

Ball courts in Cowbridge

1. Cowbridge Grammar School

This court still stands, rather overgrown, in Church Street within the grounds of the recently sold Grammar School building. I believe it dates from the mid- nineteenth century at least, but the only documented evidence I have at present comes from the school magazine, *The Bovian*, which only commenced publication in 1894.

Bovian No 8, June 1896

Dear Mr Editor,

... Would it not be possible to turn the old playground adjoining the big schoolroom into [a fives court]? It is already used for a similar game, and by building up one of the walls, or even part of one, and cementing the floor, it could be turned into a real court, which would be a great boon to us, and also save the floor of the big schoolroom from being covered with a lot of black mud every time there is a shower of rain..

Bovian No 12, Nov 1897

Dear Sir,

As extensive alterations are being made in the old fives-court in the matter of relaying the ground with gravel, may I suggest that the gravel in front of the talley-wall be hardened by means of cement for a distance of 24 feet, or some such distance? Without a hardened surface it would be almost impossible to have anything like a decent game, because the ball would not rise. I venture to suggest also that as the wire on top of the talley-wall has seen its best days, and is now simply a collection of huge holes, through which the balls escape into the churchyard, that new wire be provided. When these alterations have been introduced, then will the lovers of the old game of Talley be able to get a decent game. Hoping that the above suggestions will be taken up, I remain, Yours truly, "Fives"

Bovian No 14, June 1898

The lower end of the old play ground has been turned into a very serviceable open fives court. The walls have been thoroughly cemented and wire netting placed around the top and on the sides, and a large piece of granolithic laid down.

Bovian No 17, June 1899

Since the new Fives court has been made, this game has received a great deal of attention. During the cold weather it was found an excellent game for warming the hands.

At the end of last term a Fives Competition was got up, a cup being offered to the winner. The players were handicapped as follows: nine entrants - owe; seven entrants - 3pts; four entrants - 4 pts; one - 6pts. Each game in the knock-out tournament involved two players.

Bovian No 134, July 1938

In 1927 the Tally Court wall collapsed into the churchyard. When the wall was rebuilt, the addition of a central wall and of a new wall of the Church Street side produced a fives court. Unfortunately the new game has never caught on and the only use made of the Fives Court is to provide an extra space for soft-ball cricket.

2. Tennis Court Inn

First reference to the tennis court or ball court in 60 Eastgate, Cowbridge is in a deed of 1748. It was attached to an inn variously called *The Three Tuns*, *The Tennis Court* or *the Wheelright's Arms*. The court was incorporated into a cinema building in 1926, and before that building was redeveloped in the 1990s into offices, retaining the cinema facade, part of the top of the side of the tennis court wall appeared to be still visible.

There was keen rivalry between the players of Cowbridge and Llantrisant in the 18th and 19th centuries.