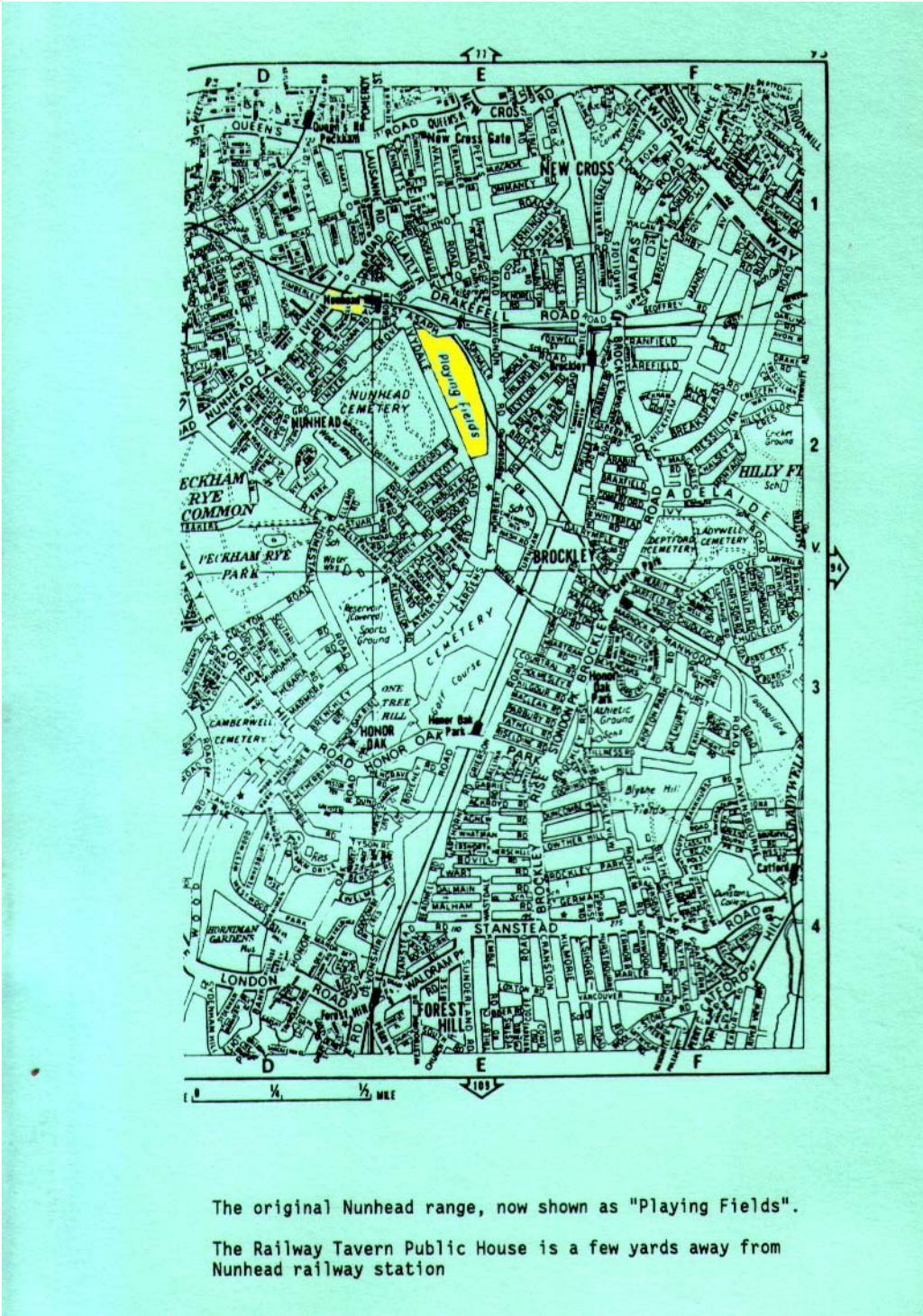


**SOUTH LONDON RIFLE CLUB**





The original Nunhead range, now shown as "Playing Fields".

