

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

Bisley General Meeting

Minutes of the Bisley General Meeting
held in the Pavilion Training Rooms, Bisley
on Wednesday 25th July 2018 from 9.00pm

Present:

Chairman:	Mr JGM Webster
Chief Executive	Mr A Mercer
Vice Chairman General Council	Dr JD Warburton
Treasurer	Mr D Lowe
Members:	120 Members and others

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

790 competitors took part in Queen's Stage I.

There is a three way tie for the Bronze Medal between Mr JAM Paton of Canada, Cdt JC Voyer of RCAC NRT and Miss LAE Crowson of Old Sedberghians all with a score of 105.17v.

The last score qualifying for Stage II is 101.8v, finishing 33.4 at 600 yards.

Chairman

Proceedings

Chairman

Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening. It's 9pm and I think we should start.

Welcome to the Bisley General Meeting of 2018.

Before I start, I think we should note that since we last gathered we have lost a few notable friends from the shooting community. In particular, four Vice Presidents of our Association. They are Haddon Donald from New Zealand, Sir Roger Bannister, Jim Thompson from Canada and Richard van Lingen from South Africa. Many of you will have been at Jim Thompson's "canonization" earlier in the meeting.

So I think it would be appropriate if I could ask us all to be still for a moment and remember these and other friends of the Association who have departed in the past 12 months.

Thank you very much.

On a lighter note, I would like to open that it would be good of us to record that one of our Vice Presidents was decorated earlier in the year in the Queen's Birthday Honours list. I am sure we would all like to record our congratulations to Colin McEachran, who sadly can't be with us this week, for getting the MBE for services to target shooting and to Commonwealth Games Scotland.

(Applause)

Thank you very much. Colin has had a hip replacement, so sadly he cannot be with us this week, but I am pleased that we can recognise his achievement.

I am joined here on the rostrum by John Warburton, the Vice-Chairman of General Council, Derek Lowe, our Treasurer and Andrew Mercer, our Chief Executive.

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

I would also like to mention both of our newest Vice Presidents, who were elected at the AGM.

The first is Mahendra Persaud of the Guyana Rifle Association. Mahendra is a regular visitor to Bisley. Most notably, Guyana celebrated its 150th anniversary recently, and he was instrumental in ensuring that those teams from these islands and elsewhere had a wonderful time when they travelled there. He has been a stalwart of Guyanan and West Indian shooting for a very long time and it is a nice acknowledgement from us as the National Rifle Association of the UK to recognise Guyana and its 150 years with this award. He has been poorly recently and we wish him a speedy recovery.

The second is Des Vamplew. Des Vamplew is the Executive Vice President of the Dominion of Canada Rifle Association. They are also celebrating their 150th anniversary this year. Des has been a fairly frequent visitor to Bisley, but more obviously has been a long time contributor to excellence in shooting at the DCRA. He is a former Commonwealth Games gold medallist, and has been a meaningful contributor to ICFRA in recent years.

I would like to congratulate them both and I'm sure you would like to join me in doing so.

(Applause)

Moving on to the competitions:

We started with the Service Rifle events, which were supported by overseas teams from Canada and Oman. Over 200 competitors took part.

The winners of Her Majesty the Queen's Medals were as follows:

- for the Royal Navy/Royal Marines, Lieutenant J Crawford RN, Staff of Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Aviation and Carriers); his medal was awarded by Commodore Wainhouse on behalf of Gen Magowan who is President of Navy Shooting;
- for the Army Reserve, Warrant Officer 2nd Class J Douglas, 103 Battalion Royal Electrical & Mechanical Engineers; his medal was awarded by General M Carleton-Smith CBE, Chief of the General Staff;
- for the Army, Corporal Bishal Rai, 2nd Battalion Royal Gurkha Rifles; his medal was awarded by Lt General NAW Pope CBE, who is Deputy Chief of the General Staff;
- for the Royal Air Force, Sergeant A Lilley, RAF Waddington and his medal was awarded by Air Vice Marshall Smyth OBE DFC, President of the RAF Small Arms Association.

The Methuen Trophy Inter Corps Team Shoot was won by the Royal Gurkha Rifles.

