

BRITISH SHOOTING
SPORTS COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

2005

Contents

	Page
Foreword	2
The Council	3
Changes in Personnel	5
Home Office and Parliament	6 - 9
The Police	9 - 13
Ministry of Defence	13
Health & Safety Executive	13 - 15
Defra	15 - 16
Proof Regulations	16
Postcomm Consultation	16
European Issues	17
World Forum	17 - 18
Lead Working Group	18 - 19
Strategy for the Sport	19 - 20
Olympic Games	20 - 21
Carriage of Ammunition by Rail	21
Tower Hamlets	22
Freedom of Information	22
Lantra	22
Animal Welfare	23
Bellgreave Associates	23
Items noted	23
Obituary [Lord Swansea]	24
Valediction [Pat Johnson]	25
Olympic Protocol [Appendix 1]	26 - 27

FOREWORD



Unlike the job of Chairman, in which we are so well served by the Earl of Shrewsbury, the role of President is not onerous and I have made it plain that I shall restrict myself to chairing the Annual General Meeting and giving advice and support when appropriate. But it was an honour to succeed Lord Swansea and I am grateful to the Council for electing me.

My election gave me great pleasure, tempered only by the death of John Swansea later in the year. Tributes have been paid to him elsewhere, but it is important to record how much we miss

the courteous and kind presence of a loyal colleague and a great friend of shooting, at which he excelled and for which he did so much

The sport continues to be under a persistent threat from those who do not understand it and fail to notice, or do not want to know, that shooters are an important component of the law abiding section of the community. The threat of further restrictive legislation is made all the more serious by the increase in the use of illegal firearms and about which something “has to be seen to be done”; meaning more legislation, however useless.

Whilst legislation is not an answer I am confident that the Council and its members will work closely together to support any practical steps to reduce the number of illegally owned firearms. Working closely together in all our work is vital; individually members can do much, but together we can achieve so much more.

I conclude by paying tribute to our friend and colleague, Pat Johnson, who has decided to retire as Secretary. Seldom can a person, who does not shoot, have achieved so much for the sport. We will miss him enormously and he will be a hard act to follow.

We wish him and Muriel a long, happy and contented life in retirement.

Sir Patrick Lawrence
President

THE COUNCIL'S OFFICERS

PRESIDENT	-	Sir Patrick Lawrence CBE DL	
VICE-PRESIDENTS	-	The Earl Peel	-
	-	Mr Brian Carter	
CHAIRMAN	-	The Earl of Shrewsbury & Talbot DL	
VICE-CHAIRMEN	-	Martyn Jones MP	
	-	Bill Wiggin MP	
TREASURER	-	Mr Graham Downing	
SECRETARY	-	Patrick W Johnson BEM	

- o - o - 0 - o - o -

“The aims and objectives of the Council are to promote and safeguard the lawful use of firearms and airweapons for sporting and recreational purposes in the United Kingdom amongst all sections of the community.”

(Extract from the Constitution of the Council)

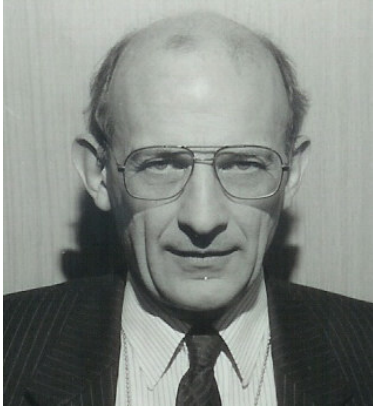
ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES

ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL CLAY TARGET SHOOTING GROUNDS	-	Ian Clifton
ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL SHOOTING INSTRUCTORS	-	Christopher Miles
BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR SHOOTING AND CONSERVATION	-	Bill Harriman TD
COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE	-	Graham Downing
CLAY PIGEON SHOOTING ASSOCIATION	-	Phil Boakes
GUN TRADE ASSOCIATION	-	John Batley
INSTITUTE OF CLAY SHOOTING INSTRUCTORS	-	Roger Hill
MUZZLE LOADERS ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN	-	Alan Overton
SPORTSMAN'S ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN & NORTHERN IRELAND	-	Richard Malbon
NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION	-	Glynn Alger
NATIONAL SMALLBORE RIFLE ASSOCIATION	-	Lt Col John Hoare ** Geoffrey Doe
SHOOTING SPORTS TRUST	-	John Batley
UNITED KINGDOM PRACTICAL SHOOTING ASSOCIATION	-	Graham Gill

** Until retirement during 2005

CHANGES

David Penn



David Penn emerged successfully from the selection process to replace the retiring Secretary, Pat Johnson.

David was the Keeper of Exhibits and Firearms at the Imperial War Museum, a former Chairman of the Firearms Consultative Committee and is a member of a number of academic and historical associations.

As well as a deserved reputation in the United Kingdom, David is well respected internationally.

John Hoare, Lt Col. [Retd]

The representative of the National Smallbore Rifle Association relinquished his position on the Council with his retirement as Secretary of his Association.

John was a major contributor to the debates and work of the Council, a member of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, one time Treasurer and one of the few members of Council to have given evidence before a Parliamentary Select Committee.

Never short of an opinion, on any subject, his forthright manner ensured that other minds were always engaged on the task in hand.

The Firearms Advisory Committee

The Council would have wished to make reference to the replacement for the Firearms Consultative Committee, the downgraded alternative the Firearms Advisory Committee.

It will be to the eternal shame of the Government that despite the Prime Minister's platitudes about 'listening to the people', once firearms are mentioned a profound deafness seems to strike him, his Ministers and his Party.

