

## A B Osmond

Alfred Bartrum Osmond first played for Hampstead Cricket Club in 1892 in the balmy playing days (so described in *Hockey World*) of F R Spofforth, A E Stoddart, G McGregor, Dr Thornton, W R Moon and H B Hayman.

He was top of the bowling averages that season, beating stalwart Spofforth, although taking fewer wickets. He generated considerable pace off the pitch, which he was able to sustain for long periods. Freddie Monro, the historian of Hampstead Cricket Club, regarded him as a “really good club fast bowler”. Others thought he was erratic.

He was born in 1866 in South Stoneham, on the outskirts of Southampton. There is one recorded match in which he played for Hampstead on 11 May 1892. The opponents were Kensington Park and the one-day game, with five ball overs, was played on Wormwood Scrubs. It was recorded as a draw, although Hampstead were clearly in the lead after first innings.

Hampstead scored 284, of which Stoddart contributed 132. Kensington Park were all out for 86, with Osmond taking three wickets. Stoddart took three. In their second innings (perhaps following on) they were 34-5 when play ended. Osmond this time opened the bowling and again took three wickets. Detailed bowling analyses are not available.

For Hampstead Cricket Club in 1902, there was what Freddie Monro described as “a somewhat curious match”. The opposition was old rival, South Hampstead, who always selected a strong side. Hampstead scored 170-6 declared. The local newspaper reported that the start of the South Hampstead innings was “sensational”. Osmond and Monro had opened the bowling and were said to be unplayable. The innings ended in 30 minutes, during which seven wickets had fallen for 19 runs.

Numbers 8 to 11 of the batting line-up could not be found when their turn to bat arrived. They had apparently left the ground and were unaware of the rapid fall of wickets.

Osmond’s bowling analysis was 8.3-2-16-6. Freddie Monro only conceded one run, with 8-7-1-1. He attributed his concession of only one run to a wish on the part of the batsmen to avoid facing Osmond (so hostile was his bowling), so not risking a single to take the strike at the end of the over.

A rugby injury had led Osmond to playing hockey with Hampstead Hockey Club. He was introduced by his Hampstead cricketing friends, who, he said, used to practice on the cricket ground in late August and early September. He was elected as a member of the Hockey Club on 8 December 1896. He became a Committee member on 2 June 1897 that he continued until the 1902 season.

He regarded Hampstead Hockey Club in 1896 as a “somewhat poor side” (only two years since formation, it ought to be said) and “had to crawl on their knees to obtain fixtures with clubs such as Wimbledon, Surbiton, Bromley etc”. He was known for his somewhat florid language in his later days as a contributor to periodicals such as *Hockey World*.

He was very much in the role of sketch writer when contributing to *Hockey World*, as the following extract from the edition of 27 March 1925 demonstrates.

## *SOME MEMORIES*

A B Osmond

### ***Bromley's Balmy Days***

I recollect beginning rather to fancy myself and coming a cropper against the Bromley team, then at the zenith of their fame. The team then, I think, contained three Earnshaws, two Solbes, Hose and Lovell and the evergreen L S Wells (who still plays for Bromley IV). The half back lines were far too much for me and others of our side and we received a great hiding. My acquaintance on the field of the Bromley stalwarts, the Westrays, M Barker, Hincks Clapham, How, Beaven etc. had such an effect on me and more particularly my skipper that once more I descended to the second team, where I played until a broken ligament in my knee sustained at cricket forced me to abandon hockey as a player.

### ***Starting as an Umpire***

However, I was persuaded to buy a whistle and tootle it to disadvantage (so I used to be told) of my own club. One needs a somewhat thick hide to take up umpiring, and I am afraid in my early days I was somewhat sensitive to criticism, and indulged in very heated arguments after the match. We had a goalkeeper, a very good friend of mine, who had a nasty irritating habit of repeatedly tapping the goal post with his stick when he imagined an opponent was "offside" and if I did, by chance, agree with him and penalise the offender, he used to say, very audibly, "Oh! he saw this time". Another "pal", then the captain, used to remark, again very audibly, "He never kicks" (incidentally a kick is often extremely difficult to see). These remarks and others like them were, I suppose, all for my good, but it took a certain amount of W and S [whiskey & soda] to square the after the match.

