

BLUNDELL'S MAGPIES' RIFLE CLUB

NEWSLETTER, MAY 2015

Dear Magpie,

Unbounded greetings once more to you and yours, as another (tolerable) spring creeps up on us and announces the imminence of a new shooting season...

Our 2014 experience was a full one, comprising the traditional London Lunch, a significant share in the memorable tour to France and Flanders, a most enjoyable mini-range match against the school on OB Day, and finally the Veterans' shoot at Bisley in July. A report of all these activities has been posted on the OB Club website, but for ease of reference a copy is attached alongside the current newsletter on the accompanying email.

The 2015 programme is already under way. This year's London Lunch, organised by the club's principal coach David Bentata, took place on March 3rd, and was again graced by the presence of the Head, Mrs Nicola Huggett - and also, to our great interest, by Barry Dawe, the School's SSI and shooting coach. Both had much to tell us, not only about pupils' achievements generally, but also as to the weapon states and improved shooting standards of a healthy number of cadets, in particular the junior sections. Blundell's was clearly a very exciting and active place to be part of, and the Magpies were extremely grateful to our guests for the trouble they had taken to be in London for the Lunch, especially in view of the intensive routine prevailing at the school in the early spring.

Warm appreciation was felt for the efforts which David, so ably assisted by Linda, had put into the arrangements for the event, despite the burden of indifferent health over the previous few months. Some 15 Magpies and 5 guests much enjoyed what was the ninth in the series of such lunches, held for the last seven years at the Special Forces Club. (A more detailed account of the proceedings can be found on the OB website).

Some half-dozen Magpies travelled to Normandy earlier this month as members of the Blundell's pilgrimage to the 1944 battlefields, led by Lt.Col. Tim Courtenay (our Chevithorne Captain). The specific focus was the respect to be paid at the last resting places of twelve OBs, although the wider historical perspective of the sacrifice of many allied lives was of immense interest. A full report on this trip will be posted on the OB Website (with many photographs), but of note to Magpies must be the highly professional commentary offered on the events of 1944 by Col. Tim and his RM brother officer Brig. Rob Tailyour, soundly supported by Mrs Amber Oliver. This lady's preference for wearing safari shorts, despite the howling wind on most of the tour days, betrays that she is also clearly a member of the RM school of tough survival. Another noteworthy episode was the impromptu speech by Hugo Brooke on the occasion of the tour dinner, when he related a number of slightly risqué stories with aplomb and (just) enough delicacy to avoid discountenancing the ladies present...

The next event in our calendar will be the OB Day shoot, to be staged sometime during the late morning of **Saturday 20th June**. At the time of writing it is not known when the first shot will go down the (mini) range, but it seems likely that the range will be open for business from about 10.30. Unfortunately this is shortly before the point when the chapel service will

be starting, so those Magpies of a pious and traditional outlook will only be able to make their way to the range at about midday, if they can slip past the temptations of the musical display and the siren calls of people they haven't seen since the 50s or 60s... Col. Tim is the link man as Chevithorne Captain, and if I learn anything more definite I shall endeavour to let likely attenders know a.s.a.p..

Although no law governs the degrees of entitlement to attend the shoot, it would be very appropriate if those intending to be present were to apply to the OB Club for tickets for the day - which, though £30.00 a head, do carry the facility of having lunch in the marquee at one of the Magpie tables (yes, there have been **two** for the last two years) and listening to a variety of speeches... Occasionally, staying awake can be rather a challenge, but I have to say that the principal speakers at the 2013 and 2014 lunches were outstandingly good. And included in the price is, of course, some of the finest bonhomie available, maybe not unconnected with the presence of the goodly number of ladies who accompany us.

The last event scheduled for 2015 will be the Public Schools' Veterans shoot at Bisley, which will take place on Century Range at approximately **17.15 on Thursday 9th July**. One team has been booked to date, which entails 5 members having to chance their reputations with actual marksmanship. (It would be feasible to enter a second team, but as the entry fee is considerable, I am reluctant to do so unless I am reasonably sure that at least 3 extra people will turn up to shoot in it.) As ever, I would ask intending marksmen to be on the range well before 17.00, to bring any accessories they may have, and particularly to remember their wet-weather gear.

A new feature of the programme will be the possibility of doing a spot of coached practice during the mid-afternoon, for which those interested will need to be ready from about 14.30 and be prepared to wait for whenever a free target is available: Both David Bentata and Chris Barker intend to take part in this exercise, and have both kindly offered to lend their rifles to any Magpie who wishes to use them. Cards and ammo will need to be purchased from the NRA before firing, and for non-current members the shoot must be supervised by a certified shot (David, Chris and I are so qualified). Please let me know if you would like to attend either the practice sessions or (for experienced shots) the match itself. Bisley is fairly crowded at that point, and RV times and places need to be arranged a little in advance.

It is usual for most of the Magpies to go for a noggin immediately after the match (Bisley is full of bars), and then to sally forth to find a good place for a meal, at which an unofficial AGM generally occurs; as this for some folk is the main item on the agenda, anyone who merely wishes to support the event (i.e. rather than shoot) is especially welcome.

To conclude, I offer all Magpies and their clans the very best wishes I can muster, and am taking the liberty of appending a few pictures to show something of what has been happening recently down our way...

Yours with transparency, fairness, and justice for all,

Peter GC Ward,
Bisley Captain.
(Also de facto Hon Sec and associate gopher)



The Chevithorne Captain in technical mode.



Gilly, Hugo and George in sightseeing mode.



Linda and David at Bayeux War Memorial



Young Blundellians on the range, early 2015.



Magpies on 7th May in Normandy, celebrating on the eve of VE Day.



Who, when, where? (Courtesy of John Batten)