HOME OFFICE & PARLIAMENT

Review of Firearms Legislation

Increasingly the Council has questioned just what was the purpose of this Review, since there appeared to have been no progress beyond gathering comments from interested parties. Such was the importance that the Government placed on the Review it was the understanding of the Council that only one member of staff at the Home Office was working on the production of a summary of the submissions; a summary which has yet to be made public.

As information about the Review has drifted into the public arena it is apparent that the Home Office had received 4,371 responses, broken down into some 250 different aspects of opinion on the range of issues. The Council's submission to the Review was placed on the Council web site.

What is now clear is that the Review appears to have been overtaken by the Violent Crime Reduction Bill.

Violent Crime Reduction Bill

On the publication of the Bill the Council issued a consultation paper to its members and, having examined the responses, began to prepare a series of briefing papers with Rees & Freres, Parliamentary Agents.

This development continued throughout the passage of the Bill through the House of Commons, during which the Government introduced new Clauses referring to air weapons, which had not appeared in the original proposals of the Bill. It is clear that this process of development will have to continue and the Council is prepared to rethink its responses on specific clauses in the light of any further information which might appear during the progress of the Bill.

The work to date has resulted in numerous amendments to the Bill as it passed through its Commons stages and more will be tabled as the Bill goes to the House of Lords.

It seems obvious that the Bill is little more than knee jerk legislation. Whilst the Council recognises that there are underlying problems with violent behaviour, and would be willing to assist the authorities in any sensible measures to combat that behaviour, another attack on legitimate shooters appears to be the only weapon in this Government's armoury.

An especially clear example of the knee-jerk can be seen in proposals on ages and air weapons. New age limits are proposed despite the fact that the Anti-social Behaviour Act has not been in operation long enough for a sufficient amount of evidence to be gleaned which would demonstrate a need for such a sudden change of mind..

Another example of legislation following the promises of a politician, rather than being based on identified needs and solutions, can be found in the proposals outlined in Clause 31, which seeks to ban the sale of ammunition loading presses. Despite the fact that a number of amendments have been introduced which would lessen the impact on legitimate business, it

should be clear to any reasonable individual that, once Clause 30 [which demands production of a firearm or shotgun certificate before primers can be purchased legally] Clause 31 becomes superfluous - unless one is more concerned with 'spin' than with practicalities.

The difficulties posed to the draughtsmen are best exemplified in their attempts to identify the meaning of "realistic imitation firearm" in Clause 34. Again, despite a number of amendments, much more work is required to ensure that it is violent crime which is hampered by this legislation and not legitimate interests.

Firearms Advisory Committee

If one item has caused more annoyance and disappointment in equal parts than any other during the year, it has been the failure of Government and the Home Office to appoint members to the proposed Firearms Advisory Committee.

The Council saw no good reason for abolishing the former Firearms Consultative Committee, other than political expediency. It is not that Home Secretaries of the day had taken much note of the multitude of recommendations made by the Committee, but, as it was a statutory committee established by Parliament, at least the Home Secretary had to report its work each year to both Houses of Parliament. With a non-statutory body, such as it is intended that the proposed Firearms Advisory Committee will be, its work will go unreported in any meaningful fashion. That is presuming that it might one day be established and begin to examine the many issues which, if resolved by intelligent and open minded people, would relieve the police of what is too often little more than bureaucracy for bureaucracy's sake.

The Council was advised that the General Election had put everything on hold, but were promised that an early submission would be made to incoming Ministers about appointments to the Firearms Advisory Committee.

At the end of the year the Council noted, with as much anger as regret, that there had been no progress on this important matter.

The Political Parties

The Council seeks every opportunity to make contact with Members of Parliament who have shown some interest in firearms matters. It sees this as a means of better informing Members of Parliament about the shooting sports.

One such instance was when the Secretary wrote to a Member, in early January, seeking a meeting following the latter's Parliamentary Question, about the number of convictions for converting supposedly deactivated firearms. Regrettably, whilst Members of Parliament are content to put questions on the Order Paper they are often not equally enthusiastic to engage in debate on the matter raised. This was one such occasion.

Shooting Protocol

The Annual Report for 2003 referred to contacts made with Martin Salter MP, following the latter's issuing a News Release concerning shooting and fishing. Since that time members of

the Council have had a series of meetings with Mr Salter, who has proved to be very responsive to the concerns of sporting shooters. With his assistance a Protocol on sporting shooting was drawn up and this, in turn, has led to discussions with the Minister of Sport, Richard Caborn, on the issue of pistol shooting and the London Olympics Appendix A].

Sports Foundation

Council welcomed the Report, issued jointly by Lord Moynihan and Kate Hoey MP, which advocated a single Sports Foundation to replace the various bodies currently involved in promoting sport. Whilst the shooting sports were not a major feature of the Report, it was pleasing to see a reference to the difficulties faced by the top pistol shooters in pursuing their sport.

Westminster Fair

One method of seeking to get the message about legitimate shooting across to elected representatives in the House of Commons is to hold a function, usually in the Marquee on the Terrace of the House of Commons, to which one can invite Members of Parliament, their advisers and researchers. The invitation to such an event is, as a matter of courtesy, extended to the Members of the House of Lords.

Following persuasive arguments from the Council's Vice Chairmen, Bill Wiggin MP and Martyn Jones MP, it was decided that the Council should hold such an event. Various ideas as to the scale and nature of the event were considered and it was agreed that each association would consider what contribution it could make should produce a plan, which would be submitted to the Council to co-ordinate efforts. Principle ideas produced by this process included concentrating on the scale, variety and the safety aspects of the sports. Particularly important to demonstrate to politicians would be its inclusiveness, with special emphasis on the involvement of the young, the female and the disabled.

