

MLAGB

Muzzle Loaders Association of Great Britain



Safe Shooting Practices for Muzzle Loading Firearms

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1. General

The following is intended to give a muzzle loading RSO/RCO the knowledge to run a muzzle loading detail, where handguns, muskets and rifle are being shot at various venues and ranges, both indoor and outdoor.

2. Range Construction for Muzzle Loading Firearms

Muzzle loading firearms may be shot on outside civilian ranges already certified for cartridge firearms providing the firearms used are within existing limits of muzzle velocity or muzzle energy stated on the Range Safety Certificate and calibre size.

On MOD and Reserve Forces & Cadet Association (RFCA) ranges, the use of muzzle loading firearms must be authorized within the local Range Orders. However, there are elements of muzzle loading that require facilities which may not be provided on ranges used mainly by shooters of cartridge firearms. These are the problems of muzzle blast on revolvers, and debris from the flintlocks and sparks from the match on matchlocks.

All revolvers, where there is not perfect alignment of each chamber with the barrel, tend to slice a sliver of the lead off the side of the ball as it jumps from the mouth of the chamber into the barrel. In addition, when flintlocks are discharged, small particles of flint break off as it hits the frizzen. Such debris is “blasted” sideways on discharge and can cause injury to adjacent shooters.

A further problem is the generation of sparks blown from the lit matchlock discharge. Although there is a requirement for the shooter to ensure that the match is retained with the arm on discharge, this does not stop the glowing shards of the cotton match from being blown about the firing point. The fitting of side screens will resolve this problem.

Perforated plastic netting, which is installed in some ranges from the forward edge of the shooting table at the firing point to some distance to the rear of the shooting table, poses problems for the muzzle loading shooter. Such mesh screens are normally installed to enable the Range Officer to see what cartridge arm shooters are doing from the side. These screens are unfortunately ineffective in reducing the above problem. Matchlock firearms, pistols or muskets should not be shot on ranges of this type as the match sparks will burn large holes in the plastic netting.

There is a lot of smoke emitted from black powder firearms! It is therefore essential that, when muzzle loading firearms are shot on indoor ranges, the air extraction system is adequate to deal with the smoke produced.

Many indoor ranges have been constructed or modified with vertical back-stops with Linatex rubber or equivalent curtains hanging in front of the back-stop to prevent “splash back”. Balls discharged from muzzle loading firearms, using a related small charge, may have insufficient energy to pass through such thickness of curtain and can bounce back down the range. A fabric curtain blanket or sheeting can be hung in front of the rubber curtain on a temporary basis when shooting small calibre pistols, effectively keeping “bounce back” under control.

The RSO has a duty to ensure the facilities appropriate to the muzzle loading firearms which will be in use on the range are in place before allowing shooting to commence.

3. **Basic Safety rules for Handling Black Powder**

On indoor ranges, most of which will have concrete floors, a muzzle loading shooting session will leave the floor in front of the firing point covered with burnt powder, bulk filler (such as semolina), spent patches, wads, and minute particles of lead. This debris should be routinely removed and disposed in a manner defined by the club rules at the end of a shooting session. The floor should be dampened first to stop any lead dust which may exist being unnecessarily brushed into the air. When dry, this debris may burn, particularly Pyrodex or other black powder substitutes or nitro powders have also been used in gallery rifles during the same shooting session. This is because virtually all the finer grades of black powder ignite in the barrel (even if it continues to burn outside the barrel) where as a small proportion of other powders usually fail to ignite and is blown downrange. A vacuum cleaner with a water filter may be a wise purchase to safeguard anybody cleaning the range.

4. **Handling Muzzle Loading Firearms in the Range**

Never let anyone pick up a muzzle loading arm (or any other for that matter) that is not theirs without first requesting permission from the owner to do so.

Assume all muzzle loading firearms are loaded until proved otherwise.

Long firearms should be loaded at the tables provided on the range. On open ranges such as Bisley, competitors invariably provide their own tables of varying design.

The arm, having been loaded, is carried forward to the firing point muzzle upwards and the firing position taken up. Only then is the cap placed on the nipple, the pan primed or the match removed from its storage tin fitted to the serpentine on the match lock.

