



ST PETER'S

PREPARATORY SCHOOL

St Peter's was founded in 1882 by the Rev. Alfred Wren on Boarden Barn, Exmouth, with about a dozen pupils. He took the name from Peterhouse, Cambridge where he was an undergraduate. Upon his retirement in 1890, the school was taken over by Mr Hodgson, who was determined to make the school a success, and was its Headmaster for twenty-three years. He and his wife made considerable improvements to the school during that time. For example, it was the first school in Devon to take up the game of hockey only four years after its introduction to the country.

Hodgson grew the school to about thirty pupils before his retirement in 1913. His place was taken by Harold Falkner, who was Headmaster for 29 years until his death in 1942. Harold made St Peter's a leading Devon prep school by expanding and improving the buildings and activities offered. In 1919, boys passed Common Entrance to Eton, King's College, Canterbury; St Edward's, Oxford and King's College, Taunton to name a few, and in 1923 the first recorded Scholarship was achieved to Blundell's School. By 1926 the school had seventy pupils and eight staff and the "Bungalow", which was erected as a sanatorium, had to be used as classrooms instead. This building moved to the present site in 1949 and is still in use - perhaps the longest serving 'temporary' classroom in the country!

A prospectus from the 1930s advertises the school as a "preparatory for boys aged 7-14 for Public Schools or the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth". Among the subjects taught were Scripture, Latin, French, Maths, Drawing and Elementary Science. There was extra tuition in piano, singing, dancing, swimming, carpentry and language. The 30s saw the school's sporting standards reach an impressive level. In 1936 - 37, the football, hockey and cricket XIs won every single game they played, and so daunting were they that opposing schools cancelled further matches. Falkner's successor was Theophilus Rhys-Jones, who joined the staff at St Peter's in 1937. He was Senior Master when Harold Falkner died, and took over the reins. The number of boys had dropped to about 40 at this point due to the war, but numbers gradually increased to over 70 by 1949. On 12 July 1949, he sent a letter to the parents announcing that "After much careful and anxious consideration we have decided to move the school to new premises, and we are in negotiation with Admiral Sir Arthur Peters for the tenancy of Harefield House, Lympstone". This was to alter the whole course of St Peter's history.

Rhys-Jones became seriously ill in 1954 and his Senior Master, Basil Lake ran the school during his 2-year absence. He had been a pupil of St Peter's and a member of staff prior to active service in the Second World War. When Rhys-Jones died in 1959 there were just under 100 boys in the school with ten full-time staff, and Basil, with his experience of running the school, was readily equipped to take over. The Lakes further improved the new site, converting the stables and coach house, and adding the classroom block adjacent to the Bungalow. In 1974 Philip and Coral Pike took over. They also made their mark, changing to weekly boarders and accepting girls for the first time. They were also responsible for building the sports hall, so whatever the weather, some form of exercise could be taken. They ran the school until 1983 when Charles and Di Abram arrived.

Under the care of Charles & Di Abram along with bursar, William Tee, the school expanded in numbers and premises. Outside storerooms and the old school gym were converted into a junior school complex to create the Pearson Block, named in honour of David Pearson's long and outstanding service both in the classroom and on the games field. The sports hall was extended to incorporate a new Science lab and an Art Room along with storage and changing rooms. The main house was also developed to include a new dining room and kitchen facilities and the creation of more extensive houseparent accommodation, Rhys-Jones House. New outside classrooms were added to the senior school and the boarding house accommodation was renovated. On the footprint of the old orangery, beyond economic repair, a new headmaster's house, Peterhouse, was built. Along with these building developments school numbers began to steadily increase and a two form entry for each year group was introduced. As numbers grew the school morning assembly was moved from the music room to the Sports Hall. This led to the creation of a revamped music room renamed the Hope Bardrick Room to mark Hope Bardrick's long service to St Peter's both in the school office and the music department. Extensive new playing fields both around the sports hall and later, the Hallett Field, at the end of the school drive, were also acquired. The school also began to be more involved in national IAPS events and quickly made its mark at Badminton and Squash. Alongside the greater impact in sports, national and European music and drama tours were introduced.

William Tee and Charles Abram were co-owners of St Peter's until 1998 and in 2005 Jon Middleton teamed up with Charles Abram. From 2013 Jon has owned the school outright.

With a demand from working parents the school began to offer holiday activities in 1980 during the summer holidays and from 2002 the activities were expanded to cover all the school holiday periods.

In 2004 Rob Williams, previously Director of Studies, became Head. Rob redeveloped the management team at St Peter's. He also pioneered Mind Gym as a way of supporting children in their studies and built a formidable Friends of St Peter's parent body, which today still supports and funds many aspects of school life.

Noel Neeson took over the headship in 2009. Noel championed assessment for learning, leading a great team to develop the St Peter's School Baccalaureate®, which has generated interest in educational circles. Boarding flourished, with the boarding house being adapted to reflect modern parental needs and flexi-boarding becoming a popular option. During this time the school gained its highest ever numbers, with up to two thirds of leavers achieving scholarships. Noel moved on to Head the Blue Coat School in Birmingham in July 2016.

Charlotte Johnston, the school's first female head, joined the school in September 2016. Previously Deputy Head Academic at Edge Grove in Hertfordshire, a large co-ed 3-13 prep school, and with a background in management consultancy, Charlotte's experience was perfectly placed to lead St Peter's. Charlotte is passionate about a Prep School education, where children have the chance to shine in all areas: Sport, Music, Art, Drama and Academics. She is looking to develop the provision for Outdoor Education so the school can fully make the most of its unique position near to Coastland and Moorland and in an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Charlotte is also keen to extend and develop the innovative approach to Education which runs through the Curriculum at St Peter's.

Most pupils remain to 13 and go on to independent day and boarding schools in the south-west including Exeter, Blundell's, Wellington, King's Taunton and Maynard. A small number of leavers at the end of Year 6 go on mainly to the grammar schools at Colyton and Torquay.