

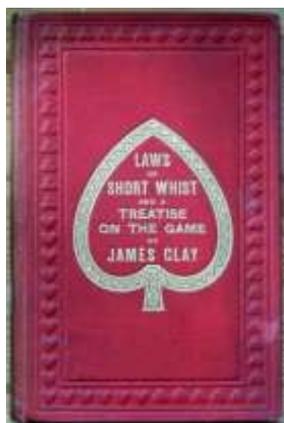
The Personalities and Books which shaped the game of Whist, 1860-1900

by Tony Hall

All the books described here are selected from my own collection, put together over a number of years as a result of my fascination with the story of how Whist evolved by stages into the game of Contract Bridge as we know it today.¹ The nineteenth century was awash with books on whist, being the foremost parlour as well as gambling game of the period. Here I have focussed on the best known and most prolific writers of the age; so many of them were larger than life with so much more to them than “just” contributing to the literature on whist. I hope I can give readers a flavour of both. At the end I have listed the names of the main characters featured in this story.

I should, perhaps, begin with the oldest text on the subject by **Edmond Hoyle** whose “**A Short Treatise on the Game of Whist**” was first published in 1742. Unfortunately, I do not own a copy and therefore must start my book review over a century later. Not all is lost, however, as Hoyle’s “rules” were regarded as authoritative until the 1860s at which point I take up the story. Hoyle’s rules were all very well, based as they were on the established game of Long Whist, played until one partnership or the other achieved ten points, in a best of three games rubber. By the fourth decade of the 19th Century Short Whist – played to only five points per game – was now much more popular and better suited the needs of the gamblers who played it. New rules and etiquettes were clearly necessary.

The first contribution from my library, therefore, is “**Laws of Short Whist and a Treatise on the Game**” by **J.L. Baldwin and James Clay**, published by Thos. De La Rue & Co., 1881,



John Loraine Baldwin (1809-1896) was a games and laws enthusiast (cricket, badminton, whist) who, “*having witnessed many questionable cases*” (of dubious play and/or behaviour at the card table) took it upon himself to try to rationalise the game of Whist as it was now being played. He appealed “*to some of the London Clubs for their assistance and support*” and as a result a Committee was formed from members of the leading London Clubs and James Clay was appointed as its chairman in 1863.

This appointment was no great surprise. **James Clay** (1804 – 1873) was widely regarded as the key figure in the world of Whist from the middle of the century until his death in 1896, as well as being MP for

Hull for 22 years.

This book reproduces the 91 **Laws of Short Whist** in their entirety as they were first published in May 1864 in a volume “*Dedicated by Permission to His Royal Highness Albert Edward Prince of Wales*”. They had been endorsed in the previous month by the Arlington (later Turf) Club and were subsequently sent to the final arbiters of card game rules, The Portland Club², to seek their approval. The Portland Club’s Whist Committee suggested

¹ As my friend Julian Laderman has written this history in his excellent *Bumblepuppy Days*, Masterpoint Press, 2014, I no longer have to!

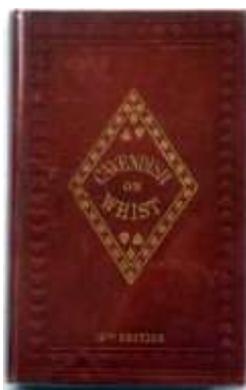
² The Card Committee of the Portland Club was to assume the same status and standing for whist and other card games as the MCC held for Cricket.

amendments and the revised version was approved by both clubs on 30th April 1864 and adopted by no less than 61 other prominent London and provincial clubs, and “numerous others” soon thereafter.

It is a measure of the significance of this initiative, and of the standing of James Clay, that the same Laws and Clay’s original treatise on how to play the game was republished in full over 30 years later in 1895.

In their brief introduction to the postumas reprint of Clay’s Treatise in 1881, the author’s sons state that they are “*glad to take this opportunity of expressing our obligation to Mr. Henry Jones (“Cavendish”) to whose counsel and assistance in the issue of this present edition we are greatly beholden*”.

And that leads me to the second book from my collection, and one of the great texts of the era, “**Cavendish on Whist**”.



