

Jeremy Potter

Ronald Jeremy Potter was born on 25 April 1922 and attended Clifton College and then Queen's College, Oxford. He was an Intelligence Officer in India in World War Two. He was a prolific games player and started playing hockey when aged nine. He was prominent in cricket, racquet, squash and lawn tennis at Clifton College.

He joined Hampstead in 1952 and was appointed as the hockey representative to the Management Committee at the Annual General Meeting on 17 April 1953. He later took over the captaincy of the 1st XI from Sandy Kay in the 1954-5 season, with Scottish international, Ian Hayward continuing as vice-captain. In the 1955/56 season the 1st XI had impressive results, winning 16, drawing 2 and losing 3 to Hounslow, London University and RMA Sandhurst, scoring 72 goals and conceding 23. (It also won the club's Barnard Cup in that season).



On tour at Folkestone in 1954, Jeremy Potter is the standing on the far right in this photograph

Jeremy Potter attributed the success of his side (**In Praise of Hockey** in the *Book of Hockey*, compiled by Patrick Rowley in 1964 and reproduced below) to the fact that the same players were keen enough to turn out regularly Saturday after Saturday, rather than to their star qualities.

R J Mallinson proved to be a high-scoring centre-forward who believed in hitting the ball at goal like a bullet the instant he was in the circle. On his right was Noel Cardoza, directing the attack “like the master he was” and outside him Peter Bell.

The backbone of the defence at centre-half was J N Bartlett who, said Potter, “did not miss a ball for five or six seasons”. Robin Mallinson, John Bartlett and Sandy Kay had been contemporaries

at Oxford University, at a time when Sir John Masterman did his old club a great service by encouraging players from Oxford to help in its re-building.

In 1956, Jeremy Potter again captained the side that won 12, drew 4 and lost 6, scoring 78 and conceding 47. On 10 November 1956, Hampstead beat Royal Artillery 3-2 at Cricklewood and the match was reported in the *Daily Telegraph*. Having taken the lead through Mallinson, who scored two goals in the first five minutes, the visitors grew more accustomed to the steep slope of the Cricklewood pitch and its uneven surface and managed to pull one back through Burnett. Cardoza and Bell then combined to let the latter in to score Hampstead's third. Burnett scored a second for Royal Artillery and according to the report, "would have equalised soon after had Potter on the line not saved splendidly a vicious shot from a short corner."

At the Club's Annual Dinner held on 15 March 1956 at Lord's Tavern (with 70 members and guests present) Jeremy Potter proposed the toast to the visitors and announced that the club had decided to move next season to Boston Manor Playing Fields. There was reported to be an excellent playing surface and, although conditions were not ideal, they were quite adequate and a local public house would become the club's headquarters "in order that the traditional hospitality to visiting teams could be maintained."

Later that season Jeremy Potter was selected for Middlesex A. At that time, the Hampstead team had a considerable hockey pedigree:-

Goal: C L Vye (Great Britain, England B, Oxford University, South and Middlesex)

Right Back: P C Kay (South, Buckinghamshire)

Left back: R J Potter (Middlesex A)

Right Half: M J Pailthorpe (West, Dorset, Oxford University)

Centre Half: J H Bartlett (Sussex, South triallist)

Left Half: R A Downard (Wales, Middlesex)

Outside Right: P D Bell (Buckinghamshire)

Inside Right: N Cardoza (Middlesex)

Centre Forward: R J C Mallinson (Oxford University, Middlesex)

Inside Left: J F Deegan (RAF Combined Services, Middlesex)

Outside Left: I A C Hayward (Scotland, Cambridge University. Kent)

