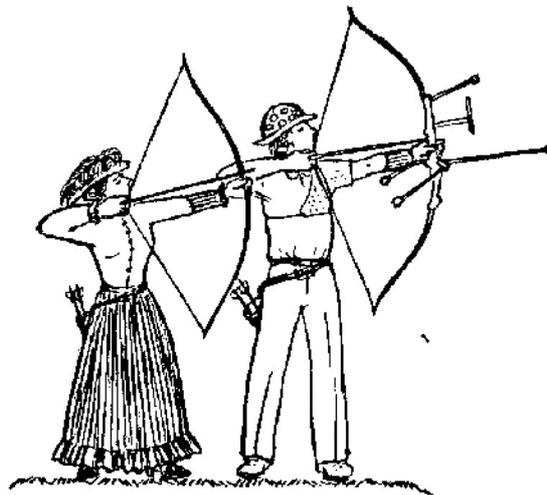


**THE HISTORY OF
REIGATE PRIORY BOWMEN
SURREY**

by Frances Mountford



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F. Mountford. 1983

The Early Days

Archery in the early part of the twentieth century was a popular pastime with ladies, and in 1905 the Reigate and Redhill Archery Club was formed, with Miss E. Hawkins as its secretary.

There were already six archery clubs in Surrey; namely: East Sheen (1860), Wimbledon (1861), Mid-Surrey at Surbiton (1870), Royal Richmond (1873) and Surrey Bowmen (Founded 1790, but it lapsed and was revived in 1877).

Every year Col. H. Walrond, who reported on archery to "The Field" magazine, published a volume called "The Archer's Register" and, along with other clubs, Reigate and Redhill Archery Club sent details to be printed in it. The club's first entry to "The Archer's Register" was in 1908 when the secretary's address appeared. By 1910 the club was running [smoothly](#). [Mrs. A.F. Blades](#) of Blandford Road, Reigate, had taken over as secretary. The club round was, for ladies, the National. For gentlemen the round was 48 arrows at 60 yards and 24 at 80 yards. The Priory Ground was open for practice on Monday mornings and all day Friday from the first week in April to the end of the season, with weekly meetings on Tuesdays at 3 p.m. During the year there were three Prize Meetings to which visitors were invited.

A Preponderance of Ladies

Perhaps it is not surprising, in view of the fact that practice and meeting days were in the week, that almost all the archers attending the Prize Meetings were ladies. There were usually about a dozen, with three or four lady visitors. Occasionally there was a gentleman visitor and MR. P.W. ROSE, a relation of one of the club ladies, kept him company. Sometimes Mr. Rose was the only male archer. He was not a good shot. In 1911, for instance, he made only 5 hits out of 24 at 80 yards, with a score of 21.

Reigate and Redhill were not alone in having a majority of ladies. Surrey Bowmen, for instance, was an all-male club, but it held a Ladies Day every year. In 1911 about 9 men shot at the regular meetings, but 47 ladies competed on Ladies Day. Similarly, The Royal Toxophilite Society had about 18 men at meetings but over 100 ladies turned out on Ladies Day. Other clubs open to both sexes had far more ladies than gentlemen.

The lady archers of the time wore long skirts and "cartwheel" hats decorated with ribbons, flowers and feathers and their photographs graced the pages of "The Archer's Register". At Open Meetings, of which there were eight or nine during the year, they regularly shot the National round or the double National, although the Hereford had been initiated in 1884. Gentlemen shot the York.

They used bows made of lancewood, lance and hickory, lemon and fancy wood, Italian or Spanish yew. Arrows with aluminum nocks were advertised by Thomas Aldred "which in no way altered the flight of the arrow or damaged strings".

Club Archers at Meetings

The Reigate and Redhill Archers had no exceptionally able shots amongst them, in fact they were all downright bad. In 1911, Miss Hawkins and Miss L. Martin were invited to shoot at the Ranelagh Club Meeting on No. 1 Polo Ground. There were 21 ladies' targets, with 117 shooting who had traveled from far and wide. By contrast there were only 5 gentlemen's targets and 24 male archers. Neither of the Reigate and Redhill ladies did well. Miss Hawkins made only 167 and Miss Martin 283 for the Double National. The winner, Miss Bird of Herefordshire Bowmen, made 632. The winning gentleman was Mr. W.A. Inderwick, a competent archer who lived at Malden, who made 580 for the Double York.

