

## **Old Framlinghamian Rifle Club International tour to Jersey 24-29<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

### **Diary of a cat wrangler**

*OFRC Hon Sec Jim Overbury describes his experience of the inaugural OF Rifle Club international tour to Jersey, 24- 29 May 2018.*

Being a Rifle Club Hon Secretary is to master the dark art of herding cats and satisfying what the French rather well describe as 'Petit Fonctionnaires'.

The cats are of course my fellow shooters; fine products of our Alma Mater, many with impressive blazers, ties, medals and silverware as well as abundant stories to tell. To a person, they won't let you down.

That is until you ask them to get organised and write on bits of paper. The other lot one must please are those whose responsibility it is to ensure that there are lots of bits of paper and that they are all filled in correctly.

Thankfully, due to the electronic age it is relatively easy to supply things in triplicate: triplicate. triplicate. triplicate. If only one could CtrlC/CtrlV broad thoughts and good intentions.

There was already one dark cloud of potential pitfall.

### **Enough Juice**

Everything was going to be electronic: the applications, the bookings, the licenses and even the targets. This meant everyone having to have some form of Wi-Fi-enabled device on the firing point and it working properly with full battery charge.

Most of us, being very far from Millennials and therefore Luddite, packed our traditional marking gear, like spare pencils and waited in trepidation of this newfangledom like a teenager fears the school disco.

The planning began, appropriately enough, in the Crown Hotel Framlingham. Everyone except Nigel Burnip had a list of things to do as, being The Chairman, he was there to swivel his steely eye of Sauron and ensure it was all done properly.

He did however, produce a surprise for us all – as the picture will show – this season's range of Haute Couture from the House of Burnip. Reversible fleeces and proper OFRC shirts. My word, we thought, even if we are a motley crew, we can at least look like we are in the big time.

Then the process of gathering ten people in four vehicles with ten rifles and all the gear together on a dockside in Poole began. Target rifle shooting is a sport for all ages and any gender. This team of Old Framlinghamians had an age range from 19 to 71 years. There are very few sports which enable such a lifetime skill to be pursued throughout.

As you'd expect within a few taps of the keyboard the immense amount of detail was swiftly collected, the data processed and sure enough on May 25<sup>th</sup> 2018 there we all were lining up to board the ferry to Jersey.

### **Code 100**

Arriving in Jersey with 'Code 100' sinisterly written on our windscreens and nervous looks from customs officials in High Viz jackets, we clutched our passports and Jersey Firearms Certificates tightly, trying not to keep checking the rifle bolt was still in our pockets, each thinking that they'd never let us board or land. But of course Bullets Burnip had thought of that and made sure we were all dressed the same in very plush team gear. We looked so smart even the sniffer dogs smiled at us.

Half a day later, the team gathered on the terrace of a rather nice hotel enjoying chilled barley-based fitness drinks and admiring the view. Jersey is a pretty place, but the roads are narrow and populated by people with Range Rovers who struggle with the width of their vehicles and can afford to be cavalier with their chariots.

The ranges are quite wonderful – all pointing out to sea and surrounded by dramatic old WW2 German defences. On the 1000 yard range called Les Landes we shot over a horse-racing course and had to take turns turning back tourists from walking along the footpaths and into danger of our fall of shot.

### **Butts duty**

It was ballistics rather than technology that required us to do some butts duty at the 1000 range as the bullets are not quite fast enough at 1000 yards to activate the sensors. The Jersey mob are cooking up some 'special' ultra-high velocity bullets to overcome this as they have quite taken to electronic targets.

Indeed, after the tour we all reflected that we enjoyed the electronic experience. The instantaneous feedback of score and fall of shot takes getting used to, not having to wait for the fallible human under the target to pull it down and mark it for you.

The upshot is a different style of shooting - much, much faster.

Our hosts, the Jersey Rifle club were very well organised, with back up gadgets to loan when inevitably one of ours failed.

As far as the OFRC's kit was concerned, we had surprisingly few failures. It was startlingly hot for the time of year and iPads did shut down if left in the sun and batteries running out without hope of a charge. Except team Captain Mehta, who brought with him an extraneous power source the size of a nuclear submarine.

### **Inflatable lobster**

This was a serious event with top teams from all over the UK, including the Welsh team. Most impressive and fun were the Army and the English NRA teams. The NRA had a sort of mascot in the form of a giant inflatable lobster. People were made to carry and look after it for a day if they made a "faux pas". Of course having seen it once it became our mission to capture it, take outrageous compromising photographs of it with our two most glamorous team members and post the results on social media. We would have achieved this but having stashed it in our Van, the door blew open and it was spotted and retrieved by a very relieved junior member of the NRA team.

I have to confess that up until the Saturday morning which saw the start of the competition I had never shot in the Imperial style. It is an interesting experience to be 55 years of age and yet a complete beginner.

Scoring someone else's card, reading the wind myself and following the required form was entirely alien to me. It was in a state of high nervous excitement that saw me gather with the other left handers at the end of the point. 'I haven't done this before I said to the two people to the right of me, whose jackets were dripping with Queens medals and international glory. 'You'll be OK.' they grinned.

Somehow, I got through the first shoot without cross-shooting or hitting the expensive electronic targetry 200 yards down range. At the end of the detail I knew I had to check the person's rifle clear who I had marked. They nonchalantly waved their flag in the breach and smiled. Now thankfully before anyone is allowed to do this sort of game one is trained very well.

### **Up the spout**

The senior members of the OFRC are all world class and safe shooters and had taught me well. 'I'm sorry would you mind taking your bolt out, so I can see up the spout please?'

Over lunch I was told how impressed with our safety standards was the President of The Jersey Rifle Association, whose bolt I had asked to remove. It was, never the less exactly the RIGHT thing to do and I am glad I did.

I was not too fussed about my own shooting – not cocking up was my goal – but as the days went on I felt a growing sense of immense satisfaction and concentrated harder than I had for many a year.

In terms of Buzz at the end of the day it was on par with the adrenaline rush I used to experience after winning a motor cycle race – and that is quite a rush. The team spirit within the OFs was great and at the end of the day my eyes were stinging with tears of laughter at the rapping and banter we enjoyed over more chilled fitness drinks.

The Monday afternoon event was the team competition. The atmosphere turned serious. I was the adjutant and was able to people watch a little. It was an immense privilege to be a part of a world class sporting event with some serious geezers.

### **Posh frocks**

The evening saw the gala dinner with the OFs dressed up in their posh frocks. The last I remember was someone ordering another bottle of fizz as the sun came up.....

All too soon it was time to settle the bar bill and head off to the ferry back to blighty. Feeling more confident that the logistics of moving firearms from one state to another we sauntered up to the shed for inspection. Eventually we found the rifles amongst the empty beer bottles and spent cartridges. The jolly Border Force person was a little tired and asked wearily 'are there many more of you?' 'Oh Yes' said McDowell 'the Army are on their way'. Some things in the world are changing fast as in my day The Revenue men did not have a sense of humour.

Her chuckles ringing in our ears we boarded the boat and looked back at Jersey. Each one of us a bit sad it was over and all harbouring a desire to return. Perhaps we will.

Oh, and by the way, we shot really well too.

The Team Photo Left to Right;

Seated Front Row: Steve McDowell Jim Overbury Nigel Burnip

Standing Back Row: John Halahan Jon Thorp James Mehta Kim Pope

