

THE COLLEGE OF THE RESURRECTION, MIRFIELD, WEST YORKSHIRE

You've heard of the lost gardens of Helligan? They were there all the time, but had simply been overlooked. In similar vein, I am delighted to report the re-discovery of a lost Yorkshire Fives court.

Bob Dolby's recent researches into the history of Fives at Alleyn's unearthed mention of a tour to play Yorkshire teams



The exterior of the Mirfield College Fives Court in June 2008.

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including Mirfield College in 1931. After a little head-scratching, we can say that this is what is today known as the College of the Resurrection in Mirfield, near Huddersfield, an affiliated college of Leeds University. Adjoining it is a religious community.

I made contact with the College and went to see the court and to read through back numbers of the Mirfield Gazette, the College's in-house magazine, to find out more about it.

The court stands in an isolated position at the base of a quarry, on the edge of the College grounds. Its position is such that it must have been very prone to sweating. It is not now in use as a Fives court. The Bursar had thought that it had originally been a boat house!

"In October 1905, a sum of money had been given to build a Fives Court in memory of JT Morrison by his sister (£142-00) and it had been designed by Caleb Ritson and built by Johnson of Mirfield. It was opened on April 17, 1906 (Easter Tuesday) by a game between Bernard & Mr Westmacott, Vicar of Mirfield. Of this sum of money, £12-00 was expended in trees, etc for the quarry which in these months was, by the labours of the students, converted in to an "incipient paradise" with walks, flower beds, trees, etc." The Mirfield Gazette

Today the floor and walls are potentially in playable condition, but the entrance through the back wall has been



The interior of the Mirfield College Court in June 2008, looking towards the front wall. © TIR.

enlarged to facilitate its use as a woodstore. The roof seems in fair condition, but has been penetrated by ivy/undergrowth and the hanging tendrils will be seen in the accompanying photograph. It was wired for electric light in 1933. The students cleared surrounding vegetation and painted the walls to freshen it up in 1954, but it seems to have become less used soon after that date. A change in the nature of the reporting in the *Mirfield Gazette* makes it hard to find much news about it after the mid-1950s. The College Archivist suggests that this would tie in with the building of a squash court about that date.

The College had an associated Hostel at Leeds University called Mount Pleasant, which was on Springfield Mount, where students taking Theology degrees would stay. The Hostel had its own court in Leeds built adjoining it in 1928. This is not the Leeds University courts at Devonshire Hall; the Hostel played fixtures of its own against Devonshire Hall. However, the Hostel players were clearly closely associated with Leeds University Fives and on occasions supplied the whole Leeds University team. At one point, the University's fixtures were being played on the Mount Pleasant court (probably before Devonshire Hall was built – they were certainly there by 1930). Sadly the Mount Pleasant court has not survived and the Hostel itself was recently sold off by Leeds University for a residential development. I have not yet discovered when the associated court disappeared.



The impressive Mount Pleasant Hostel, on the edge of Leeds University's campus, undergoing redevelopment in July 2008. The Fives court stood to the left, set back from the road. © TIR

In its heyday, the Mirfield College had an extensive fixture list. Locally, there is mention of Silcoates School, Crossley School, Heath School, Leeds Grammar School, Manchester YMCA, Heath Old Boys, Leeds University, Leeds University staff and the Hostel, as well as the anglican monks in the adjoining Community of the Resurrection. Further afield, there is mention of a tour to play Durham, Edinburgh and Glasgow universities. And the Alleyn Old Boys visited at least twice.

Fives at the College died out in Mirfield in the late 1950s/early 1960s, probably due the construction of a more conveniently situated squash court. Although the reports in the *Mirfield Gazette* show that Fives did continue to be played between the College and the Hostel into the 1960s, the end was nigh and the aspiring clerics turned their devotions to ludo and croquet instead.

Ian Roberts

My thanks to the College's Bursar Alan Speight, Brother Stephen (the Community's Archivist) and Father Thomas for their assistance in tracking down the story of these two lost courts.