

## BOOKLET No. 1

### A Sport for All - Clay Pigeon Shooting An introduction to the sport

Clay pigeon shooting is the art of shooting at special flying targets; clay pigeons or clay targets, commonly called “clays”, with a shotgun. The sport is regulated in England by the governing body, the Clay Pigeon Shooting Association, or CPSA, based at the National Rifle Associations ranges at Bisley Camp in Surrey.

The terminology commonly used by clay shooters often relates to times past, when live pigeon competitions were held. Although such competitions were made illegal in 1921, a target is still called a 'bird', a hit is referred to as a 'kill' and the machine that projects the targets is known as a 'trap'.

Clay pigeon shooting is currently enjoyed by 9 to 90 year olds of either sex. It is a hobby that can provide great personal fulfilment, and may be enjoyed with just a few friends on a very informal basis, in a more organised fashion at a local gun club or shooting school, or at competition level from registered CPSA events to County, Regional, National and International competitions including the Commonwealth and Olympic Games

Clay pigeon shooting is a strongly supported sport, with an active CPSA membership of approximately 25,000 participating at all shooting levels from farm and syndicate shoots through to national, registered and International competitions. The CPSA regulates the standards of safety and competition at 450 affiliated and registered grounds around the country.

A shotgun, as defined by UK law, is a smooth barrelled gun - not being an air gun - with barrel length in excess of 60.96 cm (24 inches) and a barrel with a bore not exceeding 5.08cm (2 inches) - and either has no magazine, or a non detachable magazine incapable of holding more than two cartridges - and is not a revolver gun.

For clay pigeon shooting at CPSA registered events and CPSA affiliated grounds, the maximum permitted bore of shotguns is 12, equivalent to 0.729 inches diameter. Barrel lengths typically vary from 26 to 32 inches, and side-by-side, under and over and single barrelled two shot semi-automatics are commonly used. Pump action guns are generally considered unsuitable for clay pigeon shooting.

To own or possess a shotgun a shot gun certificate is required, which will also require a police inspection of the storage security, usually a steel gun cabinet. Newcomers may borrow shotguns under supervision at many CPSA grounds offering coaching, without the need for a licence, under Section 11(6) of the Firearms Act 1968. This allows novices to fully participate before investing in guns and security.

Participants in the sport come from a wide variety of social backgrounds with a particular increase in the number of women and children coming into it, making clay pigeon shooting more and more a family orientated sport.

## The Clay Pigeons

The targets used for the sport are usually in the shape of an inverted saucer, made from a mixture of pitch and chalk designed to withstand being thrown from traps at very high speeds, but at the same time being easily broken when hit by just a very few lead or steel pellets shot from a shotgun.

The targets are usually black, but other colours such as white, yellow or fluorescent orange are frequently used in order that they can be clearly seen against varying backgrounds and/or light conditions.

Clay pigeons are made to very exacting specifications with regard to their weight and dimensions and must conform to set international standards.

There are several types of targets that are used for the various disciplines, as follows. However, only the standard 110mm target is used in all of the trap and skeet disciplines. Sporting shoots feature the full range of targets (except ZZ) to provide the variety that is a hallmark of the discipline.

**Standard:** The most commonly used target of all, must weigh 105 grams and be of 110 mm overall diameter and 25-26 mm in height.

**Midi:** Same saucer shape as the standard but with a diameter of only 90mm.

**Mini:** This target is sometimes likened to a flying bumblebee at only 60mm in diameter and 20 mm in height.

**Battue:** A very thin, flat, wafer of a target of about 110mm diameter which flies very fast and falls off very suddenly.

**Rabbit:** A standard sized (but thicker) flat target in the shape of a wheel designed to run fast along the ground.

**ZZ:** This is a plastic, standard sized target attached to the centre of a 2-blade propeller of different colour designed to zig-zag in flight in a totally unpredictable manner.

## The Traps

These are purpose made, spring loaded, flywheel or rotational devices especially designed to launch the different types of targets in singles or pairs at distances of up to 100 metres.

