

The All Distance Challenge & Laurels Rutland Teams Event
101 Rifle Club – Altcar Ranges
Saturday 10th & Sunday 11th November 2018

For many shooters around the UK, the end of October marks the close of the competitive season. The hustle and bustle of the long summer days is a distant memory, and as the trees are shedding their leaves, our ranges take on new rugged look as they adjust themselves for the harsh winter months ahead.

For me personally, this is my favourite time of the year to shoot as winter has a majestic quality to it. With the nights drawing in at a rapid pace, the days seem to unfold with a clear purpose and the low lying light ever familiar on the ranges this time of year sends a beam of heat that occasionally cuts through the coldest of days making a welcomed break from the chill that lingers in the air.

Thankfully I'm not the only one who feels this way about winter. Our F-Class family around the UK and Ireland have proven themselves time and time again as a hardened bunch that will happily up root and travel cross country at the mere hint of an opportunity to cram in more recoil therapy and shoot through the months of November and December.

Although the British Championships held at Bisley during the first week of November is officially the last competition for the Great Britain F-Class Association League, the remainder of the year is still jam packed with various other competitions being fiercely fought out to determine end of season club and county champions before the majority of ranges close for the festive period Mid December.

One such competition is the All Distance Challenge and Laurels Rutland Teams Event. Hosted by the 101 Rifle Club, this event takes place at the picturesque ranges of Altcar in Hightown situated on the outskirts of Liverpool in the North West of England.

Owned by the MOD (NWRFCFA) and home to the 101RC since 1945, Altcar boasts over 640 acres of fantastic shooting ranges and facilities that are steeped in history dating back as early as 1860. With its ranges backing straight onto the coast of the Irish Sea, Altcar has all the hallmarks of a very challenging shooting range and when winds build in strength out at sea and come crashing ashore from the South West, shooters need to be on point as the range takes on a devilish manner and can dish out some hellish gusts and direction changes on the flags that can catch the best of shooters out. Certainly a shooting range to include on your bucket list and visit should you get the opportunity any time soon.

The first All Distance Challenge was hosted by the 101RC in 2013 and since then has evolved over the years into a large stand alone competition becoming the flag ship event for the 101 that attracts world class shooters from all around the UK and Ireland. Don't be put off by this if you're a relatively new shooter; this is an ideal event for anyone looking for a way of dipping their toes into the world of competitive F-Class in order to get a feel for what this sport is all about.

The atmosphere at Altcar is extremely welcoming and the 101 make great hosts for all shooters and guests visiting their ranges. At the end of the day, who wouldn't want to take advantage of an opportunity to meet like minded people and pick up tips from the best shooters competing there along the way – it's a no brainer!

This year's competition was no exception, and it was apparent from the start that the 101RC had pulled out all the stops for 2018 in order to offer their competitors the very best of shooting experiences and promote both F-Class within the North West and Altcar Ranges in the highest light throughout the full weekend of shooting. Helping them do this was a whole host of sponsors and market leaders in shooting – AIM Field Sports, Aughton Automation, Bergara Rifles, Delta Optics, KAHLES Riflescopes, Optics Warehouse, RUAG UK and Tier One to name just a few. All of which providing some excellent quality prizes for the competitors to win.

As the 101RC worked closely with the MOD and Altcar Camp Commandant (Colonel Black) throughout the planning of this competition, prior arrangements had been made to open up accommodation on camp to civilian competitors at an affordable price and competitors were also given the use of the camp armoury throughout the weekend. This provided options for those on a budget and the armoury proved ideal for anyone travelling from afar and staying in local guest houses and hotels and took any worries regarding firearm storage out of the equation.

The first day of competition got under way on Saturday 10th November. Starting with the All Distance Challenge Individual element of this competition, it was an early start for everyone. Access onto Altcar Camp was straight forward as all competitors details had been submitted to range staff well in advance of the competition day and after a check of ID's and signing of a register at the Guard Room entrance, competitors gained access onto the ranges and followed signs towards the 101RC.

