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THE BOOK OF BLUNDELLS

Charles Noon

NEW EDITION

When Peter Blundell died in 1601 and so generously endowed a Free Grammar School in Tiverton, stating with minute exactness how it should be built and whom it should serve, it is debatable whether he can have looked to a future of 400 years – and counting.

And what a 400 years it has been, as author and Master at the School for more than thirty years, Charles Noon, relates. He tells how for many years income from lands at South Prawle enabled the School to be run with a surplus which was spent on heroic feasting and the endowment of generous scholarships to Oxford and Cambridge; how General Fairfax made the School his headquarters in 1645, and how the customs of Old Boys' Day grew up in the seventeenth century.

There are rebellions, fist fights and floggings, and the titanic battle which took place in the 1840s between the Liberals of Tiverton and the Masters and Governors, Tories to a man. The author pulls no punches, explaining how the School, immortalised in the pages of Lorna Doone, was nearly ruined by the squabbling and ensuing legal costs, yet through it all produced a stream of great men to serve Church and State.

Finally, Charles Noon recounts the story of the School's move to new premises in 1882 with under a hundred boys and how 'the Chief' (A.L. Francis) and his devoted staff raised the numbers to 250 within ten years. He tells movingly of the School's contribution in lives and service to two world wars; how it became a bubbling spring of culture whose visitors included Gill, Auden, Spender, C. Day Lewis and many great musicians; of famous Blundellians such as King of the Gypsies Bampfylde Moore Carew, Parson Jack Russell, R.D. Blackmore, Archbishop Frederick Temple and many more; of old customs such as jingling, treacling and spouting; and of high moments of sporting and academic achievement.

Charles Noon taught history at Blundell's for more than thirty years, latterly as Head of Department. He is currently the School's Archivist in charge of a fascinating collection of documents that chronicle the School's 400-year story, and this book is the product of many years study of that rich past. He has published a well-received biography of Parson Jack Russell, a famous Old Blundellian of the nineteenth century, and has recently completed a new study of the town and community of Tiverton.

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An early 'football' team. The setting is probably West Exe Rec.



Adieu to the home for 278 years.



Off to camp at Tidworth in 1909.



OB Day 1880.



Example of a double page spread.



Big School about 1910. The present Library.