

7th MLAIC

# World Long Range Championships

20th-27th September 2009, North Carolina, USA

by David Minshall, Vice-Captain



*Adrian Booth, Andrew Burgess, Nicholas Washington, Len Jackson, David Minshall, John Whittaker, George Arnold, Mike Alexandre  
The team just prior to 300 yard practice (silly hats optional!)*

*The 7th MLAIC World Long Range Championships was held at Camp Butner, North Carolina, 20 – 26 September 2009. A British team of eight riflemen travelled to the USA to compete and returned with two new world records, 10 medals and 5 placing certificates – a great result!*

## Background

Introduced in 1999, the MLAIC long range matches comprise events fired at 300, 500, 600, 900 and 1000 yards. Refinement of the programme over the years has brought about a full week of shooting for individuals and teams, with competitions for original and reproduction rifles in the individual events. Course of fire at 300, 500 and 600 yards (mid-range) is 3 convertible sighters and 10 match shots, and at 900 and 1000 yards (long-range) is 5 convertible sighters and 15 match shots. Team matches where possible are held in addition to, rather than concurrent with, the individual matches.

Rifles used are generally of the late form of percussion match rifle; .45 calibre,

with heavy match barrel, vernier adjustable sights and a half stock with pistol grip. Shooting is from the prone position with a two point sling for support at mid-range. Beyond 600 yards a wrist rest may be used in addition to or in place of the sling, or shooting may be from the supine position.

Len Jackson was appointed team Captain by the MLAGB Council of Management, Len subsequently appointing David Minshall as Vice-Captain. Expressions of interest for team selection were sought and the final team selected based on performance during the MLAGB series of mid and long range matches and other competition results, along with demonstrating a commitment to training.

The MLAGB and Long Range Rifles Branch hold combined weekends of shooting at mid and long range. Holding Association and Branch activities on the same weekends has helped in popularising this discipline and encouraging shooters from afar to travel to Bisley. Advantage was taken of this by team members during the year, arriving a couple of days early on some weekends and holding mid-week

practice shoots at long range; this was especially useful for the team members from Jersey who are limited to 600 yard shooting on their 'home range.'

## Early Start for Some

Four members of the team chose to arrive in the USA approximately two weeks before the World Championships. Mike Alexandre, George Arnold, Adrian Booth and Len Jackson had opted to take in some additional shooting whilst in the US, competing in a long range shoot at Atterbury and attending Friendship.

The pre-match warm-up was successful with the following prizes being won at Atterbury in the original rifle class:

- Mike Alexandre: Silver at 1000 yards
- George Arnold: Silver at 900 yards and Bronze in the 900/1000 yard aggregate
- Adrian Booth: Bronze at 900 yards

Moving on to Friendship, Adrian Booth won the 500 yard match for Traditional English Long Range Rifles.

The remainder of the team, Andrew Burgess, David Minshall, Nicholas Washington and John Whittaker, met at the team hotel along with the 'advance party' on Saturday 19 September.

### Camp Butner

The hotel was 20 minutes or so drive on quiet roads from the range, the National Guard Training Ground of Camp Butner, North Carolina. The site was acquired in 1942 for the training of infantry divisions and miscellaneous artillery and engineer units, and was named in honour of Major General Henry Wolfe Butner, native of Surry County, North Carolina, who died in March 1937 after a distinguished military career. Today Camp Butner operates the following ranges:

- Composite Pistol Range – 50 firing points and automated computer controlled 25yd line.
- Record Fire Pistol Range – 10 lane, computer controlled and scored.
- Zero/NBC/Night Fire Range – 25 point, automated computer controlled for night fire.
- 1000 yard Known Distance Range – 50 firing points with motorized pits.
- Zero Range – 32 firing points
- Record Fire Rifle Range – 16 point automated computer controlled and scored.

