

## SOF SHOOTING - Coaching the College Weekend

For once, it was not freezing cold nor did it constantly rain at the annual "Coaching the College Weekend". This is the event where the OF Rifle Club plays host to a party of Cadets from the College and endeavours to pass on knowledge to the new entrants to the sport of Full Bore Target Shooting. There were 11 pupils and 2 members of staff who made the long trip from Framlingham to Bisley in Surrey. Arriving on Friday night, they stayed on camp ready for a 7.45 am start at the zero range. As a number of the cadets had never fired a full bore rifle before this was an opportunity of getting them used to the somewhat louder bang and energetic recoil of 7.62 round as opposed to what they have previously shot- a .22 calibre round and to ensure that the sights on the rifle were properly set before we all trooped out to the ranges. By and large there were not too many problems and so off we went to try the real thing.

Bisley Camp would seem to have a microclimate all of its own with puddles/pools/lakes of standing water very much in evidence on the heath. This despite the drainage ditches having recently being dug out. Nevertheless we struggled manfully on (and womanly as there were two of the fairer sex in the College party) through the mud and water to the 300 yard point and not unsurprisingly there were one or two quips about it all being a bit like the pictures of the Somme. This was of course an exaggeration as the mud and sludge at 300 yards was desert like when compared to the delights we would later experience at 500 and 600 yards. A brief downpour did not particularly dampen the robust Framlingham spirits but served only to top up the water table.



The OFRC's new-fangled wired headset system (pictured) was put into good use with the cadets being encouraged to read the wind with guidance from the crusties of the OFRC. Positions were checked and adjusted and there were a number of good scores achieved.

Lunch was followed by the 500 yard shoot and whilst there was not as much mud, the standing water was deeply impressive. (Apologies for the insipid pun) Again there was an improvement in the standard of

shooting as the cadets began to understand what was expected of them. A number of cadets decided that whilst waiting to shoot it would be a good idea to build a dam in a drainage ditch. We are given to understand that as a result, a canoeing competition took place on Monday morning on the heath.

Saturday evening was taken up with the OFRC hosting a fine carvery meal at the North London Rifle Club House. Chairman of the OFRC and indeed of the North London Club- Nigel Burnip gave a short talk on the history of the Club House and the benefits of the joining the OFRC after the cadets had left the College. The amount of food which some of the cadets were able to consume was genuinely impressive with the carvery record of four full helpings being consumed coming close to being beaten. The meal was followed by a talk on trigger control and how to properly fill in and use a scorecard. The fact that the comment was overheard

of "I actually understood that" probably says more about the intelligence of the person listening rather than the ability of OFRC Secretary John Halahan to present on the subject.

Sunday morning started at 8.30 am at 600 yards. In his endeavours to free the 16 seater College minibus from a potentially quite muddy final resting place, Roy Witham demonstrated with much aplomb the finer points of improvisation and power sliding through the mud, this was of course much appreciated by all present.

Again there was a noticeable increase in the standard of shooting which lends weight to the adage of 'practice make perfect'. The wind coaches from the college were by this stage sufficiently well versed to be taking control of their shooters with minimal input from the OFRC and it augers well for the future of full bore shooting at the College.

It was carefully planned that the formal part of the target shooting training weekend finished in time for the old service weapons that certain members of the OFRC were keeping for posterity to be wheeled out for the cadets to use. This helped reinforce the Somme theme that had been a constant the whole weekend.

Although having a kick like the proverbial mule which had just had a most unpleasant encounter with a particularly spiteful and venomous wasp, the cadets were able to fire these relics from times gone by. From the WW2 era there were a 1943 Moisin Nagant (Russian - pictured), a 1947 Mauser (Czechoslovakian copy of the German original) and a Schmidt Rubin (Swiss) which actually dated from 1927. Cries of "Ouch that hurts" and the resultant blubbering after eyebrows were smacked by rifle scopes were of course responded to with a suitable level of sympathy and concern by the OFRC members present. Special mention must be made of Kirstie, a teacher of English from Brandeston Hall, who had never shot a full bore rifle before, scoring two Central V Bulls with her first two shots using a 1927 ex-service weapon at 600 yards. Very impressive stuff especially as she afterwards claimed to have shut her eyes at the instant of pulling the trigger.



All in all it was a good weekend for everyone with hopefully the cadets learning a few things and understanding what is required of them to become better shooters. Grateful thanks must go to Roy (from the College) and Kirstie (from Brandeston) for giving up their weekend and bringing the cadets down. The amount of organisation required to make things like this happen must not be understated.

Two cadets- Tom Hampson and Seb Treacy will be taking part in the Imperial Meeting this July and will be exposed to the tender mercies of at least 10 OFRC members who will be expecting alcoholic reward in exchange for marginally useful snippets of shooting knowledge. (Bring beer money boys!)

Below is a group picture of the College Cadets with Roy Witham

