

Nigel King (S 60-65) - Lynchpin of OF Rifle Club, dies aged 65

by Bisley Correspondent, Steve McDowell

It is with great sorrow that I must report the death of Nigel King (S 60-65) who was, from the time he first set foot in the Albert Memorial College as a bespectacled youth until a few weeks before he died, a stalwart of shooting both for the College and the OFs.

He had been suffering for some months from a rare blood disorder.

It was only in late December when we last heard from him, Nigel Burnip reporting that he was as ever cheerful, and was looking forward to being declared finally free of the latest of the numerous infections that had bedevilled him for the last few months. The Chairman reported that he sounded upbeat and ready to face the pre-matched bone marrow transplant early in 2013 that was to give him high hope of recovery.

Tragically, his battered immune system was not able to hold out as long as his indomitable spirit and he passed away surrounded by his family on 28th December 2012.

Nigel was always to be seen at every OF fixture, parked up in his garden chair on the range, rain or shine, pipe being regularly stoked while offering advice, a joke or two and an abundance of light-hearted abuse. I remember him well when returning to shooting in 2002 after a 14 year absence and grumpily stomping off the point after a disaster.

“You know,” he mused, reaching for his tobacco pouch, “If you take shooting at all seriously, you are probably in the wrong club.” How much pleasure he later took as the new and rapidly expanding OFs, with a little bit of seriousness, picked up trophy after trophy and still do.

A self-confessed over-grown kid, like many of us, Nigel would proudly produce yet another vintage firearm with a chuckle about how he had successfully negotiated with his local police force, proving it that it was necessary for him to own a 1948 Mauser 8mm.

I have no doubt he would argue so charmingly and vociferously in favour of the army of clients whose interests he watched over at his solicitors' practice in North London, which he ran for 34 years until his retirement in 2010.

He would then maintain an amused, St Bruno smoke-shrouded vigil as successive OF shooters stepped off the firing point rubbing sore shoulders and complaining about its Richter Scale-registering recoil. “It is a man's rifle, you know,” he would say, shoulders rising and falling in tune with his laughter.

He was much admired by fellow members of the OFRC for his approach to target shooting, which in his formidable mind held no obstacles that could not be overcome with technical innovation and hearty financial investment. The picture here demonstrates that age-related myopia combined with a lifetime of long-sightedness is no barrier to success on the range. It led to the OF nickname “Vorsprung”, of which he confessed to having been quite fond.

Never downbeat, while the rest of us complained vigorously about bad scoring or poor butt-marking, Nigel would simply carry on as he always had. He was in the successful OF Cadet Pair with David Argent in 1962, from an VIII captained by Jon Ford and containing yet another - our very own chairman Nigel Burnip.

Indeed it was here, we think, that he acquired his school nickname, of which he was not so enamoured. It is rumoured that he became known as 'Shover' because of his habit (occasionally suffered by all shooters) of giving the odd round a little help down the range with a push of the right shoulder – causing the shot to come out at 9 o'clock. That's the legend in any case, though your correspondent would be glad to hear of more amusing misdemeanours which may have led to this unusual nomenclature.

One of the enduring strengths of the OFRC in recent times is that it has so often contained active members from the same team more than half a century ago – again they are pictured here.

Nigel was an occasionally eccentric shooter, perhaps because of his predilection for relentless experimentation and accessorising, but when all came together he was a force to be reckoned with. Indeed in my recollection he twice hit possibles (50 points – all ten scoring shots in the bull). That one of them was completed with an unofficial 11th shot was as irrelevant to the rest of us as it was to the intensely delighted Nigel. "I had to know, Old Boy, never have forgiven myself otherwise," he said with that characteristic chuckle to his amused coach.

Whatever his score though, the Nigel we knew never changed. Urbane and witty, he was always generous and helpful with bags of enthusiasm for the sport, the OFRC and most particularly its younger members.

We last saw him at the fantastically well-attended OF Guest Day at the beginning of September. He introduced his prized Mauser to the enraptured guests and explained its history in fine detail before going on to insist that he had plenty of ammo and that everyone who wanted to shoot it got the chance. He was very obviously extremely ill; made thin, pale and deeply fatigued by his disease. Yet with his exasperated wife Tizzie at his side he tackled the day with his usual enthusiasm and kindness. Asked about his illness he simply said, "It's a bloody pain in arse, Steve, quite frankly."