### ***Watch Him!***

I well remember the first time I came across a "pukka" member of the SCHUA before I joined that body. I was in the dressing room before the game started, when a funny little man came in and said, "Is this the Hampstead dressing room?" On being answered in the affirmative, he explained that he has been sent down by the Association to represent our opponents; took off and hung up a funny short overcoat and proceeded outside. Our captain turned to me and said, "You might go out and watch that fellow, there are a lot of pavilion robberies taking place just now!" Another libel on our useful Association!

### ***Discovering Shoveller***

At a committee meeting one night the captain of our second team was severely "chaffed" at his team (which he considered to be as good as the first) being beaten by Kingston Grammar School by 12 goals to five. He grew somewhat heated, and made a bet that if the first team beat him, their half back line which included a South and two county players that in the return match a fortnight later, the School would again score double figures. He won his bet; the result of it was I think, 14-3 and as that captain said – an old rough warrior back, "there are two boys, a fair-haired centre-forward and a brown-eyed inside-right, who twist and turn, dodge round you, run between your legs and shoot like a gatling gun." Those boys were Gerald Logan, then centre-forward and S H Shoveller, both, as is well known, destined to become famous and be capped for England shortly afterwards, and who made the Hampstead Club more or less famous.

### ***Pioneers of Reverse Stick Play***

They were, I think, the pioneer of the modern style of forward play. Shortly after *Shove* left school and joined us, he was stationed at Richmond and could only get away to play in matches in that neighbourhood. The consequence was that he played for our second team almost as often as he did for the first. What a record the second had that year! They were quite a useful second without *Shove* but I believe they scored over 300 goals that season. [311, we believe, *Ed*]

### ***Shove's missed train***

I shall not forget the first inter-divisional match I umpired. It was at Bournville in 1911 and one or two incidents are still fresh in my memory. To begin with, *Shove*, who had taken all the tickets for the Southern players and officials, missed the train. When we arrived at Birmingham we had great difficulty in convincing the railway officials that we hadn't been trying to "bilk" the company. However, the situation was saved by the arrival of the Midland HA officials and poor Pridmore convinced the station master that we were really respectable citizens. *Shove* arrived about five minutes before half-time, when the Midlands were leading by a goal, which led them to the finish, and on reaching the pavilion, dear old Philip Collins told me I had given 10 seconds short! He had "clocked me" with a stop watch! In which time the South might have equalised! Perhaps?

### ***Looking for Whisky***

After the game everyone was "baked" through the heavy ground which had been under water for the two previous days, owing to abnormal heavy rains. The players tried every sort of bottle in the Pavilion in the hope of finding a "pick me up" but all to no purpose, and I was requested to "forage" for a bottle of whisky. But, alas, our hopes were again dashed to the ground, Bournville being a *Pussyfoot* village, so there was nothing doing.

As a hockey player, he thought that a considerable degree of taking and appealing took place during games. When he was promoted to the Hampstead 1<sup>st</sup> XI after a few games with the 2<sup>nd</sup> XI, he was reprimanded by the captain for talking too much. He offered his opinion that a "well-oiled jaw" was the qualification for a first team player. He was then pushed back down to the 2<sup>nd</sup> XI but "after a fortnight, was once more pushed *up* and then played for the first team for some two to three seasons".

He is thought to have played in every position on the pitch other than as goalkeeper, which, he was convinced, called for a different temperament.