The long arm should only be put on full cock once firmly seated in the shoulder

When a shooter has completed the designated number of shots in a detail with a fixed time period (e.g 30 minutes), the shooter should bench the firearm and if time permits clean the firearm **quietly** they may choose to indicate to the Range officer that it is safe and the official will check the firearm is “clear” and will give permission for the arm to be “boxed”.

However, it is easier for the RSO to wait till the end and “clear” all firefirearms in one go.

The RSO has every right to require a shooter to “unbox” a firearm which has been boxed, without RSO’s agreement, to show it is clear.

5. **Range Staff**

At major range complexes such as Bisley and Wedgenock, there will be any number of RSOs officiating on different ranges within the complex at the same time.

Many ranges are split into bays, with dividing “walls” between the firing point to the target frames, often made from railway sleepers. These dividers are more than sufficient protection to enable shooters or range staff to “go forward” in one bay whilst shooting is still in progress on adjacent bays. This enables much greater range utilization when disciplines with different timings are being held on the same range. Each of these bays will typically have six or more

individual lanes, each with its own firing point and each bay will have its own RSO or perhaps a Safety Supervisor on MOD ranges. The RSO will be responsible for the safety aspects and shooting within that bay. Where a range is split into bays each with its own RSO or Safety Supervisor, a more senior RSO may be appointed to maintain overall supervision of the range. This is typically termed a Chief Range Officer (CRO)

In some ranges, such as Wedgenock, some 20 or more firing points may be under the control of a single RSO. Individual competitors may be shooting any one of the MLA courses of fire appropriate to the range (e.g., the MLA pistol competitions of Kuchenreuter, Cominazzo, Colt and Mariette) at the same time, but because the range timings and rules are identical, a single set of range commands can be used. If the RSO feels there are too many competitors for one RSO to “police” then they should appoint “wing officers,” i.e., additional ROs to assist them.

6. RSO/RCO

RSO at club level may be required to run their club range for a very limited number of courses of fire and with a very limited number of types of firearms. At the other end of the scale, RSOs may be required to carry out their duties for a large number of muzzle loading disciplines, including the shooting of both pistols and long firearms. A MLAGB qualified RSO will be sufficiently experienced to run ranges at regional as well as national club level. In all these different disciplines the range commands targets and course of fire may vary, as well as the the distance and procedure for “capping off”. However, the basic safety and range control techniques are a common feature and once learned can be applied across a whole range of muzzle loading disciplines.

The primary duty of the RSO when muzzle loading firearms are being shot is to run safe shooting sessions, whether on a club night or at an open meeting. They do this for the benefit of the shooters with due respect for the local range orders, the immediate course of fire and where appropriate, the rules of the competition being shot.

In carrying out these duties safety is paramount

An RSO supervising a muzzle loading course of fire is expected to know both the rules for running the range and running the event. A course of fire may be relatively unstructured in the club environment with practice, training and competitive matches taking part on the same range at the same time. Once the Range Officer has learned to control shooting both in the club environment and typical competitions of the types illustrated, he will be able to control others with safety. What is particularly important is that the Range Officer recognize common safety problems or potential breeches of the rules and acts accordingly. Intervention should, where possible, be carried out without disturbing either the composure of the shooter or the adjacent shooters on the firing point. Common sense is the best back ground for a good RSO.

7. Storage and Transport of Powder and Priming Systems

The purchase, transport, and storage of black powder (gun powder) is regulated by law as it's an explosive. Keep bulk quantities of the powder in the containers in which they were purchased.

These containers must be kept in a HSE compliant wooden box of approved design when in domestic premises. Limitations on the amount of powder kept will apply, and will be subject to the requirements of the local firearms department. Store percussion caps in the containers they were purchased in and keep them separated from powder.

It is preferable to transport powders in a plastic box containing pre-weighed charges in plastic phials. It is unlikely that pre-weighed charges cannot be “created” at home, and their use is mandatory in all MLAGB shooting. The MLAGB would advise not to use glass phials on safety grounds. Depending on range regulations, phials can be reloaded from a suitable container, during the break between details.

MLAGB rules prohibit the use of flasks in their rifle, musket and handgun Shooting

8. Unpacking of Powder and Priming Systems on the Range

When phials of powder are unpacked, they should be placed at the table of the firing point for pistol and musket disciplines, and on the rear loading table for long firearms. Various ranges will have different set ups. The quantity of powder unpacked and placed on these tables should be sufficient only for the detail to be shot, together with essential spares.

