



# SPORT @ ETON

*“Honouring Tradition,  
Inspiring Change”*

From 24 April 2024  
THE VEREY GALLERY



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## Introduction from The Provost

Like a good many things at Eton, sport grew unofficially and sometimes anarchically. The sensible approach of the Tudors was replaced by the muddle of the 18th century and near savagery of the Regency period.

When my own relation George Waldegrave was drowned swimming in the river in 1790 the school largely blamed him (he was swimming on a Sunday after all) and placed his memorial very high in the north porch of College Chapel: drowning young earls was not good for business. Perhaps he contributed to the river being formally out of bounds for decades: not that that stopped the growth of rowing.

Indeed, Eton was one of the places where serious competitive rowing really began. Happily, football of various kinds and cricket supplanted the bare knuckle fighting (Lord Shaftesbury's younger son was killed in one such bout in 1825).

But the range of sport was always enormous: Eton Fives of course, Rackets (we have just restored and refurbished Eton's famous courts), beagling, and many, many more have made Eton one of the sources of international sportsmen (not only for Britain) as well as providing huge fun and a sensible level of exercise for all boys.

But there is still a little bit of unofficial anarchy: do not tell me that corridor football and the successors to the yard football of Warre House in my day do not still thrive. They are part of Eton's DNA as much as a near perfect VIII at Henley or the heroics of Fowler's Match at Lords in 1910. I hope you enjoy the exhibition!

**Lord Waldegrave of North Hill**



## Development of Sport at Eton College

Sport has been an integral part of life at Eton College since the earliest days. The first set of the College's Statutes<sup>1</sup>, written around 10 years after the foundation, record that there shall be 'no jumping or wrestling' or 'throwing of stones or balls'.



Wall paintings on the west wall of the Head Master's Chambers, Eton College. The banner seen at the top is taken from William Horman's *Vulgaria*.

William Horman, Head Master from 1486-95, published his *Vulgaria* in 1519. This Latin textbook of everyday sayings contains one of the earliest references to the game of football – 'We wyll playe with a ball full of wynde'.

He praised the value of sport for letting children find an outlet for their energy, aside from their studies. This indulgence of play can be seen in 16<sup>th</sup> century

wall paintings in the Head Master's Chambers. It shows Tudor schoolboys engaged in a school day; one boy can be seen playing with a whip and spinning top, while two balls lie on the floor.

Horman speaks of boys engaged in a number of different games, including chess, puppets and juggling, while one of the phrases states 'he hit me in the eye with a tennis ball'.

Although play might have been indulged, there was actually little opportunity for the boys to engage in any sporting activities. William Malim, Head Master in the early 1560s, wrote a detailed description of the customs and daily life of the school, painting a lively picture of 16<sup>th</sup> century Eton. This describes the day starting at 5am, with prayers at 6am. Lessons started at 7am and ran all day. The boys went to bed at 8pm. An hour's break at 3pm offered the only opportunity for recreation.

It was not until the late 17<sup>th</sup> century that physical exercise was seen as a vital part of life at the College and had time dedicated to

it. Thomas Mountague, Head Master from 1660-71, wrote that 'after dinner [the boys] were obliged to go to exercise in the fields at skittles etc till one o'clock'<sup>2</sup>. This was the first time that games were officially recognised by the school. Even so, the minutes of the Provost and Fellows of 19 December 1660

### DID YOU KNOW:

When compulsory physical education was introduced in 1937, time was taken from the hours dedicated to teaching Classics. Today, organised sport takes place on six afternoons per week.



E. Impey's Junior Cricket XI, 1907 (PA-A.7:8-2012)

state that 'The Schoolmaster shall grant but one afternoon in a week for leave to play'<sup>3</sup>.

By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Eton had seen many changes. An increase in boys from the aristocratic and leisured classes encouraged an extension of the time allowed for recreation. Fencing and dancing were the only activities officially offered, but the boys were free to organise any games themselves.

It is clear, though, that sport was not taken very seriously, and it was up to each individual boy to decide what he did and how much time to dedicate to it. The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a dramatic increase in the sports on offer, but these were still largely on an informal basis with little interference from the school. Indeed, sport continued to be largely run by boys until the 1970s.



Physical training in the Gym, 1937 (PA-A.52:2-2013)

<sup>1</sup> *Liber originalis*, Statute 46, c.1452 (ECR 60 01 01)

<sup>2</sup> Article 'Eton and Winchester in 1530' in *Etoniana* 9, 22 May 1907, p. 135

<sup>3</sup> ECR 60 06 01 02 A



## Facilities

Until the provision of specific facilities, boys took advantage of the spaces available to them, using the fields surrounding Eton, the river running past, and the architecture of the buildings.

The first playing fields were acquired from Henry VI in 1443, and were known as Upper and Lower Shooting Fields. Now they are better known as Upper, Middle and Lower Club. Mesopotamia was purchased in 1890 as an additional cricket ground, and Agar's Plough and Dutchman's were added in 1894.

### DID YOU KNOW:

The game of Eton Fives was developed by boys playing in the spaces between the buttresses of College Chapel.



Photograph showing boys swimming in the river at 'Upper Hope'. The photo, taken in c.1887, features boys who would have passed a mandatory swimming examination before being permitted to swim in the river (PA-A.85:45-2017)

Until the opening of the open-air swimming pool in 1956, all swimming took place in the river at four main bathing places – Romney near the Home Park, Athens opposite what is now the Royal Windsor Racecourse, Ward's Mead

near the playing fields, and Cuckoo Weir just beyond the Brocas. An indoor swimming pool opened in 1979. The open-air pool was in use until c.2007 and the new Athens complex was built on its site.



