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FIREARMS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

SIXTH ANNUAL REPORT

The Independent body established by an Act of Parliament to keep
under review the working of the Firearms Acts

Report of the Firearms Consultative Committee for 1994–1995

Presented pursuant to Act Eliz II 1988 c.45

Section 22(6) (Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988)

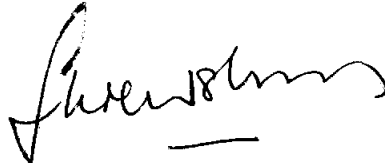
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**Annual Report of the
Firearms Consultative Committee**

Sir

I have pleasure in submitting to you as required by section 22(6) of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 the sixth Annual Report of the Firearms Consultative Committee.



THE EARL OF SHREWSBURY AND WATERFORD
Chairman

The Rt Hon Michael Howard QC MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department

CONTENTS

| | <i>Pages</i> |
|---|--------------|
| 1. INTRODUCTION | |
| The Committee | 8 |
| Aims and Activities | 8 |
| 2. PROGRAMME OF WORK | |
| Publicity | 10 |
| Representations | 10 |
| 3. EXEMPTIONS FOR FILM AND TV WORK | |
| Background | 11 |
| Statutory Provisions | 11 |
| Consideration and Recommendations | 11 |
| 4. FIREARMS AMNESTY | |
| Background | 14 |
| Amnesties since the Second World War | 14 |
| The arguments for an amnesty | 14 |
| The arguments against an amnesty | 15 |
| Other issues | 15 |
| Conclusions and Recommendations | 16 |
| 5. A TRIBUNAL ON THE STATUS OF FIREARMS | |
| Background | 17 |
| Consideration | 17 |
| Conclusion | 17 |
| 6. AIR RIFLES AND YOUNG SHOTS | |
| Background | 19 |
| Statutory Provisions and guidance - possession of firearms by young people | 19 |
| Statutory Provisions and guidance - air rifles | 19 |
| Consideration | 20 |
| Conclusion and Recommendations | 20 |
| 7. THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE FIREARMS LICENSING SYSTEM | |
| Background | 22 |
| The ACPO/BSSC seminar | 22 |
| Other action | 22 |
| Conclusion | 23 |
| Central database of lost/stolen weapons | 23 |
| 8. USE OF PISTOLS FOR VERMIN CONTROL | |
| Background | 25 |
| Consideration | 25 |
| Conclusions and recommendations | 26 |

| | <i>Pages</i> |
|--|--------------|
| 9. EC WEAPONS DIRECTIVE | |
| Background | 28 |
| The Current Position | 28 |
| Consideration and Conclusion | 29 |
| Recommendation | 29 |
| 10. REPORT OF THE DEALERS SUB-COMMITTEE | |
| Background | 30 |
| The Sub-Committee's Conclusions | 30 |
| Conclusion and Recommendations | 34 |
| 11. PISTOLS/CARBINES - SECTION 5(1)(ab) OF THE FIREARMS ACT 1968 (AS AMENDED) | |
| Background | 35 |
| R v Savage | 35 |
| The weapons in question | 35 |
| Home Office | 36 |
| Conclusion | 37 |
| 12. REPORT OF A WORKING GROUP SET UP TO CONSIDER THE CRITERIA FOR APPROVED RIFLE AND PISTOL CLUBS | |
| Background | 38 |
| Statutory provision and approval procedure | 38 |
| The consultation exercise | 38 |
| The Group's Report | 38 |
| The Categories of Membership | 39 |
| The Specific Issues the Committee asked the Group to consider | 40 |
| The Criteria | 41 |
| The Group's Conclusions on other points raised in reply to the Home Office Consultation exercise | 42 |
| Schools Criteria | 43 |
| Consideration and Recommendations | 43 |
| 13. OTHER ISSUES | |
| Add drugs offences to schedule relating to section 17(2) offences | 45 |
| Home Secretary's announcement on 20 July 1994 regarding firearm fees, length of certificate life, game licences and the Firearms Control Board | 45 |
| The Firearms (Amendment) Act 1994 | 46 |
| Armed robbery and the theft of firearms: two studies | 46 |
| Deactivation | 48 |
| British Western Shooting Society | 48 |
| Metrication | 49 |
| 14. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS | 50 |

ANNEXES

| | <i>Pages</i> |
|---|--------------|
| A. Extract from Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 (section 22) and Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 (Firearms Consultative Committee) Order 1993 (paragraph 2) | 52 |
| B. Biographies of members relevant to their appointment to the Committee and record of attendance at meetings 1994/95 | 53 |
| C. List of topics from which 1994 to 1995 work programme was drawn | 55 |
| D. News Release: Firearms Consultative Committee programme of work for 1994-95 | 56 |
| E. Membership of the Dealers Sub-Committee | 58 |
| F. Summary of Recommendations of the Dealers Sub-Committee | 59 |
| G. Proposed new criteria for Home and Scottish Office approved rifle and pistol clubs and accompanying notes | 61 |
| H. Proposed new criteria for Home and Scottish Office approved rifle and pistol clubs in schools | 64 |
| I. Organisations and other interested parties which have submitted representations | 65 |
| J. List of publications relevant to the Report | 66 |

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Committee

1.1 The Firearms Consultative Committee is a statutory body set up under section 22 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 (reproduced at Annex A). Members appointed to the Committee are chosen from those who appear to the Home Secretary to have knowledge and experience of either the possession, use (in particular for sport or competition) or keeping of, or transactions in firearms; or weapon technology; or the administration or enforcement of the provisions of the Firearms Acts.

1.2 Under section 22(8) of the 1988 Act the Committee initially existed for a period of five years from 1 February 1989. The life of the Committee has been extended by Order for a further three years until 31 January 1997. Paragraph 2 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 (Firearms Consultative Committee) Order 1993, which extended the Committee's life, is included in Annex A. Lord Shrewsbury assumed the Chairmanship from Lord Kimball from 1 August 1994 and has been appointed until 31 January 1997. The Committee would like to record formally its thanks to Lord Kimball for his loyal and impartial Chairmanship over its first five years.

1.3 Members of the Committee have been appointed for periods of two years which may be renewed. There have been a number of changes to the Committee's complement since its inception and a list of current members is at Annex B.

Aims and Activities

1.4 The Committee's statutory function is to review the provisions of the Firearms Acts and to make recommendations for improving their working; to make proposals for amending the provisions of these Acts where necessary; and to advise the Home Secretary on other matters which he refers to us.

1.5 As in previous years we have aimed to use the broad measure of autonomy which these terms of reference give us to draw up recommendations which are designed to benefit the shooting community, the police service and the non-shooting public. As always, the prime consideration in our deliberations has been the need for public safety.

1.6 During our sixth year we met on four occasions. Our meeting in September 1994 was held at West Mercia Police headquarters by their kind invitation. In March 1995 we met at the Forensic Science Service regional laboratory at Huntingdon which also houses the National Firearms Laboratory and in May 1995 we returned once again to Bisley Camp at the invitation of the National Rifle Association.

1.7 We have considered again this year complex and sometimes contentious issues. We do not suppose that our recommendations will find favour with everyone, but we have tried to produce recommendations which offer practical and sensible proposals for improvements to the firearms legislation.

1.8 We noted in our Report last year our profound disappointment that Parliamentary time has not been found for appropriate legislation where we have indicated a need for reform. *We reiterate that message and hope that Parliamentary time can be found soon.*

CHAPTER 2

Programme of work

2.1 The Committee's work programme for this year was drawn from the list of topics which is reproduced at Annex C. At our first meeting we decided to give consideration during the course of our sixth working year to the following:

Exemptions for film and TV work

Deactivation standards

Soft air rifles/air rifles and young shots

Administration of the firearms licensing system

Firearms amnesty

Central database of lost/stolen weapons

Use of pistols for vermin control

Pistols/Carbines

A tribunal to consider the status of firearms

EC Weapons Directive

2.2 In addition, the Dealers Sub-Committee examined a number of detailed issues related to firearms dealers. As well as our planned programme of work we examined several other subjects which were brought to our attention during the year.

Publicity

2.3 On 21 November 1994 the Committee publicised its work programme by the issue of a press release. This is reproduced at Annex D. As in previous years, the news release enabled us to bring the items on our work programme to those who had an interest in them and might want to make representations to the Committee.

Representations

2.4 We are grateful once again for the number and quality of the representations we have received on the range of subjects on our work programme. Anyone wishing to draw the Committee's attention to particular issues which are properly within our remit should write to:

The Secretary
Firearms Consultative Committee
50 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9AT

2.5 We must repeat our annual reminder however, that it is not the Committee's function to seek to intervene in or comment on individual applications for the grant or renewal of firearm or shot gun certificates, or to act as an appellate authority where individuals are aggrieved by decisions made by chief officers of police. Nor would it be right for the Committee to endorse specific commercial products as this would go beyond our terms of reference.

2.6 This report records our deliberations on the topics on the programme of work and other issues which were brought to our attention during the course of the year.

CHAPTER 3

Exemptions for film and TV work

Background 3.1 The Committee was asked to consider the provisions of section 12 of the Firearms Act 1968 (as amended) as part of its work programme this year to see whether the exemption adequately covered the categories of performing art which are available today.

3.2 In examining this subject we were grateful for a paper provided by Mr David Penn of this Committee, which had been prepared in conjunction with a number of people connected with the use of firearms in the film and TV industry.

Statutory Provisions 3.3 Section 12(1) of the Firearms Act 1968 provides that a person taking part in a theatrical performance or rehearsal thereof, or in the production of a cinematographic film, may, without holding a certificate, have a firearm in his possession during and for the purpose of the performance, rehearsal or production. The section does not, however, authorise the purchase or acquisition of a firearm for such purposes, without a certificate, nor does it authorise the possession, purchase or acquisition of any ammunition. Section 12(2) of the Act (as amended) provides that an authority to possess prohibited weapons issued to a theatrical or film producer may also authorise the possession of the weapons by such other persons as he (the producer) may select to have possession thereof while taking part in the performance, rehearsal or production.

Consideration and Recommendations 3.4 The paper provided by Mr Penn said that in general section 12 has been interpreted in a common sense fashion, and in practice has caused very few difficulties. Nevertheless, it was suggested that there were areas where clarification or further guidance would be helpful in interpretation of the provisions. For example, the section is medium-specific and takes no account of television, video, or CD-ROM, (although paragraph 4.25 of the Home Office *Guidance to the Police* suggests that section 12 should be taken to apply equally to television productions). It was suggested therefore that any revision of section 12 should use language which is not medium specific. This seemed to us to be a sensible updating of the law and *we so recommend*.

