



Bowmen of Ardleigh
Small Newsletter No. 114
April 2020

Archery GB suspended shooting “for the foreseeable future” with a notice sent out by email on 17th March 2020. This is required by the Government’s requirements regarding social gatherings and essential journeys during the Corona Virus emergency. Our wishes go to all our members and their families to stay safe and well. Thanks also to the members who are kindly offering and doing shopping for some of our more senior participants.

This will hamper our activities for some time, I think! I know members are keeping in touch with each other using modern technology and some may have facilities to actually shoot a bow but please remember, only where it’s absolutely safe to do so. Your Archery GB Insurance only covers you for shooting at an accredited Archery venue, which in our case is our shooting ground and the Tudor Barn at Bretons and under the present circumstances these are both out of action. The Bretons Community Association has also closed for the present to comply with the requirements to help prevent the spread of the Corona virus.

I shall include the people who were booked in for our March Beginners’ Course in the mailing lists to receive our Newsletters to keep them in touch with our doings.

Our Committee meeting due on 9th March was cancelled as we had a meeting arranged with the Council to discuss the Bretons Review, but more details about that will be covered later in this newsletter.

This is the result of our Handicap Spoon Shoot, held on Friday 6th and Sunday 8th March 2020. (Portsmouth Round)

Archer	Allowance	Score	Total	Hits	Gold	
Chris Phillips		967	492	1459	60	7
Masud Parker		930	512	1442	60	9
Dave Clegg		926	513	1439	60	7
Steven Jones		926	477	1403	60	11
Skye Phillips		1051	348	1399	57	1
Ken Dell		1008	358	1366	56	5 Longbow

These are the results of our February matches in the Bray 1 League (30 arrows, 18 metres, 40 cm 10 zone face).

Recurve Division 1 Match 5				Recurve Division 3 Match 5			
Ardleigh ‘A’		Oakfield ‘A’		Ardleigh ‘B’		Mayflower ‘B’	
Colin Vaughan	253	Aaron Maher	267	Gary Prior	226	Mick Goss	245
Chris Pollard	248	Miss Louise Devlin	263	David Clegg	214	Matt Prior	242
Chris Lowe	242	Tony Maher	233	Wayne Scott	206	Neil Beardwell	226
Steve Jones	234	Matthew Maddox	198	Chris Phillips	188	Mstr. Daniel Lang	221
Masud Parker	230	Brian Belton	180	Gary Knopp	183	Pete Cotter	209
Totals	1207		1141		1017		1143
Longbow Division 1 Match 5							
Ardleigh		Abbey					
Ken Dell	161	Eric Mallet	222				
Dennis Kenny	86	Bob Francis	164				
Totals	247	386					

Due to the limitations on movement currently in operation, the League Secretary terminated the League and the February Match 5 Results completed the series.

Ardleigh 'A' finished 6th of 8 in Division 1, Ardleigh 'B' 3rd of 6 in Division 3 and our Longbow Team finished 7th of 8 in Division 1 of the Longbow Division 1. Scores from all the teams and the tables can be found on the Essex Website (ecaa.org.uk).

Members attended a meeting at the Town Hall in Romford on 4th February for details of the Council's proposals for the future use of the Bretons Estate. The Council's representatives and the consultants they've employed were, it appeared to us, poorly prepared for the response they received at that meeting and there was nothing to report from this, apart from their declared proposal that they intended paying for the renovations to the Manor House and Tudor Barn by building houses on the main car park at Bretons. How this would affect the car parking facilities, especially on football match days had not, it would appear, been considered. It was pointed out that, rather than visiting the site on, say, a Tuesday afternoon in the Summer, the consultants would have more idea if they went at mid-day on a Winter Sunday when there are home matches.

On Monday 9th March, Committee Members attended a meeting at Fairkytes to discuss the current review by the Council of the facilities at Bretons that our Club uses, that is, our field at the front and the Tudor Barn. Our field is rented for use throughout the year for practice and competitions. The Barn is booked for Monday and Friday evenings throughout the year, subject to how the Bank and Public Holidays fall and on Sunday afternoons from the beginning of October to the end of March. The barn is also used by Abbey Bowmen and Maylands Table Tennis Club and the Wrestling group.

