

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE RIFLE ASSOCIATION

RAFSAA PERSONALITIES OVER THE DECADES

SQN LDR JLK PEARCE, OBE RAF (Obituary from NRA Journal 1948)

Very many people connected with rifle and pistol shooting will hear with deep regret of the passing of Sqn Ldr JLK Pearce, known to all his many friends as “Joe” Pearce. Shooting with Joe has been more than a sport. It was his great task in life to make people shoot well, and he started when he was a young man in the Army, and continued it until within a few days of his death, in the Royal Air Force, to which Service he was transferred during the 1914-18 war, as he had been selected as an Armament Staff Officer on Major-General Trenchards’ staff (later Marshal of the Royal Air Force the Viscount Trenchard). Until then he had been a Sergeant-Major Instructor of Musketry on the staff of Hythe, the Army School of Musketry.

As a Flight Lieutenant in 1919 he was at great pains to instil his ideas of shooting into this new, young Service, which had no such long records of wonderful shots and shooters as the Army, but he was determined that the RAF should at least aspire to the standards set up by the two other Services, if it were possible. In the two or three years at the start he was fortunate in having the help and co-operation of Flt Lt Jackson Taylor, whose work in those earliest years was invaluable at the Air Ministry. Joe started by gathering a few enthusiasts with similar views to his own and, with their assistance, held the first RAF rifle meeting at Pirbright, by the kindly help of the Grenadier Guards – a two-day meeting with two targets – a small beginning.

He was then stationed as Armament Officer at the newly created RAF Cadet College at Cranwell, and was fortunate in having a far-seeing Commandant, AVM Sir Charles Lincroft, who gave him every encouragement and enabled him to train large numbers of boys and cadets in shooting, both with smallbore and Service ammunition. During these years, 1921-29, he remained at Cranwell, and was captain of the Irish Rifle Club Teams and shot for Ireland in the Elcho Shield with the Match rifle. At the same time, for several years, Cranwell, under his guidance, did exceedingly well in competitive shooting at the RAF Annual Meetings in which Joe was the Hon Secretary and general factotum and distributor of intelligence, experience, and friendly advice. One thing he often said was that he would never be satisfied until he saw the whole Century butt in use by members of the RAF. Alas! Though he did much to organise this – and if he had been alive now could have in fact seen it – he died before it could be accomplished.

He was the prime mover to form an RAF Rifle Association and collected money to build the Clubhouse. He nearly wept with mortification when the Bank failure of MacGrigors, the Army agents, with whom he had banked the Associations’ funds (some £800) occurred. The funds, being of an Association and not privately owned, the RAFRA only got 5s in the pound – so £800 became £200 only – a great shock! More collections, and eventually it was possible (with the help of the Sports Board) to build the existing Clubhouse, and Joe was a proud man when he handed the silver key to the then Secretary of State for Air, the Marquess of Londonderry, another Irishman, to declare the new RAF Bisley Rifle Club open. Between the wars he never failed; always, his gospel was the “Sairrvice first” – he had probably picked up that pronunciation during his period of “Sairrvice” in a Scottish regiment. Always ready to answer questions – though he did not suffer fools gladly – at least, he was kindly and considerate and ever ready to give a helping hand by precept and example to those younger and not so experienced as himself.

He was never so moved and utterly happy as that day when Willott won the King's Prize for the "Sairrvice". It was the culmination of one of his dreams, and he often said between 1927 and 1937 that Willott would be the first of the Royal Air Force to win that greatest of all shooting trophies, and when Bennett did it again the next year, and Whiting was third, his cup of joy and pride was full and flowing over. Tribute must also be paid to his wife, Mrs "Joe", who did so much, as only a woman can, to make the club at Bisley a home-like place, and the wonderful way in which she was always behind him in all the many hours daily that he gave so freely and without stint to the affairs of the Association and the Club. And now, Mrs "Joe" has lent to the club the mounted case containing all Joes shooting badges, and it hangs on a wall in the club – a lasting tribute to an outstanding marksman.

