

Since early 2009, both the EFA and the RFA now have an official presence on Facebook. The brainchild of Gareth Hoskins (EFA) and Andy Pringle (RFA), these online groups are an attempt to unite all Fives-playing Facebook users in one place, where they can post photos, comments, news items, results, information and video clips which are all instantly accessible to other Facebook users. They are also meant to complement the existing EFA and RFA websites and reach out to Fives players who might otherwise be lost to the game.

The early indications are positive: after a concerted early recruitment drive followed by the user-driven ripple effect of social networking sites, the EFA page on its own has quickly acquired nearly 300 members. Most excitingly, these members are not generally speaking the “usual suspects” – people who are already EFA members and who are already closely involved with the game. The vast majority of members are under 25 (unlike the group creators!); many are still at school or are recent leavers or students. The obvious benefit of this is that it may go some way towards solving the perennial problem of losing contact with players as they leave school and never seeing them in the adult game. The first big tests will come next season when the Facebook group is used for the first time as a recruitment tool for the Universities Championships in an attempt to extend it beyond its Oxbridge stranglehold and also for the newly revived Under 21 and Under 25 Championships.

Already the group has produced some interesting feedback. As group creator I have already received queries from an Old Cranleighan currently at university and trying to find somewhere to play; from a recent school leaver in China keen to pick up the game again on their return and from a Berkhamstedian wanting to return to the game after 30 years away. Hopefully this is just the tip of the iceberg.

If you are a Facebook user but not yet a member of either the EFA or RFA groups, then a simple search for Eton or Rugby Fives should point you in the right direction. Further searching will undoubtedly lead you to other related groups; several clubs have their own group as do the CFA and Handball. And if you can't find one for your club, why not start it yourself and help spread the word!

Gareth Hoskins

The screenshot shows the Facebook profile for 'The Eton Fives Association'. At the top, the navigation bar includes 'facebook', 'Home', 'Profile', 'Friends', 'Inbox', 'Notifications', 'Settings', and 'Logout'. The profile header shows the group name and a cover photo of a fleur-de-lis. The 'Basic Info' section includes the type 'Sports & Recreation - General Sports' and a description: 'This is the official Facebook group of the Eton Fives Association. Our aim is to bring together all people interested in Eton Fives in one group and use it to publicise forthcoming events and tournaments and provide up to date news from the world of Eton Fives.' It also states the group's purpose: 'We therefore need your help - keep inviting all your Fives playing friends. Feel free to post any news/photos/videos you think might be of interest.' Below this is a 'Latest News' section with a link to a website. The 'Members' section displays a grid of 8 member profile pictures with names: Rowan Handorf, Martin Street, Francisco Dobejo, Seb Cooley, Barclay Lawrence, Nick Turner, Edward Rose, and Chris Pringle Smith. The 'Discussion Board' section shows '2 posts by 2 people' and 'The Leader' section shows '1 post by 1 person'. The 'The Wall' section is currently empty. At the bottom, there is a post from Nick Turner dated May 19th, 2009, mentioning a match at 10:00am and a reference to the 1977/78 season.

The EFA Facebook page