

John Besch

The first person to be prominent in the affairs of Hampstead Hockey Club when nascent as the hockey section of the Cricket Club was J G Q Besch or to give his full names, John George Quiddington Besch, who was born in June 1861. He later died on 24 March 1940 in Brondesbury. He is recorded as playing cricket for Oakham School when aged 17 and a player for Hampstead Cricket Club from 1886 until 1894.

John Besch was the spokesman for the hockey section of Hampstead Cricket Club when the question of non-members playing hockey first raised its head at a general meeting of the Cricket Club in 1893. His was the *apologia*, so described by cricket club's historian, Freddie Monro, that explained the inability of the hockey section to fulfil its allocated fixtures.

At that meeting the cricket club resolved that the hockey sub-committee had exceeded its powers in admitting non-members of the cricket club to play hockey but that the arrangements for the present season were "to be carried out".

At a later meeting, another hockey section's representative, H R Lipscombe, who later became the Honorary Secretary of Hampstead Hockey Club and was appointed captain of the 1st XI, had told the cricket club of the "very successful results" of the matches played.

However, he had to add that a number of matches had to be scratched "owing to the wet state of the ground". He said that it was useless to arrange fixtures in the winter and proposed that a new ground be found and that "the hockey section be allowed to manage its own affairs".

This may have led to or equally may have preceded the general meeting of the hockey section at the Eyre Arms that agreed to propose to the Cricket Club that "the permission of the Cricket Club be asked for the Hockey Section to control its own affairs".

The Committee of the cricket club then resolved, as Freddie Monro describes, that in view of the wet state of the ground no more hockey was to be played there without the sanction of the Committee. Further, that the hockey section should cease to exist and that Hampstead Hockey Club "(late hockey section of the Cricket Club)" be allowed to wear the Cricket Club's present colours.

There followed the first general meeting of Hampstead Hockey Club on 12 April 1894 at the Eyre Arms. As Colin Greenhalgh commented, it would seem the Hockey Club was never formally constituted at that meeting, although it was hoped to play games at Elms Farm near Garden Lane in Acton.

Along with H R Lipscombe's appointment mentioned earlier, John Besch was appointed Honorary Treasurer and captain of the 2nd XI. He later chaired virtually all meetings of the Hockey Club until at least 1908, along with the Treasurer's responsibilities.

At the conclusion of a general meeting held on 6 July 1899 at 50 Canfield Gardens Hampstead, John Besch was given a vote of thanks "for his kindness in granting use of this room and for presiding". At that meeting, once again Besch had been appointed Vice President and Honorary Treasurer.

At a meeting of the Committee also held at Canfield Gardens on 5 November 1899, John Besch submitted a design for "a blue cap and badge that was adopted as part of the club uniform".

THE HAMPSTEAD HOCKEY CLUB.		1899-1900.	
TREASURER'S ACCOUNT.			
RECEIPTS.	£ s. d.	EXPENDITURE.	£ s. d.
Balance from 1898-1899	16 4 10	Rent of Ground	19 0 0
Fifty Hill Members at 6s. 6d.	57 10 0	Hockey Association	1 1 0
Donation (E. Brockle Hoare, Esq., M.P.)	0 10 6	Middlesex County Association	0 10 5
Four Members (half-season)	2 2 0	Printing	7 7 0
Eight Honorary Members at 5s.	40 0 0	Travelling and Stationery	3 5 1
Donations for Hockey War Fund	0 18 0	Telegrams, Messengers, &c.	3 5 11
		Painting Hockey Balls	1 1 8
		Washing	1 8 9
		Ground Boy (27 days at 2s. 6d.)	3 7 5
		Visitors' Teas	3 7 5
		Brics and Combs	0 11 7
		Sponges	0 12 3
		Present to Club	1 0 0
		Present to C. Boot	0 16 0
		Expenses at Oxford, Lechliffe, & Stranmore	0 9 11
		Lancers	0 8 0
		Donation to Hockey War Fund (see contra)	0 4 0
		Balance in hand	24 2 11
	<u>£74 5 4</u>		<u>£74 5 4</u>

J. G. Q. BESCH, *Hon. Treasurer.*

Examined and found correct,
 J. C. TOLLER,
 ALFRED B. OSMOND, *Hon. Auditors.*

Mr Besch made a formal request to be relieved of his responsibilities as Vice President at the Annual General Meeting held at the Constitutional Club in Hampstead on 7 September 1907 and Herbert Hayman was elected to take his place, Mr Besch retaining his post as Treasurer.