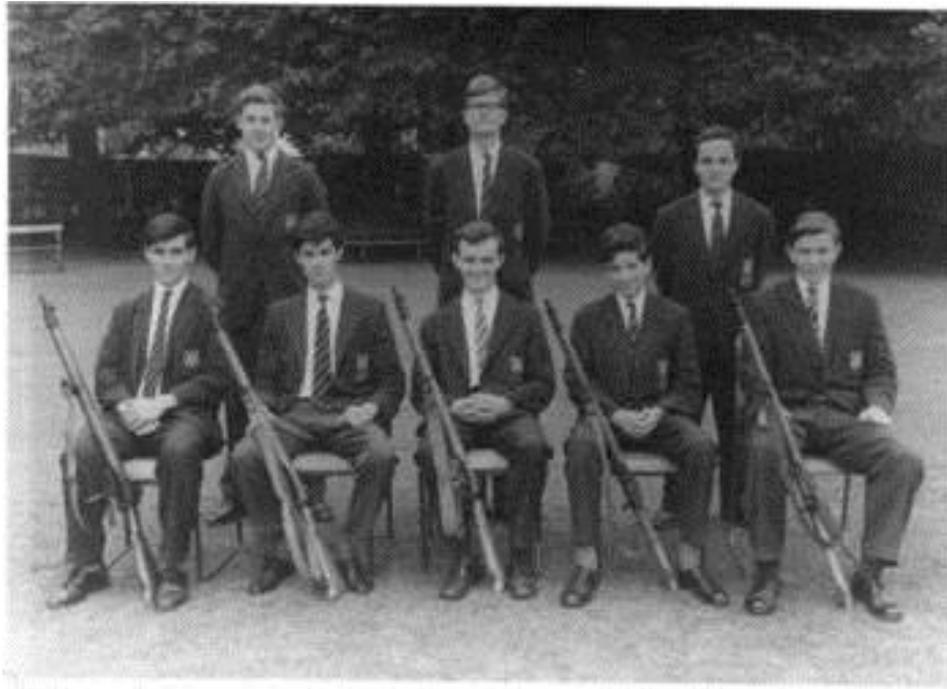
He was nearly out on his feet by the time he left us all in the bar at the Artists Rifles' Clubhouse marvelling at his spirit and courage.

It is all too often said, but he will be very sorely missed indeed by the OFRC when we come back to Bisley in April.

It will quite simply not be the same without him.

The thoughts and prayers of the OFRC and its members are with his wife Tizzie and family.

More follows below...



1962 Framlingham College Ashburton team.

L to R.

Back Row:

Nigel Burnip (S 58-65), Nigel King (S 60-65), Bob Le Rougetel (K 55-63)

Seated:

Keith Howard (R 55-63), Tony Hewitt-Hicks (G 59-63), Jon Ford (Captain) (S 58-62), David Argent (R 55-64), Ed Brown? (G 54-62)

For comparison, the remaining members of the team at Bisley in 2009:



Nigel King OF 1947-2012



Nigel is pictured wearing this season's latest optical accessory

A regular stalwart of the OFRC is Nigel "Vorsprung" King, (*Stradbroke 60-65*). Nigel, a retired solicitor, acts as executive committee member and his advice is greatly valued by the Club.

Nigel is a fan of the shooting gizmo, and will enthusiastically demonstrate his latest find. Rarely costing less than an arm and several legs, these gadgets are guaranteed to be the answer to all shooter's prayers. Nigel is usually quite embarrassed to possess them, sportingly feeling that he has an unfair advantage over his colleagues, since he now, "Can't miss, Old Boy!"

Last season's gizmo rarely survives long enough to see the next. The Wonder German-engineered 3 Dioptre Magnifying Back-sight of 2002 led to an unexpected volley of shots, whilst directed at the target 900 yards away, being despatched in the general direction of Guildford. Later closer inspection revealed recent and serious structural weaknesses in the target marker board, several feet above the aiming mark.