

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

Bisley General Meeting

Minutes of the Bisley General Meeting

held in the Umbrella Tent, Bisley
on Wednesday 17th July 2013 from 9.00pm.

Present:

Chairman:	Dr R Pizer
Chief Executive	Mr A Mercer
Vice Chairman General Council	Mr J Warburton
Vice-Chairman Council	Mr J Webster
Members:	50 Registered and other Members

BISLEY GENERAL MEETING

Notice of the Bisley General Meeting

The notice of the Meeting was taken as read.

ITEM 1 - SPEECHES

The Speech of the Chairman is attached hereto and initialled by the Chairman.

ITEM 2 - OPEN FORUM

ITEM - 3 – QUALIFYING SCORE HM THE QUEENS PRIZE, STAGE I

The winner of the bronze medal is Parag Patel with a score of 105 and 20 V bulls. *Round of applause.*

The last in is a score of 102 and 12 V bulls with 34 and 3 v bulls at 600 yards.

The winner of the F Class Stage 1 is HJ Mitera with a score of 105 and 14 V bulls.

Chairman

Proceedings

Chairman

Ladies and Gentlemen, I welcome you all to this Bisley General Meeting, which is taking place at 9pm in the Umbrella Tent on Wednesday 17th July 2013.

Those on the top table are Andrew Mercer, who is our Chief Executive. Next to me is John Warburton, who is Vice-Chairman of the General Council and next to me on my right hand side is John Webster who is Vice Chairman of the Council.

We had our AGM on Friday 14th June and a copy of the proceedings is on our website.

I would particularly like to welcome all our Vice-Presidents who have either been here, are here or are coming here and those from overseas: Philippe Ginestet from France, Robert Chombart also from France, Norris Gomez from Trinidad, Peter Sirett from Guernsey, Cliff Mallett from Jersey, and Stan Frost from Canada.

Now I move on to the competitions.

We started with the Service Rifle events, which were supported by overseas teams from Canada and Oman and some 160 competitors took part.

The winners of Her Majesty the Queen's Medals were: for the Royal Navy/Royal Marines, Cpl Jim Bloom, Royal Marines; for the Territorial Army, Cpl Johnny Moore, 253 Northern Ireland Medical Regiment; for the Army, Corporal Sombahadur Chhantel Magar, 1st Battalion Royal Ghurkha Rifles, for the Royal Air Force, Corporal RKL Jamieson of the RAF Regiment. The main prize giver was Major General PNYM Sanders CBE DSO who was Assistant CDS Ops. The TA prizes were presented by Major General T Radford DSO OBE, who is GOC Theatre Troops.

The Methuen Trophy Inter Corp Team Shoot was won by the Royal Ghurkha Rifles. The cup was presented by Major General NAW Pope, Master General of the Ordnance.

Civilian Service Rifle, which runs alongside the Service Rifle events, opened the Imperial 2013 with their first shot taking place on 26th June. 2013 saw 113 competitors shoot over 5 days, culminating in the prestigious NRA Methuen Cup Match, which was won by The Highpower Rifle Association, with London Practical Shooting Club "A" Team coming second, and the Saluza Scouts third.

The overall winner of our second NRA Military Adaptive Championships this year was L/Cpl David Mullarkey, 3 PARA.

The Inter-Services Cadet Rifle Meeting was very successful; there were 565 cadets attending from 113 teams, including the Royal Canadian Army Cadet National Rifle Team. The winning team in the Team Grand Aggregate was 1344 (Cardiff) Sqn ATC with a score of 975.057 and Sgt A Taylor, 1344 (Cardiff) Sqn ATC won the Bossom, the individual prize, with a score of 250.16. The prizes were presented by Capt J Holloway, Captain of the Sea Cadet Corp.

At the Schools' Meeting there were 50 teams including those from Canada and Australia, from 50 schools, and there were 540 cadets. 32 of those schools participated in the Ashburton Shield which was won by Dollar Academy with a score of 757 including a 99 from Sgt L McKerrell, beating Epsom College into second place by 17 points. Prizes were given by Brig John Smales, Chairman of CCRS.