First impressions of Altcar were WOW! The ranges were exceptionally well maintained and clean, and the many firing lanes looking like bowling greens. Wind flags were positioned every 100 yards on each range, and as the yellow and blue flags moved freely with the early morning wind, they looked very impressive and gave an early indication of what the competitors were up against. Following the convoy of cars through the range, there was an inviting aroma of bacon wafting on the air that was mouth watering. Squadding packs were available from the 101RC club house "The Laurels" from 6am onwards and as the floods of competitors arrived bright eyed and bushy tailed, they were met with a smile and a freshly cooked bacon and egg breakfast barm and a cup of hot coffee or tea made by several volunteers at the 101RC – Janet, Patsy and Stella, to name a few.

Saturday's individual competition consisted of blow offs then 2 sighters and 15 scoring shots at 300, 500 & 600 yards. As it was competitor marking, squadding packs indicated if you were shooting first or were to be escorted to the butts to mark targets. With 92 competitors attending the Saturday, the field was split evenly between the three classes of F/TR, F-Open and Factory Sporter and all 23 firing lanes available on C Range were going to be used in competition.

F-Open and Factory Sporter were first into the breach and formed Detail 1. The range being used was C-Range and situated at the rear of the 101 club house. After a short walk to the 300 yard firing point, the RCO (Richie the 101RC Captain) gave everyone on Detail 1 a safety brief at 8.15am. Competitors were then allowed to set up their kit and make ready for a 1 minute Blow Off period. After blow offs, Match 1 at 300 yards got under way with a 2+15 in pairs. Once this match was complete, everyone dressed back to behind the 500 yards firing line and after a short break Match 2 got under way with another 2+15. The process was then repeated for the final Match 3 at 600 yards.



Saturday's Detail 1 - F-Open and F-Sporter

There was then a short lunch break around 1045am as Detail 1 packed away their shooting kit and Detail 2 returned from the butts. Detail 2, which was made up of F/TR and Factory Sporter competitors, then headed onto C Range for a safety brief at 11.15am behind the 300 yard firing line while Detail 1 made ready in the butts.

After repeating the process of a 1 minute Blow Off period, Detail 2 shot Matches 1 – 3 dressing back from 300 to 600 yards in the same way as Detail 1 and all shooting was completed by 1430hrs.



Saturday's Detail 2 – F/TR and F-Sporter

Weather conditions throughout the day were ideal for a shooting competition. Overcast with occasional sunny spells bringing with it some mirage yet cool in temperature and staying dry all day. Altcar's south westerly winds coming from the left didn't disappoint, and provided challenging shooting conditions for both details. With lots of short strong gusts and sudden drop offs added to angle changes, there were plenty of unexplainable elevations that confused even the best of them, including those experienced 101 shooters with the home advantage. I have to say though, there were some excellent scores submitted and it certainly showed the calibre of the competitors that had entered this year.

With all the score cards handed in to the 101 stats department, it wasn't long before the scores were on the doors and the day's winners and had been worked out, albeit with a few count backs along the way. Everyone was then called to gather in "The Laurels" for the awards ceremony where a large selection of personalised glass awards, medals and trophies were handed out to the lucky recipients.



Adam Bagnall - F/TR



Lance Vinall - F-Open



Andy Southward - F-SP

Results showing Top 3 positions in each class – The All Distance Challenge

Place	Class	Name	M1 300	Name	M2 500	Name	M3 600	Name	Grand Agg
1st	F/TR	Adam Bagnall	75.14	Tony Gray	75.10	Rob Hale	75.10	Adam Bagnall	225.29
2nd	F/TR	Dean Wallace	71.10 CB	Ray Fitzpatrick	75.09	Adam Bagnall	75.07	Rob Hale	225.27
3rd	F/TR	Mark Downing	75.10	Adam Bagnall	75.08	David Rollafson	75.06	Dean Wallace	223.28
1st	F-Open	John Murphy	75.15	Lance Vinall	75.12	Lance Vinall	75.10	Lance Vinall	225.34
2nd	F-Open	Tony Marsh	75.14 CB	Des Parr	75.10	Tony Marsh	75.07	Tony Marsh	224.30
3rd	F-Open	Joe Melia	75.14	Alan Manson	75.09	David Raybould	74.09	Alan Manson	223.24
1st	F-SP	David Fawcett	75.12	Trevor Bryan	75.12	Cam Grant	75.11	Andy Southward	223.32
2nd	F-SP	Andy Southward	75.11	Paul Wright	75.11	David Fawcett	75.10	Martin Liversage	222.31
3rd	F-SP	Stephen Moloney	75.08	Andy Southward	74.11	Jeff Brookes	75.09	David Fawcett	222.26

I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate all those who won awards and put in some amazing scores in some extremely challenging conditions – Well done to everyone involved.

