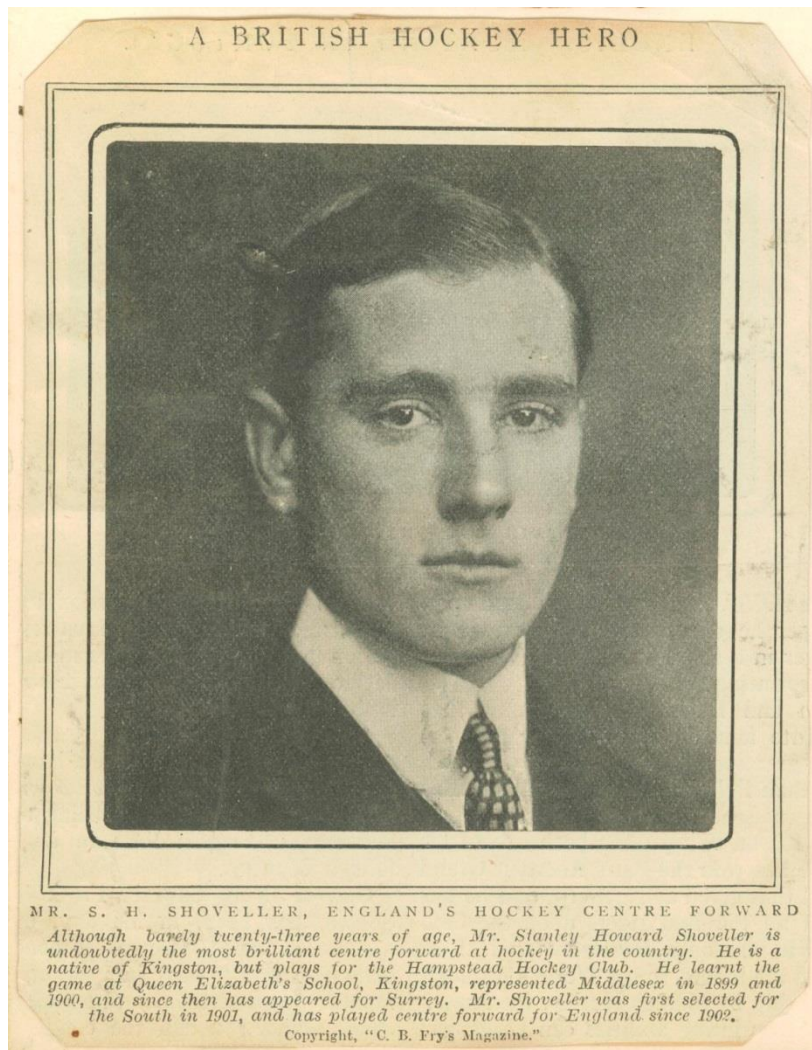


Stanley Howard Shoveller

(1881–1959)

The Prince of Centre Forwards



Stanley Shoveller was born at 1 Park Road Villas, Park Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey, on 2 September 1881, the second son in a family of three sons and one daughter.

He was admitted to Kingston Grammar School (then known as Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School) in January 1892, when hockey was being taken up as a school sport. Already distinguished in school athletics, he played as a forward for the school's hockey 1st XI aged only 14. He went on to play centre forward and captained a school team that regularly beat club sides from the London area. In his last school term, in November 1898, he scored eight of the goals in a 9–1 victory over club opponents.

On leaving school, he became a stockbroker's clerk and spent his working life at the London Stock Exchange, where he eventually became a stockbroker.

From September 1898 he played club hockey for Hampstead, of which he was captain from 1909. In 1899 he represented Middlesex but from 1901 played for Surrey. After

selection for the South against the Midlands, the Western Counties, and the North in 1901, he was selected for England against Wales at Kersal in March 1902.

He marked his international début with the *prettiest goal of the afternoon* according to the *Manchester Guardian* on 10 March 1902, dribbling single-handed from the half-way line before finishing. He was to make 37 international appearances over 19 years.

His international total would have been greater had his business commitments not prevented him from being always available for selection. In his early years as an international he formed an effective partnership with his Old Kingstonian contemporary, the inside-forward Gerald Logan (1879–1951), another who joined Hampstead.



Stanley Shoveller was a prolific goal-scorer at all levels of the game, scoring seven for England against Wales in 1906, and achieving 17 international hat-tricks.

Hockey was admitted to the London Olympic Games in 1908, though the fixtures at the White City were played at the end of October, two months after most of the events had been completed. Only two overseas nations (France and Germany) entered sides, so the four home nations competed separately to create a competition.

