

From the Archives

Roehampton Club and the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

With the plans announced for the year-long Platinum Jubilee celebrations throughout the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth and around the world to celebrate the Queen's historic reign and her 70 years of service, this would seem an appropriate time to remind everyone at the Club about our Royal connections.

The culmination of numerous events and initiatives taking place this year will be a four-day bank holiday weekend from Thursday 2nd to Sunday 5th June. The four days of celebrations will include public events and community activities as well as national moments of reflection to mark this historic milestone. The long tradition of celebrating Royal Jubilees, weddings and coronations will continue with the lighting of more than 1,500 beacons throughout the United Kingdom,



Channel Islands, Isle of Man and UK Overseas Territories and, for the first time, beacons will also be lit in each of the capital cities of the Commonwealth countries. Clubs and institutions around the world with the 'Royal' prefix will no doubt be looking back at their own Royal patronage as will Roehampton Club with its frequent visits by the Royal Family and its hosting of sporting events in which Royal Family members have participated.



Princess Elizabeth presents the Open Cup to Mr. J. Lakin, captain of Sussex, which won the Roehampton Cup

Queen Victoria had passed away in the year that Roehampton Club was formed. The royal connections with the Club were cemented from the very beginning with Lord Charles Bentinck as one of the original shareholders. His family were related to Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother through the Cavendish-Bentinck side of the family. By the time the Club had established a significant membership built around senior military figures and the aristocracy, the Club was ready to celebrate the coronation of the King which had been unfortunately delayed due to his poor health. The crowning of Edward VII took place in

August 1902. It is referenced in the *Centenary Book of the Club* in which the author mentions the event and the 'heavy expenditure entertaining royalty and coronation guests' as one of the contributing factors leading to a year-end financial loss of £677.12s - equivalent to more than £88,740 in today's money. Despite the growing membership at the time and the popularity of its social events, the miserably wet summer of that year and the consequent reduction in revenues from tea-room and bar takings had resulted in a substantial dent in the profit and loss accounts of the Club.

From the opening of the Club in April 1902, royal and aristocratic personalities have appeared regularly as part of the Club's heritage. The succession of the first three subsequent Club Presidents provides a perfect illustration with the appointments



H.R.H. THE DUKE OF TECK

Green © Stuart



of HRH The Duke of Teck, The Marquis of Cambridge, and HRH The Duke of Gloucester. In 1929, the Club enjoyed the patronage of the Duke of York when he accepted the role of Golf Captain and in 1935, The Duke and Duchess of Kent and the Duchess of Gloucester were made honorary Members of the Club.

Roehampton Club associations with Lord Louis Mountbatten are particularly strong after he had discovered the game of polo in India during a royal tour of the country in 1921 with Edward VIII. He often played at Roehampton Club and his correspondence with the Club forms part of the Mountbatten archive held at the University of Southampton. He was also responsible for introducing the game to Prince Philip (left) recently deceased but not forgotten in the history of the Club written by Elizabeth Hennessey.

Her book includes several photographs of royal occasions at the Club including pictures of Prince Henry with the King of Spain playing polo in 1920, HRH The Prince of Wales playing Polo in 1925, Lady Louis Mountbatten in 1939 presenting the Whitney Cup to her husband, and finally HRH The Duke of Edinburgh going out to play polo in 1953. There is a particularly nostalgic reference in the book to the layout of the old clubhouse with Prince Philip enjoying the proximity of the bar on his way back to the changing rooms after playing polo. Queen Elizabeth herself has also appeared at the club on more than one occasion, the first of which was reported in the *Tatler* in 1950 when she attended a polo tournament prior to her coronation as Princess Elizabeth. This summary of the Club's special affinity to the Royal Family is intended as a helpful bookmark for Members to enjoy the upcoming celebrations in the knowledge that the Club has played its part.

Steve Riedlinger, Club Archivist



Lady Louis Mountbatten presents the Whitney Cup to her husband Lord Louis Mountbatten captain of the Adsdean winning polo team 1939