The Railway Tavern Public House is a few yards away from Nunhead railway station

(Yellow highlighting is not done on the original)

THE HISTORY OF THE SOUTH LONDON RIFLE CLUB

1874 TO 1990

By E.Hayes

The History of the South London Rifle Club 1874 – 1990

Published by South London Rifle Club

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## Introduction

When Jim Hallam asked if someone would take on the task of writing the history of the South London Rifle Club I didn't realise what I was letting myself in for. The club minute books are so fascinating that I found it difficult to put them down,

It was a relatively easy task to start as a good deal of research had been done by both Mr. Langdon at the beginning of the Century and by Mr. Ebbutt during the 1920's. Mr. Langdon, who was the Secretary from 1900 to 1906, had the habit of pasting copies of letters and notices randomly in the minute books. Mr. Ebbutt found details of the first notice of the formation of the club and wrote them into a book together with a list of club members and a list of the winners of the club cups. He probably did all this work In 1923 whilst he was the Assistant Secretary and when he was setting up the board in the clubhouse listing the names of all club rifle champions.

I was also delighted when Bob Jones volunteered to research the Stamen range.

Presidents

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| 1878-1879  | Major S.S.Young  |
| 1880 -1880 | Captain Sweeting   |
| 1818 -1883 | Colonel Farrell  |
| 1883-1900  | Field Marshall Viscount Wolseley of Cairo, KP, GCB, GCMG             |
| 1901 -1914 | Field Marshall Earl Roberts of Candahar. VC, XG, GCB, KP, GCSI, GCIE |
| 1915-1924  |  |
| 1925 -1927 | Viscount Deerhurst   |
| 1927-1932  |  |
| 1933-1950  | Sir Lionel Fletcher CBE, Commander RNR                               |
| 1951-1967  | Major H.C.Patrick  |

Auditor/Trustee

|             |                  |
|-------------|------------------|
| 1879 - 1882 | Captain Lovibond |
| 1883 - 1906 | Captain Foster   |

Chairmen

From the minute books it appears that the club did not elect a regular chairman but that members of the council took turns in taking the chair. The first mention of an elected chairman is in 1914 when Major Nortlock was "re-elected" as trustee and chairman.

|             |                |
|-------------|----------------|
| 1906 - 1940 | Major Mortlock |
| 1946 - 1953 | F. Guilding    |
| 1954 - 1959 | E.L.Corliss    |
| 1959 - 1970 | J. Leggett     |
| 1970 - 1982 | L. Rutter      |
| 1982 -      | H. Sear        |

### Sources

The Minute Books and documentation of the Club from 1878 onwards.

The Volunteer Service Gazette (NRA and National Army Museum).

The NRA Journal.

Ordnance Survey Maps.

The Art of Revolver Shooting - Walter Winans

Modern Sportsman. Gun & Rifle - Walsh

Contributions from Members of the Club

### Acknowledgements

Jim Hallam for suggesting that the book be written in the first place.

Bob Jones for all his help in researching the Staines Range.

Henry Sear for lending me his collection of shooting memorabilia.

Mrs Gill of Johnson Walker & Tolhurst for photocopying the old ledgers.

Barbara Dixon for allowing me to look through the NRA archives.

And last but by no means least my husband Richard for putting up with my constant requests to rush off to do some research and also for having to read the text of the book endless times.