Shoveller played centre-forward in an England side that emerged as gold medallists after defeating France in the preliminary round, Scotland in the semi-final, and Ireland in the final.

The sport was omitted from the Stockholm Olympics in 1912, though as an alternative an international tournament was organized by the German Olympic Council at Hamburg in October 1912. The Hockey Association, of which Shoveller was honorary match secretary from 1906 to 1912, entered an England team. He scored four times in an 8–3 victory over Germany, and three times in a 10–0 defeat of Austria.



This photograph shows the England team that played France on 26 March 1910 at Auteuil near Paris, before 1,000 spectators. Stanley Shoveller is standing in the darker jacket in the centre.

Under immediate French pressure from the start, England's defence and midfield began to exert some control and won a short corner. Shoveller fielded the corner injection and made a clever opening that allowed Stafford to open the scoring. Just before half time, Shoveller collected a pass from Matthews to make it 0-2.

At the start of the second half, Shoveller pressed again and tested the French goalkeeper Salarnier, who cleared but only to England's Twigg, who picked up the ball out on the right wing and centred to Shoveller, who scored his second. France pulled a goal back quickly after the re-start and added a second through Bessan. Shoveller and Pridmore attacked again for England but France gained ascendancy, with two racing saves off his line by goalkeeper Powell. France forced three more corners but England counter attacked at great pace after the third, when Stafford made ground and passed to Pridmore, who scored for 2-4. France pulled one back when a shot cannoned off the England goalkeeper's foot.

England then took control of the game. Shoveller scored his third “cleverly, with one of his typical strokes with the stick reversed and the same player again tested Salarnier, who saved in excellent style”. Stafford later scored again, leading to a final score of 2-6

On the outbreak of the First World War, Shoveller joined the Rifle Brigade, was commissioned second lieutenant, and went to France in 1915 with the 7th battalion. Wounded at Hooge, Belgium, in July 1915, he returned to the front, was awarded the MC later in 1915, and promoted to lieutenant in December 1915. He was promoted to captain in 1917 and served through the remainder of the war, relinquishing his commission in July 1919.

Shoveller resumed hockey in the autumn of 1919 and captained the England side, representing Great Britain, which gained a gold medal at the 1920 Olympics in Antwerp. Only three other countries (Belgium, Denmark, and France) entered, and the tournament was organized on a league basis, held as in London after the main Olympic events had been completed.



Sixth from the left on the back row is Stanley Shoveller, to his right is C T A Wilkinson and to his left J H Bennett. The third from the right is C S W Marcon. All were representatives of Hampstead Hockey Club (although Marcon was to join later).

England decisively beat Belgium and Denmark, and when the French scratched the final fixture after a convivial dinner on the previous night, England were left as victors. He made his last international appearance in a match against Ireland on 12 March 1921 at Beckenham, attended by George V. The 1-1 draw proved a rare occasion when Shoveller, effectively marshalled by the Irish centre-half P. Murdock, failed to score in an international match.

He retired from regular club hockey in 1922, though occasionally appeared after that. In 1922 *Hockey World* commented, *the retirement of S H Shoveller this season, the most brilliant centre ever produced in hockey, is a big blow to the famous London club. No one has done more to bring the name of Hampstead right to the front rank. But time is no respecter of persons, and "Shove" has had to bow to the inevitable.*

He was a vice-president of the Hockey Association from 1921 until his death, and was an England selector in the 1930s.

Shoveller - or *Shove* as he was widely known in the game because others were uncertain how properly to pronounce his surname - dominated hockey over two decades. Likened to W. G. Grace, he was regarded as the supreme exponent of the sport. Contemporaries admired his stickwork, ball control, and bursts of pace, using his skill at dribbling—feinting to deceive opponents—and speed of movement and passing, to cut through packed defences. His trademark scoring finish was not a blasted shot, but a deft push, placed past the goalkeeper.

His name featured regularly in press reports of matches. For example in 1902 when Hampstead played Blackheath:-

Judging from the way the visitors pressed at the start it looked as though Hampstead would be well beaten, for they never crossed the centre line for the first ten minutes. Blackheath could not manage to score however and suddenly Shoveller broke away and scored practically the first time the centre line was crossed.

In a review of the Club in 1904, it was said,

It goes without saying that the bright particular star of the Hampstead team is S H Shoveller. Without him, the team are much in the same case as Sampson was when shorn of his locks. With Shoveller, Hampstead are always a formidable side, a team of dangerous potentialities. There is no more pleasing sight in hockey than one of those electric runs with which Shoveller delights his comrades and paralyses his opponents.

