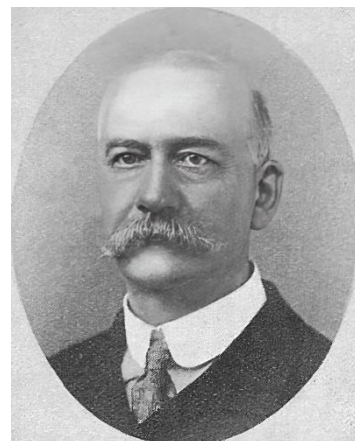


From the Archives

AK Huntington – aviation pioneer at Roehampton Club in 1902

Alfred Kirby Huntington was in his fiftieth year when he was elected to the Club in March 1902 as an Ordinary Member - one of the several hundred Members recruited by the founders before the opening of the Club on 1st April. His memberships at other clubs such as Rugby and the Ranelagh Club in Barnes (now defunct) was the likely connection with the Miller brothers who proposed and seconded his application to join Roehampton Club.



It was his address shown on the form that confirmed his notable background as a British professor of metallurgy, accomplished balloonist and one of the early aviation pioneers. His interest in ballooning and aviation was shared at the time with other significant figures such as Frank Hedges Butler – a successful British wine merchant and Charles Stewart Rolls who was co-founder of the Rolls Royce car manufacturing company.

These individuals also founded the Royal Aero Club in 1901 and were responsible for the first ever Balloon Race in England in 1906 in which AK Huntington also took part. It took place on 7th July at the Ranelagh Club about a mile from Roehampton

Club. The event was initially announced by the *Daily Mirror* newspaper with the participants competing for a cup offered by the *Evening News* publication valued at

fifty guineas (approximately £7,500 in today's money). The paper referred to crowds of fashionable people due to attend with additional interest caused by the fact that several ladies were also taking part including Princess Teano – a Lady in Waiting for the Queen of Italy.

The heroism of the ladies taking part was also recognised in other newspapers deserving admiration for putting themselves through the 'violent sickness' which generally accompanies the first experience of the first ascent. The start of the race was captured in a photograph in the *Bystander Magazine*. Seven balloons took part from the ascent in Barnes racing to the finish at Ingatestone, three miles from Chelmsford in the county of Essex. They all landed safely, and the winner was adjudged to be the closest to the finishing line which proved to be Frank Hedges Butler who landed at the village of Orsett, nine and a half miles from Ingatestone.



Photo The start for the Aero Club Race at Ranelagh on Saturday Bystander Copyright
Polo and everything else were very secondary considerations on Saturday compared with the balloon race, and the Club lawn presented a very gay and animated assemblage. The winner was Mr. Frank Butler, on the "Dolce Far Niente," though he only succeeded in getting within 6½ miles of the "winning post" at Ingatestone, near Chelmsford.

Later in the same year, the Royal Aero Club members previously mentioned together with Professor Huntington took part in the 'Gordon Bennett Race for Aeronauts' – an International Balloon Race starting from the Tuilleries Gardens in Paris. The trophy donated by Gordon Bennett from the *New York Herald* was valued at a thousand guineas (c£150,000 in today's money). On the day of the race, sixteen balloons representing seven countries were involved. A photograph of Professor Huntington with Frank Hedges Butler just before the start of the race was featured in the *Sketch* newspaper.

The *Canterbury Journal* reported the descent of the balloon named 'Zephyr' carrying the Professor and Mr CF Pollock of the Royal Aero Club and landing at Iwade Marshes near Sittingbourne.

They had crossed the Channel to arrive back in England following a journey which took them eighteen hours. Their arrival was witnessed by a large number of people who had assembled near to the village school. The distance covered from the start in France however was not enough to win the event. The other participants landed safely in different parts of France, the UK and Belgium and the winner was announced as American Lieutenant Lahn, who landed at Whitby on the northeast coast of England. Over the next few years, Professor Huntington took part in numerous balloon races both in the UK and Belgium.

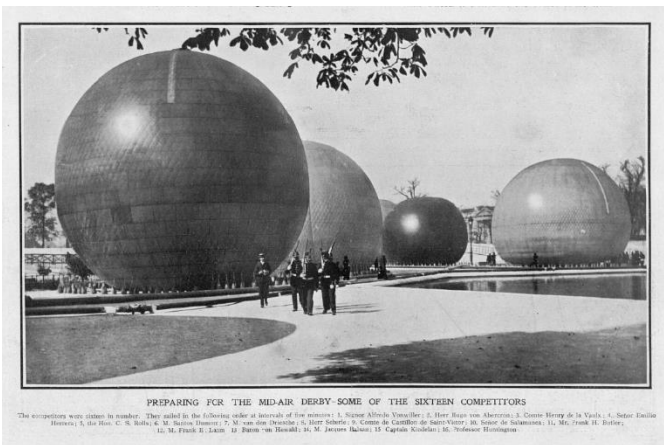
The Hurlingham Club was the start of another significant international event witnessed by large crowds and well reported in the newspapers. Another took place in Brussels – both of these events were photographed at the time.