During the 1939-45 War he kept the Club going, took care of all its financial difficulties and kept a fatherly eye on it all the time during its occupation by the Military Authorities – all in his spare time and at weekends when he should have been enjoying a well-earned rest. He kept an interest in the International Matches for all the countries in Great Britain, and it was seldom indeed, right up to 1939, that he was not required to shoot for Ireland in the big matches. He had the distinction of being the first RAF member who was Champion with both rifle and pistol, though others have since emulated him. He was always on the range for the Whitehead Revolver match, giving by his presence a feeling of security to the team, and marking each shot so as to have the correct result as the team came back from the targets. In 1947, Joe got so excited at the RAF record scores that he had a bad heart attack, but his "guts" pulled through and enabled him to remain long enough to transfer all his activities to the new Secretary, Sqn Ldr Collins, by the end of the year. Yes, we have all lost a friend indeed by the passing of Joe, but he worked so hard and conscientiously that others were glad to follow him and continue the great work of maintaining the highest possible standard of shooting in the RAF, and by doing so they cannot contrive a better monument to Joe.



**SQN LDR CC WILLOTT OBE (GM)
QUEENS MEDAL WINNER 1956**

SQN LDR CC WILLOTT, OBE (GM)

The following Obituary appeared in Vol II Autumn 1973 Edition of the NRA Journal

The sudden death of 'Bill' Willott, in June, deprives shooting of one of its best loved and most expert exponents for he was equally facile with a rifle as with pistol or sub-machine gun.

It was in 1926, long before the King's Medal for the best shot in the RAF had been instituted, that he first sprang into prominence when, as a Leading Aircraftman, he won the RAFSR Championship, a feat which he was subsequently to repeat seven more times and which, in 1956, at last brought him the Queen's Medal. In winning that medal he established a record never likely to be equalled – that of being the holder of the King's Gold Badge and a Queen's Medal – for it was he who won the Sovereign's Prize at the first post-war Bisley Meeting.

Professional commitment to his Service inevitably brought years when he could not come to Bisley, but when he did, he was much sought after by the RAF for Service events and by England for the National and Mackinnon. Indeed, he represented the RAF on no fewer than 18 occasions in the Whitehead (Pistol) and was twice Captain; even this demand was surpassed by 19 appearances in the United Service Cup Team of which he was eight times Captain. The Mother country chose him twice for the Kolapore and twice he

represented Great Britain in the Olympic Pistol Team. To each meeting he attended he contributed a distinctive mark of his ability, sometimes in more than one field as happened in 1953 when he won the NRAs Service Rifle Championship, the Queen Mary and one of his six Revolver Gold Badges.

He made the last of his eleven appearances in the King's or Queen's Final in 1971 and with it he closed a quite remarkable record of marksmanship extending over the best part of half a century.

To those privileged to know Bill over the years, one of his outstanding assets was his ability to poke fun at himself. As an example, taken from the days of his youth in the RAF when he and two others would fight hard for shooting supremacy – none giving way even one trick: One morning at Bisley one of the trio was observed bathing his eyes in Optrex – at that time apparently a recent product. The others watched with interest and eventually Bill remarked: 'and what do you put on your boots for the run-down?'

WG CDR DP CALVERT, RAF By Leslie Howcroft, Daily Telegraph Shooting Correspondent

David Calvert chose well when he made the Royal Air Force his career, for 'Per Ardua Ad Astra' could apply equally well as a motto for his shooting life and the cool-headed efficiency of the pilot goes a long way towards a standard of excellence which never seems to diminish. To describe him as a multi-discipline man is almost an under-statement. He first became involved in competitive shooting with the RAF section of his school Cadet Force at Campbell College, Belfast in 1965. In 1968, while still at school, he represented the 20-strong All-Ireland team in the Four Nations Home International match at the UK centre of shooting at Bisley, the first of an incredible number of appearances on the international stage as both individual and team member.

