



- The Single Shot Black Powder Cartridge Rifle Club of Great Britain -

www.ssbpcrc.co.uk

Affiliated to the N.R.A. – No. 1285

BLACK THUNDER

The Official Newsletter

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No. 6 August 2003

QUIGLEY “THE Man Down Under”
goes down a storm ... but then we always
knew he would!



Three of the 600 yard targets pictured during the afternoon session of our newest competition ... QUIGLEY “THE Man Down Under”. Affectionately known as The Wagon Man target, connoisseurs of the film will recognise the scene where Quigley and Crazy Cora are dumped in the middle of nowhere and left to die by two of the bad guys. After dealing with one of the villains, Quigley regains his Sharps rifle and, with a well placed shot from several hundred yards away, takes care of the other one as he speeds off in his wagon, in a vain attempt to escape. Ooops, I was getting quite carried away then.

Full report inside...

Match Reports

QUIGLEY “THE Man Down Under”

Saturday 14th June

They say the sun shines on the righteous. Well, we must be a right bunch of good old boys because the sun shone from before the first shot to well past the last. With temperatures up in the mid 20s, that's high 70's for you elderly readers, we all experienced what could prove to be one of our most popular competitions.

This is the shoot for which Shiloh have generously donated a rifle, to be raffled at the October match (see p.10 for more details).

Century Range was buzzing with activity all day long, due to the fact that a big Inter Counties Championship was taking place over the same weekend. Being the gentlemen that we are, we apologise now, to any of those competitors who struggled to see their 7.62 mm targets through our smoke.

First up on the firing line to break-in the new match were Phil Morgan, Guy Milchem and Frank Pfeil. Those buckets looked pretty small, even at 300 and, because of the bright light, required a very small aperture, (speaking for myself).

I thought I'd done OK with a score of 15 ex 20 until Clive Taylor and Len Jackson both showed us how to do it with a score of 19 ex 20. Len shot 18 straight hits with his .45-90 until his 19th shot, when he dropped one.

While I was checking on the boys marking in the



John Gilpin in his 2nd favourite position, belly down on the firing line with rifle in hand.



Gerry Haines settles down for a bit of bucket shooting.

butts, Alan Stevens was busy shooting a nice tight group. I could have sworn that he was using his RHO 'scope and Shiloh combo. but he wasn't. Nice shooting dear boy.

Speaking of the boys in the butts, we owe our thanks to one of John Gilpin's shooting friends, Gavin, and to my son Charlie for stepping in at the last minute to



Martin Hinchcliffe getting to grips with the 600 yard Wagon Man target.

mark targets, after the NRA ran short of their own markers. Hope you lads spent your earnings wisely on drink and loose women instead of squandering it away.

John Brocklehurst outshone everyone by shooting an 18.1 out of a possible 22 at 600 yards with his Pedersoli .45-70; that's 18 hits including 1 "head shot" at the Wagon Man target.

It was Guy Milchem's turn to get a dose of splitcasitis, but at least it didn't strike until his 17th scoring shot in the afternoon. Although it cut his match short, being the intrepid retired engineer that he is, Guy has given this problem some great thought and he now carries a magic gizmo in his shooting kit (see article on p. 14).



Mr Cool, Nick Steadman taking luxury shooting to the limit. Those legs deserve the best sun protection that a fishing umbrella can provide. Nick went on to score 12.1 at the 600 yard stage, taking 5th place, pretty good shooting in anyone's book.

John Grover and Gerry Haines appeared to be pacing each other, both shooting 9 in the morning and 11.2 and 10.1 respectively after lunch.

Richie James came so close to hitting all 20 buckets with 8 direct hits and 12 very near misses, all within a gnat's wotsit.

It was decided to hand out "Personal Score & Shot Checker" sheets for this match, to anyone who wanted to keep track of their own shots, plot strike patterns on the target diagrams and generally keep a record of their performance for future reference. It certainly wasn't obligatory to fill them in, however, it was felt that it could be a useful double-check between shooter and scorer at the end of the detail ... in case either lost track of the number of shots fired or status of the shot. Sometimes it can get



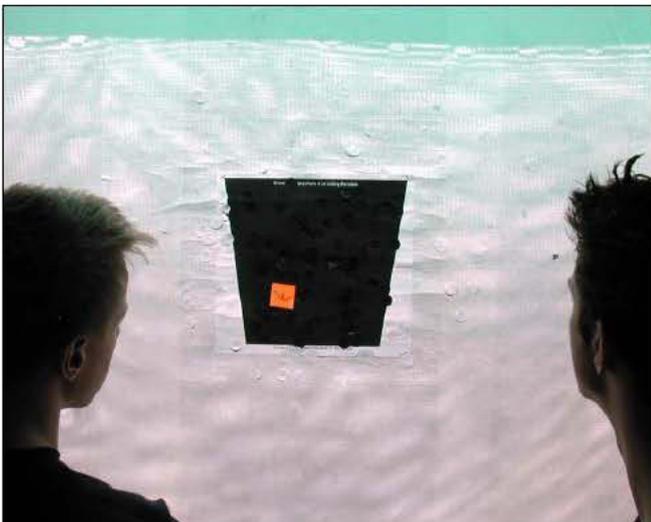
Clive Taylor taking a break from his .45 - 3/4" and showing us all the winning potential of the mighty .40-65.

hectic at the firing line. I used mine and now have it filed with my reloading data and sight settings for that day. The only regret of the day was that Paul



Adrian Eagling, in the foreground and John Gilpin wearing a natty 2-tone pink outfit, in the middle of their 600 yard detail. It was a close call ... John shot 8.2 with Adrian close behind with 8.1.

Jackson (Jacko) and Nigel Dennis couldn't be there due to personal family circumstances. This shoot was one that both were looking forward to very much and hopefully they'll get to attend the October match and



Gavin (left) and Charlie, our own markers, seen here marking a hit on the bucket at the 300 yard stage. They quickly got the hang of marking, as if they'd been doing it all their lives. Well done boys, you got us out of a tight spot.



... and on the 7th day they rested ... totally knackered! Phil and Clive take a break, knowing that the scoring is in the capable hands of our merry band of willing volunteers. Thanks guys, it's much appreciated.



Clive takes time out to demonstrate to John, Gerry and Frank the correct way to clean a winning rifle barrel ... a .40-65 barrel that is.

experience the fun and excitement that the rest of us had.

