



# THE EARWIG

A Paper Containing Neither Politics, Literature,  
Science, Nor Art

Issue 2, July 2010  
(An Irregular Publication)

## A Greeting

Welcome to the second issue of the Earwig on the occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the NRA. We hope that the odd chuckle may have come your way with the first issue that you should have found nestling in your squadding envelope.

Our request for contributions has met with some modest success, and we are grateful to those among you who have responded. Earwigo again.



*When you've done that dear, Freddie in the next tent has some socks to darn and a nasty rip in his fly-sheet, and there is a week's worth of underwear .....*

## April Fool - Moi?

I was in the Estate Manager's office enjoying a companionable cup of coffee and a chat. It was a Monday in early Spring and, for once that year, it wasn't raining. All was peaceful at Bisley. There was no shooting and it happened to be the one day in the year when the bug hunters and other keen naturalists were given the run of the Common.

All of a sudden, the door banged open and a slightly haggard-looking chap with a straggly beard burst in, clearly extremely emotional. He was panting hard.

"I've found it! I've found it!" he yelled.

The Estate Manager and I looked at each other. "Found what?"

Words failed the newcomer. He just babbled insanelly.

"Sorry? What was that?"

"I've found it! I've found it!" (full decibels)

"Found what?"

"The hairy chested ant!"

I looked at my watch: it said "*Monday 1 April*". "Oh, yes," I thought "and I'm the Queen of Sheba."

My companion was more tactful: "Tell us more."

"It's extinct!" And he hurtled out of the room.

Note: *Formica rufibarbis*, aka the hairy chested ant, or more properly the red-barbed (bearded) ant, had indeed been believed to be extinct in England, but was found on 1 April, 1980, on a Surrey heath. TE

## Social Announcement

### Mr Robert Nibbs & Mrs Svetlana Manakova

The odes of joy are announced for Mr Robert and Mrs Svetlana Nibbs who have set new standards in speed dating. In December 2008 Robert, while in Finland on business, met Svetlana at a hotel. They married in October 2009 and are pleased to announce the birth of son Alexander Oliver, with whom said Robert is besotted - as of course he should be.

In anticipation of the usual questions from immigration personnel as to the validity of this union Robert and Svetlana put together a full diary of their association in the form of a pre-emptive strike. It contained everything from phone records and emails to Skype text and letters.

When asked by the officials for some evidence of the stability of the relationship - to prove that this was not simply an exercise in convenience - they plonked a four inch thick dossier on the official's desk. Visas were produced some three days later.

We wish them a happy and contented future. Robert can be found slaving away and offering sage advice at the HPS tent.

Now here is a message for our resident cultural attaché: "The cabbages in Moscow are ripe this summer, comrade".

**Mr Colin McEachran**

This revered and august Queen's Counsel and former Advocate Depute has announced that he has now turned 70 years of age. Your correspondent was privileged to attend upon him and Mrs Charlotte McEachran at Elcho Lodge at a ceremony to mark the occasion of the passing of anno domini (aka incipient decrepitude) and also his fifty years of competing at the hallowed ground from his pre-alumni days at Glenalmond.



*Photo JMcA*

Also in attendance were luminaries of the sport of rifle shooting, both Target and Match, with a combined age that well surpassed even Scotland's winning Elcho Match score. The clans of Scotland were represented by Laird Robert, the chieftan of clan Aitken, and well-known seller of raffle tickets to support needy Scots' causes, and Hamish of Hunter. Leaders of the financial world in the form of the Central Bankers came to offer gratuitous advice.

We are pleased to join with them and to offer Mr McEachran our very best wishes.

---

**THE RIFLE**  
**An Interlude In Three Acts**

**Act One – The Anathema Club, Whitehall**

*(Two crusty military figures in civilian dress are seated in the gentlemen's lounge of the club twirling amber liquid in brandy glasses.)*

“Have a brandy, Fffanshawe.”

“Thanks.”

“You're going to have a lovely new cadet rifle soon.”

“Oh goody, goody, sir! When?”

“We don't actually know yet, but it'll be jolly good when it comes, you know.”

“Oh super! What's it going to be?”

“Well, er, we're not quite sure. It could be the BAM (British Allied Munitions) or the POW (Premier Ordnance Works). But it'll be frightfully pukka, what.”

“That's terribly good news isn't it, sir? A real British target rifle for British cadets. One in the eye for the Aussies, too. I'd heard they'd had hopes with their P-Spot. If ours is better than theirs, it's got to be really super, hasn't it?”