Combination and Shoveller are the main characteristics of the Hampstead team and more especially of the forwards who pivot around their centre, making him as it were, their objective. But there are days when Shoveller is so carefully marked down by his opponents that even his genius is stifled and then it is that the other forward have an opportunity of showing their individual abilities and resourcefulness.

Two years later, the *Evening Standard* included a column entitled the *Rise and Progress of the Hampstead Club*, in which it stated,

The want of a regular centre forward was always the principal cause of the Club's weakness and there can be no doubt that its rise to its present rank started with the advent of S H Shoveller to that position in 1899 whilst still a student at Queen Elizabeth's School, the nursery of so many brilliant players.

Shoveller's quick advance to County, Southern and international honours is testimony to his merit and it is not surprising that the club's continued success and increased scoring power earned for them the reputation of being a "one-man" side.

He was a prolific goal scorer, seen yet again in 1911 in the Wimbledon v Hampstead fixture:

From the bully off Hampstead pressed and although Wimbledon defended strongly, Shoveller succeeded in scoring two goals in quick succession and with Eastman (1) and Shoveller (3) scoring again, they led at the interval 0-6. The visitors pressed again on re-starting but could only score one more through Shoveller. The Hampstead team played magnificent hockey throughout and Shoveller was seen at his best.

It was rare for Stanley Shoveller to be outdone by an opposing defence but it happened sometimes. In 1908, Hampstead lost 2-1 to Southgate and in a report on 17 December 1908, *Hockey Illustrated* commented that it was *high testimony to the new formation that Southgate were able to overcome Hampstead with their great array of forward talent. Although they were a goal behind at the interval, they overplayed their opponents in the second half, and, with luck would have won by a larger margin than 2-1.* Southgate had adopted four half backs who proved a severe handicap to a forward line of stereotyped methods. *We do not hold a brief for the four half game. On the contrary, we believe the old and generally adopted formation the better; but we wish to emphasise that in hockey, as in all games, the end justifies the means, so long as the rules of the game are adhered to in letter and in spirit.*

Hampstead forwards, led by Shoveller, did not meet with more success; and, whilst they did not appear to give their best, the cause was greatly due to the tactics employed against them. Surely, this was a case in which the end justified the means. Hampstead were undoubtedly prevented from playing their proper game.



Stanley Shoveller regularly toured at Easter with Hampstead when they tended to send their best team.

HAMPSTEAD HOCKEY CLUB
EASTER TOUR, 1907-08

Hampstead Hockey Club had an Easter tour on the South Coast. On Good Friday they played the Leicester Regiment at Shorncliffe and beat them by four goals to one. S. H. Shoveller made a promising debut at right full back, and gave signs of being quite a sound defensive player. F. W. Orr and C. H. Eiloart scored twice each for the winners. On Saturday Hampstead beat Folkestone by five goals to two scored by S. H. Shoveller 3, G. E. Winter, and F. W. Orr.

On Easter Monday the tourists went to Dover and were defeated by the Garrison there by three goals to two after a close game, the Hampstead team, with the exception of R. A. Hill, playing below their usual form.

The Hampstead team was:—F. R. Eiloart, H. M. Tennent, S. H. Shoveller, G. E. Winter, H. Waterman, C. M. Carey, C. H. Eiloart, P. Collins, E. L. Marsden, J. Greig, and R. A. Hill.

On tour on Good Friday in 1908, however he was reported to have made a promising debut at right back and “gave signs of being quite a sound defensive player!”



In a team photograph from 1910, above, he sits in the centre of the front row, with fellow international, Jack Bennett, immediately to his right.

On his death, a fellow England international, the civil servant Sir Denys Stocks, recalled Stanley Shoveller as the 'apostle of orthodoxy' (*The Times*, 20 March 1959), whose impeccable style ensured that he had fewer 'off' days than most players. He added that it would not be disputed that Shoveller was the greatest centre forward the game had ever produced. *He was fast, with excellent ball control and had a first class shot at goal. In addition to this he had a most deceptive body swerve that made him difficult to mark. He was to me the ideal model for any aspirant to copy in that his style was impeccable and he was an apostle of orthodoxy.*

Another fellow international and member of Hampstead Hockey Club, Cyril Wilkinson commented that *Prince of Centre Forwards* was the title bestowed upon Stanley Shoveller and was acknowledged to have been fairly won by everyone who played with or against him.