Boys playing Fives, 1939 (PA-A.37:173-2012)



High jump on Kennels, 1940 (PA-A.1:35-2012)

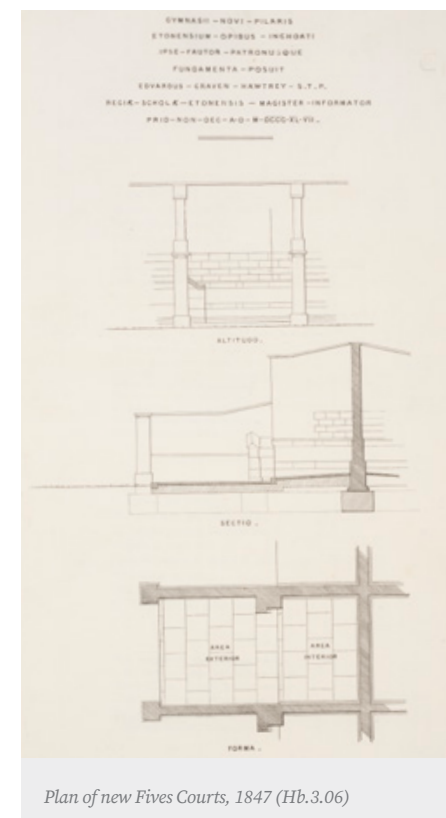
The first building provided by the school for recreation was the Dancing School, first mentioned in the 1760s and run by Mr Hickford, the dancing master. The Fencing School appears in our records around the same time, led by Domenico Angelo, the celebrated fencing master, whose family would run the School of Arms until 1864. The House Angelo's is named after them.

The lack of formal facilities reflects the lack of interest by the school in the boys' recreation. New, purpose-built Fives Courts were constructed in 1847, but when more were needed in 1863, it was up to the Captain of the Oppidans to raise the money required and to commission the building. Senior boys were to subscribe 5 shillings and Lower Boys 3 shillings, with some boys contributing up to £1 to raise the £250 needed.

This lack featured as a regular complaint in the *Chronicle*, the school magazine, with the boys stating in 1863, that 'on a wet day, there is positively nothing to do by way of amusement, but to eat, or else annoy your Tutor by quasi-gymnastic exercises in the passage, or a 10-foot square cage, called a "room" at Eton.'<sup>4</sup>

Despite this, it would not be until 1907 that the school would provide a venue for physical activity. In that year, the first gymnasium was built and the first instructor in Physical Training, Lieut. F.H. Grenfell R.N., appointed to instruct the boys according to the Swedish System.

Today, the facilities available to the boys include around 40 football pitches, 19 cricket pitches, 50 tennis courts, a national standard athletics stadium and a rowing lake. A new swimming pool and sports hall, known as Athens after the historic bathing spot, opened in 2022 and plans are in place for a new general indoor sports facility including a further sports hall, climbing wall, squash courts and fencing salle. Extensive improvements have also been made to existing facilities such as the rackets courts.



Plan of new Fives Courts, 1847 (Hb.3.06)



Eton College Rowing Centre at Dorney Lake

<sup>4</sup> Eton College Chronicle, 2 July 1863



## Eton and the Olympics

Etonians have been a part of the modern Olympic Games since the foundation of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1894, from organising to competing, playing both host and spectator to the world's foremost sports contest which today sees representatives from more than 200 countries compete.

The first modern Olympic Games took place in Athens in 1896.

One of two British members of the original committee of the IOC was the Hon. Arthur Oliver Villiers Russell, 2nd Baron Amptill, an Old Etonian (GEM & WD, 1888) and former Captain of Boats. He was just 25 when he was nominated, and he served on

the committee from 1894-98.

Following the outbreak of the Second World War, the 1940 and 1944 Games were cancelled. The Olympic Games returned in 1948, held in London with Old Etonian David Cecil, Lord Burghley (JHMH & JCC, 1922), as Chair of the Organising Committee.

David Cecil, Lord Burghley had made his Olympic debut at the 1924 Paris Olympics, and won the 400m hurdles at the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam. He became a member of the IOC in 1933, and in 1936, Chairman of the British Olympic Association. In 1946, he was elected President of the International Amateur Athletic Federation, before taking on the role as Chairman of the Organising Committee for the 1948 Olympics. He held the post of Vice-President of the IOC for 14 years from 1952.

He was the inspiration behind the famous court run scene in *Chariots of Fire* (1981), filmed at Eton College. In June 1927, in his final year at Magdalene College, Cambridge, Burghley sprinted around Great Court at Trinity College at midnight in the time it took the college clock to toll 12 o'clock.



Eton has featured as a venue in each of the London Olympics, first as part of the route of the Olympic marathon in 1908. The race began on the east terrace of Windsor Castle and finished at the Royal Box at the White City Stadium, giving the distance 26 miles 385 yards, becoming the standard length for the marathon. The route passed the College, and a plaque on the High Street signifies the point at which runners had 25 miles to run.

### DID YOU KNOW:

Known as 'Eton Dorney' for the 2012 Olympics, Dorney Lake welcomed over 30,000 spectators per day who came to watch 550 athletes participate in the flat-water rowing and canoeing events.

In 1948, the Olympic torch came through Windsor over the bridge to Eton, with the hand-over taking place at the Burning Bush outside School Hall. The flame had been brought over from France on *HMS Bicester*, and the first lap in England was run by Chief Petty Officer Herbert 'Chiefy' Barnes, later Head Waterman at Eton College.

In 2012, the rowing, canoe sprint and Paralympic rowing events were hosted at Dorney Lake, Eton College's 2,200m, eight-lane course opened in 2000. The first major event held there was the SuperSprint



Lord O.A.V. Amptill while at Eton, 1887  
(PA-A.77:235-2014)

Rowing Grand Prix, Sir Steven Redgrave's last race after the 2000 Sydney Olympics, at which he won his fifth gold medal. He competed at that event as a pair with Sir Matthew Pinsent (JWT & NRC, 1988), himself a four-time Olympic gold medallist.



