

KINGS OF THE Worlds

Chris Cundey takes a break from his HFT instruction duties to bring us the 2010 World Hunter Field Target Championships at Kelmarsh

For once in my life I'd actually managed to plan ahead and had booked the Friday off work before the World Hunter Field Target Association (W.H.F.T.A.) competition at Kelmarsh country show. I'm glad that I did, because I had a full day of practice and fine-tuning in very windy conditions which, according to our ever-so-accurate BBC, was the forecast for the weekend.

DAY 1 - SUNDAY

I arrived early on the Sunday morning and the wind was already there to meet me, along with a nasty chill and the happy hat-trick possibility of rain, sleet and showers. The shoot coincides with the Countryman Fairs' show at Kelmarsh Hall, Leicestershire, and is a perfect setting for the Worlds. There is the added benefit of being able to wander around the show and pop into the manufacturers' tents for a chat between the sessions. The Worlds has two courses positioned either side of the hall. The first course is in the woods to the right of the Hall with the second course placed along the edge of a lake to the left. By definition, the lake course should be the more difficult of the two as it is more open and prone to strong gusts of wind. On the first day I was to shoot the wood course in the morning, help with marshalling in the afternoon and then shoot the lake course in the afternoon of the second day. This format allowed over 300 shooters from eight different countries to shoot over the two days with one competitor travelling all the way from Malta (nice to meet you Wayne Galea).

HERE WE GO!

After five minutes on the zero range I was happy that nothing had been disturbed during the drive to Kelmarsh, so I grabbed a sausage butty and waited for the morning session shooters to be called for the safety brief. Whilst sitting and chatting it was obvious that the poor sods on the lake course were going to

have a hard time trying to compensate for windy gusts that must have been pushing 25 mph. A quick but professional safety brief soon followed and we were allowed on to the course to find our lanes. I was to start on lane 14 with Steve Lanyman and Nigel Williams for company. The great thing about the Worlds is that you shoot both days with the same guys. This made our group interesting as I was shooting for Team England and Nigel was shooting for Team Wales, our fiercest rivals.

We all managed to down the first target and moved onto the second lane which was the unsupported stander, barely 25 yards and a full-size kill. I shot first and have to admit that my technique was pants, coupled with the usual first few target nerves. The shot split high and a naughty word



Above: Ian Harford presents Mark Wall with the winner's trophy.



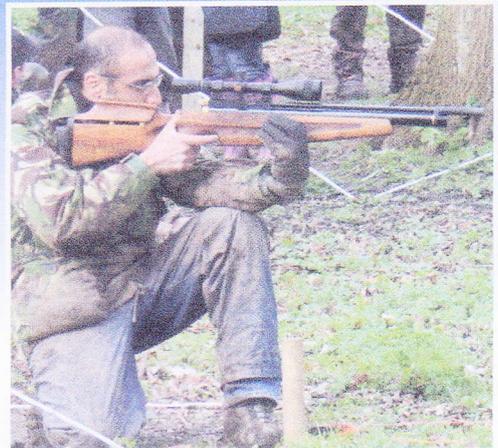
Left: Don't believe the flags.



Above: Team England took the squad honour.

Above right: Khalid Rafiq showing that a MK2 Daystate Huntsman can still cut the mustard in HFT.

Below: Use of the peg for stability.



SCORES ON THE DOORS

Once off the course we could soon work out who was in with a shout. Top score of the day went to Ryan Charlton with a superb 59, and the only target he missed was a relatively easy kneeling shot that I've seen him nail over and over again during practice. A large group of shooters was clustered behind with respectable 58s and 57s whilst my 55 was looking like I was well out of the running. The competitors that had been unfortunate to shoot the lake course came away with scores that showed how hard that course must have been. Daniel Smith was the best with a very hard earned 55. The afternoon shooters went onto the course and I donned my marshalling kit before walking to the top of the hill. This is where I could fully appreciate the depth of the mud around these pegs and the rather nasty, now twitching, wind. This combination made sure that the scores from the morning session were safe.