Although the facility did have a 1000 yard range, prior to 2003 it lacked both 500 and 900 yard firing points. This was rectified in 2003 in order to hold the 4th MLAIC World Long Range Championships. With the firing points on progressively higher mounds as distance to targets increased, large volumes of earth had to be excavated and placed to form the new firing points. The work was undertaken by the National Guard. In 2003 these points were bare earth covered by straw and very muddy when wet! Thankfully in the intervening years grass had grown eliminating the mud.

The target frames, powdered by a small electric motor, will be appreciated by anyone who has pulled targets on a range. At the touch of a button the target frame rises into place, or lowers for scoring.

### Weather Warning

An informal meeting was held for shooters on the Saturday evening preceding the Championship. Joe Hepsworth, the US Long Range Team Captain, advised that the weather forecast for the week was not good. The programme of events had five full days



of shooting, but with rain forecast during the week there was some doubt about being able to complete the program, despite the closing Saturday being reserved for a 'rain day'.

It was agreed that if the team matches were held concurrently with the individual matches then some time could be gained, adding flexibility in the event of rain. Although this was not desirable it did provide a solution whereby the maximum amount of shooting could be gained by all. It was decided that following the mid range practice and the long range practice but before competition, team captains would provide the match director with a sealed envelope containing the names of their team members. These teams were only to be used in the event that the separate team matches were cancelled due to bad weather; the results for the team matches could then be determined using concurrent individual scores.

Equipment control was held at the range on Sunday 21 September, all members of the team satisfying scrutiny without issue. The team was evenly split between those shooting original rifle (Mike Alexandre, George Arnold, Adrian Booth and John Whittaker) and those shooting

*The motor driven target frames, with 500 yard targets in place.*



reproduction rifle (Andrew Burgess, Len Jackson, David Minshall and Nicholas Washington)

Late in the afternoon an orientation meeting was held in the pits (butts) where range safety rules and the use of the electric target frames were explained. This also afforded opportunity for shooters to clarify any further administrative matters.

Following the orientation meeting, the team captains met with the match director to determine allocation of firing points. Shooters were grouped in fours per firing point, with the nations being mixed. Two details were scheduled per distance such that while two competitors fired, one was allocated to the pits and the other acted as scorer on the firing point.

### World Championships

Monday was set aside for practice at 300, 500 and 600 yards. With the forecast for the day fine and poor conditions due later in the week, there was some debate as to whether the training should be curtailed and the matches begun early. In the end it was decided to stick with the program. The practice sessions allow shooters opportunity to check equipment and establish elevation settings for all ranges. Generally only a small number of shots are required for this, although some nations did take opportunity to train on the full match course of fire with a view to their team selections.

The 300, 500 and 600 yard matches were due to be held on Tuesday. Rain however put a stop to that and only the 300 yard match was held. Great Britain got off to a good start with John Whittaker taking gold with a score of 43.2 in the original rifle class and Adrian Booth on 39.2 gaining a fourth place certificate in the same class. Top GB scorer in the reproduction rifle class was David Minshall with a creditable 42.3 for eighth place.

The 500 and 600 yard matches were held the following day, Wednesday, in contrasting conditions. The mornings 500 yard match was shot in slightly overcast conditions, while for the afternoon and the 600 yard match the sun appeared bringing with it a tricky mirage to deal with. John Whittaker continued with his fine form taking gold again at 500 yards with a new world record score of 45.3. At the same distance David Minshall was again top GB scorer in the reproduction class with 42.2 for sixteenth place. At 600 yards and still scoring well with 39.3 John took second place and the silver medal. In the reproduction rifle match Andrew Burgess won the 600 yard competition with 45.4,

and gave Great Britain a second new world record for the day. Two new world records, two gold medals and a silver medal in just four events for the day – a splendid achievement for GB! Josef Ruoss of Switzerland also deserves mention here, having set a new world record at 500 yards in the reproduction rifle class with his winning score of 46.4.