On 12 October the Council went ahead with a 'Fair' in the Terrace Marquee, at which the member associations had a individual 'stalls' on which to present the 'wares'. The Fair was attended by a number of personnel beyond those who normally attend Council meetings; in some cases resplendent in blazers and badges which gave a different image than the usual 'men in grey suits'.

The Council was pleased that the ACPO Working Group on Firearms accepted an invitation to have a 'stall' alongside those of the associations.

Every effort was made to ensure that Members of both Houses would be aware of the event and, by utilising the services of Biss & Co, a letter was delivered to each member drawing their attention to this opportunity to see the shooting sports, their achievements and successes, at first hand.

The success, or otherwise, of such events is always difficult to gauge, but some 35 - 40 Members of either House visited the marquee between the allocated time; 4pm. to 6pm. The attendees came from the three major parties and included one Labour Minister, albeit the Minister of Agriculture from the House of Lords. Feedback suggested that the exercise was

well received by the attendees and the associations and it has been decided to repeat it as an annual event.

The Cullen Inquiry

Many rumours of wrong doing and unhealthy relationships surrounded the Cullen Inquiry. The discontent felt by the shooting community at the eventual outcome began to surface in other parties during the year. Of particular concern has been the decision to seal the Inquiry statements for one hundred years. A group of individuals in Scotland, some with close connections to the parties involved in the Dunblane incident, have mounted a campaign challenging the decision to seal the papers.

Towards the end of the year it was announced that the statements used in this Inquiry had been released for public examination. This posed a question for Council to decide whether there would be any value in examining the recently released statements. There was a view that the opportunity should be taken to seek out matters which might shift the blame for what happened at Dunblane from legitimate shooters to the real guilty parties. Whilst there was a desire to highlight matters which might be favourable to the shooting community, the consensus was that the ban on pistols was a political decision which would not be reversed by examining the Cullen papers. The Council will monitor the situation.

Parliamentary Reporting

The Council is pleased to acknowledge the valuable service provided by Rees & Freres, Parliamentary Agents, in keeping members informed of matters, raised in either House, concerning firearms.

THE POLICE

Practitioner's Meetings

For some years now the Council has met with representatives of the Association of Chief Police Officers [ACPO] and the Home Office; the ACPO representatives being firearms licensing managers. One such meeting was held on Wednesday 3 February 2005 at the headquarters of the Norfolk Constabulary, whose Deputy Chief Constable is the Chairman of the relevant ACPO Committee.

These meetings follow a familiar routine within which matters of day to day operation of the firearms licensing system are discussed. The format and personnel of the meeting remain fairly constant and has led to an understanding of the various 'positions' which are likely to be encountered. Items on the agenda for this particular meeting included, Carriage of Firearms by Royal Mail [of which more later in this Report], Descriptions of Firearms and Ammunition, Revision of the Licensing System, and Controls on Ammunition.

Two items of particular importance to the shooting community were concerns about the Freedom of Information Act, since it seemed that the Home Office had issued no specific guidance to the police on this issue, although individual certificate holder's personal details remained safeguarded under the Data Protection Act. Perhaps more worryingly, was the

revelation that there were no current plans for the police to liaise with local authorities on the question of sensitive premises, since local authority employees might not be as aware of such issues as might the police.

The other major item of interest to shooters was the question of local Liaison Meetings. It transpired that only about one half of the police forces in England & Wales had such meetings, but the evidence is that more and more forces are seeking to implement the recommendations in the Police Inspectorate Guidance.

There is now a good relationship with the ACPO representatives to the Practitioner's Meetings, who appear more amenable to proposals from the shooting side. Whilst it is clear that Assistant Chief Constable Taylor, who has continued the work of James Hart to ensure an effective and efficient service to the shooting community, is carrying his committee with him But there are concerns about the quality of understanding of issues which involve change or new concepts amongst firearms licensing managers.

This runs hand in hand with concerns about the relationship between local firearms licensing managers and either individual certificate holders or their association representatives. Despite agreements, such as that on Section 11[6] of the Firearms Act, being reached at these meetings some forces still fail to recognise those agreements and, in the words of the Police Inspectorate, subject the shooting public *"to differing local requirements, some of which border on the discriminatory, without apparent justification"* [A Report of HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, 1993]. The defence that 'my Chief Constable' has the final decision would not ring so hollow were the Council convinced that senior officers were not relying unduly on advice from relatively junior individuals in the command structure. One need not look much beyond the number of successful defences of individual certificate holders to realise that senior officers need to have in place rigorous processes for re-examining decisions before they find themselves embarrassed at Court, or often on the steps of the Court.

In July the Chairman and Secretary met the main ACPO representatives, Deputy Chief Constable Simon Taylor and Assistant Chief Constable Adrian Whiting, with a view to cementing the relationship and improving the flow of information between the two bodies.

The Practitioner's Committee met again in Norfolk on 31 August 2005, its main thrust of the meeting was the lack of commitment from the ACPO representatives and the long list of matters still outstanding from previous meetings.

When this meeting was discussed by the Council it was reported, by one Association, that there had been an increase in complaints about the police from their membership and that it was intended to distribute a questionnaire to determine the depth of this matter Other Associations indicated that they would co-operate with this exercise.