To sum up our first Quigley shoot, I'd have to say without doubt that it was a total success ... but deep down, I always knew that it would be!

The next Quigley "THE Man Down Under" match is on 25th October at which the shooter with the highest aggregate score will get to keep the fabulous trophy until next year, when we start all over again. I can hardly wait.



Partners in crime ... the Club founders, Clive Taylor, sporting a fine pair of knees, receives his well deserved winner's silver plate and certificate from Phil Morgan. Well done buddy.

QUIGLEY "THE Man Down Under" Results

Shooter	300	600	Total	Place
Taylor	19	16.4	35.4	1st
Jackson L.	19	13	32	2nd
Barnard	16	14	30	3rd
Morgan	15	13	28	4th
Steadman	15	12.1	27.1*	5th
Brock'	9	18.1	27.1*	6th
Andrews	16	11	27	7th
Grover	9	11.2	20.2	8th
Haines	9	10.1	19.1	9th
Hinchcliffe	5	14	19	10th
Gilpin	10	8.2	18.2	11th
James	8	9.2	17.2	12th
Stevens	10	7.1	17.1	13th
Sutton	9	6.1	15.1*	14th
Eagling	7	8.1	15.1*	15th
Pfeil	9	4	13	16th
Milchem	10	2**	12	17th
Farey	8	0	8	18th
Goodacre	4	3	7	19th

* Place decided on time

** Retired due to split case



The new trophy, sponsored by Peter Starley of Warwick.



Mid-week practice Wednesday 2nd July

Report and pictures by Clive Taylor

Considering the low turnout we had for the April practice I was pleasantly surprised on the take up for this practice day, more so as it was all long range. Eleven of us met up on the 800 yard firing point of Stickledown on a Wednesday morning that did not bode well as the sky was dark and threatening.

As it happened most of our members must have been Boy Scouts in a previous existence as 3 of them had brought along garden Gazebos and we soon had the makings of a Bedouin encampment. Just as well as the sky soon opened and the rain started coming down – coming sidewards to be exact as the perpetual Stickledown crosswind was once again in evidence.



The Bedouins of Stickledown Range ...

There was a wonderful air of mutual help about the scene as we all mucked in helping one another getting on the target. In particular Roger Andrews and Bryan Sutton greatly helped Roger Vines. It was Rogers first long range shoot and you could tell that his heart was in his mouth as he, at first, struggled to connect. But our two experienced shooters from Kent soon had him dropping them on the target with confidence.

The afternoon saw the encampment moved back to 1000 yards. Again it was a saviour as the rain really did pelt down for half an hour – during which time connecting with the target was virtually impossible. It's surprising just how much heavy rain can affect the passage of a bullet. Once the rain gave over it was Frank Pfeil who was having difficulty and it was John Brocklehurst who came to his aid with sight adjustments. Again we got Roger Vines on and he was certainly the dog with two tails as he only expected to make loud noises that day – with the gun that is! I spent the afternoon experimenting with loads for my 40-65 and I have to say that it was holding the

target with less windage and less movement than the 45's shooting alongside.

Can't miss mentioning Martin Hincliffe and Guy Milchem who were quietly dropping them on the target with little problem and annoying regularity. And of course there was Alan Stevens using his LoneStar Rolling Block in 40-82. He was happy as he finally managed to sort out sight settings on this nice, but strangely sighted, weapon.

One thing about this Club is it's communal sense of humour – some may call it sick, it's certainly odd-ball, but it does have a sense of fun which **we** find is most important and attractive. That afternoon John Gilpin's false leg went walkies whilst he was shooting. Elsewhere in this worthy tome you will find a caption competition for a picture taken of him (NB. The action **was** open and the gun **was** proved clear). The other event rounded the day of nicely with laughter. Now, there is an undocumented "message" that is recognised by some of the more regular butts staff. This is "message 13", which basically means there's a shot coming down but no matter whether it's a hit or miss mark it as a dead central V-bull. Andy Boyle was the last shooter – John Gilpin (leg back in place), his partner in crime was RCOing and had the radio. Evil John gave a quiet message 13 on Andy's last shot of the day! When that target came back up Andy jumped up, nearly putting his head through the gazebo, and was whooping and jumping around like a banshee – until he saw John and I laughing hysterically. The dawn of realisation didn't take long at which point Andy impolitely questioned our parentage and sexual preferences. Most ungrateful! So to all you budding Long Range (or mid range for that matter) shooters – **beware of Message 13**.

For those of you who missed the day, well, John Gilpin summed what you've missed when he said that most club shooters have access to military ranges so can shoot up to 5/600 yards on a fairly regular basis but access to these longer ranges is rare for the majority of shooters. So when these opportunities arise it's foolish not to take advantage of them!

1200 yards next time???????????



Roger Vines enjoying his first shoot with us and discovering just what these rifles are capable of.

The Precision Match Saturday 26th July



The Precision Trophy ... the latest addition to our competition trophies. Standing 9½ inches high, the cup is engraved with the Club's name and rifle logo. Like the Creedmoor Cup, it goes to the outright winner on the day.

The Precision Match was introduced only this year and designed specifically to test precision shooting skills at 300 yards and 600 yards. Since most of our matches consist of shooting at irregular shaped targets, it was felt that only a true, round Bisley target would bring out the best combination of shooter, rifle and ammunition. And, as is customary in this club, good shooting is rewarded by a handsome trophy. In this case, a particularly fine cup which the winner gets to keep until next year.

Almost half of us arrived at Bisley late on Friday afternoon and because our usual haunt, The Exhibition Hut was full up due to the International Palma Match, we checked in at The London & Middlesex Club. A wise choice as they were doing a great barbeque that evening which helped to soak up the alcohol. For anyone who hasn't eaten at The London & Middlesex, I recommend it, particularly the full English breakfast! You can't beat a full belly before a good shoot. Isn't that right Clive?

The weather looked as if it would hold as we made our way forward from the 600 yard line to the 300 yard firing point. I travelled in comfort along with a ton of gear in Nigel Dennis' Land Rover. Since I was still in post op. recovery mode, I was very grateful that the NRA gave us permission to drive to the firing point.

After setting up the scoring table, the first two shooters began their 30 minute detail at about 8:30.



