important items held in the archives is the Great Account Book. It dates from 1610 and runs until 1792 and contains all the expenditure of the school.

This can be as mundane as physical expenditure on materials for and upkeep of the school, wages, as well as the incomes from various rents which supported the financial health of the school.

**The Great Account Book (1610-1792)**

The image shows two pages of an old account book. The left page has a header in Latin: "Hinc inde in re ad hunc per tres paginas Disbursemente ad hunc ad hunc ad hunc". Below this, there are several lines of text in Latin, followed by a list of entries. Each entry is followed by a date and a numerical value. The right page also contains a list of entries with dates and numerical values. The handwriting is in a cursive script, and the paper shows signs of age and wear.

Date	Description	Value
1610	...	...
1611	...	...
1612	...	...
1613	...	...
1614	...	...
1615	...	...
1616	...	...
1617	...	...
1618	...	...
1619	...	...
1620	...	...
1621	...	...
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1695	...	...
1696	...	...
1697	...	...
1698	...	...
1699	...	...
1700	...	...

Payments made in the Great Account Book suggest that the Old Blundell's building was finished around 1610.

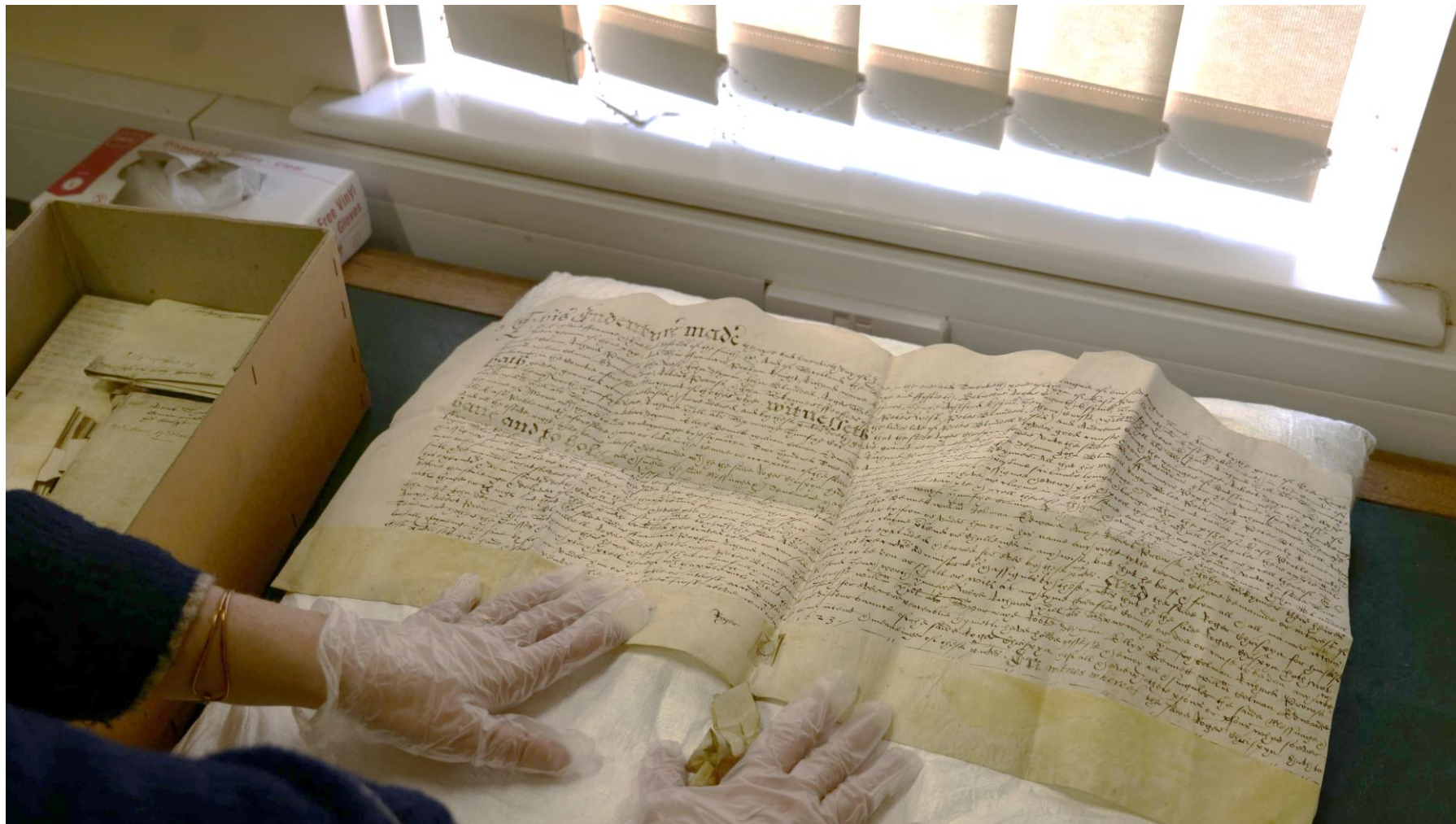
Detail from the Great Account Book (1610-1792)