After joining the RAF in 1969 as an Acting Pilot Officer at Southampton University he first represented the



DAVID CALVERT WINNING THE QUEEN'S PRIZE 2010

Service in the following year and started his long association with the RAF Target Rifle (TR) Team. After completing flying training, he joined his first squadron (No 44 (Rhodesia) Sqn) in 1975, and within months won his first GB 'cap' on that team's annual tour to Canada. However, over the following 12 years, as a junior pilot on 2 Vulcan and 2 Phantom fighter squadrons, the tempo of front-line operational flying meant a reduced involvement in international shooting. Nevertheless, during this period he managed to captain the RAF TR team to victory over the other Services for several years and to tour abroad on 5 occasions with the RAF team to Kenya and Hong Kong. During this period, he also demonstrated his diversity, winning HM

the Queen's Medal for Champion Shots of the Air Forces, as well as winning both RAF Sub-Machine gun and TR Championships. This period also marked the start of a record-breaking involvement in the Commonwealth Games, representing Northern Ireland for the first time in Edmonton, Canada in 1978.

It is perhaps the variety and diversity of both participation and outstanding competitive success over 4 decades that most emphatically underline his lifetime achievement in sport. He has represented the RAF countless times in Service Rifle, pistol, sub-machine gun, small-bore rifle and TR competition, the latter 2 continuously since joining. He has represented GB in Service Rifle, Match Rifle and TR disciplines, in the latter case continuously for the past 20 years. He has won the national open civilian championships in GB, Canada,

Malaysia, Namibia and in the case of South Africa, for an unprecedented 6 years during the period that the South African team were World Champions.

Notwithstanding his personal achievements he has been an active member of the RAF Small Arms Association and RAF TR Club Committees over the past 30 years. He is currently filling the post of Vice-Chairman of RAFSAA and has been actively running its shooting committee, where his multi-discipline record and performance enable him to have a firm control of all the issues involved in each of the disciplines. He has also contributed hugely over the years in mentoring and coaching in all disciplines where he has applied a single-minded dedication to improving not only his own skills, but also of imparting this knowledge and experience to others in the RAF and Northern Ireland teams. Such is his commitment to the sport of TR shooting, that he has developed scoring and plotting sheets together with coaching lectures on the art of recording and plotting the formation of the groups of shots, which are now recognised globally as the definitive coaching process for TR shooting.



DAVID CALVERT – COMMONWEALTH GAMES 2002

His achievements over the past 40 years of International representation are perhaps best demonstrated by his participation in every one of the past 8 Commonwealth Games. His total of 7 Games medals was achieved in the single shooting discipline of full-bore TR, the 'blue-riband' event in the shooting world. He won his first Commonwealth Games medal in 1982 and 4 Gold medals over the past 4 Games, earning him the status of his country's highest medal winner. Indeed, this achievement alone ranks among the best in the world and underlines his lifetime commitment and achievement in shooting whilst serving in the RAF. Last year, 2010, saw him win the coveted Queen's Prize at Bisley (inaugurated by Queen Victoria in 1860), the most coveted TR trophy in the world, defeating 1300 international competitors to win the one major trophy previously missing from his portfolio. In October 2010, he competed in his 9th Commonwealth Games, winning a bronze medal in the individual event.

CHIEF TECHNICIAN J P PRICTOR

John joined the RAF in 1977 as a Weapons Mechanic and retired in 2010 as a Chief Technician. With the taking of his 14th Queen's Medal in 2009, a Commonwealth Record, he holds the record for the most number of Queen's Medals won by any individual. The RAF record was previously held by Sgt Van Gelderen who had won 7 times.

John has not been outside of the RAF top 3 since 1979, except in 1987 and again in 2010, when he placed 5th. He has had the good fortune to compete at every competition since 1979, except 1991 (there was no competition that year) and 1993.



He was selected for the Great Britain Service Rifle Team 18 times since 1983 including 2006, where he had the highest individual score. This is another record of individual selections into the Great Britain Service Rifle Team, which is selected from all of the UK Armed Forces. In 2004 John was selected to head the Great Britain Team as Captain and won the match beating the Sultan of Oman's Armed Forces into second place. Furthermore, he was also selected for the Great Britain Service Pistol Team in 2006.

