



Victory at Fives

Two gentlemen of Mere, having challenged any other two in this or the adjoining counties to play a game of fives, the challenge was accepted by two players of Crockerton, when the challengers were completely beaten, both at the Crockerton court and their favourite one at Mere.

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OPC Note:

Fives is an English sport believed to derive from the same origins as many racquet sports. In fives, a ball is propelled against the walls of a special court using a gloved or bare hand as though it were a racquet.

Before purpose built courts were erected players would use walls of buildings such as churches where a recess of three high walls could be found.

It is highly likely that the version of fives played by these gentlemen was a version of fives known as the Warminster Fives. A less well known, but possibly much older version of the game is Warminster Fives, a game based on Wessex Fives which is thought to have been played from as early as 1787 at Lord Weymouth School, now Warminster School. It has even been claimed that Rugby Fives owes its creation to the famous Headmaster Thomas Arnold who had first played Fives when a pupil at Lord Weymouth's. Whilst an 1860 Warminster Fives Court still exists at Warminster School and was in regular use until the late 1950s, the game is rarely played in the area and the fine details of the game are probably lost. The Warminster Fives Rules are recorded in many locations including the Eton Fives Website.