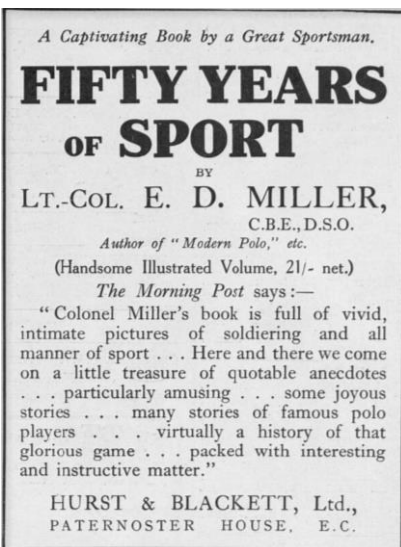


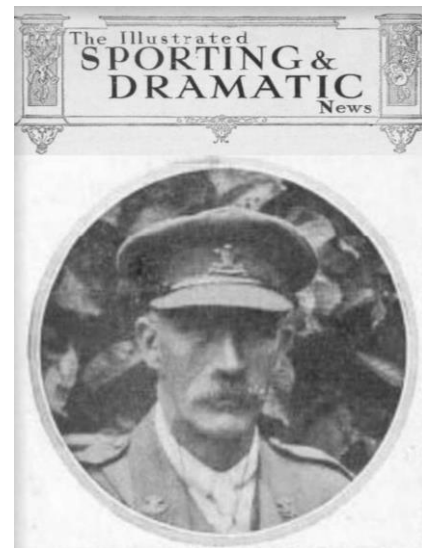
Fifty years of sport by Colonel Miller – part II

Colonel Edward Darley Miller was one of the three brothers who founded Roehampton Club in 1901. In 1923, he published a retrospective account of his 50 years in sport from his early days of fox hunting to the many other sports in which he played. His book was serialised in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News Magazine* from January to April in the same year.



The articles provide a fascinating insight into his upbringing and the many notable characters he met along the way with many of them recruited into Roehampton Club.

In the last newsletter, Colonel Miller looked back at his time in Hertfordshire, his early experiences of fox hunting and the environment in which he lived. This is the continuing story of his reminiscences. At the time of his interest in meeting young people of the same age, he goes on to say how good the social scene was in Hertfordshire for young people. Money was plentiful in the area and the social life was vibrant. Most of the big houses were occupied by hospitable people with large families and nearly all of them had private cricket grounds.



Lt Col. E.D. Miller, CBE DSO

In the holidays, there was a succession of cricket matches and lawn tennis parties. There was also plenty of shooting, hunting, paper chasing with horses or on foot and even skating. There were many children's dances at the big houses in the neighbourhood. He also mentions his introduction to lawn tennis which he describes as a sort of glorified badminton with an India rubber ball in place of a shuttlecock. The first nets were very high, and the courts were shorter than they are now. Gradually the nets were lowered, and the court lengthened as the game developed into the one, we know today.

Colonel Miller gives an account of the names of more than a dozen of the many aristocratic families in the surrounding area who entertained freely making up an ideal country life for young people at a time of prosperity with everyone seeming to have money to burn. At this point in the article, Colonel Miller reflects on the time he was writing in the 1920's when the young generation at this time had little of the good times from forty years ago with many the big houses now empty and a different class of people now occupying the remaining properties. He then refers to the game of polo and the first match played in 1869. Fixtures were limited playing at Hurlingham, Aldershot, in Dublin and a few other places where cavalry officers were quartered.

His first recollection however was a sad occasion when his mother received a telegram to inform her that her brother, Bob Darley had been killed in a polo match in Phoenix Park, Dublin in 1877. Colonel Miller believes this was the first recorded fatal accident during a polo match when his uncle was thrown from his pony and landed on his head. In those days and indeed for many years to come, no one wore helmets or head protection of any kind. The wearing of head protection did not become general in India until the time of Lord Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in the year of 1890 owing to the number of fatal accidents. In England, the fashion did not become general until three or four years later.



Robert Darley

Bob Darley was a great loss to the family and regarded as a popular sportsman in Ireland. He was also a great horseman, accomplished with a pack of hounds, a first class shot, good with his fists as a boxer of more than ordinary merit and one of the pioneers of polo. Those of his peers at the time thought that he would become one of the best polo players of his day. He was agent to Lord Leitrim at a difficult time in Irish history and had only recently resigned from this role a few

months before Lord Leitrim was killed. He had left his role as he did not agree with the methods employed by Lord Leitrim and the manner in which he treated his tenants.



This concludes the first of many excerpts from the book, *Fifty Years of Sport* by Colonel Miller shown regularly in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* publication. Interspersed with this account of his early upbringing, there are several images of his fox-hunting experiences and an illustration of an early polo match referred to as 'hockey on horseback'. In the next edition of the newsletter, Colonel Miller will be taking about notable people he grew up with in

Hertfordshire going on to become exceptional figures as soldiers, sailors, statesmen, businessmen and sportsmen of every kind.

Steve Riedlinger, Club Archivist