In 1912, Mrs. Du. Buisson competed at the 9th Southern Counties Meeting, which was held at Worcester Park Polo Ground, New Malden. She did not do well either; scoring only 197 against the winning lady, Miss Q. Newall of Cheltenham who made 745. Miss Newall was an exceptionally skilled and successful archer for several years, as were amongst the gentlemen, Mr., W. Dod (Welford Park) who score 830 and Mr. H.P. Nesham (West Berks.) who made 800 for the Double York at that meeting.

The Outbreak of War

By 1914 there were eight archery clubs in Surrey, the ladies' hats were a little smaller than they had been a few years earlier and their skirts narrower. Reigate and Redhill Archery Club continued with about the same number of archers as before, none of who was outstanding. Mr. Rose won the gentleman's prize at the June Prize Meeting, but he was again the only male archer and his score as bad as ever, with only 6 hits out of 24 at 80 yards, and a score of 20.

That year saw the outbreak of the 1914 - 1918 First World War, which affected archery just as it affected every other aspect of life. The final issue of "The Archer's Register" came out in 1914 - 1915 in which the editor, Col. Walrond, wrote that several archers and many of their friends and relatives had already fallen in the war. Col. Walrond himself died at the end of 1915 and "The Archer's Register" were never again published.

The New Post War Magazine

When shooting began again in 1919, there was no periodical to keep up to date with news of other club activities and tournament score. In consequence, Miss Christine A. Philips of Hereford and Miss B.M. Legh of Cheltenham brought out "Archery News". The first Issue appeared in August 1922 and was published for seven the year. Miss Philips was to produce it for 26 years.

At first, the magazine contained mostly the scores sent in by clubs of their target days. Reigate and Redhill Archery Club was not listed in the magazine until June 1923, and then only in a catalogue of existing clubs, with no name or address for the secretary. As several of the pre-war club members had been enthusiastic archers and their names subsequently appeared in "Archery News", it seems likely that they wasted no time in starting the club up again after the war, but neglected to send the magazine any details.

Home and Away

In July 1926 the cluti began to send in its scores to "Archery News", and they were regularly published. As no club Minute Books survive from this period these reports in the magazine are the only records we have of the activities of the Reigate and Redhill Archery Club in the 1920's and 1930's.

There were no gentlemen in the club. Sport was not usually practiced on Sundays, and as most gentlemen were working during the week, including Saturdays only retired or professional men would have had opportunity to shoot.

Usually, seven or eight ladies turned out for target days, but on Handicap Day, Prize Day, or the Last Shoot of the Season, there would be about sixteen.

On October 3rd 1927 at the Last Shoot of the Season, the members subscribed one-shilling (5p) each towards a goose, which was to be given for the best gold. This shoot for the goose was repeated in subsequent years.

On Prize Day on 24th June 1928, eighteen club members shot with four few of them went home without a prize of some sort. They competed for awards for: highest total score, highest score of 60 yards, highest score of 50 yards, best gold, 2nd best gold, 3rd best gold, the most reds, the most blues, the most blacks, the most whites and the visitor's prize.

Miss May Williauns was, for several years, a Class 1 archer, but she did not approach the standard of the top archers of the time, notably a Mrs. Atkinson and a Mrs. Sandford of Shropshire. At the club Miss Williams regularly won for several years the silver challenge cup for the 6 highest scores of the season and the GNAS Bronze Medal for Surrey Ladies.

In 1926 four of the club ladies competed for the Trevor Lawrence Cup which had been first awarded in 1875. Reigate and Redhill lost by a wide margin to the strong teams of Mid-Surrey and Royal Richmond. One member of the team was Miss Law, of Deerings Road, Reigate. She was club secretary, over seventy years of age, and had been a club member since Reigate and Redhill had first sent in its scores to "The Archer's Register" in 1908.

Several members of the club regularly entered for the Southern Counties Archery Meeting. In September 1927, when it was held at Tunbridge Wells, with 64 ladies and 17 gentlemen competing, Miss Martin, a member from before the war, and Miss G.F. Hamilton entered. Miss Hamilton made a creditable score and came 7th on Handicap Day. Mrs. Inderwick a visitor to the club in pre-war years presented the prizes. Mr. Inderwick was SCAM Chairman.

In 1929 the meeting at Ranelagh was revived with 66 ladies and 20 gentlemen shooting. Miss G.F. Hamilton was there, but did not do well, nor did the club ladies who attended the SCAM meetings in following years come anywhere near to catching up with Mesdames Atkinson and Sandford. By 1932 seven members shot at the SCAM at Hastings, although three of them entered as members of Royal Richmond. Two of these were Miss May Williams who made the 2nd best gold and Miss Chennells who achieved the 4th best score.

