

European Championships

7th – 12th September 2009, Valencia, Spain

Captain's Report by Victor Chopin-John



The Team. l-r Jon Harper-Smith, Jane Capewell, Tom Clark, Tony Asker, Jeff Tanner, Shonagh Clark, Alex Winters, Nick Harvey, Steve Fletcher, David Elvin, Alan Robinson, Martin Crix, Sylvia, Frank Thibault, Allan Wellings, John Marsh, Rhys Hobbs, Sylvia Harvey, John Taylor, Sandy Robertson, John Munt, Clare Mills, Helen Harper-Smith, David Brigden, David Spittles & Yours Truly. There were twenty-seven Team members.

The opening ceremony was held some 30 km's from the hotel and after the parade of participating countries and speeches, we were treated to a medley of medieval jousting and displays of knights showing their prowess on horseback and also a display of military manoeuvres and battle re-enactment.

The shotgun, pistol and rifle ranges were fairly new and the facilities offered were much better than most of ours. The baffles were efficient and there were houses not 300 to 400 metres from the back stops which makes one think that they unlike in the UK did not suffer noise complaints.

Unlike us, most of the ranges and shooters abroad receive some sort of subsidy. Therefore, to some extent one would expect better facilities but also, unlike the UK, shooters can be open and proud of their sport which is fully supported by the community.

The shotgun range was half an hour's drive from our hotel in the opposite direction to the pistol and rifle ranges which did not make it easy to travel between the two ranges to support or watch each other.

The organisation of the competition went fairly smoothly except for the delivery of our supplies of powder and shot as Jane

so eloquently describes later. Our shot allocation was short which gave us a new challenge as the week progressed.

We shot in temperatures in the 30's and with high humidity which was physically draining and it is fair to say that everyone's averages were down by 5 to 8% with daily water consumption up by 500%! That said, we did win medals and all in all did reasonably well as can be seen from the following tables of medals and positions.

The highlight of this trip was our three gold medals for which special congratulations must go to our three winners who can rightly now call themselves



European Champions – Tom Clark in Cominazzo/O (flint pistol), Jane Capewell in Lorenzoni/O (percussion shotgun) and Nick Harvey in Tanzutsu/O (matchlock pistol).

All our other medal winners must also be congratulated and they are:

Rifle Individual: Bronze to Jon Harper-Smith in Pennsylvania/O, Silver to Gareth Callan in Hizadai/O, Silver to Helen Harper-Smith in Walkyrie/O

Rifle Team: Silver to David Brigden, Gareth Callan and Jon Harper-Smith in Nobunaga

Pistol Team: Silver to David Spittles, John Marsh and Jon Harper-Smith in Original flint pistol

Congratulations must also go to Sylvia Harvey who, although ill and requiring hospital treatment, still managed to achieve a very creditable score. Thanks also go to our ‘resident doctor’ Paul Wolpe, who we were very lucky to have on this trip.

The final closing banquet was held at another hotel in the area and was a really enjoyable evening. The venue, quality of food and service was certainly above the usual – except for during the opening speeches which lasted well over an hour without even water being placed on the table!

Thanks must go to our two new members; Steve Fletcher who was our country’s name plaque bearer and Claire Mills who was our flag bearer at the opening ceremony. This year they both made a start in their international careers and we hope Portugal will prove even more fruitful for both of them.

In Australia last year at the World Championships in Adelaide, my wife Rosemary (Ros) and I decided to present the Team with a cup which we called the Captain’s Cup which would be competed for by the three disciplines of Rifle, Pistol and Shotgun, at the two main championships – either the World or the European’s which alternate annually.

At these events, there is always a healthy rivalry as to who wins the most medals



Tom Clark



Jane Capewell



Nick Harvey

between the three disciplines and Ros and I thought we would like this cup to be in recognition of the winners. In 2008 in Australia the rifle team won - congratulations. The cup will be awarded to the winning discipline on the results in Valencia and presented at the first major competition around May next year at Wedgnoek.

Finally, thanks to all those who helped make this another successful year for the GB Team; the Discipline Secretaries Jane Capewell, David Spittles and Helen Harper-Smith, also John and Heather Marsh for their assistance in finding our hotel and to Ros who helped with the admin and photography.