Pre-Certification Training

A consistent theme to these meetings has been the fear that some police forces were insisting on pre-certificate training for applicants for shotgun certificates. A number of cases have been investigated, but the Council, or its member associations, have not had sufficient evidence on which to successfully challenge the police. A common situation is that there are allegations of letters which would have been useful, but that the relevant applicant was wary

of providing copies since those whose actions were being questioned were the same people who would make the decision whether to grant a certificate or not.

Without clear evidence, the Council will always have a problem in seeking to resolve such matters.

In their defence the police, whilst denying that officially the practice did not exist, would often quote Home Office Guidance to the effect that "*the crux of the matter appears to be what is considered as 'relevant experience of shooting' by all interested parties*". Trying to get the police to address this matter more fully has not yet been achieved.

Data Protection - Fire Service

The Council was made aware of the involvement of a Fire Authority which was seeking information from its local police force, as to the amounts and locations of any ammunition, i.e., the addresses of certificate holders.

In taking up the matter with the force involved it became clear that the police service was becoming obsessed with its supposed obligations and liabilities, most especially under Health & Safety legislation. The force sought legal advice on the matter and decided not to disclose such information, but to advise certificate holders that they might wish individually to make such information known to the Fire Service.

Operation Holster

A matter of concern to the Council has been the lack of communication within the police service itself, either between forces, between ACPO Committees or even within forces.

One such example was Operation Holster, under the guise of which a police force had written to a number of outlets, including registered firearms dealers, 'inviting' them to withdraw stocks of air weapons, which were legitimately held, on the basis that 'they were to be banned' in forthcoming legislation. Included with the 'invitation' was a document which required Registered Firearms Dealers to sign up to a policy of not displaying or selling air weapons and which spoke in terms of the proposals in the Violent Crime Reduction Bill already being law. Contact with the relevant firearms licensing Department suggested that there had been little, if any, real consultation before the 'invitations' were circulated.

The force was reminded of the good relationships which often existed between firearms licensing departments and the major shooting associations and the assistance which might be available to tackle real problems.

Other examples of unconnected thinking in police forces have been identified and Deputy Chief Constable Taylor's Working Party have been encouraged to work towards eliminating poor practices within forces. The question of improved communications between forces, and even between ACPO committees with overlapping interests, is something which can only be resolved internally by the police themselves, but the Council will continue to press for more joined up approaches to firearms issues.

Firearms Licensing Conference

In the early nineteen nineties the Council organised two firearms licensing conferences, at the Imperial War Museum in London and the Lancashire Country Constabulary Training Centre at Preston, to which police representatives were invited on equal terms to shooting representatives. Since then ACPO has arranged its own conferences and shooting representatives have normally participated throughout the whole of their programme.

On Tuesday 15 November 2005 the Association of Chief Officers of Police held a Firearms Licensing Conference at the Royal Armouries at Leeds which was attended by representatives of police forces throughout England, Wales and Scotland, the Home Office and John Batley, Colin Greenwood and the Secretary of the Council.

A disappointing feature of the invitation to participate in the ACPO conference was that Council representatives were restricted to the first three addresses of the Conference proper. This denied the shooting representatives the opportunity to become involved in subjects to be discussed. These included 'Appropriate calibres for live quarry' and 'Use of handguns for humane despatch'; matters which are very topical and open to abuse by licensing managers seeking to demonstrate their 'power' in such situations. Despite protracted discussions between the parties these topics have remained largely unresolved due, in the opinion of the Council, to intransigence on the part of the bulk of firearms licensing departments.

Both Deputy Chief Constable Taylor and the Council's Secretary touched on this intransigence during their presentations with Mr Taylor being particularly scathing about licensing departments which did not see that shooters were no more than 'another customer' of the police service who should be afforded the same respect and consideration as other 'customers'.

The gathered firearms licensing managers were reminded of the Report of HM Inspector of Constabulary in 1993 which spoke of the "*differing local requirements, some of which border on the discriminatory, without apparent justification*" [Page 27, paragraph 9.5].

It is most likely that the next ACPO Conference, which is scheduled for some time in 2007, will be a joint presentation.

When the Council considered this matter there were concerns expressed at the exclusion of shooting representatives from crucial elements of the conference. This was seen as another symptom of a gradual weakening of co-operation from the wider police side and a trend which appeared to be developing amongst firearms licensing managers to be less approachable and less willing to engage in debate.

The Police Service Structure

During the autumn the Home Office published proposals which could lead to the number of police forces in England and Wales being reduced from the current forty-three to a number in the region of twelve to fifteen. If these plans go ahead, and the Council has no view either for or against the proposals, one benefit which should accrue would be a more standardised and consistent approach to firearms licensing through the then twelve to fifteen individuals rather than the existing situation.

If added to these proposals is the introduction of a national firearm's register then the spectre of a civilian controlled National Firearms Licensing Board might once again feature in a Government's agenda for change.

Future Relationships

The shooting associations have made a heavy investment in developing a working relationship with the ACPO Firearms Licensing Working Group and the licensing managers in individual forces. They are unlikely lightly to cast aside that investment, but it cannot be a one way street.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Range Safety

The uncertain future of the MOD's involvement in certifying range safety has been a major cause of concern for the target shooting association and they have been unable to obtain a definitive statement from the MOD, despite briefing a number of Members of Parliament and Stephen Pound, MP Personal Private Secretary to Hazel Blears, Minister of State at the Home Office, about the predicament faced by particular clubs. Even the National Smallbore Rifle Association itself had been unable to obtain a variation.