Secretaries

|             |                                      |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1874 - 1877 | Charles Fruen (London Rifle Brigade) |
| 1877 - 1878 | W.B.Reid (London Scots)              |
| 1878 - 1879 | L.H.Thons (19th Middlesex)           |
| 1880 - 1898 | W.Tuke (Queens Westminster Rifles)   |
| 1898 - 1899 | Andrew Wilson (London Scots)         |
| 1899 - 1900 | D.Reid (London Scot.)                |
| 1900 - 1902 | R.P. Mortlock                        |
| 1902 - 1906 | W.G.Langdon                          |
| 1906        | F. C. H. Sheppard                    |
| 1907        | J. G. Summer.                        |
| 1907 - 1908 | W.G.Langdon                          |
| 1908 - 1909 | C.J.Hill                             |
| 1909        | C.W.Gladwell                         |
| 1910 - 1911 | W.L.S.Alton                          |
| 1912        | W. E. M. Curnock                     |
| 1913        | C.J.Le (RQMS 53rd Royal Fusilliers)  |
| 1915 - 1933 | A.P.Prout (4th city of London)       |
| 1919 - 1920 | H.D.Ebbutt Assistant)                |
| 1921 - 1940 | H.D.Ebbutt (Joint)                   |
| 1932 - 1946 | C.Bunch Joint)                       |
| 1934 - 1936 | O.Wood (Assistant)                   |
| 1937 - 1939 | N.G.Evans (Assistant)                |
| 1940 —      | Faulding · (Joint)                   |
| 1946 - 1947 | R.A.Fulton                           |
| 1947 - 1961 | P.W.Haines                           |
| 1947 - 1961 | J.E.Vincent (Assistant)              |
| 1962 - 1982 | Dr. L. Rutter                        |
| 1982        | A. Benham                            |

## Chapter 1

### Formation

The earliest printed notice sent out by the Founders of the Club is dated November 1874. It reads as follows:

Chin Chu Villa  
Peckham  
November 1874

On Wednesday the 11th inst. a meeting was held at the Railway Tavern, Nunhead, by some of the resident Volunteers of the District, to consider whether it was expedient to form a Rifle Club: and it was unanimously agreed that the Club should be formed and that it shall be called the South London Rifle Club.

That its object shall be to encourage the friendly spirit amongst Volunteers, to hire a second class Range at Nunhead for practice and to hold monthly meetings, an Annual prize meeting and to shoot matches etc.

That the following Rules were proposed:

1. That the affairs of the Club shall be vested in a Committee, Secretary and President.
2. That the Entrance fee and the first years subscription shall be Half a Guinea.
3. That the Club shall be open to enroll Volunteers or Private Gentlemen Rifle shots.
4. That the days for practice shall be twice a week.
5. That a Secretary pro tem be appointed, and that he be deputed to call a Meeting at the Railway Tavern, Nunhead, on Tuesday 8th December next at 7pm to pass the foregoing Rules, to elect a Committee and Officers, and to discuss such matters as may tend to further the interests of the Club.

Any Gentleman wishing to become a Member is requested to attend at the next Meeting; and any further particulars can be obtained of

Chas. Fruen

Secretary pro tem

The Volunteer Service Gazette, a weekly paper published for the benefit of all Volunteer troops, printed the following statement in its issue dated 14th November 1874:



### Notes of the Week

“We understand that a vigorous attempt is about to be made by some of the most zealous volunteer riflemen in the South of London, to establish a rifle club for practice, with monthly prize meetings, after the fashion, we suppose, of the Manchester Enfield Club. If properly constituted, such clubs can do nothing but good and we shall look with interest at the progress of the Surrey Club. We would, however, point out that there is already a Surrey Rifle Association, and that is a scheme of constant practice and frequent prize competitions could be organised by that body, it would be the best way of settling the matter”.

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Notwithstanding the remarks made in this report against the Surrey Rifle Association the first General Meeting was held on December 8th 1874 at the Railway Tavern, Nunhead, with Colour Sergeant F.W.Frigout of the 13th Kents (afterwards Col.Frigout of the 2nd West Kents) in the chair.

This meeting was reported in the Volunteer Service Gazette on February 13th 1874.

