



# Blundell's

Mrs King, Chairman of Governors, Governors, Chairman of Mid Devon Council, Mr Mayor,  
Ladies and Gentlemen, Blundellians

'A week is a long time in Politics'. So said Harold Wilson. This week has also been a long week in Politics too of course. Has it really only been a week? One thing that has really stood out to me (as a Politics teacher) has been the level of engagement there has been in the issues of the day amongst Blundellians. That has been fascinating to watch, whatever your personal view of the outcome. As our children (yours and mine) are the future of our nation, they have every need to be interested in the changes we are making as they will be theirs to ratify. There has been a buzz of conversation about the future of the UK in the Dining Room, in the gym, as people wait outside classrooms and even in the staff room! We shall capitalise on that and I know the forthcoming school year will be a proactive and exciting one.

This year saw the sad demise of boxer and political campaigner Mohammed Ali. Amongst his many observations, he once said; 'The man who views the world at 50, in the same way as he did at 20, has wasted 30 years of his life'. The world does change and the education we give our children has one sole purpose. To prepare them to make the right decisions for us when they are in our place.

For us at Blundell's the future will bring a closer working relationship between our Prep and Senior Schools and in this way we shall hope to ensure a seamless transition from childhood through to the challenges meeting our School leavers today, of whom we are very proud. Today, on this last day of term, we say farewell to them and to you their parents, but I hope you will agree they are well prepared for the journey they are each individually going to make in the months and years ahead.

My role today is of course to highlight just a few of the achievements of the year and then to reassure you of the paths we look to take as a School in the year ahead.

We have certainly been able to fit a lot into our year since we met here last, and academically the leavers of last year set the bar very high with some terrific A level and GCSE results. There was a feeling of relative calm and purpose on results day last August as the options opened up and I am sure this year will be equally good.

The Upper 6<sup>th</sup> sitting here last year, in your seats, saw 2/3rds of their grades at A\*-B, and the large number of OBs who have kept in touch with us through university this year have really proved that the study skills they developed in Westlake and in their final year have set them up well for the challenges of university study and life.

The Year 11s of last year, who now eagerly await their AS results, saw the percentage of A\* grades go up from 20 to 26%. Our university offers for 2016 have been varied and achievable – a just reward for all the hard work you have all put into your applications. Once again this year, for the third year running, four students gained offers from Oxford and Cambridge, Ben Ames to read Earth Sciences, Natalie Cotton to read Natural Sciences, Sylvia Mills to read Philosophy and Linguistics and Eleanor Ansell to read Psychological and Behavioural Sciences.

The Upper 6<sup>th</sup> this year have, I have to say, been terrific and deserve the very best of luck with their results. The Westlake extension opened as you know in September, adding 10 new rooms to accommodate the 6<sup>th</sup>

Form more comfortably, and the new library and study centre have been really well used. We can't really remember how we ever did without that space. The Upper 6<sup>th</sup> commitment to their work, and also to the very broad extra-curricular life of their school has been outstanding, and if anyone truly deserves success, it is them. I doubt there are many Heads who would meet more of their Upper 6<sup>th</sup> pupils arriving to work in the boarding house in the holidays, than they perhaps do in the middle of the week. However, that is not confined to the Upper 6 as the Lower 6 (year 12) have also been very proactive and a number of them were also making the library for their chosen revision location over the Easter and half term too.

The Musicians have been incredibly busy, and I was delighted that so many of you were able to join us for our carol service in Exeter Cathedral last December. Having finally found a suitably impressive and large venue to hold a whole School service, you will be pleased that this will now be a biennial event and the carol service in 2017 will be held there.

We have had some superb concerts like 'Blundell's at the Shows', often using the venue of the Ondaatje Theatre which adds a really intimate feel to the performances, and for those who were able to join us at St George's Chapel in Bristol last term, the Chamber musicians and choir also performed with professionalism and style.