These machines vary from the very simple, hand cocked, hand loaded and hand released types to the highly sophisticated, fully automatic variety which can hold up to 600 targets in their own magazine and are electrically or pneumatically operated. Target release is by remote control either by pressing a button or by an acoustic system activated by the shooter's voice.

Target speeds and trajectories can be easily modified and varied to suit the discipline or type of shooting required.

## The Disciplines

Clay pigeon shooting has at least 20 different forms of regulated competition called disciplines. These can be roughly divided into three main groups:

### **Trap**

Targets are thrown either as singles or doubles from one or more traps situated some 15m in front of the shooter and are generally going away from the firing point at varying speeds, angles and elevations. The most common disciplines in this group are:- Down-the-Line (DTL) Single Barrel, Double Rise, Automatic Ball Trap (ABT), Olympic Trap, Double Trap and Universal Trench.

### **Skeet**

Skeet is a word of Scandinavian origin, though the discipline originated in America. Targets are thrown in singles and doubles from 2 trap houses situated some 40 metres apart, at opposite ends of a semicircular arc on which there are seven shooting positions. The targets are thrown at set trajectories and speeds. The main disciplines in this group are English Skeet, Olympic Skeet and American (NSSA) Skeet.

### **Sporting**

The English Sporting discipline has the sport's biggest following. While the other disciplines only use standard targets, in Sporting almost anything goes! Targets are thrown in a great variety of trajectories, angles, speeds, elevations and distances and the discipline was originally devised to simulate live quarry shooting, hence some of the names commonly used on Sporting stands: Springing Teal, Driven Pheasant, Bolting Rabbit, Crossing Pigeon, Dropping Duck, etc. Disciplines in this group include English Sporting, International (FITASC) Sporting, Super Sporting Sportrap and Compak Sporting.

### **Down the Line**

Also known as DTL, this is a popular clay shooting discipline. Targets are thrown to a distance of 45 to 50 metres at a fixed height of approximately 2.75m and with a horizontal 'spread' of up to 22 degrees either side of the centre line. Each competitor shoots at a single target in turn, but without moving from the stand until he or she have all shot five targets. Then they all move one place to the right, and continue to do so until they have all completed a standard round of 25 birds. Scoring of each target is 3 points for a first barrel kill, 2 points for a second barrel kill and 0 for a miss (maximum 75 points per round). Variations of this discipline are: Single Barrel, Double Rise and Handicap-by-Distance.

### **Universal Trench**

A variation on the theme of trap shooting, sometimes known as "Five Trap". . Five traps are installed in a trench in front of the shooting stands, all set at different angles, elevations and speeds, and upon the call of "Pull!" by the shooter any one of the five machines, selected at random, will be released.

Horizontal angles can vary from 0 degrees to 45 degrees either side of the centre line and target distance is between 60 and 70 metres. Elevations can vary, as in other trap disciplines (except DTL), between 1.5 and 3.5 metres above ground level.

### **Olympic Trap**

As it's name indicates, this is one of the disciplines which forms part of the shooting programme at the Olympic Games. A trench in front of the shooting stands, conceals 15 traps arranged in 5 groups of 3. Shooters take turns to shoot at a target each, before moving in a clockwise direction to the next stand in the line. Targets for each shooter are thrown immediately upon his call and are selected by a shooting scheme that ensures all competitors receive exactly the same target selection, but in a unpredictable randomised order, from any one of the three traps directly in front of him. Olympic Trap targets are set to travel 75 to 80 metres at varying elevations and with a maximum horizontal angle of 45 degrees either side of the centre line. Scoring is done on the basis of 1 point per target killed, regardless of whether this is achieved with the first or with the second barrel. A simpler and cheaper to install variation of this discipline is known as AUTOMATIC BALL TRAP (ABT) where only one trap is used and target variation is obtained by the continuous oscillation of the trap in both horizontal and vertical directions in order to give the same spread of targets as in Olympic Trap. Similarly, the targets are also thrown to a maximum of 80 metres.

