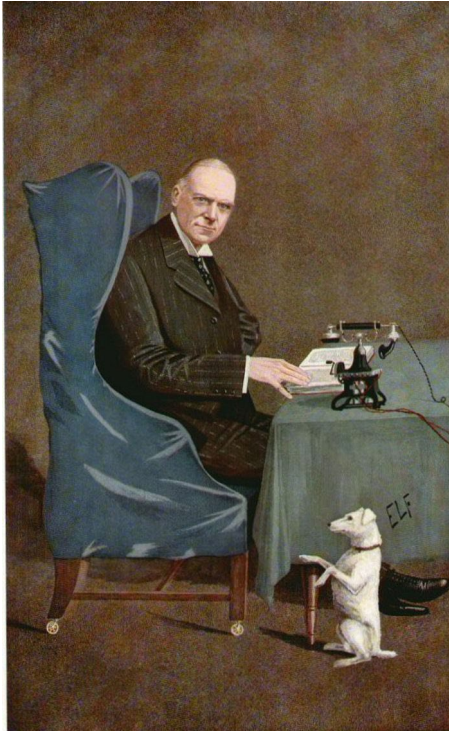




## Animal champion at Roehampton Club and the brown dog affair



The Honourable Stephen William Buchanan Coleridge was elected to Roehampton Club in January 1903, becoming one of the first fifty Croquet Members at the Club proposed and seconded by Lt Col Hon H Needham and WW Bruce. His application form refers to separate home addresses at The Ford, Greywell, Hampshire and at Egerton Mansions, South Kensington in Central London.

It was during his first year at the Club that he found himself at the centre of a political controversy about vivisection. Arguments raged in Britain from 1903 until 1910, with pitched battles between medical students and the authorities, police protection for the statue of a dog in Battersea Park, a libel trial at the Royal Courts of Justice and the establishment of a Royal Commission to investigate the use of animals in experiments.

It was the Hon. Stephen Coleridge who delivered an impassioned and angry speech during his time as Secretary of the National Anti-Vivisection Society at St James Hall in Piccadilly recounting an eyewitness account of an alleged animal experiment involving a small brown mongrel dog which had not been sufficiently

anaesthetised. Such was the ferocity and anger from Coleridge directed towards the surgeon and questioning his reputation that he was sued for libel by Sir William Bayliss of the Department of Physiology at University College London.

It was the graphic nature of the reporting in the newspapers that entrenched the views from both sides. The judge, Lord Alverstone ruled in favour of Sir John Bayliss after a trial at the Old Bailey which lasted four days case awarding him £2,000 in damages and £3,000 costs, amounting to a total of just under £678,000 in today's money. The whole of the country as well as the newspapers were divided over the result. *The Times* declared itself satisfied with the verdict although it criticised the rowdy behaviour of the medical students during the trial accusing them of 'medical hooliganism.' It also criticised Coleridge for not doing more to validate the claims made by his witnesses even going so far to suggest that 'the Defendant, when placed in the witness box, did as much damage to his own case as the time at his disposal for the purpose would allow.' *The Sun*, *The Star* and *Daily News* however backed Coleridge calling the verdict an injustice.





After the trial, the World League Against Vivisection raised £120 for a public memorial and commissioned a bronze statue of a brown dog by the sculptor Joseph Whitehead which was erected in Battersea at the Latchmere Recreation Ground. Enraged by the inscription, medical students initially tried to remove the statue through legal means. When this failed, they resorted to direct action with frequent attacks on the statue. Eventually, the costs of policing the statue became prohibitive and despite a large demonstration in Trafalgar Square and a petition signed with more than 20,000 signatures the statue was quietly removed before dawn on 10th of March 1910. Several attempts have been made to erect a replacement Brown Dog in Battersea, but the debate continues. In the meantime, a public house in the backstreets of Barnes near White Hart Lane has taken the name of the Brown Dog as a possible reminder of the past

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