

2021 SPRING NEWSLETTER



ROYAL AIR FORCE SMALL ARMS ASSOCIATION

<https://www.rafsportsfederation.uk/sports/raf-small-arms-association/>
[Royal Air Force Small Arms Association | Facebook](#)

A Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered in England and Wales 1176860

2020!!! WHAT A YEAR

Who would have thought that at the start of 2020 or indeed 2021 that we would be facing a global pandemic that would cause national lockdowns and the cancellation of many, if not all, social and sporting events?

The decision to cancel all Operational Shooting and sporting events was taken quite early on with units obviously unwilling to release personnel to any gathering that could potentially spread the infection.

National restrictions also saw Bisley and the NRA closed and a ban on using caravans on site, as well as the closure of ranges across the country. There was a slight ray of hope when things eased a bit in September and the NRA ran a much reduced and socially distanced Imperial Meeting.

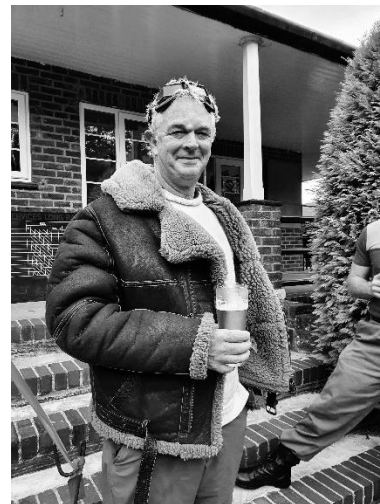
This consisted of a slightly reduced programme with F-Class, Match Rifle, Target Rifle and Civilian Service Rifle (CSR).

RAFSAA Club members did manage to participate in a number of competitions, including the Inter-Services TR matches, but with very reduced activity in the Clubhouse, with the exception of a socially distance Battle of Britain evening complete with traditional Piano burning. (Thanks to Scott Glanville for finding and arranging it)



Indeed, a lot of work was put into the Clubhouse by our Steward, Ali, to make it compliant with the Government Covid-19 restrictions, but the limits on group sizes and households meant that sadly it was still very quiet in the Clubhouse. One benefit though was the requirement to not

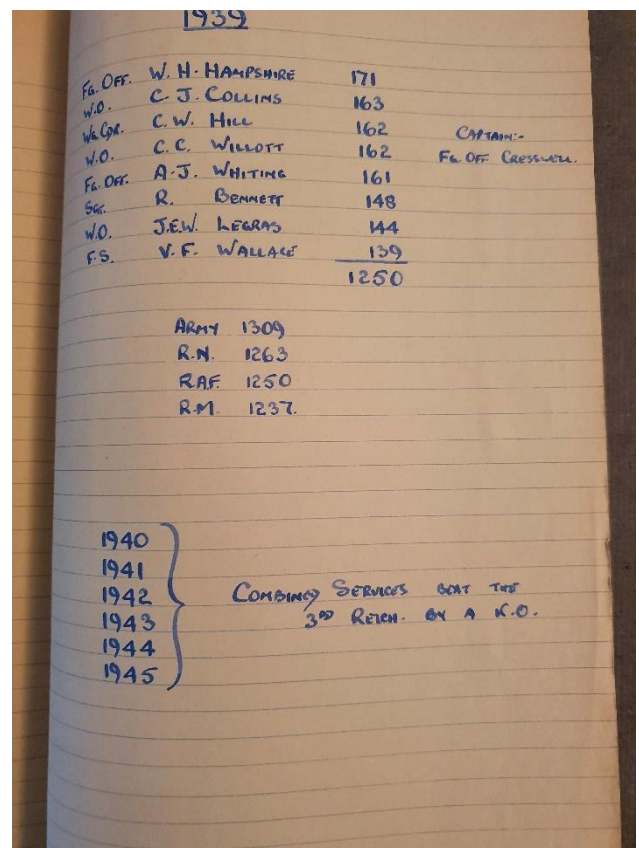
handle cash across the bar which allowed us to push forward with a card payment machine in the bar. This facility has greatly improved things with the ability to pay for drinks, score cards, accommodation and weekend shoots amongst many other things via card. At least one member was heard to comment that it was great as it meant they now didn't have to carry so much cash to buy a round of drinks. The responses were along the lines of "When have you ever bought a round?"