“**Cavendish**” was the pen name of **Henry Jones (1831 – 1899)**. He was a surgeon and general practitioner practicing medicine until 1869 when he became a full-time writer on sports and games. He began writing on the subject in 1857 and took his pen name from the Cavendish Club of which he was a member and frequent participant. The first edition of this book was published in 1862³ and as such predated the Arlington/Portland Club Rules. His book, nevertheless was reproduced in a host of editions thereafter for many years. I have two copies: 13th edition 1881, 16th edition 1886. It was the must-have book on whist for a generation.

One of the reasons why “**Cavendish on Whist**” was such a breakthrough was that Cavendish was the first whist author not only to write about the principles of play, but to illustrate these by, in his own words, presenting “*a selection of hands played completely through, and accompanied by copious explanations*”. Through a large number of illustrations, initially in symbols but in later editions in black and red cards, hands were presented and issues of good and bad play were illustrated, recorded and analysed. This style of presentation and analysis has been a feature of Bridge books and newspaper bridge columns ever since.

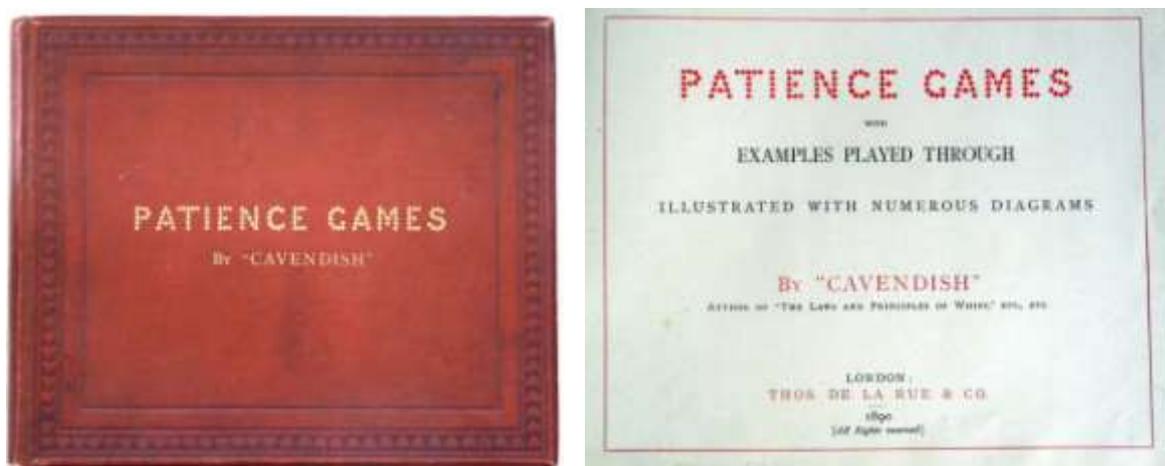
In addition to his definitive works on Whist, he became a prolific author on all forms of cards and other games, including Bezique and Rubicon Bezique, Polish Bezique, Piquet and Rubicon Piquet, Vingt-et-un, Ecarte, Patience, Drole, Calabresella, Euchre, Spoil-Five, Twenty-Five and Forty-Five, Sixty-Six, Cribbage, Backgammon and Russian Backgammon, Imperial and Dominoes. In the process he contributed articles on many of these games to the Encyclopedia Britannica and Chambers Encyclopedia as well as to many journals of the day.

Here are just a few examples of his pocket guides for De La Rue.

³ “*The Principles of Whist Stated and Explained*” by Cavendish.



I also attach pictures from his large (27x22cm) De La Rue book on Patience Games (1890) just because some of the internal art work is so beautiful and of the period.



De La Rue saw the potential of the Cavendish name and, as far as I can tell, he was the first name since Hoyle which was used to promote whist paraphernalia. Hence the "Cavendish Whist Marker" in pressed card and the more up-market and rarer wooden version.

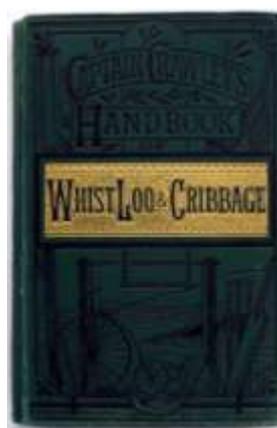


Amongst his many activities and achievements, he should at least be remembered for the fact that in 1875, as a member of the All England Croquet Club, he proposed that one of the croquet lawns in Wimbledon should be set aside for the playing of lawn tennis. Two years later, the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Championship held its first event, and Jones was a referee at the Championships from 1877 to 1885.