**Our collection of 17<sup>th</sup> century leases and indentures**

There were also various pockets of land belonging to the school in and around Tiverton which were managed by the feofees who were put in place to manage the school's finances.

It is amazing to read recognisable names in lease and indenture documents such as 'Broad Lane' in documents from 1604 for example, which still remains an important artery in West Exe today.



**Lease from Blundell's feoffees to John Crispin yeoman of East Portlemouth, for surrender of rights and for £20, of messuage and tenement called Great Walland in the parish of East Portlemouth, for 99yrs on lives of said John Crispin sr, his wife Avis and their son John Crispin Jr, and William Collyn son of Peter Collyn son-in-law of Alexander, for 20s rent, 20.06.1672**



We have around forty of these leases from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, showing the terms and conditions of the lease and the monies raised. Many of them still bear the original seals at the bottom.

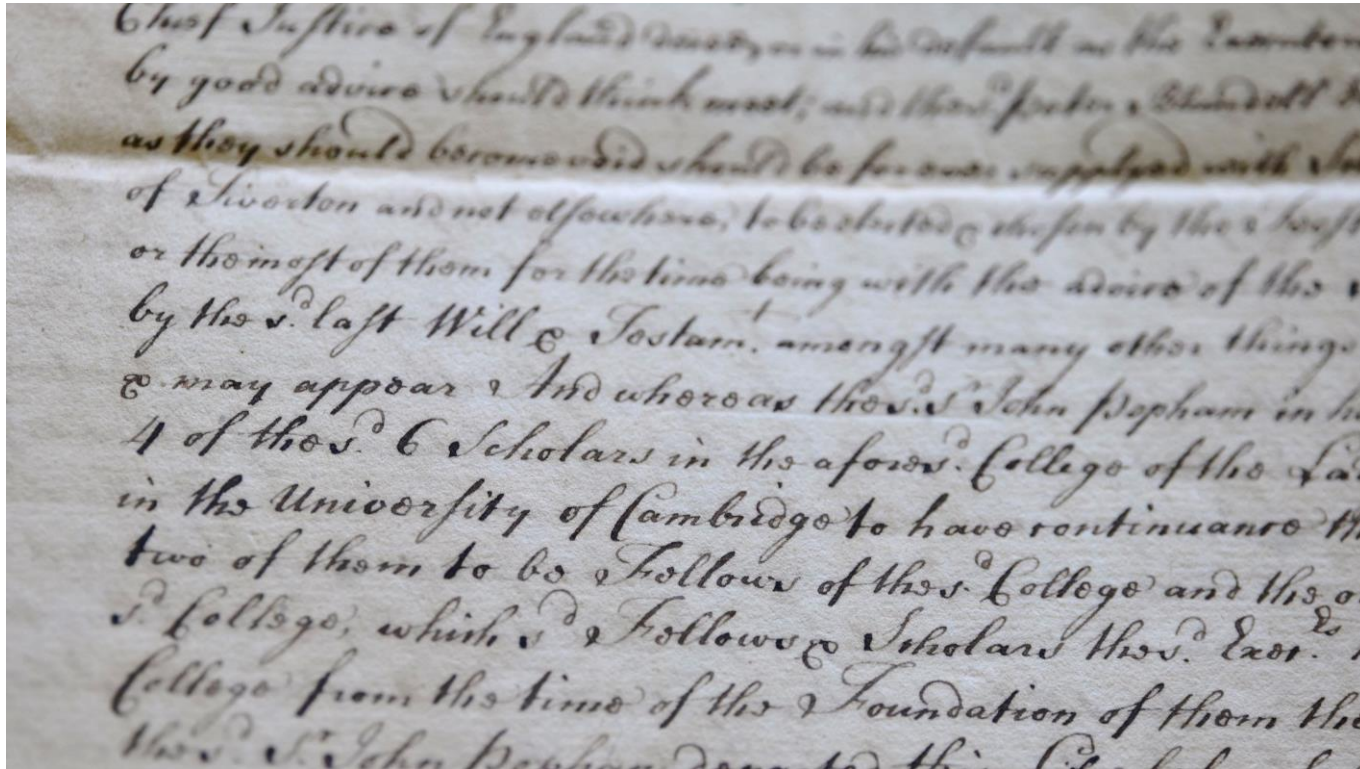
**Lease from Sir Francis Popham knight etc to John Nele yeoman of West Praull, his wife Alice and daughter Mary, for £10, for land at Little Walland in parish of Portlemouth and close of pasture adjoining, handwritten; dated 14.9.1604.**