Andy Boyle, Jacko Jackson and Guy Milchem chat while Nigel Dennis and Clive Taylor get ready to shoot their 300 yard detail.

We welcomed Steve Karn to his first shoot with us. His nervous apprehension soon disappeared as he settled down with his .45-120 (3¼") Pedersoli Quigley and started to hit the target regularly, after a bit of help with his sight elevations.

Another first timer to our comps. was Roger Vines, also with a .45-120 (3¼") Pedersoli. Roger had attended the practice shoot three weeks earlier but was now competing with the rest of us.

The first casualty of the day was ex airline pilot, Alan Stevens whose detail came to an abrupt end when a case split and jammed in his .40-82 LoneStar Remington. Fortunately, Guy Milchem's little gizmo came to the rescue and extracted the sheared-off case. The second casualty was Nigel Dennis who, after taking Vic Nock's advice about which bullet to use for this match, stopped shooting after his 14th shot and decided to save his powder. I didn't quite catch what he was muttering under his breath as he left the firing point but it sounded as if someone's parents weren't married when they were born?



This picture of Len Jackson at the 300 yard point captures perfectly the mood of the day ... great shooting weather but an overcast sky just looking for an excuse to rain.



Nigel Dennis and Jacko Jackson discuss the finer points of shooting while Richie James relaxes prior to his detail.

By the end of the day, a total of fifty two V-bulls had been shot. The standard of shooting was very impressive and it was a pleasure to watch the targets coming up regularly with lots of 5 and V-bull markers.

The final outcome couldn't have been closer ... with



Guy Milchem enjoying his 300 yard stage. Give him a big black powder cartridge rifle and some bullets and he'll play all day long.

Clive Taylor and Phil Morgan both tying on 166 points it was left to the V-bull count to decide. With 10 against Clive's 7, Phil took the trophy for it's first year.



This was the scene towards the end of the afternoon ... umbrellas came out as the rain fell. Richie James (in the white hat) and Roger Vines do battle while John Gilpin and John Brocklehurst keep score.



The end of the day ... Clive Taylor presents Phil Morgan with the Precision Trophy but doesn't appear to want to let go! With the final scores being so close, it could quite easily have gone the other way.

Precision Results

Shooter	300	600	Total	Place
Morgan	90.8	76.2	166(10)	1st
Taylor	89.4	77.3	166(7)	2nd
Jackson P.	77.3	80.2	157(5)	3rd
Brocklehurst	75.4	81.3	156(7)	4th
Jackson L.	77.4	67.4	144(8)	5th
Boyle	72.1	69.3	141(4)	6th
Gilpin	76	54.1	130(1)	7th
Dennis	47	74.2	121(2)	8th
Milchem	44	58.3	102(3)	9th
James	61.1	40	101(1)	10th
Goodacre	44.1	47.2	91(3)	11th
Pfeil	67.1	18	85(1)	12th
Vines	19	28	47	13th
Karn	12	-	12	14th
Stevens	0*	1	1	15th

Maximum possible score =200.
Figure in brackets indicates the total number of V-bulls scored.

* Retired due to split case

SAGA OF A BULLET

MOULD

By

Paul A. Matthews

In early 1994 when Ron Snover was building my rolling block .45-70 silhouette rifle, I had two bullet moulds on order. One was a nose-pour version of the Lyman 457125 round nose military style from Dave Farmer, and the other was a copy of the original design Postell (Lyman 457132) from Tom Ballard. The Ballard mould arrived first and that was the one I used from day one.

I have always liked the original design Postell bullet beginning back in 1950 when I purchased my first mould for this bullet from Lyman. The Postell bullet was originally designed for long range shooting and was basically a grooved version of the Sharps 550 grain paper patched bullet until a change in the design took place in 1974. For mid- to long range shooting, the Postell has always served well, and over the years has been my favorite bullet for the silhouettes. Yes, during that time I also tried several other .45-caliber bullets including those from custom moulds as well as those from production moulds. But when the dust settled, I always came back to the original design Postell bullet from the mould that Tom Ballard cut for me in 1994.



The original design Postell bullet as illustrated on an old Lyman Ideal wall chart. Note that this bullet does not have a straight-sided bore riding section just ahead of the front driving band as does the redesigned Postell bullet of today. The original design Postell bullet had a nose diameter of about 0.444 inch just ahead of the front driving band for shooting in a fouled barrel, and tapered forward into a long sweeping radius and round nose.

Cast of a 30 to 1 lead-tin alloy, this bullet weighs 545 grains and measures 0.458 inch in diameter on the driving bands with a scant half-thousandth out of roundness. There are five driving bands, the four leading ones being about 0.075 inch wide at the top, while the base driving band is 0.100 inch wide at the top. The leading edge of the four rear driving bands is cut with what appears to be a 45 degree angle extending all the way to the bottom of the groove, giving a grease groove that is about 0.085 inch wide at the top and half as wide at the bottom. Being 0.025 inch deep, these grooves hold plenty of bullet lubricant, and the angled face at the rear of each groove helps the lube leave the groove at the instant of firing, thus preventing leading at a most vulnerable part of the bore.

According to my records, I used the Ballard-Postell bullet in a match for the first time on March 12, 1995 at Wilton, NY over 53.5 grains of RS Pyrodex. I shot a 24 that day. Later, on August 5 and 6 of that year at the Pennsylvania State Championship BPCR silhouette match at Ridgway, PA, I set a new national senior record for a score of 45 out of a possible 80 using the Ballard-Postell bullet and 67 grains of GOEX FFg. On July 26, 1997 I used the same bullet to set another national senior record with a score of 40 out of a possible 60, again during a Pennsylvania State Championship match.

1998 was the peak of my shooting career. I had an excellent rifle built by Ron Snover; the bullet from the Tom Ballard mould performed flawlessly; GOEX was producing a superb powder; my cataracts had been removed in 1994 and the secondary cataracts zapped with a laser in 1997, and I had turned 72 years old the previous November. In June of 1998, I became a co-holder of the national senior record for a long run on pigs, and on July 26 became a co-holder for the national senior record on rams as well as setting new national senior and open records by tipping 59 consecutive pigs.

