

IT WEREN'T HALF HOT MUM



Sun cream, water bottles and vuvuzelas were the order of the day on 27 June when an intrepid band of crossbow archers came together at the grounds of Rugby Bowmen in Warwickshire for their annual tournament. Sun cream and water because it turned out to be the hottest day of the year so far – 30 degrees – and vuvuzelas to trumpet our support for England's footballers against the 'old enemy' in South Africa (we should have saved our breath on that one).

Rugby Bowmen's grounds are situated inside a Victorian walled kitchen garden at Bilton Grange Preparatory School in Dunchurch. Constructed in 1855, and attributed to Pugin, the two-acre square site is surrounded by 10-foot high ornate brick walls – great for keeping the wind at bay – but on the day in question, the heat inside the garden was incredible! Our wheelchair archers had a particularly hard time, but they had some willing helpers who kept their hydration levels up. We all survived despite the intense heat and there was some really excellent shooting.

Sport crossbow world champion Graeme Watkins (Glevum, Gloucestershire) was in far better form that day than Rooney and co. Despite the exhausting conditions inside the walled garden, Graeme shot three new British records for the National Crossbow Federation SC 600 round. His club mate Graham Course won the gents' target crossbow classification, despite having twisted limbs due to the heat (the bow's limbs, not Graham's). Rugby's Iris Bingham shot the highest score of the day to win the assisted event. Yours truly managed to win the senior (over 55s) class ahead of NCF president Ted Hayward. Did I mention that it was hot?

The tournament got off to a sad start with one minute's silence for the late Clem Griffiths, a leading light of the Rugby Bowmen club and supporter of crossbow archery, who recently passed away while on holiday abroad.

The next NCF crossbow shoot takes place at Twigworth Farm in Gloucestershire on 11 July.

Chris Aston reports from the Rugby Bowmen's annual tournament, where the blistering heat didn't get in the way of some record-breaking performances



THE FRENCH CONNECTION

The current and former presidents of the International Crossbow Organisation meet in Wolverhampton

At the end of June I had the pleasure of meeting International Crossbow Union president Gerard Boutteville and secretary general Charles Mechin in Wolverhampton. Gerard and Charly made the long drive from France to discuss the IAU's 2010 general assembly and elections, which will be held during the World Championship in Avon, France, at the end of August. We were joined by Eric Dougliss, the IAU's head of finance and chairman of the National Small-bore Rifle Association's airgun and match-crossbow committee. Our meeting was necessary because Gerard had taken over from me in July 2008, when I stepped down from the IAU presidency mid-term for personal reasons. Gerard Boutteville is the first vice-president of the French Shooting Federation and the former mayor of his home town of Gnech. The French federation is one of the leading bodies in crossbow shooting, as well as one of Europe's largest shooting sports organisations – including the FITA archery disciplines, it has over 130,000 members.

Over the past 30 years or so, Wolverhampton has become the home of British crossbow shooting. The world's best known manufacturer of crossbows, Barnett International, was based in the city until 2001 before moving to America. Wolverhampton gunsmith Frank Spittle, who passed away in May this year, founded the British Match Crossbow Association in 1979, and the National Field Crossbow Federation was formed in 1984 following the World



Top: Gerard Boutteville points out the logo of the 1989 World Crossbow Championship

Above: Chris gives Gerard a tour of the club's facilities

Field Crossbow Championships in the neighbouring borough of Dudley that July. In 1989 both IAU disciplines – Match and Field crossbow – were run alongside each other when the IAU World and European Championship came to Wolverhampton's Aldersley Shooting Ranges. My eldest son Nick Aston became the Field Crossbow world champion for a second time in 1994, and his achievements were honoured by a civic reception from the mayor. So it's fair to say that the crossbow has made its mark in our fair city.

While they were in Wolverhampton I was able to take Gerard and Charly on a tour of local shooting clubs. Our first stop was the West Midlands Regional Shooting Centre at Aldersley Stadium. Since the 1989 World Championships, the outdoor and



indoor shooting ranges at Aldersley have become a national centre of excellence and are used as a training base for the Great Britain rifle and pistol squads. Archery is also catered for at Aldersley, with local clubs making use of the new 25-metre indoor range which was opened in 2009.


Our next stop was my home club, Wolverhampton Company of Archers in Tettenhall. The club, which was founded in the 1940s, is located in pleasant rural surroundings in Wergs Hall Road. The two-acre field was purchased by the club during the 1980s and has hosted a number of national crossbow archery events over the past few years. These days the club has members shooting a wide range of styles, including recurve, compound, longbow, America flatbow and crossbow. Gerard and Charly were very impressed by the facilities enjoyed by the club and remarked that it was one of most attractive archery venues that they had visited anywhere in Europe.

We reconvened the next day after an overnight stop at the Ely House Hotel, but Gerard and Charles had to leave Wolverhampton just after lunch to catch the Eurotunnel train back to France – completing a round trip of nearly 800 miles. Our next get-together will be in Avon, near Paris, in August when the French Shooting Federation hosts the 15th IAU World Crossbow Championship. Bring it on!



CROSSBOW KIT EXPLAINED

In my writing for *Bow International* I often refer to the equipment used by crossbow archers as 'target' or 'sport' crossbows. But just what are the main differences between the two kinds of kit?



The sport crossbow was introduced a few years ago by the international crossbow associations as a means of making crossbow archery more accessible to newcomers. Before then it was only possible to be competitive at major tournaments if you could either make a target crossbow yourself or source one from a specialist constructor. It was a significant expense, too – at least £1,500 if you bought one complete.

But if you want to get started in the sport you will need a simpler, less expensive solution. And this is where the sport crossbow comes into its own. It uses mass-produced hunting-type crossbow equipment as its basis – the sort you can buy from a shooting sports shop. The regulations allow you to add certain accessories to the crossbow, such

as target sights, a raised cheek pad and an adjustable fore grip, which will upgrade the equipment to a level suitable for target competition. A basic sport crossbow will get you shooting for around £400.

The distances at the NCF's sport crossbow target shoots range from 10 metres indoors to 55 metres for outdoor tournaments. The draw weight is typically 40-75lb for indoor competition and the training of beginners. Heavier draw weights are needed for outdoor competition – at least 95lb for the 55-metre distance. Field archery (NFAS) rules place no limit on crossbow draw weights but there is an arrow velocity limit of 300fps.

Target crossbow competition distances range from 10 metres indoors to 65 metres outdoors. NCF rules limit the draw weight on target crossbows to 95lb, which is also the international weight limit for this class of crossbow.

Further information about the equipment rules, and crossbow archery in general, can be found by visiting the National Crossbow Federation's website: www.ncf-crossbow.co.uk

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