The next special place in the story of nineteenth century Whist should be preserved for Times journalist and author **George Frederick Pardon (1824-1884)**. Under the pseudonym “Captain Crawley” and sometimes “Rawdon Crawley”⁴ (derived from a character from Thackeray’s “Vanity Fair”, 1847) he wrote over twenty books on whist and a wide variety of other games and pastimes of the period. Here are two modest examples: “**A Handbook of Whist**”, 1861, is written, most unusually, under his own name. The second, “**Whist, Loo and Cribbage**” (1876) is typical of his extensive and varied later output.



1861



1876

In his preface to “A Handbook of Whist” (1861) George Pardon writes *“In the following pages an attempt has been made to popularise Hoyle, the only true and reliable authority on the Game of Whist.”* Given that he was writing this in the year before Cavendish published his most important work he can perhaps be forgiven for his apparent immodesty. He goes on to claim that he is *“the first writer who has attempted in a Sixpenny Handbook to give the theory and practice of the game in a clear and intelligible manner”*.

In his seminal work “Backgammon by Captain Crawley”, 1858, he writes about himself under another of his pseudonyms: *“Lord Macauley is acknowledged to be the most celebrated modern historian of England: Rawdon Crawley will in aftertimes (may the turf lie lightly on his breast) be spoken of as the historian par excellence, of Backgammon, Billiards, Chess, Draughts, and Whist. You see immortality is not so difficult to obtain, if you only go the right way to work.”*

At first sight this seems an extraordinary exercise in self promotion. In practice, when you read the whole book, it is just one example of his glorious style and tongue-in-cheek humour. It reads like the script of a set from a modern day stand-up comedian but in high Victorian English. The first half of the book is a very funny, but extremely erudite, description of how he came to write the book and the speculative origins of the game. The second half is an

⁴ George Frederick Pardon used both of these pseudonyms interchangeably. His books on Backgammon (1858) and Billiards (1866) were under the authorship of Captain Crawley, but the Prefaces for each were signed Rawdon Crawley. There is some later confusion because his eldest son CHARLES Frederick Pardon (1850-1890) did occasionally also use one of his father’s pseudonyms, Rawdon Crawley, for example when producing a revised version of his father’s Goodall Booklet on Solo Whist.

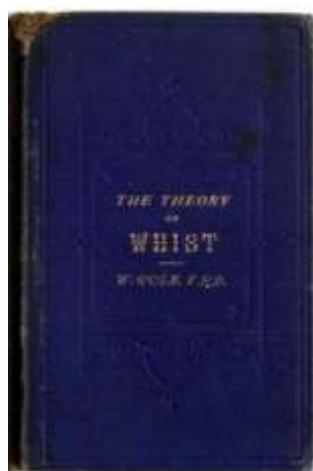
excellent description of the game and ways to play it. Both are well worth the modest purchase price of a modern facsimile. But I digress...

Captain Crawley will be best known to current readers for his authorship of miniature instruction books on "Whist", "Solo Whist", "Poker" and "Cribbage" for Goodall & Son. My copy of the Solo Whist was a revised edition edited by his oldest son Charles, confusingly using one of his father's pseudonyms, Rawdon Crawley, who was in turn the author of my 1939 edition of Cribbage, from De La Rue, thus maintaining the family tradition.

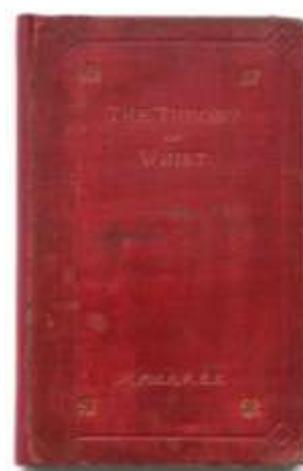


If his humorous and informative writings were not enough, I warmed to Mr. Pardon because of his direct and indirect contribution to the history of cricket. Not only did he collaborate with the legendary John Wisden to produce the book "*Cricket, and How to Play It*" in 1866, but his sons Charles (between 1887 and 1890) and Sydney (from 1890 to 1925) edited the Wisden Cricketers' Almanac helping to establish it as the Cricketers' Bible for so many subsequent generations. .