As a surprise for all the competitors, a large Hog Roast was sponsored by Aughton Automation and this fed everyone with a hardy helping of honey glazed pork and crackling carved straight from the spit and served alongside all the trimmings, salads and roasted garlic potatoes. It was also great that the caterers didn't stop serving until everyone was full to the brim and there was nothing left over but polished bones shining brighter than the silverware in the 101 club house.



Russell Simmonds taking pole position at the pass

As the light faded into the night, there was a final shout out asking for all teams and volunteers to be back on the ranges for 07.30am the following day. Everyone then went their separate ways to continue the evening's party in various hotel bars in and around the Liverpool area and discuss the days shooting, and come up with a winning formulas for the teams event the following day.

Weather reports that evening weren't looking too good for Sunday as a cold front was expected to pass through the NW regions bringing with it heavy rain and chilling temperatures. Thankfully strong winds throughout the night pushed the worst of the heavy rain away from Hightown and by 5am the air had cleared leaving a very cold and crisp morning.

Come 6am and the early birds started arriving back on the ranges for more bacon butties and strong coffee in plentiful supply. During this time we witnessed countless large skeins of wild pinkfoot geese being pushed from the foreshore at the back of the ranges, breaking the mornings silence. The early morning sun had then begun popping over the horizon and was just starting to light the morning sky. By 7am all competitors using the range armoury at Altcar had collected their rifles and were back at the club house ready for further instructions. Weather apps forecast a belt of rain to hit the ranges between 8.40-1030am but for the most part it was a relief to hear that dry and windy conditions were forecast throughout the day.

Sunday's Laurels Rutland Teams Event was run in a different format than the previous day's Individual competition and with 22x 4 Person teams on the ranges, we were in for a very busy day. The 101RC provided an army of volunteers to cover all the marking and lookout duties on the ranges leaving all the teams to concentrate and focus on their shooting.

With all competitors ready for 8am the different classes were advised to go in the appropriate directions and be ready for a 830am start. After a safety brief on the ranges by the RCO's - Richie Jones and Mick Longbottom, score cards were selected by team captains at random and each card showed who was shooting on what lanes throughout the day's competition ahead.

With the amount of teams present at this years competition, it was decided earlier in the year that the 6-7x Factory Sporter teams who entered would shoot three separate matches at 600 yards on C Range. Teams would have a generous blow off session before the start of Match 1 and each of the 3 matches allowed a 90 minute time slot for all four team members to string shoot 2 sighters and 15 scoring shots to count. Teams would have a short break between each of the matches and also move to different firing points for each match in a randomly selected order as stated on their score cards.

The format for the 16x F/TR and F-Open teams was different. They were going to be shooting on D Range over two details at 800, 900 and 1000 yards. To keep everything as fair as possible, all F-TR teams would shoot together on detail 1 with the remaining F-Open teams following straight after on detail 2. Detail 1 would have a generous blow off period before having 50 minutes for all four members of each team to string shoot their 2 sighters and 10 shots to count. They would then dress back to the 900 yards firing line and allow Detail 2 to set up at 800. Detail 2 would then have a generous blow off period before also getting 50 minutes to complete their 800 yard match in the same fashion as detail 1 with each team member string shooting 2 sighters and 10 rounds to count.



No amount of freezing rain could dampen the high spirits of Rollafson's GB F/TR Team

As shooting on both ranges got off to a synchronised start at 830am, the heavens decided to open up with a sudden onslaught of rain that was driven in by a moderate wind. This caught a lot of the guys on detail 1 out and made for a very cold and damp Match 1. For those that haven't been to Altcar before, the long range firing points between 800 – 1000 yards are sheltered on either side by a thick wall of fir trees. When the wind does decide to blow, the firing points are trapped in a long wind tunnel that often throws the shooter several red herrings with regards to wind indicators and makes the puzzle of Altcar all the more endearing.



