

BLUNDELL'S MAGPIES RIFLE CLUB

NEWSLETTER, MAY 2014

Dear Magpie,

Having escaped from the first winter in several years without the ravages of ice and snow (albeit not the rarer phenomenon of severe flooding), dare we now hope for an unbroken period of idyllic spring and summer weather, filled with memories of record scores and golden days on the range? Well, at least it's a thought. At any rate, may I welcome you back to the brief and fleeting world of the Magpie shooting season, this one being (the faintly echoing?) 2014.

First, what happened in 2013? A fairly full report was posted on the OB website in the Autumn of last year, but a slightly extended version is appended to this newsletter. The traditional London Lunch, organized by David Bentata, took place in March, followed by the OB Day events at Blundell's in June, at which Lt.Col.Tim Courtenay succeeded in filling TWO Magpie tables for the marquee lunch. A team was entered for the Public Schools' Veterans match in July, and despite the score failing to achieve winning heights, the post-shoot bonhomie was of top quality, and the NRA this time actually recorded the club's name correctly in its official results.

The current season has already started well. The eighth London Lunch took place on 4th March, and was the best one so far, not only because it was impeccably managed by David Bentata, but because it was attended by the current Blundell's Head, Mrs Nicola Huggett, and possibly for related reasons by a record 21 other Magpies and friends. Several presentations were made during the lunch, and a delightful, framed, illuminated poem was handed to Mrs Huggett by Lt.Col.Tim Courtenay, on the theme of reflections about Chevithorne and Bisley by generations of Blundellians (see copy below). A detailed account of the Lunch, including a list of attenders, can be found on the OB website.

More recently, there has been the Blundell's Great War pilgrimage, led towards the end of April by Col.Tim in France and Flanders. More than 40 people, including several Magpies, travelled to Cambrai, from where over a 5-day period they were able to visit a number of battle sites and memorials of particular interest to OBs. This offered the chance to pay respects to many OBs who still lie where they fell, amongst which are several members of the Bisley teams of the 1903 to 1914 era. Particularly memorable were the formal tributes paid at the Menin gate in Ypres, led by Brig.Robert Tailyour, and at the massive monument at Thiepval near the Somme, led by Brig.John Dean. The tour proved to be remarkable for many reasons, not least the tank named 'Deborah' which the hotel manager, Philippe, had found in the ground near Flesquieres and subsequently restored as a memorial to those who perished in the battle of 1917.

Several of the fallen appear in the attached photograph of the school's Bisley team of 1914, with brief indications of the war service of each man. Whilst many Blundell's group photographs of the immediate pre-war period reflect the same sad outcome, the shooting team's is especially poignant, bearing in mind the imminence of the conflict when it was taken (a mere 3 weeks before hostilities) and the irony of their wearing, in happy circumstances, the same uniform which they would shortly be wearing in earnest amid the grimmest of surroundings. All the 1914 team served as commissioned officers during the conflict, 6 being killed in action or dying of wounds, a further 5 being wounded, and only one surviving (at least physically) intact. A similar impact affected Bisley teams from most of the years stretching back to the beginning of the century, a dismal contrast to the markedly happier memories still enjoyed by those of us who followed in their footsteps forty or more years later, and which it would be fair to say we owe in large measure to them.

Those in the tour party are greatly indebted to Col.Tim and Mrs Amber Oliver, his 'acting adjutant', for their management of what turned out to be an eminently appropriate and successful pilgrimage.

The programme for the rest of our season consists in what we hope will be two shoots:

(i) **Mini-range match** (provisionally from about 10.30 onwards, but please be aware of possible changes, which would be made clear on the day) on **OB Day, Saturday 14th June at Blundell's**, against the school's current pupils. We look forward to meeting Barry Dawe (late RM), the newly appointed SSI to the CCF, and hope to see a goodly muster (the inimitable Ted Crowe's expression) at OB Day, where of course the other attractions are the OB Club meeting at 10.00, the chapel service at 11.00, and the marquee lunch at 12.30 (for which you have to pay £25). In fact there are yet more events on the preceding and following days, but it gets a bit complicated and possibly expensive, depending on your resources; suffice it to say that our main business will be on the range, closely followed by the lunch. If enough people turn up, not only might we fill two tables in the marquee (giving Col.Tim the headache of deciding what to call the second one), but some of us might get away with not having to make fools of ourselves on the range! Tickets for the Lunch are available via the OB website, or by application to Mrs Amber Oliver at the school (tel. 01884 243262).

