

Sutton Coldfield Hockey Club pre-1914

In 1905, a George Sharp move from Derby to live in Sutton Coldfield and being a good cricketer, he joined the towns cricket club, like many other cricketers he also joined the Sutton Coldfield Hockey Club, so as to stay fit during the autumn winter months. Little detailed information is available over the next ten years except that the game increased in popularity, and during the decade many more clubs were formed in the Midlands.

However, early recollections of the writer, at that time, was a Norman Sharp, born 15th April 1901, and the son of George, and as a small boy was a regular spectator in 1908, watching his father playing hockey in Sutton Park on the Meadow Platt for the Sutton Coldfield Hockey Club. It was perhaps natural that the club had quite a considerable spectator following as most of the 1st team were local clerics, magistrates, aldermen, councillors, solicitors and doctors, and to be seen was believed by local people to be of a social benefit to them.

The fixture card of that year shows that two teams took the field each week, commencing with a practice game the first week in September and finishing in mid-April. Fixtures included Lichfield, Coventry, Small Heath, Chester Road, Burton Winshall, Olton, Orientals, Harborne, Walsall and Camp

Sutton Coldfield Hockey Club 1908- 09 Season



Quite a number of the hockey players were also connected with the Sutton Coldfield Cricket Club, to whom, approaches had been made from time to time for the use of a pitch in Rectory Park. There were several advantages to be gained from such a move, perhaps one of the most important being that the ground was not trampled over by the general public during the week, and by the use of the cricket club roller and of course their horse, for there were no mechanized aids to groundwork in existence pre the Great War.

In 1910, the Club were successful in its application to move to the quiet and pleasant surroundings of the cricket ground at Rectory Park. The better surface of the new ground produced a higher standard of in particular stick play and by 1913 the Club was recognised throughout the Midlands for its skilful hockey. Representing the Sutton's First Eleven in those days were players of such high caliber, that a number were selected to

represent their county, our region and internationals; E. B. Crockford (England, Midlands and Warwickshire), L. C. Crockford and R. M. Evans (both Midlands and Warwickshire) and W. G. Denston and W. Pollock (both Warwickshire). It was not until after the 1914-18, First World War was over that the Crockford brother achieved greatness but in totally different directions.

The move to play in Rectory Park, the Rectors private estate, was not be assumed “all milk and honey”. The old thatched pavilion, which, though picturesque, was not the ideal place in which to change as there was no running water supply available (even for cricket teas etc. it had to be wheeled in a tub from Riland Road), nor was there any lighting or heating of any kind - essential in the cold dark winter evenings. Prior to 1970 when the new club house was built opposition players were offered the first use of the six zinc calvinized foot baths for players to wash hands and legs prior to the home side following suite.

However, the Royal Oak became the club's headquarters for after the match socialising with the visiting team in comfortable surrounds, arm chairs, log fires and good ale. The Royal Oak was situated at the corner of Mill Street and Coleshill Street where the Vesey Gardens now exist, and was of considerable historic interest. With motorised transport not yet in general use, players had to foot-slog the journeys to and from the ground, whilst the home team mostly dressed in their own homes.

The first elected President of the Sutton Coldfield Hockey Club was S. A. Taylor, JP who carried out all the Club's management functions. However, it is unfortunate that very little information about Taylor has been found, nor whether or not he was a player or in what capacity he qualified for the Presidency. Nevertheless, it is understood, that he must take a lot of the credit for the work and interest he took in the club during those early days. He remained President until his death twenty-three years later in 1914 and had held office since the Club was formed in 1891.

Sutton Coldfield Hockey Club 1913-14 Season



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