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Summer 2020 – Volume XCIX No. 2

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HPS will be displaying at the following shooting events in 2020:

Phoenix Meeting – Bisley National Rifle Ranges TBC, **Imperial Meeting** – Bisley National Rifle Ranges TBC, **F-Class European's** – Bisley National Rifle Ranges Date TBC – September, **Trafalgar Meeting** - Bisley National Rifle Ranges 17th-18th October, **Target Shooting Show** – TBC – November

There still may be other dates when we will be coming to Bisley, so if there is anything you need, let us know as we may be at Bisley at that time and can bring down any goods you require. Just give us a call.

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Staying safe, staying secure

NRA CEO Andrew Mercer discusses how the NRA is meeting the challenges of 2020, from social distancing to lead ammunition questions

As lockdown restrictions were gently eased, we opened Century, Stickle Down and National Clay Shooting Centre ranges on Saturday 23 May. Having proved our procedures, and mindful of future changes in regulations and guidance, we are planning to steadily open the rest of our ranges over the next few weeks. We are progressing slowly to ensure that visiting shooters feel safe and shooting at Bisley poses no greater risk than any other outdoor activity. All of us share the responsibility for keeping safe and complying with COVID-19 guidance. Bisley covers a large area, and ensuring we maintain social distancing is important to us as individuals, and to protect the wider reputation of target shooting.

With our ranges largely closed, we were pleased that Barclays Bank UK plc agreed a £750k overdraft facility for the NRA. The arrangement was agreed by Trustees as a pre-emptive measure to bolster the Charity's liquidity given the uncertainty over the effect the COVID-19 crisis will have on our finances. The 2019 NRA Trustee Annual Report and Accounts are available on the NRA website.

We are planning a series of new autumn competitions, probably restricted to TR, MR and CSR, under the auspices of the 'NRA Imperial'. The meetings will be organised by the National Shooting Centre, with shooters competing for honours awarded by the NRA. A survey of competitors suggests good support, but the final decision to proceed is dependent on our assessment of current and future COVID-19 regulations and restrictions. Much will depend upon the availability of accommodation, hospitality and markers; and the confidence of the likely competitors.

We have been encouraging and assisting regional clubs with applications for various grants throughout the lockdown. I was encouraged to learn that Sport England awarded £28 million to 7,668 sports club applicants; 99 per cent of applications have been reviewed, with a 70 per cent approval rate. To date, 23 shooting clubs have received emergency funds totalling £50,159.

MoD ranges are planning to reopen to civilian clubs in August; we are currently working through a number of issues regarding operating procedures and risk assessments with Warminster and regional commanders.

Threats to the use of lead ammunition continue. The EU are progressing proposals that would restrict all lead in all hunting and



outdoor sport shooting. Currently police, military, security service use and so on, along with indoor ranges, would be exempt. Non-lead rifle ammunition poses significant challenges for .22 rimfire and smaller-calibre centrefire rifle bullets. The move to non-lead will require technical and regulatory changes, and range safety criteria would also need to be reassessed.

The UK game shooting community's recent decision to support a move to non-lead shotgun ammunition has contributed to concerns that it will be difficult to save lead in ammunition for hunting. We have argued that the risk posed by lead on shooting ranges can be controlled; though it is easier to recover lead bullets from rifle ranges, compared to lead shot from many clay shooting grounds. An EU ban on lead in ammunition is unlikely to be enacted until mid- to late 2022, which should mean it would not apply to the UK. There are, however, risks that the UK government could agree to comply with such EU directives.

I hope you and your family and friends are well and in good spirits; and that you manage a session on your local range some time soon. ■

NEWS

REPORTS

RANGES REOPEN AFTER LOCKDOWN



Shooting grounds and outdoor ranges can reopen in England as shooting gradually restarts after a period of complete shutdown during the coronavirus outbreak.

For nearly two months, most forms of recreational shooting were officially prohibited as going out to shoot would constitute a non-essential journey.

Now, as part of the government's phased plan to open the country after lockdown, socially distanced sports can take place. Nigel Huddleston, the parliamentary under-secretary for sport, tourism and heritage, confirmed that shooting is included on this list, and said that "any facilities associated with outdoor sports and physical activities, including shooting ranges, can now reopen".

Shooting activities must follow social distancing guidelines, with groups of no more than six congregating outdoors and maintaining a two-metre separation.

This ruling also only covers England – other parts of the UK are proceeding at their own pace with easing restrictions. Scotland, for example, has said that "non-contact outdoor activities in the local area" are permitted – this is broadly understood to mean within five miles of where you live. As this issue of the Journal went to press, Scotland was moving to phase two of its post-lockdown plan, which meant more restrictions would be lifted.

The NRA has transferred this guidance to its ranges at Bisley. To find out more about how they have opened safely, read the dedicated feature starting on page 9.



SHOOTING INDUSTRY'S MOOD IMPROVES

The shooting industry is feeling a lot more positive about the post-coronavirus future, two surveys conducted by industry publication *Gun Trade News* have revealed.

In an initial survey at the end of March, two thirds of shooting-related businesses said they planned to close down and wait for the virus to recede.

However, a second survey six weeks later painted a happier picture. Though many businesses did indeed shut, they indicated that they were raring to go and would largely be reopening soon.

Some 55 percent of respondents said they would be back open by early July, with the vast majority of them feeling that although there was some ground for concern, they would survive.

Furthermore, nearly 30 per cent of respondents felt the coronavirus outbreak would make little difference overall to their business this year, while more than one in five businesses were identifying this as a time of opportunity, when they could in fact improve upon their previous performance.

Furloughing has been commonplace in the shooting industry, with 60 percent of businesses saying they applied for some form of government support. Thankfully, they tended to find that support easy to get, with most reporting that the process had been a straightforward one.

SCOTTISH BOOST FOR SHOOTING BUSINESSES

A successful campaign has seen the Scottish Government overturn its exclusion of shooting from a government handout designed to soften the blow of coronavirus.

The funding from the Scottish Government, designed to help tourism in Scotland get through this period, comes in the form of three grants worth £100m.

Originally, no sporting tourism businesses were eligible for any of the money. Now, however, the cabinet secretary for the rural economy and tourism, Fergus Ewing MSP, has admitted that sporting businesses had been 'inadvertently excluded' from this support.

They will now be eligible for one of the three funds: the £20m creative, tourism and hospitality enterprises hardship fund,

which can provide up to £25,000 to support individual businesses.

If you have a Scottish shooting business and are interested in applying, you can search for the eligibility criteria and further details at: <https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot/coronavirus-advice>



CALLING NOTICE

Applications to the GB Veterans Rifle Team to the World Championships 2023

I am greatly honoured to have been elected by the NRA Council as Captain of the GB Veterans Rifle Team to compete in the World Championships in South Africa in 2023.

David Richards and Stephen Penrose have graciously accepted my invitations to be Vice-Captain and Adjutant.

Due to COVID-19 it is too early to be prescriptive about numbers, plans and timetables. The dates for the SABU and World Championships have not yet been fixed officially, but are likely to be at the end of March, possibly from 16 March to 1 April.

If you are interested in selection, please email me at charles.brooks@penningtonslaw.com before the end of September 2020. Requests for further information will follow after receiving your initial application. We will want to run a number of selection and training days, hopefully starting in the Spring of 2021. Please feel free to email or speak to me if you have any questions.

Charles Brooks

NEW RANGE: CHOBHAM RIDGE

An attractive rural range that looks across the danger area towards the main Bisley site. On a clear day, to the south of the range you can see Guildford Cathedral, complemented in the east by incredible views of London and the Wembley Arch.

The range consists of multiple steel plates from unknown distances between 200 – 900x. Shooting period will be from approx. 10am-2pm depending on stoppages.

Current offer is £500 for maximum of five people, inclusive of NSC RCO.

There is a range building with a troop shelter providing a dry haven during inclement weather and impressive down range views. Ablutions consist of a portaloos, and there is a car park conveniently situated near the firing point.

Visit the Chobham Ridge page on the NRA website for more information.

GENERAL NOTICES

F CLASS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

The eagerly awaited F-Class World Championships (FWC) in Bloemfontein, South Africa, in April 2021 have been postponed to April 2022. A vote within the international F-Class community was taken after concerns were expressed about the ability of teams to attend in 2021 as well as all the uncertainties around planning for an event in 2021.

The organisers, SABU, have confirmed that the FWC will now be held in April 2022, and that they hope to confirm the exact dates in about two weeks time. They intend to reissue individual invitations to each member country with the new dates, but they will also put the dates on their website when finalised: www.sabisley.com

AUSTRALIA MATCH

The highly prestigious Australia Match for international Target Rifle Teams was due to be held at Bisley during the NRA meeting in 2021. Unfortunately, it has had to be cancelled, as the Australian Target Rifle Team will not now be coming to Bisley in 2021 and the match cannot be held without their presence. The match is normally held on a four-year cycle (approximately) and an alternative date and possibly venue is yet to be decided.





Shooting recommences at Bisley

As the lockdown in the UK gradually lifts, civilian shooting has been returning in a gradual and safe manner on the Bisley ranges

On 13 May 2020 the Government announced that Covid 19 restrictions were to be relaxed a little. People would be permitted to go outside more than once a day for exercise, alone, with members of their household, or with one person from outside their household as long as they followed social distancing guidelines.