He was not always able to get away from business when selected and his playing career was interrupted by the four years of World War One. But for these two factors, he would probably have won more than the 29 international caps he was awarded.

His most remarkable record was in connection with the Olympic Games. He was the only player to have won two gold medals and though it must be conceded that the foreign challenge was not so strong, it was remarkable that in 1920, twelve years after his first medal, including four years of war, he again represented Great Britain when approaching his 40th year.

He was a most deceptive player to watch. He did not appear to be fast or to have remarkable stickwork or a devastating shot. But he was desperately quick off the mark, had wonderful control of the ball, without any flashy display of stickwork, took the ball away from and past a tackler with a body swerve and no obstruction and shot hard and accurately when necessary.

His favourite and most effective method was, however, to bring the ball up to the left side of the goal and to score with a flick shot that no goalkeeper seemed able to stop.

In all the years that Cyril Wilkinson played with him, he regarded him as a splendidly fair and sporting player and could not remember an occasion in which he was involved in any incident or unpleasantness. With all this, he was the most modest and unassuming of men.

Another member of Hampstead Hockey Club, Toby Orr added that he *was ambidextrous and as a centre forward unparalleled and most unselfish. Just to give one example of his prowess in a match against Surbiton he stopped the ball from a short corner and scored a goal defeating five opponents.*

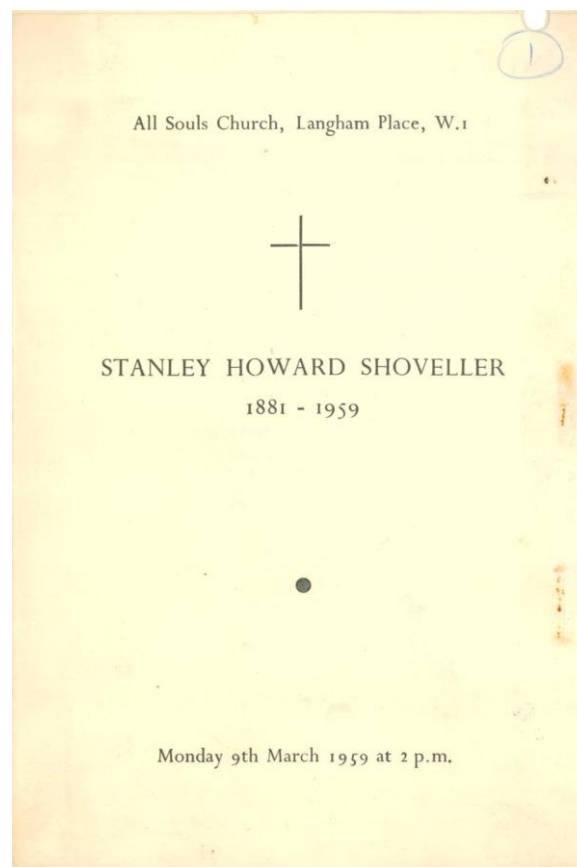
In retirement, Shoveller wrote extensively on the sport and its techniques, compiling with Marjorie Pollard, a leading exponent of the women's game, a handbook, *Hockey* (1936). In that and other works he set out his ideas on forward play and the importance of the centre-forward in linking the forward line, feeding short passes to the inside-forwards, or opening up defences by unexpected long diagonal forward passes to the wings.

Fellow players acknowledged Shoveller's modesty and charm, and his upright sportsmanship. Most of all he was admired as the embodiment of a sport which represented itself, in the years immediately preceding and after the First World War, as upholding the purest forms of amateurism.

It was celebrated as a skilful game that could be played by men well into their thirties and after, free from any of the undesirable trappings of mass spectator sport. No one in England played the game for money, and the Hockey Association opposed playing for cups or medals. The league format and medals awarded at the Olympic Games were therefore a source of unease.

The Hockey Association did not affiliate to the Fédération Internationale de Hockey, founded in 1924, membership of which was a condition of participation when hockey re-entered the Olympic programme in 1928. There were no further British hockey teams at the Olympics until 1948.

Shoveller married Vera Mary (1888–1972) on 2 February 1938, the only daughter of Sir Henry Smith, who had owned a large textile warehouse in the City of London. There were no children. He retired from the Stock Exchange in 1939. In 1947 he moved to Broadstone, Dorset, where he died at his home, White Barn, Dunyeats Road, on 24 February 1959. A memorial service was held at All Souls, Langham Place, London.



Take him for all in all, we shall not look upon his like again.