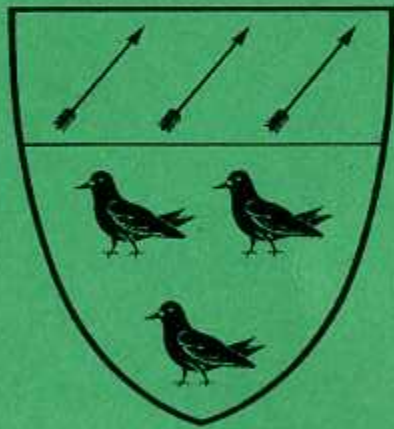


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PERSEVERO SAGITTARIUM



**THE LIFE AND TIMES OF  
CANTERBURY ARCHERS  
1955-1980**



## Sighters

There is a special satisfaction tinged with pride in being able to review the activities of Canterbury Archers over a quarter of a century. As President, and a member of the club for all of those years, I am privileged to be able to make a lighthearted record of some of the achievements and highlights, with an emphasis on the special character of the club which has evolved over that period.

Lists of names, dates and scores, although of inestimable value and interest, would be less attractive in a potted history of this nature, than a wide-ranging series of general themes, illustrating the enthusiasm of members and the variety of pursuits which have made up the club's individuality.

From a very early age Canterbury Archers began to develop a strong social character, but never to the extent that shooting took second place. This, of course, varied in emphasis according to the wishes of the club members. Successive committees have been successful in moulding the club's activities to the current mode, always aiming for a judicious balance between serious archery and relaxation. To paraphrase a popular proverb: 'All shooting and no play makes Jack a dull archer'.

The ability to maintain continuity for two and half decades, and the ease with which the activities of Canterbury Archers have harmonised with the changing

requirements of new generations, are features which are reflected in the quality of membership of the club. This membership has always featured a strong family element, and through participation in various forms of archery, together with many other allied activities, all ages have shared a common interest and a mutual bond.

A full history of the club would take up a fat volume, as small compensation the meanderings from the life and times of Canterbury Archers that follow are offered as the bones on which the meat of your own personal reminiscence can be built. It is my sincere wish that the wonderful foundations on which this club is based will continue to support future generations and that they, in turn, will find pleasure in the guiding precepts and premier rule of the club - 'the practice and promotion of archery'.

Many Happy Returns and Good Shooting.

*Gerry Heath*

President.



## Just a minute

Two little booklets produced for the fifth and the tenth anniversaries of Canterbury Archers contain much of interest and a wealth of detail of the formative years of the club. Space does not allow similar details of a further fifteen years to be included here, but due to the meticulous care with which club records and minute books have been kept it is reassuring to know that there is a more complete and detailed record for posterity.

To read through twentyfive years of minutes from committee and general meetings is a fascinating and absorbing pastime. From time to time items appear which hardly tell the whole story of the event they intend to preserve, and one's imagination can run riot over what, at first sight, may appear to be insignificant matters. Take for instance 1960, a year of drama if there ever was one. During this season we experienced our first robbery, when our hut was broken into and bows and arrows stolen. The outcome was in the classic 'villains get their just deserts' vein, for the minute reads: 'The culprits were apprehended and subsequently charged', and each had to pay £2.50 towards the cost of new equipment. Also in that year we had an anonymous member, archly described as 'X', who made an official complaint about the club and resigned as a result. Suspicion and whispered scandal was the order of the day.

Another elusive subject was the matter of 'Operation Rabbit', briefly mentioned in the minutes but not explained. The mind boggles at the possible explanations; was this something to do with myxomatosis, rife at the time, a clandestine visit to the Bunny Club, had a vet joined the club, or were plans afoot to indulge in a little poaching? Perhaps one of our early members can recall what this was about, but until then our *Lepus Cuniculus* must remain as elusive as Harvey or Alice's white rabbit.

At our second AGM one item was brought forward and dealt with early because 'Mr.T- had to catch a bus'. The curious will wonder how many members travel to AGMs these days by bus, and if they did whether the agenda would be shuffled to accommodate the timetable? On another occasion one member entered a serious complaint that 'there was too much talking on the line', and once there was an ominous rumble to the effect that the 'club was going downhill due to the decline of interest in older members'. What was done about this will never be known despite unconfirmed reports that the committee were contemplating introducing a geriatric round. However, despite these and many other problems important at the time, the continued growth and success of the club is proof of its ability to weather most storms.

**FAMOUS FOR SMALL ADVTs**

**ARCHERY THRILLS  
AT CANTERBURY**  
PICTURE

**HARbledown 'FISH STATION':  
PUBLIC INQUIRY OPENS**

**THREE-CAR SMASH:  
INQUEST OPENED**

**KENT  
MESSENGER**

## Traditions

Traditional customs are something particularly English, and take ages to evolve, unlike the instant veneer of venerability attempted by one American university which issued the edict: 'From today it will be a tradition that, etc'. Long-standing customs which are inseparable from archery and which generally have no rules, are those widely observed by most clubs. Others are those peculiar to only one club or society. Canterbury Archers have always carefully preserved archery traditions which have been handed down over the centuries and we have been fortunate in having one or two archers of the 'old school' who have passed on much of their experience, and who have guided us through the complexities of custom.

Possibly the most unique of all sports appointments is that of a Lady Paramount, and each year we have chosen our own lady to fulfill this very special role. The list of our ladies includes notabilities, both archers and non-archers, such as two Lady Sheriffs of Canterbury, many of our own members, those of other clubs who have specially distinguished themselves in the sport, and valued friends and personalities. They have all been most generous in giving their time, they have added a feminine charm and colour to the more sober patchwork of green and white, and have distributed their favours in exactly the right amounts of balance between praise for the winners and encouragement for those less skilful.