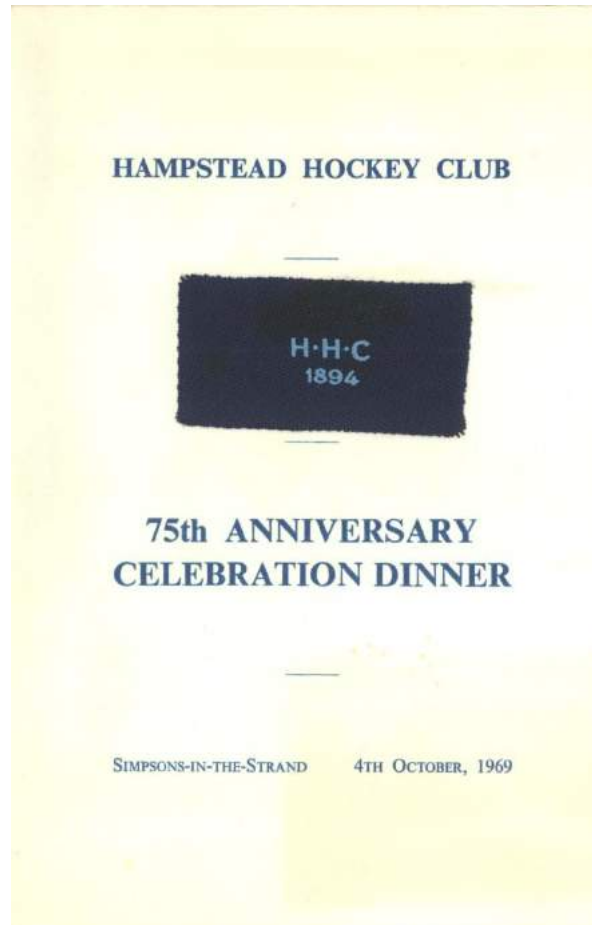
As Colin Greenhalgh pointed out in his *Short History of Hampstead Hockey Club 1894 – 1969*, the 1st XI at full strength contained five internationals –past, present and future – and only one (Jeremy Potter) who was not a full county player (and he played for Middlesex 'A' in the heyday of that county's strength).

In 1957, Sandy Kay took over the captaincy of the 1st XI. Dick Downard, who had been selected for Wales, was appointed vice captain.

At the club's Annual General Meeting at the RNVR Club on 1 April 1966, Jeremy Potter accepted a nomination and was appointed the club's President and held that post for the usual three seasons until 1969, when, once again, he was succeeded by Sandy Kay. He chaired the Annual Club Dinner at the City Pride on 15 December 1967 and at the Talbot Restaurant on 23 December 1968, proposing the toasts to the guests.

A Dinner was held on 16 May 1969 to commemorate the club's 75th anniversary at The Olde Swan Hotel in Thames Ditton, at which he presided as Past President.

On the celebration of the club's 75th anniversary, Jeremy Potter appeared for the President's XI in a match against the club's 2nd XI held at Hornsey on 4 October 1969 that was won 1-0, playing at full-back along with Sandy Kay and several others from the 1st XI during his earlier captaincy. He also then proposed the toast to the guests at the 75th Anniversary Celebration Dinner held at Simpsons-in-the-Strand later that evening. He was later appointed a club Vice President.



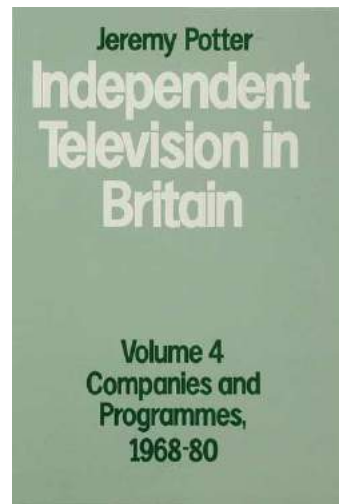
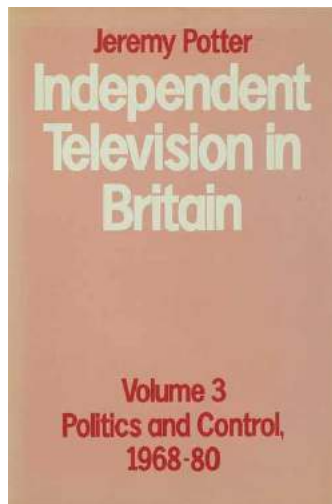
Jeremy Potter was also renowned as a publisher, novelist, historian and businessman. He was successively manager, managing director and deputy chairman of the *New Statesman* from 1951 until 1969. He worked with its chairman, Jock Campbell and is said to have had a tight rein on the business aspects of the magazine. Following the appointment of John Freeman as editor in 1961, and his succession in 1965 by Paul Johnson, Jeremy Potter raised the circulation of the *New Statesman* to 94,000.

However, surprising a few in the industry, he then left in 1970 to become managing director of Independent Television Publications, publishers of *TV Times*. Under his direction it became the most successful mass-market magazine in British publishing history. It sold 11 million copies of its annual Christmas issue. He became the President of the Periodical Publisher's Association in 1978-79.