The calm before the storm as F/TR's Detail 1 gets ready for Match 1 and a 2+10 at 800 yards

With Sunday 11th November being Armistice Day, the RCO's called a cease fire on both ranges at 1045am. We used this stoppage to scramble for waterproofs and grab a quick hot drink and bite to eat back at the 101 club house before gathering together and observing a 2 minute silence at 11am to acknowledge 100 years since the end of the First World War, and remember and honour all those who paid the ultimate price for our freedom.

By 11.10am the rain had completely stopped and the sun was starting to literally blaze through the clouds. It was bizarre as the earlier wind tunnel on the range then became a sun trap. Waterproofs were exchanged for sunglasses and the trees either side of the firing points at the rear of the range resembled the film set from Blair Witch with random articles of clothing and pieces of kit being hung from any available branch in order to dry off in the warm breeze.

With hypothermia now avoided, the weather apps had actually got it right and we could enjoy the rest of the day under the sun and clear blue skies as stated earlier in the morning.

With all competitors now gathered back on the ranges, we were then given the go ahead to commence live firing by the RLO at Altcar, and shooting got back under way at 11.15am to complete Match 1 at 800 yards on D Range for detail 2 including the Factory Sporter teams Match 1 at 600 yards on C Range.

It took a while to get back into the swing of things but once everyone was dry and warm again, competitors were back on auto pilot. The guys on C-Range flew through their Matches 2 and 3 at 600 yards as they didn't need to dress back and only had to move between firing points.

Listening to the previous radio chatter between the RCO's and Butt's officers it was clear to hear that it wasn't all plain sailing for those guys shooting on C Range at a shorter distance of 600 yards. They didn't have the luxury of the shelter that we had on D Range and were caught out in the elements with nowhere to hide.

As Message 4's rolled into the butts in plentiful supply, there were clear targets being raised back up throughout the line confirming that rounds had simply being blown off target by the sudden and demoralising 3MOA+ gusts and severe angle changes that hadn't shown on the heavy wet flags.

On D Range, several competitors had similar issues which added to the underlying mystery of Altcar. The range gods demanded respect from all those shooters who were there and anyone who didn't appreciated the effects of the wind tunnel, did so at their own peril and were caught out as several clear targets were presented to experienced and well drilled shooters who went from solid V-Bulls to clear targets with no warning right in the middle of their strings. This left them scratching their heads in disbelief for an explanation as to what had just happened.

Messages went down range to drop targets again and double check for any shots on target or indication of neighbouring cross shots but in the majority of cases, the targets came back up clear as indicated and showed the real devil at play on the range. This was Altcar's true colours showing and it certainly raised a few pulses at both ends of the range amongst all those at the sharp end.

With Match 1 now complete, Detail 2 dressed back to the 900 yard firing line after offering the RCO a token gesture of what was once a pretty looking score card yet now resembled a smudged piece of paper mache with scores just about legible. Several dry and clear plotting sheets needed to be cross referenced after the match in order to confirm match totals to assure the correct aggregates were submitted to the stats department.

Detail 1 were then allowed to start their Match 2 at 900 yards while basking in the sun. Match 2 was another 2+10 for all team members and it wasn't long before they had finished and detail 2 were then setting up on the firing point for their 900 yard match. Once all rifles had been cleared and score sheets handed in, everyone then dressed back to the rear of the 1000 yard point.



Detail 2's F-Open teams getting ready to start Match 2 and a 2+10 at 900 yards

As we stood behind the 1000 yard firing point, you could feel the conditions were on the change again as temperatures started to plummet and the sun got lower and lower in the sky. Match 3 at 1000 yards was a 2+15 for all team members and as detail 1 got under way it was bizarre to watch the bright rays from the sun light up the targets yet at the same time we were cast under a bitterly cold dark shadow. As the sun continued to drop, it reached the point where it could no longer peer over the thick wall of fir trees either side of the firing points, nor was it able to penetrate them and for the remainder of the competition we were shooting in a giant's fridge.

