

The Crockford Family

An Introduction: - Arthur L. Crockford, a practicing solicitor of, 71 Temple Row, Birmingham, a member of the Town Council, and subsequently Mayor of the Royal Borough of Sutton Coldfield. Arthur had two sons, Leslie C. Crockford, born in “Ellesmere” Vesey Road, Wylde Green on July 4th 1887 – the year of Queen Victoria’s Jubilee, and Eric Bertram Crockford, known as Tom, born on 13th October 1888 at the same residence. Both were outstanding hockey players and represented their county - Warwickshire, with Tom playing at international level. In their youth they both played hockey with their father in the same side Sutton Coldfield side.

Brevet Colonel L. C. Crockford, M.C., T.D.

Leslie was educated at King Edward’s High School, Rugby School, and Cambridge University, and joined the profession of a solicitor in his father’s business. He served in the Rugby School Cadet Corps, which was then affiliated to the 2nd VII (now the 7th Battalion) The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, from 1902-1906, when he joined the Cambridge University Rifle Corps. Here he very soon attracted the attention of the Adjutant, who subsequently recommended him very strongly for a commission in the then newly formed Territorial Army.

He was gazetted second lieutenant in the 9th Bt. The Royal Warwickshire Regiment on Nov. 14th, 1908, and was posted to “Q” Company, then commanded by Captain P. G. Danielson. Promoted lieutenant in 1912, he mobilized with his Battalion on the outbreak of War in August, 1914, and proceeded to France in March 1915. He was very soon selected to act as assistant staff captain, in which he was attached to the brigade staff.

On June 1st, 1916, he was promoted captain, and on August 18th greatly distinguished himself at the battle of Ovillers (Somme), for which he was awarded the Military Cross. Single handed, from behind a bomb stop, with two men loading for him, he poured such fire into the flank of the enemy that he was very largely instrumental in bringing about their surrender.



Colonel L. C. CROCKFORD, M.C., T.D.

The 6th Battalion “THE ANTELOPE”

On Feb. 6th, 1917, he was appointed staff captain to the 143rd (Warwickshire) Brigade, and on the 27th June 1918, brigade major, in which capacities he was present at the operations, on the Somme, in the Ypres Salient, and in Italy. He obtained a brevet majority on June 3rd, 1918. On Oct. 9th, 1918, he was appointed temporary major and D.A.Q.M.G. (Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General) to the British Forces in Italy, which position he held until his return to England.

He was twice mentioned in dispatches and awarded the Italian Military Cross (Croce de Guerra).

On the reconstruction of the Territorial Army after the War, he rejoined his old unit and resumed command of his former company, in which he served before the War.

He was promoted to the substantive rank of major on Jan. 19th, 1921, and awarded the Territorial Decoration in 1924.

On Feb. 16th, 1928, he succeeded to the command of the 6th Battalion, on the retirement of Colonel J. L. Mellor, was promoted lieutenant-colonel, and on Feb. 16th, 1932, appointed brevet colonel.

His cheerful disposition won for him the affection of all ranks, and one of the nicest tributes that can be paid to him is to place on record that wherever he went, he was popular not only with the officers of the staff on which he was serving, but also retained his popularity with all the regimental officers with whom he came into contact.

This popularity persists until the present day, so that the severance of his connection with the Battalion in which he has served for well-nigh 25 years is cause for the unfeigned, regret of all who have ever served with him.

Tom Crockford

Eric Bertram Crockford known as Tom played for England at hockey fourteen times between 1911 and 1922 and represented Great Britain and Ireland in the 1920 Antwerp, Olympic Games winning a Gold Medal in hockey.

This was the last Olympic Games when Great Britain and Ireland were one team. He would undoubtedly have received many more caps but for the intervention of the war period throughout which he served his country with distinction.

