



Ashford & District Rifle Club

(Incorporating)

**1st BATTALION KENT
HOMEGUARD
RIFLE CLUB**

Handbook

Issue 1

Ashford & District Rifle Club

Introduction

We hope that you will enjoy the benefit of all the facilities provided under your membership of Ashford and District Rifle Club.

This handbook is a guide for all current and probationary members of Ashford and District Rifle Club. This information is a guide to the activities of the Club, so that all members are aware of their roles and responsibilities when engaged in Club activities.

Target shooting in all its disciplines is a fair *sport for all* and is suitable for all, regardless of sex, age or physical ability as our overall aim is for everyone to participate on an equal basis.

The Club is very proud of its heritage and facilities, which can accommodate shooters in several disciplines at ranges from 10 to 25 metres, with plans for an additional 50 metre outdoor range. In addition to the facilities offered at Great Chart the Club also organise shoots at other venues and distances. The range has a separate clubroom and gunroom with a viewing window onto the range, together with ample off-road parking.

Competitions, for those members interested, are organised by the Club and various target shooting bodies of county, regional and national basis. The Club encourages all members (of all disciplines) to participate in organised competitions. Most competitions are organised on a league basis, enabling like-for-like standard competitors to compete against each other. Ashford & District Rifle Club have a wide variety of Club Championships and competitions open to all full members with some trophies over 100 years old.



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A brief history of Ashford and District Rifle Club



The Ashford and District Rifle Club was founded in 1902 with an inaugural meeting of the *Ashford Miniature Rifle Club*. Walter Winans a renowned American marksman, who resided in the area, was elected as President, and the first range was made at Swaffer Meadow in East Hill. This range was probably in use until after the First World War, when the construction of a Territorial Army Drill Hall in Newtown Road gave the town an indoor range to use. The photo above is the first known showing target shooters in the town and shows Walter Winans in the centre of the group.

Over the years the name and organisation of the Club changed several times, before becoming Ashford & District Rifle Club. After a break caused by the Second World War, there were two main target shooting clubs in the area, Ashford & District and 1st Battalion Kent Home Guard. Closure of the Newtown Road range in the late 1980s forced the clubs to look for a new home and at this time the Home Guard Club and its members were incorporated into Ashford & District. After much searching and planning the Club began a self-build project to construct a range on ground leased from the local Council at Great Chart.

The new range opened in time for the new millennium, giving Ashford target shooters their own home for the first time.

At any one time the Club can accommodate up to 10 air gun shooters or 5 prone rifle shooters or 4 gallery shooters. Proposals are now being made to construct a 50Metre outdoor rifle and Archery range adjacent to the present building.

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Ashford and District Rifle Club Organisation

Ashford and District Rifle Club is managed by an elected Committee. The day to day running of the Club is organised by the Section Captains who are Committee members. It should be noted that the management and upkeep of the facilities, i.e. clubroom and indoor range, is the responsibility of both the Committee and the membership. The club occasionally organises events, including presentation and celebration dinners, open shoots and twinning events with Ashford's twin town in Germany.

Sport Disciplines of the club

- **Air Gun**

The section meets on Monday nights and shoots with .177 air rifles and pistols at 10 metres. Members are encouraged to participate in competitions organised by both the Club and local leagues. The range can accommodate up to 10 shooters with automatic returning targetry.

- **Small-bore Prone Rifle**

Prone rifle shooting takes place on Tuesday afternoon/evening as well as Thursday evenings, using .22 single shot cartridge rifles at a distance of 25 yards. The section has a strong competitive background with the Club supplying a large percentage of the County teams. Occasional shoots are held at other ranges and distances, including the National Shooting Centre at Bisley.

- **3P**

Occasional competitions are organised for 3-Position (Standing, Kneeling and Prone) shooting, the most difficult of the small-bore disciplines, and are usually held at weekends. In the past Ashford & District members made up the entire Kent team.

- **Muzzle Loading Pistol**

This section meets every Wednesday and shoots with muzzle loading pistols at 25 metres, with members competing in Club and League competitions. The Wednesday evening session is also open to Gallery and Underlever Rifle members (see below).

