

Celebrating thirty years of North Cotes Butts

Over sixty years ago shouldering his Haenell Triple x Martin Appleton did not envisage he would have a lifetime in the sport, opening his own shooting ground and thirty years later having the opportunity to celebrate three very successful decades of North Cotes Butts Shooting Ground.

The celebration was held at Stallingborough Grange Hotel in North Lincolnshire and was attended by over one hundred and sixty people, this was no ordinary dinner dance, this was a North Cote Dinner Dance, organised by Martin and his family and ably assisted by an army of volunteers,

The purpose of the night was two-fold the first was to celebrate the longevity of the club and its development, the second was to thank and acknowledge the help, support, and encouragement provided over the years by volunteers, county, regional officials, and national governing bodies.

The evening was definitely shooting themed as you entered the room the table seating plan was edged in cartridges, each of the tables was denoted by calibres of ammunition. Certainly, beats table numbers. On each table was a bowl that contained used cartridge cases or shells this was a very clever ice breaker as each person on the table was asked to estimate the number of items in their bowl, and the nearest guess to the total won a prize so the conversation started to flow.

The matradee was busy chatting to people organising the staff and ensuring people sat in the correct seats, I had my wife to one side and a music teacher from Australia working out of London on the other side. We chatted about her music and how she knew the family. The starters were served and followed by the main course.

The matradee asked for the attention of the room as he informed them that it was the chef's last night and as tradition goes, before he could get his leaving present he had to sing to the crowd, enter the chef in full gear who starts singing. To be honest he wasn't bad for a chef. They then performed a duet. I was aware of a movement to my side and the girl was reaching into her handbag from which she brought out a microphone and saying I am a better singer than you, and started singing. A couple of songs later a second girl at another table got up and joined the group it was at this stage we realised that the whole thing was staged by a group called Waiters' Encore. They really got the audience involved in singing along and waving napkins in the air.

Once the cabaret had finished the raffle was drawn which raised £800 for Ssafa forces charity. Martin got to his feet and thanked everyone who had helped over the years; without their help, the club would not have progressed as well as it had.

Talking to Martin I asked him to turn the clock back to when they started the club, he said that in their first few months they had to borrow a peddle trap to fire the clays, the field was wet in the winter and the only shelter they had was the small armoury and small office. They had a lean-to at the back and with the aid of a forty-five-gallon drum they cooked some of the best bacon butties you have ever tasted.

Gradually things progressed and additional clay traps were added, they now number thirty-five automatic traps all linked to the clay mate system, a hundred-meter tunnel range can also be found on-site, and licenced for all calibres.

At the dinner dance, the family commented that Martin can talk, and yes he does but he has that knack while talking to draw out information which has enabled him to respond to the requirements of his members.

It has resulted in a western range, twenty-five and fifty-meter ranges being built which accommodate target shooting black powder and bench rest. The team of volunteers also supports new and improving shooters through instructors and coaches. Recent additions have seen a dedicated air rifle range which like the rest of the club is open all year round.

The club also has a selection of rifles and shotguns that under the supervision of one of the instructors can be used by first-time shooters. It now has a first-class kitchen that can cater for the many corporate days and the members that want to spend all day at the range, they still do the bacon butties but have moved on from the oil drum they still taste as good.

Such is the standing of the club that many organisations such as CPSA, and Practical Shot Gun hold their competitions and training there, the latter holds two of its level three competitions at the club (International Level), which see competitors coming from across Europe and many other countries, again listening to the comments from visitors struggling to find accommodation in the area, he has built his own bunk house to accommodate them.

It's Martin's can-do attitude that inspires his volunteers and those in shooting, I remember many years ago going to him with the proposal of getting into the local school to deliver target shooting. He said "you will never do it but if you do well support you" we had a great six weeks working with the pupils on the NSRA Marksman badge and many linked to the club, and Martin was as good as his word and I was supported by six volunteers.

I asked what of the future, he said that he was getting his son Jonno more involved, we are going to run Bell Target and develop a fifty-meter indoor range as well as make sure that we respond to the changing face of shooting and meet our member's needs.

So, thirty years later with approaching two and a half thousand members and a thriving volunteer team, he still has the appetite to develop and increase participation in our sport, making sure it is fun and safe. Martin travels around to other clubs to see how they do things, picking up best practices, maybe some of the other clubs should visit North Cotes to see why they are so successful Martin will only be too pleased to explain and discuss the things he has done and tried on his path to success www.northcotes.co.uk

