
Some of My Recollections and Photographs of the Early Days of Liverpool Pistol Club.

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I joined Liverpool Pistol Club in mid 1963 and at that time the club had been in operation since the mid 1950's. It had its genesis as a provost marshal military club formed primarily by Mick Grey. At this time I believe Mick was an Army Captain who later retired with rank of lieutenant colonel after a last tour of duty in Vietnam. On retirement from the army he, with assistance from wife Doris, became full time Administrative Secretary of the NSWAPA.

It was a moot point then, as is now, as to whether Liverpool was the first club in NSW or whether it was Sydney Pistol Club. Mick Grey maintained that Liverpool was the first and that confusion may have arisen because the club was initially formed as a military club with few civilian members. As more civilians joined, military personnel numbers dropped off and soon had no representation. Mick felt Sydney Club only became aware of Liverpool as its membership became more civilian oriented.

In 1963 the Liverpool club had two ranges. One was a hut in the Holsworthy Army base and the other was a range in a paddock just off Denham Court Road at Denham Court.

The hut at Holsworthy was used each Wednesday evening and incorporated a 25 metre range with a few fold up tables as shooting benches. Targets were scaled down versions of the 50 metre ISU (ISSF) target. Generally, single shot .22 pistols were used on this range and they mainly consisted of .22lr Webley and Scotts, .22 lr Drulovs and a few .310 cadet actions converted to .22lr, fitted with orthopedic grips and incorporating a set trigger. One or two Hammerlie free pistols were just making an appearance.

The Denham Court range was extremely basic and situated in an open paddock. Car parking was usually at the top of a hill with a walk down a reasonably steep slope to the range. Members, with souped-up or newer cars, blew a lot of smoke and chewed up grass to get from the bottom of the hill back to the top. A hint of rain or dew precluded trying the slope and if it rained while cars were at the bottom, it meant a quick exit or risk being stranded.

The Denham Court range consisted of one bank of five manually operated turning targets and provision for 10 targets for use at 25 or 50 metres. Backstops were steel angled plates about two metres high backed by the natural slope of a hill. Free Pistol from the 50 metres line could not be shot at the same time as a 25 metre match as there was no dividing wall. To shoot from 50 metres was not straight forward; it necessitated standing on the side of a hill and shooting across a dip and then depending on which target was being used, the shooter could be firing either downhill or uphill. It was difficult to find a level spot and small "steps" were cut into the hill for each competitor - this provided a sort of level shooting platform. Some shooting positions were better than others and longer term members seemed to "own" the better sites. The firing line for Rapidfire was in the bottom of the dip and as such it was necessary to shoot uphill. There was no building on the range and "benches" were wooden

cable drums from the PMG (now Telstra). Being timber, the drums sometimes went missing in action, it was believed they were “borrowed” by locals for use as firewood.



A photo of the Denham Court range about 1966

In the early sixties there were only 3 authorised matches, namely, Free Pistol, Rapidfire and Centrefire. On the Denham Court range, in addition to the pistols noted previously, Rapidfire pistols were mainly Hi Standard in both .22 long rifle and .22 short, Star .22 short, Browning .22 long rifle and the first .22 short Walther OSP's with the round, longer barrel and without compensation holes were just making an appearance. Centre fire pistols were mainly S&W K38's and these were not common due to the cost of reloading equipment and a general lack of knowledge of reloading and projectile casting processes. Projectiles were difficult, if not impossible to purchase. This situation changed rapidly from the mid sixties onwards as reloading and lead casting procedures became better known and equipment was purchased by small groups or teams of members in order to cut down on cost and to pool the knowledge base. By the late sixties, commercially manufactured projectiles by companies such as Super were readily available at a reasonable cost, so somewhere around the place there is a heap of old used casting, lubricating and sizing equipment.

When first joining the Liverpool pistol club, prominent members who I remember were, Geoff and Brian Banyer, Don Irving, Norm Macaulay, Roy James, Doug Blades, Jim Munro, Gordon Dunning, Arthur Smith, Norm Baxter and daughter Maureen. Geoff Banyer and Don Irving were firearm dealers and Don Irving had represented on the NSW State Rapid fire team.

Until January 1964, to apply for a pistol license, an application had to be made to the local Police Sergeant or Licensing Officer. The application was knocked back as a matter of course and it was then necessary to make an appeal before a magistrate. Providing the applicant was of good character, this long winded process generally resulted in a license being granted – but not always. Doug Blades, who had joined the club a some years before me, had only just received his license as I joined. He had appeared before a magistrate on two or three

occasions and had his applications rejected. It was not mandatory for the court to give reasons as to why rejection had occurred; consequently Doug did not know why he could not get his license. It eventually came to light that there was a person with the same name and age living in the area who had a criminal record and finger print check was required to clear Doug who was subsequently was granted a license.

A year or so after joining the Liverpool Club, the Holsworthy range was lost. I have no real recollection as to the reason, other than faintly remembering something about a new base commander not liking civilians using the range. As Mick Grey was away on an overseas posting, there was no friend at court and the range was lost. From this point on, the Denham Court range was the only option.