**Lease from Blundell's feoffees to John Nele, yeoman of Portlemouth, for surrender of an estate granted to said John by Peter Blundell on and for £80, now lease capital messuage and farm called West Prawle, dated 16.8.1636**



**Close up of some of our 17<sup>th</sup> century lease seals**

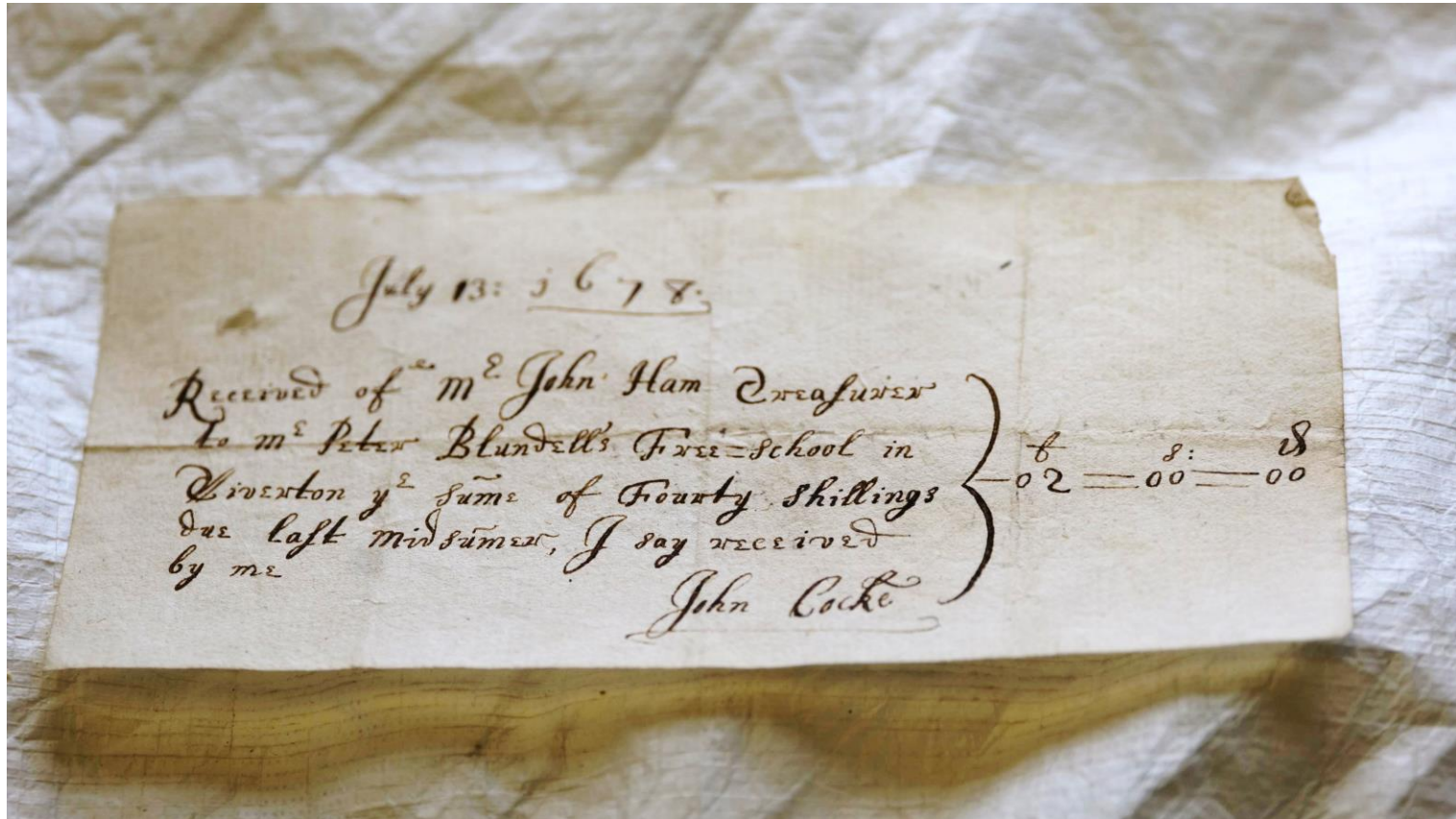


**Detail of Sir John Popham's 14.3.1602 appointment of scholars at Balliol, covenants between Popham and Balliol College 17.3.1604, and composition between feoffees and Sidney Sussex 13.6.1616**

Another series of important documents from this early period are the records pertaining to the foundation of university places at Oxford and Cambridge, as per the desire, outlined in Blundell's will.