By this time in the program, the individual mid-range matches, the separate team mid-range matches and the 900 yard practice should have been completed. After some reorganisation by the Match Director, Ted Greer, it was decided to hold the 900 yard practice and match on Thursday, similar for 1000 yards on Friday, and the long-range team match on Saturday. This meant that the mid-range team results would be based on the scores already achieved by the shooters named in the sealed envelopes provided by the team captains before the individual matches.

The winning mid-range team was Germany with a score of 501.25 beating their previous world record score of 496.21 set at Bisley in 2005. South Africa were second and USA third, with the GB team of Mike Alexandre, David Minshall, Nicholas Washington and John Whittaker finishing 6th. For the Mid-Range Aggregate in original class John Whittaker gained a further gold medal for his collection.

Thursday, for the 900 yard shooting, the weather had changed again. The mornings practice was held in tolerable conditions, but as the day wore on temperatures broke 32 degrees Celsius (90F) which with the high humidity made things increasingly uncomfortable. The volunteer helpers on the range were regularly passing along the firing point ensuring that shooters had plenty of water to hand; despite this and with no



*US Team Captain, Joe Hepsworth, during the opening ceremony. The inaugural shot was fired by Captain Lequick.*

chance of shelter on the open range one shooter passed out on the firing point during the match. There was some outstanding shooting by the South African Team who took gold (and a new world record), silver and bronze in the reproduction rifle match and bronze in the original rifle class. John Whittaker continued to demonstrate his mastery of the match rifle winning the latter class with a score 59.5. Competing in the reproduction rifle class, Nicholas Washington scored an excellent 60.2 for eighth place and top British shooter in the class.

By Friday, conditions had again taken a turn for the worse. The 1000 yard practice was held but rain prevented the match taking place. In a bid to get the shooting finished, competitors were on the firing point and ready to shoot the 1000 yard match at 7:30am on Saturday morning. Although overcast and with rain threatening, conditions were waited out and just before 8:00am it was light enough for the match to commence. The original rifle class saw another new world record set when Karl Kuehn of the USA scored 59.2 for first place. Top scorer for Great

Britain shooting original rifle was Mike Alexandre, scoring 56.3 for 4th place. Also achieving a prize certificate place in the same class was Adrian Booth who finished 6th with 51. Nicholas Washington maintained his form in the reproduction rifle class with 58.1 for 7th place and again the top British shooter in the class.

For the long range aggregate, John Whittaker (3rd, original), Mike Alexandre (5th, original) and Nicholas Washington (5th, reproduction) all received prize certificates.

Following a break for lunch and a further break to allow rain to pass, an attempt was made to stage the long range team match. Shooting commenced at 1000 yards. The GB team comprised four shooters, Andrew Burgess, David Minshall, Nick Washington and John Whittaker, plus wind coach Mike Alexandre. On completion of the 90 minute detail the shooters moved forwards to 900 yards for the final distance. Within a short period of the shooting starting light rain recommenced. The rain in itself was not heavy enough to prevent shooting, however with the dull light and misty conditions visibility of the target became an issue. In the end the match had to be abandoned and the team results were once again to be based on the scores already achieved by the shooters named in the sealed envelopes provided by the team captains.

The Great Britain team score was an outstanding 427.10, beating the world record score set by the USA in 2005 by 18 points. For this they achieved second place and the silver medal. South Africa however was the winning team with a magnificent score of 477.18 and new world record. This has certainly raised the standard by a huge margin.



*GB team training at 1000 yards*

## Awards

The awards ceremony and closing banquet took place at the Shriner's Club, at Oxford, North Carolina. The large reception room provided ample space for shooters, the volunteer helpers and those involved with the management of the match to circulate and spend time with friends, old and new. The arrival of match director Ted Greer and his wife brought about an impromptu standing ovation. An equally impressive ovation was given to Joe Hepsworth (the US Team Captain), his wife Janet and their family when they were gathered together for photographs. Joe's family had been around for the week helping on the firing point and in the pits.