Civilian Service Rifle opened the Imperial 2018 with their first shot taking place on 4th July. This saw 387 competitors shoot over 5 days, up again on last year's numbers. The class winners were as follows:

- for Historic, Rob England with a score of 513
- for Iron Sights, Sean Clarke with a score of 943
- for Practical Optic, Justin Frankland with a score of 1144 and
- for Service Optic, Adam Chapman with a score of 1156.

The CSR Meeting culminates in the NRA Methuen Cup Match. The Practical Class was retained by the London Practical Shooting Club 'A' Team, with The Highpower Rifle Association again the runners-up and the Pennine Shooting Sports Association again taking third. The Lee Enfield Rifle Association 'A' team retained the Mons Trophy for the Historic Enfield Class.

The winners of our fifth NRA Military Adaptive Championship this year was, in the Serving class, LCpl David Sly with a score of 390.39v, and in the Veteran class, Ryan Goodman with a score of 389.35v. Entries again saw a good increase from 28 competitors in 2017 to 44 this year.

A successful Inter Services Cadet Rifle Meeting was held over the period with a total of 93 teams competing, including the Royal Canadian Army Cadet National Rifle Team. The winning team in the Team Grand Aggregate was 2nd Northern Ireland Bn G Coy ACF with a score of 912.51v, while LCpl S Rudge - Somerset Gibraltar Coy ACF won the Bossom - the individual prize - with a score of 241.13v. The Lord Houghton of Richmond GCB CBE DL presented the prizes to the cadets.

At the Schools' Meeting there were 40 schools competing, with 448 cadets taking part. 19 of those schools participated in the Ashburton Shield which was won by Sedbergh School with a score of 761 with 47v beating Victoria College into second place by 6 points.

The Historic Arms Meeting was run over the weekend of 14th and 15th July, aided by volunteers to whom we owe our thanks. The event saw a slight increase in the number of competitors. Cadets from 211 ATC (Newbury) Sqn acted as markers and performed to their usual high standard.

Turning to Match Rifle, the Hopton was won by Mike Buchanan, previously known to some of us as Mike Baillie-Hamilton, beating Tim Kidner by two points on 988 with 99 V bulls. Rounding out something of a Scottish Grand Slam, Angus McLeod won the Albert, the last shoot in the Hopton, with the score of 220.29v.

The Elcho was retained by England with a score of 1746.199v, beating Scotland's 1739.185v. Ireland were third with 1736.193v and Wales fourth with 1692.155v. Top score was achieved by Scotland's Guy Blakeney with an excellent 223.28v.

The Imperial Gallery Rifle meeting had over 110 competitors, yet again an increase on last year's number, and nearly 1,300 competitions were shot, which was an increase of 6% over the preceding year. Our thanks go to those who helped organise this very enjoyable and relaxed event, and to the Range Officers who coped well with the increased numbers - and the heat.

The McQueen A, sponsored by Accuracy International, has had a very successful meeting with a more than doubling of entries. 2017 saw 43 entries whereas 2018 has seen 92 entries with the cadet numbers increasing from 24 to 55.

Overall Target and Match Rifle has shown 1045 entries, up on last years' 1012. 158 of those are from overseas. The Grand Aggregate has had 768 entries, slightly up on last year and we have seen teams and individuals from Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Guernsey, Jersey, Kenya, the Netherlands, New Zealand, South Africa and Trinidad & Tobago. 70 Under 25s are competing and 217 Under 21s, both up on last year. 58 entered the F-Class competitions, and 157 cadets have entered the Cadet Imperial, both of those competitions also up on last year's entries.

The oldest competitor is Jo Wright at 95, competing in his 61st Imperial Meeting, and the youngest is Miss K Butler of Sedbergh School at only 12 years of age, who is competing in her first. Congratulations to both.

(Applause)

We send our very best wishes for success on Friday to Charles Brooks with his Kolapore team, and on my left, to John Warburton and his TR team to Canada which travels next month.

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

To the Operational Shooting Training Team who produced military range teams and the MoD and Landmarc teams at Pirbright.

To the Bisley 'V' Club for organising "The Arthur Clarke" long range match for the cadets.

To Col. Robert Bruce and the CCRS for their support of the cadets with both ISCRM and the Schools Meetings.

To our Chief Range Officers, John Miller and Tony Clayton on Stickledown and Peter Turner and Lisa Railton on Century, and Martin Camp on the McQueen.