RAFSAA Battle of Britain Night 2020

The Royal Air Force Rifle Association was founded in 1921 with the object (as expressed at the time) of 'promoting interest in small arms shooting for Service purposes by means of individual and collective competitions framed as far as possible to induce practice in methods which will lead to increased efficiency'. Since 1946, when it became the Royal Air Force Small Arms Association (RAFSAA), it has also been responsible for the various sporting shooting disciplines, as well as competition shooting with Service weapons.

Indeed, over the years many team captain and coaches have strived to keep track of team and individual scores in an effort to be the top of the Inter Services Matches, the example below being just one example of the stats for the Service Weapons team in 1960. Although the Combined Services Scores for 1940-45 shows that when needed the Services can cooperate quite well against stiff opposition.



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From Paper Puncher to Clay Cruncher

By FS Al Sharp, RAF Benson.

In 1990, aged just 19yrs I joined the RAF. During my time at RAF Swinderby (yes, I am that old) I was introduced to the Self-Loading Rifle (SLR), a long heavy gun firing 7.62mm rounds. Any type of shooting is exhilarating; the noise, the smell of cordite and the thought of what this weapon could do, instilled a huge amount of respect for weapons and the knowledge that this tool could be my life saver if ever I needed it. Ok as an Aircraft Mechanic it would be highly unlikely that I would ever be in a situation to use it, but you never know.

Guns have a long history within the military and throughout my career I have received excellent training from the RAF Regiment on several weapon systems, all focused on protecting myself and my colleagues. Luckily, the only thing I have needed to shoot at was a paper target where my rounds, (if I was aiming correctly, always fun with a Mk10 respirator on!) would punch holes in the card.

Approx. 20 years ago, a friend introduced me to a shotgun, not something that we commonly use in the RAF. My previous experience with rifles was a big help. I wasn't concerned about the recoil, the noise or the thought of the potential impact of a gun. The biggest difference was the target that I was shooting "at", were moving, thus introducing a new element to shooting, something that further challenged me. I was hooked, so had a few lessons, applied for a licence and eventually acquired my own shotgun. To start with, I was hitting 50% but as my experience grew so did my scores and my thirst to compete & improve.

The RAF has a long history of clay shooting. An unknown fact is that it was introduced in the second world war to hone rear gunners' skills to shoot down the Luftwaffe. They would sit in a dummy gun turret and a clay would be thrown, the gunner would move and introduce lead to then shoot down the target!

I was only concentrating on clays but needed advice and guidance. After a quick search I found the RAF Clay Pigeon Shooting Association ***RAFCPSA*** and approached them for help. With many years of experience between the association I was offered all the info I requested and after getting my scores to the required standard and achieving a good finish at the RAFCPSA championships I was asked to attend an Inter Service competition.

Standing in the carpark I looked like a lost boy with no real idea of where to go. At this point, the then current RAFCPSA champion, Sgt Kevin Johnston offered to look after me and show me the ropes. After shooting that one event with the then best RAF Shooter, I was left in awe of his skills and knew I needed to get better. Luckily, I became good friends with Kev and over the coming years he helped me immensely, I never have got to his standard and at nearly 50 don't think I ever will, however his drive for the sport was inspirational. He achieved



the RAF Sportsperson of the Year and was top 3 in the Inter-Service Sports person of the year, amazing for a minority sport. He became the RAF manager and I eventually became the RAF Captain. Alongside some amazing shooters the RAFCPSA has gone from strength to strength.

Even during the reduction of the manpower from the 100K+ when I joined to where we are now with the reduction of available financial support the association has continued to assist whenever it can. During my tenure as RAF Team Captain, my highlight was leading the RAF squad to victory in the Inter Service championship, after a 14-year spell of coming close, but not close enough. Wanting to go out on a high, I stood down and with the position of manager free, I took on this role to offer the new blood my experience. The current captain Flt Lt Dave Dale, with his supporting team is again pushing the sport forward and our association is in as strong a place as I can remember.

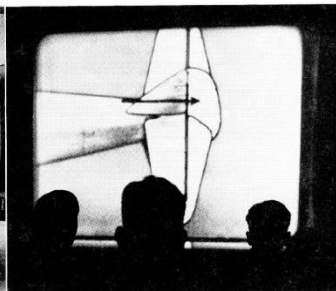
I have been introduced to not only club events, but Inter-Service and Major events such as English, British and World championships. Ok I'm not in a position to win against professional shooters but the beauty of this sport is that I get a chance. I can still win in my "Class" and anyone can have 'one of those days' and everything falls into place, well here's hoping. Clay shooting is a social sport and offers the competitor an amazing opportunity to relax and test yourself. You can follow the RAFCPSA on social media (@RAFCPSA) and all RAF PED Sections will have contact details.