When Reigate and Redhill met Royal Richmond in the competition for the Trevor Lawrence Cup in 1934. Miss May Williams' loyalties lay with Reigate and Redhill for she, with Miss G. Williams, Miss Hamilton and Mrs. May (a member since before the war). Beat the Royal Richmond team and won the trophy.

International Shoot

In August 1933 an International Match was held at Ranelagh. There were two representatives from USA, four Belgians, 1 Czech, 5 French, 9 British gentlemen and 10 British ladies. These ladies included Miss Chennells, Miss May Williams and Miss G. Williams, none of whom acquitted themselves well. A report in "Archery News" enthused over the most outstanding archer at the meeting, the American, Donald MacKenzie. His arrows cost 15 a dozen and out of the dozen he could be certain of getting at least six which flew alike. The arrows had brass piles and ivory nocks. His bow was a 52lb Styles Oregon Yew.

The Close Down

Until the end of the 1930's the Reigate and Redhill ladies were regular archers on club target days. Their annual subscription was £1.10.0 (£1.50) and the provision of target bosses was their main expense.

1939 saw the outbreak of the Second World War. The club closed down early in 1941 and sent in no more results to "Archery News". The magazine continued but printed few scores of any kind. Royal Richmond occasionally sent in some, which included scores of Miss May Williams. "Archery News" now contained more articles on archery topics and advertisements. In 1938 Seefab steel bows began to be advertised and a year or two later there was an advertisement for a novel bow with a take-apart handle and precision matched hollow arrows.

The era ended with a notice in "Archery News" of the death of Miss Law, the former hon. sec. of Reigate and Redhill Archery Club, in May 1945 in her 90th year. Miss Law had probably been a member when the club first began in 1905, and in the year of her death the club was about to make a new beginning.

The Revival

At the end of the war the Reigate and Redhill Archery Club was revived by a young man, who had been taught archery as a boy with a lady called Mrs. Petronilla de Wharton Burr. Who was to become World Champion twice over and was the wife of the headmaster of Belmont Preparatory School, near Brighton. The young man, David Hill, had shot with the Reigate and Redhill club on the last official target day, 30 September 1940, before it closed down for the war early in 1941.

David Hill inspected the old equipment, which had been stored during the war in an old shed on Reigate Priory Cricket ground, and he contacted several of the pre-war archers.

On 22nd May 1945 he presided unofficially over a General Meeting of five other people, and these formed the nucleus of the new club. A fortnight later they held the first target day for four and a half years, where a Junior American round was shot. There were six archers: Mrs. M. O'Connor, Miss A. Hall, Miss M.C. Verrall, the Rev. R.H. Grierson, Mr. R.W. Pinchback and Mr. David Hill, with Mr. Oscar Lundberg who was President of Surrey Bowmen and a member of the Royal Toxophilite Society, present to give encouragement.

By the time the second General Meeting was held about a year later, the club ended with a balance of £10 after paying 8 guineas rent and sundry expenses. Funds had been raised by subscriptions, but the club had been fortunate in being able to sell numerous bows and arrows which had belonged to past members and which were discovered in the old Pavilion.

In 1945 David Hill and Miss Clare Verrall attended the Southern Counties Archery Meeting which was held at Winchester College. Miss Verrall had first joined the club in the late 1930's. She came 2nd on Handicap Day. The male winner of the meeting was the very successful archer of the time: Mr. Frank Bilson of Edgeware, who made a score of just under 1,000 for the Double York.

During the period from 1945 to the late 1950's, the club membership fluctuated but the club as a whole flourished. Many members came and went during those years, but the club's history is built upon those who left their mark either by service on the committee or by distinguishing themselves in some way in the field.

Mr. David Hill served as [hon. sec. to](#) the club for seven years, was on the National and Southern Committees, and with Miss Verrall attended many shoots, including the 1946 GNAM at Worcester College, Oxford. He was

later to specialise in the history of archery, being awarded a Ph.D. for a thesis on ancient Greek archery, becoming the first Chairman of the Society of Archer-Antiquaries and President of the Association for Archery in Schools, 1970 to 1973.

