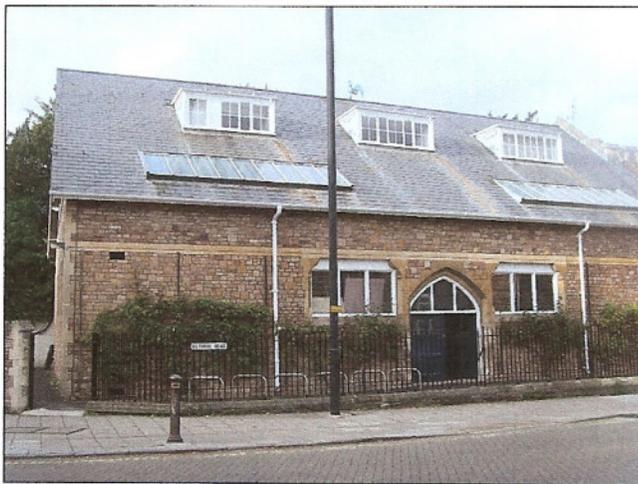


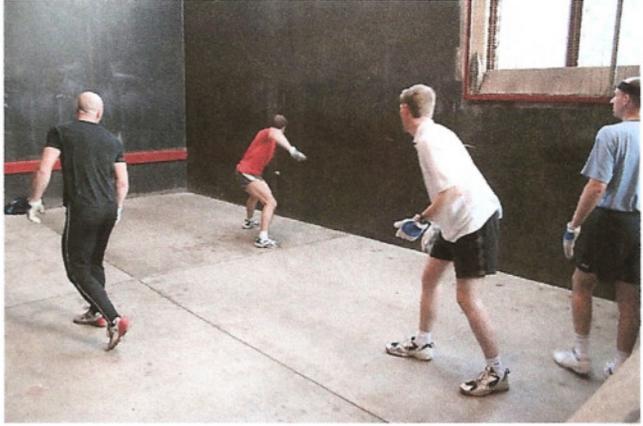
Clifton College: 4 indoor courts from 1887 with low back walls, refurbished 2004; 4 new courts (two of them 1927), demolished 2001



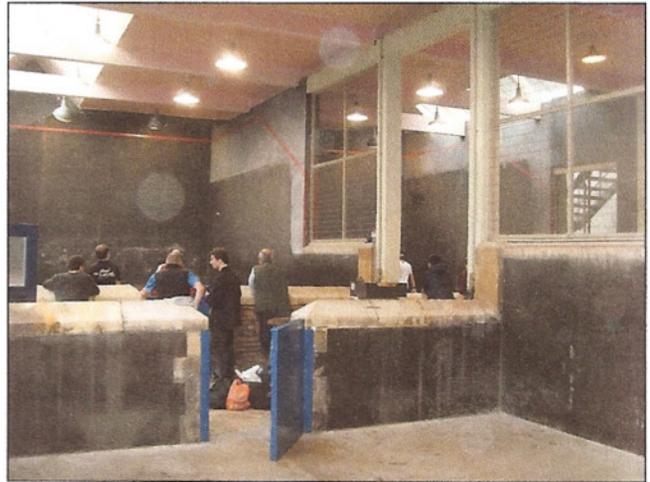
1980s



4 old courts with low back walls in Guthrie Road 2013



Old courts 2006



2013

Clifton College Fives Courts History

This summary is based on research done by Paul Broadway (PB) in 1984 and Charles Colquhoun (CC) and published in RFA Newsletter No 7 (January 1991). [see below]

1862 College founded. First Headmaster John Percival had been a member of Frederick Temple's staff at Rugby, so the Clifton courts were all Rugby-style.

1862 Part of an open shed was converted into a fives court.

1864 Three open courts were built. They were covered in 1865, partly at the HM's own expense. They are marked 'bat fives' on the 1925 map.

1871 The original 1862 court became a workshop and two open courts were erected in its stead. CC says these were 'for the Junior School'.

1871 PB says that 'four fives courts were built in substitution for three that were closed', but I can find no sign of them on the 1925 map and no reference in CC.

1875 Two covered courts were erected by subscription 'where the present South Town Room now (1925) stands'. [see plan below]

1877 One of the Junior School courts was converted into a classroom.

1879 The old racquet court was converted into three covered fives courts.

1887 The two covered (1875) and two open (not recorded) courts in the North Quadrangle were removed, and four covered courts were built on the HM's kitchen garden. These are the courts in use today.

1927 The Prince of Wales opened two new courts presented to the College by E.J. Barff, an Old Cliftonian. Were these the first 'playground courts'? If so, when were the other two built?

Undated. CWA Tait built a court for the use of boys in his house, Oakley's.

Further research is needed.

D.B. August 2013:

Acc. to Rugby Fives Review Vol 2 (February 2005). Two old courts at **Clifton** were reopened, with new back walls, in October 2004.

