



Bicester Town & District Rifle and Pistol Club

(Est.1906)

The Sports Club, Oxford Rd, Bicester. OX26 2AB

Email: enquiries@bicrp.club

Website: bicrp.club

Chairman's Newsletter

29th December 2021

2021 Summary

2021 was always going to be an interesting year for our club. When I last penned an update to our membership, we were looking with some uncertainty at the loss of Oxford Road and the resulting move to Chesterton. This, together with the ongoing negotiations over our lease and the completion of the upgrades and relicensing of the outdoor range, proved to be a particularly testing time for the club and your committee.

I would like to start by personally thanking the committee and all the members who gave their time and expertise to ensure the move to Chesterton could be completed as painlessly as possible, made all the harder by the ongoing Covid pandemic. It wasn't easy and they all went above and beyond.

Through the club's hard work, we have completed our withdrawal from Oxford Road, successfully negotiated and completed the construction and certification of a new onsite armoury and purchased and erected a new 'clubhouse'. This doesn't even begin to cover the countless other tasks completed to ensure our club has a strong future at Chesterton.

Furthermore, our wider membership stepped up despite Covid and supported the club by continuing to renew, despite the anticipated challenges. I am happy to report that as we reach the end of 2021 our club remains very healthy both financially and in terms of membership.

New Indoor Range

Moving out of Oxford Road was only the first stage in our relocation to Chesterton. As you know, the BSA have been working on a planning application to consolidate their operations at the Chesterton site. This application met with significant local and council opposition resulting in the failure of both the BSA's initial submission and the subsequent separate application for our new range. The club committed to support the BSA as they moved to appeal, and we were heavily involved both in assisting the BSA's professional team and directly by making both written and oral representations during the appeal hearing. I am pleased to report that we were successful and, as many of you already know, planning for the entire BSA plan and our new range has now been granted.

The BSA have now moved to the next stage of the process, working with the council to satisfy the preconditions allowing ground to be broken. We are informed that a project management company have been appointed to facilitate the rapid progression of the project and our committee are in constant contact with the BSA to offer technical support where required.



However, the ongoing Covid situation together with the realities of such a large engineering project, have extended the timescales for completion of our new range and will now likely take us into 2023. The situation remains positive and BSA have promised to prioritise the rifle club, as they appreciate how difficult operating with only the outdoor range is, but we must be realistic and continue to be flexible until our new range is completed.

Armoury

Although physically completed by the middle of 2021, our new 'temporary' armoury has now been licenced without issue following an unexpected delay by TVP. I am pleased to report that all the club's firearms are now onsite at Chesterton and are available to our members. Despite the ongoing UK wide ammunition shortages, we have been able to secure sufficient stocks to be able to offer ammunition for sale at the usual competitive prices. We continue to monitor the situation and, although not currently necessary, we reserve the option to restrict large bulk purchases by members to maintain a fair supply to everyone.

Air Range

Frustratingly, we have not been able to offer a range for air rifle/pistol since leaving Oxford Road. Despite several false starts, we have now agreed a plan with the BSA to modify the covered firing point and target cage. I am confident that two lanes incorporating electric returning targets and overhead lighting will be completed and available for members by the middle of January.

Clubhouse

Following the purchase and installation of our new 'temporary' clubhouse, I am pleased to report that the installation of electric lighting and heating has now been completed. Running from our own generator, we will also offer a kettle for making hot drinks, hopefully making the remaining winter months a little more bearable!

With the ongoing Covid situation, please try not to congregate in large numbers in the confined space of the clubhouse. To ensure everyone remains safe, please wear a mask when in proximity to other members indoors, as per the current national guidelines. This is not currently a requirement when outside on the range. We will continue to review the situation as it develops.

Range Access

Access to our outdoor range remains routed around the perimeter of the cricket field. Over the past few weeks, the BSA have imposed restrictions on our access when the ground is soft as our vehicles are causing significant damage to the grass. Additionally, they have informed us of mandatory weekend range closures due to football matches being played on the pitch covering our roadway.

Please ensure you respect any temporary signage from the BSA as they attempt to manage the situation. Furthermore, a strict 10mph speed limit is now in effect, both on the grass and in the main carpark. Breaking this limit may result in loss of range access and the BSA are taking it very seriously.