Champions at the Club

In 1946 a former champion's joined Reigate and Redhill Archery Club. She was Mrs. Erna Simon. She had been World Champion at Prague in 1936 and at Paris in 1937. Her husband, Mr. Ingo Simon, became the club President. He had distinguished himself at long distance shooting and he held the record for having shot an arrow 459 yards 8 inches at Le Touquet. This he had done with a Turkish bow said to be over 200 years old. It was the longest recorded distance since 1794. Mr. Ingo Simon was well known in the archery world and easily recognisable by his white goatee beard.

In 1947 the club competed for the Trevor Lawrence Cup, which was normally awarded to a team of four ladies, but in this year it was for a mixed quartet from any Surrey club. It was the first time for nine years that the contest had been held and it took place in lovely riverside grounds of a mansion called "Trumpeters" at Richmond Green. Reigate and Redhill were the victors over Royal Richmond and Farnham, with David Hill the only male ever to actually win the contest.

David Hill's former archery companion, [Mrs. de Wharton Burr](#), had become World Champion in 1946 at Stockholm and National Champion at Oxford in 1941 where she had scored 1,277 for the Double Hereford using steel bow with a draw weight of 28 lb. In the July of 1947 she shot as a visitor on the Reigate and Redhill ground making a record score for the National, and subsequently, in 1948, when she was again World Champion at Dulwich, London, she became President of the club.

First Flight Shoot

In 1947 the first Flight Shoot ever to be held in this country under the aegis of the Grand National Archery Society was held in the actual Reigate Priory grounds. Mr. Kenneth Ryall Webb, who had been a member of the club for only one year and was now its chairman, was the organising secretary of the Flight Shoot, with other members of the club generally assisting.

The archers competing came from all over the country, from as far away as Edinburgh and Yorkshire. They were permitted to use either target bows or flight bows, but target bows were limited to a maximum pull of 55 lbs. for men and 36 lb. for women. Flight bow draw weights were unlimited.

The winning lady with a flight bow was Miss Rogers of Portsdown with a distance of 193 yards 1 ft., and the gentleman was Mr. Jack Flinton of Scarborough, 246 yards 1 ft. The target bow distances were appreciably shorter. Mr. Ingo Simon demonstrated but did not compete.

A New Title, Motto and Rounds

In April 1948 the Constitution and Rules of the club were formulated and the name was changed to Reigate Priory Bowmen. The motto of the club was to be: "Cura sagittam: ratio se curabit", (Look after the arrow: the score will look after itself).

It was proposed that a new club round be created, to be known as the "Churcheffelle," (the original name of Reigate), and to consist of 4 dozen arrows at 90 yards and 2 dozen at 70 yards. Mr. and Mrs. K. Ryall Webb suggested that there should also be a Long Priory Round: 30 arrows each at 100, 90 and 60 yards, and a Short

Priory Round: 30 arrows each at 80, 60 and 50 yards. They presented a Challenge Cup to be awarded for the highest score made on either of these rounds. Mrs. Ogle presented a silver salver to be awarded for the three best Hereford scores.

A New Magazine

June/July 1949 was notable for the launching of a new archery magazine called "The British Archer", published and edited by Mr. Patrick Clover. In the first issue appeared the names of six Reigate Priory Bowmen who had shot in the Summer Postal League. The magazine contained articles on the perennial subjects of archery dress and handicap tables. The advertisements showed the steel bows of the day, such as the "Apollo", "Merlin" or "Seefab", whose approximate cost was 18.0.0. In Issue No. 2 a letter suggested that "all archers who use these 'rattletraps' in competition should be penalised", and went on to bewail "the disappearance of beautiful wooden bows and the craftsmanship which goes into their making."

A Busy Year

Reigate Priory Bowmen continued in its support of the GNAM at Oxford and in 1949 five members attended. Mrs. Ryall Webb won a tankard for the most gold's and was one of the team of four ladies to win the County Challenge Cup for Surrey.

There was an innovation at Oxford that year. It was the first GNAM ever to be held shooting six arrows in one direction instead of the old English way of shooting three arrows in two directions.

The year saw the club ladies winning the Trevor Lawrence Cup, and the gentlemen winning the new Hayter Trophy for the best Surrey team of four gentlemen. This they managed to do with only three male archers, namely Mr. P.R. Bergson, Mr. Ryall Webb and Yonkheer Roell.

Members attended several open meetings and six now belonged to The Royal Toxophilite Society. Mrs. Erna Simon shot at the revival of the Celebrations of the St. Emilion Wine Festival in France, and both Mrs. C.

Ogle (the treasurer) and Mrs. Simon had been at the World Championships in Paris, but not in the main team. Mrs. Ogle came 17th and Mrs. Simon a disappointing 22nd.