3.5 Mr Penn's paper highlighted the fact that the current exemption might be applicable to those using cam-corders to produce a film. When the legislation was drafted home cine-cameras were probably not particularly common and therefore not considered a problem. We considered whether any future revision of section 12 should be limited to commercial activities only and *concluded that it should not*, since this may restrict *bona fide* educational, voluntary or historical groups from benefitting from the exemption. In this context we noted that section 12 relates only to possession of firearms, not to their purchase or acquisition, and does not apply to ammunition. Nevertheless, this is an area which needs to be handled with care to ensure that unscrupulous individuals are not able to benefit from the exemption provided by section 12 and *we recommend* that this issue is borne in mind.

3.6 It was suggested to the Committee that guidance should be issued covering the use of re-enactment groups in commercial productions. Those participating in re-enactments are normally covered by other sections of the Firearms Acts but it seemed sensible to us for guidance to be issued on the use of such groups in relation to section 12 and *we so recommend*.

3.7 The Committee noted that, as presently worded, a theatrical production must involve an element of performance, but a 'cinematographic film' need not. We considered that this was a useful distinction and *recommend that it should be retained* as it ensures that documentary and current affairs programmes are able to benefit from the exemption.

3.8 Section 12 covers moving images. It was suggested to us that there seemed to be no logical reason why it could not be extended to the production of a still image in circumstances analogous to a moving one. We agree and *we recommend* that the exemption under section 12 is extended to cover the production of still images.

3.9 Mr Penn's paper further suggested that any re-wording of section 12 should avoid restricting non-theatrical exemptions to any form of 'recording' so that 'live' transmissions are not excluded. This seems a sensible suggestion given that live transmissions are more likely with the growth of cheap cable television, and *we so recommend*.

3.10 It was suggested to the Committee that there should be a new form of temporary certification (including certification for prohibited weapons) that would be available for theatrical, television or film production companies that required an authority to possess and use firearms or prohibited weapons. We did not think this would be acceptable. Lower standards could not be applied to certificates issued for this purpose and the Home Office could not apply different or less strict criteria to prohibited weapon authorities required for film or TV purposes. However, we agreed with the suggestion contained in the paper that there should be a modification to section 12 which would allow a suitably authorised armourer or hire company to authorise performers or others to have temporary possession of prohibited weapons during a performance, etc. Often the armourer or hire company had more knowledge of the weapons involved than the producer and *we therefore recommend* that section 12 should be amended in this way.

3.11 Mr Penn's paper suggested two areas where guidance would be helpful; on security and staffing levels when firearms or prohibited weapons are provided for a production, particularly 'on location' and on the status of antiques used in productions. This would seem to us to be helpful and *we so recommend*.

3.12 Finally, some companies with section 5 authorities asked if it would be possible for these to be worded more generally, to give them more flexibility of response in supplying the precise needs of production companies. The Committee was sympathetic to their plight but understood that the Home Office could not apply different criteria to prohibited weapon authorities required for film and TV purposes and *we do not recommend any change*, although we hope that the Home Office will take the special circumstances of these applications into account during their considerations.

3.13 In considering these detailed points in relation to section 12, the Committee thought that it may be helpful to set up a small Home Office working group consisting of interested parties, to consider these recommendations in detail, particularly where guidance is recommended, and *we so recommend*.

CHAPTER 4

Firearms Amnesty

Background

4.1 The Committee had been asked as part of its work programme this year to consider the merits and drawbacks of a firearms amnesty.

4.2 A firearms amnesty is essentially a suspension of the law; it allows a person in illegal possession of firearms or ammunition to surrender them without fear of prosecution. There have been a number of amnesties since the Second World War, the most recent of which was in 1988 to coincide with the introduction of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988. In our consideration of this subject we were grateful for detailed papers from Dr Ian Oliver of this Committee and the British Shooting Sports Council (BSSC).

Amnesties since the Second World War

4.3 Dr Oliver's paper provided various statistics from earlier amnesties. During the last amnesty in 1988 nearly 48,000 weapons were handed in and in total, since the Second World War, over 300,000 weapons and 11.2 million rounds of ammunition have been surrendered. Virtually all amnesties since the Second World War have been held following the introduction of new legislation, except for that in 1946 which was aimed at the large numbers of illegally held weapons which appeared in Britain during and after the Second World War, many of which had been brought back to this country as souvenirs by soldiers.

The arguments for an amnesty

4.4 The Committee noted that the source of weapons used in crime remains unclear. However, there is little doubt that the illegal pool of weapons remains large. An amnesty would provide the opportunity to remove some of these weapons from circulation. In addition, the papers by both Dr Oliver and the BSSC suggested that there is a substantial number of large magazine smooth bore guns being held illegally. The Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 raised these guns to section 1 control. Owners of these guns had the opportunity to surrender their guns, or have them downgraded to two shot capacity for retention on a shot gun certificate, or have them put on a firearm certificate if they had a 'good reason' for their possession. Large numbers of these weapons were affected. Only 640 of these guns were surrendered during the 1988 amnesty and the Proof Houses have handled only 50,000 downward conversions since 1988.

4.5 The Committee considered that the success of amnesties is self-evident, although it must not be assumed that the total number of weapons handed in during amnesties represents anything like the total in illegal circulation. An amnesty would contribute to the further reduction in the number of weapons which might fall into criminal hands.

4.6 The Committee also considered that an amnesty would provide an opportunity for surrender of items prohibited by the Firearms Acts (Amendment) Regulations 1992 by those who may presently be unaware of the law (although we noted that there was a well

publicised 'buy-in' scheme at the time for disguised weapons which were raised to the prohibited category by the 1992 Regulations). It is also thought that a number of weapons may have been brought back as trophies of war from Bosnia and the Gulf which could also be surrendered under an amnesty.

4.7 The Committee heard that an increasing number of gas and pepper sprays and electric 'stun guns' were being found or recovered by the police and HM Customs. We believe this may be partly due to the relaxation of systematic border controls at internal EC frontiers which makes it easier for these items to be brought into the country. Any publicity accompanying an amnesty could highlight that these items are prohibited in this country, although we realise that they are freely available in some countries abroad.

4.8 Dr Oliver's paper concluded that both the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPO(S)) are of the view that the likely number of weapons surrendered in an amnesty would wholly justify any necessary administrative costs incurred.

The arguments against an amnesty

4.9 The Committee were sympathetic to the view that to hold frequent amnesties may invite contempt of controls on firearms. A person in illegal possession of a firearm may be tempted to retain it in the hope that they can surrender it at the next amnesty. The Home Office *Guidance to the Police* states that the emphasis should be on creating an environment in which people are free to hand in firearms and thereby remove them from circulation. The *Guidance* states that unless circumstances exist to give serious cause for concern as to its provenance, the person handing it in should not be pressed. It could be argued that this is as far as we should go in the absence of **extraordinary** circumstances such as hard evidence that large numbers of illegally held firearms are in circulation or the introduction of major new legislation.

4.10 It was also suggested to us that it may be too soon after the previous amnesty in 1988 to hold another one. Moreover, the Committee would not want to give the impression that those who have used firearms in crime should be encouraged to believe they can dispose of their firearms with impunity. Indeed, people were not immune from prosecution for armed crime (other than illegal possession) during the last amnesty, and it is therefore debatable whether firearms which had been used in crime would be handed in.

Other issues

4.11 In its paper, the BSSC made a number of suggestions as to the purpose and conduct of an amnesty. The BSSC believes that there should be a national initiative specifically directed at the use of firearms in criminal activities and that any publicity to the shooting community should allay suspicion that the amnesty was being used as another opportunity to irritate legitimate certificate holders.

4.12 As mentioned in paragraph 4.4 above, the BSSC raised the issue that there may be a number of large magazine smooth bore guns in circulation. They suggested that anyone found to be in illegal possession of such a gun should be allowed to have the gun put on a firearm certificate provided that 'good reason' could be established, or have it downgraded or dispose of it through the legitimate market. *We did not consider that this was a practical proposal.* Amnesties do not normally contain any provision for a person in illegal possession to obtain pecuniary advantage or retain the weapon.

4.13 The BSSC also suggested that an amnesty might be used to obtain more information on the origins and status of surrendered weapons. The basic premise of an amnesty was that no questions were asked and that weapons could be handed in freely. The Committee strongly disagreed with any approach to data gathering that might dissuade people from handing in illegally held weapons.

4.14 However, the Committee agreed with the BSSC's recommendation that it was important that weapons of historical and/or antique value were not lost as a result of an amnesty. Weapons handed in as part of an amnesty were normally destroyed, although the Committee noted that in previous amnesties firearms experts had been invited to examine weapons handed in before they were destroyed and retain any of historical value for their collections.

Conclusions and Recommendations

4.15 We accept that there are persuasive arguments both for and against an amnesty. There is undoubtedly a number of weapons held illegally although there is little intelligence on the size of the illegal 'pool'. It is clearly important that steps should be taken to reduce the size of the number of illegal weapons in circulation. However, amnesties must not be held too frequently, otherwise their value is lost.

4.16 On balance, the majority of the Committee are in favour of holding an amnesty and *we recommend* that one is held as soon as possible. When an amnesty is held *we recommend* that attention should be focused on illegally held trophies of war, CS gas and pepper sprays, electric 'stun guns' and large magazine smooth bore guns. *We also recommend* that measures are taken to ensure that weapons of historic or antique value are not lost to the nation through destruction of weapons surrendered during an amnesty.

CHAPTER 5

A tribunal on the status of firearms

Background 5.1 The Committee had been asked as part of its work programme this year to consider the merits, or otherwise, of an independent tribunal to determine questions on the status of firearms. In our consideration of this issue we were grateful for a paper from Mr Kevin Drummond of this Committee.

5.2 It was suggested to the Committee that there is a defect in the existing system of firearms control in that there is no method whereby disputes concerning the status of any firearm can be determined without the need for a criminal prosecution. A criminal prosecution may result in a certificate holder being convicted, despite having bought a weapon in good faith, with all the implications which that may hold for any future sporting activities in which he wishes to partake. In Scotland, the problem is exacerbated as there are no awards of costs in criminal prosecutions and even where the certificate holder succeeds he will inevitably have incurred significant irrecoverable expense.

5.3 It was suggested therefore that some way should be found of resolving the 'grey areas' of firearms definition without the need for a criminal prosecution and consideration was given to whether or not an appropriate tribunal could be devised to achieve this objective.