It was apparent that the Home Office was distancing itself from the issue by suggesting that until the MOD relinquished its role there was nothing which could be done, although it was likely that eventually the Home Office would vest competent authorities to take over the role of the MOD.

Despite a campaign of writing to Members of Parliament pointing out that, although there was an alleged agreement which was now two years old, the matter was causing great difficulties for individual ranges, and that, despite pronouncements by one association, the matter had not been resolved at the end of the year.

The target shooting associations are continuing their discussions with Government.

HEALTH & SAFETY EXECUTIVE

Manufacture and Storage and of Explosives

The Council has engaged in discussions with the Health and Safety Executive [HSE] for at least two years on new regulations on manufacture and storage of explosives and those regulations were introduced in April this year

A major point of concern for the Council was that some original proposals about separation distances which, if enacted as proposed, would have led to the closure of some 90% of the existing retail outlets. The value of proper consultation cannot better be exemplified than the

eventual outcome which, based on facts and full information, led to arrangements which were satisfactory to HSE and retailers alike.

Under the new regime the HSE would be responsible licensing for stores of over 2,000 kilograms of net explosives content and local authorities would be responsible for licensing stores of up to 2,000 kilograms.

However, if 1 kilogram of smokeless powder was intended to be kept in the store then the police would be responsible for licensing. It would be sensible for those involved in sporting shooting to seek licensing with the police by keeping 1 kilogram of smokeless powder. Game Fairs have an exemption which would allow for the storage of up to 150 kilos of net explosive content for up to three days.

Fees for Storage

As part of the negotiations on manufacture and storage the Council was discussing with HSE the appropriate level of fees. It has been the long held view of Council that, as the issues raised in investigating an applicant for an Explosives Licence are almost identical to those when investigating an applicant for a Firearm or Shotgun Certificate, then additional fees were unjustified.

In an unprecedented, and totally out of character move by HSE regulations, which included a scale of fees to be charged, were laid before Parliament without any prior warning. This despite the Council having seen a draft of the storage regulations which contained no figures for fees.

Whilst there would be no fee for storage of small amounts for private use the scale of fees for larger stores, and in particular for gun dealers, would cause major problems. Having secured the future for dealers holding black powder, in terms of separation distances, the HSE had now trumped that agreement by imposing what were deemed to be excessive charges. During the consultation the Council had stressed that the role of inspectors was identical to that of the police and would be mere duplication for no improvement in security. It had been the Council's case that the applicant was a 'fit person' through the police procedures and that these should suffice.

Negotiations continued with the HSE to resolve the situation since, although there would be no fees for holders of firearm or shotgun certificates, it became apparent that Registered Firearm Dealers had been caught up in proposals for quarries and similar establishments. The Council is confident that Registered Firearm Dealers will be taken out of the system once HSE has found a mechanism for correcting the error.

Need for an Explosives Licences

Council representatives continued to meet with officials from the HSE to discuss what should be the appropriate levels of possession of small amounts of explosives for private use. Underlying these discussions has been an assumption that, subject to a small limit, there would be no need for an explosives license.

The Council remains convinced that by far the most satisfactory solution would be to exempt holders of firearm certificates (etc), as an identifiable group, from the need for an explosives certificate in respect of 'shooters explosives'. The whole process of explosives certificates for this group of people seems to be a bureaucratic waste of time and appears to serve no purpose in terms of public safety.

Documents received from the HSE have indicated that, whilst certificate holders would be exempt from the need for a licence, they would require a certificate from the police indicating that they were authorised to possess explosives as a result of the firearm/shotgun certificate holding and a further document which indicated what and where explosives would be kept.

This matter has been taken up with the HSE as the proposed system seems to involve yet more unnecessary paperwork.

DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Deer Management

Responding to a comprehensive consultation document from DEFRA, in respect of deer management, the Council expressed its disappointment that the opportunity had not been taken to harmonise calibres between England and Scotland.

The matter was taken up with DEFRA, to determine how they had decided to continue the anomaly over calibres between Scotland and England, and in response DEFRA reported that the outcome was "*in response to a broad spectrum of views*", that they decided not to change the calibres "*in order to find a happy medium*" and that "*provisions will exist in the future to change this should we be required to do so*". The Council will continue to press DEFRA on this anomaly at every opportunity.

A worrying feature of this exercise was the submission of the Scottish Deer Commission which indicated a desire on their part to see some form of training prior to stalking, a trend which seems to be gathering pace, especially from bodies in the training field which have no experience of actual stalking but merely see financial gain in providing training in a sector which has a first class safety record.

Game Law Review

The Council is aware that there have been preliminary consultations on the Games Laws and that a formal consultation is anticipated. Subjects thought to be under review would include Games Licences, Dealer's Game Licences and 'bringing in' at the end of shooting seasons.

Open General Licences

Amendments to the Open General Licence, which brought it into line with Article 9 of the Birds Directive and would now include Canada Geese, have inserted a precondition that it is necessary to demonstrate that non-lethal methods had failed before the defence under the

Article can be relied on by shooters. Despite that caveat, it is the general view that there should be no real impact on existing shooting practices.

PROOF REGULATIONS

In our Report for 2005 it was reported that a document, forwarded to the Council by the Proof Authorities, purported to be a revision of the Rules, Regulations and Scales of Proof. On detailed examination there were fears that some of the proposals fell foul of the existing law and might be interpreted, whether wrongly or not, as an attempt by the Proof Houses to extend their remit. The Council was especially concerned that there were instances where the definitions part of the new Rules appeared to be being used to change the law, such an approach, in the view of the Council, being likely to be *ultra vires*.