To our Chief of Staff, Mike Turner, Chief Butts Officers, Colin Scholes on Century and Charlie Kibble on Stickledown, and all the RCOs and Butt supervisors who have kept things going for us. Our sincere thanks also goes to all the markers who have done a sterling job in the butts. My personal experience of their marking has been faultless in what must be very hot conditions. And I know that many of you agree with me, so can I suggest that we show our appreciation with a round of applause.

(Applause)

Also to the staff who have prepared the Camp and Ranges. I do hope you continue to see an improvement in the facilities here at Bisley.

To the team of volunteers who have opened the Museum.

To 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 run smoothly, as well as all those working diligently behind the scenes to ensure a successful Imperial Meeting for all.

There is a Parish Notice. We had two elections for positions on General Council this year. Firstly the West Midlands Regional Representative for which we had two candidates put forward. The successful candidate was Richard Kenchington. The second vacancy was for the Sporting Rifle Discipline, and the successful candidate was Steve Wallis.

Our congratulations go to both candidates.

So that brings to an end my formal remarks. I'd now like to throw the meeting over to the floor. We have a microphone at the front, so please come forward to the microphone, state your name and please make your point relatively succinctly, and for sure in under 2 minutes. Thank you.

Henry Watson, Royal Navy Target Rifle Club:

I'm here on behalf of Charles Dickenson, who is the Target Rifle Discipline Representative, to promote the Target Rifle training courses that the NRA has started to run, supported by material from the Bisley clubs, particularly the London & Middlesex, and their legacy from the Morris family. There is now a complete set of instructional material available to coaches who want to run courses.

The NRA have seemingly managed to lose all records of qualified coaches, despite my hearing that there were there as software on hard disk, and indeed in hard copy, so the invitation is - and please pass this on to all the people in your clubs who might have had a qualification - we are willing to re-qualify people with a half-day update and give them access to all the material in order that they can run courses.

The courses are aimed to bring beginners up to a reasonable standard, and for those honest strivers to get them up to a better standard. There will also be courses for advanced skills, advanced wind coaching, advanced coaching, in the autumn, and indeed we will be qualifying new club coaches with a course starting in the autumn, that I am promised the NRA will have ready for us in time. I look forward to seeing them fulfil that promise.

There are notices up around the camp, I won't bother you with reading it all out, they are on the English XX noticeboard and some of the other ones. So if you are at all interested, please make your name known to the NRA Training staff, or to Charles Dickenson, who is available through the NRA website. Thank you very much.

Chairman:

Thank you very much, Henry.

Nigel Wells, UK Police

You'll be pleased to know Mr Chairman, I have not done any 8.6s down potholes over the handle bars! So thank you for filling in the emergency ones, and I know that it's on the list to get through the camp later on.

As I said last year, I think it's time we did away with the scramble boards for target rifle. For a number of years now Match Rifle have not had scramble boards. You turn up and are allocated a target and I think it's time that TR had the same thing. Then the days will be over where you are on Range 15 and you suddenly discover you should be on Range 18. Because if you've got a target number, you won't go wrong.

Chairman:

Thank you very much, Nigel. Because I shoot the GGG Aggregate, I do know that Match Rifle has done away with scramble boards. I believe this is under discussion with Bill Richards, and the change you recommend is under consideration.

Regarding potholes, I did promise at the AGM that we were going to have £45k worth of tarmac laid between the end of AGM and the end of June. Sadly our contractor let us down. It was open to us to get another contractor in. I have to say that contractors who are available at short notice are nearly always available for a very good reason, and that is they are not terribly good contractors! So thank you for bearing with us with respect to the potholes in the roads. I am now told they will be completed in August.

Neville Stebbings, City of Newcastle

I'm afraid I strongly disagree about the point that was made about scramble boards. If you can't find a range number, then what makes you think that people can find a target?

I couldn't see any difference. What I do know is, the moment people know in advance which lane they are going to be shooting on, it leaves the door open for cheating, and I think it's a bad move and there is no good reason to make the change to it. So there is no need to change, and therefore we shouldn't.

Chairman:

We will clearly take the issue under advisement with the Shooting Committee.