The Council has confirmed that we'll remain on our current field and that they presently intend not letting the pitches at the bottom of our field. Prior to any restoration of the Barn, the Council also told us they intend providing a building with the dimensions of the Tudor Barn for the use of the groups currently using it but the final location is not known at the moment but should be somewhere near to our field. It should be noted that the Council has insufficient funding available to do very much at all at Bretons and it may be some time before anything begins to happen, especially under the present circumstances with the Corona Virus throwing the proverbial spanner in the works.

The articles on the following pages have appeared in our newsletters from time to time and originally were episodic and issued in small doses but they're served up in one go this time. I have made a few up-dating alterations but they're mostly as they were written at the time.

"So, here I go again, sitting in front of a computer screen and wondering (as those who know me probably do as well, by now!) which way my thought process is going and where it'll end up. Do forgive me if I flit about! It touches on coaching but also perhaps gives a glimpse of how things once were in Archery (when the Earth was young!). I usually write about what other people have done but this is about me and some of my history in Archery."

Episode 1.

I've spent a great deal of time over the years watching other archers shoot. Indoor competitions were the best for this. I didn't spend much time watching other archers when I was shooting. I had no interest in what others were doing, or scoring, but after my session had finished I watched people shoot in the sessions that followed. This is when I realised that you don't have to shoot with a perfect textbook style to get good scores but just do things consistently. My method of coaching is to let people shoot in the way they feel most comfortable, not trying to alter too much all at once (one thing at a time is enough) and make the best of what they have. Most people don't have anything glaringly wrong, they just lack consistency, but at the higher level of things it really is the little details that can make a big difference.

Archery with Ardleigh is a good sport in that if you wish to have just a social event, once a week, then that's fine but don't put pressure on yourself to hit the gold all the time. Our Club has members with their own views on what they want from our sport and no pressure is put on people to do anything they don't wish to though they will be encouraged to "stretch" themselves because until you try you really don't know how good you could be. If you want to improve your results then you'll need to put in more good practice, because what you get out of Archery is directly proportional to the work you put in.

This is where the fun starts, because you need to trade off some of your aspirations if you shoot, according to your circumstances, perhaps just once a week. If this is your choice and you are content, then all is fine. You will become a reasonably proficient archer. The problem, if you perceive it as one, is that you may not progress as much as you wish, but you will get odd days when the fates will smile on you and you'll have a quite good shoot and then you think "perhaps I'll shoot twice a week because I really enjoyed that". So, from shooting every Sunday afternoon, you start to shoot on a Friday evening as well and then you think "what if", etc. etc. This is the beginning of what can be a somewhat frisky ride when, providing your practice is right, you are embarking on what the current over-used parlance calls a "journey". At the end of this ride is an archer who needs to shoot every day, possibly 400 or 500 arrows (or 1,000 in the case of the Koreans, but the set-up there is different!) One who maintains their excellence, and travels all over the country to do it, getting to record status and Premier events to get the points needed to be selected for the English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish squads and ultimately the Great Britain Squad for the Olympics. The dedication of these archers, and their families, is considerable, especially for the younger ones. The decision on where you step off and have a look at the scenery around you and think "I like it here" is entirely up to you.

You've probably gathered from the meanderings I do from time to time, that I think about Archery a lot. Always have, always will. Right from the very beginning of my Archery "career" (some of it before, as I read a book by Frank Bilson I borrowed from Elm Park Library before I drew a proper bow), I've read books, Archery magazines and catalogues. The first catalogue I had was issued by the Sherwood Archery Company and I took this with me when I bought my first set of gear in June 1970 at their shop in Forest Hill, just around the corner from their factory. This now becomes a "saga" about the quest for better scores! Lots of other things that stick in the mind weren't really anything to do with the Archery, except for it being the common bond between all of us.