Back at the club that year the committee were discussing the proposed increase in the cricket ground rent to 20 guineas per annum (£21), and the problem of rats attacking the bosses in the target shed.

Flight Shoot Incident

Several photographs of the Third National Flight Shoot, held on Sandown Park Race, Course, Esher, appeared in the "Tatler" and "The British Archer" magazines. One showed Mr. and Mrs. Ingo Simon preparing to shoot and another Mrs. Ryall Webb bracing her bow. The meeting concluded with a Clout Shoot and Mr. Kenneth Ryall Webb, reporting the event in "The British Archer", wrote that only one clout was scored and that "the marker, owing to a mild attack of lumbago was unable to signify this in the time-honored manner. Mr. David Hill, however, nobly stepped into the breach, immediately flinging himself onto his back and waving his legs in the air, only to find on rising that he had, alas, omitted to remove his arrows from his hip pocket."

New Members

The beginning of the 1950's saw the election to Reigate Priory Bowmen of Miss Joyce Mitchell, Mr. and Mrs. M.W. Egerton and Mr. and [Mrs. A.J. Hipperson](#). All of these were destined to make useful contribution to the club, and, in the case of Mr. Egerton and Mr. Hipperson, to archery in general. Maurice Egerton's name became well known as the manufacturer of target bosses which he began to advertise in 1952, and John Hipperson

manufactured high precision "Silver Streak" arrows and was the proprietor of Sherwood Products archery shop in Forest Hill, London.

1951 saw the first Surrey County Championships and the first Surrey Annual General Meeting, which was held afterwards. Reigate Priory Bowmen were prominent at both events. There were six ladies competing at the championships out of a total of fifteen entered, and four men out of twenty-seven. At the AGM Reigate's Mr. Ryall Webb was elected President and Mrs. Ogle a vice-president, along with Major J.G. Hayter (Farnham) who had presented the Hayter Trophy some years before. Miss Beryl Taylor of Oxshott was the hon. sec. and treasurer.

At the Club AGM in 1951 there were only seven attending. The stalwarts of the committee were Mr. David Hill, Miss Verrall, Mrs. Ogle and Mr. Ryall Webb. However by 1952 there were 24 full members and 9 associate members. The men of the club won the Hayter Trophy and David Hill gave an Indian brass bowl to be awarded for the three best Yorks. Maurice Egerton was its first recipient.

The club lost some members of long standing. In 1952 Mr. and Mrs. Ingo Simon resigned and Yonkheer Roell returned to Holland. He had been an asset in team events. At the Southern Counties in 1950 he had come 10th, using a "beautiful American Folberth laminated yew bow", which was much admired. Steel bows were used by most archers, and at that meeting four of them were reported to have snapped causing injury to the archers' faces. At about this time "The British Archer" commented on the modern trend in the use of binoculars to sight arrows.

Two Lady Master Bowmen

Miss Joyce Mitchell, who had been coached by Mrs. Ogle, made rapid progress and was chosen with five other women to represent Great Britain at the International Archery Meeting at Brussels in 1952. Of the British ladies competing she came 2nd, and the ladies came 2nd in the team placing.

Mrs. Ruth Egerton soon began to equal the prowess of Miss Mitchell. In 1953 Miss Mitchell gained her Master Bowman badge and Mrs. Egerton was awarded hers in the following year. In 1953 Miss Mitchell was County Champion, and Mrs. Egerton came 4th at the GNAM at Oxford in a field of over 100.

In 1955 both the ladies were invited to compete at the international Trials, but only Mrs. Egerton was selected to represent Great Britain at Helsinki at the World Championships. She was placed 14th there, about halfway down the results list. At that time the best lady archers in Britain were probably Miss Joyce Warner and Mrs. Patricia Flower. Mrs. Flower held the record for the Hereford with 826. Mr. J. Collyer held the record for the York at 913.

A New Shooting Ground

In 1956 Mr. Roy Valentine was elected as a club member, and although he was never prominent as an archer he did much good service on the committee.

This was the year that the club moved from the Reigate Priory Cricket Ground to the Old Reigatians Rugby Club field, and where they have remained ever since.

The ladies again did well in 1956, especially Mrs. Egerton in the new Double FITA round at the International Tournament at Windsor, where she was 6th with a score of 1626. She was Surrey County Champion, but was beaten by fellow club member Miss Mitchell at the SCAM at Winchester who came 4th to Mrs. Egerton's 6th. Miss Joyce Warner was 1st there for the third year in succession and Mr. George Brown 1st for the fourth year.

