

Peter Bond's Story

Peter Bond is almost, but not quite, a founder member of the club, inasmuch that he joined NAC as a young boy in 1953 – just five years after its formation. He is a life member, past hon. president and his skills as an archer and coach are legendary. His wife, Sheila, is also an archer, boasting skills with the crossbow. Peter and Sheila's family also have taken up the sport along with their grandchildren. A great legacy. To this day Peter's son, Paul holds a county record for the Stafford Round from 1984 with a score of 682 out of a possible 720. Peter and Sheila's dog, Ben also joins in – as he explains later. The couple are to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary in 2013.



Illustration 2: Peter and Sheila Bond

This is Peter's story.

Joining N.A.C.

I used to live right near Delapre Abbey and it used to have a five bar gate across the field and every Sunday for a year I used to sit on this gate and watch the Archery. In the end there was a wonderful fellow called Paddy Flynn and he said, "I'm fed up with seeing you sitting on this gate. Do you want to come in?" I said, "Yes please." and that was it.

In the early days of the club, many of its members were doctors and business men – probably financially it was out of ordinary working men's finances. In addition in the late 1940s of course, Britain still had a class system. However things slowly changed and when Peter joined the Club it was more open to ordinary folk. Even so there were the odd one or two who still looked down upon *an ordinary kid from the streets*.

One businessman who did not have this trait, was George Stockham, a photographer from Weedon Road in the town. George did not possess a car and when Peter started with NAC, the Club were taking part in a competition at Bedford. This inevitably meant a bus journey to the shoot for George. (imagine that these days!). Peter (who was only a youngster at the time) was invited to attend to watch, but could not afford a return ticket to the event. George was kind enough to sub him 3d (1.25p) for the ticket. The event commenced but was hit by a horrific hail storm. Everyone got soaking wet.

When Peter was a youngster, one Les Higgins, a more senior member of NAC, and who is no longer

with us, looked after him. Les and his wife, Pat, who was also a member of the club, had a son, Gary. In return for Les looking after Peter, Pete looked after Gary when he joined the club. Although Gary was a good archer, his time was split with the skill inherited from his father of sculpting miniature soldiers. A trawl of the internet will find absolutely wonderful examples of the work created by these two men. Les sculptured the mould for the Thoresby Trophy – a 2 foot statue of Robin Hood at full draw on a rock. *“The Thoresby Trophy Tournament was first shot on 18th May 1958 at Thoresby Hall in Nottinghamshire at the request of ‘The Countess Manvers’ the owner of Thoresby Hall. Originally 4 Ladies and 6 Gentlemen from each of the 5 counties in the EMAS area were invited to shoot. Nottinghamshire were the first winning Team with a total score of 5145, Northamptonshire were second with 4,760. The Countess had commissioned a Trophy to be made, this was a small replica of the Statue that stands at the entrance to the hall. The mould for the Trophy was sculptured by Les Higgins a Northamptonshire Archer, (sadly now passed away), it was cast and finished by Vaughtons of Birmingham. (source EMAS http://www.emasarchery.co.uk/?page_id=346) .”*



The Thoresby Trophy

The Thoresby Trophy created by Les, inspired him to make a further miniature trophy based on it's design, as a gesture of thanks for the coaching given to Gary. Les insisted that the club shoot for the miniature trophy and stated that if anyone could win it three years on the trot, that they could keep it. Peter succeeded with this challenge and thus was awarded the trophy for keeps, and it became one of his prize possessions. Time marched on and in the true spirit of these gentlemen archers, Peter subsequently passed the trophy on to Paul Barrett in recognition of his work for NAC.

Gary also created a Robin Hood statuette donated to NAC which is now our Chairman's Trophy.



The statue of Robin Hood at Thoresby Hall – inspiration for the Thoresby and Chairman's Trophies.



The Chairman's Trophy

Many of our more senior members may remember a BBC radio comedian from the 1950's and 60's – Charlie Chester, also known as Cheerful Charlie Chester. His humour was considered a bit risqué, but he was also an archer, and would take his bow and arrow boxes with him when on tour. Wherever he was performing he would ask the local club if he could shoot with them. When performing in Northampton he came and shot with NAC.

