

Sir George Thomas

by Bill Wall

Sir George Alan Thomas (1881-1972) was born on June 14, 1881 in the British consulate at Therapia, near Constantinople/Istanbul, Turkey. He inherited the title of 7th Baronet in 1918. His baronetcy title was created in 1766 and Sir George Thomas, 1st Baronet, was the Deputy Governor of Pennsylvania from 1736 to 1747, the Governor of the Leeward Islands. He won the British chess championship twice (1923 and 1934), the All-England Badminton championship 21 times, and reached the quarterfinals of the singles at Wimbledon in 1911.

His mother, Lady Edith Margaret Foster Thomas (1853-1920), who taught him chess, participated and won one of the first women's tournament held in Hastings in 1895.

His father was Sir George Sydney Meade Thomas (1847-1918), 6th Baronet.

George had two sisters, Ruby and Isabel

George Alan Thomas was probably introduced to chess in 1894. He entered several problem solving contests that year.

In 1895, his mother, Lady Edith Thomas, won the first Ladies chess tournament at Hastings/

In 1896 he George Thomas defeated Emanuel Lasker in a simultaneous exhibition in England. That year, Thomas joined the Portsmouth Chess Club and won the Club Championship at his first attempt. He won it 14 times during his career. He was a member of the club up to 1915.

In 1903 George Thomas won his first badminton title, the All England Double Mix Championship (his partner was Ethel Thomson). Badminton, which came from India (known as poona), was once known as Shuttlecock in England. He was runner-up in the singles title.

In 1870 the Duke of Beaufort threw a weekend party at his mansion, called "Badminton House," and the name caught on after everyone loved playing Shuttlecock as it became more popular.

In 1905 he took 2nd place in the All England Mixed Doubles badminton championship with his partner, Ethel Thomson.

In 1906 he, again, won the All England Mixed Doubles badminton championship with Ethel Thomson. He also won the Men's Doubles with Henry Marrett. He repeated the Men's Doubles championship with Marrett in 1908, 1910, and 1912.

In 1907 he won the All England Mixed Doubles badminton championship with Mrs. Murray. That year he won the First Class Chess Tournament at the Kent annual chess congress. He was also on the ice hockey team for his native County of Hampshire.

In 1909 and 1910 he won his games in the Anglo-American cable matches.

In 1911 he was the City of London Chess Club chess champion.

In 1911 he won the All England Mixed Doubles badminton championship with Margaret Larmini.

In 1911, he reached the quarterfinals of the singles and the semifinals of the men's tennis doubles.

He won the 1913 All England Doubles with Frank Chesterton.

In 1913, he won the City of London Chess Club Championship.

In 1914 he won the All England Mixed Doubles badminton championship with Hazel Hogarth. He also won the Men's Doubles with Frank Chesterton.

In 1914/15, he won the City of London Chess Club Championship three points ahead of his nearest rival.

World War I cancelled any more badminton championships from 1915 to 1919.

In 1915 he was a lieutenant in the 6th Hampshire Regiment and served in Mesopotamia. He caught malaria, which affected his health the rest of his life. He made a 250-mile trek with his troops across the then unmapped Mesopotamian desert on foot (no horse).

In 1918 he became "Sir George" when his father, Sir George Sidney Meade Thomas, died. George Alan Thomas became the seventh Baronet. A baronet is above a knight, but below a baron. It is a hereditary title. The title is passed down to the eldest son.

In 1920, 1921, and 1922 he won the All England Mixed Doubles badminton championship with Hazel Hogarth. For 20 years Sir George Thomas was one of the best mixed doubles badminton players in the world.

From 1919 to 1926 he played lawn tennis at Wimbledon. He appeared 8 times at Wimbledon, playing in 19 different events in those years. He also played at Wimbledon from 1906 to 1914 with mediocre results.

In 1919 he took 3rd place in the Hastings Victory Tournament. He lost to Capablanca in a game that may have drawn with best play.

From 1920 to 1923 he won the British singles championship in badminton four years in a row. He won the All-England Badminton championship a total of 7 times.