Outdoor sports courts and other outdoor sporting activities were permitted to reopen if those responsible for them were ready to do so and could do so safely, following public health guidance. Indoor facilities such as clubhouses were to be kept closed, apart from toilets and throughways. Clubhouse bars and restaurants were permitted to offer takeaway services.

Unfortunately, the guidance did not specifically mention rifle ranges. While the NSC and NRA were in no doubt that shooting could be conducted safely, there was some doubt among the authorities. However, following the submission of detailed risk assessments and procedures to Guildford Borough Council, they agreed that we could conduct shooting activities safely at the NSC and within the government guidelines. This was closely followed by confirmation from National Police Chiefs Council and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Sport, Tourism and Heritage that target shooting was permitted under the new guidelines providing that social distancing was observed.

Consequently the ranges opened on 23 May 2020 for the first time since 25 March. The NSC staff had implemented processes to mitigate the risk of exposure to the virus for shooters, visitors and staff. It was important that NSC procedures were sufficiently detailed to promote confidence in Bisley as a safe place to work and visit. The patience and good humour shown by all with these new, sometimes inconvenient, arrangements is greatly appreciated.

Populating the markers gallery, on any of the ranges, at this stage was deemed to present an increased risk to staff, and therefore the decision was taken to, initially, only shoot at weekends on electronic targetry in one-hour slots, with one firer per target and one waiting in a



Socially distanced shooting on Century Range

The patience and good humour shown by all with these new arrangements is greatly appreciated

specified area. Distances shot would be Century Range (100, 300 and 600 yards), Stickle-down Range (900 and 1,000 yards).

On arrival, visitors were required to follow a one-way circuit to the ranges/range office. The requirement to sign in at the range office was relaxed, so there was no need to visit the office unless ammunition or the withdrawal of a firearm had been pre-booked. This reduced the likelihood of a queue and allowed shooters to go direct to the Zero Range or, if they were content with their zero, direct to the Main Range.

Queueing systems and waiting areas were put in place on each range and at the range office. In addition, NSC staff were on hand in all areas to provide assistance to anyone that needed it and advise on details of lane allocation. At each key point, copious amounts of hand sanitiser, latex gloves and alcohol wipes were provided.

On the range

Shooters were asked not to arrive at the range any more than 15 minutes before

their allocated time. On arrival they were to go to the unmanned desk where they would find general information and electronic target instructions. NSC staff were located in the gazebo (behind a table) to provide information, answer questions and ensure social distancing guidelines were followed.

Sanitisation protocols were in place at every firing point



Using the electronic targets was key to maintaining distancing

THE NSC DURING LOCKDOWN

Because of the coronavirus restrictions, the NSC and NRA ceased all non-essential activities on 23 March 2020. All civilian shooting on the ranges operated by the National Shooting Centre was suspended. The only range activity that was permitted to continue was Police and Military firearms training.

The reduction in activity, coupled with clear instructions that all non-essential movement should cease, forced a reduction in staffing to the bare minimum. Most staff were placed on furlough. The small team remaining were charged with providing a remote service to the membership, supporting police and military range use, resetting thousands of range bookings, rescheduling training courses, servicing range infrastructure and exploring options for an autumn series of competitions. A significant portion of this work has been achieved.

Range Office

The refurbishment of the Range Office started before the lockdown was announced. It is now complete and provides a professional, modern, spacious and airy environment in which customers can be welcomed. The newly refurbished office provides an improved working environment with a segregated office area where NSC staff can process bookings and allocate range space independently from the Shooters'



Reception. The perspex screens were fitted due to the circumstances and we look forward to the day when we can remove them.

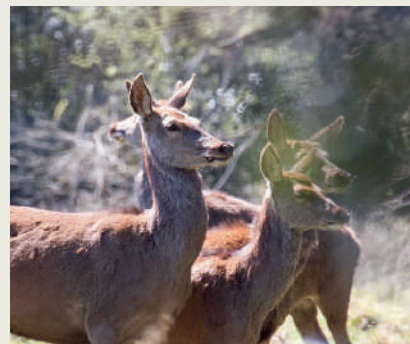
Range Maintenance

In order to maintain range safety, the scheduled stop butt maintenance has continued. Century Range has been de-leaded and is now well prepared for the return to shooting.

The gallery ranges have not been ignored. Cheylesmore Range has had 20 tonnes of sand added to the stop butt and has subsequently been reprofiled. Melville Range has been de-leaded and reprofiled. Winans Bay B has been prepared for use as an additional zeroing facility during these times of social distancing and is now available to book.

The Grounds

The 2020 weather has been challenging. It is not long ago that the stop butts



were being eroded by rain and the team were constantly shovelling sand. The sand is now so dry it is being blown away, and we are struggling to get the stop butts to hold their profile. However, in recent weeks the weather has been ideal for growing grass.

The weather combined with the reduced grounds team has made it difficult to keep on top of the estate. Several members of staff, not normally associated with grounds maintenance, have enjoyed operating a ride-on mower in the sun. Unfortunately when the weather deteriorates so do the volunteers, but the work they have done is excellent.

The quiet that has descended on Bisley suits the wildlife, which has become much bolder in recent times. Deer and badgers can be seen regularly in the most unusual places. Last week there was a roebuck outside the NRA Main Building standing in between the two steel deer.



Fat Tony's was on hand to provide refreshments

Apart from a 10-minute hail storm, the weather was fine, making the day pleasant and enjoyable for all. A strong, gusting wind ensured that long-range shooters did not become complacent. For those who needed refreshment or warming up after the storm, "Fat Tony's" provided a takeaway service of hot drinks and food.

The conduct and acceptance of the changes of all those in attendance was impeccable, with social distancing observed and good humour throughout the day.

The Prime Minister made another announcement on 28 May 2020, further

relaxing the COVID-19 restrictions. Gatherings of up to six people are now permitted providing that social distancing is observed and the gathering is outside. NSC staff are transferring this into range procedures, which we hope will encourage Affiliated Clubs to return to the ranges in greater numbers.

We hope that before you read this article, the restrictions on the NSC ranges will have been relaxed a little more and the dark days where no shooting was permitted will be little more than a dim and distant memory. ■

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Competition comeback?

Plans have been drawn up for the safe restart of competitions at Bisley



The Imperial Meeting is the flagship event for the Association and covers multiple shooting disciplines. Apart from two World Wars, it has been shot every year since 1860. The announcement of the cancellation of the Meeting in March, as the nation went into lockdown, was no surprise. But calls from several quarters to consider staging events later in the year led to a rethink of the shooting calendar at Bisley and a revised plan to stage some of the Imperial competitions.

As we gradually ease out of restrictions, we have been drafting plans for competitions in late summer and early autumn – additional events to the already busy schedule at this time.

Positive feedback from shooter surveys and the recent opening of some ranges for recreational shooting provide encouragement that we can deliver this ambitious programme.

Three disciplines with proposed 'Imperial' Meetings – MR, CSR and TR – were surveyed to gauge the likely participation in their respective events. Understandably, those unsure or unlikely to attend mainly cited three issues: 1) their vulnerability/concern about maintaining social distance; 2) timing around school term (teacher or parent perspective); 3) access to accommodation, food and beverage, and the possible lack of a social element to the Meeting.

Overall, there were numerous very positive and warm comments, many grateful for the opportunity, even if unable to attend. In terms of the likely number of competitors, responses suggest all three disciplines will have well supported 'Imperial' Meetings.

We recognise the many challenges and hurdles, for example:

- Accommodation and caravan sites must be open and fully accessible
- Food and beverage (club houses) must be able to trade, albeit under 'Covid-19 Secure' guidelines
- A heightened cleaning and hygiene regime to cover shared ablution blocks, toilets and multi-use buildings will be in place
- Social distancing must be observed around camp and on the ranges. Squadding may be altered to conform; capacity on some ranges reduced; TR ammunition issued once each day; new procedures for proving clear and keeping register / score cards
- New protocols for butts duties and target marking to ensure social distancing

We are busy drafting programmes for each event and expect a final Go / No Go decision by latest mid-July. The decision to hold these events will largely depend on any further easing of government regulations,

coupled with clear procedures across all elements of the sport.

Social distancing in some form will be part of our lives for some considerable time. The message from shooters is clear: there is enthusiasm to get back to competitive shooting so long as it is safe. We are working up the Risk Assessments and procedures together with each Discipline Rep, to be able to react quickly if, and hopefully when, we are given the green light. ■

PROVISIONAL CALENDAR

August

Match Rifle Meeting	27-31
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September

Civ SR Meeting	3-6
GR Nationals	5-6
F Class	10-13
NRA Adaptive	16
Target Rifle Meeting	12-19
Cadets/Schools	25-27

October

Cadets/Schools	2-4
Target Shotgun Festival	3-4
Historic SR	3
Civ SR League	4
The Trafalgar	17-18
GR Autumn Action	24-25



Training Update

Peter Cottrell reports on how NRA training plans have progressed during lockdown

Training courses were suspended in mid-March, leaving some 45 probationary members in limbo partway through their training Modules. Since the lockdown, we are pleased to see another 60 new members join the Association, of which 30 are eager to embark on probationary training and a further 16 will undergo the Membership Assessment – all to be arranged on the resumption of training. The question increasingly being asked is: When might that be?