Spilled powder from phials should not be allowed to accumulate on the loading table, but should be wiped up and disposed of safely as soon as it appears. On concrete floored ranges, the powder can be brushed onto the floor and water poured onto it. When the loading tables are placed on grass, excess powder can be safely brushed off the table into the grass, where it will quickly break down.

9. Storage and Transport of Muzzle Loading Firearms

Storage of reproduction muzzle loading firearms is regulated by law, as is the storage of original (antique) firearms, which, if going to be shot, must be on the appropriate license. Antique firearms (which are on license) and reproduction firearms must be stored in locked metal safes of approved design.

Transport of such firearms to the range is preferably done when each arm is placed in individual containers or sleeves, such containers or sleeves should be covered up and kept out of sight when travelling by car.

10. Unpacking of Firearms Prior to Shooting

Long firearms which have been unboxed and prepared for shooting should be placed butt down at the loading table. Pistols and revolvers must be placed on the table at the firing point, pointing down range. If practicable only one such arm should be placed on the table at any one time. The muzzle of the pistols on the bench should be forward of the phials. These provisions are to enable the range officer to see that all the firearms are safe, particularly when giving instructions for shooters or range staff to “go forward” on pistol ranges.

Firearms of any sort should not be touched for any reason when anyone is forward of the firing point

11. Handling of Firearms Prior to the Start of a Shooting Detail

Cleaning (de-oiling) of pistol barrels and cylinder chambers at the firing point prior to shooting may be done once there is no-one forward of the firing point under instructions from the RO. In pistols and revolver competitions shot under MLAGB rules, it is permitted to dry fire providing there is no-one forward of the firing point.

Cleaning (de-oiling) of barrels on long firearms is normally carried out at the loading table when the arm is un-boxed. Note that any range standing orders for MOD ranges would take priority in this respect.

12. Handling of Firearms During a Shooting Detail

Handguns should be loaded at the firing point. Rifles and muskets being shot at 50 meters, in most instances will be loaded at a table by the firing point to avoid unnecessary movement during the detail. Rifles being shot at 100 meters or above will usually be loaded at a table to the rear of the firing point. When rifles are being carried between the loading table and the firing point, the muzzle must be always pointed upwards. Firearms may only be primed/capped when the shooter is in their final shooting position. Whilst priming/capping, the arm should be pointing down range parallel with the ground.

The firearm should only be put on “full cock” when the butt of the rifle/musket is firmly in the shoulder, except in the case of Japanese matchlocks which do not have a stock and some vetterli rifles and under hammer rifles that do not have a half cock position.

Priming the pan of a flintlock or matchlock should either be by using priming powder from a phial, or priming flask with a capacity of 250 grains or less. When using the common commercial straight sided brass priming flasks, with a spring spout at one end and a screwed brass end at the other, the screwed in end must be removed and replaced either by a cork or plastic stopper before use.

In mid/long range rifle competitions where the target is raised by the butt marker, the targets will remain down until all competitors have “capped off” and fired their warming shots. On agreement with the competitors, the RSO will instruct the butt markers to raise targets so the competition can commence.

When a percussion cap fails to ignite, after waiting for 30 seconds it is common practice to drop the hammer on the same cap a second time, which may resolve the problem. If this fails the cap will need to be replaced, and the nipple may need to be cleared of debris. If the firearms will still not fire, fine priming powder can be poured into the nipple, and the extra powder may well ignite the charge. If this does not work the nipple can be removed powder introduced into the barrel bolster, the nipple screwed back in, and with a new percussion cap, the firearms can be fired again.

If the firearms then goes off the shooter must then ensure the nipple is firmly screwed into the bolster

All attempts to resolve ignition problems must take place at the firing point i.e., in the case of prone rifle, on the shooting mat and all offhand and handgun shooting on the loading table.

When a flintlock pan fails to ignite, the shooter should wait 30 seconds, then re-prime the pan. If the priming still fails to ignite, the cock should be put on half cock, the frizzen opened, and the priming charge emptied from the pan. The pan can then be cleared and recharged and/or the flint replaced. Before re-firing, a pricker could be used in the touch hole to ensure it is not blocked.

