

The Bristol bullet in

B&DR&PC NEWSLETTER

November 2008

Editorial EVERYDAY REMEMBRANCE!

Like many I watched the emotional scenes of Harry Patch, the last surviving "Tommy" from the First World War, at the cenotaph on Armistice Day with some reverence. The crowds spontaneous applause reflected exactly my thoughts and doubtless I would have joined in if I had been present.

Some time later I began to have thoughts about two relics in my firearms cabinet, both dating from the period of Harry's Army Service. I had never questioned before whether it was "proper" to casually own and use artefacts or to wonder what great events they may have witnessed.

The first artefact is a 1917 dated model 96 Mauser with a regimental plate bearing the legend

"Torpedam Overslag". I know the rifle was the standard issue service arm of Sweden from its introduction in 1896 well into the second half of the last century. It never went to war and saw action only on the training ground.

The second rifle is a pattern 14 Enfield, also dated 1917 and made in the USA. Its regimental plate identifies 39th. Company of the Royal Army Service Corp (RASC). This rifle did then go to war and during the horrors of the German offensive of early 1918 was the burden of a soldier like Harry. The role of RASC was to carry forward supplies for the front line troop. Even if I so wished, I will never know the dangers, deeds or demise of its owner during those dangerous times.

Have I the right to own either of these firearms, which I have enjoyed now for many years, or is there some moral breach by maintaining the instruments of such destruction. I am certain that Harry would have no desire to own and Enfield again. Can I therefore resolve this dilemma of being sincerely respectful of the memory of the fallen whilst enjoying an object that is representative of so much destruction of life.

My hope is that the brave soldiers who carried the rifles I now find myself the custodian of had a long and fulfilling lives. In my part by continuing to use them I will perpetually be reminded of their courage and service.

Ed

Forthcoming events

30 November brings a black powder precision match at Failand (13 shots, best ten to count in half an hour). If you have a black powder pistol then bring it along, if not speak with a Committee Member and we will make the club gun available.

The Greg Patterson Winter Aggregate continues on the second Sunday of each month until March 2009. If you want a chance at the aggregate trophy then you must enter at least three rounds.

On 7 December there is a

sporting rifle match at No 2 Gallery Range at Warminster, any full bore scoped sporting rifle and a steady hand will do.

Don't forget the Boxing Day clay pigeon shoot, shotguns and ammunition will be available.

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Western Shoot

at Failand

On Sunday 21st. December 2008

OK Huckleberries, Captain Jack here, on the third Sunday in December there will be a "Ho Down" Shootout down at Failand.

It will involve ten shots from the black powder pistol, ten shots left shoulder and ten shots right shoulder with you lever action rifles and six shots with a long barrelled pistol.

Keep your eyes peeled for the Failand Kid and Pacos Pete and you never know you may even win a prize!

Captain Jack

Firearms

During the last quarter of the 19th Century all nations went through a process of either converting their muzzle loading service arms to breech loaders or of adopting totally new breech loading designs. It was a dynamic development period that spawned rolling block, falling block, trapdoors and eventually turn-bolt mechanisms.

The period of service use for these firearms was short before the universal adoption of bolt action magazine repeating rifles by the end of the century. With the adoption of magazine rifles many of the single shot breech loaders of the late black powder age were put into reserve so many survive and are available at modest cost.

Whilst competitions are held for original rifles accuracy can be variable and most shooting with these types of fire-

black powder Cartridge rifles

arms is done with reproductions.

Modern reproductions, mostly made in Italy, can be more expensive than originals but are generally of high quality. The market is American centric and most of the available models are guns of the old post civil war west, and amongst them can be found faithful copies of famous names such as Winchester, Remington, Sharps and Springfield. They appear in a profusion of marks, including infantry musket, cavalry carbine and target configurations, the usual calibre is 45/70 Government (more of which next month).

All the target models were and still are competitive and even after repeaters appeared, the single shot types still dominated target shooting until the introduction of smokeless propellants.

The question is why do it? It's messy

and smoky and ammunition supply is usually by reloading, with high component prices and set up costs. Well for historians the thrill is to experience first hand using period equipment, for accuracy buffs getting a 120 year old design to perform is a challenge and for those who seek to be different these firearms certainly do have personality.

For between £750 and £1,000 you can have a high quality piece of history that can hit the target every time at 1,000 yards (providing you do your bit) and you will also have everyone on the range queuing up to have a go.

Next month we will be looking at the 45/70 Government cartridge that is commonly used in these firearms and some of its near cousins that can truly be described as the magnums of their age.

Range talk

Round Two of the Winter Aggregate was shot by 9 members on Sunday 9th. November and the scores for rounds 1 and 2 are posted on reverse of the calendar of forthcoming events enclosed with this newsletter. Remember with four rounds to go, if you wish to be in with a chance of taking the aggregate champion's title then you must shoot at least three rounds.

I have also started issuing the labelled precision targets which form the third element in the aggregate. If you want to shoot the precision match then see me on the range and I will let you have some targets. The six precisions

cards, each of 10 shots at 25 metre standing without support, must be witnessed and submitted to me before the final round of the aggregate matches are shot on Sunday 8th. March 2009.

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At this time of year shooters thoughts turn to what Santa may bring them in their Christmas stocking, only to find out that their family's idea of what might make the perfect gift does not include shooting related paraphernalia.

Therefore I now set my sights low and

for some time have desisted from dropping far from discreet hints about the required supplements that would immeasurably benefit my shooting box.

I am troubled by the recent financial downturn and the protectionist stance that is restricting imports from other nations more comfortable with civilian firearms ownership. This is having the effect of making components for reloading and spare parts for firearms increasingly expensive and difficult to obtain. If members have their own sources of these essential supplies and they wish to share them, then let me know and I can circulate details—

Club news

Two new probationary members were accepted into the club at the November Committee Meeting. **A—D—** an experienced shooter from Wiltshire and **B—C—** another experienced shooter from Bristol.

Ashley has been with the Frome Club for many years and has a wealth of experience with pistols and more recently rifles and shotguns. Brian is a retired member of the police force, having served in the firearms unit and

what went on at committee?

licensing departments. Welcome to you both, we look forward to seeing you on the range.

It will be apparent that the gardening contractors, mentioned in last month's newsletter, have been active at Failand with plenty of bare ground and rock face seeing the light of day for the first time in many years. They have done a great job I am sure you will agree and I think they may get an invitation to revisit us again next year.

The Committee approved the acquisition of a black powder muzzle loading rifle for use by club members. With the exception of long barrelled pistols and revolvers (which we cannot hold as club guns) we will soon have representative types of all the categories of firearms that shooters can use at the Failand Ranges.

The Committee