Having drawn these concerns to the Proof Masters they had agreed to receive a deputation to discuss the new rules of Proof once their legal advisers had produced further amendments.

Such is the obvious complexity of these proposals that no such meeting has yet taken place.

POSTCOMM CONSULTATION

The Postcomm Consultation document was subject to close scrutiny and, following contact with the relevant authorities, it soon became clear that there were no real safety issues involved in the carriage of firearms through the postal system, even when being transported by air.

A comprehensive response was forwarded to Postcomm and the Council was pleased to see that they had obviously taken note of that response in rejecting the proposals to ban the carriage of firearms by Royal Mail on the following grounds:

Royal Mail has not provided sufficient evidence that carrying legal firearms in its letters network causes undue and unavoidable disruption;

Royal Mail has not provided sufficient evidence to show that prohibiting the carriage of firearms in its letters network would contribute to a material reduction in the number of illegal weapons entering and circulating within the UK;

Prohibiting the carriage of (legal) firearms and component parts in the post would cause hardship for many people and businesses, especially those in rural areas.

That decision represented a major victory for the shooting associations, especially the Gun Trade Association, which had taken the lead on this topic.

EUROPEAN FIREARMS ISSUES

The Directive

The revision of the Weapons Directive seems to be in limbo, any progress being dependent on resolving issues, such as the marking and tracing of firearms and ammunition, contained within the Vienna Protocol.

The Vienna Protocol

The main issue holding up progress on the Vienna was the question of the marking of ammunition. Whilst there had been pressure to mark individual rounds it would seem that a compromise is likely that only the smallest logistic package would need to be batch marked.

The Protocol now has the necessary number of ratifications by nations to progress to the stage of implementation. Further information suggests that the European Union is likely to drop the review of the Directive and adopt the Protocol in its place.

Although the Protocol had been ratified, there had been no further progress at the end of 2005.

Transport of Dangerous Goods

The Council became aware, through contacts within the World Forum, that the United Nations Committee of Experts on the Transport and Labelling of Chemicals had been invited to reconsider the labelling of articles and substances in UN 1.4.

Some of the proposals being put forward could have implications for sporting ammunition. The Council made a submission to the Department of Transport suggesting that the existing tests and criteria were sufficient and this was acknowledged by the DTI, who thought the comments "helpful".

The matter is still under discussion by the UN Committee.

WORLD FORUM

Nurnberg Meeting

Each March the World Forum hold a series of meetings in Nurnberg at which are discussed a number of issues, indicating the international nature of firearms matters. An important feature of these meetings is the flow of information between shooting associations throughout the world and the Council has benefitted from these exchanges, one example being the resolution of separation distances for the storage of explosives. In that case material from colleagues in the United States enabled the Health & Safety Executive to take a more relaxed view than had originally been proposed.

solution was likely to be a ban on the use of lead in ammunition - a situation which already exists in some Scandinavian counties and is beginning to spread throughout Europe.

A clear message was that, in a situation where the philosophy is that 'the polluter pays' then every element in the sport was inextricably tied together and that solutions had to be found which tackled the problem in the whole - not merely for lead, but also taking into account other issues such as noise.

The main conclusion of the meeting was that a small working group should be formed to look at some basic strategies which grounds might adopt. .

The Council now has a comprehensive list of clubs affiliated to the Clay Pigeon Shooting Association and further information from the British Association for Shooting and Conservation and the Gun Trade Association. The process of cross checking this information and seeking clarification in respect of some names which had been submitted to determine if they actually possessed shooting ranges and were not merely 'clubs' which used established shooting grounds is now in hand..

In due course, the Group will meet to consider how best to disseminate information and how to bring those with expertise into their deliberations

Lead in Wetlands [Scotland]

Legislation has now been introduced in Scotland which differs from that in England & Wales, by following a habitat based approach [RAMSAR Convention approach] rather than a species/location approach.

With many such matters been derogated to the Scottish Parliament, and even the Welsh Assembly, there is every likelihood of confusion and the risk of 'innocent' transgressions by otherwise lawful shooters. Fortunately, the Westminster Parliament has retained to itself all purely firearms matters, although the Scottish Assembly seeks greater powers in this area and, as has been demonstrated in the Violent Crime Reduction Bill, wields a powerful influence with the current Government on firearms issues.

STRATEGY FOR THE SPORT

The need for discussions to take place about a national shooting sports strategy was recognised by the Council, especially in light of the problems surrounding pistol shooting at the 2012 Olympics.

It is more than apparent that the work of the Council goes largely unnoticed in the wider shooting community, despite it having a web site and publishing an Annual Report, which is itself on the web site. On a purely domestic level this lack of awareness proved a major problem at the time of Dunblane when there was a perception that the Council had come out of nowhere and was seeking to grab money which might otherwise have gone into the coffers of member associations.

At a wider level there has been no real discussion of a strategy for sport across the spectrum of member associations for a number of years.

The Council has, therefore, decided to seek the comments of a wider shooting audience and to that end it proposes to hold a Forum to which would be invited members of the boards or councils of each member association. This would be an opportunity to consider individual topics relevant to the Council and its work, i.e. not simply firearms issues but the fabric and structure of representation itself, what should be the aims and objectives in the field of representation and how to achieve a coherent approach throughout the sport to the many challenges to be faced in coming years.

It is anticipated that the Forum will be held in February 2006.

OLYMPIC GAMES

Any sport at Olympic level brings with it its own problems, but the shooting sports are subject to politically arrived at decisions as much as by the 'rules of the game'.