SHOOTING at clay pigeons is an ideal way of training air-gunners (above). The gunner enters a mobile turret (left), a replica of gunner's cockpit in plane, and from this he fires machine gun at clay pigeons released from trap. RAF cadets make it a sporting contest and become efficient, accurate after little practice



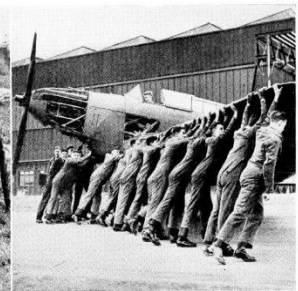
WIRELESS training of gunner-radlomen is part of RAF elementary training course. Messages are sent to "planes"



ELEMENTARY Flying School readies pupils for advanced course. Movies explain effect of airflow on the airplane



GUN AND GRENADE training is given ground staff of RAF. In practice, defenders leap barbed fence to meet foe



AIRCRAFTMEN trainees in Technical Training School wheel a bomber to shed in airdrome procedure practice



Trainers, transports, gliders and miscellaneous Aircraft

THE fighters, bombers, seaplanes and flying boats, depicted in "Britain's Warplanes" (SKYWAYS—March), would be of little avail without one group of planes... the trainers in which men become pilots. The *Magisters*, the *Tiger Moths*, all the trainers, are surely as much a part of the pattern of glory stitched by the flying guns of the Royal Air Force as are the *Spitfires*, the *Hurricanes*, and the other brave combat planes of Britain's air arm. The high standards of pilot training, maintained by the RAF in the years of peace, have paid a continuingly beautiful dividend—combat supremacy over the *Luftwaffe*.

An RAF recruit becomes a pilot in four stages: he enters an Initial Training Wing where his nearest approach to flight is in a Link Trainer. He then progresses to an Elementary Flying Training School, then to an Operational Training Unit which takes him to the brink of war, and at last to an Operational Squadron. Fitting tribute to the Flying Training Command was expressed by Capt. H. H. Balfour, Under Secretary of State for Air: "The material we have today is fully worthy of the example handed down by the pilots and crews who so decisively won the Battle of Britain."

THE RAFSAA ACCOMMODATION PROJECT – BREAKING GROUND

RAFSAA provides the Home for RAF Shooting but its accommodation and infrastructure is badly in need of upgrading to match the expectations of the modern service personnel. For the last 3-years our Plans and Budgets member, Chris Hockley, has worked extremely hard to get the project moving forward. Preparations on the site began last year with the NRA removing a large tree and demolishing the old shower block. Finally, in Jan 21 work began on the site to with drainage being dug in and in Feb the base plate for the building was constructed.



The actual buildings arrived in late March having been delayed slightly due to the -20°C temperatures in Estonia where the building is being prefabricated. The project will add 10 rooms with 2 beds per room and an 8-cubicle toilet/shower block.

This is a great leap forward in the accommodation at RAFSAA, in addition some work will be undertaken to improve the existing accommodation where possible.

The plan is to have the new building ready by June 2021 ready for the NRA Imperial so start thinking about those bookings now!

Throughout March and April progress has been rapid with the Ablutions and Accommodation going up at an exceptional rate. As of 8 April (3 Weeks of work) the buildings are as shown in the photo below.





Some additional work to finish off the interiors and surrounds will be needed so if you have some DIY skills or are just a willing volunteer please let me know as I am sure we can use your help during April and May.

100th Anniversary RAFSAA Gin

To mark the 100th Anniversary of the Association we are getting a limited edition (100) of RAFSAA 100th labelled gin.



Provided by the Lincoln Distillery their Magic Gin' uses the classic London Dry gin recipe and is bottled at 40% Vol. Bottle size 70cl. Expected price is around with £40 with profits going towards the Accommodation Project.

The Gin should be available for purchase over the RAFSAA Bar the Imperial meeting.

Cpl Myvida (Vida) Simons

Her photo hangs in the RAFSAA Club house but here is more about Cpl Myvida (Vida) Simons (nee Stone) who was the first women to shoot for the RAF.



L.A.C.W. Stone cleans her rifle after winning the Maintenance Command individual championship at Bisley.

Stafford airwoman (18) is RAF .303 champion shot

THIS year's R.A.F. Maintenance Command .303 rifle champion is an 18-year-old girl who has been in the Service only eight months and until the championship event had visited a .303 range only five times.

