

OBITUARY

C.E.A. WHYTE (1914 - 2003)



Picture: Joan Wood

Charles Whyte (left) talking to Brian Griffiths and Tom Wood at Whitgift in 1975.

As Robert Dalman recorded in his article about Whitgift School, published in the 1999-2000 RFA Handbook, Charles Whyte was master-in-charge of fives at the school from the mid-1950s until 1972, with the exception of two or three years in the 1960s when Tony Tiffin ran the game. Charles also ran the Public Schools' Championships at Whitgift during those years, and he remained involved in the game until his retirement from teaching in 1976.

Charles, a scholar of Sherborne and Peterhouse, was a modest and reticent man who led the Classical Department at Whitgift for fifteen years, commanded the Army Section of the CCF and was a Housemaster for more than a decade. He loved music, cricket and fives, although, unusually for a successful master-in-charge, he was not a fives player himself. The key to his success was organisation and efficiency, backed up by hours of patient watching from the back of the court.

David Goodwin, his first House Captain as well as captain of

cricket and fives, found Charles hard to get to know at first but soon discovered how kind, supporting and genuine he was, both as Housemaster and as master-in-charge of fives. David is, of course, still involved in the organisation of the National Schools Championships, a job he inherited from Charles long ago now. He writes: 'I still use his address book for Schools' Fives correspondence, since nothing I could produce would be anything like so organised. There are some five pages of beautifully clear pencil-written addresses, presumably of all schools that have ever heard of fives.'

Charles and his wife Betty retired to live in Cardiff, where, in the words of The Whitgiftian's affectionate tribute to his thirty years' service to the school, they would 'be able to combine their joint passion for all things Welsh and their love of music with her fondness for shopping and his support for Glamorgan County Cricket Club'. That happy period in their lives has now ended, but many ex-schoolboy fives players will remember Charles Whyte's quiet but effective contribution to our game with gratitude. The RFA recognized that contribution by making him a Vice-President of the Association.

David Barnes

Richard Hunt, one of Charles Whyte's former pupils, writes:

'My memory of Charles 'Snowy' Whyte dates from the 1950s at Whitgift School, where he taught classics and, amongst many other things, was prominent in the CCF. He became master in charge of fives, although he was not a fives player himself. He made up for this disadvantage by his unflagging support and enthusiasm.

Watching fives in the winter months in the open air day after day takes some commitment, and this he certainly had. The memory of his characteristic way of standing, cross-legged, with a pencil held vertically against his pursed lips as he watched some particularly inept play, is with me vividly still.

I remember that once, feeling no doubt that our very average talents needed some greater spur than his normal words of encouragement were able to give, he took the first four to the opera. Charles and his wife were great opera lovers, and we all enjoyed a great evening at Sadler's Wells watching *The Marriage of Figaro*. I don't know if the opera made any improvement to our fives, but it was certainly a formative moment in our musical development.

I received a letter from him about four years ago telling me that he and his wife still regularly attended Welsh National Opera, and even made the trip to Leeds from Cardiff to see Opera North.

Charles gave unstintingly of his time and energies in keeping fives alive at Whitgift at a difficult time, and for many years made a valuable contribution to the game generally. I know that everyone who had the privilege of knowing him remembers him with affection and admiration.'