Next in order of initial publication is a book by the third giant of 19th Century Whist play and writing, **Dr. William Pole** (1814 – 1900).



1870 (First published 1864)



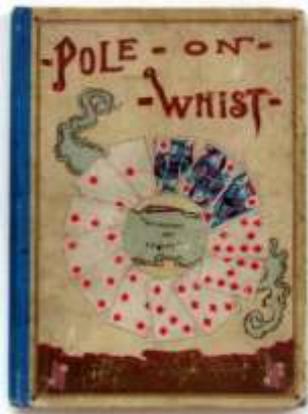
1890

Pole's essay on "**The Theory of Whist**" was first published in 1864 as a second part to the 16th edition of "*Short Whist, by Major A.*". This was considered to be sufficiently seminal to justify later publication as a separate work in 1870, which is the blue copy pictured here, and it was clearly still regarded as important when this red edition, the 17th, was published in 1890 and others followed (see below).

Pole was a talented and eminent Professor of Engineering and Fellow of the Royal Society. In between serving as secretary or member of various Royal Commissions and Inquiries and

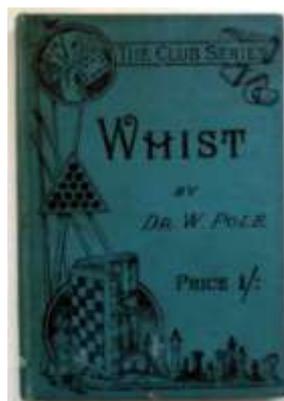
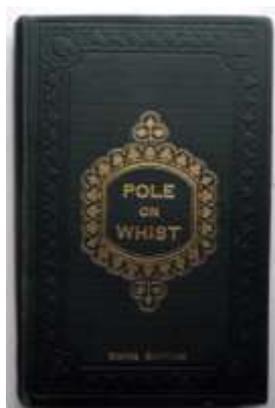
gaining a Bachelor of Music Degree at Oxford, he found time to play and write about whist. He was one of the foremost proponents of the so-called “Scientific” approach to the game.

This same essay was reprinted in this format for the American market in 1889. With an American-style cover and title of “**Pole on Whist**”, the full title inside is more explicit as “The Theory of the Modern Scientific Game of Whist” My copy, illustrated here, is described as the Second Authorised American Edition. In his preface (written from the Atheneum Club, London in May 1888) he says: “*The circulation of this little book in the United States is so large that it has pained me to see how imperfect many of the copies are that are sold here!*” Hence this new edition courtesy of Messers. Frederick A. Stokes & Brother of New York.



As an addition, however, the author helpfully reproduces the Laws of Whist as approved by the Arlington and Portland Clubs in London and in the process no doubt tweaked the tail of the Whist Club of New York, generally regarded as the arbiters of the Laws of Whist in the United States.

Two further volumes were published by the good doctor in the following year, 1889.