Chris Law, North London Rifle Club:

I applaud the work being done on the training of the markers by a group led by Jodie (Gray-Piazza). There is now a intent in the butts to find your shot hole. Jodie is also involved in another important function in the Imperial Meeting. She's part of a group - the Three Musketeers - that run Century butts, including Colin Scholes. If there are any changes of her position to take her out of butts, there is a body of opinion that feels it would be to the detriment of the running of the Target Rifle phase of the Imperial Meeting. That's point one.

The work of the markers is seriously impaired by the continued use of this accursed Correx backing material, particularly at long range. In the weeks before the Imperial Meeting started, a shooter who was marking in the long range butts, found it incredibly difficult to observe shots which were self-sealing when they were outside the black paper area.

I have asked in the past that this should be addressed. If you were shooting long range during the Imperial Meeting and your target was held down for a long time, or you were given a miss and it was subsequently found after a Message 7, it's due to the unsatisfactory qualities of Correx backing.

For the 150th anniversary next year, we are likely to have more overseas visitors, and I would ask the NRA to reconsider a request we've had previously, to provide laundry facilities on the camp for those who are here for a protracted period. It really is not good enough to say there's a perfectly good laundrette in Brookwood so take your kit there. Very often, the only car that couples use is occupied on the firing point for the shooter, so you can't expect people to be commuting into the local village.

On a lighter note, we have fourteen radio messages, and nobody would normally want to see that number extended. There was, however, an irregular radio message passed at the end of the tie shoot during the Match Rifle phase. The markers knew that there was one sighter, converted by 15 to count, that the end of one competitor's shoot the irregular message that was sent to the firing point, was anonymous marker on target 50, sends his compliments to anonymous shooter on target 50 for an excellent shoot.

Is there a place for a Message 15?

I'm now withdrawing after my 10 years assisting on the ranges. It's been with great satisfaction that I have conducted these, and I will enjoy meeting you all behind the ranges, in the shade, in the future.

Thank you very much.

Chairman:

Thank you Chris. We will certainly consider the request about laundry facilities for the 150th Meeting. As everybody knows, next year's Imperial Meeting is the 150th Imperial Meeting, and we are planning a bigger event.

I know the issue of Correx has been brought up by you before. I know it's been addressed by us before, and it has been addressed with some thoroughness, so I'm slightly surprised that its been brought up again, but nonetheless there we are.

Can I also take this opportunity to thank you for your 10 years of assisting? We all know that we depend quite heavily on volunteers and assistants to make our shooting at this meeting, and for that matter at other meetings, work.

And so, all joking aside, folks like Chris - and Chris in particular - do a terrific job to make sure that we can conduct these matches in the way that we do. So I thank you, sir, for your contribution on that basis.

Hear hear

Henry Dodds, North London

Mr Chairman, members, thank you very much. This is my very first Imperial, my very first Bisley General Meeting, so forgive me if my question is either naïve or too pointed.

It is simply this. Actually it's not a naïve question, it's a great question! What is the Chief Executive's and Chairman's vision for the home of British shooting at Bisley and what role do you see the historic clubs and their club houses playing within that.

Chairman:

I think this has been quite well discussed but I don't mind trying to repeat it here. I would ask you to take a look at the 2018-2020 Strategic Plan.

Bisley is the national shooting centre, and I think therefore it is beholden on us to do the very best we can for all the constituents that hold us responsible for running their sport. I believe I am right in saying that we are responsible for 8 disciplines, and a further 12 sub-disciplines, which make 20 different disciplines or sub-disciplines in aggregate.

I think it has been true to say that since I've been shooting - and that has been over 45 years - the concentration of Target Rifle as the largest discipline has ebbed quite substantially such that it now represents less than 50% of our overall membership.

So there are a couple of things that we therefore need to recognise as a group. First is that all shooters are welcome at Bisley, not only Target Rifle shooters. I think there has been a perception that this is a Target Rifle venue first and foremost. It should not be. It still can be a Target Rifle venue of considerable clout, but it is not just a Target Rifle venue, and we owe it to all shooters to recognise this.

A predecessor of mine as Chairman once said that if the shooting sports don't hang together, they will hang separately. I continue to endorse that sentiment, because I think we owe it to anybody who wants to shoot and enjoys fullbore shooting, to be their governing body and provide facilities that they would care to come to and shoot.