Professor Huntington (with Miss Moore Brabazon)
The professor piloted the English balloon "Zephyr." He made his descent at Cazaubon, in the Pyrenees



THE GREAT BALLOON RACE AT HURLINGHAM
Thirty Balloons in the Sky.



PREPARING FOR THE MID-AIR DERBY SOME OF THE SIXTEEN COMPETITORS
The competitors were chosen in number. They sailed in the following order at intervals of five minutes: 1. Signor Alfredo Vanzetti; 2. Herr Hans von Scherren; 3. Comte Henry de la Vallée; 4. Señor Emilio Herrera; 5. Sir John G. Baker; 6. M. Simeon Dumas; 7. M. van den Broek; 8. Herr Schuler; 9. Comte de Castellion de Saint-Veney; 10. Comte de Sodenon; 11. M. Frank H. Butler; 12. M. Frank S. Lakin; 13. Baron van Thasch; 14. M. Jacques Bachez; 15. Capitaine Kockler; 16. Professor Hootington

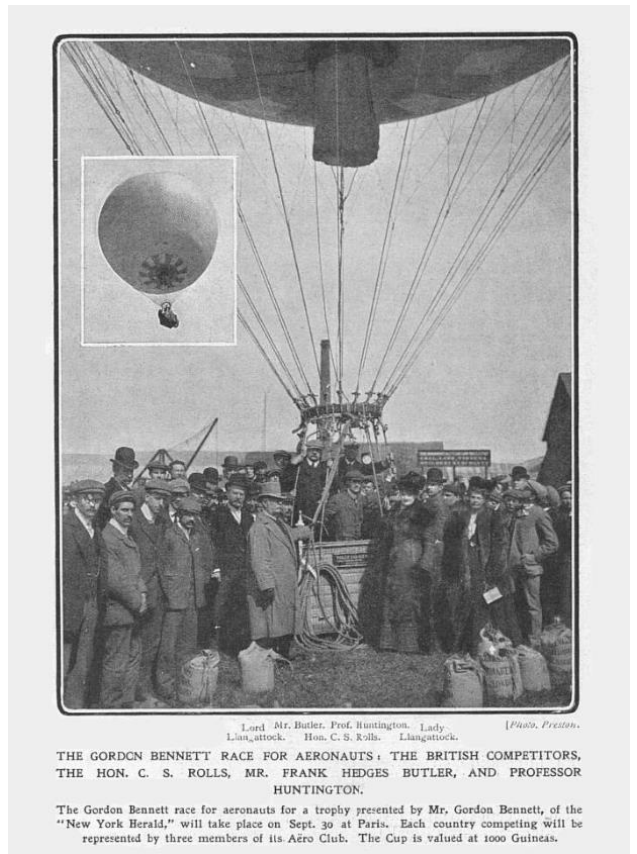


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INTERNATIONAL BALLOONING

THE START FROM BRUSSELS ON THE 15TH

General View of the Grounds Before the Start: Forty balloons assembled for the race, which was the biggest one ever held



Lord Mr. Butler, Prof. Huntington, Lady Llan, attack, Hon. C. S. Rolls, Llangatock.
THE GORDON BENNETT RACE FOR AERONAUTS: THE BRITISH COMPETITORS, THE HON. C. S. ROLLS, MR. FRANK HEDGES BUTLER, AND PROFESSOR HUNTINGTON.

The Gordon Bennett race for aeronauts for a trophy presented by Mr. Gordon Bennett, of the "New York Herald," will take place on Sept. 30 at Paris. Each country competing will be represented by three members of its Aero Club. The Cup is valued at 1000 Guineas.

Away from his interest in ballooning, Professor Huntington followed a professional career as a Professor of Metallurgy at Kings College University in London. He was associated with the Institute of Metals from its foundation and became its Vice President in 1910. According to his Wikipedia profile, during the First World War, the Professor was heavily involved working for the War Ministry in a munitions role testing the fracturing of grenades. He sadly died April 1920 in his sixty-eighth year at his London residence, Buckingham Steet, London.

Steve Riedlinger, Club Archivist