She is L.A.C.W. Myvida Stone, a storewoman at 16 M.U., Stafford, and the daughter of an Alrewas, Burton-on-Trent, policeman.

Shooting against the cream of the command's King's prize winners and international shots at Bisley on Friday, she beat all comers, including her instructor, Chief Technician J. E. P. Witts, himself an international shot who has been shooting for the R.A.F. for 18 years.

As well as beating all the men and taking the Maintenance Command individual S.R.B. trophy, Miss Stone also took the W.R.A.F. trophy for the highest aggregate score. Her score was 136 out of a possible 150.

'NO FLASH IN PAN'

"No flash in the pan is as good as that," said her instructor after she had beaten him.

Miss Stone has now been selected for the R.A.F. Inter-Group events at Bisley next month. If she maintains her standard then she will go forward as an R.A.F. representative at the National Rifle Association championships in August.

Miss Stone told a "Staffordshire Advertiser" reporter that she became interested in .22 shooting in February. Before then, the nearest she had been to a gun was her father's double-barrelled 12-bore—"and that was too heavy for me to lift, let alone fire."

With her at the command competition was W.R.A.F. Sergt. J. M. Randall, her site N.C.O. at 16 M.U.,

who came fourth in the individual competition with 118 points. Sergt Randall first used a .303 rifle five weeks ago and talked Miss Stone into doing the same.

Runner-up in the championship was F/Lt. R. Dyball, also of R.A.F. Stafford, with 134 points.

Losing by only .4 seconds, the Stafford team came in second in the combat team snap-shooting competition.



Starting as an 18 Year old LACW in 1952 she managed to put in some incredible scores to beat all other shooters including her instructor and was selected for various RAF teams as a consequence between 1952-1956. Not bad for someone who only picked up a .22 rifle for first time in the February of 1952. She met her husband Sgt Roy Simons (Later Gp Capt OBE), also an RAF Shooter and RAF team member at Bisley, and he proposed to her on the steps of the RAFSAA Clubhouse.



Photos provided courtesy of Christine Fraser (Daughter of Vida and Roy)

From the RAF Central Fund for Serving Members

Exercise Equipment

As public and station gyms re-open in line with the easing of restrictions, from today **13 April** we will no longer be accepting grant applications requesting at home exercise kit. However, applications received prior to this date will still be processed.

RAF Representative Level Grants

From **17 May** in line with the recently published BN 18/21 – RAF Sport Pathway to Resumption, we will be accepting applications and ‘top-up’ grant requests for RAF level funding. Applicants will need to outline what the event is that they have been selected to represent the RAF in and either provide their original application stating they would like a top up grant or submit their first application form (if no funding has been requested this year).

Given the additional flexibility that has been necessary as a result of the pandemic an exception has been made to allow retrospective funding for ‘top-up’ grant requests.

It may be helpful if you wish to send this short “top-up funding request” template to your Representative players should they require additional funding. Requests should be emailed by the applicant to sportsgrants@rafcf.org.uk. **N.B.** top up grant requests will not require re-endorsement if they were originally endorsed at RAF level.

Example Email

Dear Sports Grants Team,

Please may I request a top-up grant to RAF Level for the attached application I submitted in INSERT MONTH HERE and for which I was awarded development level funding. I have been selected to represent RAF X at the INSERT NAME OF EVENT HERE. My bank account details have/have not changed since my original application.

We appreciate there has been a fair amount of change to our Individual Sports Grants over the past 12 months as a result of the pandemic and we thank you for your understanding. As a charity we have worked hard to ensure that during this time our charitable funding has been made available where it is most needed. The allowance for at home exercise equipment grant applications along with our Myzone and Les Mills On Demand initiatives have proved invaluable at keeping serving personnel physically active whilst lockdown restrictions prevented participation in their usual forms of exercise and sport.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to get in touch with a member of the grants team using the contact numbers provided in my signature block.

Kind regards,



Stephanie Low

Grants Administrator
Royal Air Force Central Fund

t: 01494 569135 | e: sportsgrants@rafcf.org.uk | w: www.rafcf.org.uk

RAF Central Fund, Cournswood House, Clappins Lane, North Dean, Buckinghamshire, HP14 4NW



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If you have any articles to help publicize your discipline, historical information about the association or RAF shooting in general then please forward the to the RAFSAA Secretary.

Conrad Steele-Benny
RAFSAA Secretary
Royal Air Force Small Arms Association

<https://www.rafsportsfederation.uk/sports/raf-small-arms-association/>

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