

DAD AND HIS LAD

Tim Finley and son experience the delights of a proper shooting club

PART 4

Shooting in your back garden is fine, as long as it's done safely, of course, but I cannot recommend enough for shooters to join an airgun shooting club. I joined one in the 1980s and never looked back. Shooting clubs have come a long way since I started, and I wanted my son George to experience a proper, professional club environment with his new HW30 S spring rifle. The South Yorkshire Shooting Club is such a place, so I booked a couple of lanes as a non-member. The club has 16 indoor lanes, and even has its own café – parking is free and it's open seven days a week. It's all very civilised indeed. The comfortable café area leads into the club's premier 33-yard long, six-lane airgun shooting range, fitted out with a whole host of metal targets, electronic moving paper target holders, even CCTV systems to check out where your pellets are hitting and there are comfortable benches and seats to shoot from.

I liked the paper system because it is manually operated so you can set the zero where you need, and on the back wall of the big range below the viewing window, there's an airgun trajectory information sheet – very useful and informative. Stairs then lead up to a new, benchrest-style, 33-yard range, and that's where we were booked into.

I know we were at a shooting range. but I insisted on George wearing eye protection.



George loves the shooting range.

TASTER SESSION

The club offers a taster session for people wanting to get into shooting, so if you've never even shot before you can get a feel for airgun shooting in a very safe, controlled way. It's a

£35 one-off fee for adults, and £30 for juniors aged nine-plus, for a one-hour session with a range marshal giving instruction on the skills of becoming a competent airgun shooter. They go for nine years of age because by then, children should be able to sit at the shooting benches at SYSC and control a rested gun. George is ten, so it was all good to go for us.

After a taster session, you can choose to become a member, the cost of which is £55 a year for an adult – juniors pay £50.

Once a member, you are entitled to use all the club's facilities and there's always someone at SYSC. Booking a shooting lane for an hour costs £8, and it does get very busy. Air cylinders are provided for PCPs, and to hire a rifle costs another £8 an hour, but not for supervised juniors – their club gun hire is free. This is another way in which SYSC actively goes out of their way to get youngsters into shooting. Well done, I say! I could come back with George to book a PCP for him to shoot, even as a non-member.

Downstairs, next to the gun shop area, they also have a four-lane, 13-yard pistol range. Two of the lanes have Olympic rifle and pistol target set-ups, and the other two lanes have metal targets for a bit of 'fast-fire fun' with BB CO2 pistols. I liked the look of that, being a big



The booth at the 33-yard benchrest upstairs range at SYSC.

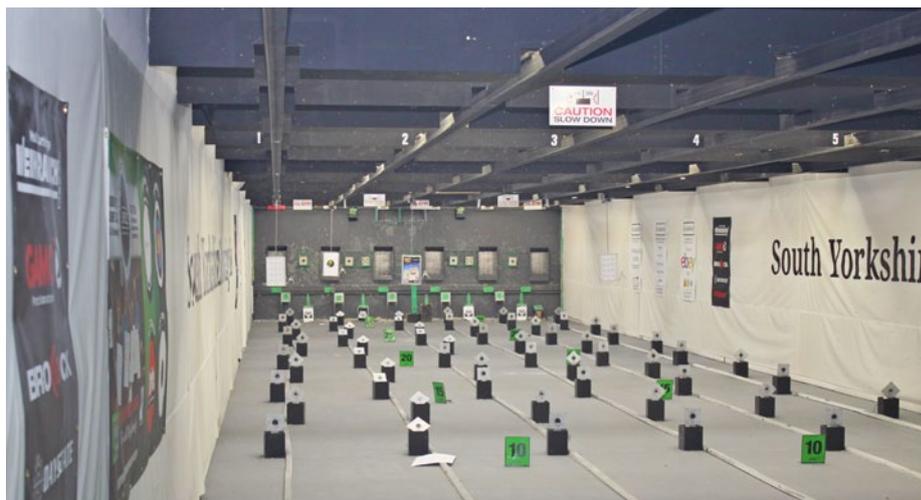
pistol fan – George has yet to be converted to shooting a pistol. They also have an in-house gun shop that stocks all the top-end brands you would expect, including quality pellets and a gunsmith service to solve any problems you might have.