Author David J Carter



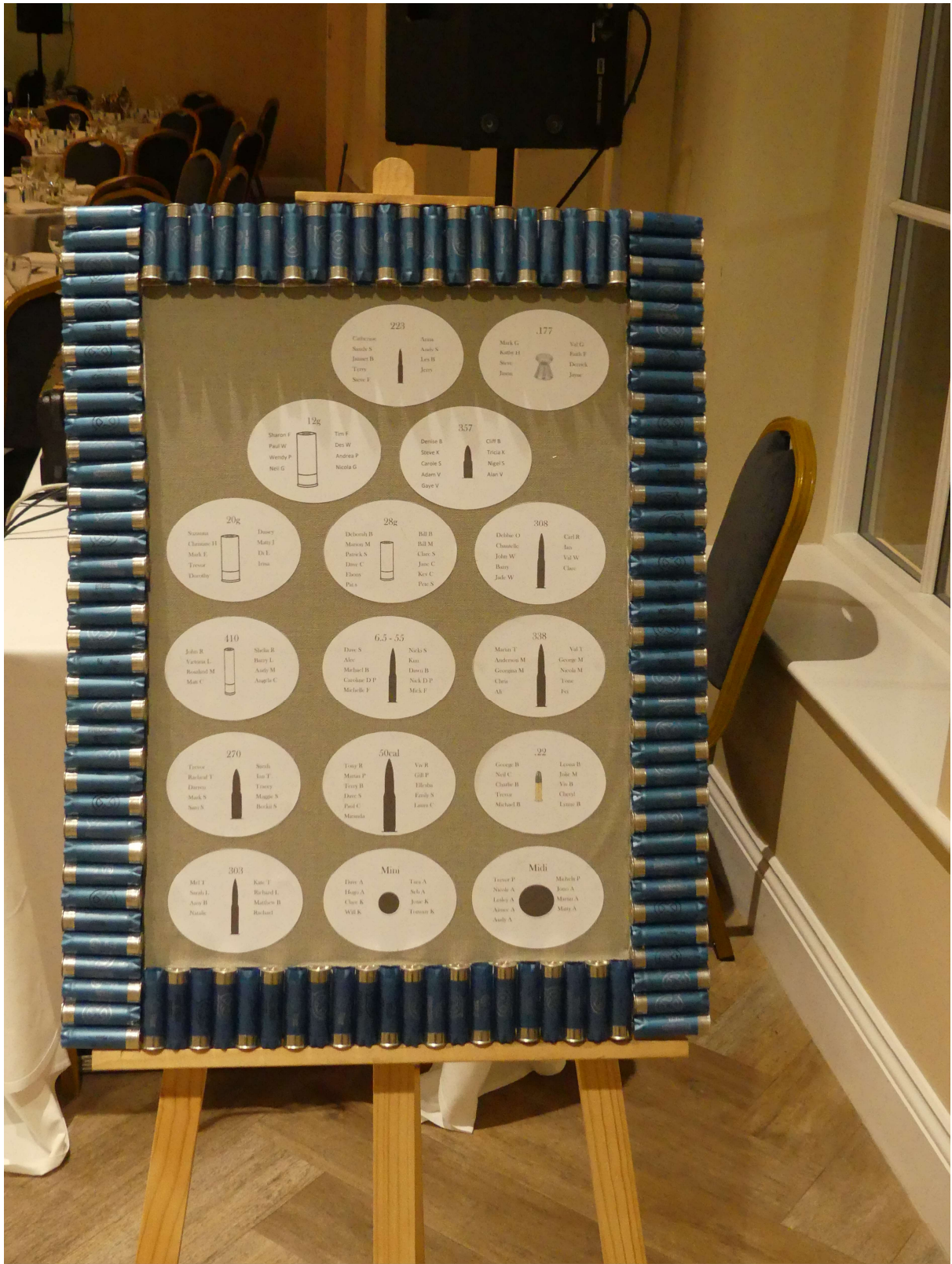












223 Catherine Anna, Andy S, Les B, Terry, Steve F
177 Mark G, Val G, Ruth H, Steve, James
12g Sharon F, Paul W, Wendy P, Neil G, Tim F, Des W, Andrea P, Nicola G
357 Denise B, Steve K, Carole S, Adam V, Gary V, Cliff B, Tricia X, Nigel S, Alan V
20g Suzanne, Charles H, Mark E, Trevor, Dorothy, Daisy, Mary J, D.L., Irma
28g Deborah B, Martin M, Patrick S, Dave C, Elaine, Peter, Bill B, Bill M, Clive S, Joan C, Rex C, Pva S
308 Debbie O, Charles, John W, Barry, Jack W, Carl R, Ian, Val W, Clive
410 John R, Victoria L, Rosalind M, Marc C, Sheila B, Dawn L, Andy M, Angela C, Dave S, Kate, Michael B, Caroline D P, Michelle F, Nick S, Dawn B, Nick D P, Mel F
308 Maria T, Andrew M, Georgina M, Chris, Al, Val T, George M, Nicola M, Tony, Joe
270 Trevor, Richard T, Doreen, Mark S, Sam S, Sarah, Ian T, Tony, Maggie S, Paul C, Marlene, Vic B, Gill P, Hilary, Emily S, Louise
50cal Tony R, Maria P, Tony B, Dawn S, Paul C, Marlene, Vic B, Gill P, Hilary, Emily S, Louise
.22 George B, Lisa B, Ian M, Val B, Cheryl, Louise B
303 Mel F, Sarah L, Amy B, Nicola, Kate T, Richard L, Matthew B, Richard
Mini Dave A, Hugh A, Chris K, Will K, Tina A, Sha A, Jane K, Trevor K
Midi Trevor P, Nicola A, Leah A, Anne A, Andy A, Michele P, Jane A, Maria A, Mary A