The Historic Arms Meeting was run by Chris Farr who was Match Director, with the invaluable assistance of David Gregory and aided by volunteers to whom we owe our thanks. There were 127 competitors, a little down on last year, who fired 549 match cards. Cadets from 211 ATC Newbury acted as markers and performed to their usual high standard. Judging by favourable reports from competitors the weekend seems to have gone well.

The Hopton was won by Mike Barlow, beating Maj A R McLeod by four points on 999 with 115 V bulls. Mike Barlow won the Albert, the last shoot in the Hopton, with the score of 221 with 29 Vs without any sighters.

The Elcho was won by England beating Scotland by 22 points, ending Scotland's 4 year winning streak. The medals were presented by the Earl of Wemyss and March. His son, Lord Elcho, was also present.

Overall Target and Match Rifle has shown 1119 entries, an increase on last year's figures, 185 of those are from overseas, an increase of 55 on last year. The Grand Aggregate has had 828 entries which is down by 30 on the preceding year and we have seen teams and individuals from Australia, Barbados, Belgium, Canada, Falkland Islands, France, Germany, Guernsey, Guyana, Hong Kong, Jamaica, Jersey, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, South Africa and Trinidad & Tobago. 66 Under 25s were present and 253 Under 21s. The oldest competitor was John Wright at 90 and the youngest was Cadet R E J McGregor at 13.

The Imperial Gallery Rifle meeting had 88 competitors, which was 10% up on last year. The number of cards sold was just under 1,000 which was in line with last year. They were very busy on the Wednesday to Friday but the hot weather took a toll on the number of competitions entered over the weekend. A number of people who had entered for the first time were very enthusiastic about the relaxed atmosphere of the event and promised to come back next year and shoot more competitions. There were only two universities represented this year - Oxford and Cambridge - but their team members said that they hope to encourage other universities to put in teams next year. Our thanks to the team who helped organise this meeting.

This year we have had more sunshine than for many years and while this is a welcome change, it has brought its problems. The most obvious problem has been the performance of the 2013 batch of RUAG ammunition which resulted in blown primers in about 1% of rounds fired on First Friday and Middle Saturday. We changed to the 2012 batch of RUAG ammunition from Middle Sunday and the number of blown primers reduced to a handful each day. This showed there was an unacceptable difference in performance between the 2013 and 2012 batches. Presently we do not know the reason for the blown primers in the 2013 batch and while many reasons have been suggested, they are just speculation.

What this has reminded us is that shooting in hot weather requires certain precautions to be taken and that many competitors are not aware of them. It has also brought home the fact that sourcing an alternative supply of 250,000 rounds of suitable ammunition at short notice is impossible. We were lucky to have sufficient 2012 RUAG ammunition in stock.

I remain concerned that a small number of rifles continued to blow a few primers in the 2012 batch. We need to understand why. Each gunsmith appears to produce their own set of tools to check that a rifle they provide complies with Rule 150. There is no common set of calibrated tools for all to use. In the light of F Class experience, we need also to consider whether to return to the CIP specification for bore and groove dimensions for Target Rifle and modify the changes in Rule 150. Gunsmiths do make mistakes as I have personally been invited to witness and members have told me of situations where it was difficult to close the bolt, difficult to open the bolt so that a hammer had to be used, or the bullet was left in the barrel if the rifle was unloaded before being fired. This should not happen. If you have a problem get it fixed.

Last year I remarked that we had embarked on a journey to restructure the NRA with staff having very different skill sets to those we have employed in the past in order to deliver a customer focussed organisation run on business lines. I am particularly delighted to welcome Andrew Mercer as our new Chief Executive, Ray Hutchings as our new Head of Support Services and Peter Cottrell as our new Head of Shooting who have joined us in the last 9 months.