During this time he was strategist and editor of ITV's submission to the 1974 Annan Committee that succeeded in preserving the regional identity of the ITV network, having made what was regarded by his peers as an important contribution to the structure and development of British broadcasting.

His skills as an editor, strategist and draftsman led him to be re-united with John Freeman at London Weekend Television in 1979. He was director of corporate affairs, with special responsibility for overseeing and co-ordinating LWT's successful franchise application in 1980. He chaired several of the group's subsidiary companies.

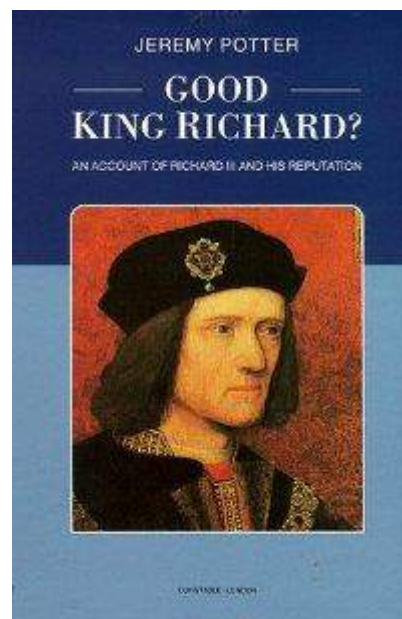
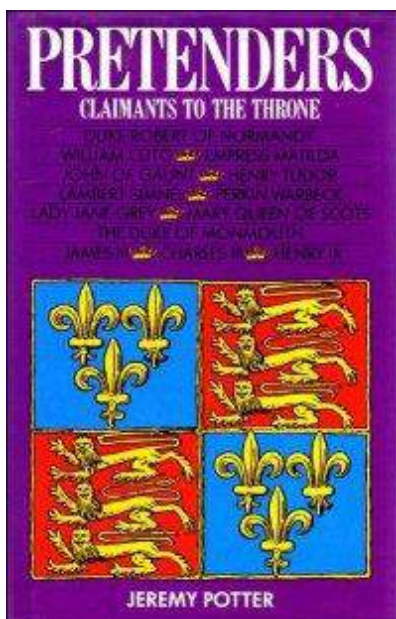
He retired in 1988 and wrote the third and fourth volumes of *The History of Independent Television in Britain*. Modestly, he suggested that his was "a view of ITV not from the stage, or the auditorium, but from the wings."



His attraction and devotion to history and, to him, the need to seek the truth, made him an authority on Richard III. He served the Richard III Society as Chairman from 1971-1989. During his chairmanship, the Society launched several significant initiatives, including the commissioning of a heroic statue of Richard III (on display in Castle Gardens, Leicester), the securing of royal patronage from HRH Richard, Duke of Gloucester, and the Channel Four broadcast of *The Trial of Richard III*, with Lord Elwyn-Jones, the former Lord Chancellor, presiding, in which he was principal defence witness.

During his tenure, the Society also became active in sponsoring the publication of fifteenth-century source documents and works of current scholarship on the period. It also created the Richard III and Yorkist History Trust, which provides financial support for graduate study and publishing. Jeremy Potter was elected President of the Society at its Annual General Meeting in London on 4 October 1997, sadly very shortly before his death on 15 November 1997.

He wrote *Good King Richard?* in 1985 and *Pretenders* in 1986.

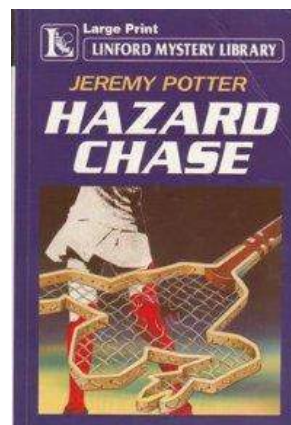


As well as being a prolific writer, Jeremy Potter wrote ten novels. One was set in the context of hockey, entitled *Foul Play*, a crime novel “with a hockey background, an entertaining *whodunit* about foul people, behaving foully”.

