

BENCHREST SHOOTING AT DARTMOOR

We recently held our first benchrest match, this came about primarily due to the determination of one of our members, Ron Morse. Ron, a lifelong target shooter, unfortunately developed an illness which prevented him from taking part in FT and HFT competitions. But he carried on shooting his air pistols and many of you will remember him as the organiser of the rapid fire pistol sideshoot at the Dartmoor events.

He was very keen to get back into rifle shooting and so wished to promote formal benchrest competition at the club as he considered that this could provide the opportunity for older and less able shooters to prolong their enjoyment of the sport, and might also encourage some of the 'plinkers' to experience the pleasures of competition.

Sadly Ron died last year and so never saw his project come to full fruition. Our new range is dedicated to his memory.



Benchrest competition does look deceptively simple, "How can you miss, there's no skill in that", many people express that opinion - until they try it themselves!

Indoor competitions are shot at 25 yards and although certainly not easy, consistent scores are achievable. The outdoor game is an entirely different animal. This is shot at 25 metres and is very much more challenging (and frustrating). The objective is to completely obliterate the 2mm ten ring twenty five times on each card, this would reward you with a score of 250:25X. And when you have done that you just need to do it twice more to claim your place in the record books. As far as I know the current record for the outdoor LV (light varmint) class stands at 750:31X. An incredible score.

UKBR22 rules are, as you would imagine, very extensive. We decided to keep things simple initially - any rifle, .177, .20, or .22, any scope, two piece rest or single front rest (which may be a bi-pod if preferred). Targets are inward scoring and are plugged with a .

22 gauge, thirty minutes is allowed to shoot as many sighters as you like plus the twenty five scoring shots.



Our first match was held on January 7th, nine members had expressed an interest and six actually turned up. The number one enemy of the outdoor benchrest shooter is the wind, and conditions for our inaugural meeting could not have been worse, freezing cold, 48 - 52 mph and gusting!, but at least they remained that way for the duration of the match, so nobody enjoyed an advantage.

Final scores were, predictably, very low. John Fricker took top spot with 670, Rob Meatyard and Paul Salmon managed 666 apiece but Rob took second place thanks to a higher X count, and Dave Taylor finished on 631. The other two lightweights couldn't take the pace and retired after the first card!

You soon come to realise when shooting at a 2mm circle that there is no such thing as a day with 'no wind', even the very lightest air movement will push the pellet into the nine ring. A score of 250, although achievable, is extremely rare, anything over 240 is a good result. An accurate rifle and good pellets are of course essential, but spending thousands on match type rifles, top of the range scopes, and exotic front rests is not necessary. In 2012 Daniel Finney, a young American shooter, set a new world record of 747:38x using an inexpensive Benjamin Marauder air rifle supported by sand bags on wooden blocks.

Benchrest shooting does compliment FT and HFT very well, you can learn a lot about trigger control, breathing, consistent hold, and particularly the effect of the wind on the light pellets. The other great advantage of having this facility at the club is that we can continue to enjoy competition shooting even when it is raining - soggy targets notwithstanding.

Paul Salmon. January 2018.