I think the second thing that we have done poorly as a governing body - and this is mentioned in our 2018-2020 plan - is serve the interests of the shooting community to those people who do not really understand the sport of shooting at all, and often take a dim view of anybody who thinks that it's fun shooting with a rifle.

It is very obvious to us that there are a lot of people out there who have an prejudice against guns and therefore take issue with people who enjoy shooting guns. And so I am keen, and it is evident in our 2018-2020 plan, that we spend more time and money supporting and promoting the sport of shooting and marksmanship as a good pursuit in and of itself, because we will no doubt need that in the future. I believe that we have done this less well than we should have, and we need to be prepared to spend some time and money making sure that we fertilise goodwill amongst those people who would normally think that shooting is not a pastime that they would think was any kind of sport.

With respect to the infrastructure here at Bisley, the ranges are getting busier. I think I'm right in saying that the year on year increase of range utilisation is up 16%.

The firing points not only suffer from the climate that we have been enjoying - and this year is a little like an Open golf course, you get the firing points that nature delivers - but they are also, in certain areas, getting quite stressed because of the utilisation that they get from all types of shooters.

So I think we need to think quite carefully about how we manage access to the ranges. We need to consider the capacity of the membership and the ranges. Harald Dunton, who represents a large number of shooters in East Anglia on General Council, and I regularly spar because I keep telling him that we are monopoly provider of long range shooting. If you are a monopoly provider in the corporate world, one way of controlling demand is to stick your price up. We must be much more egalitarian, if that's the right word, with respect to our pricing because it seems to me that is not the way we can spread the gospel. But that will require us to manage more closely and carefully the capacity that we have on the ranges.

I know occasionally some are frustrated to be told that the range is full but when they get back to 600 and see only two sets of butts in action when there are 108 targets. That may well be because some cadets are shooting and they require a greater arc of fire, and such like. Some of that will have to change and we may well have to restrict shoots on Century for example to single distances at certain times of day.

We have already had to do that on Short Siberia, and that has caused some angst for some people. The HBSA and others who hold competitions on certain days of the month and have done so since time immemorial have all of a sudden been told that they can't do so because we have to manage that capacity.

So I think there's some issues that we have got to deal with. Our membership continues to grow, and we may well be north of 9000 members at the end of this year. We are probably home to about 18,000 shooters on a regular basis, and we probably represent about 55,000 fullbore rifle shooters who come here on and off throughout a 12 month period.

So what do we want to do? We want to make sure that everybody can have fun and do what they want to do. We want to make sure that those who want to compete can compete, and those that want to have fun and not compete can do that too. So, that's a delicate task and we need to figure out exactly how we make that work.

Henry Dodds:

Chairman, thank you very much for a long and detailed answer, which I think could be summarised as saying you want to get greater utilisation out of this site for a greater range of shooters and enhance the reputation of shooting. Is that a fair summary of what you've said? (*Broadly speaking, Yes*)

Could you therefore explain how you see the historic club houses in the future? Do you think there will be the same number in 5 years time, do you think there will be less. Because I am very aware in the time that I've been here, and all of you are more experienced than I am, will be aware of the pressure that clubs have felt through the rental increases, which from a commercial point of view is very much part of sweating the assets of the NRA.

From a heritage point of view, it looks to be possibly a little short sighted. So could you explain the vision around the historic clubhouses please?

Chairman:

I can. I think there are a couple of things we need to be very careful of here. You mentioned the words heritage and commercial. First of all we are not seeking to be overtly commercial with the clubhouses. The reason for that is that it is, we don't set the prices; the market sets the prices.

Henry Dodds:

Sorry, there is a market for shooting clubhouses?

Chairman:

There is a market for shooting clubhouses and a market for shooting residences. There is a market for buildings on this camp.

By way of a very brief introduction, we divide the buildings for rent into three types:

- what we call commercial entities, William Evans for example,
- residential entities, for example Queen's Lodge and I declare an interest, and
- clubhouses.

And what we are seeking to do is to ensure that each of those levels of rent are comparable, and in particular, the clubhouses. One clubhouse should not have the commercial advantage over another, when both are multi-member clubhouses.

Obviously we could migrate buildings amongst these categories and it is clear that if we so chose, we could migrate everybody up into a commercial entity. However, our Charter lays out the objects of the Association. These include the pursuit of marksmanship throughout the Queen's dominions. Therefore one of the things that it allows us to do is to get a "less-than-best" rent for a building, when the renting of which assists us in pursuing those objects.