The firearms must always be pointed down range

On the matchlock, if this fails to ignite, the musket must be continuously pointed down range whilst the free hand first raises the serpentine from the pan. The pan cover is closed preferably with the hand below the pan, and finally the lighted end of the match is returned to its container. It must be noted that it is not uncommon for a matchlock, which has failed to set off the priming, as the match fell, to ignite the priming during the process of withdrawing the match from the pan.

Reasons for the main charge failing to ignite after the priming system has been set off more than once is attributable to:

- a. No powder in the barrel or cylinder
- b. The loaded powder has been contaminated - usually from oil in the barrel or chamber which has not been properly cleaned prior to loading
- c. A blocked touch hole or nipple
- d. In the case of a flintlock, a damaged flint or frizzen not giving a spark

On single barreled pistols and long firearms when there is a ball but no powder in the barrel, or the powder is contaminated, it is often easiest to drive the ball from the barrel using a CO2 "blower" and a suitable adapter for either the percussion nipple or a flint or matchlock touch hole as appropriate. With a percussion firearm, it is usually easier to remove the nipple before using the CO2 blower.

If this fails, in the case of percussion, remove the nipple and trickle a little priming powder into the cavity behind the ball. In the case of a flintlock, you should try to introduce powder through the touchhole. This will normally provide sufficient power to blow the ball from the barrel following re-priming. The clearance of ball in this manner must be done in the direction of the butts. The complete clearance of the ball from the barrel must be checked with a ram rod before reloading. If the ball does not discharge, the process of trickling powder through the touch hole can be repeated BUT the ball must be rammed back down onto the powder before the firearms is fired each time, otherwise the barrel could be bulged.

If either of these processes fail, the ball can sometimes be withdrawn from the barrel using a worm screw ended ball-puller. Before attempting this, the main powder charge should be rendered inert, by pouring oil through the touch hole and down the barrel. This process must take place on the firing point, the firearm must not be removed from the firing point whilst still loaded, and extreme care taken as obviously the firearms is still loaded.

On revolvers it is common practice to remove the cylinder, remove the nipple and to tap the ball from the chamber with a brass rod.

If none of these procedures clear the firearm, then under the supervision of the RCO, for rifles and muskets, the lock and nipple should be removed, and oil poured down the barrel

and through the touchhole or bolster, to render the powder charge inert. With flintlock and percussion single shot pistols, the same procedure should be adopted. In the case of revolvers, the cylinder should be removed, and again thoroughly oiled. **NB DO NOT USE WATER, AS THIS WILL CAUSE RUST IN THE BARREL, MAKING FUTURE EXTRACTION MUCH MORE DIFFICULT.** The firearm should then be boxed or put in a cover and removed from the range.

13. Matchlocks

The lit end of the match must be enclosed in a suitable “flame proof” container, designed to stop the match releasing sparks at all times except when a shot is being taken.

When firing matchlocks, the lit end of the match must be secured in hand and the other end attached securely to the match pot, short lengths of match tied to pieces of string are to be discouraged as they can fly all over the firing point.

No Firearms are to be handled whilst anybody is forward of the Firing Point

14. Range Commands in General

At Bisley, the Range Officer should not shoot at the same time as officiating on the range. At Wedgnock, the range rule is that if there are more than 4 shooters on the firing point, then the RSO must be non-shooting, and the MLAGB insurers have been advised accordingly. With fewer than 4 shooters, at Wedgnock the RSO may also participate in the shoot although this is not recommended.

Also, a register should be kept, showing who was the RO, during details, this should still apply even if the RO is also shooting.

Range Commands

MLAGB Commands

Commence Firing

Cease Fire

Is anybody still loaded
Is everybody clear?

NRA Commands

Carry on/Watch & Shoot/Standby

Stop

Show clear

EMERGENCY

STOP STOP STOP

STOP STOP STOP

15. Supporting Commands

There are a number of other commands which may be given that are applicable to MLA or NRA based shoots. However, these would not be given during a muzzle loading course of fire unless an emergency cease fire condition arose. These types of command are often given in pairs, such as “show clear and bench Firearms”. Such commands are typically as follows:

- **“Bench Firearms”** This is in respect of pistols, pointing the arm down range towards the backstop whilst being placed on the table at the firing point. Also applicable to long firearms when being fired from a table at a firing point.
- **“Show Clear”** The action showing that the arm is clear of the main charge and all priming material.
- **“Stand Back”** “The action of putting a clear space between the grounded or breached arm and the shooter to ensure that the arm cannot be touched and hence discharged by accident. Often used when RSOs have to “go forward” half way through a series to repair targets.
- **“Load and Make Ready”** the action of loading single shot pistols for the duelling sequence and particularly revolvers for the advancing target and the turning target disciplines of the Bow Street Runner and similar courses of fire.
- **“Load but do not Cap”** The action of loading revolvers at the 25m firing point in preparation to moving to a forward firing point under the Range Officers command.