At last one of the Reigate men stepped briefly into the limelight in 1957. Mr. Egerton became the National Flight Champion. His target shooting had improved too, for he was one of the team of four men to win the Titcombe Salver for Surrey at the SCAM, while his wife was one of the four ladies to win the Field Salver for Surrey. Together they won the Apollo/Diana Open Trophy.

The club membership was now down to 15, but the ladies won the Trevor Lawrence Cup from five other clubs.

1957 marks the culmination of several successful and busy years for the club and its members. Reigate Priory Bowmen had contributed much to archery in general in the form of organisation at National and County events and in providing some female archers of International standard. It had not yet produced any men who could approach top ranking in target shooting.

From this time the club entered a quiet period. The Egerton's spent less time at archery; Miss Mitchell did not maintain the standard she had previously attained. She became a committee member. The faithful Miss Verrall moved from the district to Chichester.

Revised Club Badge

At the end of the 50's and the beginning of the 60's the club was again concerned about shortage of members. The committee was chaired now by Mr. Mike Vivian. He and his wife Rosamund had been archers for several years with Surrey Bowmen. Mr. Arthur Stilby was the secretary. In 1957 Miss Mitchell had presented a silver cigarette box for the FITA round and in 1958 she proposed a new design for the club badge which would incorporate the existing triangle of bows.

The most successful event of 1959 was a match against Addington Palace Golf Club, which the archers won. By now the club's Champagne Clout Shoot at the beginning of the season was well established.

1960 was a particularly quiet year. Mr. Stilby wrote in his secretary's report that year: "No golf matches, no garden parties, no Hayter, no Trevor Lawrence, only one FITA, only three Yorks, one away match, one at home meeting" The only tournament success was from a disabled archer. Mrs. Comley represented Great Britain in Rome at the paralympics and won a gold medal for top score in the Windsor round and a silver medal for the FITA.

At this time bows with laminated handles were making their appearance in the advertisements in "The British Archer" and on the shooting lines. There was a fashion for homemade bows. The steel bows had been impossible to manufacture oneself but to make laminated bows of different coloured woods was quite possible and many strange designs appeared. The stars of the tournament fields were now Mr. Roy Mathews and Mr. George Brown.

Diamond Jubilee

During the following three or four years the club had little excitement. In 1961 the accounts looked gloomy and the subscription was raised to 3 guineas. There were no First Class archers at all. By 1964 the average turnout on the field was 5.53 persons. However, a year or two later both Mrs. Rosamund Vivian and Mrs. Muriel Hipperson were First Class.

1965 saw the Diamond Jubilee Anniversary of the formation of the club, and on 27th June a special shoot was organised to celebrate the occasion. A Jubilee Prize was awarded for the most 60 dozens at 60 yards and was won by Mr. Valentine. The vice-presidents attended namely Mrs. Ogle, Mr. Hill and Miss Verrall. After a picnic lunch Miss Verrall spoke of her early archery days.

By now the club finances were on a firmer footing than they had been a few years earlier. There were 19 members. Mr. David Hill gave a silver trophy for the American round. When it was purchased there was a date already inscribed on it, which was the same as that of the year of the club's origin?

At a Low Ebb

In the second half of the 1960's, when club days were on Saturdays and Sunday afternoons and lady archer's shot in mid-thigh miniskirts, the club membership was extremely low. The Egerton's resigned in 1966, and the Ryall Webbs, though now honorary members, did not often shoot. The committee consisted of Mr., and Mrs. Vivian, Mr. and Mrs. Hipperson and Mr. C. Barnes. There was sometimes less than half a dozen archers shooting on target days.

In 1967 Mr. Arthur Aldridge joined and Mr. Jim Gadd and Mr. Michael Coleman who was already an archer and had been a member of Nonsuch Bowmen followed him in 1968. These three were to remain members for many years and to serve on the committee in various capacities. That year the committee declared the club open for a winter season and the following winter it shot indoors for the first time, in The Parish Hall, Reigate.

New Enthusiasm

The new decade got off to a slow start. At the AGM in March 1970 Arthur Aldridge, the scores recorder, said that only once during the whole of the previous season had the club been able to field a full team of five archers for the Albion rounds of the Summer Postal League. He said that without the enthusiasm and help of Michael Coleman the club would have collapsed and died, and that the situation was serious.