This was all with the original design Postell bullet cast from the mould made by Tom Ballard. Somewhere along the line, I modified the cutoff plate by changing the angle of the cutoff from 45 degrees to a 1/4 inch radius using a half-inch diameter carbide burr rotated in a hand brace. This gave a sharper, thinner cutting edge and – I believe – a smoother cutoff at the base of the bullet.

At this point all was fine with that bullet mould and the bullets it produced. Then one day my old friend Charlie Canoll showed up at the house with a new nose-pour bullet

mould he had just made. Unlike the Pope style with its swinging top and bottom plates, the bottom plate on Charlie's mould was rigidly secured to one mould block by two capscrews.

I have always liked bullets from a nose-pour bullet mould. Their bases are like a sheet of glass with a sharp edge all the way around the base. While most shooters claim they can see no difference in accuracy between a bullet from a nose-pour mould and the same bullet from a base-pour mould, I have to say that a perfect base on a bullet never hurt anything!

After casting a few hundred bullets from Charlie's mould, we discussed the possibility of converting base-pour moulds to nose-pour. Charlie could see no problem with that, and when he left, he took with him another of my Tom Ballard moulds for conversion. I was not quite ready yet to commit my prize Postell mould to such an operation, that is, not until Charlie returned the converted mould and I had cast some bullets with it.

Succumbing to temptation, I finally asked Charlie to convert the Ballard-Postell mould from base-pour to nose-pour. And after casting about twenty bullets in the converted mould to bring it up to casting temperature, the blocks warped so badly that you had to club the mould to death in order to get the bullet out, by which time the nose of the bullet was actually bent! My prize bullet mould was ruined!

For many months after that, I would pick that mould up and stare at it as though by mental process alone I could correct the problem. Sometimes I even tried to sneak up on it and cast a few bullets to see if by chance it would forget to warp after it had reached casting temperature. No such luck. The mould was hopelessly ruined.

Then one evening when I sat in my loading room with those mould blocks in my hands, the thought occurred to me that the mould did not stay warped. It would warp when it reached casting temperature and stay that way until it cooled. Then it would straighten. I knew this because I could always get about twenty good looking bullets from the mould before the blocks warped and put a bear hug on the bullet. I also noticed that above and below the handle slot on each mould block there was a mass of metal running crosswise of the block that when heated could expand lengthwise and have a tendency to make the outer edges of the mould cavity close in on itself. All that was

required to prevent this was to make two vertical hacksaw cuts on each mould block, each cut to be the depth of the handle slot and about one-third of the way in from the edge of the mould block. It was a drastic solution, but I had nothing to loose as in its present state, the mould was useless. I made the cuts and put the mould away for the night.

I was almost afraid to cast bullets with that mould the next morning. I just couldn't possibly be lucky enough to have restored the performance of that mould to what it was the day I received it from Tom Ballard. Yet when the mould heated up, it continued to cast a perfect bullet with every pour of the dipper. And to this day – several thousand bullets later – the mould will cast a perfect bullet every time!

To look at that mould with its not-too-straight hacksaw cuts on each block, no cast bullet shooter with an ounce of sense would give a dollar bill for it at a garage sale. When I ordered it in 1994, I believe I wrote Tom Ballard a check for \$95. Today, I wouldn't sell it back to him for twice that! It is a superb mould casting a superb bullet.

Some day in the distant future, this now ugly work of art will show up on a table at a garage sale or – if it is lucky – at a gun show. And hopefully, whoever picks it up will have enough sense between their ears to give it a fair trial and once more let it continue its saga as one of the most useful tools in the history of mankind.



Editor's note:

Paul, thank you for sending this most enjoyable article and allowing me to share it with our members and other readers of Black Thunder. You should know that your articles are always welcome over here.

The countdown is on for the Shiloh Sharps rifle draw ...

Shooters at QUIGLEY "THE Man Down Under" to be held at Bisley on Saturday 25th October, will have the opportunity to enter the raffle for a Sharps rifle, kindly donated by The Shiloh Rifle Manufacturing Company of Big Timber, Montana. This generosity demonstrates their willingness to support our Club and help us in our commitment to further the sport of Black Powder Cartridge Rifle shooting in the UK.

As mentioned in the last issue of BT, the donation is in the form of a gift certificate for a Basic Model Sharps to the value of \$1504. The winner will have the opportunity to choose the calibre, barrel length, etc. and also to upgrade or customise the rifle if he (or she) so desires.



Shiloh's gift certificate for one of their fine rifles captures the spirit of these guns.

To tempt you with what's on offer, pictured below is the basic 1874 Sporter #3 model, available in standard grade wood, with shotgun or military butt stock, double set triggers and a choice of different barrel weights ...

To see Shiloh's full product range, go to:



www.shilohrifle.com or try the link on our own web site: www.ssbpcrc.co.uk

The competition trophy is pictured on Page 4.

LETTERS

June 4th. 2003

Phil:

Received the latest issue of Black Thunder yesterday and am in the process of reading every word from cover to cover. It makes for excellent reading, and I am real pleased to see that you have a gent shooting with you who is in his 70s. Good for him! I did my best shooting at 72 (1998) and am still at it, though am not taking in quite as many matches as I used to.

As for Mike Venturino's book, I purchased a copy this past March and have to believe it is a classic. The paper is quality, the printing is quality and the writing is super quality. Mike has put together a book that shooting historians are going to be referring to two hundred years from now and even longer. You might quote me on that!

Another tidbit on my ancestry: My paternal grandfather Samuel Henry Matthews was born June 10, 1859 at Mill Hill cottages, Tavistock, Devonshire. A few years ago my sister made a trip there and found the cottages still standing and in use. She took pictures of them but, as I recall, was not able to identify the exact cottage where Grandad was born. Anyhow, most of the family came to the U.S. in the late 1860s, though at least one went to Australia. My wife has been able to locate some distant cousins in that country.

Will let you go now so that I can finish reading Black Thunder. To you and all your club members, keep up the good work!

Paul (Matthews)

Caption Competition

To show what a warped sense of humour we have, this picture of member John Gilpin, was snapped by Clive Taylor during a pause at the 800 yard practice day on 2nd July. It's screaming out for a caption and the best one received, in the Editor's opinion, will win not only a fine bottle of Chateau Neuf Eau de Toilette but also a very scarce bottle of Chateau Regurgitive 2003.

Send captions to: phil@ssbpcrc.co.uk or the address on the back page. The results will be published in the next issue.