Eton Dorney during the 2012 Olympic Games showing the public grandstand

# Olympic Wall of Fame

1900	Paris	Polo	John Beresford	GOLD
1900	Paris	Polo	Sir Alfred Rawlinson	GOLD
1906	Athens	Fencing	Sir Cosmo Duff Gordon	SILVER
1908	London	Rackets doubles	Vane Hungerford Pennell	GOLD
1908	London	Rackets doubles	John Jacob Astor	GOLD
1908	London	Rackets doubles	Vane Hungerford Pennell	
1908	London	Rackets doubles	John Jacob Astor	BRONZE
1908	London	Coxless fours	John Somers-Smith	BRONZE
1908	London	Eights	Gilchrist Maclagan	GOLD
1908	London	Eights	Henry Bucknall	GOLD
1908	London	Eights	Guy Nickalls	GOLD
1908	London	Eights	Banner Carruthers Johnstone	GOLD
1908	London	Eights	Frederick Kelly	GOLD
1908	London	Eights	Sir Albert Gladstone	GOLD
1908	London	Eights	Charles Burnell	GOLD
1908	London	Eights	Eric Powell	BRONZE
1908	London	Eights	Edward Williams	BRONZE
1908	London	Coxless pair	George Fairbairn	SILVER
1908	London	Real Tennis	Neville Bulwer-Lytton	BRONZE
1908	London	Sailing	Wiliam Ward	BRONZE
1908	London	Motor boats	Baron Howard de Walden	
1908	London	Fencing	Martin Vesey Holt	SILVER
1912	Stockholm	Eights	Edgar Burgess	GOLD
1912	Stockholm	Eights	Leslie Wormald	GOLD
1912	Stockholm	Eights	Ewart Horsfall	GOLD
1912	Stockholm	Eights	Arthur Garton	GOLD
1912	Stockholm	Eights	Alister Kirby	GOLD
1912	Stockholm	Eights	Philip Fleming	GOLD
1912	Stockholm	Eights	Sir William Parker	SILVER
1912	Stockholm	Eights	Frederick Pitman	SILVER
1912	Stockholm	Eights	Sir William Fison	SILVER
1912	Stockholm	Eights	Robert Bourne	SILVER
1912	Stockholm	Eventing	Edward Nash	
1912	Stockholm	110m hurdles	Gerard Anderson	
1912	Stockholm	100m	Arthur Anderson	
1912	Stockholm	200m	Arthur Anderson	
1912	Stockholm	Fencing	Martin Vesey Holt	SILVER
1920	Antwerp	Fencing	Martin Vesey Holt	
1920	Antwerp	Eights	Guy Nickalls	SILVER
1920	Antwerp	Eights	Robin Johnstone	SILVER
1920	Antwerp	Eights	Ewart Horsfall	SILVER
1920	Antwerp	Eights	Richard Lucas	SILVER
1920	Antwerp	Eights	Baron Northbourne	SILVER
1920	Antwerp	Eights	Sebastian Earl	SILVER
1924	Paris	Fencing	Martin Vesey Holt	
1924	Paris	Coxless fours	Terence Sanders	GOLD
1924	Paris	Coxless fours	Charles Eley	GOLD
1924	Paris	Coxless fours	Robert Morrison	GOLD
1924	Paris	Coxless fours	James Macnabb	GOLD
1924	Paris	Eights	Ian Fairbairn	
1924	Paris	400m hurdles	Wilfred Tatham	
1924	Paris	110m hurdles	Lord Burghley	
1928	Amsterdam	Fencing	Martin Vesey Holt	
1928	Amsterdam	110m hurdles	Lord Burghley	
1928	Amsterdam	400m hurdles	Lord Burghley	GOLD
1928	Amsterdam	800m	Wilfred Tatham	
1928	Amsterdam	Eights	Guy Nickalls	SILVER
1928	St Moritz	Bobsleigh	Sir Frederick Browning	
1932	Los Angeles	400m hurdles	Lord Burghley	
1932	Los Angeles	110m hurdles	Lord Burghley	
1932	Los Angeles	4 x 400m	Lord Burghley	SILVER
1932	Los Angeles	Coxless pairs	Lewis Clive	GOLD
1932	Los Angeles	Eights	David Haig-Thomas	
1932	Los Angeles	Eights	Harold Rickett	
1932	Los Angeles	Eights	Kenneth Payne	
1936	Berlin	Polo	David Dawnay	SILVER
1936	Garmisch	Skiing	Peter Lunn	
1936	Garmisch	Skiing	William Moorhouse	
1936	Berlin	Fencing	Sir Ralph Brooks	
1936	Garmisch	Skiing	James Palmer-Tomkinson	

1948	London	Fencing	Sir Ralph Brooks	
1948	London	Eights	Sir David Meyrick	SILVER
1948	London	Pentathlon	Derek Allhusen	
1948	St Moritz	Skiing	James Palmer-Tomkinson	
1948	London	Double sculls	Richard Burnell	GOLD
1948	London	Single sculls	Anthony Rowe	

