

THE ORIGINS OF THE CLUB

1868-1873



MAIN: Pigeon-shooting match, *Illustrated London News* 31 July 1869.
RIGHT: Frank Heathcote, early 1860s.
FAR RIGHT: The Pigeon Shooting Enclosure as seen today.



Frank Heathcote, a noted pigeon-shooter, approached Richard Naylor in 1867 with a view to obtaining a licence to stage shooting matches at Hurlingham. This having been granted, the first matches were held in 1868. The ground was situated roughly where the tennis pavilion and adjacent tennis courts stand today.

Pigeon shooting was mainly about gambling and the sums were simply staggering by today's standards. The scorebooks for each year show totals listed by member the amounts lost and won, together with kills and misses. In the 1885 season, for instance, over 12,000 pigeons were released and £6,000 wagered. The biggest winner was one Edward Day Esq whose net winnings amounted to almost £300 (£29,000 today). The largest loser was a member from a 'Foreign Club', Monsieur Drevon, who lost over £200 (£19,000). Another time, another world.

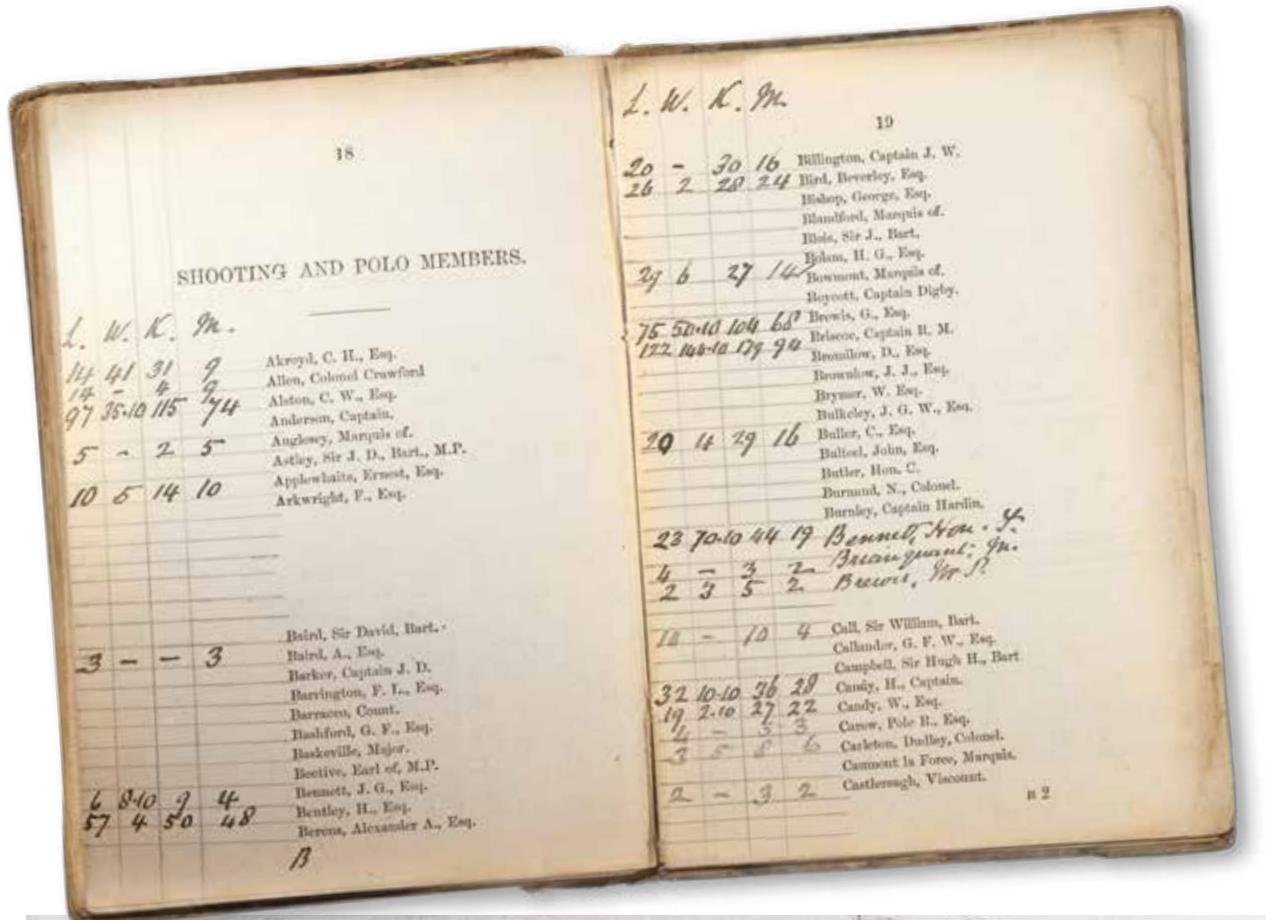
The Club was formed in 1869 primarily for pigeon shooting. However, in 1870 non-shooting members were admitted; they paid a different subscription and were also allowed to bring in ladies. Gradually new pastimes and facilities were introduced

which increased the Club's appeal. By July 1871 there were 275 shooting members as compared to 493 non-shooters.

Later, at the turn of the twentieth century, some Hurlingham members condemned the sport as barbarous and, at a meeting of the Committee, a resolution was passed: that Pigeon Shooting should be discontinued. This led to a lawsuit in the Chancery Division of the High Court. In his final judgement Mr Justice Joyce said:

'In the year 1868 when the Club was formed, I suppose that the practice of shooting pigeons from traps was considered a manly sport. Since then, times and manners have changed, people are more humane, and now many persons consider the practice to be a barbarous pastime and, if legal, not at all creditable to the Club.'

Thus, on 31 December 1905, pigeon shooting at Hurlingham ended. The shooting ground became a 'tea ground' and the pavilion was preserved. Times had changed but let us not forget that the Club owes its being to Mr Frank Heathcote and his original band of shooters.



Shooting – then and now

Pigeon shooting took place from April to August and was part of the 'London Season'. Today we recall our past through the Club's logo and laser shooting events, while harrier hawks keep pigeons at bay.



OPPOSITE, TOP: The Score Book for 1874 shows members' total scores for the year. The columns reflect gambling losses and wins, kills and misses.

BOTTOM: The Matrimonial Hurlingham: cartoon by Charles Keene, *Punch* 1872.

ABOVE: Shooting at Hurlingham Sunday, 2015.

TOP RIGHT: Pigeon control today. Harrier hawks are used to discourage pigeons flocking round the Club's eating areas.

RIGHT: The pigeon is the Club's logo and can be found in many different guises around the Club.