Photo: Clive Taylor

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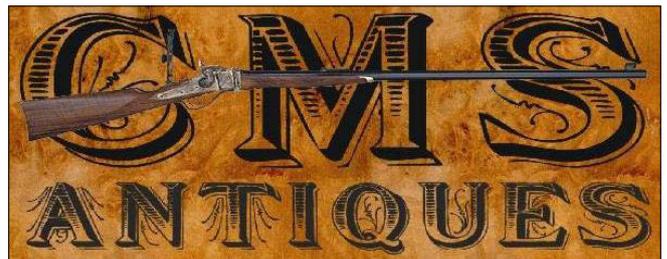
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BLACK POWDER DELIVERY SERVICE

For a small charge, we can deliver most powders to our Bisley shoots. This should help members who have trouble getting hold of powder, especially Swiss.

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You will need to supply a copy of your current RCA - POMSTER document and Form COER 3 - CERTIFICATE TO ACQUIRE AND KEEP EXPLOSIVES and pay by cash or cheque on the day.



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Club Rules & Regulations

To maintain the original concept of the Club, and bring things back on track, there will be minor amendments to the rules and regulations with effect from January 2004. Fine tuning of rules is something that all clubs do from time to time for the overall benefit of its members. None of these changes are drastic and they should be taken in the spirit in which they are meant. A revised set of Rules will be issued with the membership renewals for next year.

One of the main changes will be to allow the use of wrist rests for all competitions except Silhouette, where X-sticks are the only support allowed. X-sticks that incorporate a flat base will no longer be allowed to be anchored down with spikes.

Don't worry, it's not as bad as you think!

Reading & Viewing

- **SHOOTING BUFFALO RIFLES OF THE OLD WEST** by Mike Venturino

Yes, I'm still plugging this book! Read what Paul Matthews has to say about it in his letter on page 10. For all those aspiring to becoming good riflemen, this book belongs in your gun reference library.

The book covers the different types of rifles which constitute a "buffalo rifle", basic reloading for all the popular calibres, including a section on reloading match-grade ammunition. It is an invaluable source of reference, giving in-depth histories of these rifles and listing many pet-loads used by some of the well known names in BPCR shooting. 288 pages.

Published by MVL Enterprises, PO Box 914, Livingston, Montana 59047, USA

Priced at \$30 + p&p.

Sample of contents and order form on-line at:
www.ycsi.net/users/mlventurino/

Also available from Buffalo Arms Co.
Tel: 001 (208) 263 6953

Editor's Note: See also Page 16 for the serialisation of Chapter 11 ... Basic Reloading For Buffalo Rifles

The Bad Old Days...

England is old and small and the local folks started running out of places to bury people. So they would dig up coffins and would take the bones to a "bone-house" and reuse the grave. When reopening these coffins, 1 out of 25 coffins were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realized they had been burying people alive. So they thought they would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, lead it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night (the graveyard shift) to listen for the bell; thus, someone could be "saved by the bell" or was considered a "dead ringer."!

NEED A BED FOR THE NIGHT?

If you need to get to Bisley for an early morning start and can't face the drive, stay overnight in The Muzzle Loaders Association of Great Britain Clubhouse. You can't miss it; it's the red and white striped colonial building with the canon outside, just up from the NRA offices.

The Exhibition Hut as it is called, gets its name from the days when it used to house all the great shooting trophies. It has 6 heated bedrooms with 2-4 bunk-beds in each. There are mixed toilets and showering facilities, and whatever time you get there, you'll be able to make a hot drink and watch TV.

Open from March to September

Rates £11 (non MLAGB members £13)

Book through: Roy Ricketts, Beggars Roost, 70 Victoria Road, Bidford-on-Avon, Warcs. B50 7AR
Telephone: 01789 490076



The Exhibition Hut, in all its colonial splendour, is the clubhouse of the Muzzle Loaders' Association of Great Britain. Staying overnight can take the hassle out of getting to an early morning shoot on time.

Please remember to send off your shooting entries **IN GOOD TIME** to avoid disappointment. It helps to plan the number of targets and squadding, making the shoot run smoothly on the day.

Thanks for your co-operation. ☺

Rifles & Stuff

Splitcasitis claims its latest victim ...

Rifle pin-up # 5 ...



A particularly eye-catching Remington Rolling Block in .45-90 (2.4"). The rifle belongs to Frank Pfeil and has some nice checkering and engraving on it which isn't really clear from the picture.

Split-case-itis has struck again! Guy Milchem was the latest victim to be stopped dead in his tracks, with only 4 shots remaining during his 600 yard Quigley detail. Cause unknown.

You hope it'll never happen to you but if it does, the little gizmo that Guy uses should quickly get you out of trouble.

You'll recognise it immediately as a heavy duty expanding Rawlbolt; the type that the police insist you use to secure your gun safe to the wall. It's such a brilliant idea, I bet Clive wishes he'd thought of it last year when he was going through 3¼" brass like it was going out of fashion.

Guy's method of extraction is to insert the bolt into the remains of the front end of the case, tighten the nut to open up the jaws and simply grip it with pliers and pull or tap it out. Very ingenious Guy, you're not just a pretty face! Thanks for sharing this tip.

Remaining dates for Bisley 2003

The remaining dates for this year (correct at printing) are:

Silhouette #2	300/500	23 Aug.
USA match	200/600	7 Sep.
Buffalo #2	200/600	27 Sep.
QUIGLEY "THE Man Down Under" #2	300/600	25 Oct.

Practice dates and details of additional shoots will be published when they are known.



The expanding Rawlbolt seen next to the remains of the sheared-off brass case. The rifling can clearly be seen.



The bolt fully expanded into the case just after being tapped out of the barrel.

 ★ **DO US A FAVOUR!** ★
 ★ If you wipe out between shots, please pick up ★
 ★ your patches when you leave the firing line. ★
 ★ We'd like to leave the range as we find it. ★
 ★ *****

FOUND

Stainless steel flask cup and spoon. If you've lost yours, I have them in the back of my car.
Phil

Editor: If there are any other useful tips or gadgets out there, please feel free to share them with us.

