

The National Scout Rifle Squad



A Note to Members and their Parents

What is it For?

The National Scout Rifle Squad has the same purpose as Scouting generally: the development of young people in achieving their full physical, intellectual, social and spiritual potentials. The Rifle squad aims to develop its members' potentials in the various roles of the sport of target shooting, as athletes, as instructors and as team members. It was formed in 2000, initially to compete against teams from the Cadet Forces.

The Scout Squad provides a “bridge” from the world of Scout target shooting into the wider target-shooting world, mainly by preparing people for membership of the NRAR Regional and Great Britain Youth Development squads and to take part in Junior International competitions. It is also the group from which teams are picked to represent British Scouting in shooting competitions as opportunity arises, notably at the GB Junior International at Bisley each August. Although called a “Rifle Squad”, it covers both rifle and pistol shooting.

Is it Successful?

Yes, very. So far over 80 of its past or present members have represented Great Britain or one of the Home Countries in Junior International competitions in the UK and overseas in Air Rifle, Air Pistol and Full-bore Rifle. Several have competed in the European and World Championships or hold or have held British Junior or Senior records. One represented England in the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne whilst still an Explorer Scout and another represented Wales in the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

How does it Work?

The squad generally meets approximately once a month except in July and August (for the summer holidays). The weekends may be for training or for competition or both. Those in November, December, January and February are generally at the National Shooting Centre at Bisley, one in March or April will be at the NSRA's West Midlands Indoor Shooting Centre at Aldersley (Wolverhampton), and the others will be held at various ranges around the country depending on the invitations we receive from our members' “home” clubs. This shares out the long-distance travel implicit in being a National” squad. We have been to Swansea, Bristol, Crewe, Basingstoke and Blackburn. Where we go next depends on you!

The weekends are run as Scout weekend camps. Sometimes you will need to bring a lightweight tent and or roll mat/camp bed; sometimes we use basic indoor accommodation in Scout Headquarters or, at Bisley, in the "Inns of Court" Pavilion. You will always need the usual personal kit (sleeping bag, eating and washing kit, torch). We operate the whole year round – your sleeping bag, in particular, needs to be warm enough for winter camping.

What will I get out of being a Squad member?

Opportunity; the opportunity to broaden your shooting experience and to take the sport to the next level. You are already one of the top performers in this sport within the Scout Association nationally, probably in Air Rifle or Air Pistol. Most likely you will mostly have shot Air Rifle standing. You will be encouraged to try other rifle shooting positions (kneeling and prone) and other Olympic shooting disciplines, first cartridge rifle shooting with .22 rimfire rifles. Some concentrate on this branch of the sport. Some have gone from there into full-bore rifle shooting.

You will have the opportunity to improve your technique with the help and support of qualified Instructors and Coaches.

As with any opportunity, what you get out of it will depend on what you put in!

What is the difference between Instructors and Coaches?

Both will work with you to help you improve your technique and your approach to shooting. Instruction is mainly about the mechanics of shooting; it concerns how you position your body, how you hold the gun and release the shot. It will generally focus on teaching you the ways in which good shooters obtain their results and helping you to learn these techniques. Coaching is mainly about helping you experiment to find out what works best for you and to work out your own training programmes for between coaching sessions. Remember that we meet as a squad only once a month. To reach your potential, you will have to train between squad weekends!

How should I train effectively between squad weekends?

Partly by shooting. You are encouraged to join a local shooting club. To pursue small-bore rifle as your main discipline you will have to do so. Practice is important but it is even more important to be practising the right things or you will just reinforce weak aspects of technique. Remember that you are already one of the best air rifle or air pistol, shooters in Scouting and that only a very few Scout shooting clubs have the Instructors and Coaches you need to develop further. To find an NSRA club near you, contact their Club-finder service (phone 01483 485555 or e-mail info@nsra.co.uk). When you approach possible clubs, tell the Secretary that you are a member of The National Scout Rifle Squad and ask whether they have Club Instructors and Coaches who can help you.

Of course, it is also possible that one of your Scout Leaders or Scout shooting club instructors would like to increase their own instruction and coaching skills. They will be very welcome to join the squad coaching team and to come to squad weekends with you. The same applies to your parents, subject to the Scout Association appointment procedures.

