

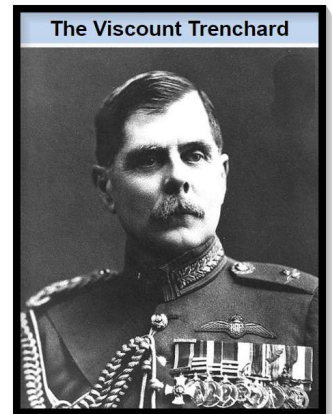
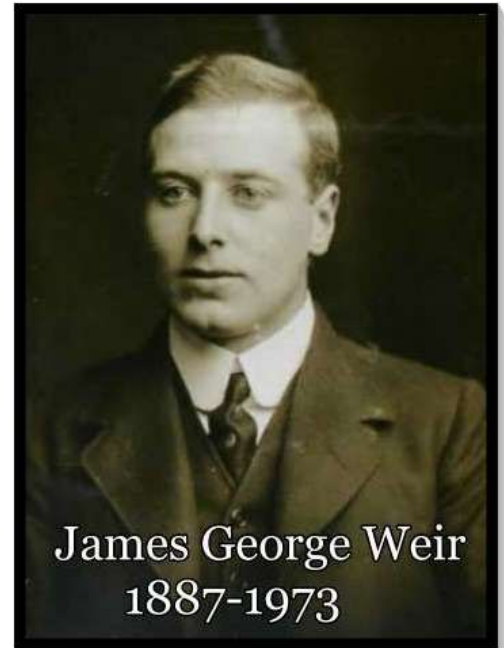
## From the Archives

### James George Weir – industrialist and aeronautical pioneer

James George Weir CMG, CBE joined Roehampton Club in April 1923 to play tennis. His application form shows his address at Thorney Court, Hyde Park Gate in London. He was proposed by Hugh Montague Trenchard – Air Vice Marshal of the recently formed Royal Air Force in which he was instrumental. The application form for James George Weir also shows his occupation as ‘Engineer.’

He was also a member of other Clubs including the Windham Club, Wellington Club, Aero Club, and the Royal Automobile Club. The Windham Club (now defunct) was based at St James’ Square in London. The Club was initially restricted to 600 members with the object of the Club stated ‘to secure a convenient and agreeable place of meeting for a society of gentlemen all connected with each other with a common bond of literacy or personal acquaintance.’ The Wellington Club (also defunct) was based at Grosvenor Place in Belgravia before moving to Knightsbridge in 1932. The membership profile of the Wellington was similar to the Windham. The Aero Club was initially based in Piccadilly, London. It was established in 1901 with the object of establishing ‘the encouragement of aero-automobilism and ballooning as a sport’. It was subsequently merged into the British Gliding Association in 1977 and although the newly formed Gliding Association has no club facilities, it does have an office in Leicestershire.

At the time that James Weir was a member of the Royal Automobile Club (RAC), it attracted leading members of society with an interest or ownership of motor vehicles. James Weir had joined the army in 1906 but became an enthusiast for flying, gaining one of the earliest Aviators Certificates from the Aero Club in 1910. He saw action in the First World War with the Royal Flying Corps (1914-1916) and was then transferred to special duties within the War Office, reaching the rank of acting Brigadier-General by 1918. After the war, he remained with the Royal Air Force reserve with the rank of Air Commodore and was awarded a CMG (Order of St Michael and St George) and CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) for his war service. He was also decorated by France and Italy.



At the time of his application to join Roehampton Club, James Weir was working for the family engineering firm of G & J Weir (based at Cathcart in Glasgow). The company has an accomplished engineering history in different fields. In 1904, the Company built three Darracq Cars to qualify as British-made for the Gordon Bennett Cup. The 1904 Gordon Bennett’s cup was held in Germany’s Taunus Forest at the suggestion of Kaiser William II and drew entries from eight countries. At the time it was considered the single most important race in the world. The course

stretched over 550km in the pine forest, consisting of four laps that started from the ancient Roman bastion of Saalburg heading north to Usingen, where there was a control point (an inhabited or built-up area where the cars had to travel slowly under the supervision of course officials). The company also invested in the early development of the helicopter. Now known as the Weir Group, the company employs more than 11,500 people in over 50 countries serving a variety of industries including mining, infrastructure projects, and the oil and gas sector. James Weir went on to become a director of the Bank of England in 1935.



His legacy lives on to this day with the James Weir Foundation established in January 1967 to contribute to those charities and institutions which promote and sustain the beliefs and ideas Mr Weir supported throughout his life. The Foundation refers to his passion for aerodynamic engineering and his place in the tradition of the Eighteenth-Century Scottish thinkers who believed that clear thinking started with 'an empiric analysis of how things worked and felt that the best training for such thinking was best supported by a thorough understanding of fundamental science and engineering principles.' The Foundation also refers to Weir's belief that individuals should give back to their Country where possible as he had done in Scotland and the United Kingdom.

Steve Riedlinger, Club Archivist