We need to build further on these changes to use the very wide range of skills within our membership in an advisory role. So I expect to see changes to the way we engage with our membership and how we select the very best trustees in the future. We will shortly be advertising for several vacancies on the Disciplinary Body and I urge lawyers and suitable laymen to put their names forward. The problems that well intentioned trustees have had to face in the last 12 years have been horrendous with quite unacceptable work loads imposed on many of them. This is now expected to fall significantly over the next 6 months. It is pleasing to say that we have now paid off the final tranche of the £150,000 of the loan taken out about 12 years ago following the financial disaster of 2001. I would just comment that the trustees are well aware of the large maintenance task needed on our facilities at Bisley – a deliberate consequence of not doing all maintenance while getting out of debt. Possibly a million pounds is required here and I expect this and plans to help

those outside Bisley to be part of the three year plan that Andrew Mercer will be presenting to Trustees this Autumn.

We wish all the best on Friday to John Warburton with his Kolapore team, to Chris Fitzpatrick and his team in Canada next month.

I apologise to Paul Lanigan who was only appointed earlier this week to captain the U25 GB team for tomorrow's match. The Shooting Committee needs to start advertising for 2014 in the next few weeks.

Now to my thank you's to those who have worked very hard over the last 4 weeks of competitions.

To Maj Ellis Harveson and his team at the OSTT, who produced military range teams and the MoD and Landmarc teams at Pirbright.

To the Bisley 'V' Club, and Mick Barr in particular, for holding their annual long range match for the cadets. This is much appreciated and gives the cadets a rare opportunity to shoot at 900 and 1000 yards.

To Maj Simon Fraser and CCRS in their support of the cadets with both ISCRM and Schools.

To our Chief Range Officers, Tony Clayton on Stickledown and Peter Turner on Century. To our Chief of Staff, Mike Turner, Chief Butt Officers, Colin Scoles on Century and Jack Evans on Stickledown, and all the RCOs and butt supervisors who have kept things going in the very hot conditions we have experienced this year. Our sincere thanks goes to all the markers who have done a sterling job in all the butts, especially in the very hot, uncomfortable and challenging circumstances of this meeting.

To the staff who have prepared the Camp and Ranges and I hope you have seen an improvement in the facilities here at Bisley over the last 6 to 8 months. We have new teams covering the Estates, Target Shed and Cleaning and this has helped improve the overall look of the camp including regular grass cutting, road markings, pothole filling and ablution and toilet blocks being cleaned on a regular basis. We have received a number of compliments over the past months on the improvements made.

To Ted Molyneux and his team of volunteers who have opened the Museum.

I would also like to thank the front counter team for ensuring everyone had their squadding cards on time, the Stats team who have produced all the results, the Range Office and Armoury staff who have ensured the ranges ran smoothly, as well as all those working diligently behind the scenes to ensure a successful Imperial Meeting for all.

That takes me to the end of what I have to say formally to you so I would now open the meeting to questions and comments from the floor. If you could walk up to the microphone and give your name and club. Please place the microphone on your chin to get the best response. Otherwise what you say may not be recorded. So who wishes to open the batting with the first question or comment? Don't be shy!

Chris Law – London Practical Shooting Club

I refer to the problem of the ammunition and for several years have propounded the idea that we might go onto the use of commercial loads or even hand loading. This could then encompass the use of the smaller calibre .556 for those who might prefer that, and the ammunition can be sold much cheaper that it might encourage more people to travel over to us from abroad because they find that a major obstacle. Thank you.