Consideration 5.4 The Committee was attracted to the idea of a body which could determine the status of firearms including those such as antiques, the class of firearms referred to in our last Report as 'hybrids' and replicas without the need for criminal prosecution. Evidence suggests that the problem of these firearms is quite widely spread and affects the police, shooters and dealers. Criminal proceedings took an inordinate amount of time to establish a definitive ruling where, particularly for dealers, speed was often of the essence. In addition, because of the delays in bringing cases to court and in the legislative process, it is almost impossible for legislation and guidance to stay ahead of changes in technology and marketing tactics; this leads to uncertainties which are unhelpful to the police and shooters alike.

5.5 This is one area where we consider that the proposed Firearms Control Board could have had an important role to play, as it could have incorporated an arbitration panel of some kind. In the absence of such a body we thought it would be difficult for a tribunal to operate without a statutory basis. At present, only the courts have the power to determine the status of a firearm in a particular case and it would be improper to have a non-statutory tribunal which purported to give 'authoritative rulings'. The Committee doubted whether Chief Constables could agree to be bound by a non-statutory tribunal or whether shooters would accept it. In addition, there would be nothing to stop a shooter going to the courts if he received an unfavourable ruling from the 'tribunal'.

Conclusion 5.6 The Committee recognises that there is a defect in the present system which means that definitive rulings can only be obtained by

resorting to criminal proceedings. Criminal proceedings are lengthy, costly and do not seem to us to be the most effective way of determining the status of firearms. Nevertheless, we accept that a non-statutory tribunal would probably not solve the problem. In addition to the legal problems mentioned above there are also practical considerations such as how it would be constituted, whether it would be cost effective and who would pay for it.

5.7 We do not intend to make any definite recommendations on this issue at this time but will keep it under review. We would be particularly grateful for any further suggestions as to how this difficult area may be more satisfactorily dealt with.

CHAPTER 6

Air rifles and young shots

Background

6.1 We considered the issue of young shots in the context of air and gas powered weapons in our Second Annual Report and of minimum ages in our Third Annual Report. In both cases we recommended to the Home Secretary that, in respect of young people, there should be no change in the legislation. (We continue to support the recommendation made in our Second Annual Report that low powered CO₂ weapons should be treated in the same way as low powered air weapons and exempted from certificate control.) Nevertheless, looking at the current law surrounding the use of all firearms by young persons as a whole, it remains complex, and we felt that consideration should be given as to whether there was scope for simplifying the provisions.

6.2 In our consideration of this issue we were grateful for a factual paper from the Home Office, one from the British Shooting Sports Council (BSSC) which made some minor recommendations for change and one from the Scottish Association for Country Sports (SACS).

Statutory provisions and guidance – possession of firearms by young people

6.3 There are extensive restrictions on the possession of firearms by young people. The legislation controlling the possession of firearms and shot guns by young people is contained in sections 22-24 of the Firearms Act 1968 and section 16 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988. These sections, amongst other things, make it an offence, except in very limited circumstances, for a person under fourteen to have in his possession any section 1 firearm or ammunition. A person under the age of fifteen may not have with him an assembled shot gun unless supervised by someone of twenty-one or over, or unless the gun is so covered with a securely fastened gun cover that it cannot be fired. It is also an offence for a person under seventeen to purchase or hire any firearm. Chapter 5 of the Home Office *Guidance to the Police* explains the provisions relating to young people.

Statutory provisions and guidance – air rifles

6.4 Section 1(3)(b) of the Firearms Act 1968 provides that low powered air weapons, that is those not of a type declared specially dangerous by the Secretary of State, are excluded from certificate control. However, such air weapons still constitute firearms within the meaning of the Firearms Acts. Under the Firearms (Dangerous Air Weapons) Rules 1969 air pistols capable of discharging a missile possessing a kinetic energy in excess of six foot pounds and air weapons other than air pistols, with a kinetic energy in excess of twelve foot pounds have been declared as specially dangerous and are subject to the certification requirements of the Firearms Acts.

6.5 Although air weapons are exempt in many cases from certificate control, their use for criminal purposes is penalised in the same way as the misuse of any other firearm. There are restrictions on the possession and use of air weapons by young people under the age of seventeen.

6.6 Following the comments in our Second Annual Report, the Home Office produced a revised leaflet on the safe use of air weapons. The

police have been encouraged to distribute the leaflets through Crime Prevention Officers on, for example, their visits to schools. We also understand that a number of manufacturers include a copy of the leaflet with each air weapon that they package. In addition, the Home Office made available to the ITV companies for running during suitable gaps in their schedules, a television 'filler' on air weapons safety aimed specifically at young people.

Consideration **6.7** As part of its deliberations the Committee was asked to consider the merits, or otherwise, of training schemes and competency tests for young people, particularly in relation to shot guns. *The Committee does not support any form of compulsory testing.* We considered that a compulsory test would just be another layer of bureaucracy for shooters and should such a test be introduced for young people and shot guns, there would then be little reason why other people or disciplines should not be tested prior to the issue of a certificate.

6.8 We also considered that any such scheme would be difficult to administer and open to potential abuse. There would also be the question of who would set the standards and administer the scheme. If a particular organisation was responsible for the scheme, would the shooter be obliged to become a member of that organisation?

6.9 The Committee heard that in respect of section 1 firearms voluntary schemes for young people were already run by cadet corps and the national shooting organisations and worked well. It was possible that similar voluntary schemes could be set up for shot guns although we accept that those responsible enough to undertake training were those least likely to need it.

6.10 We also heard about the SACS Badge for Country Sports which could be obtained by young people through Scout organisations. As well as instruction in firearm safety, young people also had the opportunity to take part as beaters and helpers in live exercises. The Committee considered that courses such as this assist young shooters to gain proper instruction and experience in an enjoyable and responsible way.

6.11 The Committee also considered whether safe use of air weapons should be something covered routinely by schools. We decided this would not be appropriate.

Conclusion and Recommendations **6.12** With respect to the safety of young people who shoot, the most important consideration was proper supervision by a responsible adult. We believed that this occurred in the vast majority of cases. We considered that it was important that young people were introduced to firearms by someone who could instil in them correct handling and the importance of safety guidelines. In this way young people were more likely to become responsible shooters. In this context *we commend* to young people and their parents the voluntary schemes

that we heard about which were run by the cadet corps, the national shooting organisations and the SACS.

6.13 On applications for firearm or shot gun certificates by young people, the Home Office 'best practice' guidelines issued to chief officers of police in 1991 recommend that, apart from ensuring that the applicant's parents or guardians were present during initial interview, there should be no difference in approach. *We endorse that view.* Each case should be judged on its merits depending on the physical capabilities and mental attitude of the young person involved.

6.14 The Committee thought that the firearms law as it relates to young people may be unnecessarily complex. However, it was obvious that considerable care had gone into drawing up the existing detailed provisions and we would not want to recommend wholesale change without being sure that such change was appropriate. *We recommend* that when an opportunity arises for major firearms legislation the provisions should be examined to ensure that unnecessary complexity or restrictions are removed.

6.15 Until such time as that is possible, *we recommend* that the Home Office produce a leaflet, along the lines of that already produced by them in respect of air weapons, which explains briefly and simply the firearms law as it relates to young people and which commends the value of training and safe supervision. This document could be made available to young people and their parents through the police.

CHAPTER 7

The Administration of the Firearms Licensing System

Background 7.1 Following the Home Secretary's announcement on 20 July 1994 that he had decided not to proceed with the proposal to form a national licensing authority to take over firearms licensing from the police (see Chapter 13) and in the light of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) report into the Administration of Firearms Licensing which was published in 1993, we decided to review the operation of the firearms licensing system. In considering this subject we were grateful for a joint report by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the British Shooting Sports Council (BSSC) about a seminar which was held in November 1994.

The ACPO/BSSC Seminar 7.2 Four members of the Committee attended a joint ACPO/BSSC seminar on the administration of the firearms licensing system which was held at Lancashire Police Headquarters on 7/8 November 1994. The aim of the seminar was to improve further the relationship between the shooting community and the police, by the sharing of views and concerns from all representative bodies on a wide variety of subjects relating to firearms administration. The seminar was attended by representatives of police forces throughout England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. In addition to members of this Committee there was also delegates from the Home Office, HMIC, ACPO, the BSSC and other shooting organisations.

7.3 The seminar provided an opportunity for ACPO, HMIC and the Home Office to address delegates and update them on recent developments in the field of firearms licensing. In addition, an insight into the customers' view was provided by Mr Sandy Ewing OBE, Chief Executive of the National Rifle Association (and a member of this Committee). There were also a series of workshops which allowed delegates to discuss relevant topics affecting firearms licensing in more depth.

7.4 We consider that the seminar was a very worthwhile event. It provided an excellent opportunity for the exchange of views on firearms licensing between all participating organisations and will contribute to the greatly improved relationship between the police and the shooting community. It was clear however, that there are still areas where practice differs between police forces and it is this inconsistency that causes the most friction between the police and shooters. These inconsistencies need to be eliminated wherever possible.

7.5 We understand that it is intended to hold these seminars as an annual event. *We commend* any steps which are being taken to continue to develop relationships between the police and the shooting community and we are pleased to be involved with these seminars.

Other action 7.6 The detailed administration of firearms licensing in each police force is a matter for individual chief officers. But in 1991 the Home Office set up a working group to identify models of best practice for police forces to follow. The report of that group was circulated to

police forces, strongly recommending that, where they had not already done so, they adopt the procedures which it sets out. The Committee was pleased to learn that since the Home Secretary's announcement a number of steps have been taken to try to ensure that the best practice guidelines issued by the Home Office are being implemented more consistently.

7.7 In addition to the seminar mentioned above, ACPO have reminded forces of the need to implement 'best practice' fully where they have not already done so and HMIC, in their annual inspections of police forces, are specifically tasked with following up the extent to which forces have adopted these procedures. The Committee also heard that police firearms licensing departments have regular regional meetings, which the Home Office attends, to discuss areas of concern. These meetings should help to ensure consistency of practice and disseminate good practice. There will also be a continuing series of meetings between ACPO, BSSC, the Home Office and HMIC to discuss areas of mutual concern and to identify areas where progress can be achieved.