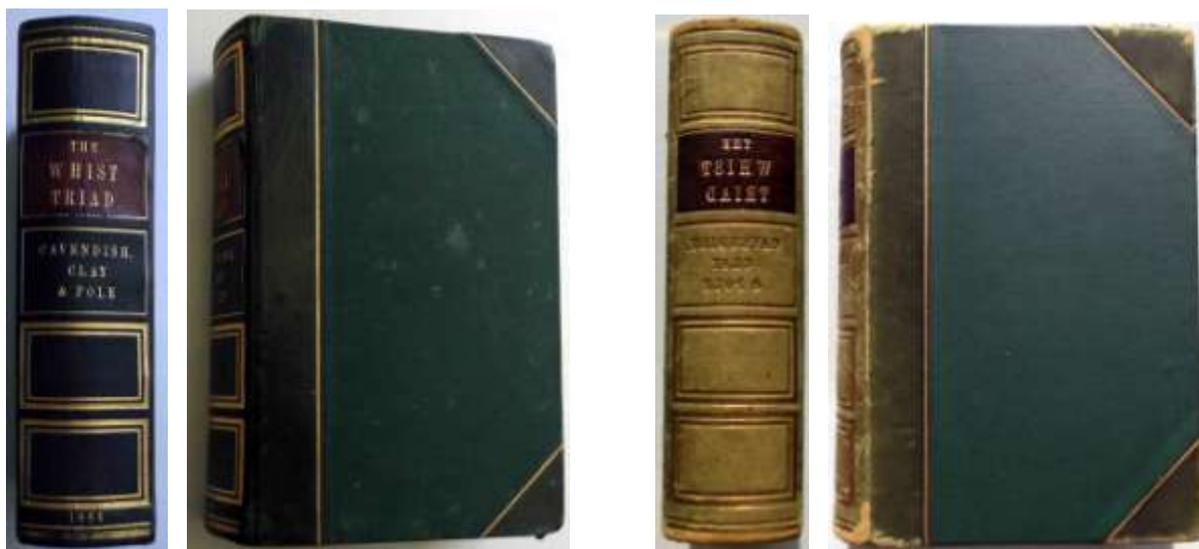
By 1886 year William Pole was sufficiently famous for his book “The Philosophy of Whist” to be presented on the basis of his name alone, “**Pole on Whist**”. (My edition is the 5th, dated 1889.) The second book, “**Whist**”, was first published in London in 1889⁵ in The Club Series, famous for short tracts on a wide variety of games and pastimes. In both books he extolls the virtues of the earlier books by Cavendish and Clay. “*To effect (a skillful game)*”, he explains “*requires not only a scientific knowledge of the doctrine of chances, but continued tentative trials and careful observation over a long period.*”⁶ This approach, he argues, “*constitutes the difference between the modern play and the old rules of Hoyle and Mathews*”.

The key works by Cavendish, Clay & Pole were of such significance that, some years later, they were beautifully bound together in leather and gold edging in a single volume called “The Whist Triad”⁷. I have two copies, shown here; a first edition dated 1884 and an updated version from 1892.

⁵ I also have an identical copy published in 1905.

⁶ Whist by Dr. William Pole, George Bell & Sons, Preface.

⁷ The title of the book identifies the three principle authors but ignores poor old James Baldwin whose piece on the Laws of Short Whist goes unacknowledged except on the Contents page.



It is perhaps worth reminding readers that the Cavendish text was first published in 1862, 30 years earlier.⁸ Pole and Clay's contributions were first published in 1864. These days things are changing so fast that it is difficult to imagine any thirty year old text today being treated with this degree of reverence and relevance.

Following Pole's first book, by publication date, was a relatively small tome: **"The Correct Card or How to Play at Whist"**, 1876, by **Major Arthur Campbell-Walker (1834-1887)**.



Major Campbell-Walker had a distinguished army career in the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, serving in both the Crimean War and the Siege of Lucknow during the Indian Rebellion of 1857. He was a keen golfer and, in common with similar "gentlemen" of the time, was an enthusiastic whist player. The first edition of his book was published in 1876 from the Army & Navy Club, and "*dedicated, by permission, to 'Cavendish'*". My edition, published by Longmans, Green and Co. in 1882 is described as the "Eleventh Thousand"! I presume this refers to the numbers printed rather than the edition, but it gives some idea of the popularity of such works at a time when card games, particularly whist, were the most popular club and social pastime. (He also wrote "*The rifle, Its theory and practice*" and "*Coast railways and Coastal Artillery*" which I surmise were a little less popular.)

In an earlier preface to the 1879 edition in thanking the enthusiastic readership of "*my little work*" he writes: "*Its circulation has not been confined to the limits of the 'Old World', but, following the sun, 'The Correct Card' has travelled West – 'over the hill and far away, beyond their utmost purple rim'. In proof of this, a friend just returned from Japan and informs me he saw it on sale at Yokohama; and the following letter, which I publish in no spirit of egoism, shows that the book is now a household word in America.*"

The next book in my collection is "**How to Play Whist**" by "Five of Clubs", the pen name of **Richard Anthony Procter (1837 – 1888)**. This is a first edition published by Longmans & Co, Paternoster Row, 1885, in the "Knowledge Library" Series, together with an exact reprint (red) in a different format dated 1891.

