

# BLUNDELL'S MAGPIES RIFLE CLUB

President: G.H.H.Brooke Esq. (NC 1949 - 54)

## NEWSLETTER, MAY 2016

Dear Magpie,

Following the passage of a rather unusual winter, I will abstain from the usual comments about the current Spring - except to observe that the rhododendrons are emerging later than I have ever known! Greetings as ever to you and yours, and I hope so far all addressees have escaped the worst that the slings and arrows can bring.

2015 turned out to be a pleasantly full shooting year, beginning with the London Lunch, after which several of us travelled to Normandy under direction of the School's Development Office. There was a mini-range shoot against the current pupils on OB Day (the latter did rather well), and a full Veterans' team turned out at Bisley in July. Excitingly, there was a further smallbore event at Bisley in August, which was attended by several pupils, with some veterans in support! As before, all the details can be seen in the Shooting page in the OB Website.

We are already well into the 2016 'season'. David Bentata held another in the series of resoundingly successful London Lunches on 8th March, details of which are also to be found on the website. A highlight of this event was the attendance not only of Barry Dawe, SSI to the School's cadet force, but of Cormac Oliver, current Captain of Shooting.

A number of Magpies accompanied the School's 2016 Battlefield Pilgrimage earlier this month, which included Waterloo, the Great War historical sites around Ypres, and the rather less well-visited areas of Dunkirk, Zeebrugge and Wormhoudt. Lt.Col Tim Courtenay and Brig. Rob Tailyour acted as tour leaders, and George Tilley, Martin Albrecht, David Bentata and Peter Ward came along for the ride. Though there was much fun to be had during the week it took, most left with very sober impressions of the sacrifices made by our forebears, including the many Old Blundellians who lie there still.

Attentive readers will by now have received their invitations to the **OB Day events on 18th June**, which will include a mini-range against current pupils. The theme of the Day will be 'girls' sporting achievements', and while some Magpies may doubt that the ladies have figured in the shooting annals, I can disabuse them with certainty: at least a dozen ladies have performed with distinction since the 1980s in the mini-range, and one (Jenny Boylett) has appeared on the open range in a representative team. Efforts are being made to enlist these gentle folk as potential shooters for the Magpies, as with such new blood to assist, we could even dare to dream once again of retaking the laurels...

With other mainstream events taking place on OB Day morning - especially the chapel service at 11.00 - it may prove a tight exercise to get all shooters through their cards. I understand that Col. Tim, Chevithorne Captain, will be at the mini-range with Barry Dawe shortly after 10.00, which will allow Magpies intending to be at the chapel service to shoot

beforehand; the range will stay open after this for as long as necessary for remaining shooters to complete, and for a prizegiving ceremony to follow. (Tentative apologies have already been offered to the powers-that-be for any delay in our arrival for the Marquee Lunch!) Naturally, although attendance at the lunch is not a requirement for shooting, we hope that Magpies will take the chance to pitch in, and that maybe we can continue the tradition of having TWO tables to spread out on! (Last year the Chevithorne Captain was clearly impressed enough following the lunch to listen intently to the series of mediaeval madrigals and motets: inspiration often springs from unexpected sources.) Needless to say, not everyone who comes for the lunch is expected to shoot: maturity brings with it the right merely to contemplate the attempts of others to resurrect their lost youth.

A team has been entered for the **Public Schools' Veterans match at Bisley on Thursday 14th July, 2016**, which begins at 17.15 on Century following the Ashburton Shield match. It is likely that there will be the chance to practise shortly beforehand (details not yet to hand, but cards will need to be purchased by about 16.00), and in this respect Magpies may like to note that **David Bentata has invited Hugo Brooke (President) and any other of our number who cares to join them for an informal lunch at the North London Rifle Club (say 12.30ish) on the day.** Those who cannot be there but would still like to shoot later are asked to be available on the range by about 17.00, although I hasten to add that non-firing supporters are just as welcome, as the social elements of the fixture are of the essence! I hope to be able to borrow a rifle for the evening, but naturally would be grateful to anyone who is able to bring another, as indeed for the loan of any telescope, groundsheet, or shooting accoutrements. (I suppose I must also mention that anyone shooting will have to be coached by a holder of the dreaded Certificate of Competence - unless he holds one himself!) Whilst we all hope for benign weather, experience warns us to fear the opposite, so please bring waterproof kit. After the shoot, I hope that a few of us may continue to socialise as in previous years, although it is appreciated that some people have considerable return distances to travel, and may need to set off with some daylight remaining.

At the time of writing, there are still unknowns which could affect the remainder of the season; if and when such arise, I will send emails to the faithful as required. For the time being however, after confirming to you that 'the great and flashing Magpie still flies as poets might', I can only wish health, possibly wealth, and a successful outcome for all ventures, to our scattered band wherever you are.

Yours with every assurance of political impartiality in these fraught times,

Peter Ward,  
Magpies' Bisley Captain.  
(Unofficial Hon. Sec.)

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Glimpses into recent times for Magpies:



Linda and David relax at Zeebrugge with Peter Price and Col. Richard Preston.



Col. Tim and George Tilley at the Tyne Cot Cemetery, with Paddy Waterfield.



and contrasts:



Chevithorne from the 600x point, about 1955 (courtesy John Batten).



From the same spot, June 2015.