Conclusion

7.8 We hope that now a decision has been taken not to proceed with the Firearms Control Board that police forces will be more prepared to invest in their firearms licensing operations and will be better able to achieve 'best practice'. Although we believe that the relationships between the police and the shooting community are better now than they have been for some years we were pleased to learn that action is being taken on a number of fronts to try to continue to improve further the service provided by the police in respect of firearms licensing. Although progress has been made, we believe there are still improvements which can be achieved and the administration of the firearms licensing system is an area we will keep under review.

**Central database of
lost/stolen weapons**

7.9 We noted in our Fifth Annual Report that we intended to give further consideration to this subject as part of our work programme this year. In our consideration of this issue we were grateful for a factual paper from the Home Office about the Stolen Firearms Index on the Police National Computer.

7.10 The Committee heard that the index went live on the Police National computer in August 1994, as an extension to the property application. It replaced a manual index which had previously been maintained by the Metropolitan Police. All forces have been requested to notify appropriate information for inclusion on the index.

7.11 We heard that in January 1995, the index contained about 4,400 records. The information recorded includes firearm number, weapon type, an imitation/replica marker, calibre, make and model and loser details.

7.12 We originally had in mind to consider whether any database of lost and stolen weapons should be able to be accessed by the trade

and the public. The Police National Database does not provide for this but we have been told that if someone wished to confirm that 'their' entry had been included in the index, it is likely that they would be told.

7.13 We also heard that the Gun Trade Association (GTA) was setting up its own register of lost and stolen weapons and certificates. For a number of years the GTA had printed in its newsletter details of lost and stolen weapons and certificates which had been provided to them by the Metropolitan and West Midlands Police. They have now computerised this system and are allowing their members to have access to it. The GTA intend to have further discussions with ACPO to see if they can gain access to details of all lost and stolen weapons and have also asked for details of when a dealer's certificate is refused or revoked. This information could then be passed quickly to their members.

7.14 We welcome the initiatives being undertaken by the police and the GTA in this area.

CHAPTER 8

Use of pistols for vermin control

Background

8.1 By virtue of section 27(1) of the Firearms Act 1968, the police must be satisfied before they grant a certificate that the applicant has a good reason for possessing a firearm. Paragraph 8 of Chapter 6 of the Home Office *Guidance to the Police* provides advice on points which should be borne in mind in applying the “good reason” test. These include advice that “a certificate for a handgun with ammunition should not be granted (except in very rare cases) unless the applicant has regular and legitimate opportunity of using the weapon eg for target practice as a member of a pistol shooting club”.

8.2 The Committee was asked, as part of its work programme this year, to consider the specific issue of pistols for vermin destruction in forest areas. We considered the wider issue of the use of handguns for purposes other than target shooting in our Fourth Annual Report. We concluded then that the *Guidance to the Police* should remain as presently worded. Nevertheless, we decided to consider the specific issue which had been put to us and in our consideration of this issue we were grateful for papers by the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) and the British Shooting Sports Council (BSSC).

Consideration

8.3 The papers by both the BASC and the BSSC said that the scope of the proposed examination was too narrow and that the Committee should examine again the wider uses of handguns. Given that we had only recently examined the wider issues, we decided to limit the discussion to the use of shot pistols for vermin control.

8.4 During our meeting at the Forensic Science Service at Huntingdon we had an opportunity to examine the sort of weapons which were at issue. We saw some examples of shot pistols which were chambered for .410 cartridges and specifically designed for vermin control inside barns and outbuildings. The BASC paper pointed out that the advantages of these purpose built shot pistols included the fact that where pests inhabit buildings or other confined areas, the relatively low power of the small shot cartridges minimises the damage to the fabric of buildings whilst still being equal to despatching the pests in an adequate manner. In addition, they stressed that the shorter barrel of a pistol makes it quick and easy to point making it ideal for use in unpredictable situations where pests appear suddenly and the opportunity for a shot is quickly gone. These seemed to us to be persuasive arguments. However, we were not in favour of their suggestion that a shot pistol could be safely carried in a holster whilst riding in or working with a vehicle.

8.5 We also had the opportunity to see a small calibre shot gun, commonly known as a ‘garden gun’ which was chambered for low-powered rim-fire cartridges and had a very limited range. The garden gun is a lightweight smooth-bore shoulder arm traditionally made in barrel lengths of between 20 inches and 24 inches. This class of low-powered weaponry had been raised to section 1 control by the Firearms Act 1965 which increased the length from 20 inches to 24

inches below which shot guns required a firearm certificate. Our attention was also drawn to the existence of so-called 'covert guns' designed to fire more powerful cartridges than those used in garden guns eg 28 or 20 bore ammunition, which were also made in barrel lengths of between 20 and 24 inches. In addition, a number of old guns exist which have suffered accidental damage to the muzzle ends of their barrels, and as a result were subsequently shortened by a few inches to a length in excess of the old limit of 20 inches. As BASC pointed out in their paper, most of these guns were made or repaired prior to the 1965 Act and their ballistic performance was no greater than that of conventional section 2 shot guns. The experience of the Forensic Science Service is that sawn-off shot guns which are used by criminals normally have much shorter barrel lengths, normally between 9 and 15 inches.

8.6 The Committee was also asked to consider the use of low energy training ammunition for off-range shooting. The type of ammunition in question was powered by cartridge primer, and fired a lightweight missile so as to possess a kinetic energy approaching 9 foot pounds - less than the 12 foot pounds allowed for non-certificatable air rifles. In addition, the non-metallic bullets were blunt ended, light in weight, and had little penetrative power. It seemed to us that there was little danger to public safety in the use of low energy training ammunition provided that the shooter had somewhere safe to practice.

Conclusions and Recommendations

8.7 The Committee considered whether the Home Office *Guidance to the Police* should be amended to list safe uses for handguns other than target practice. When we considered the issue of handguns in our Fourth Annual Report we concluded then that to minimise the risk of proliferation in handgun availability the existing presumption that a certificate for a handgun should be granted, other than for target practice at a club, only in exceptional circumstances, was the right one and that the onus should properly remain on the applicant to show good reason for an exception to be made. *We continue to endorse that recommendation.*

8.8 Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the *Guidance* does not preclude the issue of a handgun for activities other than target shooting at a club and if police forces considered each case on its merits, there should be no question of a blanket policy being operated as has been suggested to us. Each local chief officer of police should exercise proper discretion and where there is any dispute the appeals process is available. In addition, there is the danger that a list of "good reasons", which could never be exhaustive, would quickly be taken as definitive, thereby fettering a chief officer's discretion to grant a certificate for a reason which was not on the list.

8.9 However, we would like to point out that, *in our view*, the use of a shot pistol or a garden gun for vermin destruction is a good reason for grant of a firearm certificate, since these are specially designed weapons and are unlikely to be used in crime. In addition, *we recommend* that the barrel length of 24 inches, below which one- or

two-shot shot guns require a firearm certificate, should be reviewed at the next legislative opportunity. We consider that the barrel length could be safely reduced without detriment to public safety, since the barrel length of the weapons most commonly used by criminals are much shorter than 24 inches.

8.10 We also consider that there would be little danger to public safety if certificates were conditioned to allow low energy non-metallic training projectiles to be used for off-range shooting in suitable circumstances.

CHAPTER 9

EC Weapons Directive

Background 9.1 We announced in our work programme that we intended to give further consideration to the implementation of the EC Weapons Directive this year. This is an issue we have considered in previous Annual Reports but we thought that it was appropriate to revisit the subject in the light of the difficulties which it still seems to be causing. In our consideration of the issue we were grateful for a detailed paper from the Home Office setting out the current position.

The Current Position 9.2 Legitimate shooters are still experiencing considerable difficulties in complying with the requirements of the EC Directive. The Committee heard that the failure of some States to implement measures fully, or even at all in some cases, had not helped the transition to the new system of controls and procedures which should have coincided with the introduction of the Single Market. We understand that implementation is progressing and countries are gradually beginning to issue transfer documents in EC format.

9.3 The current situation for British shooters was that a European Firearms Pass (EFP) issued by the police was needed to take firearms to other European Union (EU) States. The EFP should list the firearms which it covered and was intended to carry details of any restrictions on taking each of the firearms listed on it to any other EU State. The Home Office reported that it had not been possible to issue guidance about these restrictions to the police but hoped to do so shortly.

9.4 Under the Firearms Acts (Amendment) Regulations 1992, EU visitors continued to need a British Visitors Permit (BVP) to bring firearms to Britain. In addition, where an application had been made for a permit, the EU visitor would have to produce to the police an EFP issued by his home State. The Committee heard that to date this requirement had not come into operation because few other States had been issuing EFPs to their residents. In view of this the Home Office had advised police forces to continue to issue visitor's permits to EU residents without the sight of an EFP.

9.5 Shooting organisations have previously expressed concerns about the continuing requirement for visiting shooters to have both a BVP and EFP. However, the Committee understands that Home Office Ministers were not prepared to allow visitors to bring firearms into this country without some form of prior consent. As matters stand, the BVP could not be replaced by the EFP for visitors who were also EU residents. The difficulty was that the format of the EFP does not allow it to perform all the functions of the BVP such as the regulation of how and where the firearms may be used, the imposition of a safekeeping requirement and the provision of information about domestic legislation.

9.6 The format of the EFP is enshrined in a Commission recommendation, so that an EFP in one state would be easily recognised in

another. The Committee understands that to do away with the BVP requirement for EU visitors would necessitate all EU States agreeing on a revised format for the EFP, which would meet the needs of the UK and those of each of the other member States.

9.7 The Committee and shooting organisations had previously expressed concerns that a visitor coming from another EU country might be deterred from coming here to shoot because of the requirement to submit his EFP to the police when he applied for a BVP. The difficulty would be that while the EFP was out of his possession he would not be able to travel elsewhere with his guns. The Home Office reported to the Committee that they had suggested at a meeting of EU States that a prospective visitor should be able to submit a **copy** of his EFP to the authorities. This had not found favour. But the Home Office stressed to the Committee that this remained a hypothetical problem because, in accordance with Home Office advice, police were still not demanding sight of an EFP when processing BVP applications.

9.8 The Committee heard that the first real prospect for amending the EFP or the procedures which surround it, would follow the European Commission's report to the European Parliament and to the Council of Ministers on the effects of implementing the Directive. This had to be made before the end of 1997.

**Consideration and
conclusion**

9.9 The Committee felt that the Home Office and Chief Constables had done their best to implement the Directive, but that their efforts had been hampered by the fact that the Directive had been largely ignored elsewhere. Nevertheless, we are very concerned about the layers of bureaucracy which have been introduced by the Directive. We are particularly concerned for those small estates that rely on the tourist trade for their well-being. Several members reported that they knew of businesses which were suffering because administration difficulties were off-putting to visitors.