In 1920 he played in his first British chess championship, taking 2nd place, behind R. Scott.

In 1921 he took 2nd place in the British chess championship, behind Yates. That year, he won the All England Badminton Double with Frank Hodge.

In 1922 he made it to the top 16 in tennis at Wimbledon (won by Gerald Patterson who defeated Randolph Lycett in the finals).

In 1923 George Thomas won the British Chess Championship at the Southsea Congress, and the British Badminton Championship. He was a world-class badminton player and a fine hockey and lawn tennis player.

In 1923 he authored *The Art of Badminton*.

He was on the cover of the Sep 29, 1923 edition of *The Illustrated Sporting & Dramatic News*. He was recognized for his feats in Lawn tennis, badminton, hockey, and chess.

In 1924 he won the All England badminton championship with Frank Hodge.

Un 1925, he toured Canada with the badminton English team to promote the sport on behalf of the Canadian Badminton Association, which had formed in 1921.

In 1926, he lost in round 1 in both singles and doubles at Wimbledon tennis championship.

In 1927 he had the highest winning percentage at the chess Olympiad in London with 9 wins and 6 draws. He competed in the Chess Olympiads in 1927, 1930, 1931, 1933, 1935, 1937, and 1939.

In 1928, at the age of 47, Sir George Thomas was still winning national badminton tournaments. That year he won the All England Doubles badminton championship (his 9th doubles title) with Frank Hodge.

In 1929, he played at Carlsbad and took next to last place (Vera Menchik took last). Thomas won one game, lost 10, and drew 10. His only win was against Menchik.

In 1930 he took 2nd place at Nice (won by Tartakower).

In 1931 he played in the Prague Chess Olympiad and scored best 3rd board.

In 1933, he wrote *Badminton*.

In 1933, he was on the English team at the 5th chess Olympiad at Folkestonr/

In 1934 Sir George Thomas was one of the founders of the International Badminton Federation (IBF) and was elected the first president of the international badminton federation in 1935. He was president for 21 years. There are now over 130 countries belonging to IBF.

In 1934 he won the British Chess Championship for the second time, at Chester.

In 1934-35 he tied for first with Max Euwe and Salo Flohr at Hastings with 6 wins, 1 draw, and 2 losses. He defeated both Capablanca, Botvinnik, and Lilienthal in that event. He needed only a draw in the last round to win the championship outright, but lost in the last round to his countryman, 60-year-old Reginald Pryce Michell. Capablanca's defeat against Thomas was his first loss in four years. It was his first loss as white in more than six years.

In 1936 he participated in the Nottingham International (won by Capablanca and Botvinnik) but ended up in 14th out of 15 place. He won none, drew 6 games, and lost 8. He had a won game against Capablanca, but lost it.

In March-April 1937, he played at the 3rd Margate Premier and took 8th out of 10. The event was won by Fine and Keres.

In 1939 he wanted to make badminton an international sport, so he introduced the Thomas Cup, similar to the Davis Cup. It wasn't until 1949 that the first world badminton championship matches were held. The winning team was from Malaya. The trophy is officially known as the

International Badminton Championship Challenge Cup, but it is more commonly called the Thomas Cup in honor of the donor.

In 1939 he was captain of the British team at the Chess Olympiad in Buenos Aires.

In 1946 he won the London chess championship at age 65. He was the President of the Chess Section of the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR and organized the first Britain vs. USSR radio chess match in 1946.

From 1950 to 1952 he was President of the Badminton Association of England.

In 1950 he was awarded the International Master (IM) title from FIDE. At age 69 he gave up competitive chess.

In 1952 he became an International Arbiter (IA) for FIDE.

Sir George Thomas was a 7-time British badminton champion and represented England 29 times from 1902 to 1929.

The winner of the men's world team badminton championship receives the Thomas Cup, equivalent to the Davis Cup. It was first awarded in 1948.

Sir George Thomas died on July 23, 1972 at the age of 91, at a nursing home in London. He was cremated at the West London Crematorium. He never married, so the hereditary baronetcy ended on his death.