Over the next year or so, a turnover of members coupled with a loss of interest by some of the early stalwarts led to changes in the committee. Amongst these changes, at 20 years of age, I became Club Secretary. In the following two or three years of enjoyable shooting on the side of a hill at Denham Court, a number of new members joined, some of whom were to make significant contributions to the club. They were George Kysil, Barry Dyer, Kevin Cox, Peter and Bob Fraser and their father Roy, Roly Muscat and Bryan MacGuren. With the most basic of facilities and a membership of about 30 or 40, the years from 1963 to about 1967 were amongst the most enjoyable and happy of many years of pistol shooting.

During the early years of shooting on the Denham Court range, one memory, above others, worth recounting was the attendance of Peter Badcoe. Peter was not a regular attendee but was a gun aficionado who arrived at the range late one afternoon with a car boot full of various military firearms and ammunition. In a scene which could never occur in today's environment, we spent some time firing a variety of firearms, some of which I had never seen before or since.

Around late 1966 or early 1967, we were advised that the Denham Court range would no longer be available and in the near future we would have to vacate the site, although no firm date was set. Again I have limited recollections as to why, or even who owned the property on which the range was located but think the reason was to do with proposed residential development around the range area. It became imperative to find a new range site. This proved difficult and many days over eighteen months or so were spent looking for a suitable and available location. There were many sites investigated that did not come to fruition for one reason or another. One possibility was a site on the Amaroo car race track property but when it became evident the owner/promoter thought pistol shooting would attract paying visitors, this site "fell off the map". There was a disused quarry; I think it was at the junction of Leumeah, Hansen, Junction and Peter Meadows Roads, on which negotiations were entered into however, this site also fell through. This was probably fortuitous as it has since become a

residential and school area. Finally, contact was made with Tony Fel and although the site was not necessarily ideal due the smell emanating from the casing factory it did have one major advantage – it was available and we were desperate. Tony saw the advantage of having people on the site over the weekend for security reasons and so, being mutually beneficial, this became the range site.

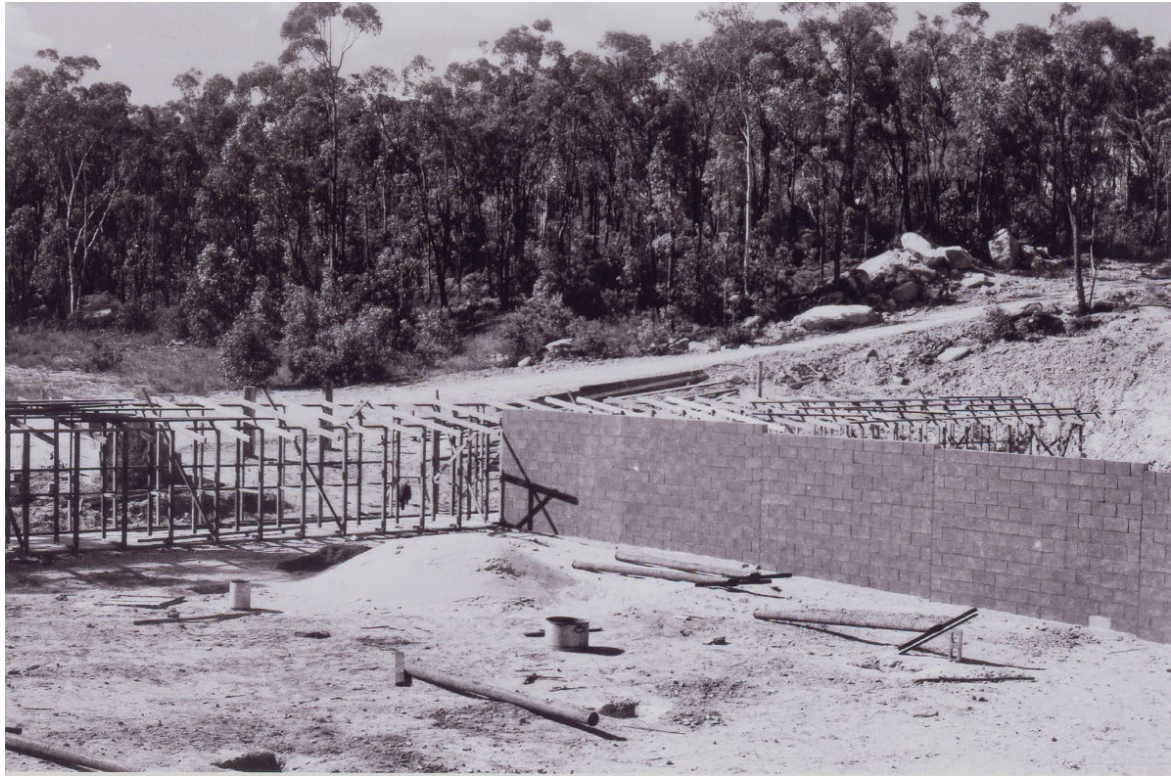
From memory, funds for range construction came from a number of sources. Money was in the bank through good financial management since the inception of the club. An influx of new members over the previous few years coupled with an increased joining fee provided another source and a levy was also placed on members.