Tom was an outstanding sportsman playing not only playing cricket for the Warwickshire County Cricket Club in 21 matches between 1911 and 1922. He also played for the Sutton Coldfield Cricket Club. He was also the Midland Billiard and Snooker champion.



Eric Bertram Crockford.

Eric (Tom) enlisting in September 1914, as a Private in the 14th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment, and was Gazetted 2nd Lieutenant into the 6th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment in August 1915 and subsequently promoted Lieutenant & served in France in 1916 & 1918.

With the Armistice being signed in November 1918 fixtures were renewed for the following season, 1919/20. A number of pre-war members had lost their lives, in particular Percy Grove and William Onions, but those who survived were keen to resume peacetime activities. The 1st XI was fortunate that almost all their pre-war team came through unscathed, included the two Crockfords, R.M. Evans, W. Pollock, J Cond, W. Dewsbury, F. Roberts, so that the nucleus of a strong side was immediately available.

During the fifteen years that followed the war many Sutton players obtained representative honours and the Club consistently won very many more games than it lost.

In the period 1921-1930, E. B. Crockford and P. C. Petrie played for England and the Midlands and in addition R. M. Evans, L. C. Crockford, N. Sharp, L. R. Martin, C. Ellis, R. F. Bennett, G. H. Shaw, C. E. Francis, V. A. Eastwood, L. Wood, R. H. Dickinson, D. G. Foster, D. H. Shaw and H. Hall all played for Warwickshire. A formidable array of talent but without doubt the greatest exponent of the game of hockey in the Clubs history was E. B. (Tom) Crockford.

1920 - Sutton Coldfield Hockey Club member win Gold



Antwerp 1920 Olympic Games Great Britain Gold medal winners
E.B. Crockford 2nd on the right

Furthermore, most of the boys comprising the Bishop Vesey's 1st XI in 1918 left school that year and joined the club, together, with a few from Four Oaks College. Names included F.R. Fletcher, C.E. Francis, C.H. Shelvoke, J.B. Sheldon, N. Sharp, K. Mason, E.M. Eardley, V.A. Eastwood (all B.V.G.S.) with A.J. Terry, and F.L. Lavender amongst those from FOC. Most of these played for the 2nd team during their first season and gained valuable experience under the captaincy of A. Leal, who was also the headmaster of Four Oaks College.

The 1st XI was again led by E.B. Crockford, with L.C. Crockford and R.M. Evans, hon. secretary and hon. treasurer respectively. Of the 20 fixtures played, 15 were won and 5 lost, scoring 90 goals against 37. Included amongst the victories were Harborne (10-0), Bournville (11-1), Orientals (5-1), Walsall (5-3), Edgbaston (7-1, & 5-1), and Erdington (8-4). The only severe loss was in the return match at Erdington when the home side won 7-2.

Eric (Tom) passed away in Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield on 17th January 1958, age 68. He had two daughters: Mary born in 1918 who married a Robert G. B. Edwards in 1940 and Gwendoline born in 1922 married a John R Perks in 1940

Tom was also an excellent cricketer and played for the Warwickshire County Club 1911 to 1922, and between 1909 and 1934 he played in 249 games for the Sutton Coldfield Cricket Club scoring over 10,000 runs with an average of 30.7, including 7 centuries and took 441 wickets at an average of 15.0 from over 10,000 overs bowled. His best bowling was taking 8 for 14 against Aston Unity and 8 for 24 against Mosley Ashfield. Considering they only played cricket on a Saturday, it was an outstanding achievement. Tom managed to be Midland Billiard and Snooker champion for a number of years.

A relative of the Sutton Coldfield Crockfords now live in Car Colston, Nottingham and I had the pleasure of meeting up with Alan Crockford when the Free Foresters Cricket Club were entertained

by the Sutton Coldfield Cricket Club in 2016 as part of the FFCC celebrating, 160 years of their existence. However, Alan was unable to advise me who is owner of the 1920 Olympic hockey gold medal.

Peter R.G. Bell
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