

TAIN RIFLE & PISTOL CLUB

Range safety and the use of firearms at our club

To ensure you and all your fellow shooters are demonstrably safe when shooting Tain R&PC has a few simple rules shall be followed. If you do not understand them: please ask as you may not be alone. Observance of the Range Rules is not just about **YOU** or **SOMEONE ELSE**: they are **EVERYONE'S** responsibility.

(1) The basic assumption: Treat every firearm as if it is LOADED

If you are handed a firearm and told that it is not loaded: Check for yourself.

PROVE EMPTY: Tain R&PC adopts the simple rule of a breech flag (or bolt removed, where possible) as a means to demonstrate that a firearm has a clear chamber. It does NOT ensure that the magazine is empty. The firearm should have its magazine removed but for some firearms this is not possible: lever action and other tube fed firearms should be proved clear by cycling the action at least three times in a down range direction and the breech flag inserted. Where possible check that the magazine follower can be seen. Muzzle loading firearms cannot be shown clear in such a manner. The convention for revolvers is for the firearm to be set at half cock and the firearms' nipples inspected in turn to ensure no percussion caps are present. Then inspect each of the chambers of the revolver in turn to ensure they are empty. For rifles and single shot pistols, the firearm should be at half cock and then be inspected to ensure there is no percussion cap or ignition charge (in the case of a flintlock) present. The barrel is usually proved empty by inserting the owner's ramrod and ensuring it is to a predetermined mark.

If you are unsure how to do this ASK as this this may save a great deal of misery.

Treat every firearm as if it is LOADED

Prior to leaving the range the firearm must be **PROVED EMPTY** before it is placed in its case or bag.

(2) Going forward of the firing Point: PROVE EMPTY FIRST

Once a detail has ceased fire and hearing protection removed, check all shooting is finished at all the firing points, before **PROVING EMPTY (Breech Flag or otherwise)** and going downrange.

Ideally one person on the range should check that each firearm in use is clear and **PROVED EMPTY** before announcing "**RANGE CLEAR**" and conducting downrange activity.

When anyone is forward of the firing point no firearm shall be handled in any manner. Whilst the firearm should be clear, those going forward do not know this and may find it rude and disconcerting.

(3) Returning to the firing Point: Firing May Commence

Returning to the firing point, ear protection and shooting / safety spectacles shall be applied¹ and, once everyone is back behind the firing point, and the order "**Firing May Commence**" has been given firing may commence. No one may move forward until the firearms have again been **PROVED EMPTY** and "**RANGE CLEAR**" announced.

Effective hearing protection in the form of ear muffs or plugs are mandatory as are shooting / safety spectacles and should be worn when one is on the range and firing is being undertaken.

(4) Firearms Handling

Key to this is always pointing the barrel of the firearm in a safe direction and, particularly, never at anyone since they do not know that it is unloaded and proved empty. Around the Range it is not easy to do this and the most effective way to avoid embarrassment is to carry the firearm cased or bagged.

Between the Club Room areas and the range a case / bag may be used although a **PROVED EMPTY** firearm may be moved observing that it is not pointed at anyone. Looking down the barrel of even a "**PROVED EMPTY**" firearm is disconcerting, generally considered rude at best and may induce a grouchy rebuke as a minimum.

On the firing point and after the "**Firing May Commence**" has been given always point the firearm in the direction you intend to shoot. Do not wave the firearm around or aim it outside the butt area of the range. The shots fired must end up in the sand butt stop of the range and not to the front (grassed area) or above the sand stop butt. Do not allow shots to stray onto any of the woodwork as this is (a) damaging and (b) may result in impacts outside the sand stop butt. This will avoid ricochets and other damage: if you find this

¹ Neglect of this precaution will lead to cumulative deafness or even tinnitus which is incurable and can be extremely painful. The club has a selection of ear muffs available at all times. Safety spectacles are not just a useful addition as they reduce the risk from firing debris in particular but also ricochet hazards.

difficult please ask for advice.

(4) Firearms Handling...continued

To avoid unintentionally firing, keep the fingers away from the trigger itself (alongside the trigger guard, for example) until you have started the aiming cycle, aligned with the target and are getting ready to fire. The use of the safety catch may also be used particularly in lulls during a course of fire but note that a safety catch is not a means to aid **PROVING EMPTY** as it does not ensure that the firearm is actually safe. Only move your finger to the trigger when the weapon is aiming at the intended target from the firing position. After the shot has been fired, remove your finger immediately from the trigger to alongside the trigger guard.

(5) Learning from other people's lessons

Good practices need reinforcement to learn and by YOU showing the correct way of doing things is one of the best ways of teaching. Never assume that that you know everything about safety and expect to have unsafe behaviour observed and commented upon. Hopefully, your safe behaviour will be observed and at least followed if not complemented upon. Advice from fellow shooters, preferably politely although expediency may preclude this, is intended to result in best practice. Even experienced shooters make mistakes and the proper use of firearms is in everyone's interest.

(6) Range Orders

Tain R&PC's Range Orders are displayed in the Club Room: they contain a lot of details and useful information. Additionally there is a range map and certificates for the range itself that can help understand the environment we operate within.

7) EMERGENCY STOP

If you seen anything that **YOU** regard as **UNSAFE** and likely to put **ANYONE** at **POTENTIAL RISK** of **INJURY** on the range (when firing is being undertaken) use the EMERGENCY STOP.

SHOUT

STOP STOP STOP

If this happens, simply put the firearm down and stand back from the firing point. Do **NOT ATTEMPT** to **UNLOAD** the firearm until the risk has been clearly identified and removed.

Examples might be: person(s) in the danger area, unsafe firearms handling: loading (or unloading) etc.

Do not be shy but do not go overboard!