

## From the Archives

### Parliamentary golf at Roehampton Club

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Parliamentary Golfing Society appeared in the British newspapers as one of the most prominent golfing organisations in the UK apart from golf clubs. The society enjoyed a fixture list prior to the First World War and was regarded as among the principal events of the golfing year.

Playing at some of the best courses within easy reach of London and the occasional visit to the seaside courses such as Rye GC, members of the society were treated to an exceptional experience. This was certainly the case if the participating players found themselves drawn to play with the former Prime Minister Arthur Balfour.

The best player in 1919 was Mr Angus Hambro, sitting MP for South Dorset from 1910 to 1922. His paternal grandfather, Carl Joachim Hambro was a Danish immigrant who founded Hambros Bank in London in 1839. He had acquired his golfing reputation

through his multiple attendances of the Open Championship and the Amateur Championship.

His best result in these competitions was to

reach the semi finals of the Amateur Championship at Royal North Devon Golf Club in 1912.

*Angus Hambro, sitting MP For South Dorset 1910 - 1922*



*Sir Harold Ben Fawcus*

Before the advent of the Parliamentary Golfing Society, regular golf matches were played between the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The Parliamentarians, as they were known, were invited to play against Roehampton Club in 1929 and were overwhelmed by the Club in a series of Single Matches and Foursomes. The Roehampton Club team for this match included Sir Harold Fawcus – Golf Club Captain for 1925-1926 and was recently featured in a previous edition of the Club newsletter. Despite his reputation as one of the best players at the Club, he was only one of several

players to lose in his match at the Parliamentary Golf

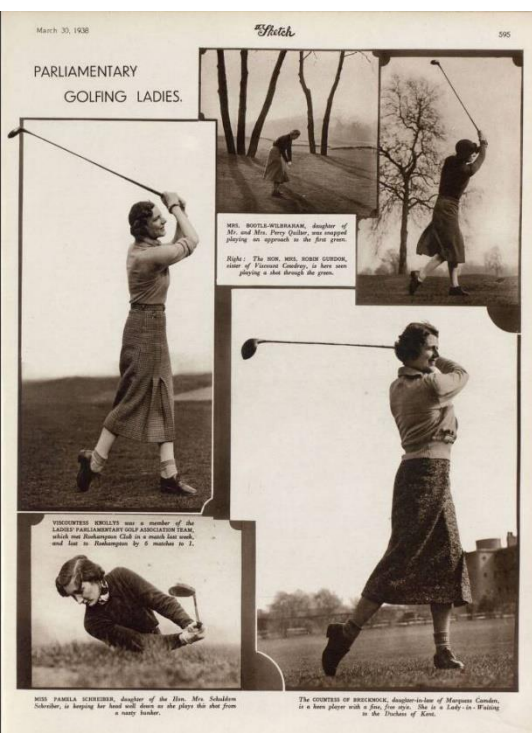
Society. Lady Parliamentarians were also regular visitors to Roehampton Club. The match at Roehampton Club in 1938 was reported in the *Sketch* newspaper with pictures of several of the leading players. The match was won convincingly by Roehampton Club by six matches to one.



*Lady Astor*

One of the leading characters involved in this fixture was Roehampton Club Member Lady Astor – An American-born British politician who was the first woman to take her seat as a female Member of Parliament. She served in Parliament until 1945, when she was persuaded to step down. More recently, the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Golf was set up as one of many informal cross-party groups of members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

The Group is drawn from the major political parties from both houses and meet regularly to discuss issues of concern in relation to the game discussing new developments, inviting stakeholders and government ministers to speak at their meetings and holding enquiries into a particular matter of importance.



*Mrs. North-Mansfield, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Perry, who was engaged playing on a green in the first round. (Right) The Mrs. Mrs. Gower, sister of Princess Countess, is here seen playing a shot through the green.*

*Mrs. PAMELA SCHILLIN, daughter of the Hon. Mrs. Schellin, is keeping her head well down as she plays the shot from a sandy bunker.*

*The Countess of Bessborough, daughter-in-law of Marguerite Gordon, is a keen player with a fine five iron. She is a Lady-in-Waiting to the Duchess of Kent.*

The Group has no formal place in the legislature but represents an effective way of bringing together parliamentarians and interested stakeholders. Like all other All Party Parliamentary Groups, they must hold at least two meetings during its reporting year, one of which must be an Annual General Meeting (AGM) or a meeting which involves an inaugural election of officers. These Groups cease to exist when Parliament is dissolved for a general election and must be reconstituted. There is an official register of every All-Party Parliamentary Group which is updated approximately every six weeks. The number of these groups is very variable. As of February 2020, there were 355 All Part Parliamentary Groups.

In 2016, there was an enquiry by the Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists into concerns that the All-Party Parliamentary Groups were being used to bypass lobbying registration rules. The enquiry was instigated following reports that lobbyists were acting as All Party Parliamentary Group secretariats and so gaining access to legislators. Despite the criticisms, the Groups associated with the game of golf and their consultations with the R&A and England Golf were responsible for drawing up the COVID protocols to be followed by all Golf Clubs across the UK following the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic.

While the Parliamentary Groups have no official status within Parliament itself, they represent an invaluable source of sharing intelligence to determine policy decisions and resulting legislation.

Steve Riedlinger, Club Archivist