

Pass the ammo, Jeeves, and watch the wind

"The fascination of shooting as a sport depends almost wholly on whether you are at the right or wrong end of the gun." PG Wodehouse.

By Steve McNottle, Bisley Correspondent (with apologies to the great man)

"I say Niggys," bubbled Lord John Halibut with his eyes wider than a constipated owl, "That chuffing wind might put a chap right off his stroke."

"Oh don't be such a wet flannel, Hallers," said Nigel Burnip, eyeing the 500 yards to the target, "It's just a standard Bizzers fishtale, you oaf – we've got proper ammo and I straightened my rifle barrel with Gussy Overbury's lump hammer this morning, we'll be fine."

"Uhm, actually, old sausage," blubbers Halibut, "That's my rifle – you forgot yours."

And as the tweeded twits ambled down Bisley's half-mile wide century range for the Q-Match, the opening fixture of the OF Rifle Club's season, more OF fools are seen to be entering the gates.

"Hoy there, Gussy, do keep up," bellowed Halahan crossly, "You were made fully aware that when you took on the mantel of Hon Sec your job was to carry the kit?"

Gussy Overbury grunted: "Yes , but not all at once."

He drops three scopes, four rifles, four shooting mats and ammunition scatters like skittles in a cloud of dust.

With a series of audible clunks as his spine resets itself, Overbury raises himself to his full 5ft 6ins and gazes through the shimmering mirage of unseasonal 24 degree heat.

"Ahm. Ah, well, that tall chap is Sandy Threepwalker – he's rather tasty with a gat you know - won the St George's last year. And..ahhh.. ooh that's Biggles...old Jonny Ford fresh from getting his GB Vets colours amongst the Boer."

"Hullo chaps, spiffing breeze for a shoot, what?" quips Biggles.

"Morning," beams the bearded beanpole Threepwalker.

As they are joined by their competition, streaming gently up the range, the veterans of the eight public schools which compete for this ancient trophy greet each other with a series of Hulloos and Havatyahs.

The Q-Match was smitten from the greedy fists of the Old Framlinghamians in 2011 by the new pretenders the Old Bounders...Bedfordians..... and there is a strong whiff of determined organisation in the air.

“Ah-ha” says Gussy Overbury polishing a bullet with his lucky snippet of Amazonian Yak Scrotum Leather, “I see our team is complete... Salve, Sir Robin Curblington... Salve, Mararajah Jimmijams.”

“I say, bloody awful hangover – got stuck into a case of vintage sherry with the Maharani last night, awoke upside down still in me dashed jodphurs, bit damp they were too” says the Mararajah from under his elaborate shooting headdress, “Bumped into old Robin here parking the Bentley. He’s been busy building things.”

“That so...Robbers?”, quoth vox pop.

Sir Robin sighs deeply: “Indeed it is, chaps, this is 2017 you know and it is perfectly socially acceptable to be in trade these days.”

“Rather!,” booms the mighty Threepwalker. “I’m a surveyor you know. And I’ve got a new gat. And a new BMW.”

“How very vulgar,” mutters Niggysy (retired) to Air Commodore Biggles (retired). They nod sagely like old Chesterfield sofas.

And so under the careful direction of Gussy Overbury and the noisy bellowing of the Maharajah, also freshly returned from the African Veldt.

“...but the best bit was,” he twitters, “I bagged a couple of tensies.”

“Tensies?” inquires Halibut.

“Well, I was aiming at elevensies at the time but dropped ‘em and they were both bulls, too!”

The bungling buffoons finally submit to Gussy’s persistence and the shooting begins. The capricious wind causes some consternation yet yields fine one-off 49s from the Maharajah, Threepwalker and Halibut as the OFs, showing highly unusual range discipline, whip through their firing order in double quick time.

Even with an unusual 47 from the dead-eyed Biggles we are looking good at 500 yards for it is only the top four scores to count. Burnip chips in with an early-season 45 and mutters darkly about Overbury’s hammer not being heavy enough. And Sir Robin, in a first shoot for some time, finds the middle too. Gussy, exhausted from his exertions struggles to find the target at all, until the careful direction of Threepwalker guides him into the black.

It seems we are two ahead of the Bounders – a tantalising competition in the ether – with the other teams losing ground fast.

Back to 600 then we go – that extra 100 yards giving more of a challenge than the uninitiated would think, especially in a wind switching through zero. But it proves the killer blow for the competition, even

with the Lawrentians sporting Chris Weedon, the current GB captain, with a mighty 50.8 from the Maharajah.

He moves into the coach’s chair as the multiple-international shooter Threepwalker begins with his new rifle. He is firing them into the centre like the master of the game that he is.

But wait.....

The Maharajah has made a bold wind call but the wind was not there and Threepwalker drops a point.

“Ooops. I say, I’m most dreadfully sorry Sanders,” chuckles the Maharajah eyeing the Best Shot of the Day medal.

“That’s most discombobulating, I must say,” protests the gangling metronome. “I’m getting old. I’m 30.”

Much guffawing from the OF septuagenarians and the remainder who are all but one in the 50s.

“The whippersnapper needs a damned good debugging,” they cry in chorus.

Yet moments later is all forgotten as the proud captain raises aloft the impressive Q-Match silverware and there are loud Hurrahs all round.

And it’s back to the clubhouse for tea, medals and high jinx.

The next OF events are listed here. If you fancy coming and having a go – drop the Hon Sec a line.

<u>Sat 13th May</u>	All Day		300/600x AM	900/1000x PM
<u>Sat 10th June</u>	Long Q	PM		900/1000x
<u>Thurs 13th July</u>	Vets	PM		500x

	500y	600y	Total
James Mehta	49.5	50.8	99.13
Sandy Walker	49.4	49.6	98.10
John Halahan	49.6	48.6	97.12
Jon Ford	47.7	46.4	93.11
Nigel Burnip	45.2	46.2	91.4
Robin Curtis	42.2	42.2	84.4
Jim Overbury	33.0	44.0	77.0

Team Score was 387.46 (team of 4)

	Q' Match Scores		8th April 2017	
	500yds	600yds	Total	Place
<i>Old Albanians</i>	183.13	176.12	359.25	5th
<i>Old Alveynians</i>	176.7	180.9	356.16	6th
Old Bedfordians	192.17	189.8	381.25	2nd
Old Cranleighians	182.9	180.8	362.17	4th
Old Framlinghamians	194.22	193.24	387.46	1st
Kings College Wimbledon	176.7	153.5	329.12	7th
Old Lancings	Did not shoot	Did not shoot	**	**
Old Lawrentians	188.15	187.14	375.29	3rd
Highest individual score 99.13 James (OFRC)				

Team Photo - Top L-R: Halahan, Walker, Overbury Bottom L-R: Burnip, Mehta, Ford