Here’s to Portugal!



Claire Mills & Steve Fletcher

David Spittles, Helen Harper-Smith & Jane Capewell
The Three Discipline Secretaries informally display the new Captain’s Cup



DTL Shotgun Report: European Championships – Valencia 2009

Only six clay shooters made up the shotgun team this year, a somewhat depleted team compared with recent years due to the fact that the competition had been moved to September, which coincided with the return to school or college for some of our regular team members who are teachers or lecturers.

This year we had decided to fly to Spain. Most of us had travelled by air before without any issues – BA had always been co-operative and it was usually plain sailing once we got to the airport. NOT this time. A week or so before the flight we were advised that the handling of the firearms at the airport had been handed over to Group 4 and as such we would be charged £25 per case for their handling fees. OK we thought – we accepted this and if we had any issues we thought we would take it up upon our return.

Most of us arrived at the airport at least six hours before we were due to check in. Three and a half hours prior to take off we made our way to the check in desk and the process began. To say it was a long repetitive process is an understatement and I won't bore you with all the details, but it took the full three and a half hours to check us and the firearms in. We made it to the plane with literally one minute to spare and with assurance from the Group 4 representative that the guns would be escorted to the hold and loaded on to the plane in time.

We arrived at Alicante airport, which was two and a half hours away from our final destination of Valencia. We picked up our bags then made our way to customs to get the firearms. After some time, we were told that there were no firearms on the flight – we had made it but they hadn't. Fortunately, we had Rhys Hobbs' girlfriend Lucy with us, who spoke fluent Spanish. She was a godsend and helped us to find out where the firearms were and determine the process for getting them flown out on the next available flight.

Customer relations needed time to locate the firearms and sort out a plan to get them from the UK, so we were advised to carry on with our journey and they would call us once they had more details.

On arrival at our hotel, we had not heard from BA, so I rang them. After an hour they advised that the firearms had been located and would be flown out the following day, but we would have to go back to Alicante to collect them. This was a round trip of over 250km and five hours. We set off early on Saturday morning and collected the firearms from customs. The



Spanish customs officers were efficient and the paper work was comparatively simple and was completed quickly and efficiently especially as we had Lucy on hand again to help us with the translation.

We made our way to the shotgun range on Sunday for a sneak preview. It was in a wonderful setting in the hills above Cheste approximately half an hour drive from the hotel. The range itself was fantastic with a layout and clubhouse beyond comparison to any other range we had been to.

Training was due to start on Monday morning, but as we had flown we had no powder, shot or caps so we had to go to the rifle and pistol range to collect them, we also needed to register and go through scrutiny before making our way back to Cheste for training in the afternoon. We found the powder quite quickly, but the Spanish would not issue it to us until their club president had arrived, so we put our guns through scrutiny whilst we waited. Powder was then issued but no shot or caps. After hanging around for a while someone decided to open a large box sitting on a pallet in the corridor in the indoor range – it was the shot. OK, 2 elements down now only the caps to go. We finally found out that these were being stored in the president's office, so we sent Victor to stand in another queue to get them - poor chap seemed to spend most of his day queuing to get into the office for one reason or another (thanks Victor).

Finally by lunch time we had everything we needed to start shooting. We made our way over to the shotgun range, which was another half an hour drive from the rifle and pistol range.

We were allowed to train on one of the ranges when we arrived, but the referee

was not going to let us train on the other range. We explained to him that we had missed the morning's session as we had had to go and get the powder and shot from the main range as well as put the guns through scrutiny. He was not happy with this, but we managed to persuade him to give us 15 minutes training before he went off to the bar with his colleagues.

Tuesday was another training day which went well for everyone followed by the opening ceremony on the beach. This was a bizarre and novel opening ceremony, being televised live on Channel 7 in Spain. We were treated to medieval knights jousting on horseback and a re-enactment battle – a thoroughly enjoyable evening watched by many spectators who were both local residents and holiday makers.

Wednesday morning saw the start of shooting. First up was my favourite event and I managed to achieve a fairly good score of 45/50. Several other shooters were equal or ahead of me after the first round of shooting, but fortunately for me they did not manage to produce a good second round score and as a result my 45 was good enough for first place.