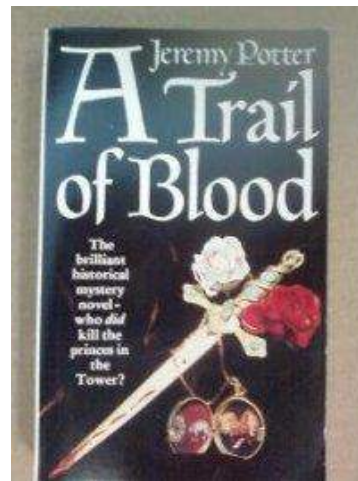
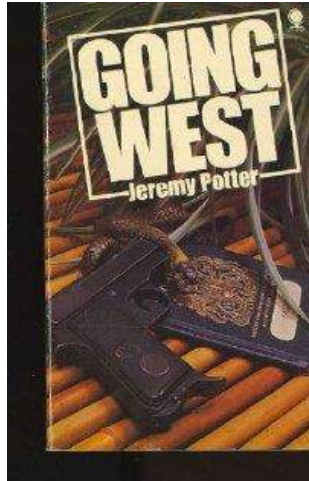
It recounts the members of the Old Soaks Hockey Club, who enjoyed the worst of reputations, being “foul in word and in deed”. The disappearance of his friend Johnnie leads to David joining the club. He spends a sporting weekend at a French seaside resort with the team and its seductive (and seducing) camp-followers, Bunty, the delectable, Freda, the sexpot and Christabel, the nympho. As the members’ murky activities multiply, sudden death begins to work its way through the club. Accident? Suicide? Murder? While the action moves from Bristol to London to Normandy and back again, the deaths accumulate and David decides that Detective Inspector Hiscock is unlikely to uncover the truth without assistance.



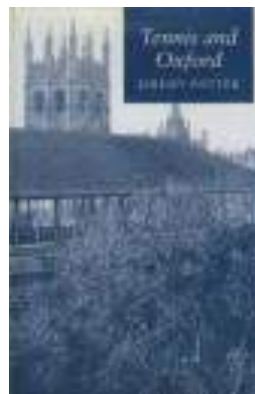
He wrote two other crime novels, *Death in Office* and *Hazard Chase*.



Other books include *Dance of Death* (1968), *Going West* (1972), *Disgrace and Favour* (1975), *Death in the Forest* (1977) *A Trail of Blood* (1985), *The Primrose Hill Murder* (1992) and *The Mystery of the Campden Wonder* (1995).



He also wrote *Tennis and Oxford* (1994), a historical work derived from his attraction to tennis and to a greater extent his passion for real tennis.



He remained fit and sufficiently agile to win the World Amateur Real Tennis Veteran Championship in singles and doubles in 1986 and 1987. He never lost touch with hockey either and when aged 74, captained a Veterans' tour to South Africa, his final such venture.

He also conducted book review: the following has a clear hockey connection, written for *Sport & Recreation* in April 1967, two years prior to the formation of the London League.

HOCKEY COACHING

(HODDER AND STOUGHTON 30s Postage 1s 7d)

Hockey in Britain is wholly amateur. There are no professionals and shamateurs. No one puts fivers in our boots after we have scored a goal and there are precious few in the coffers of the British Hockey Board. The game attracts little public interest and (except when the women play at Wembley) few spectators. With no league hockey, competitive play is minimal. On the field, science, fitness and the will to win will take second place to bursts of enthusiasm and bouts of rustic bashing. It must be confessed, in fact, that all over the country thousands of men and women boys and girls play hockey for nothing more than the sheer fun of it. And where, in these grim times will that get us at the next Olympics?

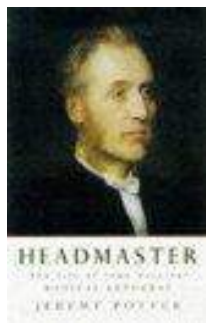
With Mexico (and our failure at Tokyo) in mind the Hockey Association has been taking steps towards a wider appreciation of the game and a higher standard of play. It has arranged a Pre-Olympic

London Tournament next October, when the World's leading national teams will be performing at Lord's and the Oval and it has sponsored a publication of this official manual.

Running to 368 pages, Hockey Coaching is comprehensive, well produced and neatly laid out (with plenty of illustrations and diagrams). There are chapters covering basic concepts and skills and defence, essential tactics, captaincy, coaches and coaching, training games fitness and equipment. The usual drawback to such annuals is that they are written by various hands, whose basic skills are not literary. But except for one or two uncalled for glimpses of the obvious ("the wing half must ensure that he does not infringe the rules") the anonymous but extremely distinguished contributors to Hockey Coaching emerge with very high marks indeed for sound and clear exposition – perhaps because some of them are schoolmasters. Coaches apart, every player in the country would profit from a good browse here (Aspects of the Rules enlightened me, for instance, on several points I had failed to grasp in thirty five years of play). Moreover, there is not, I believe, a better manual of its kind currently available anywhere in the world.