In my early days at Ardleigh, you did a beginners' course and you were then invited to join the Club. You were able to use Club equipment for 6 weeks, and then you needed to have your own. I think target fees then were 6d (2.5p) with equipment hire the same. I started in June 1970, joined after I'd completed the course and had my equipment by the end of August. I shot my first round on 6th September, a Western, another Western on the 20th, and an American Round on 26th September. The point of doing the three rounds was so I had a handicap by the 27th September so I could take part in the Western Round in the Club Championships on that day. You may be able to tell from this that I kept a record book of all my scores, broken down into distance scores, placings and what the weather was like, and that I still have it! I wasn't alone in these endeavours as most of the new members then did the same.

Sherwood made then a series of one-piece bows and I went there for an "Agincourt" bow which had multiple laminations of differently-coloured woods in the handle. The limbs then were much the same on most recurve bows, rock maple cores with white "Bjornglass" fibreglass laminations to back and front. Sherwood also made the Silver Streak and Practistreak series of aluminium arrows. Silver Streak were, supposedly, made to tighter tolerances and were polished, Practistreak not so much. A set of 8 Silver Streaks, fletched and crested, cost £6.30p (6 guineas in old money, or £6/6/-). A set of 8 Practistreak (£5.25) were less well-matched but if you took some metal polish to them they looked just as good. The complete set cost me £40 (I've still got the bill somewhere). I didn't get the bow I wanted as this was before (first note) I found it's best to telephone the retailer before going to "foreign places", the other side of the Thames to make sure they've got what you want to buy. Anyway, having made the tortuous journey all the way to South London and not wanting to go home empty-handed, I ended up with a "Raven" bow with a solid wood handle, a leather quiver by Rawlings (still have it), a set of 8 Practistreak arrows (2 inches too short as it turned out), a stand to put the bow on, tab, Beales sight, bracer, leather score pad (still using it) and a case for it all to go in.

Here comes the first bit of "fiddling" with equipment.

I read then that a polished arrow was less affected by the weather, wind or rain, so all us new archers had bright and shiny arrows, whichever brand they were. At the time, Easton arrows, though available, weren't that easy to find in some shops, but they still follow the polishing bit now by anodising most if not all their metal shafts, which has the same effect.

This was obviously before handles and limbs were made separately, although the “Robin Hood Archery Company” in America did have a few take-apart bows in their catalogue and some compounds (not many). That was the second catalogue I got, and George Quick of Quicks Archery at Waterlooville also issued an annual catalogue.

My first bowsight was first manufactured back in the 60s by a then member of our Club, Ted Beales. One of our Trophies is named after him. I think he must have done quite well out of his invention, which was an engineered brass block that carried a pin adjustable in and out, that fitted the slide in a piece of Harrison Drape curtain track stuck or screwed to the bow that meant you could move it up and down. Very simple but with the advantage of being one of the only ones like it made in this country.

We had also, by this time, discovered the benefits of stabilisers, mainly because the people who represented our country also used them. Up until then, most of the stabilisation of a bow was by making big wooden handles in various shapes and sizes, some few even with mercury contained in compartments inside the wood to absorb shock. Most bows came only with a central thread in the lower part of the handle for a poker stabiliser which was a metal rod with a weight, usually wooden at that time, on the end. One of our newer members back in the 70s, Peter Lewis, was a great experimenter and Terry Goulden at “Art and Archery” at Hoddesdon was just stocking a long rod that was called “Terry Goulden’s Batsbonk”. So, Peter got one and I remember on our ground at Ardleigh Green the assembled populace, me included, watching with some humour and guffawing and cries of “he might fall over that” as he tried it out for the first time. Within two weeks a great number of us had gone to Art and Archery and got one! In my opinion, I believe this is the one attachment you can put on a bow that, most of the time, actually improves groups (and scores). This doesn’t mean it’s the only stabiliser you should use as people can find different combinations equally successful.

Episode 2.

