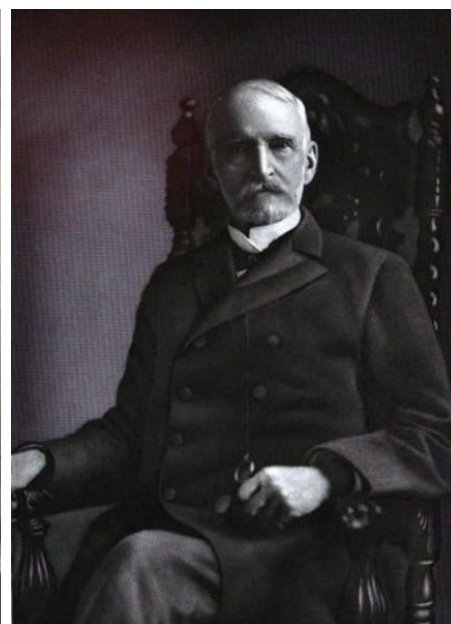


## From the archives

### Stephen Sanford - American carpet king at Roehampton Club 1922

Stephen Sanford (1898-1977), pictured on the left, joined Roehampton Club in 1922. He was an American businessman from a successful family business involved in the textile and carpet manufacturing industry. His grandfather of the same name (Stephen Sandford 1846-1913), pictured on the right, had taken over the business in the mid-19th century following a devastating fire which had burned the business to the ground leaving him to rebuild the business.



This early member of the family was reported in the British Newspaper Archives in 1872 as the man responsible for owning and running the 'Sanford Carpet Mills' – the largest and most successful facility of its kind in the whole of the United States. The Corporate Headquarters of Stephen Sanford & Sons was also built one hundred years ago in the United States in 1922 with offices on the top floor and manufacturing space on the lower floors. Known as Bigelow-Sanford following a 1929 merger, the mills operations moved south in the 1950's and the building was little used in the 1970's when it became Headquarters for Coleco Inc – manufacturers of Cabbage Patch Kids Dolls. It is now 30% occupied by The Sun Tzu Energy Drink Corporation with the remaining space being used as offices, retail outlets and storage.



The grandfather was also responsible for indulging the family interests in the field of thoroughbred racehorses. He set up a successful stud farm called the Hurricana Stock Farm near the town of Amsterdam, New York where he bred and trained a number of successful winners. These interests in the field of thoroughbred horses and racing were very evident at the time when Stephen Sandford joined Roehampton Club – obviously attracted by the quality of the Polo and the vibrant social scene in South-West London. Prior to joining the Club, he was a member of the Meadowbank Polo Club in the US. His time at the Club coincided with a particularly successful period in the fortunes of the business and his racehorses.

He was featured on the front page of Time Magazine in March 1923 showcasing the scale and influence of the family business involving more than 2500 staff working at their premises in Amsterdam, New York. The carpet industry was regarded in the newspapers as a key indicator of a nations 'relative degree of civilisation' against other measures such as the amount of soap consumed. The papers went on to offer the proposition that without question, the surest and fairest test is furnished by the carpet consumption. Carpets are a luxury and a fondness for them denotes habits of ease and comfort, and a mind contemplative and calm. The business was clearly doing well as Stephen Sanford's home address in his application form to join the Club was Park Lane, London W1.

Away from the business in 1923, one of his horses – Sergeant Murphy became the first American-owned horse to win the prestigious English Grand National. Sanford horses had become a fixture in the US since 1903 at the Saratoga Racetrack. From 1903 to 1907, the family invited the people of Amsterdam to the Matinee Races at the Hurricana. On the Sunday closest to the 4th of July, they would attract crowds of at least 15,000 to the event. These long-standing equine connections between the family and the sport are recognised each year in the running of the Sanford Stakes at the Saratoga Racecourse.

**Steve Riedlinger, Club Archivist**