INTER-CLUB TEAM STEEL CHALLENGE 2003

Saturday 2nd August

The QSA Team Steel Challenge started on the afternoon of Friday 1st August, when Clive Taylor and Phil Morgan left Warwick for the “long” trek North. Figuring that the M1 would have fewer traffic hold-ups than the M6, we passed Sheffield then cut across country. Over the Pennines, through Holmfirth (where Last of the Summer Wine was filmed) and the infamous Saddleworth Moor to Diggle. Ensuring that we got our priorities in the right order and being the addicted shooters that we are, we drove straight to the range before checking in at The Diggle Hotel. Wow, what a sight! The range looked great in the evening light, set against the moors in the background. We could hardly wait for tomorrow and what was to come.



A evening view of Diggle range, taken from the clubhouse near the 600 yard firing point.

We were greeted at The Diggle Hotel by a nice plump landlady, who showed us to our rooms. Clive’s room overlooked the railway line and mine turned out to be the hotel cat’s rooftop entrance! I discovered this at 06:00 when the bloody thing scratched incessantly to get in through the locked window. In case you are not familiar with the sound that a cat makes when scratching it’s claws across glass, it’s like running your finger nails down a blackboard! If only my Sharps had been within easy reach ...

Being local to the area, fellow SSBPCRCGB team members John Gilpin and Andy Boyle joined us in the bar later that evening. Nigel Dennis and his wife Mandy, were staying close by and also joined us for a few drinks. The sixth team member, Paul “Jacko” Jackson, met us at the range the following morning.

Day of the match and the weather was great! We were introduced to the host team as they arrived and given the course of fire for the day by QSA secretary

and organiser, Ken Hall. The first stage was at 400 yards, and thanks to Nigel’s Land Rover, getting the kit there was easy.



It should be compulsory to have a Land Rover as part of your shooting kit.

The match began with the first three shooters from each team, sighting in on two conventional Bisley targets. First strike on target became the first of two convertible sighters, followed by a total of ten scoring shots. Nigel Dennis was in fine form, scoring 47.2 (2 x V bulls). While shooters were still on the line, Stage 1b consisted of 4 steel pigs and 1 square plate all to be shot in 5 minutes. Each pig scored 10 points, the square scored 20 points and any rounds left over from the 10 starting rounds counted as 2 points. Phil Morgan, Paul Jackson and Nigel Dennis each knocked down all 5 steels.

I have to say, there was something very satisfying about hearing the sound of a strike as the CLANG echoed back up the valley to the firing point. After lunch and a chance to talk to the QSA team, we



SSBPCRCGB man Andy Boyle, brings home the bacon while Clive Taylor watches through his scope.

took up position on the 600 yard firing point for Stage 2 of the challenge ... same 10 + 2 on the Bisley target followed immediately by 10 shots at the ¾ sized buffalo. Top scorer for our side on the round target was Nigel with 41.2 (2 x V bulls) and on the



The Diggle porkers, all lined up and ready. The square at the end scored double points. This was no easy target at 400 yards as several shooters found out.

buffalo, Clive Taylor with 10 straight hits. John Gilpin and Andy Boyle both performed admirably and helped our team to a fine victory.

The QSA team really surprised us when, at the end of the shoot, they presented us with a truly fabulous,



The firing points looked as though they belonged on a professional golf course. This is the 600 yard one by the club house.

engraved glass trophy and individual medals. This is one match that will be eagerly awaited each year and one that I'm particularly going to look forward to shooting.



Ken Hall, secretary of the QSA presents Phil Morgan with the magnificent engraved glass trophy.



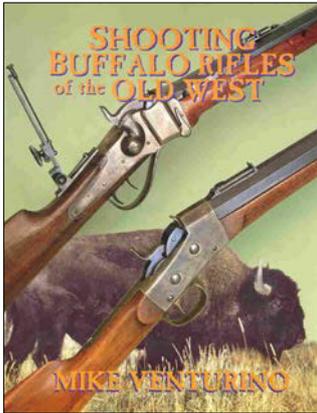
With the range in the background, the two teams line up for a memorable photograph. We were lucky this time ... the hard part will be to hang onto the trophy for two years running.

Photograph taken by Mandy Dennis.

On behalf of the SSBPCRCGB team, I'd like to thank the QSA team for putting on such a great match. I can't remember when I last had so much fun with all my clothes on.

Results

Shooter	Stage 1a 400	Stage 1b 400	Stage 2a 600	Stage 2b 600	Total
C. Taylor	43.3	10	36.1	100	189.4
P Morgan	37.0	66	38.0	70	211.0
P. Jackson	43.1	60	28.0	80	211.1
J. Gilpin	43.2	0	28.0	50	121.2
A. Boyle	40.3	20	29.0	70	159.3
N. Dennis	47.2	68	41.2	70	226.4
					1118.4
V. Bottomley	40.1	10	35.2	70	155.3
I. Dixon	42.3	20	25.0	90	177.3
R. Barlow	42.3	60	30.1	70	202.4
M. Davenport	40.0	0	33.0	70	143.0
K. Hall	35.0	0	19.0	70	124.0
C. Meekin	33.1	0	29.0	80	142.1
					944.1



We continue our serialisation of Chapter 11 of Mike Venturino's new book, *Shooting Buffalo Rifles of the Old West*.

BASIC RELOADING FOR BUFFALO RIFLES

POWDERS

Back when Steve Garbe and I wrote our *SPG BP Cartridge Reloading Primer* in 1992, the section on black powders was simple. Then the only black powder available in the United States was Goex manufactured in Pennsylvania. It came only in the basic Fg, FFg, and FFFg granulations. Additionally, Hodgdon had its black powder substitute named Pyrodex. How things have changed in the past 10 years! Now Goex black powders are being manufactured in Louisiana. Starting in 1994 they added a Cartridge grade black powder. But the big news has been with those black powders



Black powders come in various sizes. The more "F"s the finer the powder.

being imported from abroad. First there was Elephant brand coming in from Brazil, then Wano brand from Germany, next came Swiss powders, and most recently KIK powder manufactured in Slovenia.

Elephant, Wano, and KIK brand black powders come in standard Fg, FFg, and FFFg granulations, while the Swiss stuff has those plus a 1 1/2 Fg "Schuetzen" grade made specifically for cartridge reloading. To show the ranges in velocity possible just by changing granulations several strings of shots were fired using various brands of Fg, FFg, FFFg, and Cartridge or Schuetzen grades where applicable. The results are shown in the following charts.

