

## 'William Payne' by David Japes

It was always a privilege to be a member of the same Common Room as David Japes who taught Classics at Blundell's from 1966-96. The respect in which he was held by his pupils is reflected by the generous gift that one of them gave the School and that resulted in his former classroom, where Francis, Tatum and Seldon had taught before him, being named 'The Japes Room' in his honour.

David's latest book, immaculately produced in collaboration with Spinks, was the highlight of this year's BADA [British Antiques Dealers' Association] London exhibition. It provides a definitive and fascinating exploration of the career and techniques of William Payne, 1760-1840, a water colourist, who developed out of a draughtsman and surveyor, employed after 1788 by the Ordnance Office to improve the fortifications of Plymouth. This work and experience gave Payne a detailed knowledge of the area and his talents as a water colourist led to commissions from local landowners and acceptance of his work by the Royal academy after 1786. In 1790 Payne returned to London and set up as a Drawing Master and the rest as they say is history. Payne became one of the great Romantic artists of the Picturesque. He gave his name to a colour: 'Payne's Grey', fell out of fashion for a time and has been re-appreciated, largely thanks to Japes' pioneering scholarship.

Those who knew David as a teacher or as a colleague will not be surprised to be told that his route from schoolboy to Payne expert was idiosyncratic. Ejected from his Plymouth College CCF as an elongated military misfit, he took to wandering around Plymouth and finding and having the taste to admire Payne's work. At Oxford he was influenced by Dacre Balsdon, a Fellow of Exeter College, who encouraged the cultural interests of his pupils. [Balsdon, of west-country origins might have come to Blundell's except that his mother took a dislike to Fusty Wynne. He later taught at Sedbergh where he met Gorton and appreciated the skills of Lyons-Wilson] John Stanton, himself a water colourist, appointed David to Blundell's in 1966 on Balsdon's recommendation. Once again in Devon David could develop his interest in Payne.

'William Payne' is more than a scholarly survey of Payne's career and technique; it is also a masterly summary of the artistic theories of the Age. Yet to me its greatest interest was to the Local Historian. Japes and his collaborator, John Spink, not only tracked down an enormous number of Payne's watercolours, but they also did meticulous footwork to discover the sites from which Payne had done his work, so that the original watercolour is juxtaposed with a 2012 photograph. One can therefore see what two centuries have done to the landscape and how Payne had manipulated that landscape to make it more 'picturesque'. Finally the reproductions are magnificent.

It is a great pleasure to be able to recommend this work, a copy of which David has generously donated to the School. It is a work of genuine scholarship, elegantly written, and a permanent addition to our cultural life. One is proud that David Japes gave thirty years to educating Blundellians.

Charles Noon