A tradition of our own has been to invite a V.I.P. to shoot the first arrow of each season. The selection has been varied. For example we have welcomed a gaggle of mayors, a councillor or two, parsons, professionals, professors and private persons, as well as archers themselves. Usually the inexperienced and apprehensive victim is treated to very brief instruction, everyone holds their breath, and the

spent arrow falls harmlessly to the ground in the general direction of the targets. The V.I.P. retires with a sore forearm and a bewildered but relieved expression, then the real business of shooting begins. We have been lucky, there have been no casualties - unlike the Mayor of Brighton who opened a shoot some years ago and hit a passing bus!

## Nocked up

If one took the trouble to feed a computer with all the relevant data concerning the rounds shot by Canterbury Archers, the result would surprise even the most phlegmatic of observers. In 25 years one would expect a revolutionary advancement in scores, particularly as archer's tackle has undergone radical improvements over this period.

Who can remember steel bows, liable to shatter from metal fatigue and split your nose open? As some protection, more psychological than practical, we wore silly school caps with stiff rubber peaks, and in a feeble attempt to avoid the dreaded fracture, cane rods were stuffed up the bow limbs. From Accles and Pollock's mechanical marvels we have progressed to incredibly complex sets of spare parts, conjoined in a miracle of archery surgery, so involved that one needs a manual to understand it all. The science of design and manufacturing precision of these gleaming monsters, like space-age orthopaedic appliances, are acquired by today's aspiring archers with one thing in mind, to improve scores, guaranteed of course by the makers.

By this time the computer should have spewed out its findings. The net result reveals that the average archer remained much the same throughout the club's history! He shot about ten rounds a

year, his handicap hovered around 25 to 30, and he had a three to one chance of classifying. He has the same problems in the '80s as he did in the '50s and very little changed in his shooting habits. What the computer cannot measure is the amount of enjoyment he had in shooting those rounds, an emotion which can be experienced as positively today as it was in days gone by. For these reasons it is not possible to review our shooting history in any other way than to remind members of the many different shooting activities we have enjoyed and some of the highlights we have shared.

The fixture lists, of course, are the best guide as to how we have occupied our shooting time, and these reveal very comprehensive programmes of all types of archery. There has been target, clout and field shooting, archery darts and archery golf, postal shoots, home and away matches, indoor shooting, novelty and speciality days, regular monthly shoots and prize days. We have shot under almost every weather condition that can be imagined. In tropical heat of 96 degrees, in the dark to the light of car headlamps, in snow, wind, rain and frost. But, most often forgotten, the majority of times on sunny afternoons and in soft summer evenings, the splendid boundaries of trees at Bretts keeping off all but the most persistent of winds.

We always kept strictly to the rules, unlike one club we knew who insisted on shooting to rules of their own making, and one of our members who had his own interpretation of sighters, which gave him an extraordinary advantage over the remainder. Indoor shooting varied in its popularity and it was always found best to keep this activity separate from the proper shooting season. None the less we progressed from a gloomy and very dusty Territorial Army rifle range to the medieval splendour of Milner Court tythe barn.

From the early years our field shooting also found an enthusiastic following, despite one cancellation

in 1957 due to petrol rationing, and we sampled the rural delights of Folly Farm, Shelford quarry, Greenfield ranges and other sites. This was organised separately from the mainstream target archery and, despite one member who tried to gain notoriety by the indiscriminate shooting of wild game, it has proved to be a very satisfactory alternative form of archery.

For relaxation the more novel forms of archery were tried. We shot at Chestfield golf course against golfers, we had several darts matches opposed by regular darts players, and we had one competition against a rifle club. Our postal shoots brought us into contact with clubs halfway round the world. We shot against clubs in America, Barbados, Australia, Malta, Rheims, Norway and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The Amman Archers Sports Club were most enthusiastic in their postal exchanges and we found ourselves shooting against a team which included H.R.H. Princess Muna. They experienced

the same disasters that can happen at the best regulated meeting. 'The day was hot and dry with a swirling wind from behind the targets', wrote their secretary, 'So strong in one gust that No.3 target was blown flat with the loss of two of my arrows'.



The home and away fixtures which always featured in our programme, have not always been strong in their appeal to members. However we have always attempted to meet up with local clubs in a convivial exchange of archery skills and sometimes the turnout was a little disappointing, for a variety of reasons. On one occasion the match had to be cancelled due to the fact that 'the grass in the moat had not been cut', this was at Saltwood Castle, one of our favourite venues for away fixtures.

Some early members still feature as club record holders and many others have gained special distinction over the years by bringing home medals and awards from national and county championships and numerous other tournaments. We have junior record holders at national and county levels and have had a national champion, county champions, miscellaneous winners of this, that and the other shoots, a Master Bowman or two, a Master Flight Shot and a liberal sprinkling of first, second and third class archers. An excellent record from a club with an annual average of 28.1/3 shooting members.

## Hidden assets

At the end of our first year we had 41 paid-up members at one pound a head and a 6d (2½p) target fee, two had qualified as third class archers, three as second class and one as first class. We had admitted a junior of eleven years, we bought 5 bows, 7 sets of arrows, 3 bosses, 5 target faces, had paid £5 rent and found ourselves at the end of the year with a cash balance of £2. 4s. 9d (£2.24p). A most encouraging start.

Throughout our career we were always conscious of being self-supporting, plus a little to spare, and to boost our funds we searched for ways to provide extra finance. One solution was found

