

90 years of the CPSA



IN THE SECOND PART OF OUR SERIES CELEBRATING THE CPSA'S 90TH BIRTHDAY, **JAMES MARCHINGTON** LOOKS AT THE DEVELOPMENT OF CLAY SHOOTING'S GOVERNING BODY FROM 1939 TO 1948

Clay targets were used to train gunners for combat



CPSA HISTORY

THE TIME was of course dominated by the Second World War. When war was declared on September 3 1939, sports and pastimes were put on hold unless they served a serious wartime purpose. The British Open Sporting, for instance, would not be contested again until 1948. The International Shooting Sport Federation suspended operations, and in 1940 the situation looked so dire that the secretary general of the Swedish shooting federation took the ISSF's records from Paris to Stockholm for safe keeping.

There were no Olympic Games in 1940 or 1944, and even when they returned, with the 1948 London games, there were just four shooting events – held at Bisley – with rifle and pistol only and no shotgun competition.

During the war years, many shotguns which might have been used for clay competition were co-opted into the war effort. An appeal quickly produced 20,000 sporting shotguns for use by the Home Guard, and in January 1942 there were 33,623 recorded as being in Home Guard service. Today, mention of the Home Guard conjures up images of the comedy TV series *Dad's Army*, but of course at the time the threat of enemy invasion was very real and deadly serious. Eley Kynoch manufactured special cartridges which were issued to the Home Guard. They came in 2½" paper cases

suitable for standard sporting guns, marked with the WD arrow and loaded with either a 16 gauge spherical ball or large 'lettered' shot in sizes such as SG – examples are prized by collectors today.

Clay shooting as a sport all but closed down through the war, but its value was recognised by the military as a way of teaching fighter pilots and machine gunners the principles of hitting a moving target. Official wartime photographs show a ground-based rig that was used to train bomber gunners. The trainee would sit in a mock-up turret, while a colleague released a clay target from a hand-cocked clay trap. Contemporary accounts say it was excellent training for the gunners in acquiring a moving target and applying lead.

The Royal Air Force also used more conventional clay shooting as part of its training. One such account appears in the detailed story of Ken Fenton, a 19-year-old Yorkshire lad who enlisted in 1940 and went on to pilot a Blenheim bomber (see www.kenfentonswar.com). The story, recounted by his son, relates how Ken was taught "the art of clay pigeon shooting... anticipating a target's flight," and adds that he maintained his interest long after the war, becoming a keen shot.

With the end of the war in 1945, life began to return to normality and clay shooting started to pick up once again. It still had a long

way to go – the first accurate records of the CPSA show that in 1946 its membership stood at 100. But the sport was building momentum, both at home and worldwide. The ISSF held its first post-war World Championship in Stockholm in 1947, and the following year the British Open Sporting Championship was revived. Before long, shotguns would return to the Olympic stage... but that's another chapter in our story.

Do you have any old photographs or records from the early days of the CPSA? We'd love to see them. Drop us a line at info@cpsa.co.uk or write to the address on our letters page.



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