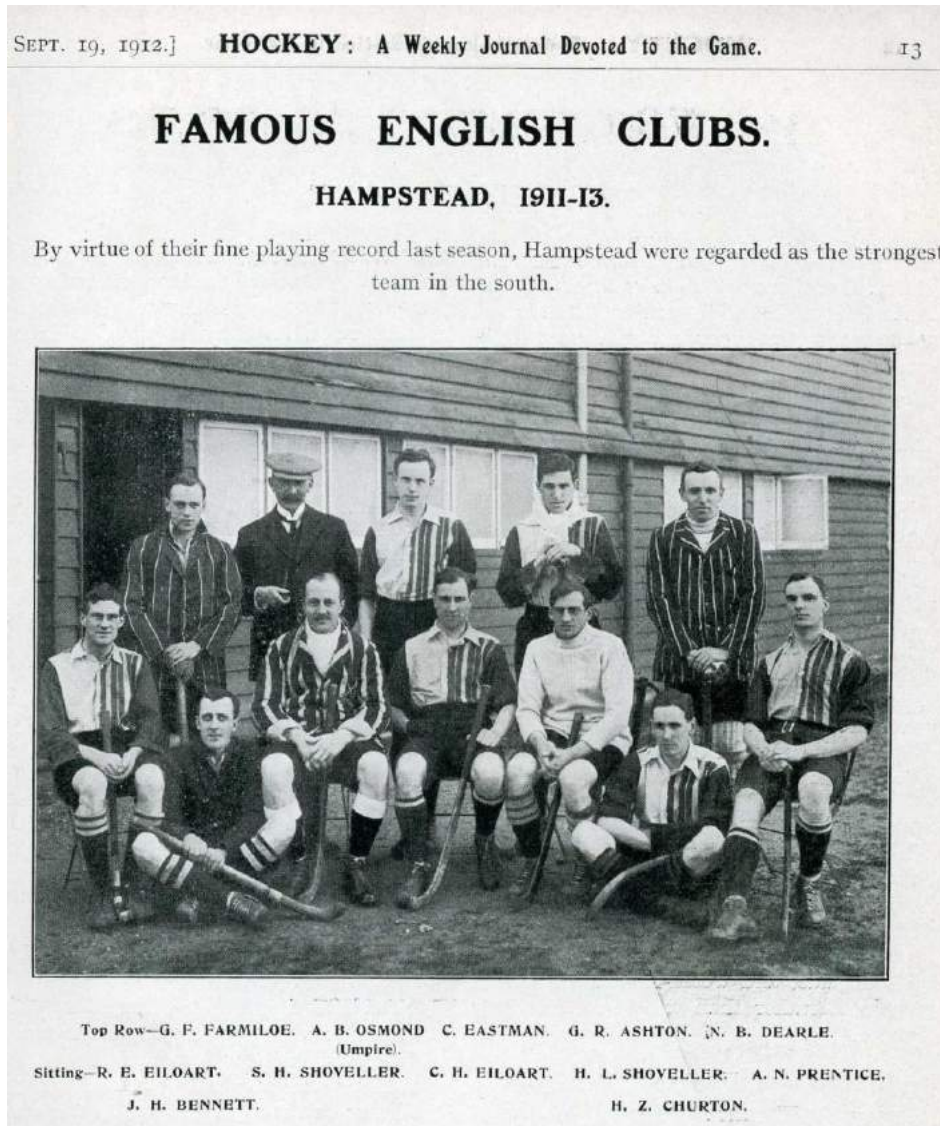
At the end of his playing career, he turned to hockey umpiring. *Hockey World* suggested that it may have been a case of Osmond becoming tired of his club or the club becoming tired of him. He later officiated in internationals in Germany, France and Belgium as well as divisional games in England and the Oxford University v Cambridge University and Army v Navy fixtures.

He also contributed to the literary side of hockey, including *Hockey for Men & Women* and books written by S H Shoveller and H E Haslam, in the Royal Navy Sports handbook, as well as contributions to *Hockey World*, predominantly on umpiring matters.

He was the author of *Playing Field Diagrams* recurring weekly and lectured to Army and Navy embryo umpires (as he described them) at Aldershot on "How to apply the Laws of the Game".

He became a member of the Southern Counties' Umpires' Hockey Association (*sic*), the Southern Counties Hockey Association and the Hockey Association Council. He encouraged players "past their prime to hand playing duties to youth" and to take up umpiring instead.

In this photograph of the 1<sup>st</sup> XI from 1912, he stands out on the back row in his cap.



He was well-regarded in both clubs on the entertainment side. In 1901 a musical evening was convened by the Cricket Club at the Conservatoire in Eton Avenue as fund raising event. Albert Osmond's "spirited rendition" of *Faugh-a-Ballagh* was particularly well-received.

In his private life, he ran a poultry farm in Wilmington, Kent, prompting teasing by the editor of *Hockey World* over his distinguishing fowls and fouls.