The laws of the United Kingdom have created problems for target shooting with pistols which has led to a reduction in the number of people entering the sport; a situation foreseen by Lord Cullen in his Report into the Shootings at Dunblane Primary School [Paragraph 1.13]. This has resulted in:

- a reduction in the number of UK citizens able to achieve international standards.
- a diminution of representation at international events.
- an inevitable and significant reduction in the potential medal tally
- a lack of investment in internationally acceptable standards of facilities
- an inability to hold World Class events in the United Kingdom.
- a reduction in the quality of coaching
- a shortfall in the numbers and quality of officials required

The Council has been working with Martin Salter MP in producing a submission to Richard Caborn, Sports Ministers, to allow United Kingdom pistol shooters facilities to compete in the London Olympics in 2012 and to practice with their own firearms within the United Kingdom prior to the Games themselves.

Members of the Council, through the assistance of Martin Salter, have met with Richard Caborn MP, the Minister for Sport. Whilst he had been supportive he also made it clear that the final decision lay in the hands of the Home Office. The Minister was provided with a Paper setting out the requirements if pistol shooting was to take place at the London Olympics. He promised he would put the case for sporting shooting, as outlined in the Paper, to Hazel Blears, the relevant Minister at the Home Office.

The submission recognises that there would be a need for a number of regional centres rather than at one central location [See Appendix A].

If this country is to be in the Olympic medal tables for shooting then urgent action needs to be taken to resolve any difficulties with identifying those with the highest potential and ensuring that they can develop their skills by having the facilities to practice on a regular and sustained basis within the United Kingdom.

The International Olympic Committee will no doubt be pressing for the provision of practice arrangements for competitors in the years immediately preceding the Games themselves. By establishing a regime now potential problems with the IOC will be avoided.

As with all Olympic sports, time is of the essence, but once the infrastructure is set up and shown to be fit for purpose then all that will be required is continued commitment from all parties, including Government, to ensure lasting viability.

OTHER ISSUES

Threats to shooting and further restrictions on certificate holders do not always come from the obvious quarters. A disturbing trend over the past year has been the attempts, by all sorts of agencies, to impose conditions which could restrict the lawful possession of firearms and/or ammunition. The Council understands fully why such bodies would wish to ensure that they have a mechanism for dealing with those involved in the illegal possession or use of firearms, but believes that those bodies are too often unaware of the situation of those who lawfully possess firearms for sporting purposes.

Carriage of Ammunition by Rail

An issue with its origins in 2004 was the incident involving shooters travelling on the overnight sleeper to Scotland. This had not only resulted in the intervention of a SWAT team, but had also greatly inconvenienced the certificate holders who were denied the right to travel by rail with their rifles and ammunition.

Whilst the Transport Safety Directive provided for the carriage of sporting firearms by rail, the carriage of ammunition was less clear cut, with the Department of Transport pointing out that relevant byelaws enabled the operator to prohibit carriage of inflammable, explosive or corrosives substances. Initial contact with the British Transport Police, who are party to the regulations, revealed that although ammunition fell into this category they would support some clearer definition within the By-laws, but would need to resolve the issue in round table discussions with all interested parties.

A by-product of privatisation of rail services is that it sometimes proves almost impossible to pin any one body down to being responsible for a particular issue. Through a circuitous route, involving the Train Operating Companies and the Strategic Rail Authority, it has been ascertained that the Bye-Laws are now dealt with by the Department for Transport, with which body discussions are continuing.

Tower Hamlets

Similar problems caused by bodies not normally associated with the firearms world was exemplified by the actions of The Tower Hamlets Borough Council in London.

Our Annual Report for 2005 commented on actions by this authority which sought to impose a condition of tenancy of its properties which would prohibit the possession of firearms. This clearly was a cause of concern as to the implications for legitimate certificate holders. Believing that the case for the legitimate certificate holder deserved special consideration the Council continued to press for a meeting with senior officers of the local authority, who were thought to be hiding behind alleged police advice.

Whether that advice ever existed, or had perhaps been misinterpreted by the Officers at Tower Hamlets, the Council received confirmation from the Metropolitan Police that they would not be, if they had ever been, supportive of such the actions by a local authority.

In the light of this new information the Council continued to press Tower Hamlets for a formal statement and in response their Chief Executive commented that *“that the Council has not yet taken any further action to implement.....as we have been awaiting further guidance and advice”*.

It would seem that the local authority have seen commonsense and have decided to shelve the matter but did not wish to be seen to be doing so. There were no reports that any firearms certificate holder had been affected by the proposals, which would seem to suggest that Tower Hamlets have discreetly withdrawn.

Freedom of Information Act

Fears that a body outside the police would prove to be a weakness in the security of information about certificate holders duly came to pass, with the Council being advised that Customs & Excise had been required to provide information about a dealer's involvement in the arms trade. The Ministry of Defence had indicated to Customs and Excise that there were no legal reasons to refuse the request.

It would seem that the only defence likely to succeed, when requests for information under the act were made, would be that the information was ‘commercially sensitive’.

The Council will continue to monitor this situation.

Lantra

The Council was disturbed to note moves by Lantra, an independent training body, to establish firearms handling courses; a process which now seems to be on hold.

But discussions within Council about existing training courses, organised by member associations, highlighted a dilemma for shooting. There was a view that the ad hoc courses currently being run by some associations needed to be validated by a recognised educational body if incursions by pure training bodies such as Lantra were to be repulsed. But equally, there were warnings about the need to resist the notion of pre-certificate training.

