

Supplement to *A History of Eton Fives* (November 2013)

Since the publication of *A History of Eton Fives* some additional information has come to light that will be of interest to readers:

Fives at Harrow in the 1760s

Sir William Jones, the distinguished orientalist and polymath, who was a tutor at Harrow for a while, wrote to his pupil's mother, Lady Spencer, in 1769: "I strive to encourage him to play at cricket and fives and good exercises for I cannot bear to see a boy idling about with no object and spending hour after hour in making ducks and drakes in a pond or sauntering under a tree." [Ref Cannon, *Letters of William Jones*, i. 28-9, no 16.]

As we have seen, the term 'fives' was used rather loosely at this time and could well have been describing the game of rackets, which is known to have been played in the School Yard. In all probability, games were played both by hand and by racquet, depending on whether an implement was available. There was no Eton fives court at Harrow until 1862 but this quotation shows that a form of fives was being played there much earlier.

Beverley Grammar School, East Yorkshire

The Rev George Pierce Richards was Headmaster of the school from 1820 to 1828. He was born in 1788, educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge, graduating in 1809, in which year he was elected a Fellow of the College. George Poulson, author of *The History & Antiquities of Beverley* (1829), wrote, "Mr Richards, the late Master, erected in the playground, which is nearly two acres in extent, a fives court. On a tablet, let into the wall, is the following:

Ut pila missa manu spatiis agitetur in amplis
Arduus hic paries stat lapidesque jacent
Tempore quo vindex regum et sacra foedera servans
Gallia in Hispanos arma nefanda tulit
Hoc opus exactum est. maneat! nugisque relictis
Musas et ludos nostra juvenia colat!
Praemia prima tenent labor et certamina mentis
Judice me detur palma secunda pilae

G.P. Richards, A.M.
Coll. reg. apud Cantab. soc. archdidascalo
T. Hull, M.D. summi magistratus officio
diligentissime obeunti
A.D. 1823

JR Witty in his *History of Beverley Grammar School* (published by the School in 1986), wrote, "Mr Richards was an energetic master and he has left behind many mementoes ... He also got a Fives court built in the school playground, on the wall of which was a tablet now to be seen in the present corridor, with an inscription in Latin, reading when translated:

"For the ball, struck by the hand and driven into space
Here the wall stands upright, and here the buttresses be;
Ever since that time when the Avenger of Kings, preserving sacred treaties
Bore the accursed arms of Gaul into Spain, this game has been carried on.
May it remain! And when other amusements are forsaken
May our youth cherish the Muses and Sport.
In my judgment, work and the repletion of the mind
Holds first place, the second place falls to the ball."

“The court, of which a plan has been preserved, was of the Eton type, rectangular in plan, about 25 ft long by 14 ft broad enclosed on three sides by brick walls. The floor was divided into the two usual courts with the pepper box buttresses in the inner court, and the various ledges or lines in the court walls.”

Beverley Grammar School, claiming to have been founded in 706 AD, has moved sites several times in its history. Early records suggest that the medieval building, which existed in the southwest corner of the Minster grounds, was demolished in 1602 and replaced on the same site by a stone building in 1609. This building fell into disrepair and the school moved to a site “adjacent to the Headmaster’s house on Keldgate” in 1816. It was on this site that the fives court described above was built. Changes in local government caused the temporary closure of the school in 1886, but makeshift accommodation was found in Grayburn Lane and the school re-opened in 1889. A new site was purchased in Queensgate in 1902 and it is here that the school now is.

Unfortunately it appears that, in spite of Witty’s assertion in 1986, the plan of the court has not been preserved but he clearly knew enough about the game to classify the court as “of the Eton type”.

*What is particularly interesting to the historian is that **this court was built at least twelve years before the first ‘replica’ courts at Eton** and suggests that it was a game that Richards had been familiar with in his days as a pupil at Eton in 1800-05.*

Magnus Church of England School, Newark

One of Newark's most important benefactors, Thomas Magnus, built the Magnus School between 1529 and 1531. The original building is now a part of Newark Museum. The Magnus Boys' Grammar School also known as the Thomas Magnus School on Earp Avenue was built in 1909. By the 1950s, the school had around 450 boys with 100 in the sixth form.