⁸ By 1884 Cavendish's text in the Triad was in its 14th edition and by 1892 in its 22nd.



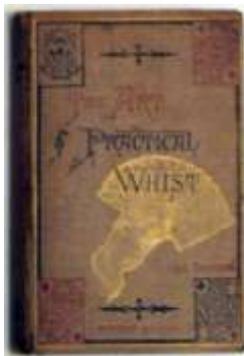
1885



1891

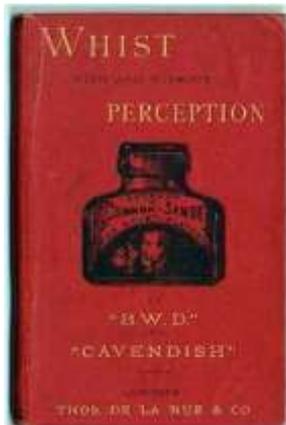
Richard Anthony Proctor is, as far as I know, the only one of the 19th Century whist writers to have a crater on Mars named after him. Proctor was, by inclination and enthusiasm an astronomer. After early work producing up-to-date maps of Mars, he was eventually elected a fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1866, and became its honorary secretary in 1872. He was a prolific writer not only on astronomy but a wide variety of scientific subjects. He was dependent on income from his writings to support his family so it is perhaps not surprising that he also contributed a tome and a number of articles to the more popular and therefore more lucrative field of whist. That he was clearly not in the first rank of whist players and writers is evident from his frequent references to Messers Clay, Pole and Cavendish whose work he admired and promoted.

Proctor, like the authors before him, use up valuable space in their volumes by reproducing the Laws of the game. This is also done in the next volume, **“The Art of Practical Whist”** by General Drayson first published in 1879; my copy is a 4th edition, 1896.



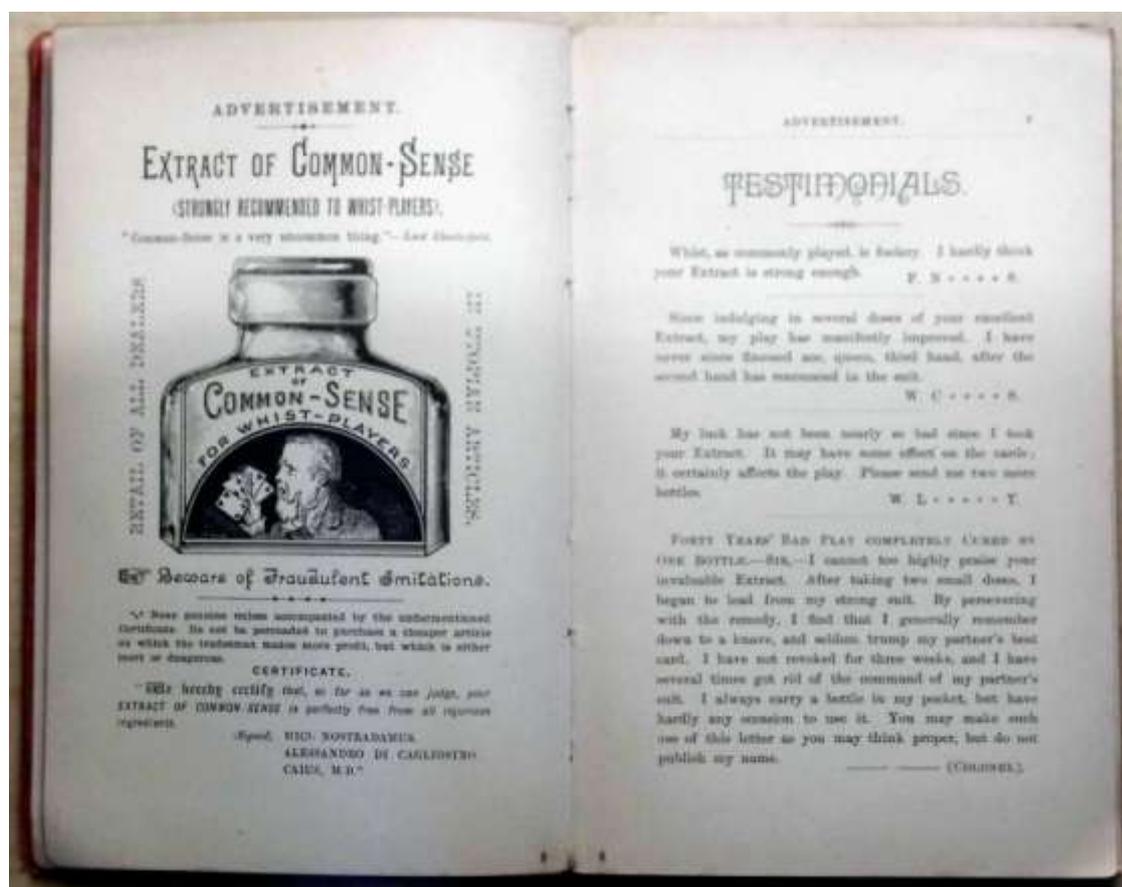
Major-General Alfred Wilks Drayson (1827 – 1901) was evidently a successful soldier before turning his hand to writing on a variety of subjects, including whist. **“The Art of Practical Whist”** was accompanied by *“The Art of Practical Billiards for Amateurs”*. Clearly his time in the army was not entirely wasted. I plan particularly to look out for original copies of *“Sporting scenes amongst the Kaffirs of South Africa”* and *“Thirty thousand years of the earth's past history read by aid of the discovery of the second rotation of the earth”* by the same author. I suspect that these were not best sellers.