During the next summer, Mike Coleman did his best to remedy the low membership problem by instructing ten beginners on Thursday evenings, but the actual club turnout was as low during 1970 as it had been the previous year. However, as a result of Mike's efforts new members were recruited. In 1971, the club entered "The British Archer" 'Frostbite' postal round for the first time, it held a Barbeque Clout, and the members and friends attended a Dinner-Dance at Russ Hill Hotel, Charlwood, where the three course dinner cost £2.20 each.

At this time the committee decided to rent a cricket pavilion at £20 per annum in which to accommodate its equipment. The cricket club, which at first shared the pavilion, eventually withdrew and then club members were kept busy improving it and with the routine repair and replacement of equipment. The club membership was £5.00 per annum, and to raise extra money car stickers and badges printed, with the club emblem were sold.

In 1971 the club again began to compete against other clubs, namely Foxboro Yoxall and Oxted. In 1972 Reigate Priory was one of six clubs competing at Foxboro Yoxall in Redhill. Reigate member Miss L. Hoad won a ladies prize, but in most of the inter-club competitions Reigate lost. However, the club had ridded itself of the apathy of the late 60's. Five members entered the Guildford "Acorn" Hereford Tournament and seven entered the Laleham Albion. The club also took part in the Reigate Festival of Sport and has continued to do so ever since. The public is given a chance to try its hand with bow and arrows, and those who show special interest are recruited to beginners' classes.

In 1974 the first Club Championship shoot was held. The year before a beginner, Mr. Barrie Watson, had joined the club. Barrie proved to be an exceptionally gifted archer, in fact a "natural", and he was the first Reigate Priory Bowmen Club Champion.

At this time Reigate had another extremely able archer in the club, although he came from Kent. He was Mr. M.W. Heason, who for some years held the National Record for the Clout at 104 points.

70th Anniversary

On 8th June 1975, a fine summer day, the club celebrated the 70th anniversary of its founding with York/Hereford rounds to which Malden, CMO and Surbiton clubs were invited. Fifty-two archers competed. The Lady Paramount was Mrs. Rosamund Vivian, who had ceased to be an active member in 1969. She presented prizes to Mrs. Olive Rimmer and Mrs. Beryl Fisher, both of ChO, who came 1st and 2nd respectively in the Hereford, and to Mr. David Knight of CMO and Mr. Stan Balls of Malden who were 1st and 2nd in the York. The President, Mr. Roy Valentine, presented and planted a yew tree to commemorate the occasion.

Reigate Prior Successes

In 1974 Mr. Barrie Watson married fellow club member Miss Jennie Wilson, and in the following year they were committee members, with Dr. David Hill elected President. There were now 37 full members, which included 11 ladies.

1977 was a particularly successful year for the club at the Surrey County Championships with Barrie becoming Surrey County Champion. For the third year in succession he and his wife won the cup for the top Surrey married couple, and he and Jennie constituted half of the team which won the team cup for Reigate, the other half being Mr. Alan Crockford and Miss Carolyn Higgs. Altogether the Reigate Priory Bowmen won ten medals and three trophies.

For the first time in the history of the club it at last had a male Master Bowman, for Barrie first qualified in 1976. In 1976 and 1977 he was selected to shoot for Surrey in the Southern Counties Inter-County Team Tournament.

In 1971 the club took part in three fetes, where the public paid to try its skill at archery with a minimal amount of coaching and a bow and three arrows. £60 was raised for club funds.

The bows most used by archers at this time had laminated wooden handles and wood and fibreglass limbs. Stabilisers and "long rods", which helped to elevate scores, were usually added.

In 1977 Mole Valley Bowmen, of Leatherhead, invited the club to compete in its Wand Shoot, where arrows are shot at a narrow post. Miss Carolyn Higgs and Mr. Alan Crockford proved adept at this and Reigate won by a wide margin. At the Wand Shoot were two members of Mole Valley Bowmen: Mr. and Mrs. Alan Mountford, who had been archers for a few months. Early in 1978 they joined Reigate Priory Bowmen, just at the time when Mr. Barrie Watson departed from the club for archery in Sussex. Now Mr. Alan Mountford quickly gained skill and achieved some success:

From Strength to Strength

At the beginning of the decade the club had 27 shooting members. There had always been a problem of keeping the grass cut short on the shooting area of the Rugby field and the club set up a fund from which to buy a grass mower. After this was purchased the club was able to keep the field in excellent condition.

Bows had now undergone more developments. "Take-down" bows were becoming increasingly fashionable, where the limbs come apart from the handle for easy transportation. The handle was often made from magnesium alloy, the limbs a laminate of wood and glass fibre, and sometimes carbon fibre. Over the next few years Japanese bows, particularly 'Yamaha; came to dominate the tournament shooting lines.

