

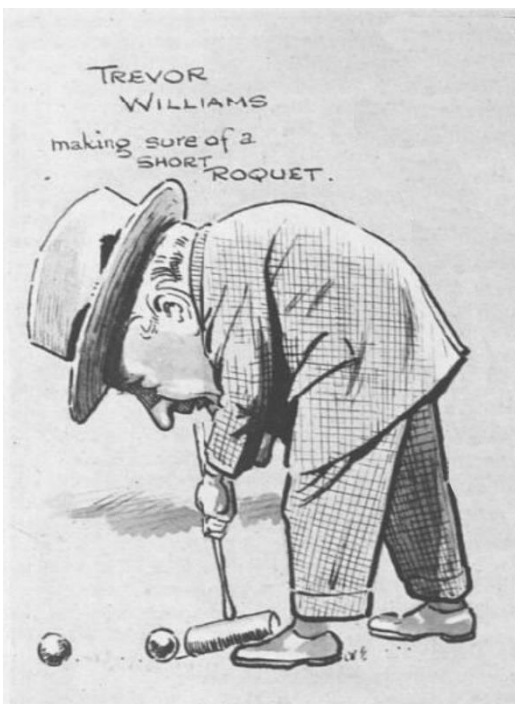
Croquet celebrities at Roehampton Club in 1923



On the 1st of August 1923, *The Sketch* newspaper featured a full page spread of caricature figures specially drawn for the newspaper by HF Crowther Smith showing croquet celebrities at the Club.

Horace Francis Crowther-Smith was an accomplished croquet player in his own right which he successfully combined alongside his career as an author and cartoonist. He was a regular visitor to Roehampton Club on many occasions and his work is also featured in the *Centenary Book* by Elizabeth Hennessey in 2001 when he caricatured leading Members of the Club in 1926 including the golf professional, George Gadd, and Peter Miller – part of the Miller family responsible for the founding of the Club.

Crowther-Smith reached the final of the Croquet Open Championship in 1919 finishing as runner up to the winner, Duff Williams. It was shortly before World War 1 that he made his



mark as a croquet writer and caricaturist with the publication of *A Croquet Alphabet*, a collection of 26 caricatures in line and watercolour. He continued his work between the wars amusing the croquet world with his use of words, pen, and his brush. The characters featured in the *Sketch* in 1923 represent a mix of leading players, organisers of the game and Members of the Club.

Trevor Williams had reached the final of the Open Championship on three previous occasions in 1897, 1899 and 1919 going on to repeat this achievement in 1927. Unfortunately, he finished runner-up on each of these occasions although he did win the Doubles event in

1925 with his partner Duff Matthews who had beaten him in the Singles in 1919.

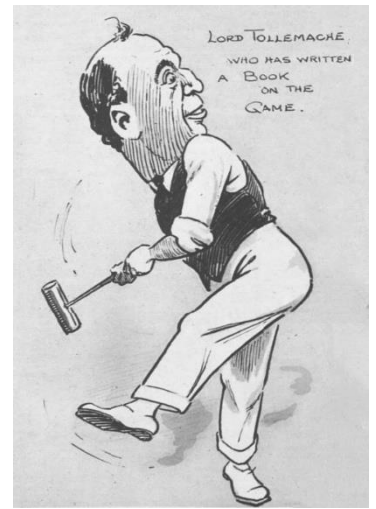
Lord Doneraile was an influential Member of Roehampton Club for many years. He was responsible



for supporting the recruitment of other significant Members and was also actively involved in the running of the Club serving on the Squash committee.



R Leatham Jones was editor of the *Croquet Gazette* from 1915-1937 and was succeeded by HF Crowther-Smith continuing in this role until 1954. Baron Bentley Lyonel John Tollemache (also known as Lord Tollemache and a writer on croquet and bridge) joined the Club in 1919. Croquet historian DMC Prichard mentioned in the *Roehampton Club Centenary Book*, described Lord Tollemache as ‘not naturally a gifted player’



‘succeeded by sheer hard work and a determination that every stroke he played should be tactically correct and theoretically perfect.

Prichard went on to provide the following assessment of a book written by Lord Tollemache entitled ‘Croquet’ which he regarded as the ‘most ambitious book ever written on the game’ and goes on to say ‘is unrivalled being lavishly illustrated with nearly a hundred photographs of himself performing every imaginable stroke on his own lawn with the embattled walls of Peckerton Castle. Dogmatic, assertive, intolerant and completely uninhibited, his presence electrified the atmosphere and for a full forty-five years he never relaxed his efforts to dominate and instruct. Those ready to learn from him on his terms never had reason to regret it.’ HWJ Sewell is featured as the Open Champion



in 1923 and AA Capell highlighted as the Vice Chairman of the Croquet Association. The article in *The Sketch* concludes with an interesting description of the game clearly aimed at addressing misconceptions amongst those who fail to appreciate the finer points of the game and its proficiency. The text of this account reads as follows ‘Croquet is generally associated in the minds of most people with crinolines, curates, and gentle philandering at Victorian garden parties.



They imagine the game to be a 'rabbity' pastime played with large, wide wire arches, and a bell in the centre of the court. This form of croquet is, however, no more croquet than rounders is cricket, and the game, as played at Roehampton (the headquarters of the Croquet Association), at the regular weekly tournaments throughout the season, is an affair of great skill and science really outdoor billiards. There are some 2,000 Members of the Croquet Association, of which the King is patron, and Lord Desborough, the famous all-round athlete, is president.'

Steve Reidlinger, Club Archivist