It was decided that the raffle would be done after the first day's shooting as last year the prizegiving and raffle at the end of day two went on forever. The prizes consisted of envelopes stuffed with cold, hard cash with the top prize of £1000 going to a very jammy Steve Burns. Four envelopes containing £500, plus another quartet of £250 envelopes were also handed out to beaming shooters.

Once the rifle and I had been cleaned, it was time to go back to the hotel for a nice meal and a pint with the other shooters; the social side is as much a part of the comps as the actual shooting. One thing is certain; I slept like a log that night.

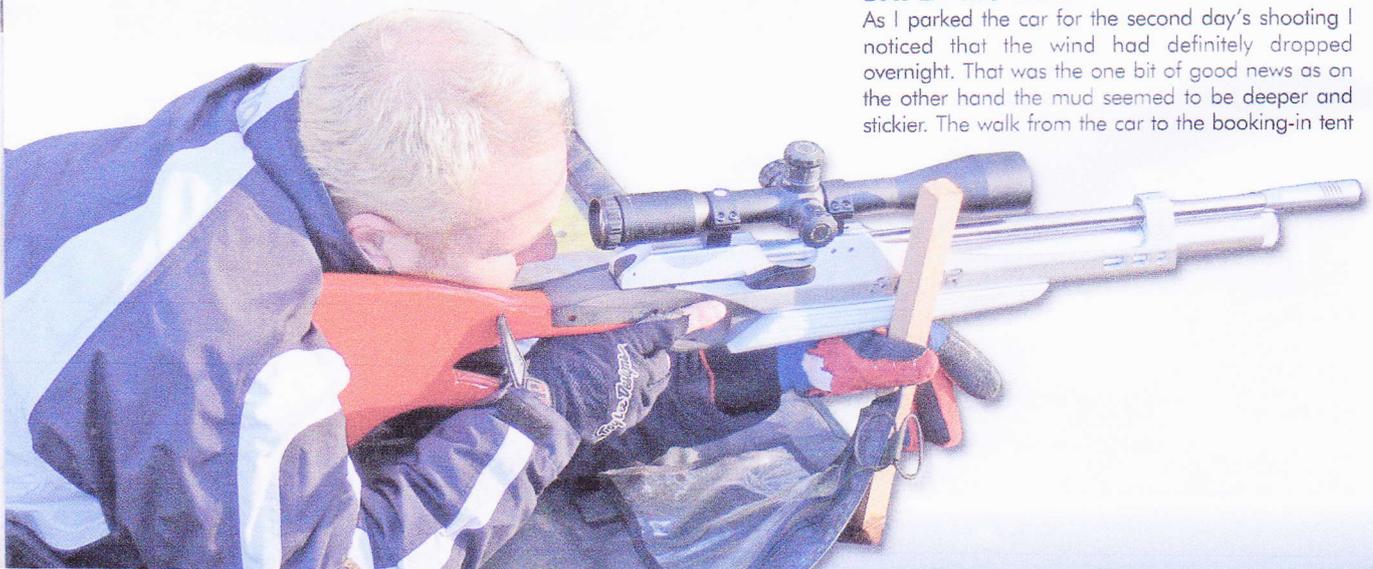
DAY 2 - MONDAY

As I parked the car for the second day's shooting I noticed that the wind had definitely dropped overnight. That was the one bit of good news as on the other hand the mud seemed to be deeper and stickier. The walk from the car to the booking-in tent

slipped out. What made it even worse was the fact that I had been practicing a slightly different standing technique shown to me by two times FT world champ, Andy Calpin, and felt that it really seemed to help. Never mind, shake off the target and focus on the next lane.

We shot seven more targets without any problems and then came to the edge of the lake to behold a sea of mud around each peg. It had been the wettest for eight years the week before the competition, and boy, did it show. Luckily I'm an ex FT shooter and don't like to get dirty so had my Aim Mat with me. That mat turned out to be the best thing I've ever bought.