My second bow was a Laleham “Otter”, again a one-piece with the same sort of limbs, bought from Lilleywhites in Piccadilly. I’d been there already, trying bows with their then Archery Manager, John Waller. (I believe John went on to be an adviser on Archery and Fight Arranger on many film and theatre sets and up until quite recently was involved as Creative Director the Royal Armouries on combat and historical research in many places, including the Mary Rose Project!) I had to order the Otter and when it arrived I was invited to try it out before I took it away (which was kind of them!). They had a netted shooting range on an upper floor, one four foot Egerton target with a table tennis ball in the centre hanging on a string. Bearing in mind I’d never pulled the bow before, with no sight, I put one of their shop arrows on the string, drew it back to my face Barebow style, no tab, anchor point fairly non-descript, loosed and pinned the ball to the target, right in the middle. This is where I handed the bow back to the assistant (John was away) and said “that should do nicely” gaining the rapt admiration of all those watching. Second note, in this particular circumstance, best to quit while you’re ahead!

The reason I went to Lilleywhites was that I did fencing (not garden!) for a few years and got to quite a good standard before I did Archery (Both sports take time and attention to get reasonably good and Archery won) and I used to get my foils, mask, etc. there. Archery was on the same floor and I could get there in my lunchtime.

Between the first bow and the second (about 2 years), I’d accumulated a set of handicap tables, a Grand National Archery Society Rule Book, a Sherwood fletching jig (Third note, always buy spare nocks and fletchings when you get a set of made-up arrows), another set of 8 Easton arrows two inches longer and lots of books and magazines. I had a quite successful beginning to my Archery, representing Ardleigh relatively quickly in the Essex Summer Albion League and doing quite well in Club competitions. A crack and some stress lines had appeared in the “Otter’s top limb and I went to see Lew Smith, who made the “Laleham” bows at his workshop (a wonderful old forge at Ringwood, just the sort of place bows should be made!) in the New Forest to see if it could be shot safely. He sanded the limb down and sprayed some polyurethane on it and said, “it should be ok”. I still didn’t have the faith in it he did so at the earliest opportunity I went, with Barbara, to see George Quick at Waterlooville.

George was a very nice man and he let me take three bows away to try out in his garden. (You were given a map of how to get there, some way away). I remarked to him he was very trusting and he said, “I haven’t been let down yet”, which he wasn’t this time, either. Anyway, I had a Border Concord and a couple of other take-down bows.

One was a Hoyt white "A Frame" take down but the Concord gave me a good mark at 100 yards (Gives some idea of the size of George's "garden" but it was actually in a field his house stood in!). Border Bows are still going and I believe they'd just then also taken over Kings of Kelso, another bow manufacturer. This was the first time I'd had a bow with a draw-weight over 40 lbs (42 in this case) and it also came supplied with a sight and block. Up until then, the one-piece wooden handles had the sight screwed on, usually at the back of the bow (side furthest from you) with wood screws but the Border Concord had a very slim cast aluminium stove-enamelled handle and it came with a pre-fixed mount to take an Arten geared sight, probably because they didn't want all and sundry to drill holes in their lovely handles. I never had to take the mount off, which was probably just as well because, if you did, and over-did the strength bit, you stripped the threads out and ended up in all sorts of trouble!

I didn't have individual success outside our Club until towards the end of 1977. My first individual medal away from our Club was at the Damon Moonlight in September when I was placed third and also got a team gold. In November 1977 I achieved a medal (placed 9th I think) in the Green Dragon Indoor 500 at the Edmonton Sports Centre. It was staged by the Green Dragon Archery Club and was so called because over 500 archers used to take part, including some from France, Holland and Belgium, hence the Gentlemen's medals going to the first 10 placings. This was shot with my fourth bow, A Marksman take-down, the TD 75. (TD stood for "Take Down" and it was first produced in 1975). I got mine from Art and Archery in 1977, the year my wife Barbara also took up the sport (WTD 77, wooden take-down, first produced in 1977) and who also did well in competitions and also shot for Essex up until our son Martin arrived in 1984. The TD 75 was made of very light magnesium and came in a fitted case with Arten side mounted Sight, Stabilisers, v-bar, pressure button (my first!), string and rest and cost £109. This is when my Archery took off, indoor and out and between 1978 and 1984 I did some of my best scores.