1952	Helsinki	Coxless fours	Sir George Cadbury	
1952	Helsinki	Coxless pairs	David Callender	
1956	Melbourne	Eights	Christopher Davidge	
1956	Melbourne	Fencing	Bill Hoskyns	
1960	Rome	Sailing	Vernon Stratton	
1960	Rome	Equestrian	Sir John Arthur	
1960	Rome	Fencing	Bill Hoskyns	SILVER
1964	Innsbruck	Two-man bobsleigh	Robin Dixon	GOLD
1964	Innsbruck	Skiing	Charles Palmer-Tomkinson	
1964	Tokyo	Fencing	Bill Hoskyns	SILVER
1968	Mexico City	Team Equestrian	Derek Allhusen	GOLD
1968	Mexico City	Individual Equestrian	Derek Allhusen	SILVER
1968	Grenoble	Skiing	Jeremy Palmer-Tomkinson	
1968	Mexico City	Fencing	Bill Hoskyns	
1972	Sapporo	Skiing	Jeremy Palmer-Tomkinson	
1972	Munich	Coxed pairs	David Maxwell	
1972	Munich	Fencing	Bill Hoskyns	
1972	Munich	Coxed Fours	H Matheson	
1976	Innsbruck	Skiing	Jeremy Palmer-Tomkinson	
1976	Montreal	Eights	David Maxwell	SILVER
1976	Montreal	Eights	H Matheson	SILVER
1980	Lake Placid	Skiing	Jeremy Palmer-Tomkinson	
1980	Moscow	Single	H Matheson	
1984	Los Angeles			
1988	Seoul			
1992	Barcelona	Coxless pairs	Sir Matthew Pinsent	GOLD
1992	Barcelona	Quadruple skull	Guy Pooley	
1996	Atlanta	Coxless pairs	Sir Matthew Pinsent	GOLD
1996	Atlanta	Double sculls	Guy Pooley	
1996	Atlanta	Team Equestrian	William Fox-Pitt	
1996	Atlanta	Individual Equestrian	William Fox-Pitt	
2000	Sydney	Coxless fours	Sir Matthew Pinsent	GOLD
2000	Sydney	Coxless fours	Ed Coode	GOLD
2000	Sydney	Eights	Andrew Lindsay	GOLD
2002	Salt Lake City	Skeleton	Clifton Wrottesley (Ireland)	
2004	Athens	Coxless fours	Sir Matthew Pinsent	GOLD
2004	Athens	Coxless fours	Ed Coode	GOLD
2004	Athens	Team Equestrian	William Fox-Pitt	SILVER
2004	Athens	Individual Equestrian	William Fox-Pitt	
2008	Beijing	Eights	Alastair Heathcote	SILVER
2008	Beijing	Team Equestrian	William Fox-Pitt	BRONZE
2008	Beijing	Individual Equestrian	William Fox-Pitt	
2008	Beijing	Eventing	Alex Hua Tian (China)	
2012	London	110m hurdles	Lawrence Clarke	
2012	London	Team Equestrian	William Fox-Pitt	SILVER
2012	London	Individual Equestrian	William Fox-Pitt	
2012	London	Eventing	Alex Hua Tian (China)	
2014	Sochi	Slalom	Kanes Sucharitakul (Thailand)	
2014	Sochi	Giant slalom	Kanes Sucharitakul (Thailand)	
2016	Rio	110m hurdles	Lawrence Clarke	
2016	Rio	Eights	Constantine Louloudis	GOLD
2016	Rio	Team Equestrian	William Fox-Pitt	
2016	Rio	Individual Equestrian	William Fox-Pitt	
2016	Rio	Eventing	Alex Hua Tian (China)	
2020	Tokyo	Coxless pairs	Fred Vystavel (Denmark)	BRONZE
2020	Tokyo	Eventing	Alex Hua Tian (China)	

## Also

Earl Cadogan, *Chairman BOA 1922-27, IOC 1923-29*  
 Wyndham Portal, *Chairman BOA 1935-36, President 1936-49*  
 Lord Burghley, *Chair of Organising Committee 1948*  
 Duke of Beaufort, *President BOA 1949-66*  
 Lord Nevill, *Chairman BOA 1966-77, President 1977-82*

Lord Burghley, *President BOA 1966-77, Chairman 1936-66*  
 Charlie Farley, *BOA Quartermaster 1991-2014*  
 Clifton Wrottesley, *Chef de mission, Ireland, 2006*  
 Herbert (Chiefy) Barnes, *torch carrier 1948*  
 Lord Killanin, *President IOC, 1972-80*





Eton VIII in 'ladder pose', 1899 (PA-A.73:78-2013)

## Sport at Eton College

The sports programme at Eton is designed to encourage a rich and diverse experience for boys. The process of engaging in sport not only promotes enjoyment of the sports themselves, but the qualities of leadership, learning to win and lose, thinking as part of a team and pushing limits.

Boys can be part of a school team, with over 60 different colours available, and can also participate in inter-House competitions, or play just for fun.

The range of sports played has always been led by the interests of the boys, with different games coming in and out of fashion over the centuries. Some are played by the whole school, while some are specific to individual Houses, such as bike-shed cricket, played by boys in Cotton Hall. Many of these games have spread

beyond Eton, with the version developed here becoming the internationally accepted one. New games are introduced regularly, a recent being pickleball – a cross between badminton, tennis and table-tennis.

### DID YOU KNOW:

There are 6,000 House fixtures each year, allowing boys of different standards to play their part and represent their House.

### List of games played as listed in *Nugae Etonenses*, c.1756 (ED 361)

<i>Cricket</i>	<i>Fives</i>	<i>Shirking Walls</i>
<i>Scrambling Walls</i>	<i>Bally Cally</i>	<i>Battledores</i>
<i>Peg-top</i>	<i>Peg in the ring</i>	<i>Goals</i>
<i>Hopscotch</i>	<i>Headimy</i>	<i>Conquering Lobs</i>
<i>Hoops</i>	<i>Marbles</i>	<i>Trap-ball</i>
<i>Steal baggage</i>	<i>Puss in the Corner</i>	<i>Cat Gallows</i>
<i>Kites</i>	<i>Cloyster and Flyer Gigs</i>	<i>Tops</i>
<i>Humming-tops</i>	<i>Hunt the hare</i>	<i>Hunt the dark lanthorn</i>
<i>Chuck</i>	<i>Sinks</i>	<i>Starecaps</i>
<i>Hustlecap</i>	<i>Football</i>	<i>Slides in school</i>
<i>Leaping poles</i>	<i>Slide down the sides of the stairs from Cloysters to Colledge Kitchen</i>	

Today, boys can choose one major sport each term as well as multiple minor ones.



Tug-of-war Dry Bobs v Wet Bobs: 1924 (PA-A.2:13-2012)



## Association Football

'Football' at Eton used to mean the Field Game (one of the main ancestors of soccer) or the Wall Game.

