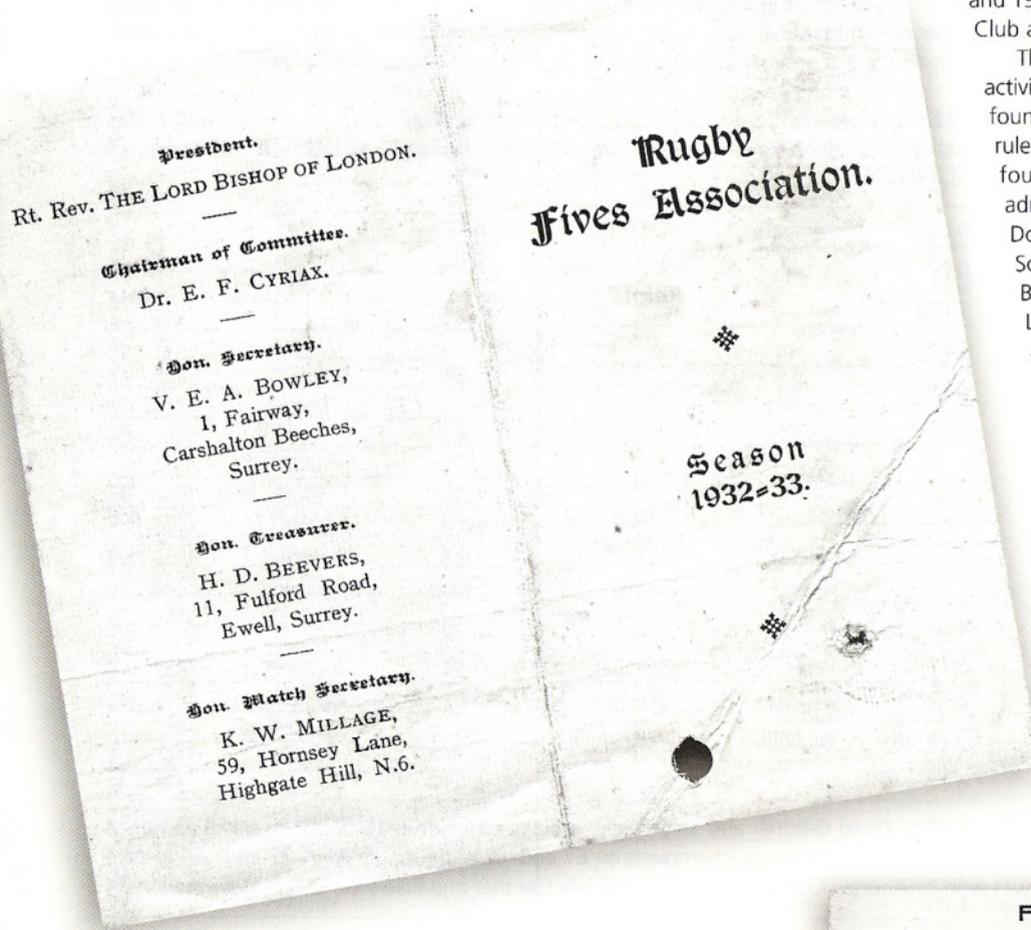


The Rugby Fives Association 70 years ago



(RFA Hon. Treasurer and later President in 1970 and 1971) and G.R.Rimmer (founder of the RFA Club and RFA President from 1960 to 1965).

The 1930s were a time of increasing activity in Rugby Fives. Dr Cyriax's newly founded RFA took the lead in establishing the rules and court dimensions, and it soon found itself responsible for the administration of the Amateur Singles and Doubles Championships and the Public Schools' Championships. Schools and Old Boys' Clubs, especially those in or near London, began to play more fixtures against each other, and from 1932 to 1936 there was even a magazine in circulation entitled 'Squash Rackets, Fives, Tennis and Rackets', edited by John Armitage, Amateur Singles Champion in 1938 and another of Rugby Fives's great servants.

In November 1932, the magazine published an 'Open Letter' addressed to Dr Cyriax in appreciation of his contribution to Rugby Fives. The anonymous writer (probably Armitage himself) placed Cyriax second only to Jack Cavanagh in the annals of the game, 'for although of Cavanagh we know but little, of him

As the 1932-3 fixture list shows, the Rugby Fives Association arranged a good number of fixtures, even at that early stage of its existence. In fact, thirty-seven events were scheduled for the season, by a strange coincidence exactly the number of matches played by the RFA Club in the season 2002-3.

Most of the fives was in the capital, with over a dozen different venues in or near London mentioned (the majority sadly no longer with us), but nine schools outside London were visited as well, including Christ's Hospital, Marlborough, Tonbridge, Winchester, Radley and Eastbourne. It must have been a feat of organisation in those days to take a side from London down to Eastbourne or even out as far as Radley or Marlborough.

The RFA also ran a match against Cambridge University and three 'representative' matches, one of them a trial to pick the South side for the match the next week against the North, played at 2.30 on a Wednesday afternoon in mid-January! Both sides must have been composed of men of leisure and/or schoolmasters, and the 'Northerners' must surely have been temporary or permanent exiles – or at any rate from not far north of Watford...