I was honoured to be selected to shoot for Essex in matches every year from 1980 to 1992. I'd also by this time acquired a Marksman Portland wooden take-down bow which I used mostly indoors. This was measured 42 lbs at 28 inches so with 30 inch arrows I was pulling 46lbs on my fingers and by this time I had similar weight limbs on the TD 75. I also got a KG1 handle (and lunch!) from Les Howis at Marksman when I went to their shop in Nottinghamshire when we "happened" to go past while we were on holiday. (Barbara never believed me, still doesn't!) It wasn't then recommended that you should use Dacron on wooden-handled bows (still is the case on most) so the new KG1 handle was so I could use the new wonder material "Kevlar" to make strings. Strings made from this non-stretch fibre had a useful life of around 1000 shots before they broke and you threw them away before they did so it was useful if you could make your own (see Small Newsletter no. 100 about string-making). Fortunately it wasn't long before Fast Flight and other materials came on the scene and if they're maintained properly it's more likely the serving will wear out on them before the string does. I still have the TD75 and have used it up to quite recently to good effect in Clout Competitions, but I only ever used Dacron strings on it, unwilling to take the chance of it breaking.

Keith Gascoigne is an innovative craftsman who then worked for Marksman Archery, hence the "KG1" but there came a parting of the ways and he now runs KG Archery. The thing is that then you could go and talk to the people who made the bows, not so easy now a lot of them come from America and the Far East. When I went to see Les Howis at Ringwood he was working on his first limbs for a take-down bow which, from what he said, was with some reluctance. As I recall it was going to be called "the "Aztec". So far as he was concerned, one-piece was the best. The trouble was, making a one-piece bow needed skill and if it came out wrong (although few did) you had to make it again. Even allowing for being able to re-work one to a shorter length or different weight it wasn't good. The point he made was that the recurve bow manufacturers were making limbs and handles separately, perhaps reasonably straight but putting the onus on retailers and archers themselves for setting up the final article.

Tony Preston's Perris Whitehart bow was probably the nicest bow to shoot, quiet and fast but not so fast it became unstable and there were quite a few of these around the Club (see Ken Dell's!). It was also the nearest bow I could find similar to the TD75. Bert Hastings (Braintree Bowmen) managed to get a 100 yard mark using 33lb limbs with one. I still have mine but I doubt I could manage the draw weight at the moment. Peter Lewis had the first one we saw, back in the day but that was made by the original manufacturer in Yorkshire, I believe. It wasn't until Tony bought the rights to produce it that the bow really took off in Essex and at one stage Ardleigh almost became a "Whithart" Club. Border made the limbs for them then and I can't see the bow coming back into production now, although if it did I'm sure it would be very popular. I did consistently good Albions with the Whitehart, and the Longer Metric Rounds but I've never bettered the York Rounds I did with the TD75 strung with Dacron B50. I shot

very heavy arrows with that, and never bettered any of my scores with any bow using lighter carbon/aluminium ones.

Easton X10 arrows are, I believe, manufactured primarily for the 70 metre distance used in the Olympic finals and they're heavier too. I always found a heavier arrow was less affected by the weather than a lighter one but there is a trade-off with the heavier weight you need to pull.

When I got my second bow I sold the Raven quite cheaply to a new member who used it once and left it in a car park leaning against his car and it wasn't where he left it when he got back! I felt the loss more than he did! I've had various bows since then and you may see some of them around the Club from time to time and I'm presently using a Sebastian Flute Pro-Forged handle or a Core Air (a quite light weight in hand one because the weight I pulled for many years has, I think, coupled with the constant repetition of shooting, contributed to arthritis in both shoulders). Although some of the top archers are still pulling heavy weights, even with the lighter carbon/aluminium arrows produced now, you can get the distances with lighter weight bows and lighter arrows. I'm using lighter weight Sebastian Flute limbs until I can pull my mid-range Uukha ones but these, at 36 lb, will still give me a good 100 yard mark with aluminium/carbon arrows.