Undergraduates at Cambridge who came from schools with different football games, but wanted to be able to play a common game, combined elements from all their traditions to create a new set of rules. This led to the Cambridge Rules, drawn up in 1848 by a committee representing former pupils of Eton, Harrow, Shrewsbury, Rugby, Marlborough and Westminster. According to the published memoirs of W.C. Green, who attended King's College, Cambridge between 1851 and 1854:

*'There was a Football Club, whose games were played on the Piece, according to rules more like the Eton Field rules than any other. But Rugby and Harrow players would sometimes begin running with the ball in hand or claiming free kicks, which led to some protest and confusion... the rules were revised... with some concessions to non-Etonians.'*<sup>5</sup>

In October 1863, a letter appeared in *The Times* from a pupil at Eton College, calling for 'the framing of set rules for the game of football to be played everywhere'. Simultaneously, an advert went out to arrange a meeting of men from various clubs to formulate a set of rules for all clubs across the country to play by. This meeting, held in a pub in London, established the Football Association (FA), and, over a series of subsequent meetings, the game widely

known as soccer. From the very beginnings, former Etonians were involved and were highly successful, although they would not play as a team until the 1874-75 season.

In addition to being instrumental in the development of football in Britain, Old Etonians also played a key role in the advance of the game overseas. A programme records a match, held in 1873, between a scratch team of Old Etonians and members of Yale University; it was the first time the Americans had played 11-a-side, a concession to the visiting team and their rules. This game therefore represents the beginnings of the spread of Association Football across the globe.

Despite this long connection, there was no school Association Football team at Eton until 1930. Today it is one of the most popular of the sports on offer.

### DID YOU KNOW:

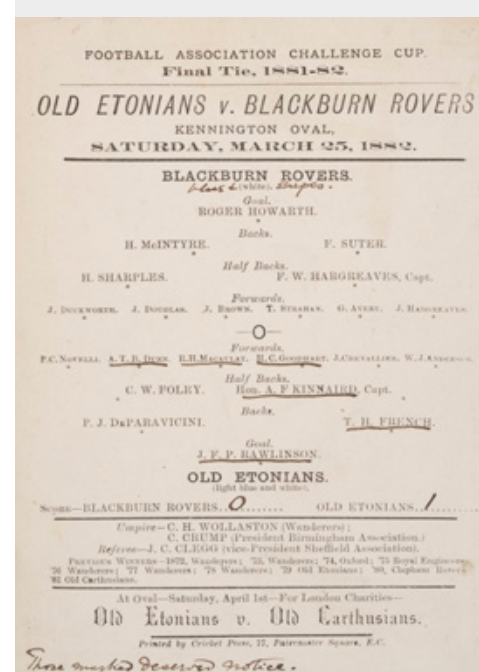
Basil Tuma, who left Eton in 2023, is a current player for Reading FC, and juggled his time at Eton, including being President of Pop, with training at the club's academy.



The Old Etonian football team which won the FA Cup in 1882



F.J.R. Coleridge's Junior League Soccer, 1959 (PA-A.48:19-2013)



MISC OEFC 03 02

In the first 12 years of the FA Cup, the Old Etonians reached the final six times, winning in 1879 and 1882, the last amateur team to do so. The original owner of the programme shown here, Sir Thomas Berry Cusack-Smith (TJR, 1876), underlined the names of the players he thought worthy of notice. These included Lord Arthur Kinnaird (LJL, 1865). Lord Kinnaird holds the record for the most appearances by an individual in the FA Cup final, appearing nine times between 1872 and 1883. He served as President of the FA for 33 years from 1890 until his death in 1923, taking over from Colonel Sir Francis Marindin, another Old Etonian (WE, 1851).

In 1885, the FA decided that professionals could participate in the FA Cup. The days of the amateur ended and the Old Etonians' final appearance was in the 1887-88 season.

<sup>5</sup> W.C. Green, *Memories of Eton and King's, Eton*, 1905, p.77



## Cricket

‘Your mother thinks cricket a very dangerous game but it certainly is a fine manly amusement’<sup>6</sup>

Boys who choose cricket in the summer are known as Dry Bobs. Cricket at Eton was popular from at least the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and is arranged into a number of clubs, depending on age and ability. William Goldwin, at Eton 1695-1700, published a poem in 1706 describing the game in Latin. Cricket is also mentioned in the Eton memories of Horace Walpole as one of the diversions of his school friends in the 1730s.

An article in *Baily’s Magazine* in 1820 describes the kit of the players as ‘a white jean jacket, fitting easily to the figure, with the blue tie of Eton; nankeen shorts and ribbed silk stockings, with socks tightly folded over the ankle, and the white hat jauntily put on’. This is one of the earliest references to ‘Eton Blue’. Today, there are six different school colours for cricket – the XXII, XI, XXXIII, Middle Club, Strawberry and Upper Sixpenny. Sixpenny is a team for boys under 16, and gets its name from the payment once given to the groundsman for the right to play. Strawberry (named after the colour of the kit) is open to boys in their last year at Eton (B Block). House cricket began in 1860 with the inaugural House cricket

### DID YOU KNOW:

An Old Boys’ team exists, known as the Eton Ramblers. It was founded in 1862, and still plays regularly.

competition, a trophy being provided by William Johnson (Cory), Assistant Master 1845-72.

The oldest series of matches in cricket history is the Eton-Harrow match played at Lord’s Cricket Ground. A letter arrived at Eton, addressed to the Captain of the Oppidans, from the Gentlemen of Harrow. They requested ‘the honour of trying their skill at cricket’<sup>7</sup> at Lord’s on 31 July 1805, and the now famous match was born. The official scorebook records that ‘The Harrow were beat...Hurra’<sup>8</sup>. Lord Byron played for the Harrovians, and managed to score. However, he was allowed a substitute runner owing to the deformity of his right foot. Afterwards, the Etonians sent a message to their opponents: ‘Adventurous boys of Harrow School, Of cricket you’ve no knowledge. You play not cricket, but the fool, With men of Eton College’.