At this point I was three targets down, Nigel was having a nightmare in the wind but Steve was going well; very well in fact. We finished lane 30 and went back into the woods to find lane 1 and the sheer bliss of mudless pegs. Fortunately, the wind at the start of the woods was strong but pretty constant in strength and direction; I normally find wind like that easier to read than the constant 'lift and drop' of a gentle breeze. We moved from lane to lane with Steve still doing really well, in fact I thought he had it in the bag right up until the last few targets. Of course we'd forgotten about the dreaded wind pixies and they punished all three of us with missed targets at the last furlong. We finished with Steve on a brilliant 58, me on a 55 and Nigel on a (gutted) 52. The course had been very well positioned and had made us work hard for every single target.





was probably only a few hundred yards but the mud was up to my ankles by the time I'd got there. I got booked in, had a plink on the zero range and then went onto the course to do some marshaling. Whilst I was on the course I could see that although the wind had dropped, many people were struggling with wind and range estimation. This was a bit of a surprise as I would have thought the howling gale the day before would have been harder to read.

The first session left the course with some shooters head to foot in mud, with bad scores and yet smiles on their faces. The second session had the safety brief and one group headed for the woods while my group turned left and headed through the mud to the lake course. Again my trio started on lane 14 and progressed up the hill towards Kelmarsh Hall.

This is where things got a bit weird. From our lane we could look behind at the flags of the participating countries that had been placed at the bottom of the field. Obviously we all thought that this would give us an indication of what the wind was doing. Normally the flags would help but on this particular day at least four of the flags were blowing in completely different directions! Maybe this was the cause of the morning sessions' problems?

The other twist was that, although Steve had shot brilliantly on the first day, he soon dropped five targets whilst Nigel and I were doing very well indeed. We moved up the hill and headed down toward the dreaded lake. This area is very flat which makes it difficult for a course setter to make the targets interesting so a theme of the M25 was used. There were road signs, traffic lights, a speed camera and the infamous Dartford tunnel that tried to trick the shooter into shooting at the wrong target.

We came to the first target in this area which was a 30-yard unsupported kneeler. I settled perfectly onto this target and gave left-hand edge for the wind to see, to my horror; the shot split the kill right on my cross hair. Despite the wind, the pellet hadn't moved at all. The next target was the speed camera which was a 25mm kill at 25 yards. I missed this one as well when the pellet moved right across the kill and struck the right-hand edge with a tantalizing spray of lead.

We moved onto our final five targets with Nigel and me on four down while Steve had valiantly managed to keep his head up with six down. The last target was not a good one to finish on as it was close to 40 yards and right on the edge of the lake. We already knew not to believe the flags and, in true gentlemanly fashion, discussed between us what we thought the wind was doing. Steve shot first to nail it and finished on a great 54. Nigel guessed wrong and finished on a better 55 and I guessed right to finish on a very chuffed 56.



TIRED BUT CHUFFED

We trudged off the course absolutely exhausted. The mud had been deep and so sticky that it tired your legs and feet when moving from lane to lane and the concentration needed to shoot two of the hardest and well thought out courses I've seen gave you the sort of mental tiredness that I normally associate with a ten-hour fishing session. I was however, feeling quite content as I knew that I'd done well on a course that had scalped some very, very good shots, although I didn't realize quite how badly. Some of the shooters that had been in contention after day one had dropped up to 10 targets, showing just how tricky the lake course had been. Our group handed our score cards in and hung around for a chat to find out what the scores had been. I was astounded to find out that I had fought my way into the top 12 with a shoot-off required between six of us. What was even more interesting was that there was a three-way tie for the top position. Ryan Charlton had managed to shoot well but Pete Dutton and Mark Wall had scrapped their way into contention with great second day scores.