So the clubhouses can be very important to us in ensuring that we continue to get more people trained, and more people shooting, so they hold competitions, they bring people in, and they offer facilities for those things.

What we can't do is to support them with charitable money for serving beer and burgers! A balance also has to be struck between members of the clubs who are members of the NRA, and members of the NRA who are not members of those clubs. Both have a horse in this race. The clubs need to be charged the correct rent, because that means that the rest of the membership aren't subsidising that particular club's occupation of a particular clubhouse.

Finally I think it is important to note that there have been a small number of buildings that have come out of the multi-member clubhouse stock for various reasons. The HAC was one. The HAC is now occupied by the CNC so it has migrated in one leap as it were, through force of circumstances, from being a clubhouse with a defined a membership into a commercial entity.

We also have the English XX Club. The English XX Club decided that it had a building where the membership were serving the building, rather than the building serving the membership. And so that has migrated into a clubhouse which has now become available to another group of shooters.

So, there is a turnover and natural progression. Not all of these places remain clubhouses forever. I reside in Queen's Lodge and that used to be the base for the Queen's Rifle Volunteer Regiment, but hasn't done so for around 100 years. But once upon a time it did.

So there is something of a Darwinian process that's going on. But we are very mindful of the fact that we can't just take clubhouses out of stock, because that starts to defeat the purpose of what the clubs can do to assist the Charity on pursuing its objects.

It's getting the balance right and the balance, to a certain extent, is dictated by demand. I am very aware that clubs can struggle. I am also aware that the National Rifle Association can struggle as well and we have to get that balance right.

Henry Dodds:

Thank you.

Silke Lohmann, General Council Member:

May I suggest that major estate decisions will be postponed until the Estate Committee is in place after the September General Council Meeting? I get the impression that there are actions being taken at the moment that should probably benefit from the committee.

I thought today was probably a good day to maybe ask for volunteers, and that should be lay members as well as professionals. I'm sure Andrew will send an email in due course, because I think that was agreed in our June meeting, and may I perhaps suggest the 3rd August as a deadline for that.

On a completely different vein, have you resolved the electricity issue? We had another power cut at 7.30pm this evening.

Chairman:

So let me hand over to Andrew on power cuts.

Andrew Mercer:

We've had two power cuts today. You won't be surprised to hear me say it's not my fault!

We've heard from UK Power Networks. There is apparently a switch station off camp which has been causing problems. It has been causing us major challenges today, we'd got everything all sorted and back up and running, and it dropped out again about 5.30pm-5.45pm to the enormous dismay of my Stats team.

We are assured by UK Power Networks that the power will be back on between 10.00-10.30pm this evening, but we just need to wait and see.

If it drops again, then I suspect there will be further challenges, we will be encouraging them with some vigour to come up with rather more reliable solutions, dropping in some generators.

But it is an off-camp problem. The reason it has been a bit whacky as to what it affects, is that we have lost a phase. More than that I can't tell you, but I don't fully understand what dropping a phase means. But suffice to say, it's a bit erratic and some things work and some things flicker, and some things just don't work at all. But I am assured that it will be fixed.

Chairman:

Can I just talk about the Estates Committee for a minute? For those of you who don't know, the General Council has determined that it will put together an Estates Advisory Committee. It will be made up along the lines of the way that the Disciplinary Committee is made up. It will be along the lines of 50% of it will be lay people and 50% of it will be specialists.

I have actually asked Mick Barr to see if he can come up with some Terms of Reference from the old Estates Committee, but we are struggling to find those in the moment, because record keeping is what it is. But we will certainly do our best.

There is a specific task that the Estates Committee can get their teeth into straight away, so that is what we will be seeking to put together.

John Lindsay, Cambridge Rifle Association:

Two questions, first is around ammunition. I am not the only person, during the Target Rifle meeting, to experience issues with the GGG ammunition that, whilst I am not best shot on camp, I can't entirely attribute to myself. And I would request the NRA let us know whether they are looking into this issue formally, and what progress they have made, if any, and whether they can provide us perhaps with a deadline of then they will have an update on that.

And secondly, the Offensive Weapons Bill. I know there has been a lot circulating informally and I know Andrew did provide a statement to Parliament on that, but it would be useful to have an official update from the NRA on where we are with that.