Round of applause

Mike Gregory – RAF TRC, NLRC and Cambridge County Chairman

A point arose yesterday on Stickle-down when we were shooting the Counties Long Range and our coach and plotter saw fit to protect themselves from the sun by using an umbrella. They were of course not in any way shielding the shooter from the sun or the elements, as required by Rule 10. However, they were required to take down the umbrella. CRO said there was a precedent for this because some time before there had been heavy rain and people had been sheltering their coaches and plotters by using umbrellas. Team Captains had apparently protested at this and the CRO had bowed to this pressure by banning all umbrellas from the firing point. Now, Rule 10 is quite explicit. It says no competitor may be shielded from the sun or whatever, and that's fine. I have no quarrel with that at all. But when the coach and plotter are seeking to protect themselves, particularly in this hot weather, when I think Health & Safety would demand that people should take every precaution to avoid suffering from the heat. To be told that they shouldn't do so when there is no rule that can be produced to say so, merely that it was a matter of precedent, I feel that if this is to be a requirement for shooting on our ranges, I would be interested to see how people on Friday get protected from the sun, then I feel that the Shooting Committee should consider it, and if necessary amend Rule 10 to state quite explicitly what the interpretation should be. I feel that as shooters, we should be protected from things. CRO is of course quite entitled to take any steps he feels is necessary for his safety and the proper conduct of shooting. I have no quarrel with that. But if it's only a question of seeing that the rule is correctly enforced and policing any interference with the shading of the competitor and his equipment, then I feel that is purely a matter for ROs watching out to make sure the rules are correctly applied. Thank you very much.

Robert Chombart – Normandy

I am no longer shooting but still concerned for accessibility. Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I will raise a protest against the new rule forbidding access to disabled people with their car to the Century Range firing point. The disabled shooter were just informed at the last minute that they could not do that and when I go to the range I notice there is at least a dozen cars and each detail and not for disabled and the disabled obeyed rule. You are provided with a cart service for that but the cart are not very convenient for the disabled and when some disabled with a bad back arrived on the cart and come back, I don't think they can shoot the next competition. I would say there is also such a card for every disabled person allowing them to park their car everywhere in Europe (he waved his card), except apparently at the Bisley ranges!

Laughs and a round of applause

Colin Rees – Harwell Target Shooting Club and Oxfordshire Rifle Shooting Association

I am referring to the squadding sheets which we get. They give the range, but instead of the target number we have a letter. You then have to go to scramble board to find out where you are shooting. Could we please not have on our lists the actual number of the targets and if you are afraid of collusion between a super shooter and a marker, scramble the markers. Thank you.

Chris Law – London Practical Shooting Club

The RCO's end of that. What is happening is some targets are held fallow at each detail and I suspect it would be extremely difficult for pre-squadding to be arranged for all competitors. We have a difficulty with some targets being applied to F Class shooters specifically, left-hand shooters specifically and then sometimes have one or two extras. But I can't honestly see how you could immediately give people their target number. It is very much work on the day.

Dick Horrocks – English XX Club

This time last year we had a survey amongst our members as to the future of target rifle shooting. The outcome of that is on the English XX website which is open for anybody to download. There were a couple of major observations or decisions or wishes coming from the membership who were canvassed at the time. One was there should perhaps be more flexibility over what form of ammunition is issued or not, or is available for the Imperial Meeting. The costs of RUAG seem to be sky rocketing. There are nowhere near, from my memory, what the original tender quotes were five or six years ago, inflation apart. And the second interesting outcome of that survey was why, when we have two official NRA calibres, 7.62 and 5.56, can we only use 7.62 at the Imperial Meeting? *Hear hear.*

5.56 is used, and I speak personally now, by a number of shooters in the North, for good reason. They may be of small stature, they maybe prefer that, less kick. I know the advocates of 7.62 say it's a far superior cartridge, but there are advocates of 5.56 who wish to be proven wrong in this aspect. We are now beyond RG when one would take the ammunition which was available. There is no reason why commercial grade 5.56 cannot be available for this meeting.

I know that report was sent via our Chairman to the Trustees and I know it was discussed, and I read in the minutes of the February General Council that the outcome of that survey was indeed discussed. Given that there is now, I believe, a root and branch analysis of the costs and whatever to do with the Imperial, and there is also a petition circulating about trying to reduce the costs, I would just remind the Trustees that we did do that survey and I ask them not to have shelved it but to bring it back into the debate. It is a very important aspect. Where I live in Manchester we have four full-bore ranges within a 30 mile radius. Each takes an hour to get to. One military range which is Altcar, which is not really military because it's run by the Territorials, and three private ranges. Why should a northern shooter ever want to go to Bisley one could ask when we have four on our doorstep! The NRA is losing an opportunity. There are shooters up there who have never had Bisley marketed and if proper marketing opening up the ammunition, the calibres will pull them out of the Northern region, and we will have more people at Bisley. I speak as a Northern shooter in my presidential role with Manchester Rifle Club. So those are observations Mr Chairman and I hope they will be taken on board, along with all the other constructive comments which hopefully will be made during this discussion. Thank you.