The committee and the BSA have been in talks about finding a solution to this issue, particularly as further restrictions have also been imposed by TVP who have specifically forbidden moving firearms across the pitch on foot from the car park, whether cased or not. As such, the BSA have accepted that a permanent solution is required and are looking to install a tiled mesh track for our exclusive and

unrestricted use. This will involve a very significant financial outlay for the BSA and we will be looking for club volunteers to help lay the tiles to keep the costs down. There has been talk of over 2000 tiles so please look out for the callout in the new year!

Shooting Schedules / RCOs

With the licencing of our new range upgrades, the club was forced to accept that all range sessions must be managed by a duty range officer, formally ending the previous practice of just turning up and shooting ad hoc. This has resulted in the need for the continued use of our Covid online booking system to ensure that sessions can be scheduled and managed accordingly. We have relied on a hardy group of volunteer RCOs to maximise the number of sessions available throughout the week, however we need more. With the winter bringing short days, we need to offer more sessions at the weekends to cover those who work or who cannot shoot during the week.

We are urgently looking for a number of duty RCOs to specifically cover prone/bench rifle sessions on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, although offers for other days are very much welcome! If you can offer some of your time, even if it is not every week, please reply to this email. You do not need a formal qualification; full training will be provided. Typically, you will also be able to shoot during the session, with members sharing the role allowing everyone to shoot. Please support your club if you can, without the RCOs none of us can shoot!

Booking System

Our online booking system was originally created to help us manage the Covid restrictions. We have continued to utilise it ensuring that sessions can be booked and managed properly. Over Christmas some feature updates and bug fixes are being completed to allow members to prebook club rifles and order ammo together with an improved system for RCOs to contact members in the event a session needs be cancelled. Look out for the new features when the update goes live in early January.

I remind you that booking range sessions through this system is mandatory for all members, failure to prebook may result in you being turned away or finding the range closed. Furthermore, shooting outside the prebooked sessions is strictly prohibited at all times. If you cannot use the system or do not have access to a mobile phone, tablet or computer please make arrangements with the duty RCO directly, but please note this is not to be considered the norm.

Website

Work has recently started on the club website to clean it up and refresh it. This is a step towards our planned new 'online' presence, but for now it will offer a fresher and more professional portal for new members and enquiries. We will continue to update and add more content over the coming months, if you have any suggestions or would like to contribute, please let the committee know.

AGM

Due to the complexity of the work throughout 2021, the committee offered to remain in post to ensure minimal disruption though a critical period for the club. As we move into 2022, it is important that the club return to our annual AGM cycle to ensure the proper constitutional mandate of the committee is maintained. As such, Covid permitting, we will hold our AGM somewhere around our usual April date. Nomination forms and the associated information will be circulated at the appropriate time.

Volunteers are always welcome and if you would like to get involved in the management of our club, please speak to a member of the committee for more information.

2022 Renewals

I'm afraid it's that time again where we need to part you from some money! Attached to this email is a copy of the annual renewal form. Please ensure you complete your renewal before the end of January, especially if you hold an FAC and use us as your primary club. Details of members failing to renew will be reported as required by TVP in February.

Forms should ideally be returned by hand as per the included instructions, however you may forward the completed form via email if you wish. Please note, you must return your card to the Membership Secretary to be updated for 2022.

The annual membership fees remain unchanged at £90 for full adult membership (£45 for juniors).

Range Fees

The committee have reviewed the range fees for 2022 and have decided to increase the daily range fee from £2 to £3 starting from 1st January.

The optional £50 range fee remains unchanged if you prefer to pay annually.

The committee understands that the continued challenge of operating solely from our outdoor range at Chesterton creates issues for those members whose shooting needs are not ideally met by the current temporary facilities. However, with the ongoing work by the committee and the BSA moving the club positively towards the completion of our new range, not to mention the further planned improvements to the outdoor range throughout 2022, we hope you can remain patient and continue to support your club for another year.

Have a great New Year and happy shooting in 2022!

Alex Robertson
Chairman
chairman@bicrp.club