16. Range Commands - Temporary and Emergency Cease Fire/Stop

If the detail needs to be stopped, the RSO needs to check how much time of the detail is left.

Situations will arise requiring the stopping of shooting before the scheduled end of the detail. Such incidents are thankfully rare. On such occasions the Range Officer must use commands suitable for the situation. A temporary cease fire may be occasioned, for example, to repair targets that have been blown off by the wind, because of a shooting accident or illness of a competitor who cannot be treated without disturbing the other shooters. Note there is no difference in the range commands given under emergency or temporary cease fire situations.

17. Emergency Cease Fire/Stop

When a dangerous or hazardous situation has become apparent the command “STOP STOP STOP,” will be used.

Once shooting has been stopped, the RSO must ensure that the range is made safe to enable either the emergency or temporary cease fire situation to be dealt with. The command “Bench, or Ground Firearms”, perhaps leaving firearms loaded but unprimed position may be appropriate in an emergency, when the time it takes to “show clear” to a third party is not available. Even if a serious accident takes place the RSO should call on an aid for help whilst he closes the range down safely, rather than putting range safety into the back ground to deal with the accident himself.

If shooting at Bisley the RO will radio the range office if medical help is required. The NRA will ring for an ambulance if one is needed, and meet the ambulance at the main gate and guide it to the range.

The command “unload” should be used with care on muzzle loading ranges. To remove the ball and charge from a muzzle loading arm is not easy under any circumstances. The safest way of “unloading” a muzzle loading arm is to discharge the shot into the back stop providing this option is open to the shooter.

When the "Cease Fire" command has been given during a course of fire, the "Show Clear" command would require that a revolver or single shot precision pistol was "Benched", the hammer was at half cock and there were no caps on the nipples. The shooter would then automatically "Stand Back" from the firing point. The equivalent position for flintlocks is with the cock at half cock and the frizzen open and the pan clear of any powder. On matchlocks the match must be returned to its container, the pan cover should be open and the pan empty of all powder.

On long firearms the equivalent would be to "show clear" and then stand the long arm at the shooters loading tables. Only when the whole range has been proved safe to the satisfaction of the Range Officer (and not his staff) can range staff go forward safely to rectify the problem.

If at Bisley or an MOD range and a cease fire has been called by "an outside agency" then wait for further instructions from Range Control.

The RSO must make provision for the time lost from calling a "Cease Fire" to be made up. When the detail has to be stopped for some time (say for more than 15 minutes of a 30 minute detail) it may be preferable to re shoot the complete detail at a later time. There are always winners and losers when this decision is made and the Range Officer should make clear his reasons for declaring a re-shoot to competitors and competition adjudicators alike.

18. Actions of a RSO Controlling the Shooting of Muzzle Loading on any range

The following outlines the responsibilities of the RSO. Whilst this list of responsibilities may look extensive, in practice most of it is a mixture of muzzle loading experience and common sense. It helps that these routines established for the average muzzle loading shooter from the general club night to national events, take care of a great deal of what follows without any intervention from a Range Officer.

Ensure all shooters and spectators have ear and eye protection

- Ensure individual shooters are aware of the range commands to be used and the course of fire to be undertaken
- Ensure that shooters under training or with limited experience are properly and independently supervised
- Ensure that shooters comply with the rules regarding the use of phials
- Ensure that shooters comply with the rules regarding the appropriate techniques for loading and priming, particularly when long firearms are loaded at a table behind the firing point
- Ensure that shooters comply with the requirements to remove spilled black powder or substitutes in a safe manner
- Take note of indication of malfunctions made known by shooters, and take appropriate action where necessary
- Ensure that dry firing, capping off or flashing off pans or fouling shots is only carried out when authorised
- Ensure that the shooter is taking the proper stance in competitive matches and is not leaning against the shooting table or side screen

