

## **SCHOOLS' VETERANS SHOOTING MATCH,**

**BISLEY, 13th JULY 2023**

The Magpies again fielded a team, and this year were much cheered to find that Blundell's cadets were present on the Common, and in the midst of making their mark in various shoots, notably the Ashburton Fours. Considering their lack of recent opportunity to practise, these cadets shot most impressively, and as they'll all still be at school next year, will have solid experience to build on. Our congratulations go to Barry Dawe for the progress the School has made in this, as in other key areas of the School's endeavours.

The Magpies followed recent custom by foregathering in the North London RC (courtesy of David Bentata) for a light lunch prior to the events of the afternoon. It had been noted that Mark Wooff, Chevithorne Captain, happened to be enjoying his 60th birthday on the day - so the assembled company duly presented him with a multi-signed card and appropriate gift (whether in congratulation or commiseration he's probably still not quite sure). A little later, the Magpies ventured out onto the Century range to meet Barry and the cadets, who were taking part in the day's concluding matches of the schools' meeting, and some interesting notes were compared between the present and past years.



**A most convivial start**



**Discussion about rifles**

After most school parties had left in minibuses for home, the veterans prepared to shoot. The Magpies were fortunate to have five members who were able to do so; even more fortunate was the presence of the club's only fully 'competent' member who was authorised to supervise range activity (Anthony Ward), without whom we couldn't have taken part. Yet more fortunate still was his kindness in lending his rifle to all five firers, and coaching each in turn over a period of about an hour and a half - we owe him immense gratitude, as Ben Wrey, our President, duly expressed in formal terms later on. The Magpie team was made up by two fairly venerable gents (Hugo Brooke and Peter Ward) and three comparatively youthful ones (Rob Bentata, Mark Wooff and Simon Allanson-Bailey). None had shot fullbore during the previous two years, and some had been out of it for rather longer; there was a fresh, variable crosswind, which made consistency difficult, and the situation might have been a little daunting for most. However, with the steady approach of hardened veterans, and the clearly effective coaching of Anthony, the team proceeded to score very evenly and ended with a

total of 206 (6v) - which evolved with very few shots outside the inner ring, and no doubt reflected lessons learnt in the distant past at Chevithorne. It is good to note that 46 schools were represented at the Veterans' match (more than half of which were fielding two or even three teams), and that the pandemic has not had such a bad effect as had been feared.



Rob Bentata in action



Team with their coach

Mention must be made of Hugo Brooke, who was firing 72 years after his first appearance at Bisley in the cadet pair, and being a few days' short of his 87th birthday. We believe this may be a record for any OB appearing in a representative side in any sport, but cannot be sure. It would be interesting to hear of any challengers...

It was agreed that a message of loyal greetings be sent to the Headmaster as from all Magpies, both present and absent, which the Bisley Captain was asked to facilitate. It was agreed also that this had been a good year for Blundell's shooting, as both School and OBs had been at Bisley together, and that both very much benefited from their respective visits.



Barry with Hugo and Gilly



A really enjoyable day...

As in previous years, the Magpies enjoyed the support of a number of well-wishers, and as well as the 'active' participants, we were privileged to have with us Linda and David Bentata, Gilly Brooke, Katrina Page, David Kyd, George Tilley and Club President Ben Wrey, to all of whom we remain grateful for making time to be with us.