FIVES AT CLIFTON COLLEGE, BRISTOL

Fives in its modern form became popular as a game for schoolboys about the year 1850. Winchester had a court of their own, different both from Eton and Rugby, but most schools adopted the Rugby game because the court needed no special construction.

When Clifton was founded in 1862, the Rev John Percival was appointed Headmaster on the 4 September. He was 27 and had been a very junior member of Frederick Temple's staff at Rugby. His appointment proved to be an inspired choice whilst games began immediately and assumed great

importance. The pioneers of sport at Clifton were therefore essentially Rugbeian and so were the fives courts.

When the school was opened the only buildings were Big-School, the School house and an open shed. Part of this shed was converted into a fives court in 1862. Three open fives courts were built in 1864 in what is now the North Quadrangle and roofed in partly at the Headmaster's expense in 1865, whilst in 1871 two courts were built for the Junior School. There is a record of house ties in fives as early as 1869.

In the early days, two open hard fives courts which used to stand near the present site of the town rooms were the most popular; the court was taken by the boy who hit the front wall above the line with a fives ball; the consequence of this arrangement was a rush and generally a dispute. The court might be re-taken at the end of every game and therefore 'game ball' became doubly exciting for players and onlookers, as each one was ready to take the court the moment the game was finished.

The old courts which we still use for the West of England Schools tournament, matches and practice were opened in 1887 having been built on what was the Headmaster's garden. Bat-fives was once very popular at Clifton and the school employed a professional (Mr Small) to improve the standard but the game was probably affected by the war and by 1919 it was defunct. The last school bat-fives competition was held in 1915. By this time the school's regular opponents at Fives were Rugby, Cheltenham, Marlborough and Malvern. By 1927, the Prince of Wales had opened two new fives courts presented to the school by E J Barff (O.C.) and Oakeley's house were proving to be the leading house enjoying the advantage of a court of their own built by C W A Tait when Housemaster. There has always been a strong tradition of Masters playing who have inspired the boys on court. In 1960, Clifton won their first title when J A Slater and A R Windows won the West of England Schools doubles with Slater also winning the singles. Further triumphs followed in 1962 (N G Harrison and J Bretten) and 1968 (A S Dixon and A J Brown) in the doubles, whilst winners in the singles include J Bretten (1964), C M Bascombe (1965), A S Dixon (1968) and J R King in 1980. Until 1989 (J A Crane and M G N Windows), Clifton had never won the Colts trophy for either singles or doubles at the West of England tournament. Their triumphs were quickly followed by the present Captain J R Nelmes and G H J Rees in 1990.

In the National Schools Tournament J Bretten and D S Spence in 1964 and A S Dixon and A J Brown in 1966 have won the doubles for Clifton whilst J Bretten in 1964 and J R King in 1980 have won the singles in the Open. In the Colts section J A Crane and M G N Windows won the doubles and Windows the singles in 1989, followed again by J R Nelmes and G H J Rees in 1990 with Nelmes winning the singles

Fives at Clifton is a strong minor sport but like many schools under pressure from the new glamour sport, hockey, with its astroturf pitches, floodlights and Olympic victories. Clifton also has Rackets to contend with but as I'm Master-in-charge of both rackets and fives,

I would like to think that Fives has more than a sporting chance of reaching the year 2000 in good health!

C M E COLQUHOUN
Master i/c
CLIFTON COLLEGE

(1991)

Updates: 2004 – 2008 – 2015

In 2004 two of the old indoor courts, which had been used for storage for some 25 years, were brought back into use, with new back walls added. This development was reported in the Rugby Fives Review (Newsletter) of February 2005. See <http://rugbyfivesassociation.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/2005-Clifton-courts-back-in-use.pdf>.

Charles Colquhoun died unexpectedly in 2008. An appreciation written by a colleague, Alan Brown, can be read on the RFA website at <http://rugbyfivesassociation.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/2008-Charles-Colquhoun.pdf>.

An annual competition for the schools in the South West was set up in Charles' memory: the Colquhoun Trophy, held at Sherborne School and first played for in 2010. So far no player from Clifton has entered.

Since Charles' death Fives has been played very little by the pupils of Clifton College, though one player has emerged from its ranks to represent Oxford in the Varsity Match: Chris Waller (2011, 0012 and 2013). Chris is ranked in the top 30 in both Singles and Doubles.

Other players from Clifton who have played recently in the Varsity Match are PJ Sommerville (Oxford 2003), Jonathan Abecassis (Cambridge 2005 and 2006) and Jeremy Fabes who played for both Cambridge (2000, 2001 and 2002) and Oxford (2009 and 2010). Fabes was British Universities Doubles champion in 2001 and National U25 Doubles champion in 2002 and 2004.

The West of England Rugby Fives Club continues to play regularly at Clifton, as does a group from Bristol University. The West of England Open Championships are played each October on the Clifton College courts.

RLD November 2015

Fives, Bat-fives, Squash

WHEN the School was opened the only buildings were Big-School, the School House and an open shed. Part of this open shed was converted into a fives court in 1862.