- **Gallery Rifle/Underlever Rifle**

Gallery Rifle is similar to, but a much improved version of the .22 rimfire rifles that used to be shot in fun fairs and is shot from a standing position at 25 metres.

Underlever Rifles are the same as those carried by cowboys next to their saddles and are known as saddle guns. These rifles can be of various calibres and are also shot from the standing position.

- **Fullbore Rifle (Military Ranges and Bisley)**

Fullbore rifles are generally of a calibre larger than those used at the indoor range and can be historic, military style rifles or target rifles and are shot at distances from 100 yards to 1000 yards. Fullbore shoots are arranged throughout the year at military ranges in Hythe and Lydd, subject to MOD availability.

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- **Archery**

The newest section of the Club meet on Sunday afternoons at the club and use recurve and compound bows.

The Law – Regulation and Legislation

The United Kingdom Home Office rules state, *‘that newcomers who apply for membership, must be sponsored by a full member of the Club’*.

New members, who do not possess a valid Firearms Certificate, must sign a declaration stating *‘that they have no criminal record and that there is no reason why they should not be allowed to handle firearms’*.

The United Kingdom Home Office state: *‘that you cannot become a full member of a club until you have served a probationary period of at least three months’*. This condition may be waived at the discretion of the Club’s Committee in the case of an existing target shooter who holds a valid Firearms Certificate.

United Kingdom firearms law states that you need a valid Firearms Certificate (FAC) to own or possess firearms and ammunition of any sort. It is generally accepted that the police will not grant you a Firearms Certificate unless you are a full member of a Home Office approved club. If when you apply for your own Firearm Certificate and need help in completing the required application form, do not hesitate to contact a committee member for assistance.

Note: Anyone under the age of 14 years may not own their own air rifle or air pistol, but may borrow and use them under the supervision of a person over the age of 21.

Note: Anyone over 14 years and under 18 years may not buy an air rifle or air pistol. It is an offence to make a gift of an air rifle or air pistol to anyone under the age of 18 years.

Note: Anyone aged 18 years and over with a valid Firearms Certificate may buy a .22 rimfire rifle and ammunition, subject to the conditions detailed on the Firearms Certificate.

Note: Members who do not hold their own Firearms Certificate may purchase ammunition from the Club for use on the Club’s ranges. The Club provides safe and secure storage facilities for any unused ammunition (rimfire cartridges/pellets) remaining at the end of shooting sessions.

IT IS AGAINST THE LAW TO REMOVE UNUSED AMMUNITION FROM THE CLUB’S PREMISES UNLESS YOU HAVE A VALID FIREARMS CERTIFICATE.

AIR RIFLE/PISTOL PELLETS MAY NOT BE LEGALLY TAKEN FROM THE RANGE BY ANYONE UNDER THE AGE OF 18 YEARS.

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SAFETY

Within all environments and whatever activity is being undertaken, there will always be areas of potential risk of injury to the person and damage to associated equipment. For this reason all sports have mandatory regulations, rules, procedures and guidelines that need to be followed, ensuring that any risks are either minimised or eliminated completely.

Target shooting has an exemplary safety record which must be maintained.

Target shooting is a very safe sport because of mandatory regulation, rules and procedures that those participating in the sport are required to follow. These ensure that all participants can enjoy the sport safely. The rules that apply to target shooting may vary depending upon the discipline undertaken.

Be aware, that when visiting other clubs or venues, additional rules may be in place to suit those particular facilities. The rules for Ashford and District Rifle Club are quite straightforward and should you be in any **doubt** about their interpretation, or have any questions, then please seek clarification before you commence any Club activity.

