

COLYTON SMALLBORE RIFLE CLUB

1965 – 2024

On 26th May 1965, a meeting was held to discuss the possibility of forming a Rifle club at the Colyton Hall. 14 persons attended with 13 apologies. Office bearers elected were Patron - Ray Matthews, President - Bruce Gates, Secretary - Kevin Sowerby, and a sub committee was formed to approach the Colyton Hall committee for approval to build butts and arrange lighting. Various meetings followed at which interest free debentures of £10 (\$20) were issued, and a major raffle was organised to provide funds for club equipment and amenities.

The first official shoot was held on March 14th, 1966 to mark the completion of the range with B Gates and S Jeffries recording the highest scores. At this time the club became affiliated to the Manawatu Smallbore Rifle Association and it was decided to boost fund raising by organising a trophy shoot. The range was to open at 2pm with trophies to the value of £4/10/- (\$9) to be presented to the winners of each grade. Entry fees were 10/- (\$1) with an optional pairs match to be available at 2/- (20c) per entry. Trophy winners (53 entries) were Master grade, Betty Hooper: A grade, Robin Carrington: B grade, Graeme Burgess: C grade, D Woodman and D grade, Robert Hills. The pairs match went to Betty and Crellan Hooper.

To mark the occasion of the first interclub match, a postal match was successfully fired against the Rangiwahia Club in which B Gates and K Sowerby top scored. Further success was to follow when Miss M Clinton who, only after 6 months shooting, was selected as a member of the Manawatu ladies team, while Kevin Sowerby won three B grade open championships.

The 1967 annual meeting saw the following officers elected; Patron - H Matthews, President - I Sandilands, Secretary - K Sowerby, Committee - Miss M Clinton, P Dalley, R Hills and J Macauley, with S Jeffries as Club Captain. Shooting had continued throughout the year with a monthly shoot to keep the members in fine fettle. The annual trophy shoot was dominated by Brian Lacey (Levin) and Eric Stanfield (Wanganui) with 81 competitors taking part, and the season ended in triumph when a club team comprising A Chowen, D Matthews and R Vautier won the NZSRA C grade interclub competition.

History was created when Dave Matthews, who was in top form, recorded the first double possible of 200.20 on the range in an interclub match against Bulls in the 1968 season. The trophy shoot was again dominated by Brian Lacey with Doug Rummins (PNRSA) and Crellan Hooper (Utuwai) as runners-up.

Club scores had improved considerably and the highlight of the year occurred when a team comprising G Eccles, A Chowen, S Jeffries, K Sowerby and P Dalley travelled to Marton to compete in the Jones and Collinson matches. Much to the surprise of everyone, the team put on a score of 992 (possible 1000) and took the Collinson Shield home.

In later years the trophy shoot was abandoned and the Colyton Club carried on with a steady membership varying between 18-25 members.

In 1996, the club members decided to build a new range adjacent to the Colyton Hall, as impending new safety regulations regarding shooting ranges were found to be too costly to bring the old hall up to standard.

The land (547m² of area) was purchased from the Thurston family by the Manawatu District Council. Over the summer period, hay was carted for fundraising and a *Macrocarpa* plantation was donated by local farmer J Buchanan at Beaconsfield. Club members cut down the trees and

retrieved all the logs suitable for milling, the surplus was split for firewood which was then sold and the money used to pay for the milling charges.

On April 6th, 1997 the topsoil was removed, construction began, and the concrete floor was poured. During May the Feilding Training Centre began framing up, and the roof trusses and concrete block back wall were erected. The shooting mound and interior and exterior cladding all followed.

Interior finishing was completed and the opening of the new range was held on the 17th May, 1998. The Manawatu District Council Mayor, Bob Moody did the honours.

An exceptional effort by all club members has resulted in a very attractive and practical range of which the Colyton Club should be very proud. No sign these days of the comments of visiting shooters politely asking "when are the lights going to be switched on?"



In 2017 Colyton Club welcomed the members of the Awahuri Miniature Rifle Club to shoot at their range, as the Awahuri Club had lost their range when the grandstand they'd been using at Manfield Park in Feilding was demolished. A year later those Awahuri members joined Colyton as Colyton members.

Over the years a wide variety of people have been members of this club, serving the purpose of fostering firearm safety, fellowship and marksmanship.