Fourth of June Cricket match, c.1890s (PA-A.254:2-2019)

Upper Club score book, 1805, SCH SP CRI 01 A

Records of any matches between 1805 and 1818 were destroyed when Lord’s Pavilion was burnt down in 1825 but from 1818 the Lord’s match had become an annual event between Eton, Harrow and Winchester. However, in 1854, the Head Master of Winchester withdrew his school from the match, wishing to dis-associate from the notoriety of the event with teenage boys unsupervised in London for up to a week. Two years later, Eton did the same, with one of

Etonians benefit from professional coaching, often from former professional players. One of the most influential is R.A.H. Mitchell. Known as ‘Mike’, Mitchell was an Assistant Master from 1866, and was in charge of Eton cricket for over 30 years. Regarded as one of the leading amateur players of his era, he has been widely

SCH B 02 01 01

the reasons given by the Head Master at the time that ‘The masters allege that these matches brought together a number of boys’, who ‘are led by bad example into the debauchery which London offers...Virtue must come before cricket’<sup>9</sup>. Numerous letters survive detailing the arguments for and against the match, and ultimately it was resumed, but during term-time with far more control by the school authorities.

credited for the improvement in Eton cricket over his time as coach. He taught his pupils to bat in what became known as the elegant Etonian forward style. In the history of Test cricket, 21 Etonians have represented England; 13 of whom were coached by Mitchell.



The Eton XI take to the field, 1930 (PA-A.132:4-2017)

<sup>6</sup> Letter to Richard Gosling, 6 July 1809 (ED 165 8)

<sup>7</sup> SCH B 02 01 01

<sup>8</sup> SCH SP CRI 01 A

<sup>9</sup> Statement by Charles Old Goodford concerning the Lord’s cricket match, 8 August 1857 (COLL P3 38 35)



## Rowing

Rowing has been a major sport for the College for many years, and the school has many successful rowers among its alumni. A boy who rows is known as a Wet Bob.

Eton has a claim to have invented rowing as an amateur sport, and its boys were certainly boating in the 1790s. However, until 1840 the boys were not officially allowed on the river, and those caught were flogged. They had to pass their swimming examination, and a register was kept of the

nants and non-nants – swimmers and non-swimmers. In practice, however, the school authorities did nothing to stop boat races, and the Procession of Boats on the Fourth of June was, and still is, an annual occasion full of ceremony.



CAG's Boats choices, 1925 (PA-A.45.16-2013)

The Fourth celebrates the birthday of George III, a great friend to Eton, and the first recorded Procession for this occasion was in 1793. The Procession starts with the most senior boys' boats and ends with the youngest, who all row past a crowd of spectators. The costume worn today is based on the dress of Nelson's navy, with many of the boats named after the ships who fought at Trafalgar. A boater covered in flowers is also worn. As part of the Procession, the boys stand up in the boats and scatter the flowers into the Thames.

The most senior boat is the Monarch, which has ten oarsmen and a cox – a very unusual arrangement and supposedly the only ten-oared boat in the world. The job of the Monarch's men is to act as river prefects, assisting with internal rowing events and ensuring river safety. Boys who row in the Monarch wear dark blue. Victory, the second boat, is crewed by the VIII, and named after Nelson's famous ship. Her colours are Eton Blue.

Initially, captains of boats recruited crews from their own friends, but as the sport became more recognised, the numbers taking part grew and by 1931 nearly 500 boats were competing for around 20 different cups. Part of this increase can be attributed to the support of Edmund Warre, himself an Old Etonian and Head Master from 1884-1905. He had rowed in the Oxford VIII, and became River Master and trainer of the Eton VIII. His papers contain many discussions about the sport, especially on the use of the sliding seat. Warre was not a fan, writing 'They have done no good to rowing except perhaps increasing the pace. But they have done much to spoil style.'

Eton first challenged Westminster to a race in 1818, but it was not until 1829 that the first race between the two schools actually took place. The VIII first rowed in the Henley

Regatta in 1861, and in 1894, the Eton College Boating Company was set up to enable the school to run its own boats and boathouse.

### DID YOU KNOW:

The Eton Boating Song, written in 1863, is one of the best-known of the school songs. In 1962, the tune was adopted by Coventry City FC as their club anthem.



Coxed four on the river, c.1932 (PA.A-50:21-2013)

## Fives

'The very best game for boys that has ever been invented'<sup>10</sup>

Fives is one of the games mentioned in *Nugae Etonenses*, the list of games enjoyed by Eton boys that dates from around 1765. Eton Fives is unique because of the architecture of the court rather than the basic idea of the game – using your hand to hit a ball against a wall. The boys did this in the spaces between the buttresses of College Chapel. Two boys could play in between the first two bays, and in the third bay, slightly larger due to the steps, four boys could play. The game with four boys is likely to be that referred to as 'shirking walls' in the *Nugae*.

The game with four players was so popular that in 1847 replica walls were built where the House called Mustians now stands – the first Fives Courts. These purpose-built courts replicated the original space between the buttresses at the foot of the steps to the north door of College Chapel, the third bay from the west. The end of the balustrade was copied as 'the pepper box'. The foundation stone was laid by Dr Hawtrey, Head Master from 1834-53, and verses by Eton masters in Greek, Latin, French, German and Italian were printed as a memorial of the occasion.

Competition for these courts was fierce, as only 32 boys out of the 700 then at the school would be able to play at any one time, on a first-come, first-served basis. This led to the building of more courts so that by the early 20th century, 200 boys could play at the same time. From the 1870s onwards, courts were also built at other public schools, including Harrow and Westminster, as well as at Oxford and Cambridge and country houses across England, spreading the game throughout the country. In the 1920s, courts were built

in Switzerland, the beginning of the game's spread overseas. The Eton Fives Association was established in 1924 to bring together Old Boys' associations and to promote the increase of facilities and inter-club matches.

There are now courts in France, Australia, India, Malaysia and Brazil, and the game is especially popular in Nigeria.



From 1857, the winners of School Fives were recorded, and House Fives began in 1869 (PA-A.1:37-2012)

The first written rules date from 1878, by which time players were wearing special gloves to protect their hands. The game was then played chiefly in the Lent half, which was often referred to as the Fives half, but was played sporadically year-round. The National Schools' Championships is the main competition for school players across the country, and is regularly held at Eton.