Whatever happens at Mexico, what about gold medals for Terry Podesta, Chairman of the HA Coaching Committee who has spent years on this enterprise and Roy Salisbury, who has made a brilliant job of the editing?

He also found time to write what was his last book, *Headmaster; The Life of John Percival, Radical Autocrat* that was published in 1998. This is a biography of the first headmaster of Clifton College, where he made his reputation as a great educator. In his 17 years at Clifton College numbers rose from 62 to 680. He accepted the Presidency of Trinity College, Oxford to recover from his exhaustive years at Clifton. It was from Trinity that he went to Rugby to become Headmaster of Rugby School before becoming the Bishop of Hereford.



In addition, Jeremy Potter was a vigilant defender of his local communities. In Hampstead, he campaigned for the preservation of the Heath, in Teddington for a youth club and in Oxford for the preservation of the Oxford Playhouse. Until shortly before his death, he was chairman of The Friends of Old Headington, seeking the preservation of the old village.

IN PRAISE OF HOCKEY

JEREMY POTTER

Hampstead Hockey Club, London

Hockey is a life sentence. Already, at forty-two, my kind of retirement is well behind me: from inside left to left back twelve years ago. My playing career to date extends across a third of a century, and I expect to keep going in a mild sort of way for another eighteen years, sliding gracefully down the elevens and employing less and less mobility and more and more guile.

How the rules, like us players, have changed for the worse! One of the happiest memories of my childhood is of hooking sticks. You flicked up your opponent's stick ever so delicately from behind, converting his epic swipe into a humiliating airshot, and then you stole the ball away while he was angrily unwinding. In those days, too, you stopped the ball with your feet proudly, without a twinge of conscience or peals of horror from the chap with the whistle. I can re-live a couple of dozen enthralling penalty bullies, mostly as a forward, gaining in tempo on the goalkeeper at every tap, some as a back putting on a sly *rallentando* performance. No Ichabod; the penalty bully has departed, replaced by a soccerish importation.

I have played hockey on grass and gravel, mud and sand, concrete and wood – even on that fiendish pitch at Dean Close, where wooden parapets prevent the ball from ever going out of play and you'll be lucky if you're allowed a half-time. For me there are no pitches like Indian pitches. There the ball travels fast and true, the tactics are a matter of the instant calculation of angles, and the Sikhs' feet are temptingly bare. There the game is played in the right temperature and at the right time of day – when the sun is nearly down, the tropical heat dying a slow death, and the second half cooler than the first. If only cricket's stranglehold on the grounds could be broken and we could have full seasons of summer hockey in England! Hockey in gym shoes in the sunshine; hockey on hard, dry pitches instead of in rain and slush and frost and fog.

Even as things are, no other activity has given me so much pleasure over quite so long a period as playing hockey. It attracts because it is a team game for individualists, and not a long-drawn-out one like cricket, or one steeped in professionalism, like soccer. Not for us hockey players the unbearable egocentricity of the lawn tennis addicts. Not for us, either, the bovine anonymity of second-row rucker forwards. We gather the ball, we bring it under control, we preen ourselves with a modest display of stickwork while finding an opening, and then – we pass. There is scope for the opportunism of a dashing wing or a weaving inside; a half may have a private duel marking his man out of the game; but when the crunch comes it is the forward line as a whole which scores and a dovetailing defence which keeps the ball out of the net.

Thus, the successful club is the one which turns out the same team week after week, not the one with the stars who twinkle in and out of the side. In one three-year stretch with the Hampstead Club, I didn't miss a single game, and the rest of the defence was almost as regular. Our combined endeavours became infinitely better than the sum of our individual merits, and in two of those three years I believe we were the only London club unbeaten by those thoroughly professional-thinking amateurs at Hounslow. We all went through our favourite private antics, but as an instinctive part of an intricate pattern which I find satisfying even in retrospect. In every emergency everyone sensed where everyone should be, and there, by a series of stunning coincidences, everyone usually was. Doubtless we would have been all the better for some hard work with a blackboard off-field but the joy of acting on individual impulse would have gone. As the enemy swept down the field we would somehow form and re-form in depth with (almost) military precision, but undrilled and uncommanded.