(ii) **Public Schools' Veterans match on Bisley Century Range, Thursday 10th July, at 17.00.**

One team of five has been booked, although as ever I will book a second if I am made aware in advance of enough active OB shooters intending to come. All OBs will be welcome at this event, even if they have no wish to shoot, as we try to extend the post-match socializing through a few noggins to a comfortable meal for those who are able to stay for it. As a technicality, with growing strictures on safety from the NRA, it will regrettably not be feasible to allow inexperienced or long-inactive shooters to fire in this competition, as anyone without the dreaded 'certificate of competence' will have to be vouched for and coached personally by someone who has one. This could place an unfair responsibility on the coach, who probably wouldn't know the firer well enough to gauge their capacity to handle a full-bore weapon. As of old, intending shooters are asked to be on the range before 17.00, and to be prepared to register-keep if necessary for adjacent teams, as they will be doing for us. Needless to say, wet-weather gear should be brought, as well as any ear defenders, scopes etc., and if any Magpie is able to bring a serviceable weapon (i.e. tested for 155 grain ammo) then he will definitely be treated to drinks by the rest of us.

So there we have it. The Magpie flag continues to fly, and rumours persist in the media that recovery is in the air! Whilst any seasoned campaigner has long learnt to remain sceptical of such wild talk, it is nevertheless permitted to dream of hot summers and Pimm's parties, even of high scores on the range (on the principle that someone, somewhere, wins lottery prizes). I hope to see or hear from a few Magpies during the coming months, and in the meantime send greetings to you and your clan.

With very best wishes,

Peter Ward,
Magpies' Bisley Captain & Hon. Scribe.

1956



Snap, Rapid, Marling, Grand Aggregate, Ashburton Trophies

Chevithorne Lament and Magpies in Memoriam

In days of old when boys were bold and girls were not invented, the Magpies were shooting many a bull and outer's wind directed!!

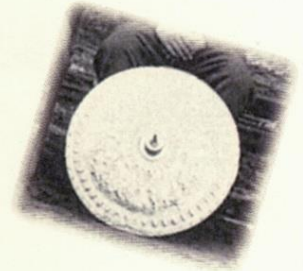
Bike we did to Chevithorne, our rifles on our backs and once a year to Bisley bound to raise the Blundell's flag. Snap and Rapid, the Marling too all came with in our sights and once or twice The Ashburton Shield came to us by right.

Not for us the other sports of cricket, golf or tennis, we choose to learn the gentle art of shooting at its zenith. And shoot we did for Blundell's, our name on Century Range cemented, but now alas it's sad to say we are now absented.