A lot of materials used in the construction of the range were donated as was almost all labour with the exception of site excavation and backstop mound building. I seem to think Norm Baxter, who was a Contracts Manager with the Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board, had a contact with the earth moving company which resulted in reduced rates. *(The photograph below shows a partially completed earthworks).*



In respect to labour there were a host of volunteer contributors. Most members contributed as labourers, however there were some major contributions from members who had particular skills. Roy Fraser, who had an engineering background, designed the baffles in accordance with correct engineering principles, Barry Dyer and Kevin Cox undertook most of the welding and fabrication of baffles and target frames. George Kysil was a builder and it was his building expertise and hard work which resulted in construction of most of the building works. In

addition to those mentioned above, members who attended most working bees over 12 months, (both Saturdays and Sundays), were Norm Macaulay, Gordon Dunning, Peter & Bob Fraser, Roly Muscat, Merv and Percy Shoesmith, Doug Blades, Jim Munroe, Bryan MacGuren and me. There were others but these are the names that I recall. *(The photo below shows a partially completed range).*



An interesting incident occurred while holes to insert the baffle supports were being dynamited. Initially a powder monkey from one of the mines was employed to carry out blasting. He proved to be unreliable as far as attending the range when he was needed and also appeared to be overly "cautious". It was resolved to carry out the blasting ourselves. A "cautious" start again showed little results in removing the sandstone, so it was decided to considerably increase the charges. Good and exciting results were soon achieved with lots of rock, dust and smoke shooting into the air with our amateur powder monkeys and other workers on the range cowering under cover wherever they could find it. After several great successes, one set of charges appeared to not go off. Great consternation and fear was evident amongst the self appointed powder monkeys. The tamped down sand had to be slowly and carefully removed by hand from the 2 or 3 inch diameters holes which were more than four feet down into solid rock. This took a lot of time but when each of the holes had been cleared it became obvious the charges had detonated and the blast had probably dissipated in layers of sandstone without any obvious disturbance or above ground noise. Some weeks later, the same situation occurred again and knowing from previous experience there was nothing to worry about. The pneumatic drill was employed to remove sand from the drilled holes rather than spending many hours clearing them by hand. Instant panic resulted

when some un-detonated gelignite was drilled out of the hole. We quickly learnt a lesson and although the blasting was continued by us amateur powder monkeys, it was with a lot more care and a healthy amount of fear. *(The photo below shows the effects of one of the blasts).*



Around the time the range was under construction, I am not sure if it was during the building process or just before or just after, Camden Pistol Club, who had a pistol range in a quarry near Camden, lost their range. They were a comparatively small club that could not find another range site, so those who wished to continue shooting joined the Liverpool Club. Only a handful of people transferred and most dropped out fairly soon thereafter. John Davidson and I think Don Quick were two transferees from the Camden Club.

On completion of the range it was decided to institute the Peter Badcoe VC Memorial Match which, at the time, was the first ever graded club team's match. This event, which is still conducted by the club, is one of the longest running team's matches in the country - it may even be the longest running event of its kind. Initially the Badcoe trophy match was held in conjunction with the CMPC Centrefire and Ladies Matches.

(An early photograph of the Badcoe Trophy is shown below).



The following photographs are what I believe to be the first three teams to win the Badcoe trophy. They are not necessarily in the correct order but the order can probably be established by referencing the trophy engravings. There are also a couple of general shots taken during a Badcoe/CMPC shoot. All these photos were taken on the same day which I think was during the third Badcoe shoot where it was fortunate that members of all three winning teams were present.

- The first photo is of Sydney Pistol Club members who won the trophy. The only name I can remember is Horst Schenk who is on the extreme right.
- The second photo is of Wakehurst Pistol members who won the trophy. From left to right they are Davy Peters, Ron Hutcheson, Marianne Mansfield and Don Lyall.
- The third photo is of members from Mudgee Pistol club but I cannot remember any of their names.
- The fourth photo is at the presentation of what I think is the 3rd Badcoe shoot. Gordon Dunning is presenting a trophy to my ex wife Kathy Fenning and the gentleman behind the trophy table is Norm Macaulay.
- The fifth photo is a shot of the crowd under the original covered area behind the turning target range.





In the very late 1960's early 1970's the combat pistol match became popular. For reasons political, even at this time, the name of the match was later changed to Service Pistol match. A potpourri of pistols was used as shown in the photograph below. The people I recognise are, Norm Macaulay bottom left, Vern Tuckwell third from the left, myself on the extreme right shooting and Roly Muscat acting as Range Officer.



In early 1970's, my then wife Kathy, who had also been a member of Liverpool Club, transferred to Blacktown Pistol Club as we had built a house in the lower Blue Mountains and travel distance to the Liverpool range became prohibitive. Other than an occasional visit over the next couple of years, this ended my relationship with Liverpool Pistol Club.