All the GB clay team had original percussion guns this year, including Dave Elvin who shot an original for the first time. He produced a credible score of 41 in an event that he has not enjoyed shooting for a number of years as flint is the event he excels in. Watch this space as he improves in this event in the years to come.

I must give praise to Martin Crix, Rhys Hobbs and Allan Wellings who all trained extremely hard this year but were unable to convert this in to a medal winning formula during the competition - I know it was not for the want of trying.

Special credit must be given to Clare Mills as it was her first time in a major competition. Clare qualified earlier this year as a tyro and was extremely nervous about shooting. I was worried that the nerves would get the better of her, but fortunately she proved me wrong. Everything we had taught Clare had sunk in and she did not let the emotion of shooting in a major event get the better of her. She shot a fantastic 36/50, which far exceeded her average score for the year – she can be very proud of her achievement and one to watch out for over the next few years.

Flintlock came next – our hopes in the reproduction class lay with Dave Elvin, Rhys Hobbs and Martin Crix. Dave had won this event several times in the past and during his first round he shot 24/25 alongside his great rival Frans Lotspeitch from Germany. It was very exciting to watch and we couldn't wait for the next round. Unfortunately, Dave did not manage to reproduce the same level in the second round and achieved a score of 19, putting him in overall fourth place. Frans continued to shoot well and shot 21 putting him in equal first place and into a shoot off, which he eventually won.

Allan and I shot original flint on Saturday morning. Although this is not my strong event I was pleased with my two rounds and overall score. Allan exceeded his average score during the competition but neither of us was good enough to be in contention for a medal.

I had entered teams in the Batesville and Hawker competitions and was placed fourth

in both events.

Germany excelled in the clay events this year, winning both repro classes and both team events. Fortunately, a French man and I managed to win the original classes which meant we didn't have to listen to the German national anthem more than four times during the medal ceremony (I think I know the words now!).

We all enjoyed the week in Spain, the range was excellent, the company and camaraderie amongst the clay shooters was brilliant, but overall the results were disappointing, which has made us all more determined to come back fighting next year at the World Championships in Portugal.

I would like to thank Victor Chopin-John for the part he played as team captain.

It is not easy to take on this role and this year was no exception. Thanks Victor and Ros for your help and support leading up to and during the event. I would also like to thank Heather and John Marsh for finding the hotel; it was comfortable, quiet and well located for both ranges.

Future events – by the time this report appears in the magazine, we will have completed the qualifying events for Portugal. Qualifying for the European Championships in Finland in 2011 will take place on the 2nd and 16th October 2010 and the full training dates at Sywell are published in the 2010 Calendar of Events and on the MLAGB website.

*Jane Capewell,
DTL Discipline Secretary*



GB Medal Winners; l-r Jon Harper-Smith, Nick Harvey, Jane Capewell, Gareth Callan, John Marsh, David Spittles, Tom Clark, Helen Harper-Smith and David Brigden.

Medals and Positions up to 10

Individual Comp.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	>10	DNS
	37	37	36	36	35	34	33	32	32	32	970	31
Germany	14	9	11	5	6	6	4	9	4	1	63	2
France	6	9	9	6	6	9	9	10	4	9	110	
Spain	6	5	6	3	6	4	7	3	4		151	9
Great Britain	3	2	1	4	3	3	4	1	5	5	89	1
Sweden	2	2			1	3		1	1	2	42	2
Italy	2		2	1	1	1	2	1	4	1	79	9

Team-Comp.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	>10	DNS
	21	21	21	21	20	18	16	12	10	9	17	
Germany	9	6	2		1			1			1	
France	6	4	4	3	1	1	1			1		
Italy	2	1	2		1	1	3	1	1	3		
Spain	1	3	4	4	1	4	2	1	1			
Austria	1	3	1	3	7	2		1				
Finland	1				1		2	3	2		3	
Belgium	1					1						
Sweden		2	3			1			2		2	
Switzerland		1	2	5			1	1	2	1	1	
Great Britain		1		3		2	3	1		1	6	
Slovak Republic			1	1	2			1		2		
Hungary			1	1		2		1				