In 1864 three open fives courts were built, and were roofed in (partly at the Headmaster's expense) in 1865. There is a record of House ties in fives as early as 1869.

In 1871 two courts were built for the Junior School. The workshop was built on the site of the original fives court, and two open fives courts, between the workshop and the College building were erected in the place of the one demolished.¹

"In the early days the two open hand fives courts, which used to stand near the present site of the Town Rooms, were the most popular; indeed, some of the best players the School has turned out learnt all their play in them. The way these courts were 'taken' was, if not decorous, at all events exciting. The court was held as taken by the fellow who first hit the front wall above the line with a fives ball; the consequence of this arrangement was a rush and generally a dispute. The court might be re-taken at the end of every game. 'Game ball,' therefore, became doubly exciting both for the actual players and the onlookers, as each one was ready to take the court the moment the game was finished, or even before."²

In 1876 Sir Herbert Warren was fives champion of Oxford University.

In 1882, during the summer holidays, the courts were repaired and made watertight.

In 1886 "a plan was brought by the Headmaster before the Council for the removal of the two covered and two open

fives courts, and the range of schools that lay behind them in the north Quadrangle, and the erection of the present Armoury and Town Rooms. Four covered fives courts were built at the same time on what was the Headmaster's garden. In 1887 these buildings were all opened.'

In 1892, at the expense of Mr Tait, the floor of the courts was relaid and the walls renovated.

Since 1912 Clifton has played fives matches against Rugby, Marlborough, Malvern and other opponents. There is now a Fives VI, as there is a Rackets VI.

Two new fives courts were presented to the School by EJ Barff (O.C.) and two new 'squash' courts by EJ Marden (O.C.), and were all opened by the Prince of Wales in 1927. In 1934 Oakley's were Cock House at fives.

Bat-fives also was once a very popular game. So important was it considered that, to quote a letter received from an excellent and enthusiastic player of that time, 'Small, the professional racket-player (next best to Gray in those days) was engaged to improve bat-fives'. The School bat-fives competition was quite an event in the middle 80s; it seems to have been held for the last time in 1915. The War probably affected the game; anyhow in 1919 it was defunct. The two bat-fives courts became generally used for 'squash'; the walls were whitened and electric light installed. The Winchester fives-court (with buttress), adjoining the bat-fives court on the West side, is now used as a storehouse.

John Percival, 1862-1879

NEW BUILDINGS ERECTED AND OTHER IMPROVEMENTS CARRIED OUT DURING DR. PERCIVAL'S HEADMASTERSHIP

- 1862. A portion of the Shed converted into a Fives Court.
- 1863. The School House finished.
"Haynes' land" thrown into the Close, the hedge removed and the ground levelled.
A part of Big-School divided off for use as a Chapel.
7 and 8 Rodney Place taken for three years as a Preparatory School.
- 1864.¹ Swings at north-east corner of Close.
Three Open Fives Courts built.
Brown's House opened (15th September).
The Bachelor Masters' House opened.
Sanatorium begun.
Draining and levelling of Close.
- 1865. The Sanatorium opened.
The three Fives Courts roofed in (partly at the Headmaster's expense).
The first stone of the Chapel laid (1st December).
- 1866. Construction of Chapel.
A new wing added to Big-School with three class rooms (including the old Sixth Form Room).
Plans of Cay's (Dakyns') House approved.
- 1867. Cay's House opened for forty boys.
Completion of Chapel (formal opening 15th June).
Physical Science Laboratory built. (This was on Guthrie Road, but was later moved elsewhere.)
Gymnasium built.
- 1868. The first Pavilion built.
- 1869. The two Swimming Baths opened.

JOHN PERCIVAL, 1862-1879

- 1870. Making up of road from Quadrangle to College Road.
Library in course of erection, with class rooms and Secretary's room on ground floor.
Additions to Sanatorium.
Harris' House (Oakeley's) opened.
- 1871. The Percival Library and Museum completed, with four class rooms.
The Botanical Garden laid out near the Chapel.
Two Fives Courts built for Junior School Houses.
Four Fives Courts built in substitution for three that were closed.
- 1872. Workshop and Physical Laboratory completed and opened.
An open Racket Court built.
Orchestra Platform put up.
- 1873. A new Workshop built over the end of Large Bath. (The old one converted into Classrooms.)
The Preparatory School opened.
- 1874. T. W. Dunn opens new House at 30 College Road (now Watson's).
The Organ in Big-School constructed.
Extension of Library Buildings. Four new Bays.
The School House Library added.
- 1875. The Museum and Open Cloister with Classrooms added.
Two covered Fives Courts built on site of present South Town Room.
- 1876. The Junior School built.
- 1878. Rev. H. J. Wiseman succeeds to Dunn's House and moves boys to new House in Albert Road (Wiseman's).
Rev. H. C. Watson succeeds to House at 30 College Road (Watson's).
Addition to Dakyns' House.