In 1977 a voluntary controlled comprehensive school was opened on the grounds of the Earp Avenue site. It amalgamated the boys of the Thomas Magnus School with the girls from Lilley & Stone Girls' High School, a girls' grammar school on London Road, and The Grove School, a secondary modern school. It was a co-educational 8-form entry school for ages 14–18, with 600 boys and girls, and 130 in the sixth form. In 1997 the Magdalene High School, a lower school (ages 11–14), on Barnby Road was combined with the Thomas Magnus School to form the current school. The school went into special measures in May 2008

Fives at the Magnus

Fives Courts at the Magnus Grammar School, Newark

All these photos show the Fives courts in the background - although none is actually being used for its intended purpose! The pictures come from a series of images taken of the school in the early 1900s, which may be viewed at

www.picturethepast.org.uk





The game of fives as played at the Magnus Grammar School at Newark-on-Trent receives a number of mentions in the school literature. Writing in the school magazine, *The Novarcensian* in 1900, the Rev WJ Humble, a former pupil, had the following to say about how fives was played during the headmastership of Herbert Plater (1854-93): “Among our minor recreations was fives. In my time there were only two courts, but it was a good instance of the Master’s self-abnegation, when Oxford offered him the honour of a DCL degree, that he declined it but devoted the fees, which he would have had to pay had he accepted, to the building of a third fives court upon which he had inscribed the letters DCL.”

In 1869 a detailed description of the school appeared in *The Public Schools Chronicle*; it was reprinted in *The Newark Advertiser*. The writer notes the existence of “a spacious yard adjoining the school a quarter of an acre in extent, and two very good open fives courts, of which the boys seemed ready to avail themselves”.

Somewhat later, another ‘Old Magnusian’, who attended the school between 1902 and 1915, remembered that “we used to play a lot of fives”, but that when “a court was built at the new school [it] was not used much.” The new school referred to was that which is in use today on Earp Avenue, Newark, following a move from the original buildings on Appletongate in 1909.

The existence of this single fives court at the new school, and the decline in its use is confirmed in the reminiscences of another Old Boy who attended the school in the 1940s: “There was a dingy brick and concrete thing, like a roofless air-raid shelter, next to the ‘bogs’. It was called the fives court. I never found out what fives was as nobody seemed to play it”

* The standard history of the school, *Newark Magnus: The Story of a Gift* by NG Jackson, was published in 1964 by J & H Bell Ltd of Nottingham, and is still the best source for information on the school’s long and distinguished history.

The Magnus courts were Eton courts but the ledges along the side walls appear to be missing. One of the courts (presumably the gift of Herbert Plater) has plain brickwork, while the other two are plastered. In all probability the court that was clearly not being used in the 1940s was demolished sometime soon after. It certainly did not survive the conversion to a comprehensive in 1976.

Alleyne’s High School, Uttoxeter

The school was founded in 1558 by the Reverend Thomas Alleyne. Its original location was on part of the Stone Priory at a site beyond the Jervis Mausoleum; in 1843 a new building was constructed. The school moved to its present site at Oulton Cross in 1889 on land given by Lady Forester, daughter of Viscount St Vincent. Staffordshire County Council took control of the school in 1924. In 1944 the school became a co-educational grammar school and in 1951 it was enlarged to include new classrooms and science laboratories. In 1969 it became a comprehensive school, taking its present name of Alleyne's High School. A three-tier system of schools was established in 1976, when Alleyne's became a school catering for pupils aged 13-19 years. The school starts from year 9 and has a sixth form. Alleyne's was designated Specialist Technology Status in September 2003.

Extracts from *The History of Alleyne's Grammar School, Uttoxeter, 1558-1958* by WG Torrance, published in 1958.

P41 "This period [1864] is also notable as showing the first records of organised games. There were traces of an old Fives Court in a corner of the School House Garden; this court was replaced about 1888 by another, which was in turn demolished and replaced by the present Court."

P56 "The Wood family can claim the remarkable record of three generations of Alleynians on both paternal and maternal sides; W Wood was President of the OA Association in 1938, his brother G Wood, with AC Denman and E Fletcher, was responsible for a record defeat of Newcastle High School at Fives in 1889 and WE Wood of the next generation ... was an outstanding Fives player in the 1920s"

P62 "The early 1920s were remarkable for many extensions of activities in and out of the classrooms... School Games too showed considerable progress, though ground difficulties were formidable [following WWI].... After some silent years, too, Messrs LE Middleton and WG Torrance awoke the echoes of the Old Fives Court and soon many boys learned the game."