Round of applause

James Watson – Uppingham Veterans Rifle Club

I'd firstly like to start by congratulating the NRA on the streamlining of the organisation and reduction of costs. However, there is one particular reduction of costs that I feel is not achieving necessarily the correct response from everyone. That is the decision to not award bars to those appearing, or those who would have appeared on the prize list for scoring a possible. As of this morning, 217 bars were not awarded to competitors who had, or would have been previously recognised for their achievement in scoring a highest possible score. I understand from my enquiries, that the cost of a bar is £1.12 per bar. The overall cost of this cost saving is therefore about £243.03! Given the lack of, or given the response from the competitors, and that the general bad feeling around this, I think this is a misjudged decision and I would request that the NRA would re-instate the old rule and recognise those shooters who have achieved a maximum possible score and give up that £200 saving, which equates to, with over 1,000 entries in the meeting, less than 2p per person. Is that something that you would be willing to look at Mr Chairman?

Round of applause

Rob Kitson – Army

Good evening Chairman, ladies and gentlemen.

I would take issue with the Chairman's view of the marking this year. In some cases, in my opinion, it has been abysmal. I think there are several solutions for this. We could go back to competitor marking, which might also reduce the costs, especially for the younger shooters. If that's not possible, for whatever reason, then at least give special duties to the shooters who understand shooting and they can go down as butts or assistant butts officers. They keep an eye on people who are blatantly, maliciously marking. And as for my experience this year, I had three successful challenges in the St. George's 1st stage. Arguably a fourth I didn't get it away in time. But there is not a consistent level of marking.

My other point follows Mr Horrocks, which I thought was a very good one, is that RUAG - we can go down the route of issue or non-issue, but RUAG at approximately £1 makes this meeting no longer value for money. I think we should look at other options, no matter what they might be. But RUAG in itself, or certainly at the price it is at, is not going to make me want to come back. Thank you very much.

Round of applause

Chris Hayley – Oxford & Cambridge Rifle Association

Mr Chairman, I missed the beginning, so please forgive me if this was something you raised earlier on before I arrived. I would like to address the issue of member retention. In my age range, the 30-40 somethings and awful number of us find our weekends torn between Bisley and staying at home looking after the family. One of the issues is that, for those of us who have children, there is very little to do here on camp and hence persuading our other halves to come down here and bring the children is actually quite difficult. I know it seems quite a relatively trivial problem, but it's something that does affect an awful number of us with children and we find that actually there are numerous weekends that we actually end up not coming down to camp. It's something that has been raised before, but maybe putting aside a small area for a children's playground I think would actually make a great difference to those with children. It would involve clearly some initial outlay, but I'm positive that you would get this back in relatively short time because there are a number of shooters in the 30/40 old bracket who would find themselves coming down to Bisley at lot more often as a result. Thank you.

Round of applause

Charles Kennish – Isle of Man, Middlesex, 101

I would like to thank Andrew, I met him in November, put a few points to him, and I thank you Sir, what you say you'll do you do! *Hear hear, round of applause.*

The ranges, the ablutions and the sites are a hell of a sight better. One point I've noticed in Site 8 the water supply is rather poor. I did mention it to a member of staff and they've since turned up. I noticed a water pool appearing, I said you got a burst?, "no seepage" This morning I found out that seepage is actually a broken sewer at the entrance to Site 8. If you'd had a wet Bisley, the whole site would have been contaminated with effluent. Now, they've dug it up and the crack, common sense says put a patch on it, concrete or cement, you don't just fill a hole in and let the water seep out again into a pool. Now if the management can't do that sort of thing, then we need to look for other management. OK? Thank you.

