

Things to be proud of...

Bisley correspondent Steve McDowell (pictured right) tearfully splits infinitives as he tells of individual stardom and international recognition from the OFRC



No-one could have known what was going to happen next as 14 of us gathered to compete in the Public Schools Veterans match at Bisley on July 10.

When I say compete, the Vets is more of a social gathering for us to celebrate the end of our season since it is dominated by the big nobs of Epsom, Gresham's and Dollar Academy who rarely drop a point between them.

And as usual we performed creditably and with great enthusiasm, with some top scoring – Hon Sec Halahan giving us a whiff of things to come with a glorious 50.7 and a self-deprecating Kimbers "I hate full bore I'm so rusty and anyway I'm not very good" Pope as usual opening with a 50.4.

No hints

Further decent shoots from Skipper James "Jockstrap" Mehta, Sandy "There can be only one" Walker and Jon "Red Leader" Ford – our most improved player – gave no hint of the fireworks that were at that moment being packaged up ready for delivery to the veranda of our imaginary clubhouse.

The A and B teams performed well with a great triumph of organisation from the Skipper and Hon Sec as we got almost all of the 14 firers through on a single target, including a last minute arrival from surely the club's unluckiest member, James "M25" Brocks, who really should come by helicopter next year.

It was a welcome sight from him, and a creditable season's closing ceremony for Geoff "Blimey I got a possible" Houston, Chas "Adj" Lister, Brian "Elpresidente" Smith, David "Muttley" Argent and our father of the house Neil "Rupert" Joy. The A team achieved 13th out of 47 in the Vets, seven points off the winners - a good result, happily beating our season's bugbears, the Lawrentians and the Bedfordians. The B team came 9th (ex 28) 10 points behind the winners.

New members

We welcomed into the fold Tom "Handsome" Hampson as he leaves the College en route to Loughborough University, and also Seb Treacy, with still one year left to go, making it into the Athelings team – the UK cadet rifle team. The last OFRC member to achieve this was Sandy Walker and we all know what happened after that (*may his children be born with straight legs and his path be lined with lotus flowers etc etc*).

Thus leaving the rest of us to get on with the serious business of enjoying ourselves, or so we thought...

The last team shoot of the year was the OFRC stepping in to represent the great county of Suffolk in the legendary Astor - an ugly piece of silver but one keenly contested amongst rifle clubs from all the counties of the UK. The six man team of Halahan, Mehta, Ford, Walker, Burnip and Pope, with coaches McDowell and Larcombe and adjutant John Horton, gathered on a thundery looking 300-yard firing point at the indecent hour of 0800h with hope in our hearts. Worried as were about the forecast it was the only time rain was seriously threatened throughout the entire meeting.

Two shots and seven to count at three distances giving a possible total of 105.21 we can afford to drop less than a handful if we are to stand the faintest whiff of a chance. It would have helped then if McDowell, the buffoon, had not wound Sandy Walker's sights to wrong way to put his first to count into the magpie 3-ring, dropping two points straight off.

Burnip deathstare

Naturally the great man was gracious enough to leave the genuflecting coach grovelling only a few minutes before recovering his poise for a 101.12. Less so from The Chairman who was less than impressed, delivering the legendary Burnip Deathstare into the five-ring of the quivering coach. He later failed to mention, however, that he did the same thing to Halahan with a wind call.

So nerves aside we resumed where we meant to go on. 300 yards is, as The Chairman is fond of saying, generally only enjoyed by paedophiles, and so we went back to 500 yards and did so 'clean' – ie not dropping a single shot. Again, showing the promise that was to blossom later in the meeting James Mehta fired in a 103.17 with two perfect 35.7s, and Red Leader topped the team with 104.13 – dropping has last for a triple Spine of Custard award. Dropping only 16 points across the whole team we managed 11th from 18. The Astor was won by Jersey, who dropped only two.

Halahan bragging

Then the fireworks really began to burst and there are too many mini-OF triumphs to list here – with the name Old Framlinghamian Rifle Club lighting up prize boards all over Bisley camp. James Mehta maximuming the two-range Century competition, Halahan famously bragging that he had got a near perfect 75.9 in the 15-shot Daily Telegraph only to be shot down by Mehta's 75.11. John Ford's 75.13 in the Daily Mail. 50.7s all over the shop. Even Tom Hampson pinging in his first self-coached maximum in one of the earlier shoots and Seb Treacy shooting in 49's with gay abandon.