P68 "New Trophies for Inter-House competition, in Games and for School work, gave further evidence of interest by Governors and Friends of the School [1926].... To these were added later a Fives Cup by an anonymous "Lover of Fives"."

P71 "We have already mentioned the magnificent support given by Sir Percy Heywood to the extension of the school playing fields. The old Fives court was to provide another example of his practical interest in School amenities; it had stood for fifty years and an estimate was made that £100 would be needed to make good the inroads of time. Thanks to subscriptions from a number of Old Boys, who had played under the eye of Mr Acheson and his successors in the game, to the proceeds of a Dance organised by Mrs Atkinson, and to further dramatic performances by Sir Percival and his friends, this sum was raised soon after the need was seen in 1936. The renovation was carried out by the firm of JE Ward OA, who generously declined to accept more than the bare cost of materials and labour."

P91 "The post-war expansion in Education and the increased financial aid from the Government and County sources provided Mr Daniel, and later Mr Atkinson with more numerous and more highly qualified staff than ever before; scholastic and athletic improvements rapidly followed.... LE Middleton was an inspiring Games Master and under his expert tuition and that of WG Torrance, many boys learned to become first rate fives players."

P99 "When the county Authority decided in 1957 that a new Chemistry Laboratory could be provided for the School, the only available space lay to the north of the 1926 block, and this was not large enough as long as the old Fives Court stood where it had been built by Mr Acheson's efforts 70 years before. Accordingly it was decided that the old court must be demolished, but thanks to representations by the Governors, sufficient funds were obtained for the erection of a new court on what remained of the old Croft beyond the canteen."

P111 [The Quarter Centenary Celebrations, 1958] "During an interval between the innings [of the Parents v School cricket match] the new Fives Court was officially opened by the Chairman of the Governors.... Mr Mellor [Chairman of Governors] said that when the extension of the school buildings necessitated the demolition of the old Fives Court, the Governors felt that their duty of providing both for body and spirit of pupils required a replacement of this excellent opportunity for physical benefit. They had therefore taken steps to ensure that sufficient funds were obtained and the result was that now he had the pleasure of declaring the court open for play.

"Mr Sargeant [Headmaster] expressed the thanks of the School to Mr Mellor and the Governors and to the Staffordshire Education Committee; they would now be glad to know that the Court would always be in great demand. They would even like to see the Governors taking part in the game!"

The court at Alleyne's, Uttoxeter failed to survive a building development in the 1990s. There is no objection to building another court but there is no finance available.

Stonyhurst College

It had long seemed that fives was not part of the games tradition in the English Roman Catholic schools. Certainly there are no courts at the best known Benedictine schools, Ampleforth and Downside. It

was therefore a surprise to find that there are Eton fives courts at Stonyhurst College, the Jesuit school near Clitheroe in Lancashire. Its origins need some explanation. During the nineteenth century, religious intolerance in England prevented Catholics from attending the universities at Oxford and Cambridge. As a result of this policy, Catholic colleges developed their own university-level education. At Stonyhurst, those following such a course were known as 'Philosophers' (because the original courses were in this discipline alone). They later came to be called the 'Gentlemen Philosophers', to distinguish them from members of the Jesuit novitiate following the same course. In the 1840s the number of Gentlemen Philosophers increased substantially as the University of London (founded in 1836) was empowered to grant degrees to external candidates from 'approved institutions'. Thus Stonyhurst became a multi-faceted institution during this period, consisting of the Jesuit community, the gentlemen philosophers and the school. When permission was finally given for Catholics to go to Oxford and Cambridge in 1895, the Stonyhurst philosophers' courses were so well established that they continued until they were brought to an end by the Great War in 1916.

The earliest known reference to fives at Stonyhurst is in a letter, dated 26-27 September 1882, sent by Gerard Manley Hopkins SJ to his friend Robert Bridges, in which he includes fives courts in the list of the College's facilities and amenities. An article on the Philosophers printed in *The Stonyhurst Magazine* in 1960 states that "the rackets and fives courts were built for the Philosophers, and like many other good things were inherited by the boys". In the summer of 1887 an inspection of the College had been carried out by the Oxford & Cambridge Examination Board. The results of their findings were reported in the August 1887 edition of *The Stonyhurst Magazine*, which contained the statement: "The provisions for healthy sports, cricket, tennis, racquets, fives, are most ample, and under conditions far superior to many of the Public Schools". The fact that the report relates to 'the College' and not just to the Philosophers implies that the boys were using the courts. So we can deduce that the courts were originally built by or for the Philosophers – presumably emulating their Protestant contemporaries at Oxford and Cambridge – and that thereafter the game became a school sport.