“Yes; quite.”

“I say, sir, who's going to test this new rifle, help decide between BAM and POW?”

“No problem, my dear fellow. We've organised the Surbiton Press gang, you know, and we'll have a dozen of the finest flower of British Youth at Frimley next year to put 'em through their paces.”

“Cadets?”

“Yes (harrumph); they will be by then.”

“But can they shoot, sir?”

“Of course they can, old man. Any bloody fool can shoot after a short course of instruction, you know.”

“How short?”

“I don't know; ask the NRA: they've got a brigadier chappie who arranges these things. Anyway, we don't want to bother with slings and all that rubbish – just good honest marksmanship's what we're after. Can't beat it, you know. Good enough in Bartle Frere's day; good enough now.”

“But we didn't do terribly well against the Boer .....”

“My dear fellow, you have to move with the times. This is a modern rifle for the modern cadet and we are leaving no stone unturned in our search for the right weapon in the right place at the right time. Rome wasn't built in a day, you know (Bloody fool, Romulus; no tactician). Mustn't jump our fences, what. Terribly bad for morale. And, anyway, the Boer lost the war ..... Didn't he? Another brandy?”

TE

---

*Acts Two & Three will follow in the next edition.*

**Why You Did Not Appear In The Prize List**

*A selection of reasons offered by the hard pressed stats office staff.*

1. We did receive your card. We know that because it is still in the Range Officer's pocket.
2. You did not enter the competition. Did you enter on-line?

3. Your maths is appalling – do you own a calculator?
4. You did not score enough.
5. We do not accept queries on last year's lists.
6. Clearly, your friend cannot be entrusted with your scorecard.
7. You are too late, mate.
8. You were left off the prize list because we heard that you were cute and we wanted to meet you.
9. You were once rude to us and we bear a grudge.
10. Because you are F Class and cannot fill in your card properly.
11. Because we drank too much Pimms last night.
12. Your financial inducement was not big enough.
13. You are on the list but being incapable of seeing you missed your name – you should have gone to Spec Savers!
14. You are on the list but too proud to look a little nearer to the bottom.
15. Your writing is illegible – are you a doctor?
16. Oh, so your register keeper is a doctor.



*What you have there, Algy, are the £40 million temporary buildings for the Woolwich Olympics*

### Some Answers

*Q. Edward Ross won the first Rifle Contest in 1860 but who got the wooden spoon?*

A. Edward Ross won the Queen's Prize with a score of 24 out of a possible 30 but the wooden spoon was won by Murray of Cringletie with a score of 0.

*Q. Whitworth is famous for his rifles but what other machinery was he equally famous for?*

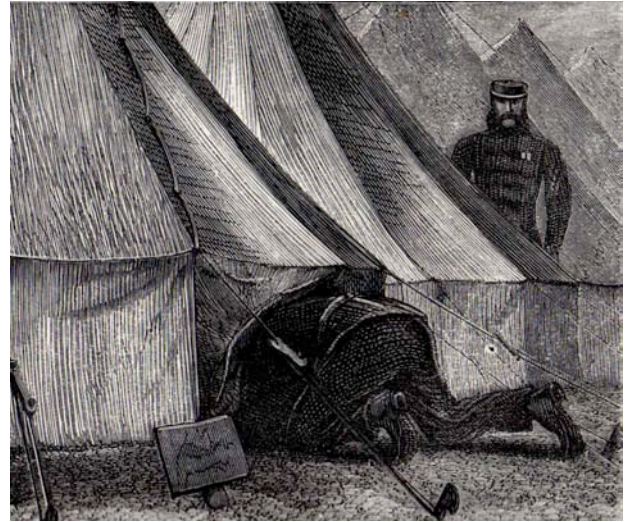
A. Whitworth designed the first large scale printing machinery for the Times.

*Q. What international team attended the first Rifle Contest?*

A. The Swiss sent a delegation of marksmen to compete in the 1860 competition and started the tradition of international competition.

*Q. How many competitors shot in the final of the Queen's Prize in 1860?*

A. Forty, thirty-seven including Murray of Cringletie and three who either did not appear or retired.



*Attempting The Back And Other Positions*

### Tradition and "Spot the Dog"

For many years, the Greshams School staff has included a large and always very well-behaved black labrador dog. Every Ashburton Day, a long suffering Greshams black labrador dog has been decorated with white round sticky patches, the sort for covering stray bullet-holes way outside the black part of the target. The effect on the dog is to turn it into a Dalmation in the negative. The dog seems not to object. Few people, possibly not even the perpetrator(s) knows why they do this, but they do it. And why not?

