

From the Archives

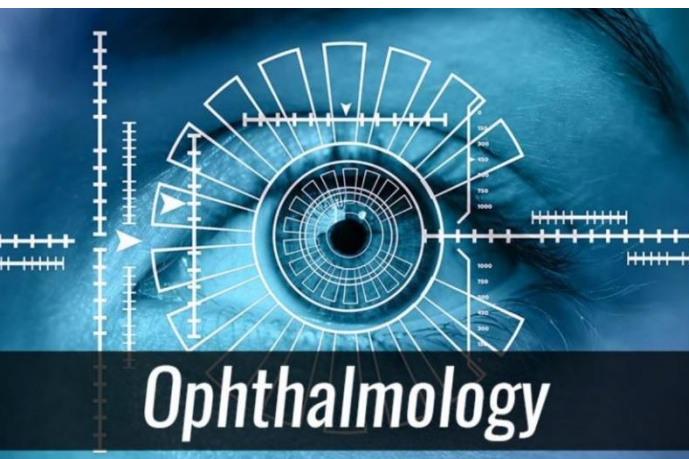
Roehampton Club in the early 1900's – a site for sore eyes

Two leading surgeons specialising in the treatment of eye problems were both Members of the Club in the early 1900's. Arthur Charles Roper was the first Ophthalmic Surgeon to join the Club in 1903 followed by his fellow surgical colleague Mr A Harold Levy (image right) in 1915. Arthur Roper was elected to the Club at the end of January 1903. His address was shown as the 'Shrubbery, Exeter'. His father, Mr. C. H. Roper, was a leading surgeon in Exeter, and served the office of Sheriff of the City, while his grandfather, Mr. W. Kennaway, was Mayor of Exeter in 1830 and 1836.



Arthur Charles Roper was born in 1858 and was educated at the Old Mount Radford School in Exeter (left) and St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London; he qualified as a Member of the Royal Colleges of Surgeons (M.R.C.S.) in 1880, and the Royal College of Physicians in 1881 becoming a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in 1890.

For more than 40 years, he had practised in his native city of Exeter, occupying a leading place, not only in the city, but also in the County of Devon. Roper went on to continue his connection with the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital for 25 years and on retirement was elected Consulting Surgeon. In the 1970's, he took a leading part in organizing an appeal by which more than £6,000 was raised for the building of new hospital wards for children. As a gesture of appreciation, one of the new wards in the hospital was named after him.



Roper had begun his connection with the West of England Eye Infirmary as far back as 1881 cementing his reputation as one of the leading Ophthalmic Surgeons of his time, making him one of the best-known individuals in the West of England. He took on various roles as a Consulting Surgeon in other institutions across the West Country. He also took on administrative roles at the West of England Blind Institute and was President of the South West of England Ophthalmological Society in 1923. He even found the time to be elected Mayor of Exeter in 1920 and a Justice of the Peace in 1922.

His proposer and seconder at Roehampton Club would suggest that he was an active croquet player. It was many years later in 1975, that the *British Journal of Ophthalmology* released a tribute to acknowledge their felicitations and best wishes on the occasion of the 100th birthday of Mr A Harold Levy on 11th December. The tribute refers to Levy as the doyen of British ophthalmologists; even though he was born in Montreal, where he took degrees in medicine at McGill University before coming to London taking further qualifications at Barts Hospital before embarking on a professional career working until the age of 85 years in London.

It is also fitting that he should be commended for his role of Managing Director to secure the future of the *Journal* surviving the trial and tribulations of the Second World War, ensuring its monthly issues appeared regularly on time, with little if any reduction in the size and with no increase in subscription rates. After the war with increasing costs and difficulties in production, the Company was wound up and the journal came under the wide-spreading umbrella of the British Medical Publications under whose aegis it has remained and thrived.

Levy was Managing Director from 1932 until 1948 and the *Journal* owes a great debt of gratitude for this contribution during such a difficult time. The article goes on to describe him as a man of great charm and erudition with a wide-ranging knowledge of the best in art and literature. Levy was elected to Roehampton Club in the middle of the First World War at the time he was living at Wimpole Street, Cavendish Square in West London. Towards the end of his life, he suffered the vicissitudes of age with increasing deafness and, ironically, some of the troubles in his own specialty for which he had done so much to help so many in the past. Despite these setbacks he retained a strong interest in his medical speciality sustaining a remarkable philosophy and equanimity battling his own journey to survive. Even to the end, with his deafness and impaired vision he continued to reflect on current affairs and the welfare of those who shared his afflictions. The tribute concludes with a respectful salutation and best wishes to a grand old man.

Steve Riedlinger, Club Archivist