9.10 We fully recognise that the aims of the Directive were designed to tackle crime within the Single Market but the result seems to us to have been one of increased administration and inconvenience for the legitimate shooter.

Recommendation

9.11 *We recommend* that the Home Office should continue to urge other EU States to implement the requirements of the Directive. *We also request* that we have early sight of any representations which the Home Office proposes to make to the Commission in order to ensure that the concerns of legitimate shooters are fully represented.

CHAPTER 10

Report of the Dealers Sub-Committee

Background **10.1** Chapter 7 of our Fifth Annual Report noted that we had set up a Sub-Committee to consider in detail various suggestions which had been made to the Committee on issues related to firearms dealers. This Chapter sets out the findings of the Sub-Committee. The members of the Sub-Committee are listed at Annex E.

10.2 The Sub-Committee was grateful for the detailed representations it received from the Shooting Sports Trust (SST), the British Shooting Sports Council (BSSC), the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), Dr Ian Oliver, Mr Kevin Drummond and a number of individual police forces. The representations covered the original questions which were included in the Fifth Annual Report (should there be a new power for police to seize a firearms dealer's register, definition of a 'servant' and should there be a provision for the police to refuse to renew a registered firearms dealer's certificate on the grounds of failure to meet the 'trading to a substantial extent' test) and made a number of other suggestions relating to the law as it relates to firearms dealers. The Sub-Committee also considered recommendations made by a small group, set up at the Sub-Committee's request, which considered in detail the forms used by firearms dealers.

The sub-Committee's conclusions **10.3** A summary of the Sub-Committee's main conclusions and recommendations is included at Annex F. We were grateful for the extensive consideration given to the subject of dealers by the Sub-Committee and for the detailed report submitted to us and have no hesitation in *endorsing the recommendations made*. Consideration of the Sub-Committee's report is broken down into three parts:

The specific questions/issues contained in the Fifth Annual Report :-

Should there be a specific power in the Firearms Acts for the police to be able to seize a dealer's register?

10.4 The Sub-Committee's report noted that this was only a problem in Scotland as in England and Wales the police can use the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to seize a dealer's register. There is no parallel statutory provision in Scotland. The Sub-Committee *recommended* that this would be a useful updating of the law when Parliamentary time allows. They noted that the register should, of course, be returned to the dealer as soon as possible to enable him to continue trading.

Definition of a 'servant' **10.5** The Sub-Committee noted that the Firearms Acts do not contain a definition of the term 'servant'. This has caused problems in interpretation and has led to some dubious practices. The Sub-Committee thought that part of the problem was that the term 'servant' had been interpreted differently by the courts in connection with a number of different pieces of legislation and it was therefore difficult to provide confident guidance on the meaning of the term for the purposes of the Firearms Acts.

10.6 In considering the report of the Sub-Committee, the Committee

took into account section 58(1) of the Firearms Act 1968 which exempted those carrying firearms to or from the proof houses from the provisions of the Firearms Acts. We also noted that section 41 of the Firearms Act 1968 allows a chief officer of police to exempt a person from the requirements of section 40 and Schedule 4 of the Act (requirements to keep a register) if he is carrying on a business in the course of which he manufactures, tests or repairs component parts or accessories for shot guns, but does not manufacture, test or repair complete shot guns and that it is impossible to assemble a shot gun from the parts likely to come into that person's possession in the course of that trade or business. It seemed to us that this exemption could sensibly be extended to those who were involved with component parts or accessories for firearms under similar circumstances and *we so recommend*.

10.7 Although the issue of servants was very difficult, the Sub-Committee agreed that clarification was required and that it would be wrong to adopt too restrictive an approach. The Sub-Committee therefore *recommended* that section 8 of the Firearms Act 1968 should be amended to read 'a servant **or agent authorised in writing**'. This should be further clarified by an addition to section 8(1) which said that 'provided that all such authorisations to agents [not servants] shall be in the form of a certificate issued by the registered firearms dealer in terms of Rules made by the Secretary of State under section 53 of this Act'. The Sub-Committee envisaged that the Rules should also include a requirement for the chief officer of police to be notified 48 hours in advance of any temporary agent appointed for transfer of work or carriage and provide identification in advance to the police of the party so authorised.

10.8 The Sub-Committee also considered whether in the absence of legislation, some form of certificate could be issued to firearms dealer's servants. It thought that it would not be easy for the police to know to whom a certificate should be issued. As has already been noted there is no definition of the term 'servant' in law. This would make it difficult to know who to issue a certificate to. Even if such a certificate were restricted to employees of the dealer there would be problems. Dealers vetting prospective employees had no way to check whether they had a criminal record and so could issue a certificate in good faith to an unsuitable person. The police would wish to check a person's criminal record before issuing a certificate. It could then create considerable difficulty if the police felt obliged to refuse a certificate to an employee for reasons they could not reveal to the dealer.

10.9 Nevertheless, the Sub-Committee felt that the idea was a helpful one in principle and *recommended* that it be explored. There might be scope for dealers' representative bodies to issue a standard form of document, although the Gun Trade Association's reservations about this were noted.

Should the police be able to refuse to renew a firearms dealer's certificate of registration on the grounds of failing to trade to a substantial extent (at present the power is limited to refusing an initial grant)?

10.10 It seemed to the Sub-Committee quite wrong that the police should be unable to refuse to renew a firearms dealer's certificate on the grounds of failing to trade to a substantial extent. The Sub-Committee therefore *recommended* that the police should be able to refuse on these grounds. It was obviously important in reaching a decision about whether a dealer was trading to a 'substantial extent' that consideration should be given to dealers who may only produce one or two very expensive or highly specialised firearms, but for whom this should still be considered substantial trade. A dealer should, of course, have a right of appeal against a refusal to renew on these grounds.

Recommendations made by the Group considering Firearms Dealers' Forms

10.11 The recommendations made by the dealers forms group which were endorsed by the Sub-Committee are included in the summary of recommendations at Annex F and are marked with an asterisk (*).

10.12 The group *recommended* that registers should be kept in bound form rather than in loose-leaf format. The Sub-Committee discussed whether, pending a change to the Rules, a chief officer of police should include a standard condition on a dealer's certificate of registration to require a dealer to keep his register in a bound book. It considered that it was not necessary to include this as a standard condition but the Sub-Committee *recommended* that it should be pointed out to chief officers that they have the power to add this kind of condition if it is considered necessary in particular cases.

Other points

Dealers to be required to show prior knowledge

10.13 It was suggested to the Sub-Committee that dealers should be required to demonstrate knowledge of firearms and the law before being allowed to be registered. The Sub-Committee considered that this was unreasonable and unenforceable and *did not recommend* any such requirement.

Civilians to be able to inspect dealer's registers and premises

10.14 It was suggested to the Sub-Committee that civilians working in police firearms licensing departments should have, equivalent powers to their police counterparts to inspect dealers registers and premises. The Sub-Committee considered that this would be useful, particularly if the civilian officers were dedicated to firearms licensing work and were well trained, and *recommended* that the law should be changed to allow this.

- Police powers of inspection** 10.15 It was suggested to the Sub-Committee that police powers of inspection of dealers' premises should be extended. The Sub-Committee considered that this was unnecessary as the police already had quite wide-ranging powers of inspection, not only under the Firearms Acts, but also under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (England and Wales only) and therefore *recommended no change*.
- Should dealers notify the police of deactivation of weapons?** 10.16 The Sub-Committee considered that this was unnecessary, would create additional burdens for the police and would not help to prevent crime. It therefore *recommended no change*.
- Guidance to the police and dealers** 10.17 One of the underlying principles to the Sub-Committee's discussion was that there should be uniformity in the records kept by dealers and in the approach of police firearms licensing departments to dealers. To this end, the Sub-Committee considered that it was important that comprehensive guidance be issued to police firearms licensing departments and to dealers on the Firearms Law as it relates to dealers and it so *recommended*. Dr Oliver had prepared a paper giving the outline of a guidance note to the police about dealers, which the Sub-Committee thought could be built on by the Home Office, in consultation with the police and shooting organisations, to provide comprehensive guidance. For the sake of brevity Dr Oliver's report is not included in this Report but copies are available from the Secretary on request.
- Transfers** 10.18 The Sub-Committee thought that the current requirements for notification of transfers were confusing. It therefore *recommended* that the transfer requirement should be changed so that anyone who parted with a gun, whether to a firearms dealer or not, or otherwise disposed of it or destroyed it should notify the chief officer of police of the area in which his certificate was granted. This would eliminate the present anomalies between section 1 and 2 weapons and mean that the police would be notified of transfers **to** dealers.
- 10.19 The Sub-Committee noted that Article 8 of the EC Directive required that all transfers of category C weapons by private individuals or dealers should be notified to the authorities. The implication of this was that all transfers **between** dealers should be notified. The Sub-Committee were concerned that such notifications would overload police firearms licensing departments and would serve no useful purpose. It was suggested that as entries had to be made in a dealer's register within 24 hours and as the registers were open to inspection by the police at any time, notification of the authorities could be taken as insertion of the proper record in the register. The Sub-Committee agreed that this was a sensible approach.
- Definition of 'in business'** 10.20 The SST had provided a paper which attempted to provide a definition of the term 'in business'. The SST suggested that in the context of the Firearms Acts the words 'in business' must involve a commercially viable and proper business which was the serious occupation of the dealer and was not a hobby or a pastime. The

business, when seen in its entirety, must form at least a significant part of a dealer's livelihood, rather than be a means of earning pin money.

10.21 The SST further suggested that if at any time a business, which included a dealership ceased to be commercially viable, the person may have ceased to be 'in business' for the purposes of the Firearms Acts and the dealership could be revoked.

10.22 The Sub-Committee were grateful for the SST paper but considered that the current situation where it was a matter for the chief officer of police to decide whether a registered firearms dealer was in business in each individual case was correct. The Sub-Committee therefore *recommended no change*.

Firearms Dealers' Registers

10.23 The SST had provided a paper with suggestions for clarifying and amending the current requirements for firearms dealer's registers. Again this has not been included in this Report but copies are available from the Secretary on request. The Sub-Committee *recommended* that the SST paper should provide a basis for amending Schedule 4 of the Firearms Act 1968 and the Firearms Rules 1989 to provide a simpler system for dealers' registers.