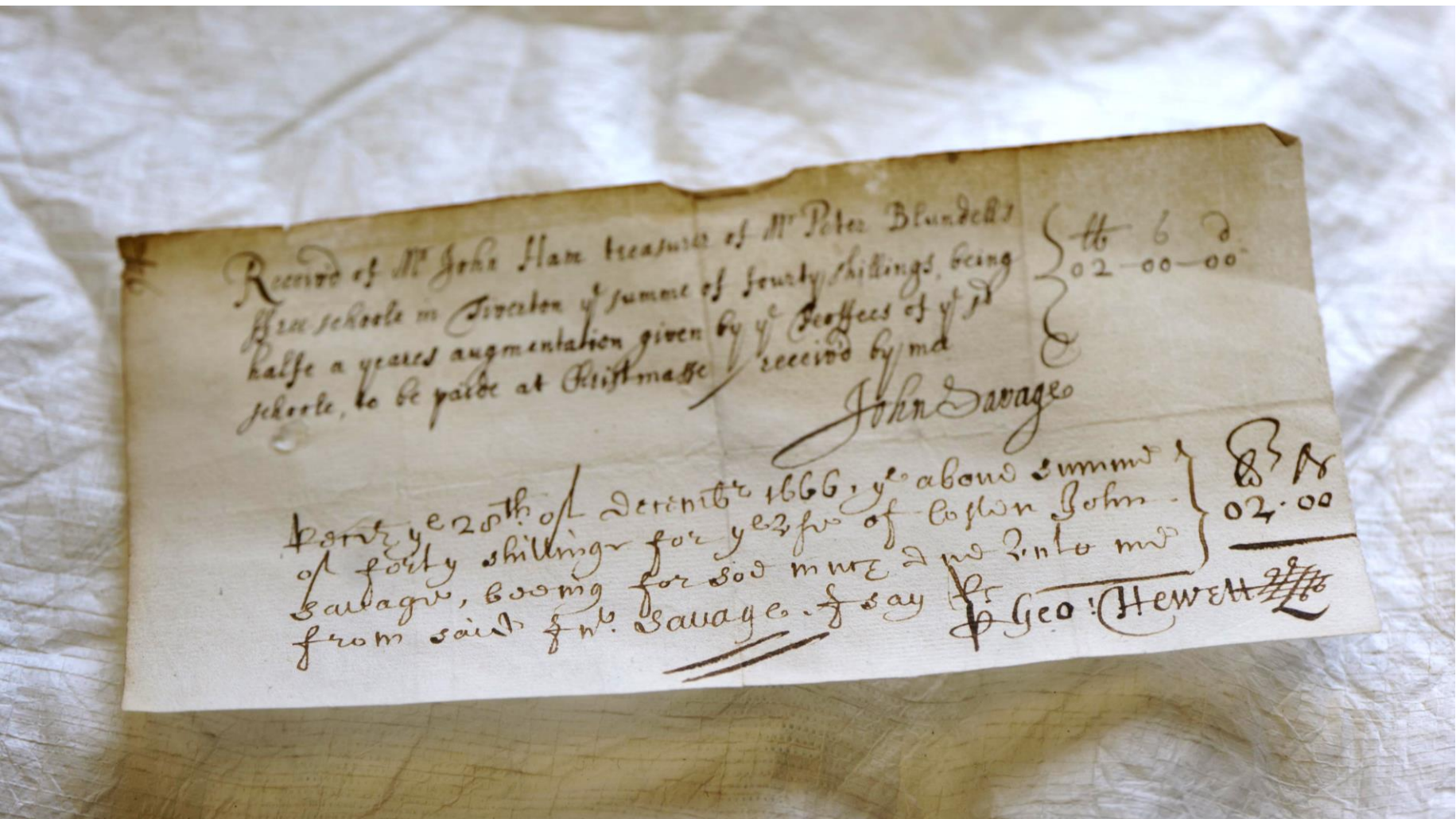
Again, Sir John Popham was instrumental in setting these up, as early as 1602, when he secured six places – two at his old college of Balliol in Oxford and four in Cambridge, split between the recent foundations of Sidney Sussex and Emmanuel.





The school paid £8 per scholar and £15 per fellow. The payments for these litter the Great Account Book during this period.