Peter also tells of a man, considered probably to be the grand daddy of archery in Northamptonshire – Ben Herd. He lived in a chalet at Overstone Park and archers would go there to shoot. One Sunday the band of archers went to the Park with all their bows, but Ben was unable to shoot as he had to paint his chalet. The group put their bows down and within about two hours the chalet was painted from top to bottom. “That is what it was like, it was more like a family than a club.”

Peter's married Shiela who was drawn into the sport by her husband. She became proficient with the crossbow.

Sheila, like some of our existing members, provided catering and was a great organizer of events for NAC at Tournaments. She prided herself on giving good value for money and hearty refreshment. She remembers doing cheese toasties and a mug of tea for 50p – good value then.

One of the biggest employers in Northampton in the 1950 – 1970's was British Timken, manufacturers of bearings. Several members of NAC worked for the company and they enquired about the possibility of setting up their own club at Duston. British Timken Archery Club was formed and Dave Clarke, originally an NAC member, became one of their main stalwarts. Dave was a very good coach, and didn't suffer fools gladly. He went on to be Team Manager for two Olympics. David led the GB team at the Seoul Olympic Games in 1988 and again at the Barcelona Games in 1992.

Under his watch, GB won successive men's team bronze medals, while Simon Terry won an individual bronze in Barcelona. David died in 2011 leaving his widow, Marion.

In around 1975, Peter was working for Avon Cosmetics and Avon Bowmen was formed. The members got hold of some kit that belonged to the company, but Peter was the only one with any archery experience, so Peter supposes this is when he first started coaching. He built up a routine from thereon. Pete says, *"It's easy to coach – there's only certain things you have to watch out for. The secret with coaching is how you approach people. If you go in and you're the great 'I am- I know everything about coaching' you haven't got a prayer. But if you can be humble enough, if you make a mistake to admit it, then you'll get on with people, and you'll help them as you go along."* Peter as we have said still loves coaching and finds young members are much easier to coach. They take things on board better than adults. The best way to coach is with a camera. It doesn't lie and a video of a shot will identify such bad habits such as peeping etc.



Peter Bond, Dudley Leeson and John James shooting at a Country Fair at Deene Park in the 1970's

During the 1970's, like today, NAC was invited to attend country fairs and the like, including one at Deene Park near Oundle. The Club had a camp and around 40 archers attended.

Little Tricks with the Clicker

"If you are shooting a 400 you want to get better, you go on a clicker. When your score goes down to 350, you'll curse me. But bear with it, you'll get the hang of it and your score will go to 450. It will go down to begin with. There's little tricks to beat the clicker."

At this point Shiela interjected. *"One of the people that went down to Delapre, D...y, he bought a*

clicker didn't he and he was doing something in the house.” Peter continued, “We were in his front room and I went to visit him. He said 'Come and look at this' and he'd got a new bow and he'd put it all together. He put an arrow in. He was a good archer – we were in the County together, but he pulled back and the thing 'clicked'. So he let go didn't he. It went straight through the window. The window seemed fine and when we looked there was a hole was in the corner. The arrow had gone down the garden. He'd got a fence about waist high and when we looked the arrow was stuck in the fence. The other side of the fence was his neighbour cutting the lawn.” Now some say history repeats itself – mmmmm.

And to continue

Northampton Archery Club, Peter explained went on to become a “*Gentle Club*” in the 1980's, where members did not want to take part in competitions, but wanted just to shoot for fun. Other members joined who wanted to compete, and this caused a bit of a rift. Sheila added, “*The competition archers and the other archers, they're all one club and they've got to mix.*”

Northampton Archery Club had many excellent archers and provided something like between 60 and 70 per cent of the County Team, including their son Paul who was a great shot even as a junior. Peter explains “*Bob Jolly (from WOAC) was a wonderful character. He was very drole. We had this shoot and Bob was first in the adults, but in the juniors, our Paul had beat him by about ten points and he said, 'Ain't in b.....y real, getting beaten by a kid'. Paul was that good he was out-shooting the adults.*” *Paul when shooting out of the county as junior used to come second overall, perhaps only being beaten by one senior gent.*”