What is clear is that social distancing and the need for self-discipline (especially regarding minimising face to face contact and good hand hygiene) will remain part of our lives for some considerable time. We are actively working up the protocols and risk assessments to deliver courses as soon as we are able. Achieving social distancing in classrooms is relatively simple, but issues such as shared firearms and 1-1 instruction need particular attention. The current regulations preventing the opening of accommodation and food outlets are especially challenging.

Training courses scheduled from the beginning of August remain on the calendar and will be kept under review. As soon as we

have firm news, we will contact probationers and let them know, prioritising those partway through their training.

The eight regional RSO courses planned between March and June will need to be rescheduled for the latter part of the year, together with Bisley RCO and RSO courses, plus Club Instructor courses.

Similarly, skills courses can be rescheduled from September providing opportunities for disciplines to engage with new shooters and promote their discipline for the latter part of 2020 and looking towards 2021.

RCO Renewal Process

We continue to deal with RCO renewals during the lockdown, so if your qualification has recently expired or is about to expire, do not delay. You can apply to renew your qualification up to six months after expiry – beyond this grace period, we usually require you to attend a fresh RCO course.

To renew, go to the NRA website and complete an online open book test (NRA / Training & Development / RCO Renewal). This test serves as a 'remind and revise' session for the duties of the RCO; all the answers can be found in the latest RCO

manual, which can be downloaded from the NRA website.

The online system for renewing an RCO qualification has been in place for 15 months. Despite being an open book test with no time limit, the first time pass rate is only 77 percent, with some applicants displaying a concerning lack of knowledge. When prompted to read the RCO manual rather than simply rely upon years of experience, the vast majority pass at the second (and final) attempt.

NRA RCO Manual now on website

The latest RCO manual is available via the NRA website (NRA / Training & Development / RCO Downloads). Additional hard copies can be obtained from the training department via training@nra.org.uk for £8.15 incl. p+p.

Skills Courses

Skills development courses have proved popular in introducing shooters to a particular discipline, building knowledge and confidence to participate in competitions. A number of courses are scheduled for later in the year, and we will look to add extra courses to meet demand – look out for course dates on the NRA website. ■



Reviving A Legend

Robin Carter reports on his attempts to craft a 300m rifle based as closely as possible on the one wielded by Malcolm Cooper

At this time, with our 'indoor' shooting curtailed by this dreadful virus, rather than focus our 300-metre article on the future, we will look a little bit more about where its history comes from.

This article is not so much about the history of the event, but about a particular rifle that has its place in the heritage of the 300-metre event. The Malcolm Cooper-built rifle that comprised his own special action in a Walther GX1 stock was a milestone in 300-metre fullbore rifle development, and was also probably the first Accuracy International rifle.

Malcolm lifted British shooting to the top ranks in the world and set British records that still stand today

Malcolm Cooper, who sadly passed away in 2001, is a legend in British shooting. Between 1970 and 1991 he won 160 international medals, 14 European titles, and seven world titles. He still holds most of the UK 300-metre records! Malcolm lifted British shooting to the top ranks in the world, and set British records that either still stand today or are only just being matched or beaten.

In those days – the early 1970s – Malcolm was also the Walther importer, a competent gunsmith, and the owner and founder of Accuracy International, then a small business. Now AI has grown to be the world-renowned maker of sporting and military rifles. This, our subject rifle, came about because he could not get exactly what he wanted for the 300-metre class, and he set about building his own. The stock was naturally a Walther; he used the GX1 small-bore rifle stock, which was his choice of small-bore rifle, and he then set about building a fullbore action to compliment it.

As the Walther importer and a world-level Walther shooter, he would have been a regular visitor to Walther at Ulm, and it's only logical to presume he would have

discussed his need with the designers. He was given un-machined blanks of the action and bolt from the Walther Jagd rifle with their blessing. The Jagd was a hunting rifle but was the only fullbore rifle that Walther produced at that time that was close to a match fullbore rifle.

Malcolm machined the action, fitted a match barrel (I believe from Lothar Walther), a match trigger, and the first Accuracy International rifle was born. He developed it, and was soon making his mark in the world with it. The original was in 7mm/08 calibre, which by switching barrels allowed him to also shoot it as a 7.62x51 mm (.308 Win).

This rifle was shot successfully for many years until Malcolm built his first pure AI rifle using all his own components. The action from this original was fitted into a Standard rifle stock and was used by his wife Sarah to set even more British Ladies records (some of which still stand!) That rifle with the original action No.1 is now believed to be in a museum in New Zealand.

The original GX1 stock from the original rifle was consigned to storage, and this is where our story starts!

From yesterday to today

My wife was in the Great Britain rifle squad in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with Malcolm and Sarah as team mates. She decided in 2011 to return to shooting fullbore as a retirement pastime, and being a nostalgic type, thought it would be nice to shoot again with a similar and familiar stock to the one she had used before. She had always used a Walther GX1 copy stock with various actions for fullbore, including one built by Malcolm, so the first route for us was to find a Walther GX1 stock.

Our first contact was our friend Bill Welsh, now also sadly passed on. Bill, who had been the sales manager at Accuracy International, said, "I have just the one for you. It was in my loft for 30 years, and I know who has it now!" We were able to contact the present owner, who was happy to sell it. Bill told us of the heritage of the stock and verified it was the actual original stock from Malcolm's first 300-metre Walther special. He was glad that it would be going to someone who valued the heritage of a special piece of shooting history, and also one who knew Malcolm well and was in the GB team with him.

Building the rifle

So now we had the stock, and after initially fitting a 7.62 Sportco action, we started planning to find an action similar to the original Walther Jagd. The original rifle was built as a 300-metre rifle, and our restoration objective was to return it to this purpose. So after initially considering building in the original 7mm/08 calibre, we decided for ammunition practicality to use the 6mmBR calibre that we shoot with our modern Keppeler 300-metre rifles.

I initially considered a new Keppeler action as I knew they still made round actions as well as the square flat-bottomed modern actions, but the diameter was bigger, and a new modern action did not fit the ethos. I then spotted an early 1980s round action Keppeler for sale in calibre 6mmBR, and discovered it was also the same diameter as the original Walther Jagd. The plot thickens...

The action we obtained was in 6mmBR,



Malcolm Cooper shooting the Walther Special at Bisley in the early 80s

The morning was spent in the Zero range 'running in' the barrel, and zeroing. The signs were good: a one-hole group

stamped Keppeler, Langenau, and the serial number was 00** so it was certainly early. The barrel would need replacing as it had seen better days. I needed to do some remedial work on the extractor and ejector, but the general finish was good. I spoke to Johannes Fritz at Keppeler to get an idea of the age, and guidance on what I should check. I described the action, and received some advice on the work I should do – and some interesting history points!

Dieter Keppeler, the founder of Keppeler, had been a design engineer at Walther from 1958 to 1987, and would have been part of the Walther design team when Malcolm Cooper was building his action in the late 1970s. Not possible to now verify as all have either now passed or are unreachable, but could they have met, and discussed the project? It was a small team at Walther, so it was very likely.

Keppeler started his own business specialising in 300-metre match rifles in 1982, some time after Malcolm built his Jagd special, and was also still working as a designer at Walther. He initially used the

blanks of the Walther Jagd rifle, and the Jagd bolt, to build his early rifles. Keppeler machined the Jagd blanks, and then stamped them as a Keppeler! Johannes confirmed that our action was in fact machined from a Walther Jagd blank. So now we knew that I had as close as I was likely to get to the original action.

Malcolm's rifle action was much of his own design and work, just on a Walther blank, but now I'm left wondering how much he influenced Dieter Keppeler to consider building his own rifles.

Restoration decisions

We made the decision to have the action rebarreled. As we were not due another trip to Germany for a while, getting it to Keppeler would be impractical, so we decided to have the work done by Mik Maksimovic at Dolphin Guns. Mik has done some good work for us on other rifles, and we were impressed with the standard of his craftsmanship. He fitted a one-in-eight twist, Bartlein stainless 6mmBR barrel, and did some remedial



The Cooper Special under test on the range

work on the bolt and action. The original action on which it is based was designed for no more than the .22 Hornet calibre, so with modern safety thinking, 7.62x51 was a shade optimistic for the design, and Mik's work included some improvement to the locking lug fitment. As the Keppeler recoil lugs were also a little different to the Malcolm Cooper action, he also machined an alloy block bedding and fitted that into the stock, bonding it to the original alloy block fitted by Malcolm for the same bedding system nearly 50 years ago.

I have done a delicate and sympathetic restoration of the stock – always a difficult decision on a piece of history. If it had been straight from Malcolm's hands I would have left it as it was, with every

scratch and dent. But it had spent many years in the Accuracy International shop, then later in Bill's loft, and then with an owner probably unaware of its history. I did not know what marks were original and what had been added. To add to that, many of the original equipment control stickers had been removed.