Anyway, almost getting back to the point, I lived and breathed Archery. I was eventually shooting four times a week at Bretons and in competitions all over most of the country up to the Midlands. On the other three days I was shooting into our garage at home, usually when I got home from work.

The first requisite (very important!) for this is a very understanding wife or partner. The second is having like-minded people around you and I am fortunate I've had both!). You also need someone who's had the operation on their brain that makes them think in the same way about Archery as you do and they're pretty rare. Someone who will still turn up at the ground because they know you will, whatever the weather's doing, revelling at shooting in the rain and wind because you then know better what to do when conditions aren't perfect. You have, therefore, dear reader, to find someone who is also bordering on insane in their enthusiasm to shoot! The point is that at one time, to my certain knowledge, there were lots of them in clubs throughout the County and, fortunately our Club had a Jim Watchman! We both had wives who shot which helped a lot!. We were both very competitive with each other and enjoyed every minute of it, in practice or competition. We both had enough common sense to know we weren't going to win every competition we went to but for a "golden time" we, and our Club as a team were in contention at most of the competitions we went to, indoors and out.

So, times change, as do people's inclinations. It's unlikely we'll ever see as many people as absolutely devoted to all aspects of our sport. Circumstances such as working for a living, schoolwork and family matters all make a difference. I'm more inclined now to look out of the window and think, thank goodness, I'm not going to the East Midlands FITA Star tomorrow, I hope the weather's going to be alright! That doesn't mean I haven't the enthusiasm for our sport. I enjoy the coaching that I do and making strings for people, checking their bows are set up properly and suggesting ways you can get arrows to match bows better. If your bow isn't "set up" properly then your groups won't be as good as they could be, no matter how good your technique.

Episode 3.

Another thing I encourage people to do is to shoot with no face on the boss. I know I say people should get a set of handicap tables, so they know how they're improving but shooting for a score all the time puts a different emphasis on things. Even if you don't add the totals up if there's a face on the boss you still try to hit the 10 and, there it is again, that word "try"

Also, as I mentioned before, if you feel a need to alter things, change only one thing at a time, otherwise how do you know which has worked?

Try a session of shooting sometime where you decide before you start not to come down on any shot, not even once. If you are holding on too long the best thing is to come down and start again, if you have the time. This isn't an option at some competitions. Officially you get 2 minutes to shoot 3 arrows and 4 minutes to shoot 6. If the

weather is bad there can be some dispensation but at the Olympics you haven't a choice; if you don't shoot the arrow before the buzzer goes you lose the points. You'll often see more people coming down on a shot in good weather than bad. In inclement conditions you're just grateful to get the shot off. The problems come along when you are continually trying for perfection. The point of this exercise is to (modern word) priorities the "not coming down" over score. It opens up another bit of your brain. If you don't try all the time to make a perfect shot you tend to let your body get on with shooting and you'll get better scores. The conscious mind is the barrier to this. So, getting in a roundabout way back to the point, do what I suggested at the beginning of this paragraph. On a practice session, tell yourself that you aren't going to come down on any shot. If you are holding on too long, just extend the push. Because, if you are using a clicker, the arrow hasn't actually got any longer, but your draw set up is certainly shorter so this tells you that your form needs looking at. Moving the clicker forward might help, but only for 3 or 4 shots, then it'll go to pot again.

Deciding you aren't going to come down on a shot for a session will firstly help to keep your form. It will also show you what happens if you don't shoot that perfect arrow all the time and this will (almost) certainly make you think "well, that wasn't so bad". This gives you confidence that even when you don't shoot a perfect arrow it isn't as bad as you thought it might have been. This removes some of the pressure in your mind to shoot perfectly all the time. It also reduces the chance of lactic acid build-up in your muscles because you are using some of the wrong ones to practice letting the bow down rather than pulling it back and loosing. When you are "in the groove" good shooting is easy. You are relaxed, you've kidded your brain you don't care where the arrow goes so it gets on with the job. All the continual analysis and dissection of your shooting style most certainly isn't conducive to good shooting, so try not do it!