Next year, Dr Leaman has big plans for us and at the forefront will be a year-long project with the London Chamber Orchestra, whose key instrumentalists will be joining us at different times throughout the year to run workshops for us and local schools. The culmination will be a spring concert with a difference at which the professional London orchestra will perform alongside our own players, from the Prep and Senior schools. That will be a once in a lifetime chance for our pupils to play alongside some of the very best professional musicians in the world.

I must congratulate the Drama department and the casts of the many different productions we have seen performed this year. From the hilarious and irreverent House plays to the impressive year 7-13 production of 'Street Child' the Barnardo story with its 60 strong cast, it has been a productive and very entertaining year.

Perhaps one of the more unusual pieces was the very recent year 9 and 10 play, 'Star Crossed' which was devised entirely by the cast. For me, it was as well written and imaginatively staged as any professional play I have seen and I know that the large cast and crew, spanning four different year groups, were really challenged but eventually succeeded in creating a thought-provoking story which was very believable. It was in my view, an example of drama in education at its best. Fiona Baddeley, our former Head of Drama who so sadly passed away in January this year would have been so proud of all that the department and the pupils have achieved.

The high standards that Fiona expected and encouraged continue, as we look forward to 'Into the Woods' coming to the Ondaatje stage as a joint collaboration between Music and Drama in the autumn and the new Year 7 and 8 production for the spring will be 'Far from Home', the sequel to 'Street Child'. There has been a great deal going on in the Creative Arts arena including a visit by Jenny Beavan, the Oscar winning costume designer of The King's Speech, Mad Max and many other projects as our guest of honour at the Creative Arts dinner.

For those who weren't able to join us for the champagne reception on Monday evening, I hope if you have time at the end of the day, you will take the short walk through the Art and Design and Technology exhibitions of GCSE and A level work, as well as the 40 years of Photography exhibition put together by our retiring Head of Photography Steve Goodwin.

On the sporting front, as you would expect me to report, we have had a really terrific year. At the start of the term, Neil Rollings a well know Independent School coaching expert reviewed Blundell's sport and noted above all that Blundellians, irrespective of age, show as he put it, 'an industry leading' commitment to their own fitness and team sport. He noted in particular, the real value the pupils place on putting their best efforts

into something, even if they do not win, and that is perhaps the standout characteristic of Blundellians, past and present. This is at its height of course in the Russell which was won in excellent time by Karl Still and Jenny Mettam. To win the Senior Russell race literally takes years of preparation and to see both these most dedicated and determined of athletes win this year so graciously was a real pleasure indeed.

Whilst I can never sadly highlight every single achievement (the staff sweepstake on the length of my speech would be seriously undermined if I did), I would like to just recognise a few. The 1<sup>st</sup> XV rugby team finished off their season in fine style, reaching the final 4 of the National Championships and beating giants like Barnard Castle, Millfield and Canford along the way.

They were a great example to us all of how important a belief in your capacity to win really is. The England football team could take a leaf out of their book! They had played as a team for many years, becoming firm friends along the way and when they went out to play the tough Durham School on that cold misty day, just a few meters from where we are sitting now, we just knew they would win. And they did.

We shall really miss many of the core elements of that team who saw the largest number of full colours for rugby awarded in recognition of their passion for the game. We shall also miss many of you, their parents too. The touchline on a Saturday afternoon on Big Field will seem very quiet without you.

The girls' hockey squads have also continued to build in strength and expertise and the Under16 girls reached the Olympic park once again for the National finals.

The boys' hockey and football have also enjoyed good seasons, as have the netball squad who won over 70% of their matches with a relatively young side. The swimmers, tennis teams and rounders have all enjoyed their competitive seasons and fives goes from strength to strength with our continued support from Chris Hedley Dent and Wayne Enstone. The athletes have seen significant regional representation once again, with two members of the team, Lucy Walliker and Trixie Nicholson proceeding for at least the 2<sup>nd</sup> time to the National Schools Athletics Championships at Gateshead.