I kept the EC stickers that were left. The ones on the side of the cheekpiece are untouched, and I sealed them on so they are protected. The fore-end has the original small metal button inlet into it, proudly proclaiming "AI, Accuracy International Ltd, Portsmouth."

Malcolm always did select special stocks for his own rifles, and this one is no exception. The grain of the walnut

is superb, and it is a dark walnut with a delicate tiger stripe which, like a hologram, is only visible from one direction. It is a stunning piece of wood, which has made it difficult for me to find a piece to inlet in for the bolt cut out. I've not found a good match yet!

The stock to the casual observer is a standard GX1, but it has been altered. Malcolm was not tall, and the stock has been slightly shortened to fit him exactly. It's been done carefully to mirror exactly the same lines as the original, and unless you know your Walther stocks well, you would not know it was not standard. The pistol grip has been carefully eased to suit shorter fingers and then been skilfully re-stippled. The butt plate and hook are original, and the cheekpiece has been relieved on the top to clear the longer fullbore bolt throw with the cheekpiece raised.

I did not know what were original marks, and what was not, so I took a decision on what looked like fresh marks

If it had been straight from Malcolm's hands I would have left it as it was, with every scratch and dent

and decided to remove the worst of the scratches and dents. The bolt cut-out had been patched with a crude piece of plain wood, and now with its fourth action in the stock, that needed replacing. I carefully blended in a piece of walnut, but before you comment, I know the grain match is wrong! It is temporary, so at some time when I come across a piece with the correct grain and tiger stripes, it will get done again. If you have a small piece of walnut, with the grain length wise and the tiger stripes vertical, you are welcome to donate it.

I refinished it with oil, and was greatly relieved to see that the areas I have worked on are looking perfectly blended with the whole stock.

The end in sight

The sights I've used are standard from the era: an 18mm metal element foresight, and for photographs I'll use a period Walther small-bore sight. But for

If you have a small piece of walnut with the grain length wise and the tiger stripes vertical, you are welcome to donate it

shooting, a more practical RPA Trakker sight in 8 click per minute and metric direction will be used as my wife, a very good 300-metre shooter, attempts to get as close to Malcolm's records as she can.

On a visit to Germany in 2018 the action was confirmed as a Walther (stamped Keppeler!) by the staff both at Keppeler and at Walther in Ulm. The Walther people were delighted to see this rifle, and when we retire from shooting it

will go to them for their museum in Ulm, to be the only Malcolm Cooper rifle in their collection. But in the meantime, we intend to use it.

Range test

So how does it shoot? The first opportunity to test it was the first 300-metre date of the year at Bisley in March 2018. The morning was spent in the Zero range 'running in' the barrel, and zeroing. The signs were good: a one-hole group! But that was only at 25 yards, so the wife looked forward to the next morning and returning it to its spiritual home, the Bisley 300-metre 'shed' for a full 300-metre match course. Sadly Mother Nature had other ideas: not only was there a full-on gale, but the targets were not even visible in the blinding snow.

The next available opportunity was a Club TR shoot at the Thetford range. The sighters found the card, and at 300 metres it was soon totally at home. It proceeded to shoot an incredible group on the NRA target, with eight of the ten shots hitting the inch diameter marking disc or the wire in the middle. She enjoyed it so much, she went on to shoot it at 500 and 600 yards as well, where it was equally accurate.

It was successfully shot for the rest of the year at the Thetford TR shoots and also at its home, the Bisley 300m range, but its now sat in lockdown, sulking with all our other rifles. When these restrictions are lifted, we hope to restart, and again shoot 'indoors' from the 300 metre 'shed' on Century range 10, where you are welcome to join us, staying dry in the rain or sheltering from the tropical sun (we can always hope), and see the highest tech of modern fullbore prone rifles, as well as on occasions see historic pieces like the one in this article. ■

TRY 300M

300 metre is a demanding discipline with in target shooting that all can enjoy, it can be shot very successfully with a NRA 7.62 TR rifle, if you would like to try it, contact the NRA 300 metre representative who can advise you how you can join us.

300m@nra.org.uk



The Keppeler Walther Jagd action and the Alloy bedding



Iconic arms, iconic site

Derek Stimpson reflects on the sheer variety of Classic and Historic firearms available at Bisley

As I write this article, some forms of shooting have opened, so we may practise our sport again a little, while taking into account government instructions and social distancing. This will mean limited activity and poses the question as to when full meetings like the Trafalgar will be able to take place once more. We have seen the cancellation of this year's Imperial, and thus the 2020 IHAM will not take place.

The Imperial is a most historic event, and Bisley an iconic and historic site. It always gives me great pleasure to see and write about the use of historic and classic arms at Bisley – and indeed to shoot them myself, and encourage others to do so.

I have written about the wide, indeed remarkable, variety of arms used, not only at historic meetings, but on many other occasions at Bisley. These are of all classes, both military and sporting arms, and rifles, shotguns, and pistols and revolvers.

British Classics

The name Lee Enfield of course immediately springs to mind in relation to any historic arms discussion. The first centrefire rifle I used at Bisley, as a cadet, was a No 1 Mk III Lee Enfield – my ears stuffed with cotton wool.

The Lee Enfield No 4 is the rifle about which many visitors comment, “My dad used one of those in the war!”

I acquired my No. 4 in the late 1960s, which I used from 100 to 1000 yards with target sights, and with battle sights on the BSRC Running Deer range. It came from a member of another club and cost me £10. I still have it, now with a scope fitted.

I remember discussions in my early shooting career about the rear locking lugs on the bolt allowing dynamic stretch in the action and bolt, and whether this affected accuracy at short range, but allowed better accuracy at longer ranges. In fact it is understood that the resulting barrel vibrations from the stretch mean that low-velocity ammunition has a tendency to shoot high and higher velocity ammunition to shoot low. This tendency can be reduced by using the best quality ammunition and the heaviest barrel possible.

Of course with a historic rifle you don't have much choice. Using different ammunition with varying muzzle velocity is therefore an issue in relation to shooting the Lee Enfield or potentially other rifles with rear locking lugs. This topic could form a separate article, along with many of the other topics we touch upon.

Some shooters prefer the Mauser actions with front locking lugs. That design, which includes the P14s made for Britain in the US by Winchester, Remington and

Eddystone during the First World War. These bolts are not as slick and thus actions are not as fast to shoot. The British troops' rapid rate of fire with SMLEs during the retreat from Mons is reputed to have caused the enemy to think they were facing MG fire. Rapid fire is certainly a potential advantage in shooting Historic CSR.

The heavier Mauser action was widely adopted as the sporting and big game bolt rifle action and still used today.

Various versions of Lee Enfield are in use in CSR and Historic CSR matches, and of course IHAM, the Trafalgar, and seen generally in use on the ranges.

The classic British .303 cartridge was adopted as a compressed-load black powder cartridge in 1888 and switched to cordite in 1892 when the new nitro-cellulose propellants appeared in Europe. The first loadings were with an RN 215gn bullet.

The Lee Metford, so called for its shallower Metford rifling, designed for black powder fouling, was the first in the line, and the 'Long' Lee Enfield the first in the line of Lees with Enfield rifled barrels shooting the cordite cartridge, soon to be replaced by the 'Short' SMLE, later designated No. 1.

The .303 British cartridge, like its 1890s contemporaries, the 7mm Mauser or 7x57 (also .275 Rigby), the 7.92mm Mauser, 6.5 Mannlicher and 6.5x55 Swedish, continued in use for many years and are all still in regular use. These were introduced as military cartridges but quickly adopted for sporting rifles, where they are still in use. The choice of cartridges available these days for every purpose is enormous, but these historic cartridges still work well, and for many purposes they don't need improving, other than with use of modern bullets perhaps.

Lee-Speed .303 with stalking safety, magazine cut-off and bolt dust cover engraved "Shot and regulated by Holland & Holland"



If you wish to shoot Target Shotgun with a historic shotgun then there are some alternatives



The .303 is a good game cartridge and was much used in Africa and India. Then, in the early 1900s, Britain prohibited the .450 (Martini Henry) and .303 cartridges in India and Sudan for all except British military personnel. Anyone found with one could be shot. This was an issue for hunters and produced a range of variants from .450 calibre, still in use today – the .470; .465, .475 No 1 and No 2, and so on.

Those of us who shoot sporting rifle may use these in the IHAM and Trafalgar in the sporting rifle competitions, and in the BSRC annual Big Game rifle match against the Australians and South Africans, which simulates hunting conditions. You may have seen my previous Journal articles about that.

The .303 was often used as a stalking cartridge and BSA produced Lee-Speed rifles in that calibre. For India and Africa they made the same rifle chambered for 8mm Mannlicher or 8x50R to avoid the aforementioned ban on non-military use of the .303. Both are bottlenecked tapered cartridges and very similar, which facilitated use of the same action and feed, and more importantly easy adaptation of the same magazine. The name was due to Joseph Speed, the factory manager of the RSAF at Enfield 1891 to 1909, who took out the patent. The illustrations show a

Lee-Speed .303 regulated by Holland & Holland and another in 8x50R.