There are few references to fives at Stonyhurst up to 1920 in the surviving literature. In fact, there is just one: in the October 1890 entry in the *Philosophers' Diary*, where, in the statement of the latest income and expenses of the Philosophers' Fund, there is a reference to 4/- (four shillings) being raised by the 'Sale of Fives gloves'.

In February 1924, following an article on Eton fives in *The Times*, the *Stonyhurst Magazine* printed a letter to the editor in praise of the game. It was accompanied by a comment from the editor: "... by the Mill we actually possess two courts" adding that "two more could be provided without much trouble or expense". The latter comment can only mean that the two 'rackets' courts could be modified for Eton fives. A second letter to the editor praises the game but refers ruefully to "two excellent Eton Fives Courts - one complete with a brand new buttress", which "has been transformed into a temporary storehouse ... whilst the other houses a wonderful fire-engine." These letters evidently provided a healthy stimulus, for the October edition of the Magazine reports that "Fives continues to be played very vigorously", with a Club being "firmly established" and that "the numbers of the Fives Club has been swelled by many new members". The December edition included the first of what proved to be a long series of 'Fives Club' reports, telling the readers that "a president has been elected", that "the prospects for the future are very bright" with "the debt on the Club has been cleared off" although "the financial position is by no means sound".

A report from October 1925 claimed, "In spite of the loss of very many of last year's players, the membership of the Club has now reached the number of 30 – a record since the revival of the game at Stonyhurst. There is much enthusiasm, especially amongst the members of Higher Line." ['Higher Line' is the Stonyhurst term for 'Sixth Form' – Ed]. In spite of this, in May 1926 the lighting is described as "extremely inadequate" and the gutters as leaking "very badly", accompanied by hope that as members had been paying subscriptions for seven terms "there should be sufficient balance to pay for improvements". It would seem, however, that this hope was misplaced as it was followed by a considerable gap before there was any further mention of the game. It appears to have been a flame that flared brightly for a short time and then flickered feebly or perhaps even died out.

When the next mention of the game appeared in October 1933, it proved to be at the beginning of a revival that was destined to last for over 20 years, with a 'fives secretary' (J M Bebb) appearing for the first time on the List of School Offices. By February 1934 "The Fives Courts (had) been greatly improved by the introduction of more light from above", with groundsman Will Cross having "again achieved a triumph". The report in the July 1934 Magazine is worth quoting:

"The Fives Club has taken on a new lease of life... The Fives Courts have been thoroughly reconditioned and a tournament has been held during June and July. There are about 40 members in the Club". All the tournament results are given. "This tournament has proved a success. It was run on an 'equality system'; one good player partnered one less good (or even indifferent), or two medium players partnered each other" to ensure that the pairs were equally matched. "Next year it is hoped that we shall be able to start Inter-Line tournaments". Fr Clark was thanked "for putting the courts into good order".

Fives was played throughout the remainder of the 1930s, although it received few mentions in the magazine, and was included in the Inter-Line Challenge Cup section as being played as part of the competitive sports programme up to July 1939, after which it was not mentioned again until 1951. Whether this was because there were more serious issues to which the pages of the magazine were having to be devoted during and after the war years, paper shortage or whether fives simply ceased to be played is unknown.

However, in 1951 it was reported in 'Second Playroom Notes' that "there has been a considerable interest in Fives and Rackets", although by January 1954 this had dwindled, prompting the author of 'Second Playroom Notes' to write, "It is a pity that the Fives Club is not more flourishing; it started the term with a good membership but it is mostly a non-playing membership", and adding, "Still their subscriptions have been most welcome". The mid-1950s seem to have been the acme of Fives at Stonyhurst with home and away matches being played against Merchant Taylors', Crosby. Nothing is recorded about the results of the first two matches but in the second season (1954) Stonyhurst won both matches, although in the away game the number of games won by each team was even, the winner being the team scoring the most individual points. This resulted in the narrowest of Stonyhurst victories, by 114 points to 111. After this, the game again lost ground. In 1956, "so much rugby being played" was cited as one of the reasons why interest in fives was diminishing during the winter, while "during the summer term support for the Fives and Squash clubs became negligible due to the attraction of more outdoor sports". The October 1961 edition of the Magazine reported the formation of a new Motor Club, whose five members had managed to raise £5 but then added, ominously, that with the proceeds they "purchased a Morris 8 of 1939 vintage" which was installed in the Fives Court, with a power point being put in to facilitate the repair work on the car. In spite of this obvious setback, in October 1967 fives was included in the list of sports available at Stonyhurst to the new boys from Beaumont (which had closed down).