It was a battle of wills and with everyone jumping about to keep themselves warm, detail 1 cracked on and got their final match finished just before 1445hrs. Detail 2 were then allowed to get set up on the firing point with their soft kit and rifles. I had to laugh as I witnessed teams gathering together and having a quick game of short straws to determine which team member would have to stay behind and be registered keeper for a team that was about to start shooting.

As there were 16 teams on D Range and only 8 targets on this range. As detail 1 shot a match, one member from each team in detail 2 would act as registered keeper and vice versa. This worked well and meant the teams could concentrate on the job in hand and didn't have to worry about moving shooters around to other points to keep score, leaving all team members not shooting able to act as coaches and help steer their current shooter in the direction of the V-Bull – In theory anyway!

With the unfortunate gathering of “Oliver Twists” selecting the short straws and their own fate, the remaining 3 members of detail 1's teams beat a rapid retreat out the rear of the range and onto the road that led back to the Laurels club house in order to seek refuge in the warmth only a short walk away.

News then came over the radio that all the Factory Sporter guys had completed their matches on C Range and were now also dressing back to the warmth of the club house. This was the indication for the 101 chefs to light up the cookers and get the hot plate sizzling for the incoming hungry masses. Behind the scenes and in a team like effort, all those guys marking targets on C Range then moved over to join the guys marking on D Range for a final push to help keep momentum up and the pace going for the final F-Open detail that were about to start shooting Match 3.

Once the RCO signalled the start of the match, F-Open didn't need much persuading and opened up with a solid barrage of shots down range. Contrary to most ranges I've been on, Altcar seems to work in a different way. Take for instance Bisley, as a rule the calm conditions are found first thing in the morning with winds building mid afternoon and calming down again as the day draws to a close. Altcar on the other hand is hugely affected by the tide with winds building throughout the mornings, subsiding somewhat in the mid afternoon before coming back with vengeance during the final stages of the day, as the tides are on the change. This greatly affects shooting here on the coast and can make it very interesting and rather frustrating at times.

With a monumental effort from the butts, all teams got finished within the allotted time frame and against some seriously tricky winds that moved all the teams around the score board making it very exciting right to the bitter end.

As we reached 1610hrs, there was a sigh of relief from everyone as the last shot was scored and a message 10 and compliments was sent back to the butts. That was it and marked the close of play at Altcar.

Credit must be given to all the 101 volunteers who helped run this competition behind the scenes. For those of you who have marked targets before, its a very long and extremely hard day for the fittest of bodies but to keep it going for a full day at competition speed deserves a lot of credit and a big thank you from everyone who attended this event.

With the ranges now cleared of shooters, the targets were patched up and put away in the butts store, sentries were stood down and all those out on lookout duties in the Outer Hebrides off Altcar Ranges were brought back in to thaw out. Returning to the 101 club house on mass, it was business as usual on the hospitality front and the chefs had an assembly line of cheese burgers, bratwurst hot dogs and grilled onions with all the condiments flying off the hot plate at lightning speed and feeding all the competitors and volunteers in an orderly fashion. Washed down with a welcome brew in the warmth of the 101 hub “The Laurels”, and all the earlier hardships and weather conditions had soon been forgotten about.

While everyone was being fed and watered, this brought the guys dealing with the stats some extra time as unfortunately the main computer had gone down leaving the match officials to trawl through all the scores using pen and paper and all available abacuses, fingers and toes in order to collate the teams results while another team worked out the overall grand aggregates for all the shooters. Going back to Saturday's Individuals and medals were given to the highest three shooters at each distance and in each of the three classes. Each shooter's scores were then added together for all the distances shot to form an aggregate and determine the overall champions of the day. Recipients would then be awarded personalised glass and trophy awards in each class.

Sunday's team winners were determined by the teams with the highest aggregates on the day which was each team members combined scores from each of the three distances added together. Personalised glass awards and medals were awarded to the top three teams in each class as shown below.