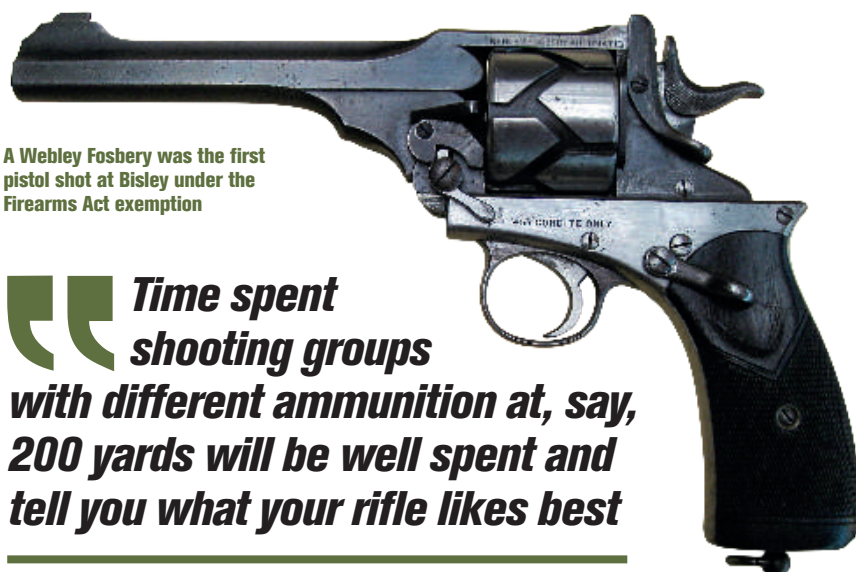
Looking Further Back

Of course there are the Lee Enfield predecessors, the .577 Snider and .577/.450 Martini Henry with their black powder cartridges. The former was the first breech-loading issue rifle (converted from the ML Enfield), and the Martini was the first issue custom breech-loading rifle adopted for the British army, and so often referred to as the Rorke's Drift rifle.

They are satisfying to shoot, especially with black powder. When making up handloads for Martinis with paper-patched bullets, I used to dip the base of the patched bullet in liquid beeswax, of which, being a beekeeper at the time, I had a plentiful supply. Today, I leave the paper plain and use a lubricated wad. They shoot very well with 'nitro for black' loads, but if you are shooting in the NRA historic competitions, black powder loads are required.

Pistol Progress

Bisley's reputation as a historic site came to the fore again in 1998 when it became the first Designated Site in UK for what became known as Heritage pistols.



A Webley Fosbery was the first pistol shot at Bisley under the Firearms Act exemption

Time spent shooting groups with different ammunition at, say, 200 yards will be well spent and tell you what your rifle likes best

When certain pistols – effectively centrefire and .22 rimfire cartridge pistols and revolvers – became prohibited, the HBSA and others, working with the Home Office, were able to create an exemption in the Firearms Act, Section 7(1) and 7(3), to save historic pistols. Some may be kept at home without ammunition, as part of a collection and may be exhibited, while others chambered for a current cartridge have to be kept at a ‘designated site’. Pistols kept at the site can also be fired. I was privileged to fire the first shot of ‘Section 7’ at Bisley with my .455 Webley Fosbery, kept at Bisley with other Heritage pistols. I kept those first six cartridge cases; one was presented to Dr Christopher Roads, HBSA President, in recognition of his efforts in creating Section 7.

We have come a long way since then. The NRA have offered remarkable support, including use of the new Cheylesmore range and armoury. Another of my pistols, a Nagant 7.62, was borrowed by a film company for a historic scene, reminding us of another use of arms in collections.

Foreign Firearms

With good reason, we have spent time on the British military rifles. There are of course many other military rifles shot in competition alongside them. Each rifle type has its proponents, and its foibles, and they are all individuals.

One decision that has to be made is whether you wish to use factory

ammunition or improve accuracy with handloads. Certainly time spent shooting groups with different ammunition at, say, 200 yards will be well spent and tell you what your rifle likes best. If you are lucky, it may be cheap factory ammunition! A short list might include the following:

- The German Mauser G98 of First World War vintage, or K98 from the Second World War. Effective in competition – though the five-round magazine may be a limitation. As with many rifles, they are individuals, and much depends on having a good one, with a decent trigger and a good set of sights. Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian versions in particular are favoured by some shooters.
- The US Springfield .30-06 Model 1903 or the earlier US Krag-Jorgensen Model 1898 in .30/40 Krag – both interesting rifles that shoot well. A good addition to a Springfield would be an American scope – a Winchester A5 or Unertl Optical Co, as appropriate to the rifle.
- The other Krags are the Krag Jorgensen 6.5mm M1895 from Norway and the 8mm Danish version.
- The Russian Mosin Nagant 7.62x54R (sometimes called 7.62x53R) Model 1891/30 (the year the cartridge was adopted) and later versions. Like others it has its foibles, such as a heavy military trigger, but these are easy to fix. A good one is nice to shoot and can be accurate – later ones in particular, and depending

on the ammunition used. A limitation may be the five-round magazine. They are generally not expensive. A good starting point may be a Hungarian 1891/30 or a Polish M44 carbine.

- Another is the Swiss Schmidt Rubin 7.5x55, perhaps also a rarer 10.4mm Vetterli. Swiss rifles tend to be like their watches and shoot well with the GP11 military issue ammunition.
- Greek or Romanian Mannlicher 6.5s are also interesting and shoot well, but again, choose your ammunition carefully.
- You may consider something a little different among the rarer ones, including for example a Carcano 6.5mm, or a Guedes 8mm M1885.
- The Japanese Arisaka is also less common but an interesting and potentially accurate rifle. They are modified Mauser design. The Model 1905 (Type 38) 6.5mm or the later 7.7mm Type 99 long and short rifles.

This is certainly not a complete list but may underline the sheer variety available and whet your interest. There are also the sniper versions of rifles with scopes replacing the military or target sights and work done to improve their accuracy. Or you can try something different and shoot in a fixed bayonet competition.

If you wish to shoot Target Shotgun with a historic shotgun then there are some alternatives – the Winchester Model 1897 on the previous page is one such. We have not even touched upon the Muzzle Loading classes for rifle and revolver, as that will be enough to fill another article.

There is something special about shooting well with a firearm 100-plus years old knowing that with your own hand-loaded ammunition, that suits the rifle, you can shoot accurately enough to win the competition or even beat shooters with modern state of the art rifles.

If you are a historic shooter then I am preaching to the converted, though perhaps you will be enthused to try another rifle or class.

If you are not, then perhaps I will have sparked your interest in acquiring, shooting and enjoying an arm which is not only historic but full of character. ■

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New-look National Clay Shooting Centre

A transformation has taken place at the National Clay Shooting Centre, with every aspect of the facility getting an update. Here's what to expect when you return...

Before the lockdown, the National Clay Shooting Centre (NCSC) was in the midst of a significant change program centred on modernising the facility to a point where once again it is worthy of its name. The plan was to create a look and feel that not only appeals to our elite shooters, but also our members and customers. The technology was old and the general appearance required attention.

First of all, the reception area was given a substantial facelift. We set to work opening up what was a small hatch similar to a ticket office into a more inviting environment where our staff can engage appropriately with our customers. The old assortment of cathode-ray TVs needed to go, along with the large cleaning cupboard they were sat on. The left-over space was transformed

into a lounge area where our customers can relax in comfort. Marcus and Neil did an outstanding job moving the door and lowering and widening the reception area.

The finished article has transformed the clubhouse into a welcoming and professional sports setting where clients can relax while waiting for a lesson, or passers-by can enjoy our breathtaking views and catch up on a bit of work.

The café has also had a similar facelift along with a new consolidated menu to include our new 'Bisley Banger' Sausage.

Out on the ranges we were keen to revitalise the grass that has slowly wasted away. Years of fallen clay debris, accompanied by continuous sweeping, has left the range layouts quite bleak, perhaps more akin to a lunar landscape. We needed

to be bold and start from scratch, so we hired a machine to collect as much of the debris as possible and prepare the ground for fertiliser and seeding. The clear up was a huge task, which we carried out in shifts so as not to disrupt our opening times.

The grass seed was laid the day before the lockdown, which gave it the best possible chance of success while the range





A new-look reception area greets you as you enter the NCSC building

The finished article has transformed the clubhouse into a welcoming and professional setting

was closed. The lockdown period has been tough for all and the NCSC staff were furloughed throughout. The Bisley range complex was now being cared for by a small team in preparation for reopening. We tried to maintain the momentum and look for improvement opportunities where possible. The dry weather meant we needed to water the ground regularly and we also managed to repair some areas of the shooting layouts that were in need of some TLC. The before-and-after photographs are typical of the work being carried out.

As well as the grounds, a considerable amount of work has been carried out addressing some of the other long overdue issues to prepare for reopening. We have started a refurbishment program on all of our traps and associated equipment. This is a long process, but we are slowly getting through it and hopefully this will ensure the longevity of our facility for the next

20 years and beyond. We have replaced our trap control system boxes, which will not only increase the reliability of the equipment, but also offer new programs to help coaches select specific targets and routines for their clients.