A member of the club, Mr. Philip van Buren, ran (and still runs) the archery shop, Southern Archery Specialists, in Reigate, and this is convenient for Reigate Priory Bowmen members to obtain their equipment. As a Regional Coach, Philip is also able to give help with shooting and technical problems.

From the late 1970's more and more club members began to enter open tournaments in various parts of the country.

In 1979 Michael Coleman and Alan and Frances Mountford went to Malta to the 10th International FITA Star Tournament where Alan Mountford came a creditable 4th. In 1980 Michael Coleman again shot in Malta, accompanied by Miss Carolyn Higgs and Miss Shelagh Roberts.

Alan Mountford first qualified as a Master Bowman in 1979 and was Surrey Champion in 1980, when Reigate came top team. At the Surrey Championships Alan and Frances won the cup for top Surrey married couple in 1978, 79, 80 and 81. Alan was selected to shoot for Surrey in the Southern Counties Inter-County Team Tournament in 1978, 79, 80 and 81: In 1981 he helped Surrey's team of six to victory over the thirteen other competing southern counties, the first time Surrey had won since 1962.

Barrie Watson, although now a Sussex archer, briefly rejoined the club in 1981 and with both Barrie and Alan the club could boast two top archers capable of challenging the best in the country. Barrie won the 1200 FITA Star at Eastleigh, Hampshire, in June 1981 and Alan won his 1200 FITA Star at Manchester in August 1981. Both won or were well placed in many tournaments. Alan accumulated more points than Barrie in these and was selected for training at National level in the Pre-Olympic Squad over the winter of 1981-82.

Reigate Priory Bowmen entered the National and County Winter Postal leagues for 'Frostbite' and Portsmouth rounds and in 1981-82 two out of the three teams were undefeated in all their matches.

At this time Miss Dulcie Salter (Worcestershire) and Mr. Mark Blenkarne (Avon) were the champions of the tournament fields, Mark Blenkarne going on to win the gold medal for archery in the Commonwealth Games 1982.

Special Occasions

At the close of the Club Championships shoot in 1980, won by Alan Mountford, with Carolyn Higgs as lady champion, the archers found, on entering the pavilion, that a surprise had been prepared for them by the committee. To celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the club. The social secretary, Mrs. Dorothy Ruffle, had made and iced a cake in the shape of an arrow, and wine was provided which was drunk from glasses on which chairman Mr. Jim Gadd had exercised his skill at glass engraving. He had engraved the club's insignia and the dates 1905-1980 on the wineglasses, which were given to the archers, and onto glass paperweights which were presented to the club champions.

On 29th July 1981 there was a public holiday for the Royal Wedding of Charles, Prince of Wales and Lady Diana Spencer. The club held a Royal Wedding Shoot. Concentration on the York/Hereford/National rounds was difficult for a television was set up in the pavilion on which to view the wedding. Mr. Michael Coleman and Miss Marilyn Jones won commemorative plates for the first to have arrows in the centre gold, and nine medals were awarded, inscribed on the back: "Charles and Diana 1981" .

To the Present Time

1982 saw Barrie Watson temporarily quitting archery to give more time to business and family, while Alan Mountford dropped out of competitive archery, giving his time to experimentation with a Compound bow. Compound bows, working on the principle of pulleys, which allow the archer to draw a much greater weight than does a conventional bow, are slowly infiltrating the sport.

However, at this stage Michael Coleman, for so many years a dedicated archer began to make marked improvement over his previous scores. Now President of the club, he achieved creditable placing in several tournaments, and was selected to shoot for Surrey in the Southern Counties Inter-County Team Tournament in 1982.

As we enter the mid-1980's the club has a nucleus of about a dozen enthusiastic archers of some year's experience who shoot regularly. Hopefully, the club will continue in strength for many more decades, its archers of the future, like those in the present and past, enjoying that mixture of pleasure and frustration that besets the Toxophilite.

We, the archers of the BO's, shoot in all kinds of weather but no doubt we. Like the Reigate Priory Bowmen that have long since shot their last arrow, and those that have that pleasure yet to come. Will remember most the perfect early summer evenings when the season is still young and we are full of expectations of high scores to come. Evenings when we shoot until dusk with the target hardly visible, and with the high ridge of the North Downs beyond catching the last of the light.



Stout arm, strong bow, and steady eye,
Union, true heart, and courtesy