He has been a leading figure in many overseas teams, competing against: Saudi Arabia, Oman, Canada, USA, Italy, South Africa, France, Holland, Belgium, New Zealand and Australia to name but a few. John started shooting at the age of 12 with the .22 Target Rifle, .303 Cadet Rifle and 7.62mm Target/Service Rifle, the latter with his father who was a member of the British Territorial Army. When time permitted John was allowed to shoot on the electronic target range (ETR) with the service rifle. Having spent some time getting his group size down, he started to win small competitions within the Air Cadets and attended Bisley for the larger events. His first major win at Bisley was the Air Cadet 300m Patriotic Shield at the age of 15.

His first attendance for the RAF at Bisley was in 1979 where he won the Target Rifle Championship on his first attempt. This obviously raised a few eyebrows, as he was an unknown individual in a very large and competitive arena. Over the years he has won all of the major RAF shooting competitions including, Sub-machine Gun, Service Pistol, Target Rifle and – the most coveted of all – The Queen's Medal for Champion Shots of the Air Forces. He is the first RAF serviceman to have won every Service discipline.



JOHN PRICTOR BEING CHAIRED OFF THE RANGE WITH HIS 8th QUEEN'S MEDAL IN 2000 AND CELEBRATING HIS 14th QUEEN'S MEDAL IN 2009

SGT MICK GAULT

I was asked to produce a list of my sporting achievements during my service career. I have tried to make it as clear as possible. The 23 years in service have flown by but the only thing that I will miss is the comradeship of my RAF shooting team. I own all my success to the experience of shooting within the team. It gave me some vital ingredients required to reach the top in my sport, self-confidence, knowledge and a good training environment.

I have been shooting on and off for about 30 years. I started in the Air Training Corps (ATC) 1862 Sqn aged about 12 years in the city of Carlisle. As a member of the ATC I shot .22 and .303 service rifles and I soon found that I had a 'knack' for the sport attaining the marksmanship proficiency badge in both.

I am ranked No 1 in Great Britain in Air and Free pistols and have been for about 6 years. I hold the only World Cup medals in the Country for these events, I have been invited TWICE to the very prestigious World Cup Finals, again the only pistol shooter to have done so from our great Nation and I hold more British records than any other pistol shooter (5). I also hold 3 Commonwealth medals, (1 gold, 1 Silver and 1 Bronze).

It was some 10 years after joining the RAF, whilst on a course at RAF Scampton, that a friend introduced me to pistol shooting. I got hooked on the sport there and then soon making the RAF team and going to a place I had never heard of, BISLEY, I never seem to be away from the place now. After shooting as a member of the RAF Team and sometimes the Combined Services Team in the past 10 or so years, (never winning my RAF Marksmanship badge) I needed to expand in my sport, was there something else? The answer was yes, why not try for the Olympic and Commonwealth Games.

I had a goal now, but how to achieve it. The first step was to find out who had represented Great Britain in the sport and put some questions to the National Small Bore Rifle Association (NSRA) about them and how to become one of them.



I joined the regional squad and had some very useful training with them, with this squad I entered my first major competition, the British Air Pistol Championships then held in Cardiff. I came 3rd and was then promoted into the National 'B' Air Squad. This was only some 6 years ago. After only 2 or 3 months I was sent to my first International Match at Munich in Germany, where I made my first 'Olympic Final'. I ended up 4th. I still remember my 1st shot in the final, God must have guided that pellet as I was so nervous

the pistol was shaking and my heart racing. It was a near perfect shot, a 10.8. After that performance I was promoted to the National 'A' Squad and sent to my first European Air Games in Holland a few months later, where I again shone with an =8th place. I was then promoted into the elite 'Olympic Squad' where I have remained ever since.

I now try to pass on to other shooters my skills and knowledge and in so doing I have passed my GBTSF coaching course. I now run coaching courses for shooters who want to improve their sporting skills.

RECORD BREAKER GAULT By Tony De Launay (NRA Journal)

He finally did it in Melbourne. Pistol shooter Mick Gault clinched four more Commonwealth Games medals, in the process equalling the record of 13 held by the swimmer Karen Pickering and then becoming England's most be-medalled athlete in the history of the Games with a final total of 15. For a time it seemed that he would have to be satisfied with two silvers and a bronze to seal his achievement, but in the tradition of leaving the best until last, he hit gold in the final event – the standard pistol.