There have been a lot of freedom of information requests and it would be good to know, I know a lot of people here have written to our members of Parliament, and it would be good to understand what the latest is on that.

Chairman:

Thank you John.

Let me take the ammunition thing first. Does anyone else have a question about ammunition?

We are where we are. I think the incidence of peculiar shots is troubling. But there is not a lot we can do about between now and Saturday. Because we have the ammunition and that is what we have use.

A couple of things that I'd like to say. We tested this ammo when we got it in two test barrels at the NRA. We fired the ammo over a chronograph at 200 yards. The average of the average of the velocities was 2940ft per second, which is good enough, and certainly good enough in this hot weather. But I think we would all acknowledge, those of us who are certainly here, that it wasn't good enough on a cold day with a headwind at the Inter Counties at 1000 yards, where groups just got too big.

So that's the first thing. We would like that number to be 20-30-40 foot seconds higher.

The average extreme spread around 2940 was 60ft seconds, so 30 either side of that, which is a little higher than I think it was for 2017, where I think the extreme spread was 45 foot seconds.

We have pulled apart some rounds obviously, because that is the standard operating procedure. We measured the cases, we measured the loads, we looked at the primers, we looked at the bullets, everything seemed to be reasonably good.

The "issue" that we've got may be twofold. First is we've got some rogue projectiles, second we've got different neck tensions. And it may well be that it's a combination of those, but I don't want to pre-judge the issue.

We've had some extremely helpful comments amongst a lot of comments, let me put it that way. I even started to get some comments after the 5 minute preparation period started in the Corporation! So I know this is a heartfelt issue, and it's rather sad in one sense, because our friends at GGG have done a terrific job up until this period. And we must remember that they are delivering into our hands a round at about 87p, which is commercial.

We also have some comments about bullet dimensions, concentricity, those type of things. So let's get the data and input. The General Council will clearly give the Shooting Committee a task to work on and they will take it away.

And I'm sure that there will be some conclusions, John. Sadly, I can't do much about it before Saturday.

Henry Wells:

You stated that we tested the ammunition at 200yards – we do not shoot at 200 yards, why do you not test the ammunition at the ranges at which we shoot? Particularly, the long ranges?

Chairman:

We do.

Henry Wells:

You stated it was tested at 200!

Chairman:

But we do also then give it to well-known marksmen who test it across the course.

Henry Wells:

And the results of these tests at long range?

Chairman:

Mr Calvert? You were pretty happy with your shoots at long range, if I remember rightly?

David Calvert:

Mr Chairman, having been asked the question, I've had two groups of 10 shots at 1000 yards, and I don't think that's a statistically significant standard.

They were acceptable groups, but I don't think that that should be used statistically to assess the oddity of the ammunition.

Chairman:

Others are shooting them as well of course.

David Calvert:

I don't know who else is shooting them. I'm merely answering your question to me.

Andrew Mercer:

I think it's also worth pointing out, we sold 140,000 rounds of this ammunition without complaint before the meeting.

Chairman:

I know there have been some anomalies. If Arthur Clarke were here, the man who spent a lot of his days shooting in Africa across hot ground, he would tell you that funny things happen between your muzzle and the target when you are shooting in really hot conditions.

Let's not forget that, but the point has been made, and we will be interrogating it. In particular, I would like to thank Nick Tremlett for taking some time out with Andrew to have a very sensible conversation about the methodology about how to approach this.

So we will report back in due course.

David Calvert:

I think essentially, you have put your finger on it, when you talked about the possibility there were problems with the projectiles. It was suggested that you pull a number of bullets and looked at the powder weight and that that has been assessed as being acceptable. The one thing that is difficult to assess, and I don't think has been assessed yet, is the concentricity and the quality and the quality control of the projectiles that have been used in the ammunition.

And it is this issue that needs to be taken back to Sierra, and/or GGG, I'm not sure which in which order, to assess whether there is a problem in the production of the ammunition.

Chairman:

We wholeheartedly agree and will do that.

While we are on this subject, does anyone else have anything else they want to add? And if you shooting with me tomorrow in the Prince of Wales, could you please not raise it after the 5 minutes preparation period begins! Before 5 minutes, I'm getting used to that bit. After the preparation target get put up, I think that's a little much....even if it was reasonably good natured.