He represented England in 7 chess Olympiads, from 1927 to 1939.

He won the London chess championship 16 times, from 1913 to 1939.

He had won 21 British badminton titles from 1903 to 1928 and won 90 other national titles. He represented England for 26 years in badminton and wrote *The Art of Badminton*.

He played in over 80 chess tournaments in his chess career.

Here are some of his shorter games.

Ed Lasker - Thomas, London (Oct 29, 1912) (English 5 minute game) 1.d4 f5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Nf3 e6 4.Bg5 Be7 5.Bxf6 Bxf6 6.e4 fxe4 7.Nxe4 b6 8.Bd3 Bb7 9.Ne5 O-O 10.Qh5 Qe7 11.Qxh7+ Kxh7 12.Nxf6+ Kh6 13.Neg4+ Kg5 14.h4+ Kf4 15.g3+ Kf3 16.Be2+ Kg2 17.Rh2+ Kg1 18.Kd2 mate 1-0 After the game, Thomas congratulated Lasker, saying, "That was very pretty."

Emanuel Lasker - Thomas, London 1921 1.d4 e6 2.Nf3 f5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Be7 5.Bxf6 Bxf6 6.e4 fxe4 7.Nxe4 b6 8.Ne5 O-O 9.Bd3 Bb7 10.Qh5 Qe7 11.Qxh7+ Kxh7 12.Nxf6+ Kh6 13.Neg4+ Kg5 14.h4+ Kf4 15.g3+ Kf3 16.Be2+ Kg2 17.Rh2+ Kg1 18.O-O-O mate 1-0

Abrahams - Thomas, Liverpool 1923 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Qxd5 3.Nc3 Qa5 4.d4 Nf6 5.Bd2 Nc6 6.Bb5 Bd7 7.Nd5 Nb4 8.Bxb4 1-0

Thomas - Tylor, England 1926 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 c6 4.Nc3 Nf6 5.e3 Ne4 6.Bd3 f5 7.O-O Nd7 8.Ne1 Bd6 9.Bxe4 fxe4 10.Qh5+ g6 11.Qh6 Bf8 12.Qf4 Nf6 13.f3?? Nh5 0-1

Thomas - W. Winter, London 1927 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2 c5 5.dxc5 Na6 6.a3 Bxc3+ 7.Qxc3 Nxc5 8.b4 Nce4 9.Qd3 d5 10.cxd5 Nxf2 11.Kxf2 Ng4+ 12.Kg3 Qf6 13.Nf3 Qxa1 14.Bd2 Nf6 15.e4 exd5 16.exd5 O-O 16.Bc3?? Qxc3 [17.Qxc3 Ne4+] 0-1

Mir Sultan Khan - Thomas, Hastings 1932 1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 d5 3.c4 e6 4.Nc3 c6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.Qc2 Bd6 7.Bd2 Qe7 8.a3 O-O 9.Be2 Re8 10.O-O e5 11.cxd5 Nxd5 12.e4 N5f6 13.Rae1 exd4 14.Nxd4 Ne5 15.Nf5 Bxf5 16.exf5 Qc7 17.h3 Nfd7 18.f4 1-0

Tylor - Thomas, Margate 1937 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 c6 3.c4 Nf6 4.e3 Bf5 5.cxd5 Nxd5 6.Bc4 e6 7.O-O Nd7 8.Re1 N5b6 9.Bb3 Be7 10.e4 Bg6 11.Nc3 O-O 12.Bf4 c5 13.d5 c4 14.dxe6 fxe6 15.Nd4 Nc5 16.Bxc4 Nxc4 0-1

G. Brown - Thomas, Southsea 1949 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Be7 4.d4 d6 5.Nc3 Nf6 6.h3 O-O 7.Be3 Nxe4 8.Nxe4 d5 9.Nxe5 dxc4 10.Nxc6 bxc6 11.Nc5 f5 12.Qf3 f4 13.Bxf4 Qxd4 14.Be3 Qxb2 15.Qd1 Qb4+ 16.c3 Qxc3+ 17.Kf1 Qxa3 0-1

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