Animal Welfare

The Council is monitoring the progress of a Bill which would give the Secretary of State power to prohibit activities involving firearms where there were issues of public safety

Bellgreave Associates

The Secretary, Pat Johnson, who was a self-employed provider of services to the Council under the trading name of Bellgreave Associates, indicated that he intended to terminate his arrangements with the Council with effect from the close of business on 31 March 2006. Council agreed that the Finance & General Purposes Committee should be charged with the task of finding a successor.

In due course, the Chairman advised the Council that an interview panel, consisting of himself, John Batley, Graham Downing and Bill Harriman, had interviewed a total of four candidates, all of which were highly suited to the position.

As mentioned earlier in this Report the successful candidate was David Penn.

ITEMS NOTED

Planning Inspectorate	-	Various rights of Way issues
Defra	-	Diversions of Rights of Way
Scottish Executive	-	Statistical Bulletin CrJ/2005/5

OBITUARY



JOHN HUSSEY HAMILTON VIVIAN

BARON SWANSEA

It was with great sadness that the Council learned of the death, on 24 June 2005, of its former Chairman and first President, the 4th Lord Swansea.

Lord Swansea was a keen marksman and, more importantly for all shooters, a fervent defender of sporting shooting. He was a Vice Chairman of the Council for many years, being elected Chairman in October 1982 following a period as Acting Chairman.

A Gold & Silver Medallist at Commonwealth Games, Lord Swansea took every opportunity to remind Governments, of all shades, that they were shooting at the wrong target when seeking to impose further restrictions on legitimate shooters, culminating in his giving up the Conservative Party Whip and sitting in the House of Lords as a Cross Bencher, following the ban on the private possession of pistols in the United Kingdom.

A Memorial Service at St Margaret's Church, Westminster, brought together people from many walks of life and emphasised Lord Swansea's abiding affection for his much beloved native Wales.

VALEDICTION



PATRICK WILLIAM JOHNSON BEM

As the Council approached the year end Pat expressed his intention of relinquishing the post of Secretary; a position to which he had been appointed in 1989.

A former police officer, one time Deputy Secretary of the National Executive of the Police Federation and a specially appointed Staff Officer to the Chief Constable of the West Yorkshire Police before joining BSSC, Pat brought a new dimension to the Council's work through his understanding of the political process at the highest levels.

His breadth of knowledge and experience, which was greatly respected by politicians, civil servants and the police alike, made him a formidable advocate for sporting shooting.

Though not a certificate holder himself, Pat ably represented shooting's interest throughout some of the sport's most difficult hours. Following the Dunblane tragedy, he was instrumental in bringing the shooting associations together and then mounting a credible opposition to the legislation which followed.

The Council wishes Pat well for the future.

APPENDIX A

EXTRACT FROM A NOTE TO THE MINISTER FOR SPORT

The Potential Olympic Competitors

To achieve success at Olympic level needs the same amount of commitment from shooters as from any other athlete. Currently the sport has two 'age' problems created by the pistol ban; the 'up and coming' competitors and the 'veterans'.

At the one end the United Kingdom has two young, female air weapon medallists who, already showing great talent and commitment, would normally progress to cartridge pistols and international competition. The other end of that spectrum is occupied by shooters such as Mike Gault [an eight times Gold Medallist] who is restricted in his ability to maintain his skills by having to practice abroad. Only by nourishing these two 'wings' can the United Kingdom hope to achieve success at the highest levels, not only in 2012, but also at successive Commonwealth & Olympic Games.

The Way Forward

Pistol shooters from overseas, as well as those United Kingdom residents who had taken their pistols abroad, were admitted to the Commonwealth Games and it might be assumed that similar provisions could be made for the Olympic Games, but one further step is necessary if the United Kingdom is to compete in shooting competitions on equal terms.

The Home Secretary's authority is required to possess a firearm which would otherwise be prohibited, under Section 5, on an ordinary firearms certificate issued by the relevant chief officer of police. The provisions of Section 5 could be extended to embrace named individuals with authority to shoot on approved ranges only, these individual authorities being constrained by suitable conditioning.

Section 7(3) of the Firearms Act established the concept of a place designated by the Secretary of State at which firearms, normally subject to Section 5 prohibition might be kept and used. That approach, with a limited number of sites, is now well established, offers a high degree of control and might usefully be extended to a minimum of two such centres per Region.

Based on these models it should be possible to allow competitors who, through careful monitoring of their experience and levels of attainment, are seen to have the potential to compete at the highest levels, to retain their pistols at home, subject to further conditioning on the relevant firearm certificate. This would allow them to have unrestricted access for 'dry firing'; an essential element of co-ordinating shooter and his/her equipment. Furthermore it would allow the shooter to transport the firearm to different ranges [which will have been authorised under Section 7] to facilitate 'shoulder to shoulder' competition with other potential medalists.

It goes without saying that there would be no provision for the possession of ammunition, suitable for the firearm held under the Section 5 authority, to be held at home. That ammunition would only be acquired when the competitor was actually within the range confines where the firearm is to be used.

This mechanism has flexibility and is the means by which experienced competitors and supporting personnel, such as judges, coaches and officials, may be authorised to practice, to compete and to carry out their duties effectively. It will enable early construction of the pyramid from which success will emerge.

Correspondence concerning this Report,
or other matters relevant to the Council,
should be addressed to:

Patrick W Johnson BEM
Secretary

British Shooting Sports Council
PO Box 11
Bexhill-on-Sea
TN40 1ZZ

Telephone & Fax: 01424 217031
Email: patjbssc@aol.com
Website: www.bssc.org.uk