**Receipt from Blundell's feoffees of £2 for half year by John Cocke; dated 13.07.1678**



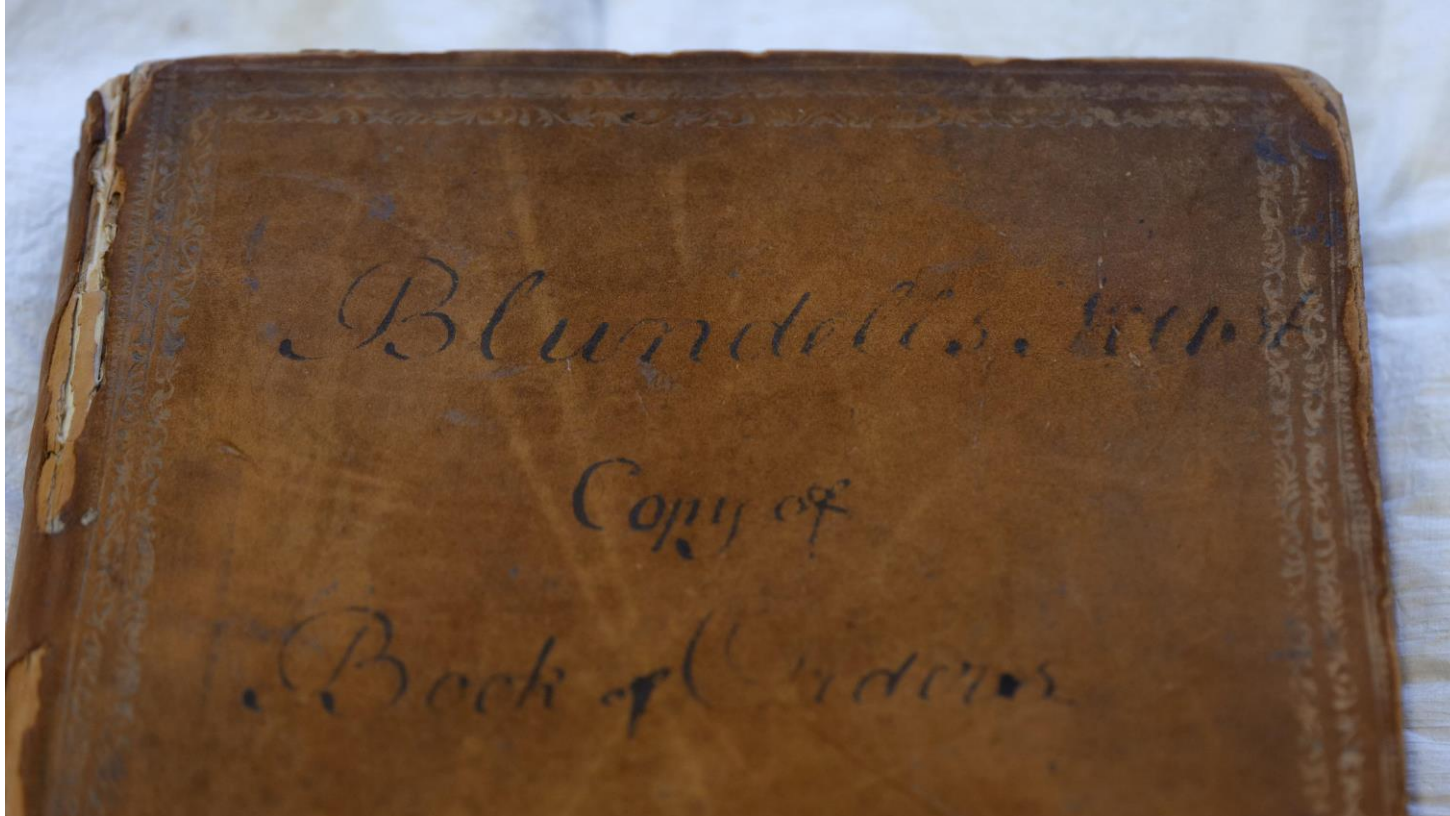
But beyond this we also have all the receipts for the monies sent to pay for the exhibitions of various scholars and fellows from the period, all signed off with beautiful 17<sup>th</sup> century flourishes.

**Receipt from Blundell's feoffees of £2 half year's augmentation by John Savage, and of said amount by William Hewett; dated 20.12.1666.**

June 20<sup>th</sup> 1676.  
Received of Mr John Ham Treasurer  
for Mr Peter Blundell's free school  
in Sinton the sum of forty  
shillings, being half a year's  
exhibition due unto me at midsummer  
last past, so I say, Received  
by me  
Abra: Channon.

} 40  
02-00.