### **Skeet**

In this discipline, targets are released in a combination of singles and doubles, adding up to a total of 25 targets per round, from the High and Low trap houses on a fixed trajectory speed. Variety is achieved by shooting round the seven stations in a semicircle. Scoring is on the basis of 1 point per target killed, up to a maximum of 25.

In ENGLISH SKEET (by far the most popular of the skeet disciplines), the gun position is optional (i.e. pre-mounted or out-of-shoulder when the target is called) and the targets are released immediately upon the shooter's call.

In OLYMPIC SKEET, the targets travel at a considerably faster speed, the release of the target can be delayed up to 3 seconds after calling and the gun-down position is compulsory. There is also an eighth shooting station, midway between the two houses.

### **Sporting**

This discipline can have an infinite variety of 'stands' . ENGLISH SPORTING is the most popular form of clay shooting in the UK, and a course or competition will feature a given number of stands each of which has a predetermined number of targets, all travelling along the same path and speed, either as singles or doubles.

Each stand will feature a different type of target i.e. crosser, driven, quartering etc. INTERNATIONAL (FITASC) SPORTING gives a much greater variety of targets in terms of trajectory and speed, and is shot by squads of six competitors in rounds of 25 targets at a time. Super Sporting is a hybrid of the two preceding varieties. There are also other formats such as Compak Sporting and Sportap in which five cages are surrounded by a number of traps, and shooters fire a specific combinations or singles from each stand according to a program displayed in front of the cage.

### **Helice (ZZ)**

A different form of flying target competition, which cannot be called clay shooting as the targets are made of plastic! Plastic propellers holding a detachable centre piece are rotated at high speed and released randomly from one of five traps. They fly out with in an unpredictable way “buzzing” through the air to give the discipline its colloquial name of ZZ. It is designed specifically to simulate as closely as possible the old sport of live pigeon shooting which was made illegal in this country more than 70 years ago. It is great fun to shoot, but can also be a very competitive sport with World and European Championships being held on the continent every year.

### **The Guns**

Although virtually any type of gun up to 12 gauge is capable of being used to shoot clay pigeons, the wide variety of types and models on the market can be bewildering to the newcomer to the sport. Prices can also vary enormously from a couple of hundred to many thousands of pounds, although price alone is no indication of the suitability of the gun for clay pigeon shooting. Most gun shops and registered firearms dealers will be pleased to advise prospective buyers as to the most suitable weapon for their needs. Also most gun clubs and shooting schools and existing CPSA members will be more than happy to advise and even let newcomers have a go with one or more of their guns, under close supervision, so that they can judge for themselves whether they would enjoy it or would like to look further into the sport. There are three main types of shotgun that are suitable for clay shooting.

### **Side - By – Side**

The original and traditional game shooting gun, with it's barrels placed alongside each other in a horizontal plane, is generally a lighter gun with



double triggers. Few side-by-sides are used for clay pigeon, as their lightness proves a disadvantage compared to the shooting stability and pointability of the over-under

## **Over – Under**

By far the most popular gun used by regular participants of the sport. As its name indicates this gun has two barrels superimposed on each other and it has usually just a single trigger which can be selected to fire either barrel first. Within this type there are three sub-groups of specification i.e. trap, skeet and sporting. Trap guns are generally heavier and longer barreled (normally 30" or 32") with tight chocking and designed to shoot slightly above the point of aim. Skeet guns are usually lighter and faster handling with barrel length from 26" to 28" and with fairly open chokes. Sporting models most often come with an interchangeable choke facility and barrel lengths of 28", 30" and 32" according to preference.



## **Cartridges**

Shotgun cartridges are readily available in gun shops and at shooting grounds, and within limitations as to the shot size and the weight of the shot load are suitable for clayshooting at CPSA affiliated grounds and for use in events coming under CPSA rules. Home loaded cartridges can be dangerous and are therefore not acceptable at clay pigeon shooting events.

Care should be taken that cartridges to be used are compatible with the shotgun that is going to fire them. The instructions and specifications are printed on the boxes and should be meticulously checked and adhered to. For clay competition, shot size must not exceed 2.6mm, English No 6. The shot load must be a maximum 28gram {1 oz} for all domestic disciplines, or 24gram for Olympic Trap, Olympic Skeet and Double Trap, and up to 28gram [from 2005] for FITASC Sporting and 36g for Helice.