Categories of Dealer

10.24 One suggestion which the Sub-Committee did not consider in any great detail was that of categories of dealer. Registered firearms dealers ranged from large multi-national organisations to one-man operations and the Sub-Committee thought that some system could be devised which separated them into categories according to the size of the business. These categories could be used to determine the extent of police supervision and other matters. The Sub-Committee recommended that further consideration be given to the idea and we intend to do so as a substantive item for next year's work programme.

Conclusions and Recommendations

10.25 As mentioned above, we have no hesitation *in endorsing the recommendations* made by the Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee expressed its willingness to be reconvened if there are other detailed matters in connection with dealers which the Committee wished it to consider and we are grateful for that offer. The Committee noted that the Sub-Committee endorsed a recommendation made in our Second Annual Report that dealers should be able to keep their registers on computer. The Committee heard that the subject of computerisation of dealers' registers may be suitable for a Private Members' Bill and we hope that this will be considered by Members who are successful in the ballot.

CHAPTER 11

Pistols/Carbines - Section 5(1)(ab) of the Firearms Act 1968 (as amended)

Background

11.1 In our Fifth Annual Report we recommended that the Home Office issue guidance to the police as published in Annex I of that Report, on the interpretation of section 5(1)(ab) of the Firearms Act 1968 (as amended). This was as a result of a Working Group which was set up following a recommendation in our Fourth Annual Report because of difficulties which had been identified in interpretation of section 5(1)(ab).

11.2 The Home Office decided not to issue the guidance that we had recommended partly because it did not appear to give a clear interpretation of section 5(1)(ab) and partly because there was an ongoing court case involving some of the weapons which were at issue. That court case has now been concluded.

R v Savage

11.3 The Committee heard that in March of this year Mr Savage, a registered firearms dealer (trading as Creative Gunsmithing, London) was convicted of a number of offences involving the possession and sale, without the authority of the Secretary of State, of guns prohibited by section 5(1)(ab) of the Firearms Act 1968 (as amended). The court heard detailed evidence from witnesses called by both prosecution and defence as to whether the weapons in the case fell within the scope of section 5(1)(ab).

11.4 In convicting Mr Savage (by unanimous jury verdict) the court ruled that they did. In sentencing Mr Savage, his Honour Judge Monro-Davies remarked that 'the main object of (the case) being brought before a Crown Court was to attempt to clarify the issue of proper classification ... this has been done'.

The weapons in question

11.5 The Committee heard that the weapons which were deemed to be prohibited in this case were as follows

a – .223 AR-15A2 Semi-Automatic 'Pistol'. This was marked by Mr Savage as a 'pistol', but the court ruled it to be a rifle or carbine covered by section 5(1)(ab). It was based on the Armalite AR-15 and chambered for current NATO 5.56mm (.223 inches) rifle ammunition and was almost identical to the Colt model 733 Commando assault rifle. The evidence was that it was made up of component parts imported by Creative Gunsmithing from Olympic Arms in the United States. As sold by Creative Gunsmithing, it had the optional extra of a telescoping shoulder stock;

b – Australian Automatic Arms self-loading 'pistol'. This was imported from Tasmania by Creative Gunsmithing - it was marked with the word 'pistol' before despatch, but the court ruled it to be a prohibited rifle or carbine covered by section 5(1)(ab). It was based on the Armalite AR-18S self-loading carbine, and chambered for the current NATO 5.56 mm (.223 inches) self-loading cartridge. The body of the weapon was clearly designed to accept a shoulder stock, and a moulded plastic stock is available for it; and

c – 12-bore pump-action firearm, described as a ‘pistol’. This was made up from the action of a Remington pump-action shot gun to which had been fitted a Mossberg 12-bore rifled barrel which had been shortened to a length of approximately 14 inches. The shoulder stock had been replaced with a pistol grip. A smooth-bored gun of this type would clearly be prohibited by section 5(1)(ac) of the 1968 Act (*‘any self-loading or pump-action smooth bore gun which is not chambered for .22 rim-fire cartridges and either has a barrel less than 24 inches in length or (excluding any detachable, folding, retractable or other movable buttstock) is less than 40 inches in length overall’*) and it is understood that Mossberg, the US gun company, supply interchangeable smooth and rifled barrels for differing types of use by owners of Remington weapons. The court ruled that this weapon was also covered by section 5(1)(ab).

Home Office guidance

11.6 The Committee heard that the Home Office has issued a ‘Dear Chief Officer’ letter giving the police detailed information about the weapons that were ruled by the court in this case to be prohibited which is designed to be read in conjunction with Chapter 11 of the Home Office *Guidance to the Police*. The guidance also states that the Secretary of State does not normally grant his authority for the possession of prohibited weapons of this type, or any other type, by individuals on a personal basis.

11.7 The Home Office guidance notes that following the verdict at Knightsbridge Crown Court, persons in unauthorised possession of guns fitting one of the descriptions above are liable to proceedings under section 5(1)(ab) of the 1968 Act. It points out, however, that whether, in any particular case, proceedings are to be taken will be a matter for the police and the Crown Prosecution Service to decide, bearing in mind the individual circumstances.

11.8 The Home Office guidance says that police force firearms licensing officers should therefore regard firearms fitting any of the above descriptions as being prohibited weapons for the purposes of the firearms legislation. It says that no firearm certificate should be granted in respect of any firearm or ammunition to which section 5 applies unless authority for its possession has been given by the Secretary of State. It also says that licensing officers should pay particular attention to any application for a certificate to possess any other pump-action or self-loading pistol which is chambered for high intensity rifle cartridges such as 5.56 mm (.223 inches), 7.62mm (.308 inches) or similar, or for shot gun cartridges (e.g. 12-bore - equating to 18.5mm or 0.72 inches) which may well turn out, on inspection, to be weapons similar or identical to those which the court in *R v Savage* has ruled to be prohibited. The Home Office guidance says that there are few reasons for the possession of such a weapon which are not equally well met by a conventional pistol which is not a prohibited weapon. This is consonant with the advice contained in our Fourth Annual Report.

Conclusion **11.9** The Committee notes the advice issued by the Home Office in respect of the particular weapons mentioned above and *we accept* that it was not possible to issue the guidance recommended in our Fifth Annual Report in full. However, *R v Savage* only dealt with a small number of the weapons in question and we will continue to keep this matter under review.

CHAPTER 12

Report of a working group set up to consider the criteria for approved rifle and pistol clubs

- Background** 12.1 In our Fifth Annual Report we recommended that the Home Office set up a Working Group to consider revising the criteria for approved rifle and pistol clubs. We also recommended that the Working Group should specifically consider the vetting by clubs of prospective members, whether it is necessary for the criteria to specify the ratio of full to probationary members and whether the number of guest days should be limited. This Chapter sets out the findings of the Working Group which was established. Membership of the Group consisted of members of the Committee, the Home Office and the Scottish Office, the police, and the British Shooting Sports Council. It was chaired by the Home Office.
- Statutory Provision and approval procedure** 12.2 The Home Secretary's, or the Secretary of State for Scotland's, approval of a rifle or pistol club under section 15(1) of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 means that its members can possess firearms and ammunition without a firearm certificate when engaged as members of the club in, or in connection with, target shooting. In order for a club to obtain, and retain, approval the Home Office and the Scottish Office require it to adhere to criteria which are set out in a leaflet published by the Home Office.
- The consultation exercise** 12.3 The Home Office conducted a consultation exercise and asked for comments from shooting organisations, the police and clubs themselves. Comments were invited on the specific points which we had raised and on the criteria generally. The Working Group's report noted that it was grateful for the large number of detailed and varied comments that were made, which were taken into consideration at its meeting.
- The Group's report** 12.4 The Group's report noted that the police, the Home Office and the Scottish Office consider that the great majority of clubs are run very safely and the report noted that very few club approvals were ever withdrawn.
- 12.5 The Group's report divided its considerations into five main areas :
- the categories of membership;
 - the specific issues the Committee asked the Group to consider;
 - the criteria;
 - other issues; and
 - the schools criteria.
- 12.6 Some of the suggestions made in response to the Home Office consultation exercise would require primary legislation. The Group did not consider these.

Probationary Membership

The categories of membership

12.7 The report noted that the Group considered that the standard of training offered to a probationary member was more important than the length of the probationary membership period. Nevertheless, the Group agreed that there should be a minimum period of probationary membership and recommended that this should be three months (reduced from the current six months). Clubs would, of course, have discretion to set a longer term of probation if they wished, either in individual cases or as a matter of policy.

12.8 The Group decided that it was not necessary to specify a minimum number of attendances during the probationary period. However, the Group recommended that it is essential that all probationers receive a course of safety training, on a one-to-one basis. This training should be given by a full member of the club or someone with a recognised coaching qualification. The shooting organisations agreed to provide advice to clubs on safety training on request. The Group agreed that, during the probationary period, probationers should attend and shoot regularly.

12.9 Once a probationer had been taught how to handle firearms safely, the Group's report concluded that one-to-one supervision was not necessary for the remainder of the probationary period. Supervision by the range officer, or a full club member, or someone with a recognised coaching qualification should be sufficient.

12.10 The Group's report noted that it did not consider that probationary membership should be regarded as good reason for the grant of a firearm certificate.

Novice Members

12.11 The Group's report noted that a large number of respondents to the Home Office consultation exercise had said that this category served no useful purpose. There was only a limited amount of training that could be done without letting someone actually shoot. Some respondents said that the criteria which said that novices must not be in possession of ammunition had been interpreted to mean that someone else should load the firearm for them. The Group's report noted that the current criteria did not require aspiring club members to take up novice membership before they underwent probation. It agreed that the novice category served no useful purpose and recommended that it should be disposed of.

Guest Members

12.12 The Group's report noted that the current criteria stated that guest days should be used for assessing whether someone was suitable to become a probationary member. A number of respondents had said that this had meant that they were not able to host visits from Rotary

clubs or other outside organisations, which was a useful way of promoting the sport of shooting.

12.13 The Group agreed that the use of guest days should not be limited to assessing whether people were suitable to become probationary members. However, it also agreed that completely 'open' days were not desirable either. The Group therefore recommended that guest days were limited to members of a recognised outside organisation, such as Rotary, Women's Institute, or scouts, or to individuals who were known to at least one full member of the club.

12.14 The Group's report recommended that while in possession of firearms and ammunition, guests should be supervised on a one-to-one basis at all times, by a full member of the club, or by someone with a recognised coaching qualification.