This next bit is going deep! I hope the subject of it will forgive me! One of our members, who shall remain nameless (he's left-handed), because of a small change in their set-up, suddenly found they could shoot better groups. I'd rarely seen this archer come down on a shot and they've always had a "relaxed" style and are quite capable of getting results even better than the very good scores they've already achieved but in a competition since that discovery, the bow was up and down like a fiddler's elbow, because they were now "trying". The brain then decides it's now time to relieve this stress and does what it normally does and takes the easy way. It first decided that it could remove the stress of trying not to miss (the middle) by deciding not to shoot the arrow at all! If you persist in shooting the arrow, it'll then send a wild one to the outer reaches of the target, or the boss, thus removing the possibility of a personal best and the conscious mind thinks "well, that's that" and the subsequent shooting can then improve. The pressure on the brain is removed and things relax. This is possibly the first time anyone's tried to analyse what actually goes on in this particular archer's brain when he is shooting!

One of an Archery coach's primary functions is not just to deal with the physical side of Archery, but with what goes on in an archer's head. Someone can have a very good style but if they don't believe they can shoot consistently well, then they won't progress as far as they might otherwise. Self-belief is the key to wonderful things and not just in Archery. You just don't consider failure, it doesn't feature. To get to this level requires much hard work and to stay there even more. Good practice lets your body take over. You know and have confidence in what you are doing without thinking about every detail and, effectively, let go both mentally and physically.

Progression can take place outside the Club. Selection for Club Team Competitions is the start as this is when you'll shoot with more "good" archers and then you start to try open shoots. One day you'll find you are winning on your target and, further on, you start to get placed at competitions. When you get selected to shoot for your County you are shooting with like-minded people and the good ones tend to pull you along and you get better scores and on to, for a fortunate few, Olympic selection. There's luck involved too, you do also need a smidgeon, from time to time but you'll probably find, with good practice, the "luckier" you get. I do stress "good practice" as 12 arrows shot with attention to making good shots are generally better for your style than 60 arrows shot as fast as possible. This is understandable for the archers at Agincourt but hardly necessary nowadays!

I have lots of books by many authors. I've gained something from most of them. The first one that made a big difference was "Winner or Loser" by Shig Honda and Ralph Newson (Published in 1972). This was one of the first "modern" books I bought and also the first that began to make me realise that the "secret" of good Archery lies in the brain rather than the body.

Also, very good is “Archery in Earnest” (first published in 1985 and re-printed several times) by Roy Matthews and John Holden. Roy was one of the top archers at the time and John Holden was a photographer who also shot in Essex.

Best book to read!? Al Henderson’s “Understanding Winning Archery”. Also considered at one time worth re-printing and was stocked by Perris Archery but I believe its unfortunately out of print now.

These are the ones that I found worked for me the best. There are lots of others and if you asked 50 archers what books they found most valuable you’ll probably get 50 different answers.

Best publication on the internet is “The Archers’ Reference”, via Balbardie Archers. You should find this with a Google search to download as a PDF. It’s free to all but cannot be sold (although they will take a donation towards it). This has all the information you could ever want about the technical side of things (Pressure buttons, stabilisers, etc.). There’s lots of it so best to download it (it’s been up-dated recently) and keep it on your computer. Also useful for actual shooting and you’ll see details of most things you want to know and lots of stuff about things you didn’t even know you wanted to know!

I still buy books now and have a mooch about on the internet. You can find alternative ways of looking at things or doing things which is always useful and I regularly get at least one that makes me think from each one I’ve had, which I reckon is good value for money but the first three I mentioned are the ones that made a big difference.

Last thought (for the moment) is about the Archer’s Paradox. This describes how the arrow bends around the bow as you shoot it, so it doesn’t go off at a tangent when you loose. There are lots of slow-motion videos on Youtube that show this. The real Archer’s Paradox is wanting to shoot well without trying to shoot well! May the Force be with you!