GOEX POWDERS (All manufactured in 1996)
 TEST RIFLE: Shiloh M1874 .45-70 30" barrel with 6x RHO Scope
 BULLET: Lyman #457125, 520 grains of 1/20 alloy, SPG Lube, sized .459 inch
 PRIMER: Federal 215 Large Rifle Magnum
 BRASS: Starline
 CHARGE: 60 grains by actual weight

POWDER TYPE (granulation)	VELOCITY & VARIATION (fps)	GROUP (in.) (five shots @ 100 yds.)
Goex Fg	1,037 & 10	2.00
Goex FFg	1,119 & 24	2 1/8
Goex Cartridge	1,130 & 15	2.00

Note: The rifle was cleaned after every group, and a fouling shot fired before the next group. The fouling shot was not counted in either the group size or the chronograph readings.

SWISS POWDERS (All dated 2000)
 TEST RIFLE: Shiloh M1874 .45-70 30" barrel with 6x RHO Scope
 BULLET: Lyman #457125, 520 grains of 1/20 alloy, SPG Lube, sized .459 inch
 PRIMER: Federal 215 Large Rifle Magnum
 BRASS: Starline
 CHARGE: 60 grains by actual weight

POWDER TYPE (granulation)	VELOCITY & VARIATION (fps)	GROUP (in.) (five shots @ 100 yds.)
Swiss Fg	1,100 & 10	1 5/8
Swiss 1 1/2 Fg (Schuetzen)	1,118 & 13	1 3/4
Swiss FFg	1,114 & 7	1 1/2
Swiss FFFg	1,200 & 6	1 1/4

Note: The rifle was cleaned after every group, and a fouling shot fired before the next group. The fouling shot was not counted in either the group size or the chronograph readings.

Great debates rage about which black powders are best, with the Swiss brand quickly gaining acceptance with American shooters despite its relatively high price. That acceptance has come because of three factors: It usually gives higher velocities per grain than the other black powders, has

been used by several shooters to win large competitions, and seems to be very uniform from lot to lot (at least in the batches that have thus far been imported to the United States). Goex and Elephant brand powders have been plagued with considerable lot-to-lot variation in recent years. Both companies have advised this writer that they are working hard to remedy the problems of lot-to-lot variations in their products. So little of the Wano and KIK powders have been around at this writing that it is not possible to make a considered judgement on their lot-to-lot consistency.

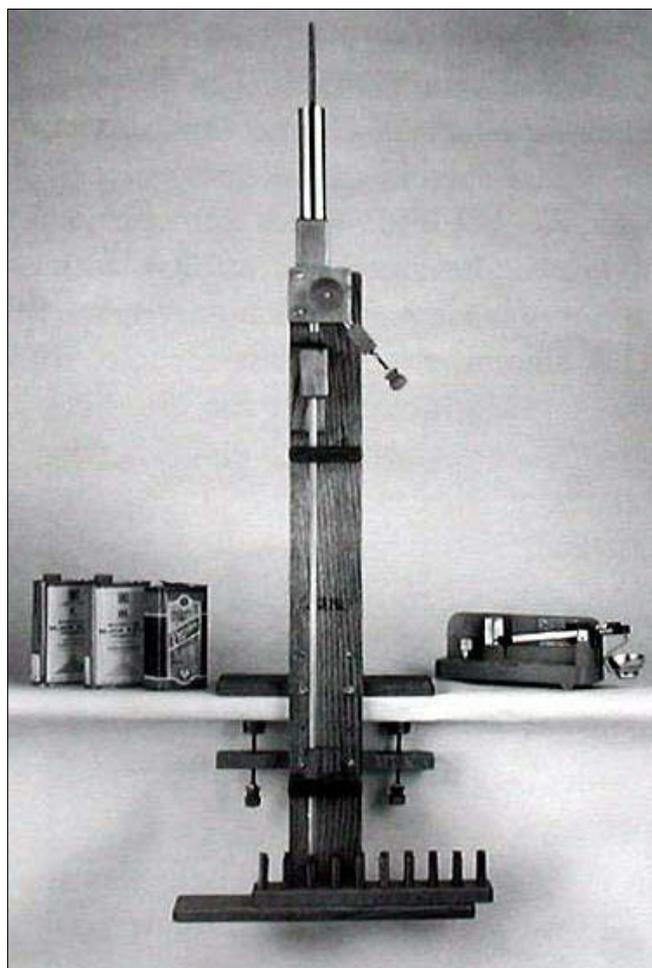


For firing most of the cartridges detailed in this book the author used these five currently available black powders.

That said, I must also say that by varying components such as primers, and in changing techniques such as in the amount of compression the powder is given, all current black powders will serve sufficiently for assembling basic hunting ammunition. Match shooting is a different matter and will be covered more in that section. For purposes of demonstration in the hunting loads section of this book, I used several of the black powders currently available in the U.S. However, it must be said that no effort has been made to tailor any of the loads listed in the data sections specifically to one or the another black powder. They were simply loaded in the exact same quantity and fired for velocity and group. Whatever type of black powder chosen it is this writer's opinion that there is only one way to deliver it into the cartridge case. That is via a drop tube is so necessary for black powder reloading is still a mystery. Pouring powder into a case by means of a drop tube allows more to enter because it compacts as it pours. But for some reason, black powder that is drop tubed into the case burns more cleanly and consistently. In fact, an experienced black powder shooter can tell when a reloader has failed to use a drop tube in assembling his black powder loads just by the rifle's muzzle blast. The report is more of a dull boom then, instead of the sharper crack given by loads assembled with a drop tube.

Drop tubes can be made from a simple piece of 3/8 inch copper tubing flared on one end to accept a copper or aluminum funnel. A cartridge case is held at one end while the powder is poured slowly through from the top. Years ago the only way to weigh black powder was by hand because no company made a powder measure that was rated as being safe with it.

Like so much else in this game, that has changed due to the vast amount of interest in again reloading with black powder. We now have several black powder measures. The first black powder measure I saw was the Cal-Graf Powder Pour with its integral drop tube. That has now been followed by black powder measures by Lyman and Hornady, both of which have optional aluminum drop tubes. All three of these measures will hold a charge to within a few tenths of a grain. That is certainly tight enough for hunting type ammunition.