We have worked on improving membership to offer a better service as well as increased access to our facilities. Membership is now managed by a central database, which will increase efficiency and our ability to inform members of future events, special offers, results to competitions and so on. We will shortly be issuing a new membership card, which will insert directly into our new trap control systems. Virtual tokens will then be loaded on to your card at reception, eventually removing the need for our old token boxes.



A new logo compliments the changes going on at the facility itself



The grounds have been rejuvenated with new grass

Rebranding

Concurrent with all this work, we felt it was time for a change regarding the NCSC image and overall branding. We have designed a new logo and over the next few months we hope to introduce a new uniform and some items of merchandising, some of which will be available for sale to our customers.

Reopening

As this article is written, NCSC has reopened for two weekends initially for our members. Social distancing measures are in place and there is a new process for booking and paying for a layout before arrival. This is working much better than expected and will probably set the standard for future operations at NCSC. Next weekend we will be opening for three days to all our customers, non members included. We will gradually increase our opening days as and when the government restrictions relax and the demand dictates. ■

Best target practice

With some members reporting inaccuracies in the electronic targets at Bisley, here's what you need to know about them and how to get the best from them

The NSC employs electronic target systems originating from three different manufacturers, all of which record shots accurately. However, the concept of shooting at an electronic target is different from shooting at a standard target with a marker, and is not always well understood. There are some facts that must be accepted:

- If maintained correctly, the electronic targets employed at the NSC will record shots accurately in comparison to the electronic centre.
- It is impossible to paste a paper target face to the same degree of accuracy that the target electronics can measure.
- The Hythe frames within which the targets are mounted do not hold the target static, particularly in strong winds.
- When shooting at the target, the firer is aiming at the centre of the paper target face. The shot is recorded against the electronic centre.
- The centre of the paper target face and the electronic centre are unlikely to be 100 percent concentric.

When the shot strike is displayed on the monitor, it scores the shot in comparison to the electronic centre. There is no relationship to the paper target face. When Kongsberg targets are received, they bear a black circle aiming mark; there is no target face. Target faces were added by the NSC approximately four years ago at the insistence of shooters.

All electronic targets employed at the NSC claim an accuracy of 1mm or greater.

Variable Factors

The NSC target staff go to great lengths and religiously employ a specially manufactured 'jig' to ensure the target face is located consistently. In addition, the target system is electronically calibrated regularly. However, when the target is re-centred,

the calibration will, to a certain degree, be compromised. A pasting error of just 5mm is approximately the width of a scoring ring and can cause an anomaly between the monitor score and the paper score, should they be compared.

The target frame moves in the wind; at the upper edge of the target, this an arc of 150mm or more. This is exactly the same for an electronic or paper target; unfortunately the results on an electronic target are subject to much greater scrutiny.

Methodology

Before shooting at the electronic targetry, it is important that the rifle has been zeroed and you know that you are going to hit the screen centrally. Beware – any damage to sensors will be charged to the individual/club. More than 50 percent of the reports of a malfunctioning target are due to poor marksmanship and misses. Quite surprisingly, this applies equally at 100 or 1000 yards.

The following procedure is suggested:

- Aim at the centre of the paper target face and adjust your sight setting to obtain a Mean Point of Impact (MPI) over the centre (v-bull) of the target face displayed on the monitor.
- You should not look for the bullet strike on the paper target face – you must trust the electronics and adjust to the monitor.
- Do not request your target to be re-centred during a competition or during a shoot where you are recording data.
- Once content with your zero, continue to shoot. Keep in mind that your rifle is zeroed to the electronic centre on that individual target. It may not be zeroed to the centre of the paper target face, though it will be close.
- Falling back and wind changes should be addressed in the normal manner.
- If you change lanes and shoot on a different target, you will need to adjust.



It is possible to increase the life of the target skins by offsetting the electronic centre, thus moving the MPI around the physical face of the target. However, I acknowledge that until we can broaden our understanding and acceptance of the targetry, this is probably a step too far and could damage the reputation of the target systems.

It is common practice for live quarry shooters to zero on the short-range electronic targets. Due to this, they are checked regularly against a paper target. Electronic targets are ideal for a quick 'check zero' or marksmanship training. It is recommended that an initial zero is checked on paper.

The skill in marksmanship is consistency, i.e. maintaining the point of impact accurately on the point of aim in all conditions. This is equally applicable to the electronic centre of a target that relays the point of impact to the monitor.

In summary:

- There is no relationship between the target electronic centre and the paper target face, which is affixed solely to provide an aiming mark.
- You must adjust your settings to the fall of shot shown on the monitor
- Trust the electronics and enjoy your shooting. ■



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Return of the Native Red Deer Revisited

A decade on from the reintroduction of red deer to the Bisley heath, James Adler & Steve Proud investigate the effects of the project

Ten years ago we saw the start of one of the largest single-site conservation projects in southern England: the return of red deer to a 720-hectare heathland grazing compartment in Surrey. Now the deer are thriving and the habitat is beginning to respond favourably to their actions.

The Pirbright Range Danger Area (RDA) is located only 25 miles from central London in one of the most populous parts of the country and yet is an unspoilt haven, home to threatened and rare species. There are no paths, no people and no dogs. It is truly Surrey's last wilderness. The area is

a fundamental land resource for both the UK armed forces, as part of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation's (DIO) Pirbright Range Complex, and the NRA's centre at Bisley.

The land was originally bought by the government in 1877 and has remained undeveloped and little disturbed since that time. The public were allowed into the area until the 1970s, when a review banned access to the area owing to the danger of unexploded ordnance and a 14km long security fence constructed. The lack of disturbance has created the thriving wildlife community, albeit one that was

threatened by the difficulties of managing such an area.

The Ministry of Defence and the NRA are jointly responsible for the condition of this special area. Both parties have entered into arrangements with Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) as an expert partner organisation for the conservation management of the area.

Natural History

Lowland European Heathland is at the heart of this wildlife value. This habitat exists only in a narrow climatic belt along the North Atlantic seaboard and is dependent on certain soils and altitude. Once a valuable pastoral resource, heathland gradually lost its economic importance during the industrial revolution. The UK lost 85 per cent of its heath between 1850 and 1980, with all the remaining lowland heathland in England being able to fit on the Isle of Man. Heathland's biodiversity is recognised as being of international importance.

Heathland's great value for wildlife is reflected in the wide range of environmental protection that the site enjoys. Under UK law it is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) while it also safeguarded by the European Designations: Special Area of Conservation (for the undisturbed peat and wetland areas) and Special Protection Area (for three threatened heathland bird species; the nightjar, Dartford warbler and woodlark).

Image: Jon Hawkins

The breeding strategy of these bird species (nesting on the ground or within the heather sward) makes them vulnerable to disturbance from people and dogs; the RDA therefore provides the perfect sanctuary.

Management And Problems

The RDA had not received any formal management since it was bought by the MOD. On most heathland sites this would have resulted in a rapid transition from heath to scrub to woodland. The area remained as heath due to large fires that have swept across the site. The site burns regularly as the vegetation grows up and provides sufficient fuel. With the emergency services not being able to enter the area, the fires burn much of the site, often lasting for days and occasionally breaking out of the area to threaten local homes. This keeps the fire brigade camped around the perimeter fence for long periods of time.

Obviously this created problems for the people who had to evacuate their homes, for the emergency services who would find their resources stretched, and for the shooters at Pirbright and Bisley who would not be able to train or fire. It also caused problems for the wildlife. Less mobile species would be incinerated, while others that escaped found that their habitat had been destroyed. Consequently several decisions were made. The military ceased use of tracer and phosphorous grenades. The fire brigade instituted a series of changes to their responses to heath fires and have enjoyed greater success in stopping fires that start outside the RDA burning their way into it. Finally, DIO created a wider fire break on both sides of the fence and improved perimeter access and fire plans. All of these measures will hopefully help reduce the incidence of fire and the disruption and the damage it causes. Unfortunately, just as large fires are a bad thing for wildlife on heaths, so is a lack of fire when it is the only check on vegetation change.

The risk of a reduced incidence of fire within the RDA is that it may lead to encroachment by scrub and coarse grasses and a consequent build-up of biomass, which would give a future fire greater intensity. Scrub and coarse grasses can overwhelm the more fragile, interesting



Species such as the warbler thrive in this untouched area

and rarer species and reduce biodiversity. On other sites heathland managers use a variety of methods to combat these invaders, including mowing, tree and scrub cutting, turf stripping and grazing using domestic livestock. Due to the access restrictions on the RDA, none of these were possible. The international importance of the site meant there was never an option to do nothing as this would allow the site to turn into secondary woodland with a loss of species and landscape value. What followed was the beginning of one of the most exciting conservation projects ever embarked upon in the UK.

Beginnings

After observing some of the effects of deer grazing elsewhere on UK heathland, the idea of introducing a herd of large deer to the RDA was born. Between 2005 and 2007 animal welfare meetings involving Defence Estates, Natural England, Defence Deer Management, RSPCA, DEFRA, the Deer Initiative, consultant deer specialists, and

SWT were held to discuss the project's feasibility. Natural England was keen to introduce stock into the area and looked to the partner organisations to consider this. An agreement between the MOD and SWT was signed in the summer of 2006 that allowed the Trust to manage the Defence Training Estate in Surrey for habitat conservation. The creation of the SWT grazing team with specialist staff in 2007 and the green light from the DEFRA grazing animals welfare group gave impetus and direction to the Pirbright project.