HELPFULLY PROVIDED

We started off by getting George into a comfortable position, resting on a bench. I had brought along a sand-bag type rest, but we

“It was a bit alien to him at first, but he soon worked it out”

didn't need it because SYSC very helpfully provide them. They had a bigger and better soft rest, which you need when shooting a spring-recoiling air rifle from a bench. You must allow the rifle's firing cycle to perform in a consistent manner, letting the rifle move in



Downstairs at SYSC and all the reactive targets.

your grip as it wants to; placing the front of the gun on a hard rest will result in a harsh-firing cycle and the pellets will not land in the same place as if you were holding the rifle.

I had George place his front supporting hand on the top of the soft bag rest, and then place the fore end of the HW30 S on his palm. This made it comfortable for George, and gave the gun a consistent recoil pattern shot-to-shot. It was a bit alien to him at first, but he soon worked it out. The target system allowed

alone 20 yards. In hindsight, booking the ground-floor range would have been better, with all of the metal reactive targets, but I'd had the foresight to bring my spotting scope so we could see where the pellets were going on the target.

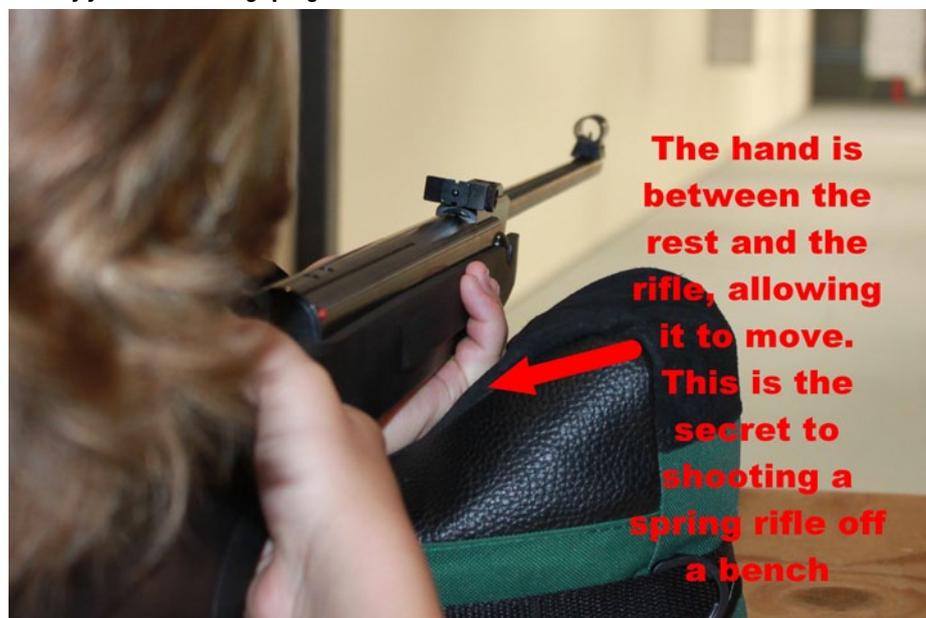
What a place! SYSC is a fantastic place to shoot, and it's not limited by weather or time of year. George loved the relaxed, comfortable, indoor airgun scene. He and I will be back to SYSC – this time with a red dot to put on the HW30 S, to see what difference that makes.■

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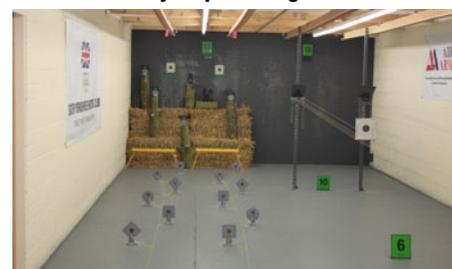
POINTS OF INTEREST

Joining a shooting club IS the best way to progress as a shooter. DO IT!

The way you rest a recoiling springer on a bench has a massive effect on how well and where it shoots.



It even has a 13-yard pistol range.



It's a good job I brought along a spotting scope so we could see where the shots were going.

