

# The girls who shoot it out alongside the men

Deal and District Rifle Club, founded in 1902 and one of the oldest in the country, has no discriminating "Ladies' Section," and no rules to say when women may or may not play.

It's seven women and 40 men all pay the same fee of £10 a head for single membership. There is a reduced fee of £15 for a married couple, but this is only to encourage families to join. And it doesn't turn the woman into a second class member.

Whether out on the summer season ranges, or in the club's premises off Deal High Street, the women shoot it out alongside the men. And the men are glad to have them.

"I can't see why there should be any distinction between men and women," said Chris [redacted], the 24-year-old secretary. "In fact, we

positively encourage women to take part."

Chris is a teacher; his wife Barbara, also 24, is an engineering technician, and the club treasurer. Chris and Barbara were only 17 when they started going out together — and shooting together.

It is the increasing togetherness of intelligent young men and women that has brought about a gradual rise in the number of women in rifle clubs all over Britain. Women more and more are sharing men's leisure-time activities, and by and large the men approve.

Shooting is a sport, just like darts, or bridge, or fishing, to its devotees. But because their equipment happens to be lethal, they have to be extremely careful, and responsible.

It is also expensive to

own a gun. A rifle can cost up to £450. A licence, if you've got through the screening of the club secretary and the police, will cost you £25.

Why not go fishing instead?

Another member, Christine [redacted], mother of two little girls, of [redacted], tries to explain: "You are pitting your wits against yourself when you shoot. It's not like fishing — a matter of whether the fish are there. It is purely you. I can't tell you how elated you feel when your score is good."

Christine's husband shoots with the club's pistol section — which has only one woman member, so far.

She is Sandy [redacted], secretary to the manager of the Deal branch of Lloyds Bank. A slim, petite girl, she prefers handling a

dainty pistol to rolling down on the ground with a more cumbersome rifle.

How do the girls measure up to the men? Pretty well. They can be just as skilful. Weight doesn't count — it's all a matter of balance and co-ordination, and sometimes the slighter-built person is better in these matters than the heavier.

Which should put paid to any false impression that the girls with the guns are tough, pistol-packing mommas!

For shooting they naturally wear conventional slacks, jerseys and padded jackets. But when they go out socially, they like to dress in feminine clothes and look as attractive to the opposite sex as any other women.

## MAINLY FOR WOMEN

by Gerda Paul



Shooting it out with the men are these girls of Deal and District Rifle Club. On target, from left to right, are



secretary and treasurer, are in equal partnership.

—Basil Kidd photos

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