Non-shooting members

12.15 The Group's report concluded that there could be no objection to clubs having non-shooting members such as social, family or honorary members, with no access to firearms or ammunition at any time and who were not affected by the Firearms Acts. It recommended that the criteria should not mention them. However, the Group considered that it would be helpful if the Home Office could offer some guidance to clubs to clarify the status of these people.

Vetting of members

The specific issues the Committee asked the Group to consider

12.16 The Group's report noted that a number of respondents to the Home Office consultation exercise suggested that prospective members should be required to obtain a copy of any records held about them by the police on computer. Individuals were entitled to do this under the Data Protection Act at a cost of £10. However, the Group considered that it would be wrong to require individuals to do this as a prerequisite to joining a club. Whilst appreciating the difficulties clubs faced in ensuring members were of 'good character', the Group was against routine police involvement, either formally or informally, and considered that vetting of members was a responsibility for the club by whatever method it saw fit.

12.17 The Group's report noted that some clubs used the firearm or shot gun certification process to 'vet' members. The Group did not consider this to be good practice.

12.18 However, the Group was concerned that prohibited persons may be gaining access to firearms and/or ammunition and therefore recommended that, in order to help protect clubs, there should be a requirement upon clubs to ask a prospective member or guest to declare that he/she is not a prohibited person under the Firearms Acts.

The Group also discussed whether prospective members or guests should be asked to declare whether they had ever had a certificate revoked or refused. It thought that this would be unreasonable. Certificates can be revoked or refused for reasons which have little to do with whether individuals are suitable to become club members.

Is it necessary to specify a ratio of full to probationary members?

12.19 The Group, as we did when considering this subject in our Fifth Annual Report, considered that supervision on the day was the key issue and not the strict ratio of full to probationary members. However, given that it was recommending that the probationary period should be reduced to three months, the Group recommended that the current requirement that the number of probationary members should not exceed the number of full members should remain. The Group recommended that the Secretary of State grant variations to this requirement in exceptional cases such as university or college clubs.

Is it necessary to restrict the number of guest days?

12.20 The Group agreed with the Committee's view that public safety depended upon the competent organisation of guest days, not on their number. It considered whether restriction on the number of guest days could be lifted altogether, but rejected the idea because of possible exploitation by commercial shooting centres and the fact that it would reduce the controls over guest days. However, the Group considered that the number of guest days could safely be increased without detriment to public safety and therefore recommended that clubs should be allowed to hold up to 12 guest days per year. Clubs could still continue to apply to the Secretary of State for a greater number of guest days if they required them.

The criteria

12.21 The Group's report recommended new criteria and accompanying notes. These took in the points made above and the following :

- the criteria should specify a 'written' rather than 'proper' constitution;
- the Group believed that the criteria should continue to refer to 10 members at the time of application. The criteria made it clear that the Secretary of State can approve clubs with less than 10 members in exceptional cases;
- the Group noted that the Ministry of Defence seemed to be withdrawing from their current role of granting safety certificates to clubs affiliated to the National Rifle Association or the National Small-bore Rifle Association. The Group

recommended replacing 'with safety certificates' with 'which are suitable';

- although the Group recommended that the criteria relating to novice members should be scrapped it considered that it was important that the criteria should clearly state that clubs should not run a day or temporary membership scheme;
- the Group recommended that the local chief officer of police be informed of guest days 48 hours in advance of the event. The names of those attending did not need to be notified this far in advance;
- the Group recommended that clubs should be able to waive the probationary period, at their own discretion, for an individual who:
 - * is already a full member of another Home Office approved club approved for the same type of firearm; or
 - * holds a firearm certificate holder; or
 - * has handled firearms in the course of his/her duty in the police or the armed services, and has a statement from his/her senior or commanding officer saying that he/she is fully trained in handling the type of firearms for which the club is approved and is able to shoot unsupervised safely;
- the Group did not consider that it was necessary for full members of the club to hold a firearm certificate before being able to supervise probationary members;
- the Group recommended that the target shooting organisations provide a list of recognised coaching qualifications for the purposes of the criteria.

Records of firearms used by the Club

The Group's conclusions on other points raised in reply to the Home Office consultation exercise

12.22 One respondent suggested that a record be kept of firearms used at the club. The Group considered that this was a matter for the club and should not be a requirement.

Police Inspections of Clubs

12.23 It had been suggested that Home Office guidance be issued to the police to specify the frequency of inspections of approved clubs under section 15(5) of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988. The Group considered that this was a matter for local chief officers of police and should not be laid down in guidance.

Club Certificates

12.24 One respondent noted that applications for Home Office

approval are dealt with by the chief officer of police for the area in which the club firearms are stored. However, club firearm certificates were issued by the chief officer of police for the area in which the club secretary resides. This could cause difficulties when the secretary lived in one police area and the club was situated in another. The Group noted the problems this could cause but thought that little could be done without primary legislation since chief officers may only grant certificates to people who reside in their police force area.

Overseas Visitors

12.25 It had been suggested to the Group that those holding a British Visitor's Permit should be allowed to be made a full member of a club without serving a probationary period. The Group considered that this would not be acceptable, but considered that its proposals for guest days should allow visitors to shoot without too much difficulty.

Requirement for a First Aider

12.26 It had been suggested to the Group that there should be a requirement for a first aider to be present when shooting was taking place. The Group considered that this was a matter for the club and should not be a requirement laid down in the approval criteria.

Schools Criteria

12.27 The Group's report also included recommendations for criteria for rifle and pistol clubs at schools. These were amended in line with the Group's recommendations for other approved clubs. The Group recommended that the number of guest days for schools clubs should be increased from 4 to 8. It was considered that this was sufficient since schools are only likely to conduct shooting during term time.

Consideration and Recommendations

12.28 The Committee were extremely grateful for the detailed consideration given to this issue by the Working Group and for the constructive recommendations made. We noted with concern that the Ministry of Defence appear to be withdrawing from their traditional role of inspecting club ranges and *we recommend* that the Home Office ascertain the exact position from the Ministry of Defence. This is an issue which we will keep under review. Leaving this aside, *we support the Group's conclusions and recommendations in full.*

12.29 In our discussion of approved clubs it was brought to our attention that some clubs were using club approval to conduct 'bodyguard training' on a commercial basis. This appeared to us to be outside the scope of section 15 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 and we consider that *it is inappropriate for approved clubs to be used in this way.*

12.30 In discussion, the Committee agreed some minor drafting amendments to the criteria recommended by the Group. The new

criteria for approved rifle and pistol clubs and accompanying notes which *we recommend* are at Annex G. The new criteria which *we recommend* for rifle and pistol clubs in schools are at Annex H. (Copies of the current criteria are available from the Secretary.)

12.31 If the new criteria are accepted *we recommend* that the Home and Scottish Offices notify all clubs which are currently approved of the new arrangements. We do not envisage that the Home and Scottish Offices will need to re-approve clubs, since the proposed new criteria are no more stringent than the existing ones. *We further recommend* that the Home and Scottish Offices produce a new leaflet setting out the revised criteria. We hope that the new criteria can be introduced without delay.

CHAPTER 13

Other Issues

Add drugs offences to Schedule relating to section 17(2) offences

13.1 Paragraphs 8.2 - 8.5 of our Fifth Annual Report reported that Lord Kimball had written to the Home Secretary during the course of last year's work suggesting that offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 be added to the Schedule relating to section 17 of the Firearms Act 1968. The text of Lord Kimball's letter was reproduced as Annex G of our Fifth Annual Report and suggested that the change be considered for inclusion in the Criminal Justice Bill which was going through Parliament at the time.

13.2 The Home Secretary's reply, which was not received until after the publication of the Fifth Annual Report, was that the measure would not make any practical difference since the penalty for relevant offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 was already life imprisonment. However, he also said that he was very concerned that the courts should have adequate powers to deal with the illegal use of firearms and that the Government had tabled amendments to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill to increase the maximum penalties for a range of firearms offences. The Bill received Royal Assent on 3 November 1994 and came into force on 3 February 1995. It increased the maximum penalty for the illegal possession of, or trading in, prohibited weapons from five years imprisonment to ten. It increased from three years to five the maximum penalty for the illegal possession of a firearm or shot gun and that for illegal trading in non-prohibited firearms. The Act also increased from five years to seven the maximum penalty for carrying a loaded firearm in a public place, trespassing with a firearm in a building, shortening a shot gun or re-activating a deactivated firearm. *We commend these increases.*

Home Secretary's announcement on 20 July 1994 regarding firearm fees, length of certificate life, game licences and the Firearms Control Board

13.3 We noted with interest the Home Secretary's press release issued on 20 July 1994 which announced increases in some fees under the Firearms Acts, the increase in certificate life for firearm and shot gun certificates from three years to five, the abolition of the licence to kill game and the decision not to proceed with a national firearms licensing authority to take over administration of firearms licensing from the police. We also had sight of copies of 'Firearms Licensing Costs' by the consultants Ernst & Young and the Home Office Management Advisory Services 'Review of the Firearms Control Board'.

13.4 We offer no comment on the increases in fees which came into effect on 1 January 1995. Fee setting is a matter of government policy and is outside the Committee's remit.

13.5 We were pleased that certificate life for firearm and shot gun certificates has been increased from three years to five. This also came into effect on 1 January 1995 and implements a recommendation made in our Second Annual Report. We hope this will be of benefit to police and shooters alike.

13.6 Although game licences are strictly outside our remit, we were pleased to note that the licence to kill game is to be abolished, thus

reducing the restrictions on game shooters. At the time of going to press the Order necessary to abolish the licence was going through Parliament.

13.7 We were disappointed to learn that the Home Secretary had decided not to proceed with a Firearms Control Board. We recommended that a Board should be set up in our Third Annual Report and we still believe that such a body has a lot to offer to the shooting public.

**The Firearms
(Amendment) Act 1994**

13.8 The Firearms (Amendment) Act 1994 received Royal Assent on 21 July 1994 and came into force on 21 September 1994. The Act implemented a recommendation in our Third Annual Report that the range of offences relating to the criminal misuse of live-firing firearms should, wherever possible, be extended to cover imitation firearms as well.