Hockey has its perils as well as pleasures. I am scarred on the cheek for life by a blow from the stick of a centre-forward from the other side of London (we dropped the fixture the next season, naturally). Usually, though, it is the centre-forward who suffers. There was one I used to play

inside who was an Anglo-Indian – a mixture of bloods which for some reason produces the best hockey players in the world. He rarely scored fewer than four goals a match, and each one with an effortless diffidence which made it all the more galling to those at the receiving end. One day the opposing goalkeeper became so infuriated as number six went in that he abandoned the ball for good and set about the man with his stick – not a smart tap on the ankle such as even respectable defenders unleash from time to time, but full-scale belabouring round the shoulders. That was an Army game, and it ended months after the final whistle in courts-martial and dishonour.

On quite another occasion my own goalkeeper, finding the opposing centre-forward providentially at his feet, proceeded to kick him gravely and systematically out of the circle. That was in Germany, and there was already some tension in the air owing to what the papers would call “amazing allegations” of body-checking against me and our centre-half, a player of unblemished character from the stockbroker belt in Surrey. (The point at issue was who is fouling whom when blond fliers from Hamburg tap the ball ahead and try to run through you and you simply stand). The goalkeeper incident was as a climax, therefore, and the umpire’s whistle sounded like a signal for World War 3. Our goalie stood impassively to attention while being harangued in broken English and at the end remained silent and unapologetic, leaving it to us to explain that the team’s only goalkeeper was at our hotel sweating out a fever under one of those huge feather mattresses, and this was an obliging fellow from Munich (where Hamburgers were unpopular?) who didn’t speak a word of English.

Now let me dogmatize and, breaking the golden rule for backs, commit myself. At the age of nine I was told that I would never be able to play hockey properly because I was left-handed. But as the seasons passed I discovered this to be what is politely known as the reverse of the truth. The greatest natural advantage in playing hockey is to be left-handed. On the reverse side this should be obvious, yet it’s astonishing how few opponents realise that one is left-handed, let alone the implications. At left back, for instance, I positively encourage inside rights to try to take the ball round my reverse side, and they never tag on.

But left-handedness goes further. If you are a left-handed cricketer, bowl left-handed by all means, throw in left-handed) though not at first from cover-point – keep it for the quick single to your left-hand side) but don’t bat left-handed. Leave that to right-handers who have enough sense. For if you play a two-handed shot from the right-hand side of your body at cricket or hockey or any other game, the right hand merely guides. What counts is the left wrist, and if you use your left hand for all the manual chores of life yours will be stronger and suppler than any right-hander’s.

The effect of left-handedness is one peculiarity of hockey; another is the variety of its manifestations. Because of differing atmospheres and attitudes, Saturday and Sunday hockey in Britain are virtually different games: staid Bromley men break out the very next day as Bandits; and Syphons and Tankards and Heathens, too, are specially reserved for the Sabbath. Women’s hockey, again, is a world apart, and according to my observation one Saturday at Wembley (in the company of 60,000 schoolgirls) a far, far cleaner one than men’s. Mixed hockey, on the other hand, occupies a dangerous half-world of its own: an unholy of extramural and intramural sports.

But, so far as memories are concerned, the heights of hockey are achieved in yet another manifestation; the festival. Here, Pink Elephants and Hairy Goats abound. Here, spectators actually appear on the touchlines. Festivals have taken me to The Hague, where I found that Holland wasn’t a flat country after all; to Guernsey, where I was expected to share a bed with a large centre-half; to Folkestone and Bournemouth and that unlucky venue the National Physical Laboratory; but above all to Le Touquet, the quintessence of festivals. Au Touquet, as they say one unlimbers in the scramble for free champagne at the Mayor’s reception, then follow the fierce encounters on the field with long-legged Dutchmen and short legged Belgians and afterwards there are nocturnal junketings at the Café des Sports and dark rumours of other

encounters in the tents among the pine-trees. One year, such is the fervour of festival hockey, we even transported our right-half across the Channel and safely back again without benefit of transport!

Hockey is not for watching (except by small boys who can fetch the balls). Hockey is not for making money out of. Nor is it really for writing about. Hockey is for playing.