And who were the heroic men who did the organising? The palm clearly goes to K.W.Millage, the RFA Hon. Match Secretary, responsible for no fewer than eighteen of the events, while other famous names on a very select list are those of P.A.Malt (Amateur Singles Champion from 1933 to 1935), H.D.Beevers

FIXTURE LIST.							
	DATE.		OPPONENTS.		COURTS.		MANAGER.
	1932						
Oct.	8 Sat.	2.30	Old Paulines		W. Kensington		K. W. Millage
"	22 Sat.	2.30	Old Blues		Horsham		H. D. Beevers
"	22 Sat.	2.30	Marlborough College		Marlborough		K. W. Millage
"	26 Wed.	6.15	Alleys Old Boys		Dulwich		K. W. Millage
Nov.	16 Wed.	2.30	United Hospitals		Roehampton		
"	23 Wed.	6.15	Old Sinjuns		Battersea		K. W. Millage
"	28 Mon.	7.0	Old Alleynians		Dulwich		K. W. Millage
Dec.	1 Thurs.	6.30	Old Merchant Taylors		E.C.2		K. W. Millage
"	10 Sat.	2.15	St. Mark's College		Chelsea		K. W. Millage
"	17 Sat.	2.30	U.C.S. Old Boys		Hampstead		G. R. Rimmer
"	21 Wed.	2.15	SOUTH TRIAL MATCH		Roehampton		
"	31 Sat.	2.30	The Jesters		W. Kensington		K. W. Millage
	1933.						
Jan.	11 Wed.	2.15	SOUTH v. NORTH		Roehampton		
"	16 Mon.	7.0	Old Alleynians		Dulwich		K. W. Millage
"	21 Sat.	2.15	Dulwich College		Dulwich		K. W. Millage
"	25 Wed.	2.30	Oxford University		Roehampton		P. A. Malt
"	25 Wed.	6.30	St. Bartholomew's Hospital		E. C. 1		H. D. Beevers
"	28 Sat.	11.0	Henry Thornton School		Clapham		K. W. Millage
Feb.	1 Wed.	2.30	Tonbridge School		Tonbridge		P. A. Malt
"	2 Thurs.	2.30	Felsted School		Felsted		K. W. Millage
"	4 Sat.	2.45	Cambridge University		Cambridge		K. W. Millage
"	11 Sat.	2.15	University College School		Hampstead		G. R. Rimmer
"	11 Sat.	2.15	Haberdaashers Askes School		Hampstead		K. W. Millage
"	18 Sat.	2.15	Clove Club		Hackney		P. A. Malt
"	18 Sat.	2.30	Haileybury College		Hertford		K. W. Millage
"	25 Sat.	2.15	St. John's Hall		Highbury		K. W. Millage
"	1 Wed.	2.30	Winchester College		Winchester		K. W. Millage
"	4 Sat.	2.15	Bedford Modern School		Bedford		P. A. Malt
"	7 Tues.	2.15	Radley College		Radley		H. D. Beevers
"	11 Sat.	2.15	King's College		Chelsea		P. A. Malt
"	11 Sat.	2.45	Eastbourne College		Eastbourne		G. R. Rimmer
"	11 Sat.	2.15	Alleys School		Dulwich		G. Avgherinos
"	18 Sat.	2.30	Christ's Hospital		Horsham		H. D. Beevers
"	22 Wed.	2.30	LONDON v. STH OF ENGLAND		Roehampton		
"	25 Sat.	2.30	University College (London)		W.C.2		P. A. Malt
"	29 Wed.	6.30	Bank of England		Roehampton		K. W. Millage
Apr.	5 Wed.	2.30	Public Schools		Roehampton		



Dr Edgar Cyriax surrounded by Fives players at the opening of Sutton Valence School's courts on February 10th, 1934.

Hazlitt has written, and Hazlitt had the power with a few strokes from his quill of making a man immortal however scanty his record.' Nonetheless, claimed the writer, Cyriax's was the greater achievement in that '... like Cavanagh, you are a man of great personality and a fine exponent of the game of Fives, but unlike him, you have not only been a player but a leader to all those who would further the interest of this sport.'

The Open Letter goes on to celebrate Edgar Cyriax's unbeaten singles record between 1890 (his penultimate year at University College School) and 1927, 'when P.A.Malt of the Alleyn Old Boys was your proud conqueror'. In that same year came the foundation of the RFA, 'to act as control authority, to formulate, alter and add to the rules governing the game of Fives', followed by the difficulties in getting agreement on the rules and court dimensions despite the care the Doctor took over consulting opinion. The RFA Archives contain two of the cards he sent out to schools, and a quantity of replies, including some unintentionally hilarious ones and one spoof (from P.A.Malt).

The last two paragraphs of the Open Letter complete a fitting tribute to the Grand Old Man:

'In 1926 you inaugurated the first Open Fives competition for Doubles play, presenting a cup yourself to the winning pair. That competition for the Cyriax Cup has now become of chief annual importance in the world of Rugby Fives. You, yourself, still take part in this competition and last year, partnered by Mr Scott, himself no longer a young man, you won a splendid victory in the first round over K.C.Gandar Dower and J.F.Burnet. This year we are hoping to see your name among the list of competitors for the Singles Championship.

For you, Fives is a national sport, beloved above everything else, to be played at all seasons of the year, at all ages from seven to seventy. You have little mercy for those who after the age of twenty-five need a racket to save them from undue exertion and bending. Let them bend and keep fit, you say, and if their wind is short, let them pick up the ball more slowly between the rallies. Sir, they do not all follow your advice. Instead they smile and say, 'It is not for nothing that he is called the G.O.M. of Fives.'

David Barnes

R.F.A. ARCHIVES – A PLEA

The Archives contain an almost complete collection of past RFA Handbooks, RFA Club Pocket Books and RFA fixture cards, but the following are missing:

RFA Handbooks: 1949/50; 1951/52; 1961/62.

RFA Club Pocket Books: Any prior to 1971/72.

RFA Fixture Cards: Any prior to 1991/92.

The Archives are very short of photographs of players on or off court.

If you have any of the above and are prepared to part with them, please send them to David Barnes, RFA Archivist, Froude's Cottage, Bucklebury Village, Reading RG7 6PP.