THE SHOOT-OFFS

Once the scores had been fully calculated, we all went back into the woods for the shoot-offs. The Recoiling, Ladies and Juniors were quickly sorted along with a five-way scrap for 12th position in the

Top: Supported stander textbook style.

Above: The Dartford Tunnel tricked a few into shooting the wrong target.

Below: Any idea which one is called Big Chris?





Above: The mud grubbers.

Above right: Mark Wall, the 2010 champion, accepts the trophy from last year's champ, Kieran Turner.

Below: The top 12 Worlds HFT shooters.

Below right: Steve Burns takes the top raffle prize of a grand.



NATIONAL TEAMS

1st England
446 points
2nd Wales
36 points
3rd Poland
402 points
4th Scotland
398 points
5th Holland
360 points

MANUFACTURERS TEAMS

1st Walther
450 points
2nd Air Arms
447 points
3rd Daystate
443 points

OPEN

1st	Mark Wall	Wales	Air Arms	114
2nd	Ryan Charlton	England	Walther	114
3rd	Pete Dutton	England	Walther	114
4th	Steve Ianyman	England	Walther	112
5th	Dave Ramshead	England	Air Arms	111
6th	Chris Cundey	England	Daystate	111
7th	Darrell Waite	England	Daystate	111
8th	Gavyn Jones	England	Air Arms	111
9th	Mark Camoccio	England	Air Arms	111
10th	Pete Sparkes	Wales	Daystate	111
11th	David Taylor	England	Air Arms	111
12th	Khalid Rafiq	Scotland	Daystate	110

JUNIOR

1st	Greg Hensman Jr	England	Steyr	104
2nd	Cameron Casey	England	Air Arms	101
3rd	Craig Lord	England	Air Arms	101

RECOILING

1st	Patrick Fitzgerald	England	Weirauch	102
2nd	Colin Wilkinson	England	Weirauch	102
3rd	Steve Whiting	England	Air Arms	98

LADIES

1st	Steph Kirkwood	England	Steyr	110
2nd	Janine Travers	Wales	Air Arms	107
3rd	Jane Sparkes	Wales	Daystate	104

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1st	Simon Jones	England	Air Arms	100
2nd	Matthew Rawlings	England	Air Arms	94
3rd	Johnny Smith	England	Daystate	90

open. I had a most enjoyable tussle with Darrel Waite for 6th and 7th position, shooting a 25mm target at 35 yards in the standing position, whilst Darrel's wife Rachel squeaked like a cornered mouse every time he hit the kill. In the end Darrel missed and I fluked a hit to get into 6th position. To say I was chuffed after the first day's score is a huge understatement.

Then we had the main event for the top title. Ryan Charlton, Pete Dutton and Mark wall all hit the 45 yard target from the kneeling position so all three had to re-take the shot standing. Mark hit the target whilst Pete and Ryan took the edge in the swirling wind, making Mark Wall the W.H.F.T.A. 2010 champion. Well done Mark! Ryan managed to pip his good friend Pete and take the second position.

I would just like say an extra special well done to the 2010 Junior Champ, Greg Hensman, a great lad with a great dad, who took the title by borrowing my Steyr and keeping positive even when he'd missed a few targets. I wouldn't trust many with the rifle I took the 2008 UKAHFT title with but he's one of them. And a special mention to the Daystate team for giving me the silencer for a hunting article. Once it's done I'll give the silencer to the organizers of the Help for Heroes shoot at Kibworth for a raffle prize. That's a win-win situation in my books.

Well, what can I say? In my opinion the weekend had been a roaring success and my hat goes off to the organizers, course setters and my fellow marshals for making this one of the best shoots I have ever attended. Extra special thanks to Ian 'I always look good in photos' Harford for his support over the whole weekend and Gary Chillingworth for the photo in this article. The moral to finish with? Don't let your head go down if you miss a few targets or have a bad day. Stay positive and remember that every dog has its day. Maybe yours is just around the corner. ■

