

College Shooting Team Gets OF Wisdom



April 28/29 2013

Not bad for a bunch of OFs, Old Farts that is.

Half a dozen of our youngsters had barely seen a full-bore rifle, let alone actually fired one when the masters of the OF Rifle Club got their hands on them.

By the end of the weekend the 12 keen young things were all on target (pretty much) and the odd decent score of above 30 (ex 35) was pinning the target.

Regular access to a full-bore range is absolutely key if you want to compete with the big boys, which means those public schools that practically abut Bisley, like Epsom and Wellington.

With only one full-bore range remaining in Suffolk – at Thetford and that belongs to the RAF - Framlingham lacks this and will always face a more significant challenge.

But the other vital ingredients to success in team shooting they possess in spades.

Bossing about

Under skipper Will Hamilton happily bossing about Head of School Emma, the clutch of raw youngsters has what it takes to be the best team the college have put out in years – enthusiasm, enthusiasm and more enthusiasm.

Well, as good as the 1962 team which Nigel 'C' Burnip skippered anyway. Ahem.

Roy Witham brought them the four-hour journey and the students embraced the opportunity with gusto. All they need to add is knowledge and experience and these, we felt, we could do.

OFs who turned out to pass on their dubious wisdom were C himself, James 'Botulinus' Mehta, John 'Grasshopper' Halahan, Brian 'Deerstalker' Smith and Steve 'Whatsthisbollocks' McDowell. Hon OFRC member Guy 'Windmaster' Larcombe (actually an Old Epsomian, but Halahan tapped him up and signed him for a club record fee of two pints of Adnams) also gave up his Sunday to bring his considerable expertise to bear.

Full-bore rifle shooting is a very different beast to .22 small bore. For a start the rifle actually goes 'bang' instead of 'ting' and this causes considerable recoil and thus you need good consistent technique and a solid position. It also takes much longer as the target is marked with each shot, so you can't hang on to the rifle in the same way as you would with a .22

This can be tricky if you are 14 and weigh about much as a wet rugby sock.

Yet nonetheless the five year 9s who got involved were without fear or inhibition and simply wanted to improve, firing round after round and getting better and better.

The challenge

The OFs found exclusively and to their considerable delight that with some genuinely novice charges to guide we learned as much about ourselves as we were passing on. We loved the challenge, you might say, perhaps another trait learned at the College.

One thing we did learn was that our tired old jokes about breeding them tough 'in our day' – cold showers, solid eggs, frozen swimming pools, a good thrashing after prayers etc etc – was a total myth.

Because over the weekend 'The Curse of the OFs' descended upon the gathered throng – namely, appalling weather. And guess who it was doing the moaning about being cold? Well it wasn't anyone under 18, so that kind of narrows it down.

By way of a treat, some of the OFs broke out the ancient weaponry – a 1945 Lee Enfield number 4T sniper rifle and a 1929 Schmit Rubin 7.5mm. Again the students hurled themselves upon these classic firearms with keenness and not in the least put off by the Schmidt Rubin, which has the recoil of a tectonic shift.

As the College peeled off on Sunday evening to begin their long journey home, we turned to muse about the weekend.

It was Guy who put his finger on it: "To have a successful school team you absolutely have to have a keen shooting master and a thriving and enthusiastic old boys' side."

Two ticks there then.

The College VIII heads into the Schools Meeting with the very best wishes of the Old Farts.

