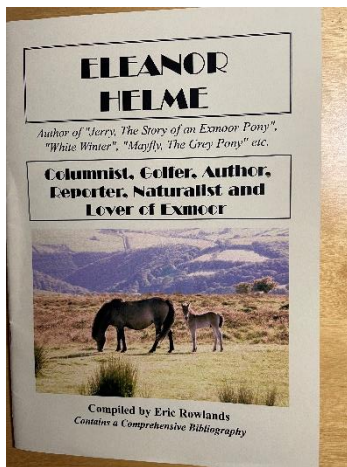


## From the Archives

### Eleanor Edith Helme – author, eminent journalist, and accomplished golfer

Eleanor Helme was featured in a recent article in the *Roehampton Club Recorder* which referred to her winning a Ladies Open' Golf Tournament at Roehampton Club 100 years ago. Further research into this intriguing lady and with helpful support from a resident of the village in Somerset where she spent her retirement, the following account of her life reveals her successful career as a journalist and author combined with her passion for wildlife and the Somerset countryside.



Much of her work is shown in the British Newspaper Archives but it was her decision to retire to the village of Luccombe in West Somerset with her elder sister Vera where a local resident who is thankfully still around today remembers her riding her horse 'Sarah' past his cottage. Eric Rowlands is the resident in question and has kindly agreed to allow the use of his booklet on the life of Eleanor Helme which he published in 2002 and only recently updated in March 2021.

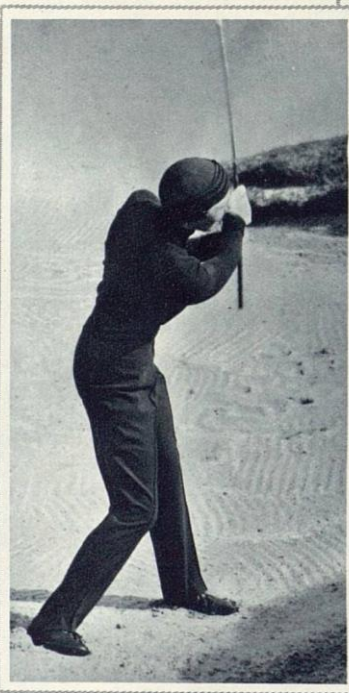
Born in Surrey in 1887, Eleanor Helme was the youngest of three sisters. Her brother was killed in the Great War. In her younger days, she was an accomplished golfer joining Leatherhead Golf Club where she played to a Handicap of 1. She represented England in 1911, 1912, 1913 and 1920 and won the English Ladies Amateur Championship at Ganton Golf Club in 1923. She was elected Vice President of the Surrey Ladies County Golf Association in 1913, Captain in 1920 and 1923 and became President from 1929–1946. A trophy in her name – The Helme Shield – is still played to this day.



Miss Gloria D. Minoprio (Lilleshale), who played with only one club in the English Women's Championship. Her style of dress, as seen above, was also out of the common

Eleanor was also an eminent journalist starting her career as the golfing correspondent for the *Yorkshire Post* and the *Daily Telegraph*. By the 1930's she was the golfing editor for the *Bystander Magazine* and the *Tatler*. Perhaps her greatest scoop as a journalist took place in 1933, when she reported the goings on at the English Ladies' Amateur Championship at Westward Ho. In the build up to this match play tournament, one of the competitors, Gloria Minoprio, announced to the golfing press that she intended to play in the competition with only one club. This was sensational enough as it had never been done before in a high-ranking competition, but the newspapers had a much bigger headline for their story when Gloria appeared on the first tee wearing trousers and *not* the traditional Ladies' golfing attire. Little was mentioned

of the fact that she had won her first-round match using only one club. The papers were far more interested in this rebellious gesture against the traditions of the game.



MISS GLORIA MINOPRIO

Whose hard-worked one club took her into the second round of the Ladies' Close Championship. Miss Minoprio, who, incidentally, set the fashion for feminine trousers on the golf course, is such a promising golfer that it seems a pity she should not make the game considerably easier for herself by de-restricting her choice of weapons

Eleanor's article, however, was very matter of fact choosing to stay away from the furore and whether this was a flagrant breach of an unwritten rule. Her paper did however have the best picture of the lady in question. Gloria Minoprio looked amazing dressed in black from head to toe and would not look out of place even today. As well as covering the excitement of this event, Eleanor Helme was also responsible for organising an annual Ladies' Foursomes Competition sponsored by the *Brittania and Eve* magazine.

It was 1947 when she decided to move to West Somerset living in a house called 'Three Gates' on the outskirts of the village. Long term resident, Eric Rowlands has a vivid recollection of Eleanor at the wheel of her car with her sister Vera and their third sister Emily who used to stay with them on holiday.

Besides her countless golf articles, Eleanor Helme wrote four golf books which appeared in the

inter-war years. She also wrote children's books and other titles covering nature, birdlife and religion. A multi-talented individual who knew the Roehampton Club extremely well.



Eleanor Helme (left) with her sister Vera "on Exmoor".

Steve Riedlinger – Club Archivist