No-one could accuse Blundell's of not having a varied offering and it has been really good to see the canoeing and sailing squads growing in professionalism. We should take note, once again, of the commitment from the two crews, one boys and one girls over Easter this year which saw Dougal Glaisher and Francis Huntingford win the nationally renowned Devizes to Westminster canoe marathon in appalling conditions.

The equestrian team, for an amazing third year running, won the National Arena Eventing championships at Addington, which I am sure will be of interest to our guest speaker Mrs King, and having put both Millfield, and last Saturday Sherborne very firmly in the second place position on the 1<sup>st</sup> XI cricket pitch, we shall be wishing Rob Turner the best of luck as he leaves us this term, having run cricket at Blundell's for the past 10 years.

Mr Liam Lewis will be taking over the reins as Head of Cricket next term, alongside the appointment of Alfonso Thomas, ex-Somerset and South African fast bowler, who will coach here in all age groups, part-time from the Autumn term. Julian Wyatt is also undertaking some individual cricket coaching alongside that provided by Aaron Flamson our excellent tennis coach, Harry Jones in hockey and Tony Yapp in rugby who continues in his role as our director of performance and player development. All our professional coaches spend time at both Senior and Prep Schools during the week.

Outdoor Pursuits have certainly been a serious focus this year too, once again, as you would expect and we make the very most of our location amidst some of the most stunning and challenging terrain.

Ten Tors was well supported and very successful despite yet more weather. The boys and girls have now undertaken far more Duke of Edinburgh work through the CCF and the following have completed their Gold

Duke of Edinburgh this year: Becky Brinkley, Bethany Squires, Eleanor Ansell, Jenny Mettam, Emily Combe and Tabi Unsworth-White alongside five pupils from last year's Upper 6<sup>th</sup>.

The Charity committee has itself worked tirelessly this year again under the guidance of Miss Lucy Elzik who is sadly leaving us after six happy years. The committee have again run a number of excellent events, some of which are fast becoming a 'tradition' such as the Comedy Night with Dom Holland, Blundell's Unplugged, the School Fete, charity art exhibitions and the Pilbo crazy tie day. There cannot be one single Blundellian who has not contributed in some way to the charity fund-raising and community service work we have completed this year. To be able to raise the huge total of just over £19,500 for in excess of 20 local, national and international charities is a wonderful testimony to their hard work and generosity.

So as you can see, I am sure, in preparing the pupils here for the next big decisions they will need to make in their lives, the Blundell's staff have once again gone above and beyond what would just be a part of their normal teaching role.

At this time of year, inevitably in all schools, it is a time for some fond farewells to our friends on the staff. Within Blundell's Senior School, we have a total of 128 academic and instrumental teaching staff. At the end of this term we see 16 of those leaving us this year. The majority of our leavers are either relocating for personal reasons or have earned well-deserved promotions. The latter is the case for Karyn Wilson who will become a Housemistress at Strathallan, Luke Wynell-Mayow who becomes Head of Academic Music at Pangbourne College, Paul Gordon who becomes Assistant Director of Music at Dauntsey's and Clare Sherwood (with husband Simon) who takes up the role as Head of Llandaff Cathedral School in Cardiff.

Other departing staff I have not already mentioned are; Nicola Clancy, our Senior Nurse, Camilla Bacon, Lydia Reeder, Matt Taylor, Carys Wilson, Sarah Davies and Thetis Abela who we wish well on the birth of her beautiful twin girls. Two of our long standing music teachers are retiring; Fiona Greaves and Julian White.

There is no doubt that you have all given a great deal to your pupils and colleagues in your time here with us. We, as a staff, have already had our chance to bid you farewell but I would be grateful if as a School, we could join in a round of applause for all our most recent leavers today.

Amongst our leavers this year we shall also see four members of staff retire after quite a number of years, and I shall just take a few moments to talk about their contribution to our School in more depth.