Toby Raincock:

Obviously you will analyse the data for this year's ammunition. But in terms of next year, are we still in contract?

Chairman:

No, it's an annual contract.

Toby Raincock:

We don't want to prejudice the likelihood of overseas visitors returning at vast expense to experience the same thing as this year.....

Chairman:

We completely understand that.

Anything else on ammunition before we move to Offensive Weapons Bill?

Andrew, Offensive Weapons please.

Andrew Mercer:

Thank you.

Hopefully most of you have seen the various communications. I've been enormously heartened with the response that our pleas for assistance have created.

Talking to the Home Office and the politicians, when 8,000 or 9,000 of the shooting community contact their MPs, and reiterate comments and add to comments that have been made from the NRA and other shooting organisations, has had some effect.

In terms of the machinations through Westminster, the Home Office have stated their case. The first reading in the House went through without any issues. Regarding the second reading, after a tremendous effort on the part of our members, I think the Home Office and the Ministers were particularly surprised as to how many politicians spoke out in favour of target shooting, which is good news.

Very quickly, after that, I had a letter from the Minister, Nick Hurd MP, saying that the Government were minded to review the proposals, particularly against the 50" cal, the 10,000ft pound limit rifles, and with a suggestion of greater attention to home security, they may well amend their recommendation to have those rifles prohibited.

I think we are making good progress on that, and this very morning, a memo popped up on my screen, which is something that we are working on.

So I think we are making good progress on formulating the argument to save the 50" cal and high energy rifles that someone somewhere doesn't like the look of.

In terms of the MARS, the trigger release, and the lever release rifles, it is harder work. Our political friends are uncertain about whether these are semi-automatics in all but name. We don't think they are and we are having some challenges making the argument.

A trigger release is when you pull the trigger once to fire, pull the trigger again to chamber the next round, pull the trigger again to fire, I think those are particularly problematic. So what we are trying to do is to highlight the difference between a trigger release, and a lever release.

There are some 200 or so trigger release MARS rifles in existence, particularly well supported by some people with limited physical mobility. The lever releases have been around for much longer, MARS have been around for about 2-3 years, lever release have been out for 10 years, made by Bob Clarke down at Southern Guns who has sold about 2,000 of those.

So we are trying to differentiate between MARS and lever release.

So the headline news, is that we are going to need to go again and we have submitted some detailed papers and encourage members to do so to the committee. The committee have stood down and will reconvene in September. We've actually got a lever release delivered to Bisley this morning, which we are going to be encouraging as many MPs and Lords to come and shoot as we can possibly muster, and I think we need to get on the front foot to promote the value. I think a lot of our problems are that the politicians simply don't understand the difference between the technicalities and we need to do much better to explain our cause.

So I think as at this stage, we're about a third of the way there. I would be enormously disappointed if we weren't able to save 50'cal. I am hopeful but no more than that, to try and save the lever releases.

Martin Osment:

I'm the owner of a MARS because I find it impossible now to operate a manual bolt, due to wrist damage.

This afternoon, I shot some video footage of my using the MARS on Winans and I'm more than happy to make this available. It demonstrates that it is not being cycled as fast as one could cycle, for example, an SMLE.

I am more than happy to make my rifle available if you'd like to use it for any demonstrations.

Chairman:

That might be helpful. Thank you.

Andrew Mercer:

We have to be very careful in terms of how we present these mechanisms, because there is a grave risk of unintended consequences of saying don't ban MARS and lever release because I can shoot just as quickly with a straight pull or SMLE.

I think you need to stop and think about what you are saying for a moment, and may well need to use a different argument.

Chairman:

If there are no further questions, I shall come to the main news of the night.

Before we close, on Century Range today, 790 competitors shot the first stage of Her Majesty's The Queen's Prize.

There is a three way tie for the Bronze Badge:

- Mr JAM Paton of the DCRA,
- Cdt JC Voyer of RCAC NRT and
- Miss LAE Crowson of Old Sedberghians,

all scoring 105.17v. So there will be tie shoot after the end of Queen's II.

The last score in is 101 with 8 v bulls, finishing 33.4 at 600 yards.

Thank you very much everybody, we are adjourned.

The meeting closed at 10.00pm