The club held different shoots including Pope Young Shoots. “*A Pope Young is a speed shoot. If you can imagine a shooting line with six stations on it – No. 1 to No. 6. From station number 3 to target number 3 is 30 yards. The targets come round in an arc, so that number 1 is probably 20 yards, but number 1 to number 6 is nearer 50 yards. So you stand on your station, say you are number 1. You are allowed to load your bow and the whistle goes. You are allowed 30 seconds to shoot one arrow at each target. So you're shooting very close and then it gets longer and longer. If you're in the middle it's not too bad. The shoots was named after two famous Americans, Art Young and Dr. Pope. They were famous hunters.*”



NAC at a Pope Young Shoot at Cogenhoe Football Ground From left to right the archers are – John James, Jeff Thorneycroft, (unknown), Sid and Pat Owens, Paul Barrett, Paul Bond, Peter Bond.

Whilst talking of Cogenhoe, Peter remembers an interesting episode involving one Paul Barrett, a keen kite flyer as well as archer. *“Paul was trained by the world fighting kites champion. We were at Cogenhoe and Paul was flying a kite. We said, “That would make a great target Paul.” He said, “No – what we’ll do is I’ll tie a string to my kite, tie something to that. We’ll send that up.” So we shot at what I think was a black plastic bag in the air. We didn’t realise that the wind was gradually pushing it over and over and we were in line with the road. So someone had a crack at this target, but the arrow carried and went over the hedgerow and hit a car on the roof. Like a lot of naughty schoolboys we all ran off, except for Paul who was left holding this kite. This bloke came over and said to Paul, ‘Have you seen anyone with bows and arrows?’ Paul replied, ‘No mate – this is a football club’.*

In the mid 80's Peter filmed a video at the Raunds Heritage Shoot which is still viewable on DVD. Peter commentated on the recording which featured many names that we still know and recognize today – Martin Ross, Colin Thwaites, Sid and Pat Owens, Pat Comber and many others, including Paul Bond – who won the gents recurve at the event shooting for NAC. Dale Langley of NAC won the junior compound.

The Archery Club was also a feature of television feature in the 1980's, when Peter Purviss (previously of Blue Peter fame) oversaw events.. Filming took place at Castle Ashby with a mediaeval theme and would-be archers competed on the assembly of a bow.



Peter Purviss interviews Peter for a television feature.

Peter and Sheila's dog, Ben, described as a large black animal - a cross between a labrador, a collie, a lurcher, a wolfhound and a pointer; also enjoys field archery and loves to find lost arrows, biscuits being his reward. *"We trained him as a puppy, I used to smear Marmite in between the fletchings and he could smell that."* Ben has become more notorious in some circles than Peter. *"It used to be 'There's Pete Bond, he's quite a good archer.' Now it's ,There's Pete Bond – he owns Ben.'"*

Mr. Bond is renowned for his coaching abilities and has trained hundreds of archers, both famous and infamous, including, one Paul Barrett, our present honorary president. Allan Clarke of The Hollies fame was also helped by Peter who comments on how good Allan was. The IMDb web-site lists Alan's hobbies which include archery, Karate and target shooting. Peter gains great satisfaction from coaching. *"It does your heart good to stand on the line and see people shoot; and you think 'I helped them do that'".* He has also lectured to many on the skills of archery, and recalls many questions about Robin Hood - *"Did he exist", "Did he shoot as well as they make out."* His reply was always, *"Hands up all those who can drive a car?"* This resulted in all raising their hands. He would then say, *"In all honesty how many of you could race in Formula 1"* Naturally no-one responded. He explained, *"That is what it's like – there are probably only about 40 of people in the world that can really drive formula 1. It is the same with archery – people probably took about 40 really good archers and melded them into one to make Robin Hood."*

Peter still regularly coaches at NAC, and his son Paul also recently rejoined the Club after a break of several years. He continues to spot things others miss and gently points out errors, and praises good techniques. We owe him a lot.

Other Archers Peter remembers-

John James – famous Northants archer and dedicated NAC member.

Bill Day – who had a fish and chip shop on Abington Square. Along with Paddy Flynn, he took Peter under his wing as a young man.

Paddy Flynn

Keith and Cythia Tunncliffe. Keith was a coach.

Peter's maxim is that there must be a good mix of archers in a club.

Pictures provided by courtesy of Peter Bond. Other pictures can be found on the Northampton Archery Club web-site History Section.