

From the Archives

Sir Harold Ben Fawcus – soldier, doctor at Roehampton Club

This article was prompted by a recent enquiry from a Club Member asking if there was any record in the Club archives associated with his grandfather who was Golf Captain at Roehampton Club in 1925 and 1926.

The enquiry was timed to coincide with a family golf event and the presentation of a framed biography of this individual to a member of the family who was getting married. The Member in question is Bob Dearsley and it was his son Joe who was to be the recipient of the framed presentation of their ancestor Sir Harold Ben Fawcus. There were of course several references to Sir Harold in the Club Archives, the *Centenary Book* by Elizabeth Hennessey and the British Newspaper Archives which proved to be a rich source of additional material for the following report.



Sir Harold Fawcus was elected to the Club in 1912 and his application form confirms his address at the Royal Army Medical College (RAMC) in London. The form also confirms the names of fellow officers at the RAMC College who proposed and seconded his application. Within a brief period, Sir Harold had achieved a scratch handicap representing the Club in matches against the Parliamentary Golf Society. He is listed as Golf Captain at Roehampton Club for two successive years in the Club Centenary publication by Elizabeth Hennessey. The book also refers on page

32 to other notable individuals playing golf at the same time as Sir Harold, including the King of Spain and Lord Jellicoe, Admiral of the Fleet who took over as Golf Captain in 1927. The Prince of Wales and the Duke of York were also mentioned as Honorary Members making regular appearances in the Household Brigade Golf Tournament in which Sir Harold was also involved.

He was appointed to the Golf Sub-Committee at the Club prior to his subsequent role as Golf Captain. The Minutes from the Golf Sub Committee also refer to his tenure as Chairman. Away from the Club, Sir Harold Ben Fawcus enjoyed a distinguished career in the Army and in the field of medicine which was well documented in the British Newspaper Archives. In January 1937, the *Birmingham Weekly Mercury* featured a glowing recognition of his 'brilliant record and achievements'. In a full-page article headed '*The Story and the Glory of the Red Cross, Sir Harold Fawcus, Soldier-Doctor*', the story of his accomplishments and his motivations begins with an account of his adventures in 1900 as a Junior Officer in the RAMC in South Africa. Using his outstanding qualifications from Medical School in the Northeast of England, he was given responsibility for a General Hospital of

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ROYHAMPTON CLUB.
CANDIDATES FORM.

Full Name of Candidate Major H. B. Fawcus R.A.M.C.

Address R.A.M.C. College, Grosvenor Road, S.W.

Occupation (if any) Junior Army & Navy School

Clubs of which a Member Junior Army & Navy.

Polo Player or Ordinary Member Ordinary

Proposed by Major S. Lyle Cummins R.A.M.C.

Seconded by Major S. Lyle Cummins R.A.M.C.

twelve marquees in Newcastle, Natal, South Africa during the Boer War. He was only 24 years old at the time, but it was here that he first came across a small band of voluntary workers whose equipment bore the then little-known symbol of the Red Cross. His boyhood ambition to be both doctor and soldier from his time at Medical School and the value of his first-hand experience with these voluntary workers from the Central Red Cross Council proved to be his inspiration as the Council became the forerunner of the British Red Cross Society resulting in his appointment as Director General of the Red Cross some years later.

Before then, he had been appointed Assistant Professor of Hygiene working in conjunction with Sir William Horrocks where he carried through a piece of research work taking out the impurities of the water used by the soldiers which was said without exaggeration to have saved the British Army in France during the Great War. He was then moved to a senior role in the frontline of the newly formed Fourth Army under General Sir Menus O'Keefe where he was responsible for the medical arrangements for the biggest ever land battle ever fought up until that time – The Battle of the Somme. His next appointment in the Guards Division kept him in the frontline and it was after the outbreak of peace that he rode in procession through the streets of London. He spent three years in India which included more front-line experience albeit for only a small amount of time in the Afghan War. It was shortly after his role as Golf Captain at Roehampton Club that he was Director General of the Army Medical Services from 1929 to 1934. Retired at his own request, he became Director General of the British Red Cross Society also receiving his KCB. His sporting career is also worthy of mention. Aside from his golfing abilities, he also played cricket and rugby and county level. As a final recognition of his medical skills, he was appointed Honorary Physician to King George V in 1923.

Steve Riedlinger, Club Archivist