The name "Dr J Mehta" appeared at 34th in the top 50 of the Grand Aggregate (the most prized of all individual shooting trophies) board – for an OF a sight rarer than an Osprey in rattlesnake shoes. Kimbers Pope (pictured left supporting Mehta in the final) is cutting along nicely and McDowell displaying his usual version of aggressive incompetence.

We were blasé. This is easy, we thought collectively. All this representative shooting has gone really well for James Mehta (NRA and Scotland) and John Halahan (GB and Ireland) and Jon Ford (RAF and GB vets) – perhaps there is something in it.

Dreaded Corp

Then came THE CORPORATION. The dreaded 'Corp' is the only 1000-yard shoot in the Grand Aggregate. Bisley had seen some fascinating winds. Well, I say 'fascinating' because I like to wind coach – everyone else called the six-to seven, sometimes nine minute fish-tailing winds a 'nightmare'. Bear in mind that at that range one minute of wind represents more than 12 inches on the face of the target.

The wind was a nightmare and McDowell enjoyed his only decent shoot of the week with a fighting 43.3. Mehta's extremely expensive HubbleScope foresight chose that moment to fall to bits for the third time in two months – causing him to drop nine points and off the Grand Agg board forever. A moment celebrated by the Red Arrows flying low overhead. Kimbers "Vasco da Gama" Pope, proving herself to be as adroit at

reading wind as Ed Milliband is as an elocution teacher, cheerfully Facebooked her scorecard showing right and left hits (scoring 1) for, we think, a record low 31. "I got terminated" she posted.

As the week progresses it becomes increasingly apparent that some of our members are going to get picked for *SOME VERY BIG STUFF*. McDowell, Pope, Hampson and John "Adj" Horton all representing Suffolk in a minor way is all very well – only a few years ago this was big news. But no.

Irish Muslim

Sandy Walker (pictured right), at 26, is a veteran of the GB team having represented them at every level, and Scotland for the last few years. James MacMehta on the other hand is awarded his first full international cap for Scotland at the age of 57, and shoots a competent 103.15 (ex 105.21), helping them to come second to a record-breaking England score. And Seamus O'Charlatan aka John Ibrahim Halahan, becomes the first known Muslim to shoot for Ireland. Not only that, he comes second in the team, going clean with a 105.14. Considerable debate ensues in the Irish camp as to whether he's a Catholic Muslim or a Protestant Muslim, an argument that can only be decided over pints of Guinness, thus confusing the fundamentalists even more.



Sandy just fails to win the top prize across the entire National Match with a score of 105.17. "If I'd have known there was a pot in it, I'd have tried harder", he cheerfully states. Bastard.

England (with whom we have no representation because it's too hard to get in) wins again and the beers are everpresent and much welcome.

Oddly O'Charlatan wins a trophy for the top newcomer in the Ireland side. It is a small rimless silver bowl that looks exactly like a Muslim's kufi skullcap.

Rise and rise

Finally, and this is the best bit, ladies and gents. The culmination of the Imperial Meeting is the HM The Queen's Prize Final and the most cherished trophy in shooting. Riflemen and women come from all over the world to compete. Think Wimbledon Finals, and you have some idea of the magnitude of this event. To reach the final you must first be among the top 300 in the first stage out of nigh on 1000 international entrants. Then you must make the cut to be in the top 100 after the second stage. This usually means that out of 255



possible points you should have scored better than 250. Halahan, McDowell, Pope, Horton, Burnip and Hampson of course take the first opportunity to exit stage left. Walker, surprisingly, exits at stage two, whilst young Seb Treacy makes it in.

But – to our enormous pleasure and pride – both MacMehta and Red Leader Ford (pictured left after shooting at 900 yds) are in the Final, aged 127 between them. In blistering sunshine they compete against the other 98 finest shots in the world. Neither was carried off the range in the traditional chair and MacMehta scored only one magpie 3, although he did allow his nerves to get the better of him, firing his second sighter at 900yds into the adjacent target's V-bull. But it matters not – 2000 people (including

McDowell running James' scoreboard in a very fetching little yellow summer dress – as a result of a 12 year old wager – witness the ever relentless rise of the Old Framlinghamian Rifle Club. Pictured below L-R are John Halahan, "Rachel" McDowell, James Mehta



A Selection of Scores:

The Grand Aggregate

Total Points available: 705.141

Entrants: 853

			Position
Sandy Walker	689	91	33
James Mehta	680	73	140
Jon Ford	676	70	213
Seb Treacy (College)	676	67	217
John Halahan	673	72	253
Kim Pope	654	56	504
Nigel Burnip	650	50	541
Tom Hampson (College)	641	49	612
Steve McDowell	Redacted under duress		