

OK, so whose bright idea was it to suggest that we run a shooting club?

Ah, that'll be me then!

So, having had the idea and being told to run with it, what next? Find out if there is any interest within our membership. Out went the e-mail and to say the least, you guys and gals came up trumps. Over 60 interested members in the first 24 hours and more interest still being shown. Best I find a suitable date and book targets then. As the club is designed to cater for all shooting disciplines I decided to try and cover as many as possible over the first day: Gallery Rifle, Black Powder, F Class, Service Rifle and Target Rifle were all on the agenda.

With Chris Webb running Melville and Cheylesmore, ably assisted by Garry Minton, and with Iain Robertson, Steve East, Hamish Tucker and Chris Law running Century we had a great team. John Gardner offered to run a service rifle competition for which there was a trophy, kindly donated for that reason.

The inaugural day dawned with clear blue skies and warm sunshine but, true to our British summers, quickly clouded over and threatened to rain. Fortunately there are other non-football fans out there as I had managed to book targets on Cup Final day.

Glynn Alger opened the proceedings with a few words about what the NRA was achieving both at Bisley and in the regions. Then it was out to the ranges. There were a couple of hiccups but nothing that couldn't be corrected.

We had a variety of shooters from 'plinkers' to serious shooters. Some quite happy just to enjoy themselves and others making good use of the experience that was around. Even the rain that arrived shortly after we started failed to dampen our spirits and gave us the chance to practice our wet weather drills.

We had one probationer, shooting one on one with a coach, who was delighted to have the opportunity to try some larger calibre gallery rifles. Unfortunately, as his mother, it cost me a fortune in ammunition. But then again the grin on his face was worth it and his shooting wasn't bad either.

Lunch was taken in the London & Middlesex clubhouse and provided an opportunity for us to find out if people were enjoying the day. I was very happy to hear a resounding "Yes". There were suggestions for future days as well as ideas on how to help it to run more smoothly.

Back out onto the ranges in the afternoon and amazingly the weather improved tremendously. The service rifle competition was won by Steve Burnaby. There was one better score but he was disqualified as he seemed to know what he was doing! As Steve had to leave after the morning shoot we were unable to present him with his trophy and hopefully by the time he reads this I will have remembered to tell him.

Everyone seemed to have had a good day and agreed that it was a good idea. One of the e-mails I had after the event proved it was all worthwhile:

*Heather*

*Thank you and everyone for an excellent day on 21/05/05.*

*I only tried F Class and Target and although I enjoyed F Class I think I shall stick to Target. Everyone was friendly and most of all keen to help and pass on their own experiences.*

*The whole day was well worth it, I began at the outset feeling a little insecure about shooting in the wind, and although I only understood about 30% of what was passed on, and then only absorbed about 20% of that, I went home feeling 50% taller. It was also the first time I'd shot my rifle in the rain whilst lying in a puddle, and although it's not something I would encourage, I didn't even notice it until I looked down to what appeared to be another episode of blown seals on my incontinent trousers.*

*However I still feel a little bit of a cheat having spent the whole day "soaking up" other peoples hard earned experiences, perhaps soon I will be able to repay some of this.*

*I have booked time off for 11 June just to be sure to be there.*

*See you soon!*

*Ian*

So maybe the sleepless nights and hectic organisation was worth it after all. I'll just have to put on some more dates and hopefully see it grow. As they say - watch this space for future dates as well as your e-mail, our website and the postman.

Now all I need are more people in all the shooting disciplines to help me to ensure that we offer the best for our members.

Any volunteers? (Pressed men and women are also acceptable).

*Heather Webb*

*Tired but happy Membership Secretary*