By October 2007 a working group had been set up with a group of core organisations whose task it would be to work out the details, organise any necessary works and manage the herd within the RDA. After a comprehensive series of meetings that covered everything from stock type to biosecurity, from escapes to fire plans and from monitoring to management, it was agreed that the most appropriate species to introduce into the RDA were red deer. Goats were also considered for introduction but this has not proved necessary thus far. With the stock type carefully chosen, the project moved towards implementation.

Project Development And Funding

SWT applied for the government's Higher Level Stewardship funding (HLS), the aim of which was to deliver significant environmental benefits in high-priority areas. An application was submitted to Natural England and was successful in its



The heath is unlike anywhere else you'll find in the busy south-east of England

bid for funds. This funding, together with a budget from DIO and SWT, provided sufficient resources to get the project off the ground. Deer specialists Dr Jochen Langbein and Neil Brooks provided their expert advice on how best to create a safe deer compartment. The works included:

- Building 5.1km of new Tornado wire, solid knot deer fencing. This was to fence off the range floors and create holding paddocks and fire refuges.
- Installation of five deer grids in regularly used access points.
- Installation of 20 culverts in stream and ditch exits from the RDA.
- Installation of 45 badger gates.
- 11km of ground proofing to the existing security fence. This involved the adding of weld mesh to secure between the ground level and the chainlink.
- 5km of raising the razor wire coil to ensure that stags would not entangle their antlers.

The enclosure was completed in October 2010.

Arrival Of The Animals

SWT bought its first 22 red hinds from the Tb-accredited herd at Bailing Hill Deer Farm in Warnham in March 2010. This farm not only has one of the most respected red deer bloodlines in the country but also has the advantage of possessing a robust handling system and suitable crushes, which allowed SWT to

live-catch and transport the animals. It also permitted the carrying out of a comprehensive series of blood and health tests, selected and undertaken by Peter Green (the BDS's veterinary advisor), and the fitting of GPS collars.

The deer were transported from Warnham to specially constructed deer-holding paddocks within the RDA. This 25-hectare safe haven allowed the deer to settle in a more natural area than the farm. A number of the deer were pregnant and by the end of the calving season there were eight rapidly growing calves running with the females. Six of the calves were successfully caught, ear tagged, identified by gender and weighed to give an idea of their performance over the coming years.

In September 2010, SWT bought two stags from Warnham. These two, a five-year old and three-year-old, ensured the covering of the hinds during the October rut. The stags were transported in full antler in two separate vehicles and released into the same paddock as the hinds.

Since the paddock's gates were opened, the herd has been under constant remote surveillance. The animals' impacts are being studied by monitoring the site's flora and fauna and the herd is being managed in response to these factors along with direct observation of the condition of the animals. This is one of the things that make the project so unique; the animals are on site as conservation grazing tools rather than as trophy or meat stock, and animal welfare remains of the highest importance.

Defence Deer Management manages the stock bought by SWT in accordance with a mutually agreed management plan.

The herd movement patterns have been tracked using GPS collars on two of the hinds and both the stags. The collars take a GPS fix every hour and send that information to the computer system at SWT's Pirbright HQ. This data has been analysed using the Trust's Geographical Information Systems and allows SWT to monitor how the animals use the site. This unique opportunity has allowed SWT to monitor the animals' movement and dispersal patterns, behaviour, feeding habits and response to seasons and stimuli.

Conclusions

This pioneer project has safeguarded one of the last wildernesses of southern England. The years of careful planning and the work of the project team have led to animal welfare, sustainability principles and agreed best practice being successfully delivered. The introduction has gone surprisingly smoothly so far. In addition, the information and knowledge gained will be made widely available to provide a useful evidence base for other land managers facing similarly difficult issues. Already the project has been visited by both the Danish and German Ministries of Defence to consider heathland management on their sites.

We are immensely proud that the partners have worked together to face this unique challenge. Folders of risk assessments, plans and minutes of meetings had to be created to achieve the reality of deer grazing on the ground. Now that this has proved possible and successful, we have a united range of organisations behind the project. We were particularly delighted that the project was recognised by being awarded the coveted Sanctuary Award for environmental contributions to MOD land both within the UK and abroad.

Next time you shoot at Bisley in October, listen out for the roar of red stags in the rut. The sound reflects an age when these animals roamed naturally across the Surrey heaths, and now it bears testament to the great lengths gone to in order to conserve and enhance this very special area and its wildlife. ■



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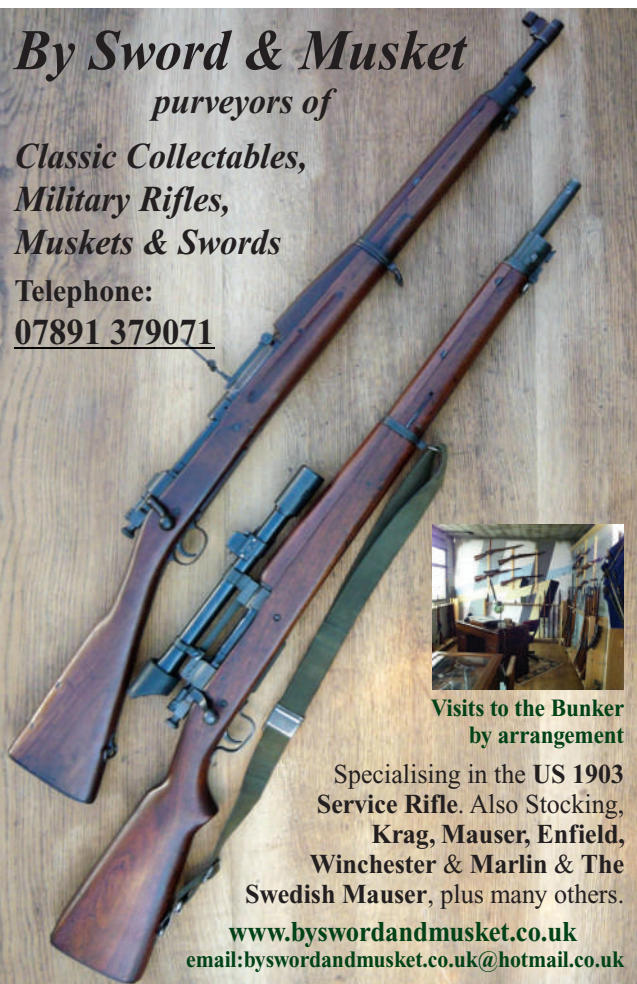
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Clean break

Now is the ideal time for Clubs to perform a thorough deep clean and de-leading routine, says Nic Couldrey

In the Spring *Journal* I referred to Telfords Range, operated by Kings Lynn St. Michaels Rifle and Pistol Club in Norfolk. The Club has generously agreed to share its recent experience of deep-cleaning an indoor range.

The Club decided to engage a specialist contractor to perform a thorough deep clean of the indoor range. Several contractors were approached; the contract was finally awarded to Resilient Ballistics, based in Lincolnshire. The work took three operatives two days to complete at a cost of £2,600 + VAT.

Jason Ess Secretary of KLSM R&PC said: "I am pleased to confirm that the de-leading and deep clean of our range has been completed and has been a major improvement. The works were undertaken by Resilient Ballistics over two days and this will now allow us to set up an improved system of cleaning and maintenance moving forward, with other improvement works in the near future, which logistically could not be completed in the same time frame and will require a longer close-down of the club.

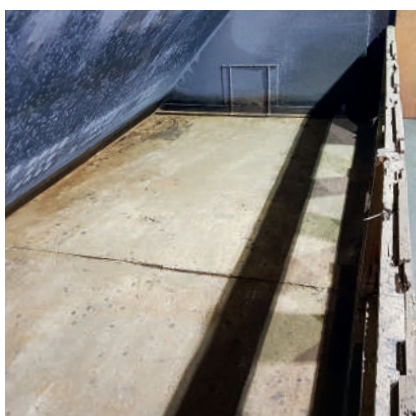
"Resilient Ballistics worked with us throughout and we would be happy to recommend their services to other clubs."

The pictures included here show the firing points and view down the range including the back plate after the clean.

Key Points and lessons learned

Indoor ranges require frequent deep cleaning to remove lead and other hazardous materials from surfaces and range structures. Keeping the range clean is the single most effective way for club officials to minimise the risk to members from exposure to harmful materials that may be found on indoor ranges and ensure range contamination is not inadvertently transferred to members' homes.

Club officials should observe the build-up of dust and debris on the range as part



of the regular safety inspection routine. Appropriate equipment, including vacuum cleaners designed to avoid the risk of explosion and floor washer/scrubbers, should be used by trained operators equipped with suitable PPE. This is specialist work and should be performed by specialist contractors, not club members on a best-efforts basis. Dry sweeping and dusting surfaces should be avoided to prevent dust becoming airborne.

Done properly, deep cleaning is a protracted, time consuming process particularly if a range is heavily used or has not been cleaned for a long period (greater than 12 months). Frequent cleaning and de-cluttering the range will help keep deep cleaning costs manageable.