### A Rifle Club in South London

“For some time past gentlemen resident in the South of London and more especially in that district of which Peckham-rye may be regarded as the centre have been considering the desirability of forming a Rifle Club possibly for all who like to join but with the primary idea of enrolling as members Volunteers who take a particular interest in Rifle shooting no matter what corps they may belong. The project is not one that can be regarded as in any way antagonistic to casting institutions which have been created to foster rifle shooting. The Surrey Rifle Association and also, we believe, the Kent Association are organisations devoted entirely to the promotion of military shooting and seek mainly to further the interests of the volunteer regiments of the two counties and the Middlesex Association, a body which has proved by its success the necessity there was for it, although taking a somewhat wider field than either of the other associations mentioned in providing allcomers series on a large scale is at present confined entirely to the county whose name it bears, the City of London and the Tower Hamlets. The club at present under consideration may perhaps be likened to those popular clubs which have been in existence for year. at Altcar, Glasgow, Edinburgh and many other places there are, at present, we believe, none in existence in the London district. The matter having been canvassed for some time, last Monday evening a number of gentlemen mostly or entirely Volunteers met at the Railway Tavern at Nunhead to regularly form a club.

Mr. Frigout, a Sergeant of the 13th Kent Rifles, was in the chair and though the meeting was by no means numerous the core of the Metropolis North and South were fairly represented. Prior to the reading of the proposed rules the chairman expressed the pleasure he felt at the representative muster of gentlemen desirous of joining the club. The committee had secured the use of a very good range at Nunhead in the immediate neighbourhood and it only awaited the certificate of government inspector as to its safety and there was little doubt that the certificate would be granted. The club would have its exclusive use on the Monday and, most probably, on a part of the Friday in each week and, as the railway which served that district went to all parts of London rendering communication exceedingly easy there was a good reason to believe they would be able to form a first class club. The number of original members would be limited to fifty and on completion of that number an entrance fee would be required. The rules, as framed by the provisional committee, presented no novel feature were then read by the Hon. Secretary Mr. Fruen, 19th Surreys and after slight alteration were unanimously adopted as the rules of the club. The provisional committee consisting of the following gentlemen was then elected as the permanent committee Colour Sergeant Frigout, 13th Kents RV; Colour Sergeant W.H. Smith, 10th Surrey RV; Sergeant W.C. Nash, 13th Kent RV; Sergeant W.H. Fruen, 19th Surrey RV; Chief Petty Officer A.C. Wickens, RN Avs; Private J. Hart, 7th Surrey RV; Private Richards, 7th Surreys RV; Private S. Butcher, 23rd Surrey RV; Private Schultz, 13th Kents. Treasurer Colour Sergeant Bosisto, 19th Middlesex, Hon. Secretary Corporal Charles Fruen, 19th Surreys, Auditor private L.H. Thomas, 19th Middlesex.

At the close of the meeting all the gentlemen present having signified their intention of joining subscriptions were received and the South London Rifle Club became an established fact. We can only hope that, conducted with the good spirit and feeling which has marked its original the club may thrive and without trenching upon the ground of the older and more important county associations can be very useful in maintaining the shooting interest for the district for which it is especially intended.

The following are the rules and byelaws of the club.

#### RULES

1. That the club be called the South London Rifle Club
2. That the annual subscription be 10/6
3. That the number of original members be strictly limited to fifty but that members may be elected in excess of that number but who will be required to pay an entrance fee of 10/6 in addition to their subscriptions.

4. That the affairs of the club be managed by a President, Vice President, Secretary, treasurer and a committee of nine members to be elected annually at the General Meeting. 5 to form a quorum.
5. All questions for decision at the General Meeting to be determined by a show of hands.
6. All members will be elected by ballot and it will be required that all candidates for election be duly proposed by one member and seconded by two others and that notice of such proposition be posted in the club room with the names of the proposer and two seconders. One black ball in three to exclude. The election to take place at 9pm on the first Monday of each month. Pending his election such candidate shall be permitted to participate in all privileges of membership provided he has lodged the amount of his subscription in the hands of the Secretary.
7. That the following be the test of qualification of members – via Wimbledon 1973 targets:  
  
15 rounds 200 yards standing 36 points  
15 rounds 400 yards 45 points  
15 rounds 500 yards 40 points  
  
400 and 500 yards any position. No member shall be allowed to shoot beyond any range until he shall have made the required score thereat in the presence of two members of the committee.
8. That the days for practice shall be twice a week and that the times for matches and prize meetings shall be decided by the committee.
9. That every member shall be furnished with a copy of the rules and bylaws of the club.
10. Subscriptions payable in advance on the first of January each year. Any member whose subscription shall be three months in arrears will cease to be a member of the club.
11. The rules shall not be altered or amended except by a majority of the members at a General Meeting. Special General meetings may be called by the Secretary or a requisition signed by 20 members.