The story, as it broke, captured the interest of the UK's media corps, led by debate in the BBC's Melbourne studio featuring Pickering and others speculating on whether her record would be toppled. Inevitably the demands for interviews increased the pressures on Gault. By his own admission he had not realised just how intrusive the interest could be: that he was able to put it to one side speaks volumes for his own mental approach and the advice of those who assisted him.

Gault has been a familiar face in this Journal, having appeared after the 2002 Games and featuring last year when presenting the prizes as guest of honour at the Bisley Meeting. His story, too, will be familiar: the RAF technician turned civilian employee pursuing his trade at RAF Marham in Norfolk.

Like all the other cartridge pistol shooters he has had to struggle with the demands of going overseas to practice his sport for his country. His achievement is a triumph of sheer hard work over statutory adversity. For this record breaking triumph he deserves – and has – the admiration and congratulations of all those who practice shooting sports.

The record speaks for itself:

VICTORIA 1994

Gold medal for Free Pistol
Individual Silver medal for 25m Centre Fire
Individual Bronze medal for Free Pistol Pairs

KUALA LUMPA 1998

Gold medal for Free Pistol Pairs
Gold medal for Free Pistol Individual
Gold medal for 10m Air Pistol Pairs
Gold medal for 10m Air Pistol Individual

MANCHESTER 2002

Gold medal for 10m Air Pistol Pairs
Gold medal for 10m Air Pistol Individual
Gold medal for 50m Free Pistol Individual
Bronze medal for 25m Standard Pistol individual

MELBOURNE 2006

Gold medal for 25m Standard Pistol
Silver medal for 10m Air Pistol Pairs
Silver medal for 50m Pistol Individual
Bronze medal for 50m Pistol Pairs

Titles Past

British Air Pistol Champion 1992, 1994, 1995
British Pistol Champion 1991, 1993, 1995
British Centre Fire Champion 1993, 1994, 1995
British Free Pistol Champion 1992, 1993
RAFSAA Small-Bore Pistol Champion 1979, 1988, 1992, 1993

Other Titles Held

British Pistol Club Champion
Norfolk County Champion Air and .22
British long range pistol Champion .22
British short range pistol Champion .22

British Records Held**Centre Fire Pistol**

1989 – 583 out of 600 Taken
1993 – 586 out of 600 Improved
1995 – 588 out of 600 Improved
1995 – 589 out of 600 Improved (Still hold)

Standard Pistol

1992 – 579 out of 600 Taken (Still hold)

Free Pistol

1991 – 564 + 93 (657) out of 700 Taken
1995 – 568 + 90.6 (658.9) out of 700 Retaken (Still hold)

Air Pistol

1993 – 579 + 103.7 (682.7) out of 700 Taken
1994 – 586 out of 600 Taken (Still hold)
1994 – 586 + 99.3 (685.3) out of 700 Improved (Still hold)

Other Records

Commonwealth record for Free Pistol 558 out of 600
National Pistol Association
Free Pistol 570 out of 600
Centre Fire Precision 296 out of 300
Standard Handgun 588 out of 600



SQN LDR PJ FLIPPANT MA MSC In Nov 80 Peter started shooting with the Oxford University Pistol Club where he gained 5 half-blues and was University Pistol Captain. In Oct 83 Joined the RAF as a Logistics Officer and in Mar 84 he joined the RAFPC/RAFSAA. Oct 85 First shot for RAF in Inter-Services. Mar 86 Took over as Sec of RAFPC. Jun 89 Posted to Germany. Handed over as RAFPC Sec. Took over as RAFG Pistol Secretary and Captain and in Jun 92 Qualified for the German Championships. In Aug 92 he returned to UK. Appointed as RAF Target Pistol Captain.

He continued his success and represented England in the centre fire pistol, at the 1998 Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Four years later he made a second Games appearance at the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester. A third Games appearance in 2006 resulted in winning a silver medal in the centre fire pistol pair with Simon Lucas.



