

SOME VERSES FROM CLIFTON

At the West of England Championships in November, Lionel Lawson gave me a copy of a poem about Fives which he had discovered. What he didn't know is that it was written by the first housemaster of my house at Clifton, who was a minor poet.

This is it:

FIVES COURT

BY T.E. Brown, (from 'Poems' 1900)

Sometimes at night I stand within a court
Where I have played by day;
And still the walls are vibrant with the sport,
And still the air is pulsing with the sway
Of agile limbs that now, their labours o'er,
To healthful sleep their strength resign—
But how of those who played with me langsyne,
And sleep for evermore?

It has moved me to try something a little more serious than my usual flippant stuff, so here goes:

FIVES 2000 A.D.?

Sometimes I wonder who will play our sport
In twenty years or so.
'Old Roger's gone', 'The game's no longer taught',
'Hockey is now compulsory, you know'.
Are we to watch as Rugby Fives declines,
And reminisce about the good old days?
It's up to everyone who reads these lines
To help make sure that every school that plays
Plays on – but you will ask me 'How?'
I'm asking you to think about it – now.

ALASTAIR MACKENZIE

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