Boys playing Fives, 1939 (PA-A.37:153-2012)

### DID YOU KNOW:

The layout of the Fives court gives left-handed players an advantage over right-handed ones, unusual in ball games.

<sup>10</sup> A. C. Ainger, *Memories of Eton Sixty Years Ago*, J. Murray 1917, p. 175



## Field Game

The Field Game is one of the few that is still largely organised by the boys, with the Keeper selecting the team.



Lower Boy Final, St Andrew's Day 1934 (PA-A.50:43-2013)

With no formal training sessions, it is an opportunity to play at a more relaxed level. All current boys get a chance to play and teams of alumni return to play matches at the College on Saturdays in the Lent Half.

The Field Game rules were first written down in 1847 and have been revised several times since. Some rules have remained unchanged, such as rule 8: 'the goal sticks are to be seven feet out of the ground... the space between each goal stick is to be eleven feet'; and rule 19: 'No crawling on the hands and knees with the ball between the legs is allowed.'<sup>11</sup>

There are 11 players and an umpire, and the game is played with a smaller version of a soccer ball. The use of referees was first advocated in games in public schools, and the Field Game is a particularly early example of this. The game differs from soccer in two major ways. If the ball goes out of play a bully or scrum puts it in again, and most importantly it is not a passing game. The player retains the ball until tackled. For the originators, avoiding this one-to-one confrontation by passing was considered a sign of moral weakness. According to one boy, it is this that makes it preferable to Association Football: 'I think that it would be

a very bad thing if Association football was played here: our Eton game is one of our most cherished institutions... also there is the very important question of slackness and loafing, for anybody who did not want to run about energetically could simply give the ball an enormous kick and call it a pass.'<sup>12</sup>

The House Cup was inaugurated in 1860, making it one of the oldest inter-House competitions and one of the oldest trophies in the game of football as a whole. On St Andrew's Day, one of the key dates in the Eton Calendar, a match takes place at Eton between Old Etonians at Oxford and Old Etonians at Cambridge.

A record of a House debate states 'The Field Game is the only game which the whole school plays...there are some types of boy which are clearly out of place on a soccer field; whereas the talents of others are more suited to soccer than to Rugby. The Field Game on the other hand provides equal opportunities for the snappy dribbler and seventy ton tank.'<sup>13</sup>



A Lower Boy match on Dutchman's, 1939 (PA-A.1:24-2012)

### DID YOU KNOW:

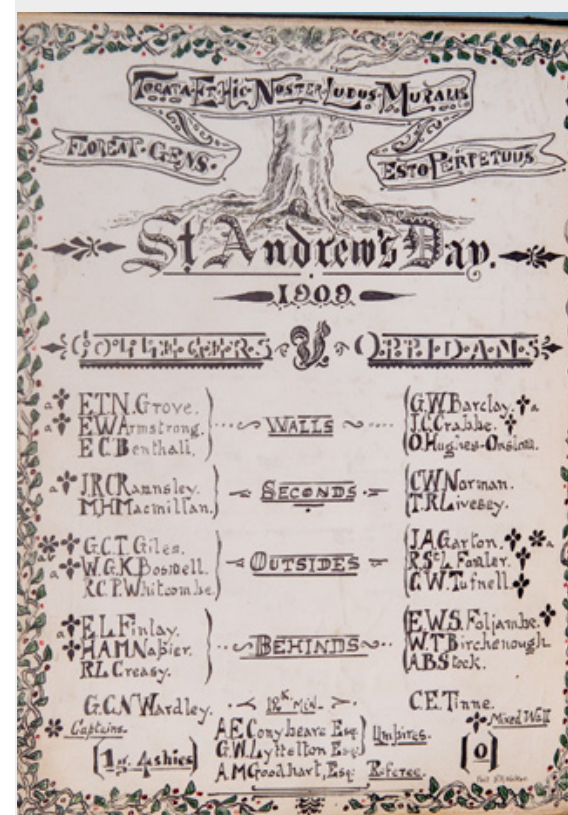
The Field Game was one of the first versions of football to be reported on in the national press, with *Bell's Life of London* featuring an article on a game played on 23 November 1840.

## The Wall Game

'It is not true to say that there are no rules about what you can or cannot do to your opponents; if you were to kill one you would certainly be cautioned for rough play.'<sup>14</sup>

The Wall Game is a peculiar game played on a pitch just five metres wide and 110 metres long, with the ends marked by white lines. The end closest to Eton is called 'Good Calx' and the other end is 'Bad Calx'. The goals were originally denoted by a door in a garden wall and an elm tree. The slightly curved wall along which the game is played

was built in 1717, and although there are references to the game in the 1750s, the first written rules, such as they are, date from 1849. Teams are comprised of ten players, with two subs, and matches generally last 55 minutes. The game is notoriously physical and few sports offer less to the spectator.



SCH HOUS 03 COLL 03 09

As with the Field Game, the Wall Game is entirely organised by the boys, and famous past players of the Wall Game include Prince Harry, Boris Johnson (Keeper of the College Wall, 1982) and George Orwell. Harold Macmillan, who was on the College team in 1909, was described by the Keeper as 'rather young and weak for his position' who 'played an excellent if inconspicuous game.'<sup>16</sup>

The main match, which takes place on St Andrew's Day, is played between a team comprised of Collegers and one comprised

Scoring in the Wall Game is near impossible and no goal has been scored in the St Andrew's Day match since 1909. In fact, only three have been scored in a St Andrew's Day match in the entire history of the Wall Game. One was nearly scored in 1912 by Logie Leggatt, 'Keeper of one of the strongest Wall elevens that have ever represented College'. Logie left school in 1913, and shortly after headed for the battlefields of France. He was sadly killed at Paschendale in 1917, wearing his Wall Game scarf. He wrote shortly before battle: 'Needless to say I'm wearing my Wall scarf - symbol of victory. And I feel that means more than safety.'<sup>15</sup> He is commemorated on medals still issued to the Wall Game players and a toast is raised in his honour every year.

of Oppidans. This match begins with the Oppidan team climbing over the wall with a loud shout, having thrown their caps over in defiance of the Collegers, who control access to the wall. The Collegers march down from the far end of the field, arm-in-arm, to meet the rival team. Those not participating watch from a seat on top of the wall.