Tim Courtenay, Chevithorne Captain 2014



Miniature Range



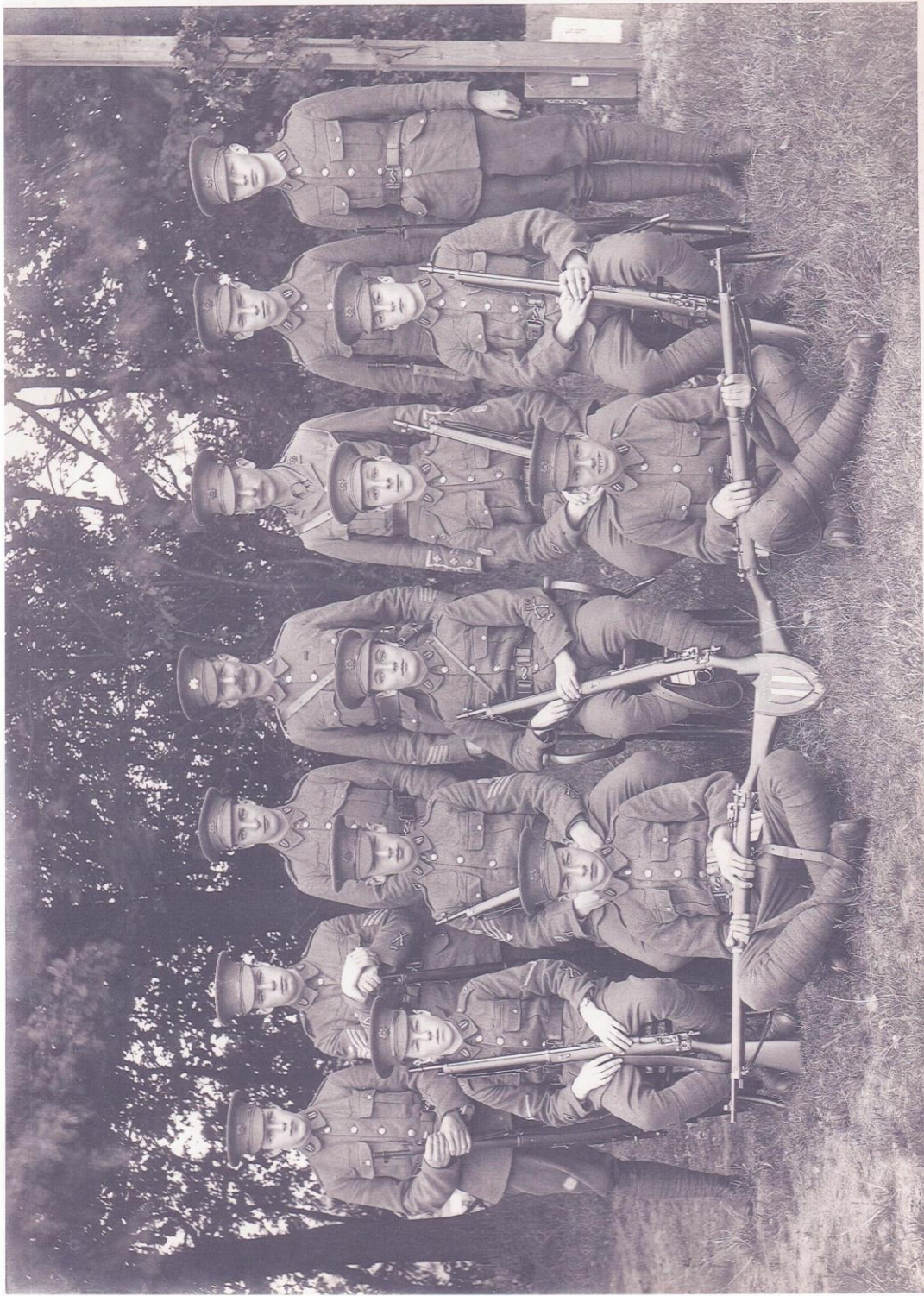
The last young hopes 2010



Public Schools Veterans Shoot Bisley 2010



Chevithorne Range revisited, we find the Plate 2010



H. J. Paddock D. B. W. E. Martin K. O. J. M. Jensen Charles O. H. Sargi Maj. Dwyer. Capt. E. G. Purice. A. P. Donnell W. F. Y. Ivesell K. O.
 R. G. Townsend K. O. W. Y. Stewart K. O. B. D. Truitt. P. E. O. Brown O. H. P. Malloy D. B.
 C. Boyd W. B. Y. Smith O. H.

Bisley 1914.

BLUNDELL'S BISLEY TEAM, JULY 1914

Subsequent service records of individual team members in the Great War, which followed a few weeks later.

H J Paddison
Capt. 4th Worcs
MC 1916
Killed in action,
Ypres, 1917

W E Martin
Capt. Gen. List
MiD
Wounded

J W Jenner Clarke
Lt. 6th DCLI
Missing, presumed
dead, Thiepval, 1916

CSM Ayres
(PSI)

Capt. E G Peirce
(Master/Offr. Cdg.)

A P Donnell
Lt. N Fus (att'd RFC)
Killed in a flying
accident, 1916

F N Insoll
2Lt. RFC
Wounded, PoW

R G Townsend
2Lt. RAF
Wounded

W V Stewart
2Lt. 1st Monmouths
Killed in action,
Ypres, 1915

R D Muir
2Lt. Loyal N Lancs
Wounded

E C Brown
2Lt. Somerset LI
Survived intact, and
served later in RAF

P Walsh
2Lt. 8th Loyal N Lancs
(twice recommended for MC)
Died of wounds, Somme, 1916

E C Lloyd
2Lt. South Wales Borderers
Died of wounds, Aisne, 1918

B V Smith
Lt. RAF
MC 1918
Wounded