Pauline Black has been a member of the teaching staff since 2003 when she was appointed into a part-time role as PSHE and Religious Studies Teacher. Having had significant pastoral responsibility at her previous school Pauline worked originally for two short term appointments, the second in English, and as often happens with the very best teachers, she made herself indispensable very quickly. Her two terms became 13 years. It is so clear from all I know about Pauline that she has been hugely committed to giving her best to Blundell's, in whatever role she was asked to do, of which there have been many. She has very clear interests and strengths in the support of our younger pupils and has been a kind and supportive School House tutor for many years. Pauline is a great fan of the outdoors, both in terms of walking and gardening and has helped with various sports including her special area of expertise, cricket, as she is a Somerset and MCC player. Our girls played the MCC for the first time this year.

For all of us, Pauline Black is a quietly thoughtful person with real personal integrity. She has been a truly loyal and dedicated member of staff and to me, quietly behind the scenes, a wise and loyal friend who has shown her kindness and generosity in many unseen but tangible ways.

Christine Rebuffet began her career in England as a teaching assistant in Crediton, and once here, we have not been able to let her go home. She has had a long career of teaching both English as a foreign language and French joining Blundell's from her role as Lecturer in Modern Languages at East Devon College in 2001. During the last 15 years, Christine has been a very committed and creative teacher, always preparing

meticulously for her classes and she has the highest possible standards. She has been a great asset to the languages team and also has been a supportive tutor in School House too.

Christine has strong principles and she believes deeply and passionately in the importance of high academic aspiration. She really cares about the way education is developing, as well as the part we all play in preparing pupils for the global workplace they will be entering and her insight has helped us in many different ways. I have felt it a privilege to work with her over the last four years. I have appreciated Christine's quiet sensitivity and personal kindness to me and to many and I thank her for all that she has done for Blundellians in her career.

There are really very few roles that Alistair Deighton-Gibson has not done in Blundell's and even fewer things he does not know. He is very much a part of our DNA and he will always be so. From Alistair's first years here as a teacher of Biology, Chemistry and Geology in 1981 he has worked very hard to support and guide the pupils in his care. Alistair has been involved right the way across the extra-curricular spectrum including being in charge of Hockey, swimming and taking the 2<sup>nd</sup> XV rugby for many years. (Only Mr Menheneott has been trusted with this great honour since). Ali, as he is fondly known to all of us, is a grade 8 trombonist and a keen rower too but most in evidence since I first met him anyway has been his combined passion for cricket, in his role as President of Heathcoat's Cricket Club (the extension facility for Blundell's cricketers) and also fly fishing.

In 1995, Alistair took on the role coordinating local PR and media relations and ran successful Easter holiday revision courses, after which he became the Housemaster of the boys' day House, Milestones until the decision was made to bring day boys into the other senior boys Houses.

When I first met Alistair he was standing with two boys in Year 8, casting a fly fishing line across the lawn outside my office window on a sunny Thursday afternoon, just as everyone else was heading home. He explained to me when I went over to chat to them, that he had brought his fishing rod in for the boys to try out as they were thinking of buying a new one. That was very typical of the teacher I have known in my short time here.

He is kind and committed, he does what he thinks is right and he will always support an interest of his pupils. He has been hugely committed and loyal to the School and has turned his hand to whatever has been put his way. Alistair's own institutional memory has filled in many a gap for me and I know that whilst the last few months have not been at all easy, he has continued to put all he can into the teaching of the younger year groups that have become his trademark. He will, without doubt, be much missed by us all.