The clean includes the removal of dust

from surfaces including floors, ceiling/roof spaces, ducting, target systems, bullet trap, backsplash curtains and the air handling equipment/filters. The cleaning waste may contain lead and unburnt propellant and should be disposed of in accordance with regulations. This includes waste water, sand or granulate rubber, vacuum cleaner waste and ventilation filters.

The frequency of deep cleans is a function of range use, specifically the type of firearms used on the range, type of ammunition and the number of rounds fired, particularly accurate fire, which concentrates lead around the mean point of impact. Club officials should also consider the characteristics of the range, the efficiency of the ventilation and extraction systems and the porosity of surfaces down the range. Small ranges or tube ranges will require bespoke cleaning procedures.

Depending on the premises, facilities such as toilets, training rooms, tea and coffee-making facilities, storage etc. may need to be included within the scope of the deep clean. Soft furnishings, carpet etc. may trap lead and unburnt propellant and should be removed.

Records of inspections, maintenance, faults, cleaning and de-leading should be kept for the statutory minimum period and be stored securely. Documentation will be vital in the event of an incident or claim on the club.

The coronavirus pandemic has closed indoor ranges, so clubs have an opportunity to perform cleaning and maintenance work in preparation for the eventual relaxation of government guidelines and the resumption of shooting indoors.

I have recently spoken to two contractors that provide deep cleaning services to indoor range operators; both are happy to receive enquiries from Clubs.

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See you on the ranges! ■

OBITUARIES

DAVID FRIEND 1934 – 2020



David Friend was a remarkable man. A superlative shot, a unique Bisley character, and an inspiration to so many. So it was with great sadness we learned of his death on Sunday 17 May, in Brighton Hospital, just four days after his 86th birthday.

His shooting career spanned over 70 years, during which time he excelled at Target and Match Rifle. But this was just one aspect of a man with many talents, who contributed to causes as diverse as passing on leather working skills, the Burgess Hill Shed, a community art and crafts workshop, the Burgess Hill library, and the restoration of Oldland Mill in Sussex.

David started shooting at his school, Hurstpierpoint College. By his own admission he was, at that stage, a solid but unspectacular member of the school VIII. From school he joined the navy, training at Dartmouth, and 'retiring' from the position of midshipman after three years. He then joined the family business, Friends for Leather, originally established by his great-great-grandfather as a leather merchant. Never one to shirk progress, David took the business into new territory, successfully developing and producing high-quality fashion handbags and briefcases.

His association with leather made him instantly recognisable at Bisley by dint

of his extraordinary shooting jacket. He made it using a pattern borrowed from his tailor, and the result was a garment more akin to a trench-coat, weighing almost as much as the cow from which the leather came. With his famous coat, ever-present pipe, weathered tweed fishing hat and extraordinary eyebrows, he was instantly recognisable. And such was his propensity for smouldering tobacco, he was often mistaken as being on fire from a distance.

Having established himself in the family business, David was able to resume competitive shooting, and concentrated on Target Rifle for many years – very successfully. As early as 1963 he came third in the Queen's. He was a regular on the Sussex and GB teams in the 70s. In 1971 he achieved the then record of 224 ex-225 in the Palma Match, in Camp Perry. He also captained the winning England team in the National Match in 2006. The pinnacle of his Target Rifle career was winning the Queen's in 1977. His winning score of 283 was low, and in his unassuming way he had no anticipation it would be enough. He was chaired off the range to great acclaim, pipe ablaze, his bearers struggling with the additional weight of his jacket.

His win in the Queen's was achieved by superior wind reading on a difficult day,



and the vagaries of the wind was one of the factors that drew him to Match Rifle in the 1980s. He loved the challenge of judging the wind, the technical elements of shooting at very long range, and became ever-present in English Eight competitions and the Hopton. Over the years he won most of the trophies on offer, though the Hopton itself eluded him. He was selected for the England Elcho team on several occasions. The first was in 1992, and the last, his ninth, was 24 years later, in 2016, when he was in his eighties. In 2002 he scored 223 ex-225 in the match, on a difficult day, when the next closest score was a full 11 points adrift of his total.

That he could stay competitive into his 80s was not only a result of inherent skill but also his constant desire to 'move with the times'. He was eager to try new techniques or components, and was instrumental in helping a fellow Sussex man, Colin Moon, develop wooden rifle stocks, which were the 'go-to' stocks for Swings and similar actioned rifles. David's outlook enabled him to continue winning at the highest level. As recently as 2016, at the age of 82, he won the Wimbledon (MR) with an amazing 100.14 at 1100 yards.

His interest in innovation extended beyond shooting. He surprised us last year by buying a Jaguar E-Pace after decades of allegiance to Land Rovers. This willingness to embrace change was also reflected in his enthusiasm for encouraging aspiring shooters or supporting community-based projects close to home, such as the Oldland Mill. He was one of a small team who started work restoring the mill in the early 1980s, resulting in its return to full working order in 2008.

David was a modest, thoughtful, generous man with a dry sense of humour. He was universally liked, and a fixture on the North London Rifle Club veranda, in quiet contemplation, pipe puffing and pewter tankard in hand. He was a dear friend and inspiration, and will be sorely missed. ■

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MESSAGE



We grab a word with former NRA Chairman, John Webster

How did you get into shooting and at what age?

I was given an air rifle for my 10th birthday and spent hours shooting targets in the garden. I progressed to shooting small-bore at prep school, and from there to fullbore (.303" in those days) at Uppingham School. My first visit to Bisley was in 1972, when I won the Cadet Pair with a friend at the Schools Meeting (for the record, he got the higher score!) I have been shooting fullbore ever since.

What is the most memorable moment in your career?

I am lucky enough to have had many memorable moments, but one stands out: around 3.45pm on 11 October 2011 at Belmont in Brisbane. After a poor 900 yards in the Australia Match, GB was third behind the USA and South Africa. At the start of the final range (1000 yards), as GB Team Captain I issued the unusual instruction that we would not start for 30 minutes or so, reasoning that the variable left-hand wind would subside. An hour later, the flags were showing a mean wind of around two minutes left, down from eight left at the beginning of the detail. With the other teams gathered round, Jon Underwood (ENG) and Chris Watson (WAL) each scored 50 under the guidance of the coaching team to win by four points and set a new match record for 1000yds. To come from behind against such strong competition in such a prestigious match was a great team effort and a great feeling.

What was your biggest hurdle as a shooter?

When playing rugby, I was used to getting myself 'psyched' for matches. I had to learn to abandon – indeed almost reverse – this process before a shooting competition. Even now I sometimes regress. It means I flick the odd shot towards 10 o'clock – known to many wind coaches as Webbie's Corner!

What role does your family/friends play in your shooting?

It's colossal. In the early days, mum and dad were very supportive, buying me my first rifle, an RSA Musgrave. My wife and children have also played a big part, supporting me being away for a dozen or more international team tours. They also come to Bisley, and have been involved in marking targets, manning the souvenir tent and running the cream teas at the British Commonwealth at previous

Imperial Meetings. As for friends, some of those I met through shooting are among those whom I count as my best friends.

Who has been your biggest inspiration?

Simon Pattinson, the Master in charge of shooting at Uppingham when I was there. He did the job for 30 years, and in that time three dozen pupils represented the UK Cadet Rifle Team. He and his wife Jeanie gave us a gift – by instilling in us a love of shooting – that changed our lives for the better.

How have Bisley and the NRA influenced you?

Spending several days each July at Bisley for the Imperial Meeting acts as the perfect foil to a hectic life. There is nowhere else I would rather be. No matter what standard you're competing at, we have all made great memories at Bisley and through shooting. During my six years as NRA Chairman, I saw it as a key part of the job to make sure the organisation had the wherewithal to provide future generations with the opportunity to make their own memories.

What do you like to do in your free time?

My wife and I have two dogs, so walking them is a great routine and keeps me (sort of) fit. I play golf, currently off 16. I also engage in 'country' pursuits: fly-fishing and game shooting.

What advice would you give to somebody who wanted to take up shooting?

Don't delay. This is a sport you can do for life, and it has much to teach us at different stages of our personal development. Shooting is essentially a process, and to improve and do it well, you have to recognise that self-analysis, self-discipline and self-criticism are key. As you learn and develop such skills, not only will you find that shooting is more fun and you get better at it, you will also likely discover that you become a better human being as well.

So what next?

Last year, I shot Match Rifle for the first time in 35 years. It has moved on quite a bit in that period, but the experience was enough to get me wanting to re-engage. I am also keen to participate in, and foster, international TR competitions for Veterans. I might also try and get into wind coaching. The older I get, the more I realise that life is urgent, so I had better get on with it. ■

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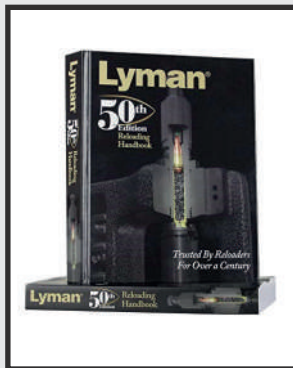
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