- Ensure that loading techniques particularly for revolvers are following the rules of competitions
- Ensure that shooters who have finished shooting before the end of the allotted time for each competition do not disturb adjacent shooters, either by excessive cleaning of firearms, by dismantling their equipment at the firing point, by talking to spectators or other shooters and that their firearms are “proved safe” before boxing
- Ensure that any firearms remain loaded at the end of any series or course of fire are discharged safely into the back stop before further action is taken
- NB the RO is not there to assist shooters if they have a problem during the course of the detail. Whilst helping somebody, they will be totally unaware of any other problems on the range. If there is an experienced person on the range they can be asked to assist, however, if this is a competition, by accepting help, the shooter will forfeit their score
- The RSO’s duties only finish when all firearms and the firing point have been proved clear at the end of the shoot.

19. Reasonability for Functioning of Firearms during a Competition

The shooter is responsible for the correct loading, functioning, and maintenance of a firearm at all times. In MLAGB competitions the shooter cannot ask for help from anyone to resolve a problem, whether the firearm has broken or has been mis-loaded, without abandoning the competition. It is vitally important that, following a mis-fire for any reason, the arm is kept pointing down range for a full 30 seconds before attempting to resolve the fault.

Resolving mis-loading problems can and must be resolved by the competitor providing they do not cause any disturbance to other shooters.

For example, a cap which ignited but failed to ignite the powder in a revolver chamber would simply be replaced by another. A cap which fails to ignite may fire quite satisfactorily if the hammer is dropped a second time. When the powder in a flintlock or matchlock pan ignites but fails to ignite the main charge the pan is simply cleaned then re-primed.

In all these circumstances there is no need to inform the range staff. If a firearm breaks beyond immediate repair, it should be removed from the firing point after having been proved safe by the Range Officer at the end of the detail. If it can be repaired during the remaining time of the detail-**at the firing point** – the competitor is entitled under the rules to carry on where they left off in the remaining time.

The replacement of a firearm with another is not allowed under MLAGB rules and would result in disqualification. No extra time is allowed to resolve such problems. The Range Officer **must not** assist a shooter to resolve malfunctions.

20. Capping Off of Flashing Pans and Fouling Shots

Black powder firearms of all sorts, having been cleaned and lubricated after the previous shooting session, tend to accumulate oil in the nipples of percussion firearms, touch holes of flintlocks and matchlocks and patent breaches. All shooters should completely “de-oil” their firearms before starting to load. It is almost impossible to remove all the oil which has collected in the nipple cavities and patent breaches, and it is therefore common practice to discharge a cap or flash the pan without any powder in the chamber to clear oil from these

parts. Failure to do so can lead to a misfire on the first shot, and if oil gets into the powder the shooter may well have a major problem in clearing it in the short term.

It is also common practice to shoot a fouling/warming shot prior to starting the first series of shots. This clears the last vestiges of oil from the chamber and coats the barrel with the same degree of fouling that it will encounter during the course of fire. When the actions of capping off or taking a fouling shot can take place depends on the competition. The fouling shot will be directed at the backstop away from the targets.

In MLAGB competitions, capping off, flashing off of pans or the discharge of a fouling shot can only take place once the command “open fire” has been given.

In international or other formal shoots, it is necessary to declare a “fouling shot” to the verification officer prior to the competition commencing, otherwise penalties may be incurred.

Cylinders may be removed from a revolver, but not for loading, unless no loading mechanism is fitted, as is the case in some English revolvers. The practice of removing the cylinder from the revolver and capping it, leaving it out of the revolver until the command “fire” is given, is considered as loading. The shooter should be disqualified from that detail as they have loaded prior to the command from the RCO.

21. **The Shooting Stance**

A variety of shooting stances are used in muzzle loading shooting. All pistol courses of fire are fired in the standing position. The range officer must check that the shooter is not leaning against the shooting table or any blast screen during the course of the competition. In long arm shooting, standing, kneeling, prone and back positions are used dependent on the competition being shot.

22. **Loading Aids and Restrictions**

A drop tube is commonly used on single shot firearms to guide the powder into the chamber, rather than allowing it to ‘hang up’ on the fouled surface of the barrel. The exception to this is long firearms used in MLAGB competitions where the arm is categorized as a “military” rifle i.e. Enfield rifle or musket i.e. Brown Bess. Here, only a short funnel can be used. The funnel prevents spillage as the powder is dropped into the barrel.