General Safety Rules and Procedures

The following rules are **MANDATORY** and apply irrespective of the target shooting discipline:

- **Always** obey the commands of the **Range Officer**.
- **Never** point a rifle or pistol at anyone, not even in fun.
- **Never** shoot where you cannot see.
- **Never** pass a loaded rifle or pistol to anyone.
- **Never** pass a rifle or pistol with the action closed to anyone.
- **Never** accept a loaded rifle or pistol from anyone.
- **Never** accept any rifle or pistol with its action closed from anyone.
- **Never** load a rifle or pistol until you are on the firing point and are ready to shoot. Always ensure that the rifle or pistol is pointing down the range and that you have been given the command to load.
- **Never** carry around a rifle or pistol that is loaded **or** has the action closed.
- Do not pick up any rifle/pistol until you are told to do so.
- All cartridge rifles and pistols **must** be kept either bagged or bolt out or have an open-breech indicator (breech flag) in-situ at all times when not in use, i.e. on the firing point, between details and when being transported in open public areas. Air rifles and air pistols **must** be uncocked and have their loading ports visibly open when in public areas away from the firing point
- Practise dry firing in the clubroom **is prohibited**.

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- When commanded, always stop shooting and unload the rifle or pistol **immediately**.
- If you get a misfire and have not been told what to do in such circumstances, keep the barrel of the rifle or pistol pointing down the range and inform the Range Officer immediately.
- **Never** go forward of the firing point until the red warning light is OFF and you are told you may do so.
- Have consideration for others when you are getting ready to shoot or have finished shooting. Keep noise, movement and disruption to a minimum.
- Pick up all your empty cases and leave the firing point tidy when you have finished shooting.
- Ensure that when your rifle/pistol is stowed, that the breech is clear, except for a breech flag or plug. It is good practice to remove the action/bolt and store separately.
- If you are one of the first to go in to the range, please assist with the setting up of the target frames etc.
- When you are the last (or one of the last) to use the range please ensure the range is clean and tidy and all empty cartridge cases have been picked up.
- All the target frames must be safely stowed away.

Hygiene Note: All individuals are advised to wash their hands after touching/coming into contact with any lead based item, i.e. ammunition.

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Joining Process and Rules Governing Probationary Members

Persons interested in joining are welcome to attend any Club session. New members must be proposed by one current full member of the club and by a person who knows the applicant personally. This statement may not apply to new members who are experienced target shooters and in possession of their own valid Firearms Certificate but they are still required to complete the agreed probationary period.

All new members must supply the following:-

- Completed application form
- 2 passport size photos
- S21 form (Detailing any Firearms Certificates past or present)
- Joining fee

The probationary period will start from when a new member receives their membership card and will normally last for a period up to 6 months, but can be adjusted or waived by the Club Committee depending upon individual circumstances. New members of the Club, who are experienced target shooters and can prove that they are competent and safe or provide a letter from their current club, may have their probationary membership period shortened or waived, subject to a review by the Club Committee.

Annual Membership will be paid on a pro-rata basis dependent upon when the new member joined the Club. Once issued with a probationary membership card, new members are entitled to attend any shooting session. If they intend to shoot at that session, they are required to sign-in on an Attendance Log and pay the appropriate probationers fee. Dependent upon the discipline the new member must also complete a Firearms Log as a means of identifying which firearms they have used. As a probationer any ammunition purchased must be registered in the Ammunition Log and must include the calibre of that ammunition and the amount used.

Note: NO ammunition may be removed from the Club without the appropriate Firearms Certificate. Any unused ammunition will be retained by the Club for the members next session.

During the probationary period the new member will be required to go through a training scheme relevant to the chosen discipline. Training will be phased, in order to get the new member participating quickly, whilst maintaining the level of safety required by the sport of target shooting. All new members will be introduced to the Section Captain or Section trainers who will be able to provide one to one tuition. There are no additional charges for coaching or the use of Club equipment. The Section Captain or trainer should be the point of contact or reference regarding any problems experienced during the training period. If the Section Captain or trainer is unavailable at any particular time, new members are encouraged to ask other Club members for advice.

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Important notes:

- 1. Infrequent attendance - probationary members may have their probationary membership period reviewed or extended.**
- 2. Ashford and District Rifle Club reserve the right to carry out background checks on any individual seeking membership.**
- 3. Ashford and District Rifle Club maintain the ongoing right, to refuse membership to any individual.**

Probationary membership may limit use of the Club facilities to the chosen discipline of the new member's training.

For example: a probationary or full member of one discipline may still be required to undergo the relevant training for another discipline before being allowed to shoot that discipline unsupervised.

The End