Cal-Graf Design Adjustable Powder Pour

However, in perusing the oft-quoted original Remington 1878 catalog I found the surprising information that they recommended weighed powder charges for long-range target shooting. The Remington catalog states that an 80 grain bulk powder charge varying by one grain will cause 2 1/2 inches of vertical stringing at 500 yards and nine inches at 1,000 yards. This 125 year old statement should be food for thought for us modern buffalo rifle shooters.

A question often asked by reloaders steeped in smokeless powder technique is, "How much black powder should I load?" And, those people sometimes have trouble accepting this answer, "It doesn't matter." Unlike smokeless propellants, the correct

amount of black powder is however much the shell will hold under the bullet. That amount varies by case capacity, the sizing given the cartridge case, and the exact seating depth of the specific bullet being used. So it is fruitless to try to specify to someone else exactly how many grains of black powder should go in their loads. The proper amount of powder is how much fits into the case so that the bullet compresses it the desired amount upon seating. Exactly how much compression and whether there's a wad between powder and bullet will be discussed shortly.

Here are a couple of pertinent factors: I have seen the capacity of a .45-70 case change by five grains of powder between the case being full length sized, and only neck sized. When neck sized, more powder was required to bring the level to the same point it had been when the case was full length sized. Also, since Winchester brass usually has the thinnest case walls of any brand, and Remington the thickest, several more grains of black powder can be fitted into Winchester cases with all the other factors equal.

If you canvass 100 black powder cartridge reloaders you will probably get 100 different answers on how much compression is required in their loads. Some people report compressing their charges a full one half inch. Others are satisfied with no compression at all. The truth is that different powders, combined with different primers, require different amounts of compression. The shooter must experiment to find out. I am personally of the school of thought that compression of about 1/16 to 1/8 inch is usually sufficient. I can do that much just when seating the bullet. However, if any more than about 1/8 inch compression is needed, it should not be done with the bullet as its nose can be deformed. Several companies sell special compression dies for this purpose.

In assembling the ammunition fired for demonstration loads in the following cartridge sections I set the standard with Swiss 1 1/2 Fg and Goex Cartridge grade powders. By experimenting I determined how much of those powders filled the case so that when the bullet was seated over the card wad (if any) compression was no more than 1/16 inch. Then the same amount of the other black powders was loaded. With some of them, most notably Goex FFG and Wano FFG, considerable compression was required to bring them to the same level in the case as Swiss 1 1/2 Fg or Goex Cartridge. All compression was done with special dies and ranged from about one eighth to one quarter inch depending on exact cartridge being loaded.

When a wad is used between bullet and powder its thickness must be factored in when considering compression. When I began reloading buffalo rifle cartridges with black powder the only way to obtain wads was to cut them from cardboard with arch punches of the correct diameter. Usually tablet

backing of about .030 inch was my choice. In my opinion cutting out wads was one of the most obnoxious chores connected to black powder cartridge reloading. One whack of the hammer netted you a single wad. However a few years back an



Most black powder cartridge rifle shooters rely on a wad between powder and bullet. These are John Walter's brand vegetable fiber ones .060 inch thick.

enterprising Oklahoman named John Walters began selling vegetable fiber wads of .030 or .060 inch thickness for all popular bore sizes. I gave them a try, and they worked as well as anything I had ever made. So, as long as I can buy vegetable fiber wads I'll never take wad punch in hand again. Some black powder cartridge shooters prefer plastic or poly wads but I'll stick with the vegetable fiber ones as they are biodegradable. My preference is for the .060 inch thick ones and I feel that they should be from the exact same diameter of the bullet to no more than .002 inch over that. Several individuals and companies now market wads for black powder shooters so they are not difficult to find. To seat the wad over the powder I simply push it in with the aid of a short aluminum rod, taking care to keep it square. It can also be seated with a compression die if one is used.

Here's one other comment. The fall day in 1998 when my brand new Lone Star Rolling Block .50-70 arrived, I had no .50 caliber wads on hand and couldn't find my .50 caliber wad punch. In my hurry to fire the rifle, I then loaded my .50-70 cartridges sans wads. To my great surprise and pleasure the rifle still grouped five shots into 2.00 to 2.50 inches at 100 yards. I've never bothered to try finding that .50 caliber wad punch. So, it is my opinion that for black powder hunting ammunition that will be used within 200 yards, it may be possible to get good accuracy without wads at all. The rifle will quickly show you if such is possible by firing a test group or two.

This following point is critical. **If a wad is used there should never be any airspace between it and the bullet's base. If there is, then the air can be compressed and form a ring in the rifle's chamber. For that reason, always put enough powder in the case so that the bullet's base compresses it about 1/16 of an inch when seated.**

Editor's note: My sincere thanks Mike, for allowing me to print this chapter from your book. As I've stated before, I consider it to be the best book on modern-day buffalo rifle shooting that I have ever read ... a sentiment also shared by a good friend of mine:

"As for Mike Venturino's book, I purchased a copy this past March and have to believe it is a classic. The paper is quality, the printing is quality and the writing is super quality. Mike has put together a book that shooting historians are going to be referring to two hundred years from now and even longer. You might quote me on that!" - Paul Matthews

IN THE NEXT ISSUE AND TO COMPLETE THE CHAPTER:

PRIMERS, CRIMPING, TESTING & DEVELOPING LOADS

Some other books by Mike Venturino:

SHOOTING SIXGUNS OF THE OLD WEST

SHOOTING COLT SINGLE ACTIONS

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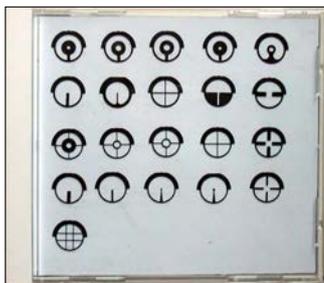
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FGL LUBE: Lube-sizer sticks. Contains LubeGuard polyester as used by American silhouette shooters ... £1.50 per stick Tel: Clive on 01926 496569

BLACK THUNDER is the official newsletter of The Single Shot Black Powder Cartridge Rifle Club of Great Britain, 27 Yardley Close, Woodloes Park, Warwick CV34 5EX, England, UK and is edited by Phil Morgan: Contact: phil@ssbpcrc.co.uk with articles, letters, pictures or ads. for future issues.

Deadline for next issue is 1st October

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