In his preface to the first edition, Drayson writes: *“There are at present time many valuable works on Whist, amongst which the most able are probably: The Laws of Short Whist; Cavendish on Whist; The Theory of Whist; The Correct Card, etc. In spite of these and other books on the same subject being available and often read by would-be whist players, yet the number of good whist players is limited, the number of very bad players is legion.”* His book, he claims, aims to address this problem in a series of “Letters” (like Paul to the Corinthians). There is no evidence that the good Major-General was any more successful in this aim than any of his predecessors or contemporaries although, like the others, a market for the book was found on both sides of the Atlantic and throughout the Empire and the rest of the world.



Next is a delightful, small tome **“Whist with and without Perception”**. Its authorship is claimed to be **‘BWD’ & ‘Cavendish’**

but we may never know. It was published by Thos. De La Rue in 1889. As B.W.D. is an unnamed “Believer in Whist Developments” it is hard to believe that the guru Cavendish was genuinely a co-author as in parts it reads like a spoof and does much to poke fun at earlier serious texts, including Cavendish’s own. If he was involved, he clearly was not as pompous as some of his earlier prose might suggest. The style of the book is perhaps best illustrated by this spoof advertisement which appears at the start of the book before the frontispiece, complete with alleged testimonials.

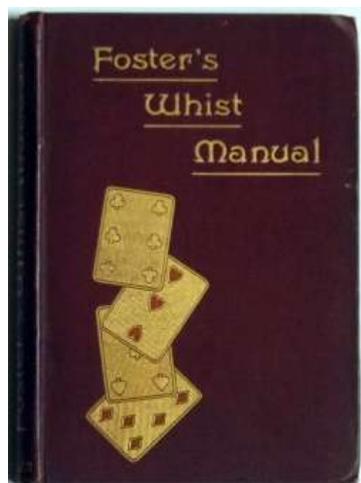


The justification of the book, according to its preface, is that most Whist books and manuals focus at length on how to open the game, which suit to lead and which cards to play from third and fourth hand. “Cavendish”, he argues, devotes 26 pages to first hand or lead, and pays only scant attention to what happens later! “*The consequence is, that players who have learnt Whist from books play the first half or so of the hand with the utmost correctness, just as well in fact as they would play a chess opening which they have learnt, as far as the book analyses it.*” Thereafter, the author(s) argue(s), it all falls apart – hence this book; common sense and perception are essential. B.W.D continues: “*I must also disclaim any pretension to the title of ‘Author’ in these pages. My material has been drawn almost entirely from examples furnished by ‘Cavendish’ and others. I have done little more than arrange these examples in the order that seemed most likely to be of service to students, under the superintendence of the gentleman whose nom de plume is associated with my initials on the title page.*” I have been unable to discover the identity of B.W.D.

