

## From the Archives

### Fifty years of sport by Colonel Miller – Part IV

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 sporting life over a period of 50 years and the people he met along the way. The book was serialised in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News Magazine* from January to April in the same year. The newspaper articles provide a fascinating insight into his upbringing and the many notable characters he admired with many of them recruited into Roehampton Club.

In this instalment, Colonel Miller continues his recollection of Lord Rawlinson's brother Toby formally known as Sir Alfred Rawlinson. Having previously covered the success of his motor manufacturing business allowing him to buy a good house in East Sheen previously owned by the Duke of Fife, Colonel Miller highlights another interesting facet of his varied and interesting life involving fast cars and now aeroplanes.



*A Captivating Book by a Great Sportsman.*

# FIFTY YEARS OF SPORT

BY

LT.-COL. E. D. MILLER,  
C.B.E., D.S.O.

*Author of "Modern Polo," etc.*

(Handsome Illustrated Volume, 21/- net.)

*The Morning Post* says:—

“Colonel Miller's book is full of vivid, intimate pictures of soldiering and all manner of sport . . . Here and there we come on a little treasure of quotable anecdotes . . . particularly amusing . . . some joyous stories . . . many stories of famous polo players . . . virtually a history of that glorious game . . . packed with interesting and instructive matter.”

HURST & BLACKETT, Ltd.,  
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The risks associated with motor vehicles in the early days were more than sufficient for the average person but not for Toby Rawlinson who relished the experimental challenge of flying an aeroplane with nothing but his wits. The aeroplane he had designed was powered by a faster version of his Darracq car engine which would not have stood the health and safety requirements of today. It took a brave man in those days to venture in the air sitting on a perch which looked more like a bicycle saddle than a pilot's cockpit.

Undaunted, up went Toby in a machine that was the most powerful engine that had yet been put in an aeroplane. Working things out with little or no preparation, he went up too straight and not knowing too much about aeronautics, he would come down too quickly. Fortunately, on most occasions, he would land without a crash. His friends would find him sitting on the ground near his aeroplane smoking his pipe contemplating his close shaves with a high-speed contact with the ground. When

asked by his friends if he were all right, all he would say was 'I have often thought I was frightened but until today I wasn't'.

Unsurprisingly, his career in the air came to an end at the Eastbourne Airshow where he was demonstrating his skills perfectly well until landing in a depression on the ground causing the plane to turn turtle. The result of the crash was a broken leg which took years for Toby to recover. When war broke out in 1914, Toby was one of the first to get to France with a small fast car mounted with a Maxim Gun in which he hung about the extreme rear guard on the retreat to Paris.



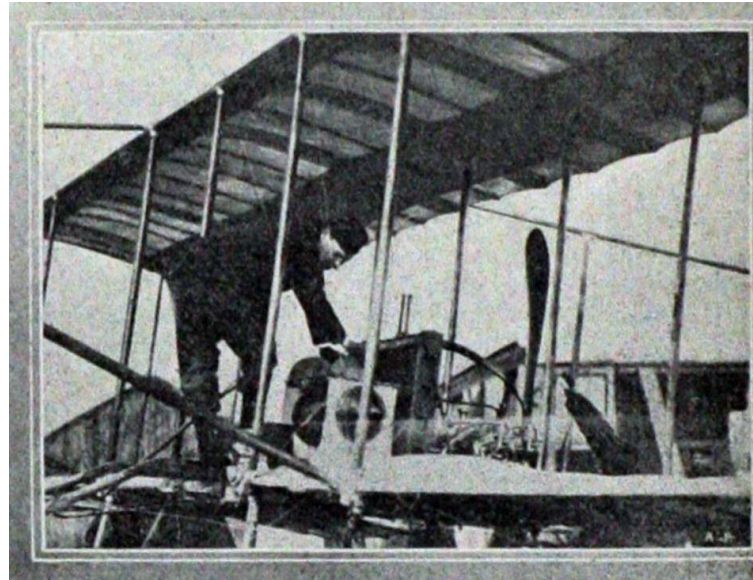
Sir Alfred 'Toby' Rawlinson

Colonel Miller recalls one occasion when he was out in France himself in the middle of the conflict meeting up with Toby's father Sir Henry Rawlinson who told him where to find Toby at his headquarters. When they met up, Toby was full of stories of his experiences. The best of these stories was recounted by Colonel Miller in his book. It referred to an incident when Toby was struggling to get out of one of the French villages caused by the breakdown of his car which refused to function properly. Luckily, a lorry came passing by driven by one of the mechanics which he recognised from the Darracq factory back home where Toby was the Managing Director. After a warm greeting, Toby asked him to tow his car away from the Germans back to the safety of the British lines. They hitched the car up with a rope and started their journey. Unfortunately, the driver took a wrong turn and proceeded the wrong way towards the pursuing Germans. Realising the mistake, Toby was unable to make his voice heard from the end of the rope with the rattling lorry preventing any warnings that they were headed towards the Germans. Just as Toby was preparing to cut the tow rope, the driver slowed down and stopped the lorry realising at last that he was going the wrong way. Toby reacted to his error by calling him 'a silly blighter' as they turned around to make their escape. Toby went on to continue his hair-raising adventures in the Eastern Campaign. He tells Colonel Miller of his participation in the evacuation at Baku and how he managed to steal a Bolshevik Steamer, Armenia, manned by ninety-seven Russians with a small band of nine Englishmen and one American to run the blockade of guard ships outside the harbour escaping to safety at the southern end of the Caspian Sea. The Steamer was crammed with high explosive ammunition, guns, and munitions of all kinds which he prevented from falling into the hands of the Turks and the Bolsheviks. He and his small band protected themselves from being shot by the crew by barricading themselves with the Captain of the Steamer taken at gunpoint to a secure area of the ship. Using the threat of the munitions, the crew were told of what would happen if they attempted to free the captain or prevent them from making their way to the open sea.

As they passed the blockade of guard ships, they were hit by seven shells which fortunately did not ignite the munitions and they were able to reach safe harbour despite the overwhelming odds. For this great deed, Toby was awarded the DSO.

The next edition of the newsletter will refer to other decorated soldiers known to Colonel Miller some of whom survived their wartime adventures to join Roehampton Club.

Steve Riedlinger, Club Archivist



Sir Alfred 'Toby' Rawlinson tuning up his Darracq engine on his Henry Farman machine