Now a few years ago when I was a range officer during an Ashburton Day, and during a lull in shooting, a small cadet came to my table with an earnest enquiry. Such enquiries can be quite entertaining, and this one was a good one, thus, "Please sir, excuse me sir, can you tell me why that dog has those white spots all over it?"

Every Range Office must know all. And so as quick as a flash I replied, "Good question young man; you see it must have started for what was a good reason at the time, the sort of thing that later becomes a tradition. Old people like traditions, and they may have been doing that for a long time, perhaps even a hundred years. That is why to this day, the Greshams dog is given those spots". At the time I thought this was a pretty good off-the-cuff response.

The lad accepted my explanation thoughtfully, thanked me, and walked about twenty yards. He stopped, apparently pondering my explanation. He turned, and came back to ask a further question -

"Excuse me sir, please sir, has it been the same dog for a hundred years?"



This was Spot of 2007, taking himself for a walk. Dogs MUST be on the lead all the time at Bisley, but the rules only say a DOG needs to be on (one end of) the lead. The rule says nothing about a requirement for a PERSON to be on the other end.

So Spot just took himself for walkies, but he was always "on the lead!"

Moral: when drafting laws, be very explicit.

### That Tune!

The first winner of Her Majesty The Queen's prize was a Scotsman - or, as would have been said at the time, a Scotchman - and his success was, as Mr. Punch remarked at the time, another feather to embellish the cap of Scotland.

Horatio Ross was merely the first from north of the border to carry off the prize, and one hopes there will be many more to follow.

But let the band that stands ready to march the triumphant winner of the prize off the range beware - there are a number of Scots on camp who will not allow themselves to be carried behind that thinly veiled peon of praise to butcher Cumberland (Stinking Billy rather than Sweet William) following his barbarous exploits at Culloden.

Can I suggest that the band has well rehearsed "Scotts Wha Hae" in glorious memory of victory at Bannockburn, just in case - -

Hoots mon!

### Three Cheers!

As far back as any living matchrifleman can recall - and probably for decades before that - the Elcho Match has concluded with a charming little ceremony. After the final results have been declared on the firing point by the Chief Range Officer, the competing teams, led by their respective captains, have taken turns to raise three cheers for those who have just triumphed over them. Hence the captain of the team coming second has proposed three cheers for the winning nation, the captain of the team coming in third position has then proposed three cheers for the winning nation

and for the nation in second place, and finally the captain of the winning team has proposed three cheers for everyone.

All went well until the appointment of the current Welsh captain. Try as the other captains might to explain the cheering system and order of precedence, whether due to the pressures of the match just passed, or the natural state of that individuals' mind, the Welsh captain would invariably propose three cheers either at the wrong time or to the wrong nations!

So, at the conclusion of the 2010 match, the four captains sought the help of one of their former members to rehearse the procedure. The Chief Range Officer declared the results, and the process started. As the turn of the Welsh approached all held their breath, and were rewarded by a perfectly timed and appropriately targeted proposal and the cheers of the Welsh team. All relaxed, and finally the captain of the victorious Scots cleared his throat - and forgot to include his own nation!

Perhaps he considered a second consecutive victory to be cheer enough for those from north of the border?

### Thanks

With thanks to contributors:

John & Deborah Deane,  
Tim Elliott,  
Bruce Parker,  
T Rex,  
The Stats Office  
Karen Robertson and the NRA Staff  
Tim Webster,  
Dick Winney,  
Charles Young  
and others, wittingly or unwittingly.

We also acknowledge with thanks to the original artists, the historical illustrations from 'Punch' and 'The Illustrated London News'.

Contributions from any shooter, their partner, companion, staff or other personage are welcomed. They can be something you have penned, something you have heard (whether extraordinary or funny or baffling, trivial or serious or in any way interesting and/or entertaining).

Offerings, in writing (legible manuscript is fine) should be taken to the front counter clearly marked "Earwig Contribution" c/o Karen Robertson and with your contact details on Camp, or delivered in person to the Editor in Chief, placing the opus in the Earwig Box at the command centre, caravan site 6 plot 3 (the cream and brown four wheeler down Marjorie Foster Road, on the left behind the wriggly tin ablutions opposite the back road to the Canada Hut) with your contact details.