## BYELAWS

1. Any competitor firing ,when the danger flag or disc is shown at the target or firing point or discharging his rifle except at a target to which he has been told off shall be debarred from further practice for that day.
2. No entrance fee will be returned but a competitor who is prevented from being present at any meeting for which he has paid a fee will be allowed to nominate a substitute (if qualified) to shoot in his place.
3. Every competitor shall enter and shoot under his own name and not oftener than once for any prize unless specially allowed by the terms of the competition.
4. The marking when signalled shall not be questioned but if the officer in charge of the firing point receives reasonable evidence that a shot has struck the target and has not in any way been signalled he shall examine, or cause to be examined the target and the result of such examination shall be final.
5. The committee shall have the power to offer or accept any challenge or to enter the club in any match in which it may be entitled to shoot and to select the members to represent the club in such match.
6. At all competitions the committee shall fix the ranges and number of shoots. The position shall be directed by the committee. The rifles to be long or short Snider rack or Government certified and a minimum pull of trigger is six pounds, the trigger to be tested at each meeting. No kind of screen to be used in prize shooting. No member may go in front to repeat the marking.
7. Ties to be decided by fewest misses, second by fewest outers, thirdly by highest scores at each range successively from the longest and if still a tie to be shot off at the longest range shot for shot.
8. The committee reserve to themselves the power of altering any part of the bylaws whenever it may appear to them to be necessary and make such arrangements as they may from time to time consider expedient for the welfare and interest of the club.
9. All members must make themselves acquainted with the rules, regulations and byelaws as a plea of their ignorance will not be entertained.

And so the South London Rifle Club was born.

The Railway Tavern, Nunhead was made the Headquarters, with the range on the Cricket Field where practice took place twice a week. The first official practice took place in the early spring of 1875. Shooting commenced at 6am and it was not unusual to see 20 or 25 members at these early practices.

The Volunteer Service Gazette reported, what appears to be the first important S.L.R.C. club competition in their June 26th 1875 publication.

The results of this competition were:

|                    | <b>200</b> | <b>500</b> | <b>600</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|--------------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Private Suttill    | 20         | 19         | 22         | 61           |
| Private Searle     | 23         | 16         | 19         | 58           |
| Corporal Fruen     | 24         | 16         | 16         | 56           |
| Sgt. J.A.Smith     | 21         | 24         | 11         | 56           |
| Sgt Willoughby     | 20         | 25         | 10         | 55           |
| Private Thomas     | 24         | 21         | 10         | 55           |
| Lt. Richards       | 22         | 10         | 22         | 54           |
| Sgt.Fruen          | 21         | 17         | 15         | 53           |
| Corporal G.E.Wells | 22         | 20         | 10         | 52           |
| Private J.Hart     | 20         | 20         | 10         | 50           |

The report goes on to say that the day was unfavourable for high scoring as the sun continually glared and a strong chopping, right and head wind prevailed.

The range was rented from Nr.C.Brown proprietor of the Railway Tavern at a yearly rental of £100 per annum. The Nunhead cricket ground and the Railway Tavern public house are still in existence today. The present landlord has held the tenancy for the last twenty years and his predecessor was landlord for thirty years. The pub is still known locally as "Browns" after the original owner. The cricket ground is about 600 yards long and there is a natural incline at one end. The field is bounded on one side by the railway line and on the other by a row of houses.

Membership increased rapidly and many of the members owed much of their success in their Company, Battalion, County and Wimbledon meetings, to the facilities afforded by the club for practice. The range became very well known amongst Volunteers and was much patronised for Class firing and Company and Regimental Prize meetings.