The swansong of Eton fives at Stonyhurst came around 1990, when Geography and IT teacher Jef Holdsworth undertook some painstaking research, supervised the restoration of the old fives courts and reintroduced it as a games option. But when Holdsworth left Stonyhurst in 1997 the game came to an abrupt end and it is now 16 years since it has been played. But there have been longer gaps in its somewhat chequered history and, in spite of their unprepossessing appearance, the courts are judged to be in an easily-restorable condition. It may yet prove to be merely another long pause rather than the end of the line.

Adapted from an article by Mr DN Knight, Archivist (October 2013)



The courts at Stonyhurst, November 2013. Readers should draw their own conclusions as to what is there!



Neale-Wade Academy, March, Cambridgeshire

March Grammar School, Cambridgeshire, was born of two bequests, one by William Neale in 1696 and the other by Henry Wade in 1717. New premises were built in Station Road, March, in 1876 for both boarders and day boys and, while the School remained small until World War I (fewer than 100 pupils in 1914), it was a recognisable grammar school, attracting both fee-paying and, after 1902, local education authority pupils. It is believed that the original fives courts were built at this site on the initiative of Headmaster Cedric Potter, who had previously taught at Rugby School. The precise date is unknown but thought to be in the mid-1950s.

By the 1960s, it was apparent that the existing site was too small, and a new school was built on the southern outskirts of the town. This was opened in the autumn of 1964 with some 350 boys. In 1969, girls from the High School joined the boys on the new site but the Grammar School then became a school for pupils aged 13 to 18 with a selective entry. Following this change, the decision was made to re-name the school, the Neale-Wade School, in honour of the founders.

Mr. Potter decided that there should be new fives courts at Neale-Wade School and three courts were built, set in a single block located to the east of the main school hall. Visiting Eton fives players remember these courts as small and 'non-standard'; the closest resemblance was thought to be the courts at St John's, Leatherhead. Chris Morton, an Old Boy started at the Grammar School in 1969 and was a pupil when it finally closed in 1970. He can remember fives competitions held at MGS and took part in them himself. A former master, who arrived in 1959 and was there at the change, believes that the courts were built in 1964. He also remembers games being played; the sixth formers held a competition, but fives was not part of inter-house competitions. No one can recall any inter-school fives matches.

As the enthusiasm for comprehensive education developed, the Cambridgeshire County Council decided that there should be one school only in March and in 1983, the Neale-Wade merged with the existing Hereward School to form a new comprehensive on the Neale-Wade site, designated a 'Community College'. Initially there were about 1,300 pupils. Since then, it has grown in size as March has grown, and now has more than 1,750 pupils. Following an Ofsted inspection in 2012, the college was placed into

special measures, but has since made progress under new principal, Jason Wing, for which he was commended by inspectors in a follow-up report. Under the last government's 'Building Schools for the Future' initiative, NWCC was largely rebuilt, but the five courts were demolished. There are serious plans, supported by Mr Wing, to build (probably two) new courts but this is the subject of discussion prior to an appeal for funding. On 1 April 2013 the College became the Neale-Wade Academy, an 'Active Learning Trust' school.

Compiled from information provided by Mr Michael Wilding (OMG) November 2013

Errors in *A History of Eton Fives*

P 24 col 2 lines 8-13: 'Die for' should be 'Die first'

P 26 col 1 para 2 line 4: 'Earle' (spelling)

P 44: caption: 'demolished' (spelling)

P 102 col 2 para 3 line 9: Baden Fuller (no hyphen)

P 103 col 1 line 1 ditto

P105 caption ditto

P 164 caption ditto

P 165, 166 ditto

P 122 caption: 1992 not 2009

P 124 caption: Martin not Mark Powell

Index Baden Fuller pp 164 -6

Chapter 16: The Digital Revolution: Incorrect heading at the top of pages: Games of Fives