

Sholto Marcon

Sholto Marcon is frequently credited as one of four Hampstead players to have played in Great Britain's (or England's) gold medal winning team in the 1920 Olympic Games in Antwerp. That he played is beyond doubt but he actually joined Hampstead after the tournament. His application to join beforehand had rather mysteriously (at least to a modern eye) been rejected, as it was felt that he could not guarantee to play regularly enough. He nonetheless gained sufficient accolades to be associated predominantly as a Hampstead man.



C S W Marcon is standing third from the right. Stanley Shoveller stands sixth from the left on the back row: to his right is C T A Wilkinson and to his left J H Bennett.

Charles Sholto Wyndham Marcon was born on 31 March 1890 in Headington, Oxford. He was the son of Charles Adby Marcon, a curate in the Church of England, who became well-known for the re-naming in 1891 of Marcon Hall in Oxford University, one of the permanent private halls of the University, when he succeeded W H Charsley as Master. Charles Marcon was also known as a pioneer of hockey at the University.

Sholto Marcon was educated at Lancing. He played 1st XI cricket there in 1907 and 1908. There is a record of the game between Lancing College and Eastbourne College on 6 June 1907 and against Hurstpierpont College on 24 June 1907. In 1908, his participation in three matches is recorded, against St John's School, Leatherhead on 6 June 1908, against Eastbourne College on 13 June 1908 and Brighton College on 11 July 1908.

He went on to Oriel College at Oxford, where he won hockey blues for four consecutive years, from 1910. In his final year he captained the team.

After University, he moved to the north of England and played for Oxton. He represented Cheshire and the North.

As hockey was not selected as an Olympic sport in the 1912 games convened in Stockholm, he played for England in the 1912 Hamburg tournament. The German Olympic Council organised the tournament and the Hockey Association, of which Hampstead's Stanley Shoveller was Honorary Secretary from 1906-1912, entered an England team. The tournament was considered to be an adequate substitute for the Olympic Games. Shoveller scored four times in the 8-3 victory over Germany and a hat trick against Austria, in which Marcon outscored him, with five goals, in a 10-0 defeat.

On the outbreak of war in 1914, Marcon was commissioned into the 4th Regiment of the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, as a second lieutenant.

He features in *The Story of the 2/4th Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry*, a diary account written by Captain G. K. Rose KC (published in, 1920).

It is morning of 22 February, 1917. Colonel Bellamy and his four company commanders are setting out to reconnoitre the new front line. Guides are to meet us at Deniécourt Château, a heap of chalk slabs and old bricks, beneath which are Brigade Headquarters. To reach this rendez-vous_ we pass through Foucaucourt and then along a corduroy road through Deniécourt Wood to the village of that name.. Dismal surroundings on a dismal morning, for the frost has relented for several days and already sides of trenches are collapsing (flop go the chunks into the water!) and on top the ground is loading one's boots at every step.

We change into gumboots in an old cellar and our journey commences. See the Colonel, Cuthbert, Marcon, Brown, Stockton, Robinson and myself lead off down a communication trench behind a guide, pledged to take us to the Berks Headquarters. The going is desperate – water up to our knees; however, each hundred yards brings our goal nearer, and it can hardly be like this all the way.

We come to a trench junction, and our guide turns left-handed; presently another –the guide knows the way and again turns to the left. Confound the mud! If we do not get there soon we shall never be home for lunch ... but we do not get there soon. The guide, always protesting that he knows the way, has led us in a circle and here we are whence we started an hour ago!

After such well-meaning mockery of our efforts, a route 'over the top' is tried. Soon we are outside Battalion Headquarters of the Berks. Whilst we are there, German gas shelling starts—a few rounds of phosgene—and helmets require to be adjusted. It is not everybody's helmet that fits, this being the first real occasion on which some officers have worn them. There is some laughing to see the strictest censor of a gas helmet (or its absence) in difficulties with his own, when the moment for its adjustment has arrived.

Sholto Marcon had first been selected for England in 1913 and went on to win 23 international caps. In the 1920's he, with Stanley Shoveller and S H Saville, were virtually automatic choices for England. He resumed his international hockey career after the War and became a prolific goalscorer that led to his selection by

England for the 1920 Olympics. He was the sole northern-based player in the squad. He played in both wins by England and scored a hat-trick in the 12-1 defeat of Belgium.

After the Olympic Games, he took up club and county hockey in Sussex and in 1921, was appointed to a teaching post at Cranleigh School and became its first coach of hockey. He is widely acknowledged as responsible, in large part, for the development of the game in that school. He continued until 1936, when he left to become ordained.

Until 1916, there were two major sports at Cranleigh; cricket in the summer and football in the winter. In 1916 the School opted to take up rugby in the autumn term, a move later deemed a success within a season. In 1919 hockey was therefore introduced in the Easter term. But it said to have made very little impact for several years.

In December 1921, the first Old Cranleigh side took the field when they beat the School by a score of 4-3, with prolific goalscorer, Eric Abbott, scoring a hat-trick. Considering that hockey had only been played for two seasons, it was thought commendable that the old boys were able to raise a team. This fixture then continued to be played each March. In 1929, Marcon was appointed a Vice President of Old Cranleighs Hockey Club, a post he held until his death 30 years later.



There may be some doubt as to the date of that first fixture, as this photograph from 1929 claims to be of the teams in the first Old Boys v School match in 1928-9. Sholto Marcon is seated, fourth from the left.

Sholto Marcon was elected to Hampstead Hockey Club on 5 September 1924. He was another recommended to the Club by Jack Bennett, probably as a result of the latter's continuing connections with the University.

He was described as "probably the greatest inside-left who ever played for England". He was noted for an exceptional sense of *position* and excellent ball control. These qualities found expression to his exploitation of the through pass, of which he was an acknowledged master.



