

Chesterfield School Eton Fives Courts

Two Eton fives courts were built c1924-28 during the Headmastership 1921-34 of A C Bescoby, at the former Chesterfield Grammar School in Sheffield Road. The site is now part of Chesterfield College.

Bescoby was educated at Hastings Grammar School and Emmanuel College, Cambridge. He had taught at The Perse School, Hastings GS, and Elizabeth College, Guernsey, before serving in the First World War 1916-18. He was then an Assistant Master at Uppingham 1919-21, before being appointed Headmaster of Chesterfield Grammar School, where he stayed until 1934.

Extract from the Chesterfield Grammar School 1941 Prospectus:

“ . . . The school also possesses two Fives courts The first eleven cricket ground and the fives courts are at the school, and other accommodation is provided at Brampton where the school has 27 acres of land.”

Below are references from the *Old Cestrefeldian* that mention Fives together with a summary of the details.

1945 Dec P65

House Fives Competition for the Bethel Cup. Large beat Lingard 2-0. One pair from each house played.

1946 May P39

Old-established school game fated not to get deserved attention due to bad weather and lack of proper equipment - balls & gloves. New balls reserved for house matches. Interest as great as ever especially in Science Sixth.

1946 Dec P95

No official competition last year mainly due to lack of proper equipment but interest maintained and increased. Hoped to increase numbers as Sixth Forms larger. Teams to be of 4 in future.

1947 May P37

Last issue unduly optimistic re Bethel Cup Competition. Could not do with no gloves and 2 balls. Enquiries being made, but concern both with availability and expense.

NB. Dale Vargas, the author of 'A History of Eton Fives' has shed light on this situation as follows. "The ball situation after the war is well documented. Although Slazenger, Gradidge, Grays, Mallings, etc sold them, there was actually only one maker, Bailey. His house was bombed in the war and his wife killed but he kept going for another 20 years. Obviously the supply chain failed and many schools complained of a shortage - although I doubt whether any stocks outside CGS were reduced to two balls!"

1947 Dec / 1948 May & Dec / 1949 May

No article

1949 Dec P143

After several years with little interest shown, large numbers of boys have come forward. Inter-house tournament played with 2 players from each house. Lingard beat Large in final. School team of Bennett, Bliss, Collins, Davies, Lunn and Stenton mentioned but no matches.

1950 May

No article

1950 Dec P137

Bethel Cup contested in Summer Term. C bt F, H bt L. L & B received byes. Semi final H bt C, L bt B. Final L bt H.

Lack of players meant only 2 per team instead of 6. No staffs match this year. Recommend "Eton Fives" book and request few seniors who know the game to teach others.

1951 – 1967

No further mention

After the School moved away one of these courts was demolished to make way for car parking, but the other still stands on the site, which is now occupied by Chesterfield College's West Studios.



Chesterfield (Grammar) School moved to a new site on Storrs Road, Brookside, Chesterfield in 1967. Two new Eton fives courts were built at the new school. The two courts were in use in the 1970s. Richard Gillingwater (OC), wrote:

"I was at Chesterfield Grammar School from 1967 to 1973. We had a very active Eton Fives society and I played a lot in the breaks. The game tended to be played by the less hearty sportsmen; we would all get terrific hand and wrist injuries!"

There were no inter-school fives matches but there was a House Competition for the Bethel Cup. Roy Parkin (OC) had been a Master at CGS from 1960-75. He recalls that in about 1972 an EFA four played an exhibition match in the courts at Storrs Road. They had lunch with him at his house.

The courts were converted to storage sheds in 1977 when the school hosted the English Schools Athletics Championships.



Another former pupil wrote: “Shame because I spent many a break and lunch time playing (though one had to wait for the prefects to finish first, or get there before them)”

1991, the site became Brookfield Community School. The two Eton fives courts, although backed up and used for other purposes, still stand.

Contributors:

David Barnes (RFA Archivist), Roger Barnes, John Drabble, Richard Gillingwater, Frank Gorman, Alex Knight, Kathryn Knight, Roy Parkin, Philip Riden, Jerry Rudman (Archivist at Uppingham), Dale Vargas.