

Michael Howard Bushby (1931-2020)

The RFA is sad to record the death of Mike Bushby, master-in-charge of Fives at Tonbridge from 1965-77 but still fully engaged with running the sport until Ian Jackson took charge in 1990-91. Mike took over when the School's Fives was at a low ebb, but immediately found two keen young stars of the future, Ian Fuller and Tony Wynn, who were interested in learning the game.

In his history of Fives at Tonbridge School Bill Gunyon wrote of Mike "who had never played fives" as follows: "By good fortune, two of the most endearing qualities of fives coincided with Bushby's priorities in sport – namely the fun that the sport offers even to boys who lack natural ball sense and the traditions of sporting behaviour that enable four players to compete in a confined space without a referee. The consequence was that Mike Bushby invested 30 years in Tonbridge fives, mostly with the younger boys, and became an increasingly passionate advocate for the sport."

Mike's dozen years officially in charge were to see Fives blossom at Tonbridge. In the three years 1970-72, only three matches were lost, and Mike took the bold decision in 1971 to have the buttresses in two of the seven courts filled in so that Rugby Fives visitors couldn't complain! Two further courts were converted a few years later, proving the success of the venture.

Mike Bushby's finest sporting achievements were in cricket. A right-handed opening batsman, he won three blues at Cambridge University, playing 43 first-class matches in all. He was captain in 1954, his team including two great Fives players, Dennis Silk and John Pretlove.

His obituary in The Times (14th March 2020) makes no mention of Fives.

Ian Jackson: On a sad note we learnt of the death of Mike Bushby in January, who ran the fives at Tonbridge, nominally for about 20 years, but in practice for over 30. Although primarily remembered as an outstanding cricketer (a contemporary and great friend of Dennis Silk and John Pretlove), he had a great love for the sport of Fives. His encouragement for all involved in the game was legendary.

See next page for an obituary from The Hawk Easter 2020

Michael Bushby 1931-2020



He obtained a scholarship to go to Dulwich College.

Excelling at both Rugby and Cricket he captained both teams in his final year.

His National Service was with the Royal Fusiliers, before going up to Queens' to read History. There he

played in the Blues XI 1952-54, captaining in 1954.

Although the Cambridge team included such greats as David Shepherd (later Bishop of Liverpool) and Denis Silk, the Varsity match at Lords was becoming a bit of a bore - not losing was becoming more important than trying to win. In an effort to resolve the matter Bushby approached Oxford's captain, Colin Cowdrey, and the two agreed to do without the tea interval on the final day. The match was still drawn!

Bushby taught at Tonbridge School from 1954-1991, and was Master of Cricket 1956-1972. A number of future England cricketers were under his tutelage: Roger Prideaux and Chris Cowdrey, to name but two. Perhaps as a reaction to his Cambridge days, he encouraged generous declarations and aggressive run chasing. He himself was a formidable fielder, and encouraged the discipline.

As a teacher he cultivated the image of old-fashioned school master, with patches on his elbows and smoking a pipe. He disdained technology (we have never had an email address for him), even finding the Xerox machine a bit of a challenge. He marked essays with comments in red ink, often lengthier than the answers to the questions.

Sir Anthony Seldon (educationalist and author) recalls that as a rebellious schoolboy at Tonbridge he protested against the CCF, and was suspended. Mike Busby fought his corner, and allowed him to sit his exams. Sir Anthony remained for ever grateful for this recognition of latent talent and held a Bushby lunch in his honour every year.

In retirement Mike worked as a Samaritan and as a volunteer at a home for people with disabilities.

He married Judy in 1962. She and their 3 children survive him.
