

Old Alleynian Fives and Squash Club 1930-1939 by Hon. Sec. G.R.Rimmer (1981)

Six small Rugby Fives courts were built at Dulwich College about 1890, the first school match being against St. Paul's School in 1894. Although the courts were under cover, there was no artificial lighting, play therefore being confined to daylight hours; this was one reason why no Old Boys Club was founded until 1930.

In 1923 permission was given to Old Alleynians to use the school courts on Sunday mornings and during school holidays, and soon there were a handful of regular players, some of whom were members of the Old Alleynian Gymnastic Club. In the season 1925-1926 the Old Alleynian Gymnastic Club had a competition with another Gymnastic Club who were about to form a Fives section and were challenged to a Fives match. The challenge was accepted, and three members of the Gym Club, W.Schlund, H.Hicks and G.R.Rimmer with J.H.White made up the first Old Alleynian Fives team to play an official match. The opponents were the Clove Club, which was formed in 1926, and in fact this was one of the first fixtures for that club. The last gymnastics competition between the Clove Club and Old Alleynians was in 1927. This fives fixture with the Clove Club led to others, as W.H.Pett of the Clove Club mentioned, saying that several other newly formed clubs were anxious to get fixtures, and also that they were hoping to found a Rugby Fives Association. From this time 1926 until 1930 the Old Alleynians increased their fixture list, although they had not yet formed an official club. In 1930, the following notice appeared in the Dulwich Year Book:

“For some years past a number of O.A’s have indulged in Fives at the College, at times when the courts have not been required by the school. During 1929-1930 the fixture list has been extended to 18 matches, 12 of which have been won, which may be considered very satisfactory, seeing that there was no organised club.

J.Battersby, N.H.F.Burrell, H.N.Harcourt, W.G.F.Hoskins, H.Hicks, R.P.Jonas, J.R.Kelting, E.D.Miller, J.F.Oliver, G.R.Rimmer, W.Schlund, D.E.Smith, F.K.Truman, F.A.Vogler, L.H.Way, have played in the matches. It is now proposed to form an O.A. Fives Club. Before next September it is hoped that everything will be in full working order.

In the meantime, it has been decided that the Fives Courts at the school are to be lighted with electricity, and perhaps what will be even more pleasing is that three new full-sized Fives and two Squash Courts are to be erected at the back of the existing Courts.”

On July 11th 1930 a meeting was held in the School Library, and it was decided to form an Old Alleynian Fives and Squash Club. G.R.Rimmer was elected Hon. Secretary, N.H.F.Burrell Hon. Treasurer, and the committee were F.A.Vogler, W.Schlund, J.Battersby, F.K.Truman, D.E.Smith (Cambridge), W.G.F.Hoskins (Oxford).

Three Squash courts were being built at this time, and the club became the first Old Boys Public School to have a combined Fives and Squash Club. The club flourished and had fixtures for 1st and 2nd IV matches numbering over 30. Annual competitions were held for open and handicap events for both Fives and Squash. Cups were presented at an annual supper, which was well attended. These suppers were held at various London restaurants, but finally ‘The White Hart’ opposite Bart's Hospital became the regular venue. The last supper, held in 1939, consisted of roast beef and vegetables, sweet and cheese, at the cost of three shillings and six pence (17½p.)

At the outbreak of war the membership was 110, of whom 10 were killed in action. Bombs destroyed all the courts, and until now in 1981 the Fives courts have not been rebuilt. The club was not reformed; it terminated in 1939. The most well-known Fives players were: F.K.Truman, a winner of the Cyriax Cup in 1936, runner-up in 1937, runner-up in the Jesters Cup in 1937; J.Battersby, a winner of the Cyriax Cup in 1936; R.J.Knight; runner-up in the Cyriax Cup (with B.C.Gough) in 1936, and with F.K.Truman in 1937, runner-up in the Jesters Cup in 1936 and winner in 1948; J.Gill, who was killed in the war, was runner-up in the Jesters Cup in 1939; R.B.A.Smith was runner-up in the Cyriax Cup in 1950.