Sholto Marcon is to the right, with B G Lampard-Vachell over the ball.

He played for Hampstead for seven seasons until 1931. He continued to play representative hockey until 1935, when he was aged 45.

Upon leaving his teaching career, he was first appointed to Kennington Church on the outskirts of Ashford in Kent. In the Second World War, he served as a Chaplain to the Royal Air Force and rose to the rank of Squadron Leader. After the War, he returned as incumbent to Tenterden and served there until his death on 17 November 1959.

Marcon was also well regarded as a coach of hockey and wrote several tutorial books about the sport. He also wrote for *Boys Own Paper*, among them

The Hockey Game March 1922
Hockey for Boys February 1923
Helpful Hints on Hockey March 1927
Hockey and the Schools November 1929
Hockey for All February 1937
Common Faults in School Hockey March 1938
Moves that tell in Hockey March 1940

There was other hockey writing, too, including this reproduced below from 1934, for an unidentified newspaper.

Getting Ready for the Season Hampstead's Trial Game

This is the time of year when summer and winter games can be played on the same day. But on Saturday the cricket stumps which I saw erected on a well-known pitch near Thames Ditton were not likely to be disturbed by any ball, as the rain was coming down in torrents. It had little effect however on football and hockey grounds, and at Richmond to the accompaniment of cries of, "Wasps! Wasps!" from an adjoining ground where the London Scottish lost by the odd point, Hampstead HC played their second trial match prior to opening the season against Dulwich next Saturday.

As I saw the familiar – to me especially familiar – blue and white shirts, my thoughts turned to the pre-war days when S H Shoveller was in his prime. With "Shove" in the attack, partnered by G Logan and with the support of such players as C H and R E Eiloart, J H Bennett and G F Farmiloe, the Hampstead side must have been a terror to most London teams.

Certainly at Oxford round about 1909 whenever SHS was seen leading his men on to the old Varsity ground near South Parks Road, one knew the fight would be especially grim and if the 'varsity centre half failed to shadow his famous opponent, all would be lost.

The ground was very hard below the half inch of moist soil occasioned by the rain and owing to the dry summer, some bare patches were to be seen, though the ball ran well. I might mention that the indefatigable honorary secretary, M M Wyatt told me that it is hoped to acquire shortly an adjoining ground for the use of the second eleven.

Two Serious Losses

The players seemed very fit but it was a pity that few of the old first eleven members were able to turn out. I understand, however, that most of them will be available this season, the two most serious losses, perhaps, being B Trimmer, the goalkeeper and J F Alston, the old Cambridge outside left. The latter, I hear, has joined Bromley, though this rumour was not confirmed. If it is true, it will mean the Kent team should be especially strong. To replace Trimmer, Hampstead hope to have the services of H E Ascoli, now down from Oxford, while Alston's place will probably be filled by D F Kerr, a Cambridge Wanderer and a new recruit.

In Saturday's game, Colours' forwards were far the better line and were well led by J C Sankey. Kerr did well on the left wing and is a fast runner. Closer ball control and the abolition of the reversed stick centre will help to improve his game. Sanders, an old Lawrentian, and left half supported Kerr closely and demonstrated the value of the cross pass to the right.

On the Whites' side, captain R L Milsted, who played for the Rest v England last year, turned out and set a good example to some of the younger members of the club by his tackling, positioning and passing. The backs were recruits from a school eleven and when they have learnt to be much quicker on the ball they should be useful.

So far as next Saturday's game is concerned, Hampstead will probably call up H E Ascoli S Fickling, A E Legett R L Milsted B M Bird O G Jones A G Hardie C A Hinds Howell J G Chappell I M Milsted D F Kerr. It is hoped that by next March there will be more "W"s on the fixture card and not so many "D"s as last season when 12 games were drawn.

Following his death, Douglas Goodbody wrote to *The Times* on 2 December 1959 from overseas (*sic*) and said that he hoped that the death of Reverend Charles Marcon announced in the newspaper's columns would not pass without notice, for "he was one of the finest hockey players of his or any subsequent generation". He added that he had had "the good fortune to play in his company in the period between the two wars and his stick-work and energy were unsurpassed. When persuaded to play he retained his skill at the end of the last war. As with many great games players, he was both modest and kind."

A few days later, an Old Cranleighan cricketer, C B Blackshaw, also wrote to *The Times* to add to Mr Goodbody's tribute. He said that, "Sholto Marcon was probably the greatest inside-left who played for England at hockey" and "one of the famous trio of inside forwards – S H Shoveller, S H Saville and himself, who were automatic choices for England in the early twenties". He went on to say that, "he was passionately fond of hockey and, apart from being a brilliant performer himself, he was a magnificent and inspiring coach and wrote a good deal about the game. He was also a more than useful cricketer and a very keen fisherman. Above all, though, he was a great Christian and a loyal and charming friend."

Mention of Sholto Marcon's cricketing career prompts a brief review of its resumption in 1953. He represented the Canterbury Clergy against Chichester Clergy at Poplar Meadow in Tonbridge on 4 June, in the Church Times Cricket Cup, when his side won by one wicket, scoring 175-9 (of which Ronald Perfect scored 139, some 79% of the total). He also played for them in July 1954, when they reached the quarter final of the Church Times Cricket Cup, when they won by 36 runs at Sutton Valence School.

In 1958, the Canterbury Clergy improved their record and beat Gloucester Clergy by six wickets in the semi-final at London Road, Bagshot, when Sholto Marcon did not bat. But they lost the final of the Cup on 4 September 1958 at the Walker Ground in Southgate to Blackburn Clergy by 82 runs. The Canterbury Clergy could only manage 46 in their innings, of which Marcon scored 2. By this time he was aged 68. It was a year before his death.