This latter responsibility continued until the Annual General Meeting held on 22 September 1908, when he was once again acting as Chairman. At that meeting the balance sheet was discussed and with reference to the item of £18-18 for unpaid subscriptions, it was decided to write off the amount in three cases and "to write strongly to the other members whose subscriptions still remained unpaid", which amply illustrates that similar problems that recur today are far from novel.

It was then proposed that in future the item "for a brake at Cambridge" should be paid for by the team playing there instead of by the club. "This was lost by 7 votes to 6". However, a proposal that no item for "tour expenses" should come from the club funds was carried.

John Besch was once again appointed a Vice President for the 1908-9 season at that meeting, along with Herbert Hayman. The Minutes then record that:

Mr Besch resigned the treasurership [sic] having served in that capacity ever since the beginning of the club, a period of 17 years. In recognition of his invaluable services, the club presented him with a pair of silver candlesticks with a suitable inscription. After some eulogistical remarks by Mr McMillin, Mr Orr presented Mr Besch with the aforementioned token of the club's esteem and gratitude for his many past services. Mr Besch expressed his thanks in eloquent words indicative of his deep gratification

The Fixture Card still records John Besch as a Vice President for the 1911-12 season, despite being referred to as C Q Besch, still in that post alongside Herbert Hayman.

The Annual General Meeting of 1912 was convened on 7 September 1912 at the Constitutional Club in Hampstead "after the club's cricket match against Hampstead Cricket Club which ended in a draw". Stanley Shoveller acted as chairman. It appears that John Besch had now decided to relinquish his Vice Presidency of the club. He was not proposed and the sole Vice President appointed was Herbert Hayman, who stood down himself in 1913. He was then to be replaced by the former 1st XI goalkeeper of stature, Richard (R A) Hill¹.

As a cricketer, John Besch had first appeared in the averages of Hampstead Cricket Club in 1885 and is mentioned by Freddie Monro for many years making "a great many runs and [being] an immense help to the Club as an official".

This was the year in which the renowned Andrew Stoddart joined the Cricket Club renowned for his immense innings for Hampstead in 1886 against the Stoics, in which John Besch also played.

In that match, played on 4 August 1885, John Besch, another apparently nicknamed "Daddy", came in at number three and scored 98, having taken the score from 28-1 to 242-2.

HAMPSTEAD	
A E Stoddart c Kelly b Renny	485
W R M Marshall b Oscar	6
J G Q Besche ² c Lavender b Fleming	98
H Smith-Turberville b Kelly	5
E Swift c Kelly b Carter	92
F A K Doyle c & b Carter	27
P Dollar c Lavender b Renny	38
H G Rooth c Carter b Kelly	1
T Stewart not out	0
E A Dwyer absent	0
Extras (b50 lb 6 w 1)	57
TOTAL	813

¹ who sadly was amongst the six members of the club killed in World War 1

² so recorded in the scorebook

He is also mentioned as an opener with Andrew Stoddart in the game against Surbiton on 25 July 1891. This is noted particularly by Freddie Monro as an example of days on which Hampstead Cricket Club occasionally went down “even when their stars were playing for them”.

The Hampstead team included Stoddart, Hale, Thornton and Pawling, as well as the renowned Australian test bowler, Fred Spofforth (who had emigrated to England).

Of the others, he mentions that “Besch, Robertson, Danby and Russell Parker were amongst the best cricketers in the Club”. Surbiton reportedly also had a strong side at that time. Surbiton scored 159, with Spofforth taking eight of the wickets but in reply Hampstead could only muster 71, with Stoddart scoring 15 and Besch 13, all ten wickets being shared by A R Holdship and Surbiton’s opening batsman, E C Mordaunt.

SURBITON	
E C Mordaunt b Spofforth	36
E B Windeker b Spofforth	0
C A Trouncer b Spofforth	1
A R Holdship c Robertson b Spofforth	56
P Castle b Spofforth	34
A J Hill c & b Parker	0
R W Pochin b Thornton	5
E Castle b Spofforth	0
C H Windeler c Hale b Spofforth	8
H M Trouncer not out	3
R A E Beavan b Spofforth	3
Extras	8
TOTAL	159

HAMPSTEAD	
A E Stoddart c Hill b Holdship	15
J G Q Besch c H Trouncer b Mordaunt	13
A C Robertson c Holdship b Mordaunt	0
W T C H Danby c Mordaunt b Holdship	8
F R Spofforth c Hill b Mordaunt	6
W S Hale c Holdship b Mordaunt	4
G Thornton b Mordaunt	0
A Russell Parker c Castle b Mordaunt	1
G L Jeffery c Mordaunt b Holdship	14
W A Pethick c Beavan b Holdship	4
S S Pawling not out	0
Extras	6
TOTAL	71