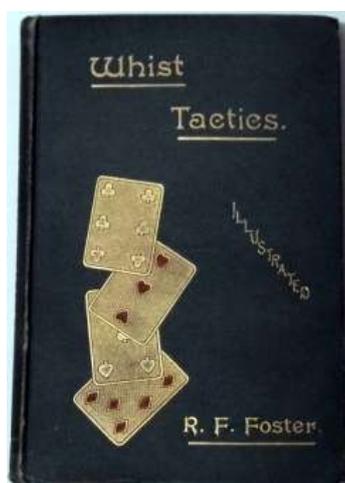
In the book, the first 30 pages offer advice and the principles of sensible play; the remaining 40 offer “*EXAMPLES OF END-HANDS; How not to win the game,*” each with “Remarks” and an alleged brief post-play conversation between the unsuccessful partners. It is great fun and very instructive. And so nice to see such a topic treated with humour when all around (with

the possible exception of George Pardon) are so serious on the subject. Whist at this time for many was clearly not just a game.

And for the final excursion into my library, I shall finish where I started, with another, almost next generation, whist guru – **Robert Frederick Foster** (1853 – 1945).



1890



1895

If "Cavendish on Whist" was the "must have" book of the 1860s, **Foster's Whist Manual** took over this role from this first edition published in 1890 (followed by countless others) and published by Frederick Warne & Co and Mudie & Sons. Foster, of New York City, was a memory training promoter, journalist and a prolific author of over 50 books on the rules of play of card, dice and board games. In 1897 he produced his monumental work "*Foster's Complete Hoyle*" summarising the rules and methods of play of all the indoor games played at the time.

Born in Edinburgh, Foster emigrated to the States at an early age and rapidly became THE whist player and author of his time, equally famous and influential on both sides of the Atlantic and around the world. Unlike his predecessors he was around during the evolution of whist to bridge-whist, to Auction Bridge and finally to Contract Bridge, writing books and articles about each as they developed and thus making a significant contribution to their development.

The card companies and publishers were very well aware of his celebrity and keen to cash in. He followed Cavendish as the prominent celebrity endorser of Whist-related commercial products. Goodall & Son were first off the blocks with the very stylish and brilliantly designed Foster Whist Marker in ebony and ivory and a variety of other woods, and marking a considerable technical improvement on earlier styles. I have written about this elsewhere.⁹



⁹ "Whist & Gaming Counters and Markers", Tony Hall, June 2015, The World of Playing Cards.

Mudie & Sons promoted the boxed set for Foster's Duplicate Whist, Foster's Self-Playing Whist Cards¹⁰ (see below), the "improved" Foster's Whist Marker and the Foster Whist Case in the "Best Morocco Leather, with Scarlet Leather and silk linings, containing 2 improved Patent Foster markers, and 2 packs of American Playing Cards with gold edges". Apart from his prolific printed output he was a hot commercial property whose name sold cards, games and playing materials around the world.



1860 -1900 were heady years for these and other authors on whist as the game dominated the clubs and drawing rooms of the nineteenth century. After the early years of Foster, card game writers concentrated on variants of the game such as solo whist and progressive whist (i.e. Whist drives) until, eventually, from around the turn of the century, a host of new books began to emerge on Bridge (i.e. Bridge-whist), Auction and ultimately Contract Bridge. But that is another story...

Tony Hall

October 2018

List of authors

John Loraine Baldwin (1809-1896)

James Clay (1804 – 1873)

George Frederick Pardon (1824-1884) "Captain Crawley" and "Rawdon Crawley"

Henry Jones (1831 – 1899) "Cavendish"

Dr. William Pole (1814 – 1900)

Major Arthur Campbell-Walker (1834-1887)

Richard Anthony Procter (1837 – 1888) "Five of Clubs"

Major-General Alfred Wilks Drayson (1827 – 1901)

Charles Frederick Pardon (1850 – 1890) also "Rawdon Crawley"

A. N. Other "BWD" (anon)

Robert Frederick Foster (1853 – 1945)

¹⁰ Patented in June 1889 in eleven countries this pack offered ordinary playing cards on one side and 128 played-through whist hands on the reverse.