

HEADLINE – **Another first for Suffolk.**

Thanks from the Provincial Grand Master for Suffolk, Ian Yeldham.

'I was delighted when I heard that Suffolk had been selected to deliver this prestigious event and having now done so I'm even more delighted with the whole occasion; probably the largest Masonic competitor sporting event yet staged. My thanks go to everyone involved from the SMaCCS members and Suffolk Stewards Lodge to you, the Freemasons and guests from all over the country, representing eighteen different Provinces, who travelled hundreds of miles in some cases to contribute to a wonderfully competitive and yet friendly event. To raise in excess of £6000 for charity, one of the core principles of Freemasonry, really capped a truly magnificent day. My thanks to you all.'

Though the dawn on June 22nd was veiled in cloud, the wind was light, the forecasters were predicting wall to wall sunshine by mid-morning and so it proved as the helicopter dropped out of a cloudless sky to land at High Lodge Shooting School. The President of the Suffolk Masonic Clay Shooting Society and Suffolk's PGM Ian John Yeldham had arrived to shoot in the 2019 National Masonic Clay Shooting Championships hosted by SMaCSS and sponsored by Joint Sponsors, Ridgeons Timber & Builders Merchants together with Woodward Markwell Chartered Insurance Brokers and Independent Financial Advisors.

Many months of careful planning and loads of hard work had resulted in 205 clay shooting sportsmen and women, including three Juniors, entering for the event, a new record high number. Suffolk Masons knew they had a challenge on their hands if the entrants were to get around the 15 stands in a safe and timely manner so the Stewards, who were to accompany each of the 15 squads and who had all received previous training, were carefully briefed at 0745 hours. There followed a welcome from the PGM, a safety briefing for all from Roger Nash, the Chairman of SMaCSS, before the first shot was fired, on time, at 1000.

But there had been a great deal of preparation over the previous nine months. Back in 2017, when the four original members of the SMaCSS committee agreed to deliver the 15th National Masonic Clay Shooting Championships they had no idea then just how much work might be involved. So, they invented and implemented a project plan and they began to find out just how much was needed if they were to deliver a good event which satisfied all those involved. They ultimately recruited twenty or so experienced and well qualified people to help, they determined to deliver a class show and, because they had not hosted the Nationals previously, a 'First for Suffolk'.

A cash flow projection was created and it confirmed that one of the essential first ingredients was the need to secure several thousands of pounds in sponsorship in order to cover the basic costs. Two joint main sponsors came on board and fifteen other organisations each took Stand Sponsorship. One large item of expenditure was the need to provide a team of CPSA trained and experienced referees and a large slice of the early sponsorship covered that cost. We needed 15 referees plus a reserve of one to cover each stand.

Another identified requirement was the need to provide leadership to and control of the squads while they were actually shooting. We appointed twenty stewards so that each of the

15 squads could be accompanied, looked after and generally mentored. The training and instruction of those Stewards was a major undertaking and, as a result, their own personal welfare became a priority, they were well equipped with personal protection equipment, their own picnic and, later, were well fed and watered at a considerable cost which had been quickly and readily accepted. On the day, they all worked supremely well and delivered all that had been asked of them.

Since 2008, when SMaCSS, then as 'R&R Promotions', started supporting the East Anglian Children's Hospice Movement which was looking to build a new children's hospice, more than £20,000 has been distributed to our various Charities and this year we decided to support both the 2019 Suffolk Provincial Festival and the Suffolk Horse. Perhaps better known to most as the Suffolk Punch, the Suffolk Horse breed (*Equus ferus caballus*) is under serious threat and in danger of dying out. We are determined to do something about that serious situation in the months and years to come and new arrangements are currently being put in place to devolve the responsibility to other experienced Suffolk Masons to continue this good work. Meanwhile, SMaCSS has allocated £1000.00 to that cause.

In "Another first for Suffolk" the committee decided to appoint a Ladies Captain in order to capitalise on the increased interest surrounding the Championships. Laurette Lavery came onto the committee with the brief to develop and increase both Ladies and Junior numbers and to deliver some of the SMaCSS objectives which, previously, have not received the attention they perhaps deserved and which we have now identified as opportunities for improvement. We are keen to introduce new interested parties to the sport especially ladies and young people and we will give them every support and arrange and provide instruction, including the important safety aspects, where this is required.

As always, and despite all of the preparations, there are extraordinary happenings and challenges which cannot be foreseen. Several occurred on the day and, due to the careful pre-planning, they were dealt with smoothly and effectively when they occurred. Indeed, some were not even noticed by other committee members as they were dealt with by another and this was another benefit of having in place clearly defined roles and responsibilities with delegated authority.

Having received their briefings and attached themselves to their appointed Steward, the shooters progressed in a generally smooth, orderly and enjoyable manner around the 15 stands. The occasional slight equipment malfunction was speedily dealt with by the High Lodge staff and, somewhat to the surprise of the organisers, those who had completed the course started to arrive back in the Clubhouse at the time the programme suggested they might. An excellent luncheon was taken and enjoyed whilst the hosting team checked, validated, verified and analysed every score card. This worked particularly well and allowed the results to be completed and published in a timely manner without any undue delay so that the prize giving went off smoothly.

Due to the large number competing it was decided to shoot over fifteen stands instead of the usual twelve. This had the benefits of reducing the numbers in each squad and of presenting more varied targets. No time to get your 'eye in' with only three pairs on most stands, you had to be on the targets immediately which may have been the downfall of a number of cards. High Lodge had agreed to give us exclusive use of these stands so most were set up especially for the occasion. Said course designer and SMaCSS Chairman Roger Nash "The aim was to ensure that everyone would hit a high proportion of the targets, with a few testers to sort the top men from the rest and most people going home happy with their score; I hope we achieved that". Use of speed and angles and not distance was the order of the day, for example the slow incomer on stand 1 undoing some with not much gun swing possible, when to shoot? The rabbit ramp on stand 2 suited the game shooter with a fast swing through proving the most effective technique. Sim pairs always cause doubt, which one to

shoot first, and so it proved with the crossing teals on stand five. The fast quartering away rabbit on stand 6 was faster than many expected as well. Many full scores on stands 7 (in the corner) and the sim pair on stand eight helped to lift the average score. Stand ten, again a sim pair, proved costly to some with several blanks; the away bird needed more lead and the incomer less than some thought. The high tower on stand 11 was slower than expected with several targets unusually missed in front! A sim pair again on stand 12 before the pleasant surprise of an easy going away pair from the platform on 13, normal service resumed. The teal on 14 was easy enough if you took it early and the looper was then only a small left swing away. Lastly to stand 15 where the final sim pair was trickier than it looked, either bird was easily hittable on its own but swinging one way and then back on yourself spoiled many score cards”.

Over tea and cake, as the various squads mingled, everyone was involved in swapping yarns about the day and new fraternal connections and contacts were made. As the entrants prepared to face, for some, their long journey home the PGM announced the proceeds to be in excess of £6000.00. He wrapped the day by warmly thanking all of the organisers for the great work in delivering “Another first for Suffolk” and he acknowledged that great work, ending by clearly stating “others may do it as well but I doubt they will do it better” – or can they? Over to you West Lancs!

ENDS.