

BLUNDELL'S MAGPIES 2011 SEASON

Shortly before Christmas in 2010 the Magpies' President, Dr Herbert Price, died at the age of 90 after a long illness, depriving us of a genial and much-loved pillar of the Club. Herbert had been the last of the inter-war Bisley shooters under Rev. Major Abigail, and his subsequent distinguished medical career was only a backdrop to his consuming passions, rugby and shooting, which he pursued with vigour until late in life. A fuller obituary can be seen on the OB website.

In March, David Bentata organized another in the series of London Lunches, this time again in the sobering ambience of the Special Forces Club. Magpies stood in silence in memory of the late Dr Herbert Price, then enjoyed an hour or two reminiscing and updating each other on a host of subjects. Beside David, other Magpies included Ben Wrey, Hugo Brooke, Peter Moore, David Condy, George Tilley, Lt. Col. Tim Courtenay, Peter Ward and Alec Rainey (who had published his book 'The Way of Life' – about which others present were extremely interested, if rather challenged by the complexity of the subject). Guests were David's partner Linda, a governor of Blundell's, and James Postle, housemaster of School House and manager of shooting at the school.

During the course of the meal the Magpies learned that James would be leaving Blundell's at the end of the summer term, because of the eminently well-deserved promotion of his wife, Eve Jardine-Young, to be Principal of Cheltenham Ladies' College from September. Eve had been an outstanding Director of Studies at Blundell's since 2006, and had contributed in good measure to the excellent ratings the school had been given in the Ofsted inspection of 2010: congratulations were offered via James from all present. David then presented James with a Magpies club tie, as a mark of gratitude for the work he had done to rekindle interest in open-range shooting amongst Blundellians.

This interest was demonstrated a few weeks later, when Blundell's cadets shot in the Mere Cup matches in May, and achieved top places in under-18 and under-16 pairs matches, despite this occasion being their first fullbore shoot of the season. Old Boys also noted with interest that this shoot was the first time that a lady (Jenny Boylett) had shot for the school in a representative match. Another pleasing aspect of these matches was that the Anstey Salver was shot for by respective school cadets from Blundell's and Clifton – for the first time in over 30 years.



The Magpies entered 2 teams in the Schools' Veterans matches at Bisley on 14th July. We were fortunate to have dry, warm conditions, and the only drawback was a very changeable, fishtailing

wind, which produced many inners ('bulls that got away'). Despite the wind, scores were generally very sound, and mention should be made of the steady performance by Mike Chandler (47.3 ex 50), Robert Bentata (46.2), David Willoughby (45.2), and Ian Anderson (45.3). Others who shot included David Bentata, Richard Price and Peter Ward; other Magpies who attended were Lt. Col. Tim Courtenay, Tony Ward and Chris Barker. We were extremely grateful to David Bentata and Tony Ward for their patient coaching in tricky wind conditions, and to the HAC Rifle Club for lending us a rifle. The A team score of 222.12 placed us 39th out of 51 teams, headed by a fine winning total of 249.33 by Uppingham former pupils.

After the shoot the Magpies and their guests gravitated to the verandah of the North London Rifle Club, where they were delighted to meet James Postle (at Bisley in his capacity as organizer of the Athelings); James was kind enough to present individual Magpies with Ashburton ties – which may be worn by anyone who has competed in the Ashburton match at any time. This very pleasant interlude was followed by dinner at the Fox, a favourite watering-hole of the Magpies.

As 2011 draws on, the Magpies Rifle Club seems to have had as enjoyable and well supported a season as any in the last thirty years. Nevertheless, the news that the school has now lost the most successful coach in Ashburton history is not encouraging. The average age of the active Magpie membership is now approaching 70; clearly the most valiant spirits cannot continue indefinitely. We hope to glean a handful of younger members from the recent resurgence of interest at the school, and will go on representing the Old Blundellians at Bisley for as long as we can.

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