In MLAGB revolver competitions, a loading press is only permitted when the revolver is not fitted with the necessary rammer. In all normal circumstances the revolver must be loaded with the cylinder in the revolver using the integral loading lever and rammer. This does not preclude the fully assembled revolver being supported in a stand during the loading process. In MLAGB revolver competitions a minimum of five chambers must be loaded each time for the first 10 shots of the 13 shot series. This is to prevent single chamber loading and using the revolver as a single shot pistol rather than a revolver. The fouling shot may be taken from any one of the loaded chambers.

In shooting revolvers, it is mandatory under MLAGB rules to close the open end of each chamber after loading with a high temperature grease or equivalent. This is to seal the mouths of unfired chambers to prevent cross ignition between chambers, known as a “chain fire”.

However, since most revolvers are down loaded for target work, the tight fitting ball and over-charge wads or bulk filler between the ball and powder serves to prevent any flash reaching the powder in charged chambers. The grease is a ‘belt and braces” requirement to prevent accidents.

With regard to long firearms, Enfield rifles, flint and percussion muskets are classed as military rifles, and must not be brushed/wiped out between shots. Match rifles, flint rifles and matchlock muskets are classed as “target” rifles and can be brushed/wiped out between shots, if the shooter so desires.

24. Prior to the start of the detail the RSO should give a range briefing, telling the shooters the duration of the detail, actions on hearing ‘STOP STOP STOP’, that if the shooter has a problem they can’t resolve themselves, to raise their hand, so the RSO is aware.

At the end of the details the RSO will order cease fire cease fire. If nobody is loaded then request an affirmation from each shooter that their firearm is clear. If anybody is still loaded, they must be instructed to fire their remaining shot into the back stop **NOT THE TARGET**. If a firearm will not fire at the end of the detail.

Nobody is to go forward until all firearms have been cleared and benched and the RSO has given the order.

23. Coaching and Spotting

Coaching is allowed when a shooter is undergoing training, but no form of coaching whether it be verbal or assistance with the firearm is allowed during a competition.

A non-shooter is allowed to keep a plot of the shooter’s shots during a competition, but this must not be shown or communicated to the shooter until the end of the relevant detail. Any assistance with the rifle, loading, sight setting, or verbal assistance from a third party will result in the competitor’s disqualification.

The RSO should also ensure the shooters are not being approached for a “chat” whilst shooting a competition, the person should be asked to talk to the shooter after the competition has finished, otherwise this can lead to misloads/double loads.

24. Definitions and Verification of “Original” and “Repro” Firearms (from the MLAIC “handbook”)

*“Any alterations to **an original firearm** which would spoil its historical value makes it ineligible for use in MLA(IC) competitions.”* An exception is the replacement of foresights on virtually all firearms to change the point of aim providing the original profile of the sight is maintained. In some MLA competitions, it is not even possible to re-bed the barrel or reduce the original trigger pressure. Sleeved barrels are also forbidden, other than in Japanese and Portuguese matchlocks - where some were traditionally made in this manner - although even here there may be some limitations.

In long arm competitions a two point sling can be used but not used so it in effect becomes a single point sling. At distances in excess of 600 yards a wrist rest may be used in match rifle competitions. Under NRA rules, the back position can be used at distance in excess of 600 yards.

“A replica is a modern made reproduction of an original antique firearm, with sights, lock assembly, stock, and barrel in the original style. Original parts may be used to build replicas. Replica firearms need to bear proof marks.” Replicas and reproductions are universally referred to as “repros”. As a case in point, the Ruger Old Army revolver, not being made as a reproduction of an antique firearm, is not eligible for use in muzzle loading revolver competitions, except in “free” pistol competitions

NB Clubs must have procedures in place should a shooter be incapacitated or hospitalized during the course of the shooting, as to what happens to their firearms. If you have an RFD present, or one at that can be contacted to collect the firearms, that will work well. If there is not one, firearms can be locked in the club Armoury otherwise an alternative plan will have to be put in place. If you are shooting at Bisley, the NRA Armoury will store the firearms until they can be collected.

Black powder in phials or containers can be taken offsite by somebody with a black powder licence. If cartridges are involved these can be removed by somebody who has that calibre on their FAC.

@ A B Whiffin

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