

TOXOPHILITE SOCIETY

The Toxophilite Society was very much part of Sir Ashton's life which will become apparent as you read on.

A Mr. Waring, who was attached to the Leverian Museum in some capacity had developed a "disorder in his chest". At some former period of his life he had studied the art of bow-making and he resolved to try archery, which had at that period almost entirely died out. In a short time he found shooting did him so much good that he persevered. Sir Ashton Lever, seeing the good effect archery had had on Mr. Waring, also took it up and together with his friends and the few remaining Finsbury Archers, formed in 1781 the Toxophilite Society. Sir Ashton became the first president. The Society met and shot in the grounds of Leicester House which stood in Leicester Square, home to the Leverian Museum.

This was the origin of the revival of archery. The Toxophilite Society took the lead, and was practically the parent of all the archery societies subsequently started. At first the members were few. The Leicester House grounds which were fairly extensive, were large enough for practice but too small for target days.

On May 26, 1784 the Toxophilite Society made application to the Honourable Artillery Company to become the Archers

division of that company. This was initiated because the Leicester House grounds were no longer available, owing to the approaching disposal of the museum. A Committee of the Artillery Company was appointed to confer with the Toxophilite Society regarding their application and on July 28, eight members of the Toxophilite Society were admitted, most of the others soon following.

In 1787 H.R.H. the Prince of Wales accepted the office of patron and occasionally shot with the society. In 1788, on the death of Sir Ashton Lever, the Earl of Aylesford was elected president.

For twenty years the Archers division continued, attached to the H.A.C., and from time to time new members were admitted but they were apparently always also members of the Toxophilite Society. The number of members had been gradually increasing till in 1791 it had reached 168 and the society was strong enough to have a ground of its own. Accordingly they rented one from the Duke of Bedford, and after having it leveled, built a pavilion on it. They also rented rooms from Mr. Waring's son, the bow maker, where they gave various entertainments. The dinners however, took place at the Fremasons and London Taverns.