Not all of your training need be on a range. You will be taught various methods of "dry training", which may involve simply picking up the gun and practising stance, hold etc.

Some training does not even need a firearm. You need to be physically fit to be a good shooter so some of your training should be just about fitness.

Do I need my own shooting equipment?

You will need some of your own equipment but what and when depends on which type of shooting you want to specialise in. Rifle shooters will need a shooting glove, and to shoot

prone or kneeling, also a sling. These are best as personal items because they do need to fit you. Whilst you are using club rifles that you share with others, you will need to adjust them to fit you so you will also need a tape measure and a notebook to record the settings. It is generally not a good idea to get specialised shooting clothing early on; it is better to learn good stance and technique first.

As you improve you will want better equipment, and equipment that is fitted to you, but technique comes first. Good kit will not make a poor shooter shoot well, but it will help a good shooter get even better.

What is expected of me as a National Scout Rifle Squad member?

You are a Scout, so we first expect that you will do your best to live up to your Promise to keep the Scout Law. So far as the shooting specifics are concerned:

- Safety is first, foremost and all the time.
- Firearms security is vital, too! Never leave any unsecured gun unattended.
- Consideration and respect for others includes some specifics of range etiquette – learn these and apply them
- Be Prepared! – Be on the range on time, with the right kit & in the right frame of mind.
- You are a member of a National Scout Squad that represents Scouting. High standards are expected of you; people will notice what you do. Make sure the example you set is a good one in all respects. Your gun safety, your sportsmanship, your appearance (especially in Scout uniform) will set the standards by which UK Scouting will be judged.
- Take responsibility for your own shooting development.
- Keep records of what you are working on and how it is going. Share these with the coaches.
- Be clear about your objective before you start and discuss this with the Instructors. It might be to work on a specific piece of technique or to shoot an assessment to see how you are getting on. Do not confuse the two.
- Unless you are experimenting with or learning a new piece of technique, do “assessment shoots” (series of whole tens of shots under competition conditions) at squad weekends and put these into the squad “stats” (statistics). You need to have this formal record in order to enter competitions as well as to know whether you are improving.
- Use the GB Junior Shooting website www.gbjs.org.uk at least once a month to notify your attendance (or otherwise!) at squad weekends and to log your scores, both in training and competition.
- When you are about to shoot an assessment, consider doing a 40-shot series for an NSRA Proficiency badge.

What are these NSRA Proficiency badges?

The NSRA Proficiency Badge Competition is shot under “Postal” rules. You can shoot in this competition at any squad weekend. Just ask for a set of “Badge Stickers”. Your first set of stickers at any squad weekend is included in the cost for the weekend.

Can I wear NSRA Proficiency badges on Scout uniform?

No. You can wear the squad badge, illustrated on the front page of this note, on Scout uniform above the shirt pocket, provided that you have attended a squad event (training or competition) within the last four months. Remember that you can count marksmanship as your skill for the Explorer Scout and Duke of Edinburgh’s Award schemes.

I am a Probationary member of the squad. How can I qualify for full membership?

By attending training regularly and showing that you are getting value from your membership. We will review all probationary members with a view to full membership after their first two attendances with the squad and frequently thereafter

I am just “Training with the squad”. How can I qualify for full membership?

By achieving an appropriate score in competition. In addition to the Scout Inter-County shoot in the spring and the National Scout Rifle Championships in the autumn, you now also have the opportunity to enter many other competitions. Mostly, these are “Open” competitions, not limited to Scouts. The NSRA Proficiency Badge Competition counts and you can shoot in this at any squad weekend.

Must I come to all the squad weekends?

No. Everyone has other commitments and we will certainly expect you to organise your time and put your academic work ahead of your shooting. Unless you are also a member of an NSRA or NRA Regional or a GB Junior development squad and training regularly with them we will expect that you will attend enough Scout squad training weekends and make good use of your time whilst there to get value from your membership of the Squad. We will start to wonder whether you are doing this if, over a period you are attending only half the available weekends or fewer.

All squad members are required to book either “In” or “Out” for each weekend on time (usually at least 2 weeks in advance) and also to ensure that their scores are posted regularly on the GB Junior Shooting website.

John Dohoo
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