Nigel Stebbins – City of Newcastle Rifle Club

I want to raise a point in relation to the membership structure at the NRA. There used to be consideration where if you lived outside of the vicinity of Bisley, you could get what was called country membership, which was a way of encouraging people who came less often because of their geography to become a full member of the NRA. That was abolished two or three years ago and now you are either a full member or you aren't.

There are a very high proportion of people who shoot across the country who are only members of the NRA by affiliation through their club and I would imagine that probably less than 10% of full-bore shooters, or shall we say rifle shots, are actual full members of the NRA.

This has to be a mistake. It means that the organisation doesn't have a proper mailing list for all the shooters across the UK. It also means that you are losing revenue because the amount of contribution they pay to the club is a tiny fraction of what they would pay for a reasonable reduced rate full membership and I think this is something which the Trustees need to look at in depth and work out a better structure for membership to encourage everybody that shoots rifle to take out a full membership and get the benefits of insurance, etc, etc, but also contribute to the organisation and build up the numbers. I don't know what the membership is at the moment, but I believe there is something like 100,000 firearms certificates on issue across the UK, and I don't believe the NRA has 100,000 members.

James Watson – Uppingham Veterans Rifle Club

I'd like to respond to that comment as previous Chairman of the Membership Committee when the decision was made. That decision was made because the NRA is a national governing body and we did not want to segment our members and have 1st class members and 2nd class members, depending on where they lived. The organisation needs to be one unit and as you will recall, the cost of membership was substantially higher at that time.

We've reduced them to a level which ended up getting a blended rate much lower than the cost of membership at the time in 2006 or 2007 when it happened. I believe personally, and I hope that the Council still has a view, that it is a national organisation and it doesn't matter where you live, you should want to be a part of that. There is no benefit from membership directly for using the Bisley facilities. You pay for using the Bisley facilities, and that's separate from becoming a member of the national governing body. That is all I'd like to say, thank you.

Round of applause

Nigel Stebbins – City of Newcastle Rifle Club

If I can respond to that. I'm not suggesting that we go back to country membership, and I do believe that we should be a national organisation. My personal view is that the NRA is principally the Bisley Rifle Association and not the National Rifle Association. And my point really is that a high proportion of shooters are only affiliated to the NRA at all by virtue of the fact that they're a member of a club and they're paying affiliation fees. Surely the NRA is missing a trick by not having these people as full members and what you need to do, however you do it, is to find a way of getting everyone who shoots to be a member of the NRA and that involves looking at the way they structure the costs.

Round of applause

Dick Horrocks – English XX Club

Can I just respond in support of James because I used to be a member of the Membership Committee several years ago when these changes were made, and also to that last comment.

My understanding, as a member myself, one of the best values I get out of membership is the full insurance package that I as an individual have on any range, anywhere in the world shooting target rifle. And my understanding is that if you are only an affiliated member, you're only insured if you are shooting on a club range, or in an event sponsored by that club. So officially, if you belong to Bloggville Rifle Club and you wish to shoot in one of the open competitions at Bisley, are you insured or not? I would say you are not insured therefore you are a risk. How many of our members know that? How many of the Clubs are aware of that? Because if we marketed membership on insurance alone, if you had to take out a private insurance policy to insure your own property and your own liability it wouldn't be far short of an NRA membership fee and I think that the majority of affiliated members are under the mistaken belief that they are fully insured to shoot on any range at any time in the country. And that's a point which I think the NRA needs to get across to its clubs and therefore encourage more membership.

Round of applause

Chairman

Well it looks as though nobody else wants to make a comment or ask a question, so I will thank you all very much for attendance and wish you good shooting for the rest of the meeting.

Oh yes, there is a message which some of you came in to hear!

The winner of the bronze medal is Parag Patel with a score of 105 and 20 V bulls. *Round of applause.*

The last in is a score of 102 and 12 V bulls with 34 and 3 v bulls at 600 yards.

The winner of the F Class Stage 1 is HJ Mitera with a score of 105 and 14 V bulls. *Round of applause.*

So with that, I will draw the meeting to a close. Thank you for your attendance.

Round of applause.