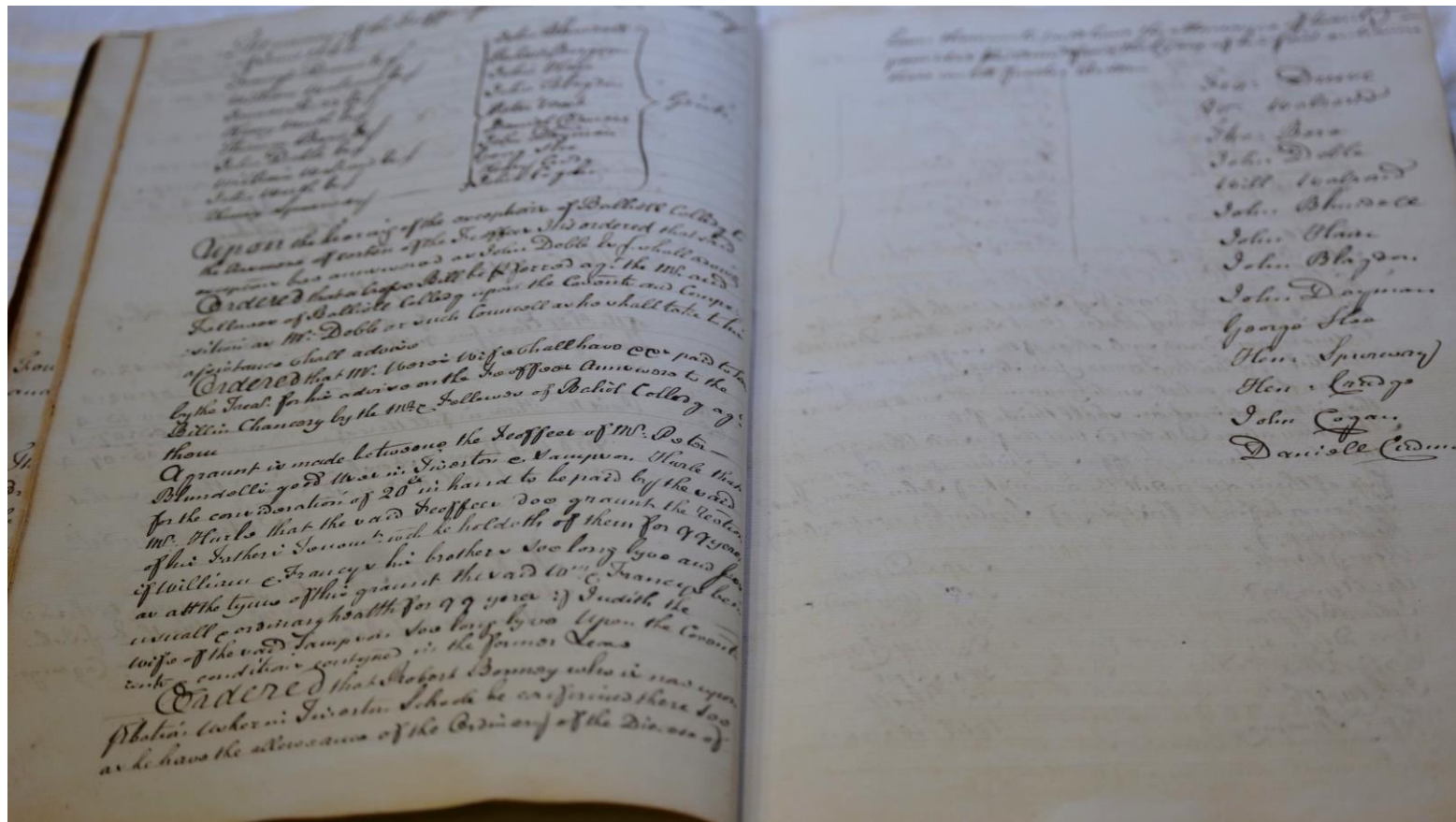
Receipt from Blundell's feoffees of £2 half year's exhibition by Abraham Channon; dated 20.06.1676.



**Front of the Book of Orders (1663-1847)**

Our other main source, the Order Book dates from a bit later from 1663 through to 1847. There are hints that there was an earlier one, but this is now lost to us.

In the Order Book the feofees met annually where possible to discuss the year the school had, in terms of appointments, financial health, building and maintenance plans and of course, the Oxford and Cambridge scholars.



These documents along with the Great Account Book give us a good idea of the priorities and financial health of the school in the period – those priorities being the establishment of the new school and a dedication to academic rigour, which remains to this day.

Inside of the Book of Orders (1663-1847)