Early in the proceedings each team was called forward for photographs. Following the banquet the presentations were dealt with efficiently allowing time to celebrate the award winners without prolonging affairs.

In addition to the medals and certificates, some special awards were made. Al Roberts presented two silver plates in memory of his father, Bill (gunmaker, 1934-2004), one for each of the original rifle aggregate winners. John Whittaker (GB) was presented with the mid-range aggregate plate and Karl Kuehn with that for the long range aggregate. Bill Roberts was a member of the MLAGB and widely known for his craftsmanship and passion for the sport. Having known Bill Roberts and visited him in the US, John's award was especially well received bringing back memories of a great man.

A final special award was made by American gunmaker Lee Shaver. This was presented to Eugene Kuisis of South Africa for the grand aggregate.



*The 1000 yard match*

## The Future

The MLAIC are currently reviewing their Constitution and Rules. The Long Range Rules Review Sub-Committee of Joe Hepsworth (USA), David Minshall (Great Britain) and Merwe Van Rensburg (South Africa) took opportunity to meet with the Team Captains to discuss both the rules and the future of the sport. There were some items of heated debate; the finer points of how slings were to be fitted to rifles and the size of teams being two notable matters. It is apparent that a clear set of rules that avoid ambiguity are needed so we are not placing shooters in a position where they can be disqualified for technical infringements.

Balancing the nationalistic aspirations of some nations to maximise medal potential and others who have more interest in maintaining some historical context of the sport is going to be a difficult task.

## Closure

The early curtailment of shooting due to rain one day led to an impromptu gathering of many shooters at the hotel where the GB team and others were based. An enjoyable time was had by all whiling away the afternoon with chatter and a modicum of drink. It was satisfying to be told by the hotel staff that they enjoyed having the shooters stay, but were surprised at the camaraderie shown by people from competing nations. This was a great compliment and reflects well on all.

Despite the rain and disruption to the programme the abiding memory is of a friendly Championship. New nations, Australia and Holland, were welcomed to the event this year and it is hoped that this growth can continue and that in the future nations will be able to field larger teams as more shooters take to the discipline.

It now passes to Great Britain to host the 8th MLAIC World Long Range Championship at Bisley in 2011.



*John Whittaker*

## Equipment Summary

Original rifles used in the championship included Whitworth, Henry, Gibbs-Metford and Rigby. In the reproduction class the Pedersoli Gibbs dominated, but there also a good number of custom built rifles. Gibbs in use included some with modifications including replacement sights and rebuilt locks. For reference the following equipment was used by the British Team (percussion caps were CCI Magnum):

### Original

Mike Alexandre

Rigby match rifle. 560 grain swaged paper patched bullet, 30:1 lead:tin. Plain card wad over 95 grains Swiss No. 3 (2F)

George Arnold

Whitworth match rifle. 580 grain extruded hexagonal paper patched bullet, 30:1 lead:tin. Hexagonal card wad over 95 grains of Swiss No. 4 (1.5F)

Adrian Booth

Rigby match rifle. 550 grain cast paper patched bullet, 30:1 lead:tin. Oxyoke wad over 95 grains Swiss No. 3 (2F)

John Whittaker

Metford match rifle. 535 grain cast paper patched bullet (C.Higginbottom mould), 2.5 % tin. 12mm fruit juice carton wad over 85 grains Swiss No. 3 (2F)

### Reproduction

Andrew Burgess

Pedersoli Gibbs. 560 grain swaged paper patched bullet, 4% tin. Oxyoke wad over 100 grains Swiss No. 3 (2F)

Len Jackson

Pedersoli Gibbs. 560 grain cast paper patched bullet, 30:1 lead:tin. Plain card wad over 95 grains Swiss No. 3 (2F)

David Minshall

Pedersoli Gibbs. 535 grain cast paper patched bullet (B.Beswick mould), 30:1 lead:tin. Plain card wad over 90 grains Swiss No. 3 (2F)

