

From the Archives – 13th March 2025

The early years of Roehampton Club – new reports from the newspaper archives



The British Newspaper Archives have recently released thousands of pages from the Ladies' Field publication featuring the formation of Roehampton Club and the significant events which took place in its first year in 1902.

The *Ladies' Field* was a British magazine first published in 1899, catering to the interests of upper-class women. It covered a wide range of topics including fashion, society events, sports, and outdoor pursuits, which was quite progressive for a women's publication at the time. The magazine gained popularity for its focus on aristocratic social life, country house living, and activities like hunting, shooting, and equestrian sports. Its content reflected the growing independence of women in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras.



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The Ladies' Field remained influential until the early 20th century, offering a unique glimpse into elite British society. The appeal of Roehampton at the time of the opening of the Club was largely due to its reputation as an affluent, semi-rural retreat on the outskirts of London. Known for its expansive green spaces, elegant villas, and proximity to Richmond Park, Roehampton attracted wealthy Londoners seeking a country lifestyle within easy reach of the city.

The area's exclusivity and tranquil environment made it ideal for leisure pursuits like polo, croquet, golf, and tennis. The establishment of Roehampton Club cemented the area's status as a hub for fashionable society, offering a social scene that blended sport with aristocratic refinement.

The magazine announced their first mention of the Club in December 1901 confirming the Duke of Tech as the President of the Club and the resolution of the new Club to admit ladies for membership. Polo would be its chief object but would also cater for the ladies with archery, croquet and other games.



THE LADIES' DRAWING-ROOM, ROEHAMPTON CLUB. Copyright Ladies Field

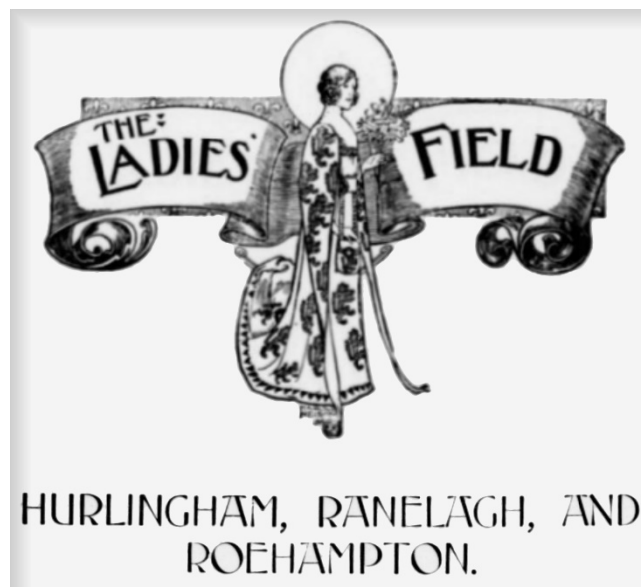
There was also a reference to some of the advantages of the new club – namely its seclusion and its proximity to Barnes Railway Station. From here, according to the magazine, 'the journey takes but fifteen minutes, the fare is cheap, and one has not to employ the rather ruffianly class of cabmen to be found in the suburbs, who overcharge everyone, and are often rude to ladies who may be alone.'

The intended opening of the Club in April 1902 was reported in the magazine in January under the management of Charles Miller, opening its gates on or after 15th April, when 'polo-loving London will have another delightful stretch of old turf on which to

display its frocks and footgear and will be found to comprise three fine polo grounds – one perhaps, the best in the kingdom.’

It goes on to say that ‘a pavilion is being built, and croquet lawns laid out, from which players and poloists can adjourn to tastefully arranged tea houses.’ The June edition of the magazine features a photograph of the Ladies Drawing Room in the Ladies Pavilion at Roehampton Club.

Following the opening of the new club, the Ladies Field publication introduced a regular feature in the magazine on the activities of Hurlingham, Ranelagh and Roehampton Clubs.



The first polo matches at the Club took place in May 1902 and the final of the Roehampton Inauguration Cup also took place in the same month. The magazine also mentioned the Reynard Coach Service from central London to Roehampton leaving Victoria at 2pm and returning at 7pm.

In July, there was a very interesting Polo match between the two Houses of Parliament at Roehampton Club involving the Duke of Westminster, Lord Castlereagh, Lord Helmsley and the Duke of Roxburghe representing the Lords, while on the Commons side were Sir S. Scott, Mr Raymonde Greene, Mr Winston Churchill and Mr FB Mildmay who were eventually beaten by the Lords who scored 4 goals to 1.

In this final reference to the recently released articles from the newspaper archives, reports of the croquet meetings which took place at the Club in July and August respectively with two of the competitors, Miss Selwyn Payne and Miss Carberry Mason photographed in the August edition of the Ladies Field Magazine.



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