

## From the Archives – 21st September Aerial golf at Roehampton Club with Lady Heath in 1926

In July 1926, a remarkable aerial golf competition took place at Roehampton Club in which the pilots had to drop sandbags as near as possible to a flag. The newspapers at the time listed the participants as Captain H. Broad, Captain G. de Havilland, Captain F.G.M. Sparks, Mr S.L. St Barber, and Mrs Elliott Lynn, who was married at the time to Major William Elliot-Lynn.

Following her divorce in 1927, she then married Sir James Heath at Christ Church in Mayfair, London where she assumed the title of Lady Heath. This amazing lady was regarded at the time as a famous aviator and parachutist.

She had also announced her intention of flying directly to Coventry immediately following her display at Roehampton Club where she was billed as the star of the show in a carnival organised by St Marks Church. She had agreed to make an appearance in the evening when she would provide another exhibition of stunt flying in her 'moth' machine.



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ROEHAMPTON CLUB.  
CANDIDATES FORM.

Full Name of Candidate: *Sir Samuel Hoare Bart*

Address: *50 Cadogan Square*

Occupation (if any): *Parliamentary Secretary*

Clubs of which a Member: *Parliamentary Club*

Proposed by: *S. P. Hoare*

Seconded by: *A. G. Hoare, J. Miller*

The newspapers reporting the event in the Midlands made special mention of Mrs Elliott-Lynn as the only lady pilot involved in stunt flying exhibitions at this time. She was also acknowledged for her distinction of acting as hostess at the first 'aerial garden party', held at the Stag Lane aerodrome in Edgware in which more than two hundred guests were present to witness her flying skills for the benefit of their amusement. Ten of these spectators, brave enough to accept the invitation of ten-minute passenger flights, were given the most exciting time of their lives.

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Meanwhile, the event at Roehampton Club was also attended by a considerable number of spectators including senior figures from the military and the aristocracy, namely Sir Samuel Hoare and the Duke of Sutherland who awarded prizes for the aerial golf competition at its conclusion. These individuals were also members of the Club.

Mrs Elliott-Lynn was also a regular visitor to Roehampton Club to enjoy her time playing tennis.

Unsurprisingly, the display at Roehampton Club and its attendance from members of high society attracted the interest of the media. The Gentlewoman publication captured the occasion with a photograph entitled 'The Air Minister and his Latest Recruit'.



AT ROEHAMPTON  
Mrs. Oliver, Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for Air, and the Duke of Sutherland in the grounds of Roehampton Club. The photograph was taken on the recent Flying Day.

Unfortunately, low quality of the photograph prevents its appearance in the article, but other images of the individuals involved have been



included. The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News publication included an excellent photograph of Lady Heath in October 1928 walking through the gardens at Roehampton after playing tennis. The article refers to Lady Heath as one of England's leading women's pilots and a prominent athlete.

The reference to athletics relates to her role as one of the founders of the Women's Amateur Athletic Association following her move from native Ireland to London in 1922. She was also Britain's first woman javelin champion and set a world record for the high jump (although since disputed). She was a delegate to the International Olympic Committee in

1925 in the same year that she attended her first flying lessons. In 1923, she represented the United Kingdom at the 1923 Women's Olympiad in Monte Carlo and later that year she took part in the Women's Amateur Athletics Association track and field championships held at the Oxo Sports Grounds at Downham near Bromley, South London.

Alongside the photograph in the magazine, the article highlights Lady Heath as one of the most enterprising women of her time and her energetic exploits as a female aviator. Several of her incredible achievements were also listed as follows; the first woman to fly alone across Africa; the first woman to loop the loop in an aeroplane; the first woman to obtain a pilot's certificate and to be engaged to carry passengers on a regular air route.

Despite surviving a serious plane crash in the United States while taking part in a flying competition in Cleveland, Ohio, her life was tragically ended as a result of an accident while travelling in a double-decker tram in Shoreditch, London in May 1939.



The inquest confirmed that she had fallen down the stairs from the top deck and hit her head on the driver's controller box. Although she had been struggling with alcoholism which was thought to be a contributing factor to her demise, the pathologist found no evidence of alcohol in her body but did find evidence of an old blood clot which may have caused the fall.

The jury returned a verdict at the inquest of accidental death. According to newspaper reports her ashes were scattered over Surrey from an aircraft flown by her estranged husband taking off at Croydon Airport although legend has it that her ashes were returned to Ireland where they were scattered over her native origins in Newcastle West.

**Steve Riedlinger, Club Archivist**