Steve Goodwin's first file note is on that translucent pink paper that came through a secretary's typewriter way back then, as he joined Blundell's in 1976, and then again as a part time teacher in 1985. He took on a further full time role in 1987 and as a result of his significant talents in the department, Steve took over as the Head of Art in the early 90s. There is no doubt that fostering creativity in such a multi-faceted School is a challenge for all Heads of Department, and Steve has always been single-minded in his wish to get the very most out of the pupils in his care. As the Department Head he oversaw significant changes in education implemented and he was fortunate to be the very first Head of Art to take up residency in the Ondaatje arts development adjacent to the theatre. From the time that Steve gave up the role as Head of Art to concentrate on his other projects, he has continued to be a really thoughtful and inspiring teacher and colleague. Photography, which is his passion, has flourished under his leadership and his pupils today, after a 40-year career, still find his own personal passion for that subject a real inspiration. The surprise party they laid on for him last week was clear evidence of that.

Steve is almost allergic to fuss and he will not be comfortable in the limelight I know, but he deserves this one moment out of the dark room where I am sure he would rather be, for us to celebrate the fact that he has fostered careers both of the students and of his artists in residence over many years. We thank Steve for all that he has done over the last 40 years and wish him the very best of times in his retirement which will be spent with camera in hand no doubt.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to Clare Sherwood, with whom I have had the privilege of working closely over the last four years. Clare joined Blundell's as the new Deputy Head Academic in September 2011 as Eve Jardine-Young moved to take on the Headship of Cheltenham Ladies College. To all that know Clare well, they will recognise the person I describe. The word enthusiastic is possibly an understatement when it comes to describing Clare, but in addition to that, she is an articulate, dynamic and an intellectual leader in her own right. She works incredibly hard and loves the challenge of learning how to do something that she has never tried. You should try and get between Clare and a maths problem and see how you get on. She is pretty competitive I can tell you.

Over the last five years, Clare has encouraged us all, and I include you as parents in this, to raise our academic aspiration and she combines really clear thinking creativity with an attention to detail and understanding of the need to listen carefully to whatever a pupil, parent or teacher needs to say.

Clare is very well known to many because she encourages people to come and talk to her. She never hides away from trying to solve the more difficult issues and she is endlessly patient with everyone, including me. She is a complete professional but as a friend, Clare is also warm, funny and kindness personified. She has been a really supportive tutor in GH and a key player in the staff netball team too. What will they do without her! I couldn't be more delighted to see Clare move on to run a school of her own. They are very lucky to have found her and she will be a very good Head indeed. The question is, though, will they have enough discos where she is going and are they ready for a Head that loves to dance?

We wish Clare, Simon, Oliver, Katie and Adam the very best of luck with the new excitements that await. Please join me in thanking Clare for all she has done (and I have something for you from all of us).

The new staff who will be joining us next year come from a wide range of different school settings and interestingly experience from the professional world outside education too. They include this year three who have worked in highly rated academic international schools.

One of these is Charles List who will join us as our new Deputy Head Academic from a school about as far away for Blundell's as you can get; Pembroke School in Adelaide, Australia.

Charles attended Ipswich Boys School and gained a BSc and a PGCE in Chemistry from Durham University. He is currently the Head of Science at Pembroke which is one of the leading Independent Schools in South Australia. It is a co-ed non selective boarding and day school with 1800 pupils aged 5-18. They deliver both IB and the Australian equivalent of A levels at Sixth Form and Charles is directly responsible for the teaching of Science in the Middle and Senior Schools and is part of the School's strategic academic committee. Charles and his wife Kate plus their three boys will be joining us in January, and I am hugely grateful to Graham Baily as Head of Sixth Form, Bruce Wheatley, Academic Head of Year 7-11 and Doug Morrison, Curriculum Manager, alongside other members of the Senior Leadership team who will be covering elements of Clare's role in the Autumn term.

As I move on briskly to the end of what I have to say today, I shall remind you that our school developments last year focused heavily of improving our site, with the large extension to Westlake, and the full refurbishment not only of North Close, but also of the Chemistry lab and a total overhaul of the workshop in Design and Technology.

We are not planning such a huge range of physical changes this year as, alongside the significant traffic calming measures that will be put in by Devon County Council along Blundell's road through July and August, but we have decided to undertake a range of detailed surveys and assessments of our site over the summer, in order to have a clearer idea of where our next investment should be and what can bring the most significant benefit to the future of both the Senior and Prep Schools.