## **Hearing Eye & Head Protection**



Hearing protection, either muffs or plugs, is advisable at all times when shooting or in the company of others who are shooting. Indeed it is compulsory to wear some form of hearing protection at CPSA registered competitions. Damaged hearing cannot be restored - prevention is the answer.

Shooting glasses are also advisable, so that eyes are protected from stray pieces of broken clay. Glasses can be additionally beneficial in difficult light conditions, with appropriately tinted lenses.

Flying particles of broken clays and whole clays can represent a real hazard at shooting events, and the CPSA recommends that participants and spectators wear head protection, baseball cap style caps being a common choice by shooters.

In the safety course the CPSA recommends three types of protection, Eyes, ears and head. This picture does not show hearing protection clearly – muffs would be better – and we should add head protection as recommended against flying clay fragments.

## **General Information**

### **Sites for Clay Pigeon Shooting**

The minimum area required for a clay pigeon site is about 15 hectares (approx. 34/40 acres) to include a minimum safety zone of 275 metres (300 yds) in front of the shooting stands in the general direction in which shooting takes place. Within that safety zone there must not be any places to which the public has access such as public highways, footpaths and bridleways, etc. Also shooting in the vicinity of overhead electrical and telecommunication cables should be avoided.

Generally speaking, shooting should be wherever possible towards the North to avoid interference from the sun and North East has proved to be the best possible orientation.

Trap and Skeet require level ground with clear and unobtrusive backgrounds of uniform nature.

Sporting disciplines are best suited to wooded and undulating terrain and attractive natural features are always desirable, especially water, trees, hills etc.

Basic site facilities should include shelter and refreshment area (clubhouse/marquee, etc.) toilets and ample car parking facilities as well as good comfortable access for motor vehicles.

## **Facilities**

As the demand for participation increases, so does the need for ranges and facilities. For environmental reasons and due to the very nature of the sport, clay shooting ranges tend to be located in fairly remote rural areas. Urban area clients would usually be prepared to travel, however the business market (corporate entertainment) may sometimes be less willing to do so. Ranges should offer quality and comfort and perhaps some may choose to provide other welcome facilities, such as four-wheel driving, archery, fishing etc. Facilities for the disabled are being increasingly demanded and should be provided wherever possible.

## **Considerations**

The main issues to consider when organising shoots are disturbance from noise and the safety of the public.

## **CPSA Affiliated Clubs**

Most clay pigeon shooting takes place at clubs or shooting grounds, and to shoot either more regularly or competitively, it is advisable to join a club.

The CPSA has a network of affiliated clubs throughout England. Affiliated clubs must meet the CPSA's minimum safety guidelines and have a CPSA trained safety officer. A full list of clubs in any given area is available to members on the CPSA website, [www.cpsa.co.uk](http://www.cpsa.co.uk), along with a list of CPSA qualified coaches and other officials. Affiliated clubs may run Registered shoots, where CPSA members may obtain shooting classifications, and be graded to shoot in competition according to their average scores in a season. Additionally, the CPSA's PULL! Magazine and other shooting publications, carry a list of affiliated clubs' fixtures, and only CPSA members are entitled to compete in registered events.

## **The Clay Pigeon Shooting Association**

The Clay Pigeon Shooting Association is the national governing body for the sport in England. It is recognised by Sports England, The Department of the Environment, The Home Office, Police etc., and it is a constituent member of the International Clay Pigeon Shooting Council of Great Britain and Ireland.

It's main roles are to promote and encourage the development of the sport, to liaise with government departments and police to represent the interests of CPSA members, to regulate and develop all aspects of the sport (technical and otherwise); to promote and organise national competitions; and to select England teams for major international events, some of which are staged by the CPSA.

Membership of the CPSA is open to the general public and offers an extensive package of free benefits which include insurance, magazine, information, publicity, advice, classification, badges, etc.