Nicholas Washington

Pedersoli Gibbs. 540 grain swaged paper patched bullet. Plain card wad over 100 grains Swiss No. 3 (2F)

# Results

## ORIGINAL RIFLE (Individual)

### 300 yards

1. J. Whittaker (GB)	43.2
2. J. De Villiers (SA)	42.1
3. M. Yess (USA)	42
4. A. Booth (GB)	39.2

### 500 yards

1. J. Whittaker (GB)	45.3	NWR
2. J. De Villiers (SA)	43.1	
3. M. Yess (USA)	41.2	

### 600 yards

1. A. Roberts (USA)	42
2. J. Whittaker (GB)	39.3
3. J. De Villiers (SA)	38.2

### 900 yards

1. J. Whittaker (GB)	59.5
2. K. Kuehn (USA)	57.3
3. J. De Villiers (SA)	57.1

### 1000 yards

1. K. Kuehn (USA)	59.2	NWR
2. J. De Villiers (SA)	59	
3. R. Weber (USA)	57.1	
4. M. Alexandre (GB)	56.3	
6. A. Booth (GB)	51	

### Mid-Range Aggregate

1. J. Whittaker (GB)	127.8
2. J. De Villiers (SA)	123.4
3. M. Yee (USA)	121.3

### Long Range Aggregate

1. K. Kuehn (USA)	116.5
2. J. De Villiers (SA)	116.1
3. J. Whittaker (GB)	107.5
5. M. Alexandre (GB)	102.5

### Grand Aggregate

1. J. De Villiers (SA)	239.5
2. J. Whittaker (GB)	234.13
3. K. Kuehn (USA)	231.8

## REPRODUCTION RIFLE (Individual)

### 300 yards

1. W. Wehle (Ger)	45.3
2. R. Juranek (Ger)	44.3
3. G. Kunz (Ger)	44.3
8. D. Minshall (GB)	42.3

### 500 yards

1. J. Ruoss (Swz)	46.4	NWR
2. E. Kuisis (SA)	46.3	
3. R. Juranek (Ger)	45.3	
16. D. Minshall (GB)	42.2	

### 600 yards

1. A. Burgess (GB)	45.4	NWR
2. P. Leonhardt (Ger)	45.3	
3. C. Smit (SA)	45.3	

### 900 yards

1. C. Smit (SA)	67.2	NWR
2. E. Kuisis (SA)	65.4	
3. J. Van Rensberg (SA)	65.3	
8. N. Washington (GB)	60.2	

### 1000 yards

1. E. Kuisis (SA)	62.3
2. G. Kunz (Ger)	62
3. D. Munch (USA)	60.3
7. N. Washington (GB)	58.1

### Mid-Range Aggregate

1. W. Wehle (Ger)	133.8
2. E. Kuisis (SA)	130.9
3. C. Smit (SA)	130.6
9. A. Burgess (GB)	125.5

### Long Range Aggregate

1. E. Kuisis (SA)	127.7
2. J. Van Rensberg (SA)	124.7
3. G. Kunz (Ger)	124.2
5. N. Washington (GB)	118.3

### Grand Aggregate

1. E. Kuisis (SA)	257.16
2. G. Kunz (Ger)	250.8
3. W. Wehle (Ger)	248.13
8. A. Burgess (GB)	237.6

## TEAM MATCHES

### Mid-Range Team

1. Germany	501.25	NWR
2. South Africa	499.26	
3. USA	493.16	
5. Great Britain	441.17	
M. Alexandre		
D. Minshall		
N. Washington		
J. Whittaker		

### Long Range Team

1. South Africa	477.18	NWR
2. Great Britain	427.10	
A. Burgess		
D. Minshall		
N. Washington		
J. Whittaker		
3. USA	405.11	



Andrew Burgess receives his 600 yard Gold Medal from Joe Hepsworth

NWR: New World Record