

OBITUARIES

JOHN BLACKSHAW (1936-2004)



Picture supplied by Mary Blackshaw

John Blackshaw arrived to teach Modern Languages at Malvern College in 1967 and soon found himself in charge of Fives, a game he never played as a boy at Sherborne, where he had been three years in the Hockey XI. He was a natural striker of the ball at cricket, too, and as someone was needed to run the Fives at Malvern, he took the game on and ran it for the next twenty years, despite being a busy housemaster for much of that time.

John's enthusiasm ensured that the game survived at Malvern, and although they did not have any schoolboy champions, they were always highly competitive – especially on their own courts – and produced some fine players, the best of whom was Simon Constantine. John made himself into a pretty good player, too, and Simon vividly remembers him getting annoyed on court when things weren't going quite right, throwing his gloves into a corner and playing on bare-handed!

A cutting from the *'Malvern Gazette'* sent to me by Tony Spicer has an article about the 4th Winchester Fives Doubles Championship played at Malvern in 1985, plus a photo (of too poor quality, alas, to reproduce here) of John serving during a match in which he partnered Jonathan Potter against Dick Warner and Terry Cobb. John and Jonathan lost that match but progressed to the later stages of the plate, where they lost to those eternal plate specialists, Tim Lewis and Cedric Clapp. As to whether John threw his gloves into the corner at any stage, history doesn't relate...

John was a man of principle who ran his house and his teams with firmness, fairness and a sense of humour which was never far below the surface. It was always a pleasure to travel to Malvern to play Fives and enjoy the company and hospitality of John and Mary in No 5. When Bradfield opened its two new courts in 1976, John came all the way from Malvern to join the party and play some rousing games with and against other aficionados of Winchester Fives. It was typical of him, although he must have had a hundred and one other things to do back at school.

After coming out of No 5, John became Malvern's Deputy Head (he would have preferred the title 'Second Master') and later, for six years, Secretary of the Malvernian Society, so his contribution to the life of the College was incalculable. His sudden death last September deprives that community, as well as his family and hundreds of friends, of a very special man.

David Barnes

JOHN WATKINSON (1941-2004)

John Watkinson learnt his Fives at Bristol Grammar School and was National Schools' Champion in 1959, the only BGS boy ever to win the title. He went from there to Worcester College, Oxford, where he won three half-blues for Rugby Fives and was on the winning side for two out of his three years. Possessed of a ferocious right hand and a magnificent service, he was very hard to score points against and was a player who liked to dominate.

From 1964 to 1971 John was a schoolmaster at Rugby, and during this period he won the Amateur Singles Championship, as it was then called, three times (in 1965, 1967 and 1970). The 1967 final, against Eric Marsh, was the last match played at the Hampstead Squash and Fives Club and was a magnificent exhibition of Fives at its best. In partnership with Mike Elliott, John had already won the Cyriax Cup three times running (from 1962 to 1964) by the time of his first singles triumph, and he won the trophy again with David Gardner in 1966. He reached the final partnering Ian Clarke (another Old Bristolian) in 1968, but they lost to Stan Holt and John Howe.

John left teaching and went briefly into law before entering politics, which effectively marked the end of his Fives career. He was the Labour MP for Gloucestershire West from 1974-79, when he lost his seat and joined the SDP, but he was unsuccessful in two further elections. Thereafter he worked for the BBC and then set up his own business as a solicitor. He played cricket, rackets and real tennis to a high standard but sadly never came back into serious contention as a fives player.

David Barnes

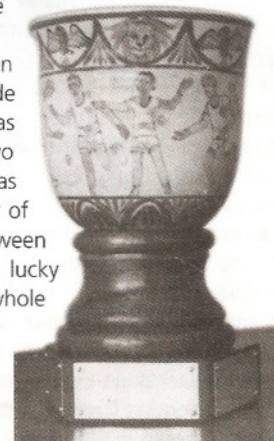
EVE CAREY

We send our condolences, on behalf of the RFA and the fives-playing community in Britain, to John Carey on the death of his wife, Eve. As all those who have been on a fives tour to the USA will know, John and Eve were the kind and generous hosts who welcomed us to St. Mark's School, Southborough, often under a foot of snow and once at two o'clock in the morning; and many who have not been to the USA will remember meeting the Careys and their American touring parties who came over to the UK in the 1980s and '90s at the invitation of Tom and Joan Wood.

Eve was a potter who worked in majolica, and it was she who made the Carey-Wood Cup which was competed for whenever the two nations met at fives. It now stands as a memorial to her and a reminder of much hospitality and goodwill between the USA and the UK to those lucky people who were involved in the whole adventure.

David Barnes

The Carey-Wood International Trophy
made by Eve Carey in 1982.



Picture: Joan Wood

BOB HOLLAND (1954-2005)

As we went to press, we received the sad news of the death of Bob Holland. A full tribute will appear in our next issue.