For the coming year, and for the next few years, our future strategy is to work in far closer alignment with Blundell's Prep School, in the classroom and outside too. Development this coming year at the Senior School will see us concentrate in the classrooms on ensuring that pupils are prepared well for the newly reformed GCSE and A level courses and we have exciting plans in Music, Drama, Sport and Outdoor Pursuits as I have already outlined.

Next year will see a re-launch of our programme for those pupils in the School who wish to stretch themselves academically, scholars and otherwise. Led by Andrew Berrow, it will be called the Phoenix Society and aims to offer a range of exciting trips and opportunities to Blundellians in order to widen their horizons, stimulate their interests and, as they get older, to support them in developing their understanding of an academic field that interests them.

I would just like, if I may, to thank a few essential people. Top of that list would be our Board of Governors who encourage us all to aim high. On a personal level Cedric Clapp, our Chair has been a great support to me, and life would certainly not go on without the dedicated hard work of Helen Tucker, my PA and the kind listening ear of my husband Spencer.

I would like to thank all the Senior Leadership Team for their continued support. It is a great pleasure to work with Andy Southgate and all his team and I thank Paul Waterworth, the outgoing chairman of the OB club too. The Bursar, David Chambers, all the Bursary and administration staff who have worked so tirelessly, as well as Amber Oliver and her development and marketing team. We look forward to Mrs Joanna Jeffrey joining us in September as our first Director of Marketing and Communications.

The majority of work behind the scenes comes from the other 200 support staff of Blundell's including Craig Sampson, our Chef and Geoff Edwards, Catering Manager, the catering team, the IT department, and all our technicians. We thank the Sanatorium staff, who will be led by Irene Horsey, Senior Nurse next year and the kind and long suffering matrons for all the least glamorous things they do in the houses. Of course we can easily take for granted the beautiful place that we live and work and that is all down to the grounds, gardens and domestic staff for their hard work and efforts all the way through the year. The long summer holiday that beckons for some of us is often the busiest time for them. Thank you on behalf of all the pupils and staff for all that you do.

To finish where I began, I spoke about the need for our children to be prepared for the future, whatever political, economic or social developments that brings. It is a sobering thought to consider the fact that no matter what uncertainty lies ahead of us it is nothing to that of our forebears.

100 years ago today, on the 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1916, the battle of the Somme was launched. By the end of that day, just a few hours from now, 58,000 men had lost their lives following the orders of those who were too distant from the realities to know what the war would actually mean. By the time the Battle of the Somme began, 60 OBs had already perished in the first world war and 22 year-old Lt. Philip Perkins died on this day. That is 10% of the School as we sit here today. Those men had been boys here, they had walked the same paths, sung in the same chapel and played rugby and cricket on these very same school pitches. They then gave their lives for all of us. They did not have a choice. The politicians decided and asked for their trust and their courageous obedience to the cause.

I am very proud that at Blundell's there is evidence that we are educating the next generation to be thoughtful, to challenge and to think broadly about the repercussions of their actions in the wider world, ready for when they become the decision makers of tomorrow.

Our School Monitors this year have typified this attitude and I would like to thank all of them and in particular the Heads of School, Chris Hamilton and Emma Jackman and their Deputies Arthur Friend and Georgie Scott for their leadership and wise counsel.

Their successors as Heads of School, Hugh Hamilton-Green and Imogen Sanders-Dutton and Deputies Caspar Montgomery and Annabel Cox will follow their example I am sure.

Our Blundellians will be loyal and courageous when they need to be, yes. I know they have courage running through every vein. But they will also be able to reflect, they will ask the right questions and they will have minds of their own when the time comes.

Malcom Forbes once said; 'Education's purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one'. Thank you, as parents, grandparents and friends of Blundell's, for all that you do to support this very special education and the young people who live and breathe it. They and we are fortunate indeed.

Thank you