Results showing Top 3 Teams in each class – The Laurels Rutland Teams Event

Place	Class	Team Name	Score
1st	F/TR	V HUNTERS (2)	675.48
2nd	F/TR	GB ROLLAFSON	668.49
3rd	F/TR	101 F/TR TEAM	666.45
1st	F-Open	TEAM TILT	682.47
2nd	F-Open	NORMAL 4 NORFOLK	680.56
3rd	F-Open	JMR 7'S	667.45
1st	F-SP	101 TEAM GAVIN	839.79
2nd	F-SP	101 TEAM TONGE	829.72
3rd	S-SP	FULWOOD TEAM (Y)	789.63

As a bonus for all competitors who signed up to the full weekend of competitions, there was finally The Altcar Grand Aggregate. These winners were determined by adding the grand aggregate from each competitor's scores from every distance over the full two days of the Individual and Teams competitions in all three classes. This kept it very exciting and gave all the competitors a chance at winning some truly amazing quality prizes from a fantastic team of competition sponsors including various personalised 101RC glass awards and branded shooting caps as extras.

Team Champions – The Laurels Rutland Teams Event



F/TR – V Hunters (2)

Tony Marsh
Rob Hale
Russell Simmonds
Brogan O'Shea Smith

F-Open Team Tilt

Hugh Inglis
Paul Sandie
Alan Manson
Des Parr

F-SP 101 Team GAVIN

Cam Grant
Chris Gavin
John Prescott
Andy Black

Top 3 Places in each class – The Altcar Grand Aggregate

Place	Class	Name	GA Score	Sponsors	Quality Prizes
1st	F/TR	Rob Hale	396.38	RUAG UK, KAHLES & TIER ONE	KAHLES K1050 MOAK + 30mm Tier One mounts
2nd	F/TR	David Rollafson	390.32	AIM Field Sports	AIM 50 Drag Bag
3rd	F/TR	Ray Hennessy	389.36	AIM Field Sports	AIM Range Mat
1st	F-Open	Lance Vinall	398.53	Optics Warehouse, Delta Optics & Tier One	Delta Stryker 5-50x56 + 34mm Tier One mounts
2nd	F-Open	Jason Miller	395.42 (CB)	AIM Field Sports	AIM 50 Drag Bag
3rd	F-Open	Alan Manson	395.42	AIM Field Sports	AIM Range Mat
1st	F-SP	David Fawcett	437.55	Bergara Rifles & RUAG UK	Bergara B14 BMP .308 Rifle + 28" Super Heavy Barrel
2nd	F-SP	Cam Grant	435.52	AIM Field Sports	AIM 50 Drag Bag
3rd	F-SP	Paul Wright	433.42	AIM Field Sports	AIM Range Mat



F/TR Altcar GA Winner - Rob Hale



F-Open Altcar GA Winner - Lance Vinall



F-SP Altcar GA Winner – David Fawcett (Left) with RUAG's James Fowler



***1 of 3 AIM 50 Drag Bag Winners
F-Open Jason Miller AGA - 2nd Place***

***1 of 3 AIM Range Mat Winners
F-SP Paul Wright AGA - 3rd Place***

I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the competitors who won awards and prizes throughout the weekend including everyone involved at the 101 Rifle Club who helped out and worked tirelessly behind the scenes and front of house to organise such a superb and extremely competitive competition. The hospitality and friendliness shown to everyone taking part was second to none and it was the perfect way to wind down a busy competition season for all involved.

As with all competitions of this scale, it's a learning curve for the organisers and it was great to see so many big hitters on the UK F-Class scene travelling from far and wide to shoot at Altcar. I'm sure next year will be bigger and better as new ideas are brought to the table and ways to improve the format are introduced. I'm very interested to see how this competition evolves and grows in the future as I'm sure on the back of this year's success, it will become a permanent fixture on the F-Class calendar.

To learn more about this competition, see a detailed list of results from the weekend or to keep up to speed with new developments in 2019, please check out the 101 Rifle Club website or join their competition Facebook page "The All Distance Challenge & Laurels Rutland Teams Event"

I look forward to seeing you all on the firing point soon.

Kind Regards,

Richie

101RC F/TR Team Captain