

BLUNDELL'S MAGPIES RIFLE CLUB

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

NEWSLETTER, MAY 2018

Dear Magpie,

Intermittently, Spring has been giving various indications of its arrival, and it is perhaps time to dust off the cobwebs and see what the new year has in store for us.

To start with, we've already had an excellent London Lunch. A more detailed report can be seen elsewhere on this website, but on 6th March we were not only able to host the current Head of Blundell's, Mrs Nicola Huggett, but also her successor, Mr Bart Wielenga, as our honoured guests. We were very pleased, too, to have Mrs Di Chandler as a specially honoured guest, as her late husband Mike, a most loyal Magpie for many years, had sadly died a few weeks earlier. The particularly good atmosphere of the event was, as ever, mainly the result of careful and assiduous planning by David Bentata and his partner Linda, to whom the Magpies are indeed grateful.

A recent welcome piece of news came for us from Barry Dawe at Blundell's, in that no fewer than 15 young pupils managed to win medals during the course of the winter with the West Kent Rifle League Handicap smallbore competition, which involved a lengthy course of competitive shoots, and which must have tested stamina and application considerably. This on the back of the triumph for the School in carrying off the Rosslyn Park Sevens Trophy (a bit like a rugby Ashburton Shield) for the third time since 1940! All of which builds confidence with which to approach the 2018 challenges - especially if you're old and bold, and don't have to perform at quite the same level...

Our first actual shoot is planned for OB Day on **Saturday 9th June**, in the mini-range at Blundell's; the range will be open from 10.30, and those wishing to attend the chapel service at 11.00 may be able to get a shoot in beforehand. Failing this, the range may still be open after the service ends, although this cannot be guaranteed, as the prizegiving is to take place at 12.30 outside the Beale Centre. Both Barry and Col. Tim Courtenay, the Magpies' Chevithorne Captain, will agree the format of the shoot on the day, and look forward to Magpies coming along in support - notwithstanding that they may not now be in a position actually to fire a card. It's possible that one or two younger members may be at hand to spare the blushes of the O & B, but whatever the case, most if not all those involved will be attending the marquee lunch a little later on, and hopefully it will be possible for Magpies and their guests to occupy a table or so together. It will be the last practical opportunity for most of us to say 'goodbye and thank you' to Mrs Huggett, the Head, who has always gone out of her way to support the Magpies, and Blundell's shooting generally, during her tenure of office; she takes up the Headship of Cheltenham College in September, where our best wishes go with her.

As we are now in the centenary year of the 1918 Armistice, it seemed to some of us that we should dedicate this season's activities to the memory of previous generations of former pupils and staff who shot or coached for the School at Bisley and elsewhere, but whose lives were ended prematurely by the fortunes of war or other result of armed service to their country. We have therefore studied

carefully the School's Roll of Honour, and have taken the details of those listed who are known to have shot for the School at any time since 1902, assembling a 'Magpie' extract for private circulation amongst club members for their interest and reflection during this 'season'. This is a work in progress, as although we have added one or two names, we believe there may be others whom we have missed, or perhaps have less than full details about. Please let us know if you have any further information.

The **Public Schools' Veterans** match takes place this year at Bisley on **Thursday 19th July**; one team of five firers has been entered - although a further team can be entered at any time until the day itself, should there be a demand for it. The shoot is timed for 17.15, but there will be time for a practice shoot earlier in the afternoon for those who would like it. We shall be following our usual routine of meeting for lunch at the North London Rifle Club from around noon (courtesy of David Bentata and Ben Wrey, both long-serving NLRC members), and then enjoying a relatively relaxed afternoon until the match starts. During this time, the schools' meeting will have ended with the final Ashburton results, a good time for bumping into a host of old friends from all manner of past connections. For those not able to shoot, or who may not be former pupils (the main qualification), there is plenty of interest to be enjoyed - even in the case of wet weather. Anyone who would like to come along, but who would like to know a little more in advance, is invited to contact the Bisley Captain (on the email address niepage@hotmail.com - see main website header).

A major point of interest this year is that Ben H.B. Wrey (W.1953-58), whose record at Bisley is beyond doubt the most successful of any OB since time immemorial, has been invited by the NRA Chairman to present the prizes at the conclusion of this year's Imperial Meeting. This is an exceptional honour, albeit that it's hard to imagine anyone who's earned it more deservedly. Our congratulations are offered as a club to Ben as our most accomplished and distinguished member in the shooting world - as indeed probably the most self-effacing!

With regard to the Veterans' competition at Bisley, it is becoming more apparent that owing to the advancing age of those who grew up with that tradition, it is progressively more difficult to find a team. During the last two seasons, though each time we've had at least six good men and true in attendance, we've only been able to find three, then two, actually to shoot! Clearly this is not viable, and as the match is always likely to be held on a Thursday afternoon, it's not a very convenient time for younger OBs who have to work for a living. Sadly, we've therefore decided that this year's 'centenary' Veterans shoot may have to be the last, at least until there's a new generation interested in 'picking up the ball and running with it'.

It only remains for me to wish all Magpies in your scattered nests around the globe all health and happiness for your clans and yourselves, and (perhaps in view of your undoubtedly great labours) a little wealth for good measure. In the meantime I shall hope to see at least some of you at some point later this summer, or to have news of you in some way.

Yours with the customary keen eye and aplomb associated with time-expired marksmen,

Peter Ward.

(Bisley Captain and de facto Hon. Sec.)

Archive section: who, where and when?



...and for bonus points, does anyone appear in both pictures?