FLT LT ALBIE FOX

Albie joined the RAF in 1980 after serving in the Royal Navy. Albie became Secretary of the RAF Pistol Club in 1981. He worked hard to get the membership out of the postal and RAF Championships rut, by encouraging members to go to open events mainly at Bisley and compete in all pistol disciplines. He was instrumental in instigating Club Championships to be shot in March in order that members practised during the 'closed' season if they wanted to win. At the same time he introduced the two day coaching and practice course. This in turn meant that the RAF benefitted in team events from the start of the season and the novices learnt from the experienced shots with one-to-one coaching. He increased multi-discipline participation by charging the same fees for all events or one event at the Championships. Oct 94 Selected for GB Standard Pistol and Centre-fire Squads. Mar 95 Took over as RAFPC Chairman. Apr 95 Shot for England in Home Countries International Centre-fire match. Jun 95 Shot for Great Britain in Finland. Aug 95 Selected to shoot for GB in European Championship, coming 11th in UIT Centre-fire. Nov 95 Selected to shoot for England in India, winning a silver and 2 bronze medals. He substituted as the Small-Bore Pistol Captain when Wg Cdr Gardiner was detached to the Falkland Islands. The team won the Inter-Services Small-Bore Championships during this time. Albie eventually became the Pistol Captain for all of the disciplines. He built up the squad through encouraging members to go to Bisley for the open meetings and become accustomed to shooting alongside the so called 'top shots' thus eliminating the 'awe' of Bisley.

In his final year as Captain the RAF beat all of the other Services in all pistol disciplines and was the Inter-Service Captain of the team that beat the GB team in both Centre-Fire and Standard Pistol, a feat that is unlikely to be repeated as the Captaincy has now been split.

His various personal successes include –

NRA Service Pistol Gold Badge
NRA Service Pistol Cup
NRA Sport Pistol
NRA Service Pistol
RAF Pistol Club Victor Ludorum

National Shooting

Represented Wales for the first time in 1981. Shot Free, Air and Standard disciplines until 1992 Shot in the Commonwealth Games in 1986 in the Free Pistol Free Pistol National Squad in 1987.

WG CDR PIERS GARDINER

Piers was on the RAF Committee from 1976-93, rising from Command SB Secretary to Vice-Chairman RAFSAA SB Pistol Team Target Pistol Captain Combined Services Pistol Captain Regional Coach Centre-fire Service Pistol Team and Captain National Coach for Service Pistol Allcomers Team 94/95 (Winners in 95) SB Rifle for RAF in late 1970s Service Rifle Squad Medals for LMG and SMG, and despite lack of enthusiasm for TR, member of winning RAF Uxbridge TR Team 93. Piers was the Association Secretary from 1994-1997 and briefly in 1998 when he stepped back in to cover the early departure of his successor.



SGT S R PENGELLY

Steve started shooting in 1982 at RAF Valley. First ever shot in a postal competition, where he missed the scoring rings on the target. First shoulder to shoulder competition was the RAFSAA meeting held at RAF Uxbridge in 1983 where he achieved 3rd in Class C. Represented Wales at the Air Weapons Match in Holland (Intershoot 86). Represented Wales at the Commonwealth Games in Auckland, New Zealand in 1990. Selected for the Great Britain Squad in the same year and has remained in the squad ever since. He represented Great Britain at the World Championships in Milan in 1994. Steve continues to be heavily involved in shooting and works as a World Class Programme Pistol Coach (Olympic & Paralympic) at British Shooting.

SGT SHARON MCGREGOR

In 1996 Sharon had been shooting small-bore rifle for the past 4 years and had just gained a position in the Great Britain Small-bore Rifle Squad. Sharon would be representing not only Great Britain, but also England and had represented Cambridgeshire and the Royal Air Force for the previous 3 years.

She came to the attention of the International Selection Committee following a number of successes in open competition during 1995. She continued to be a force within the Small-Bore discipline, having won the Wilkinson Sword for a fourth time in 2009, the only RAF person to have done so. She was the InterServices Captain in 2008 and captained the RAF Team in 2009 and 2010 as well as holding the captaincy of the England Ladies Team. She was the undefeated 3P Champion for a number of years.

Sharon continues to shoot with the Association as a veteran



Sgt McGregor with a few of her many trophies