### DID YOU KNOW:

In 2005, the game was played by teams of girls for the first time.

<sup>11</sup> Field Book, 1847-55 (SCH SP F1 01 01)

<sup>12</sup> Debate held 7 December 1895, Whether the Field game is preferable to other football at Eton (SCH HOUS 03 JHMH 04)

<sup>13</sup> Debate held 7 October 1939, That the field game does not justify its position as senior game at Eton (SCH HOUS 03 RAY 01)

<sup>14</sup> B. Ferguson, *Eton Portrait* (John Miles, 1937), p.66

<sup>15</sup> Transcript of letter sent to his family, 19 July [1917] (ED 298)

<sup>16</sup> College Wall book, 1907-14 (SCH HOUS 03 COLL 03 09)



## Sport at Eton Glossary

<b>Agar's</b>	The western half of a large expanse of playing fields beyond Pockocks Lane.	<b>Head Master</b>	Note that it is Head Master and not Headmaster because the incumbent is also a Master (i.e. a Teacher) and the Head of that body.
<b>Bike-Shed Cricket</b>	Game played in the summer at Cotton Hall House where there is a brick structure in the bike shed which serves as the wicket. Bowlers use the nooks and crannies to achieve a spin on the ball. The amount of runs one obtains is based around which part of the wall the ball hit.	<b>Keeper</b>	A captain of a sport or activity.
<b>Block</b>	Year group.	<b>Masters</b>	Teachers, also called beaks. Master I/C stands for Master in Charge (of).
<b>Bumps</b>	A rowing race where the river is too narrow for side by side rowing. Boats line up in single file with a space between and the aim is to reach or 'bump' the boat in front before the boat behind 'bumps' you.	<b>Mesopotamia</b>	A field bounded by the Jordan and Willowbrook used for football in the winter, for cricket in the summer. Informally referred to as <i>Messpots</i> .
<b>Burning Bush</b>	An ornate iron lamppost positioned right in the centre of Eton and often used as a meeting point. The iron lamppost used to stand in the middle of the road.	<b>Old Etonian</b>	The <i>Old Etonian Association (OEA)</i> was founded in 1897 to keep Old Etonians in touch with one another and to support the College as a united body. The term <i>Old Etonian</i> refers to anyone who studied at Eton College, whether or not they are a member of the <i>OEA</i> .
<b>Calendar Style</b>	Initials in brackets (e.g. <i>GEM, WD, 1888</i> ). The form of a boy's name used in formal documents. It will include post-nominals such as <i>KS</i> (King's Scholar) or <i>OS</i> (Oppidan Scholar), or <i>ma</i> or <i>mi</i> for older and younger brothers respectively. Old Etonians are marked by the year they left Eton.	<b>Oppidan</b>	Any boy who is not a <i>Colleger</i> .
<b>Captain of Oppidans</b>	The top <i>Oppidan</i> : selected from among the academically most distinguished <i>Oppidans</i> , he is one of the four senior school officers (along with the Captain of the School and the President and Chairman of The Eton Society, or Pop).	<b>Oppidan House</b>	A boarding House in which about 55 <i>Oppidans</i> live (there are 24 <i>Oppidan Houses</i> ).
<b>Captain of the School</b>	Referred to in Hill's <i>Eton Medley</i> glossary as the top <i>Colleger</i> , he is the House Captain in College and one of the four senior officers (along with the Captain of the <i>Oppidans</i> and the President and Chairman of The Eton Society, or Pop).	<b>Procession of Boats</b>	An event on the Fourth of June when the best oarsmen of all ages in the School dress in festive 19 <sup>th</sup> century naval uniform, row past the crowd of parents, etc. assembled on the bank and salute them by raising their oars and standing up in the boat.
<b>College</b>	The boarding House in which the King's Scholars live. The body of King's Scholars.	<b>Queen's Eyot</b>	The term (which rhymes with 'wait') refers to an island owned by the School in the middle of the Thames four miles upriver from Eton.
<b>Colleger</b>	One of the 70 King's Scholars: <i>Collegers</i> have <i>KS</i> after their surname in School lists.	<b>Slack Bob</b>	Either a boy who does not play sport or a boy who is neither a <i>Dry Bob</i> nor a <i>Wet Bob</i> ; i.e. they participate in neither cricket nor rowing. An obituary to a mathematics Master in the 20 June 1975 edition of the <i>Chronicle</i> includes the quote, 'I can stomach an atheist, I can stomach a Socialist, but don't let me come across a slack bob'.
<b>Dry Bobs</b>	Cricketers. Sometimes used for any non-rowing sportsman. Largely historical. Not to be confused with <i>Wet Bobs</i> or <i>Slack Bobs</i> .	<b>St Andrew's Day</b>	An open day for parents in late November, its principal feature being the annual Wall Game match between the <i>Collegers</i> and the <i>Oppidans</i> .
<b>Dutchman's</b>	The eastern half of a large expanse of playing fields beyond Pockocks Lane.	<b>The Field</b>	A football field between the Slough Road and the rackets courts (referred to as <i>Sixpenny</i> in the Summer Half). The top Field Game team.
<b>Fourth of June</b>	A gala day celebrating the birthday of George III, held as near as practicable to the actual date, when parents, friends, and relations are made welcome. Alongside a number of exhibitions and sporting events, the day features Speeches and the Procession of Boats.	<b>Wall</b>	The wall against which the Wall Game is played.
<b>Half</b>	The academic year is divided into three <i>Halves</i> (terms): Michaelmas, Lent and Summer. The term comes from when there were only two holidays in the year, dividing the year into halves.	<b>Wet Bob</b>	Rowers.

For the full  
Eton College  
glossary