13.9 Section 1 of the Act creates a new offence of possessing an imitation firearm (or a live firing firearm) with intent to cause, or to enable another person to cause, someone else to fear that unlawful violence will be used against him or another person. It provides for a maximum penalty of ten years imprisonment or a fine, or both. Section 2 extends the existing offences of trespassing with a firearm in a building or on land to include trespassing with an imitation firearm. It provides that the new offence of trespassing with an imitation firearm in a building is liable to a maximum penalty of 6 months' imprisonment or a fine; or both. Trespassing with an imitation firearm on land is liable to a maximum penalty of 3 months' imprisonment or a fine; or both. Section 2 also extends section 46(1)(b) of the Firearms Act 1968 (police powers of search with a warrant) to provide for the seizure of imitations as well as real firearms. We hope that the new provisions will give the police and the courts adequate powers to deal with imitation firearms and we are extremely grateful to Mr Michael Shersby MP for introducing the Bill.

**Armed Robbery and Theft
of Firearms: two studies**

13.10 We noted in our Fifth annual Report (Chapter 6) that the Oxford Centre for Criminological Research had been commissioned by the Home Office to conduct a study into the use of firearms in robbery. The study was published on 28 July 1994. The research was carried out over a two year period. The study looked at the files on 1,134 serious armed robberies which took place in the Metropolitan Police district in 1990 and involved in-depth interviews with some 88 convicted armed robbers serving long sentences.

13.11 One of the major aims of the research was to discover the primary source of firearms used in armed robberies. The research revealed that the majority of robbers who used a real firearm said that they had bought or obtained the weapon from a "friend". Only in a very small number of cases had guns been purchased from a "criminal quartermaster". These were generally purchased for under £200 and were often old. Only one robber said that he had hired a gun, which

was returned afterwards to the “dealer” who specialised in transactions of this kind. Very few interviewees knew anything about the origins of their weapon apart from the nature of its immediate source, and none of the guns used by robbers had been legally held by them. Indeed in most cases the robbers would have been disqualified from having a firearm certificate because of their previous criminal record.

13.12 The research also indicated that 17% of the armed robbers interviewed used a loaded pistol and 24% a real shot gun (although almost a third were unloaded). Surprisingly, however, 37% of robbers claimed to have used a replica firearm incapable of discharging live ammunition, and a further 23% used a concealed object to simulate the shape of a gun. The proportion of robbers carrying real guns was less than half the estimate based on police records. It is, however, obviously very difficult in most cases for robbery victims to know whether the gun used against them was real or imitation, loaded or unloaded, and weapons are recorded by the police as real unless it is known otherwise.

13.13 The report also highlights that firearms were rarely discharged by robbers during robberies, being fired in only 45 of the 1,134 incidents studied (4%) and that in 90% of these cases they were fired without causing any physical injury. Less than one in two hundred of the armed robberies in the sample resulted in injuries caused by a weapon being discharged. The report also highlighted the swift police response to these incidents.

13.14 A complementary study to provide more information about the thefts of firearms was commissioned by F8 Division of the Home Office from the Home Office Research and Planning Unit. The study was also published in July 1994 and was based on information derived from 643 crime reports from 16 police forces relating to the misappropriation of firearms which occurred during 1992.

13.15 Most firearms were taken during the course of residential burglaries in built-up areas. Rural dwellings and vehicles were also targeted in just over one in three of the incidents recorded. Such premises were often isolated and so the offender could force or break the door or window without being spotted, especially so in the case of detached rural dwellings. Not surprisingly, the offences were more likely to occur when owners were not present. Shot guns and hand guns were the most common types of firearm to be stolen, although most of the latter were imitation or replicas.

13.16 There were some fairly clear lessons about security to be learnt from the study. Often victims kept their weapons in secure containers or armouries, but there were some instances where owners either had no specific firearm security measures in place or forgot to use them. However, despite such preventative measures offenders were sometimes prepared to force security containers or even take them away to

do so. A point of some concern is that, in a small minority of cases, firearms containers were opened with keys found on the premises. This, together with the fact that at least one in seven premises was left unsecured, suggests that some owners of firearms may need to reconsider their security arrangements.

13.17 It seems likely that firearm owners are not specifically targeted by offenders; other valuable and easily disposable items were usually taken as well as firearms. The perpetrators of these thefts who were arrested were typically unemployed solo young male offenders with a previous criminal history. Nine out of ten of those arrested had been previously charged and one third of those had already been convicted.

13.18 Only about one in six of all the stolen firearms in the study were recovered by the police. The limited evidence provided by this study suggested that only a small proportion of recovered firearms had been used in the furtherance of crime. Where they had it was typically within a month of being stolen.

13.19 We noted the findings of both studies with interest and hope that they will be borne in mind by the Home Office if new guidance is issued to certificate holders on secure storage of firearms and ammunition.

Deactivation

13.20 We recorded in our Fifth Annual Report that the Forensic Science Service and the Proof Houses were working on more comprehensive deactivation standards, including stricter deactivation standards for prohibited weapons and recommended that the new standards be introduced as soon as possible. The Committee heard that the draft standards had been the subject of extensive consultation with the Gun Trade Association. In addition to the more stringent general standard for the deactivation of prohibited weapons, it has been agreed that the specifications would allow for alternative standards to be agreed on a case by case basis which would allow some of the features, deemed essential by collectors, to be retained.

13.21 At the time of going to press a final version had not yet been agreed but we understand that the new standards should be published shortly. We hope the new standards will reduce the potential for the reactivation of deactivated arms, especially in the case of those items derived from prohibited weaponry. It is accepted however, that it is impossible to devise a standard, short of complete destruction of the arm, which would be proof against this form of abuse.

British Western Shooting Society

13.22 The Home Office sought the views of the Committee on a new form of shooting which is currently gaining in popularity and upon which there is a need to issue guidance to the police to avoid inconsistency of practice in respect of granting certificates for this purpose.

13.23 The Committee heard that the British Western Shooting Society (BWSS) has been set up as an official society for those wishing to

participate in 'end-of-trail' shooting. 'End-of-trail' is a practical shooting discipline, popular in America, which is now gaining in popularity here. The discipline is based on firearms and shot guns typical of those used in the American West in the latter part of the nineteenth century and tries to use authentic weapons which include period rifles, pistols and section 1 short barrelled shot guns. Participants are encouraged to dress in authentic costumes and have appropriate aliases. Only those people with full firearm certificates participate in the events and firing only takes place on approved military ranges.

13.24 In referring the matter to the Committee, the Home Office said that police forces had asked for advice as to whether membership of the BWSS and participation in 'end-of-trail' shooting should be 'good reason' for grant of a section 1 short barrelled shot gun. In consideration of this issue we were grateful for detailed comments from a number of police forces. Some police forces felt very strongly that it should not, whilst some others were willing to grant certificates for this purpose. In the interests of consistency it is clearly important for the Home Office to issue some definitive advice to police forces on the subject.

13.25 This subject was only referred to the Committee in its last meeting of the year and we did not consider that we had sufficient time to consider fully all the issues involved. We therefore intend to give further consideration to this subject, and the subject of Western style shooting generally, at the first meeting of our next working year in October 1995. We would be particularly grateful for any further representations on this subject. Representations should be sent to the Secretary.

Metrication

13.26 The Committee heard that the 1980 and 1989 Units of Measurements Directives require EC Member States to use the metric system of measurement and, subject to a number of transitional arrangements, derogations and exemptions, to cease using other systems of measurement by 1 January 1995, for economic, public health, public safety and administrative purposes. We understand that the United Kingdom has achieved derogations from this such as the indefinite use of the 'mile' in connection with road traffic matters, the pint for draught beer and bottled milk, and authority to retain the use of non-metric equivalents (in brackets after the metric measurement) until at least the end of 1999.

13.27 The Committee heard that new legislation will be required to amend all existing legislation and other documents conferring official recognition on non-metric units by converting imperial references to their metric equivalent. We understand that this generic legislation will be brought forward as soon as possible.

CHAPTER 14

Summary of Recommendations

Chapter 3: Exemptions for films and TV work

The Committee recommended that:

- any revision of section 12 should use language that is not medium specific (paragraph 3.4);
- any future revision of section 12 should not be restricted to commercial activities only (paragraph 3.5);
- guidance should be issued on the use of re-enactment groups in relation to section 12 (paragraph 3.6);
- any revision of section 12 should retain the distinction between a theatrical production which must involve an element of production and a cinematographic film which need not (paragraph 3.7);
- the exemption under section 12 should be extended to cover the production of still images in circumstances analogous to a moving one (paragraph 3.8);
- any revision of section 12 should avoid restricting non-theatrical exemptions to any form of ‘recording’ so that ‘live’ transmission are not excluded (paragraph 3.9);
- section 12(2) should be amended to allow a suitably authorised armourer or hire company to authorise performers or others to have temporary possession of prohibited weapons during a performance, etc (paragraph 3.10);
- guidance should be issued on security and staffing levels when firearms or prohibited weapons are provided for a production, particularly ‘on location’ and on the status of antiques used in productions (paragraph 3.11);
- there should be no change in the issue of authorities for prohibited weapons for film and TV work (paragraph 3.12);
- that the Home Office set up a working group to consider these recommendations in detail (paragraph 3.13).

Chapter 4: Firearms Amnesty

The Committee recommended that:

- an amnesty is held as soon as possible (paragraph 4.16);
- attention should be focused on illegally held trophies of war, CS gas and pepper sprays, electric ‘stun guns’ and large magazine smooth bore guns (paragraph 4.16);
- measures should be taken to ensure that weapons of historic or antique value are not lost to the nation through destruction of weapons surrendered during an amnesty (paragraph 4.16).

Chapter 6: Air rifles and young shots

The Committee recommended that:

- when an opportunity arises for major firearms legislation the provisions should be examined to ensure that unnecessary complexity or restrictions are removed (paragraph 6.14);
- the Home Office produce a leaflet which explains briefly and simply the firearms law as it relates to young people and which commends the value of training and safe supervision (paragraph 6.15).

**Chapter 8: Use of pistols
for vermin control**

The Committee recommended that:

- our previous recommendation, in our Fourth Annual Report, that the Home Office *Guidance to Police* on the circumstances in which a firearm certificate for a handgun might be granted should remain as presently worded, should stand (paragraph 8.7);
- the length of 24 inches, below which one- or two-shot shot guns require a firearm certificate, should be reviewed at the next legislative opportunity (paragraph 8.9).

**Chapter 9: EC Weapons
Directive**

The Committee recommended that:

- the Home Office should continue to urge other EU States to implement the requirements of the Directive (paragraph 9.11).

**Chapter 10: Report of the
dealers Sub-Committee**

The Committee recommended that:

- the exemption allowed under section 41 of the Firearms Act 1968 should be extended to those involved with component parts or accessories of firearms (paragraph 10.6);
- the recommendations made by the Sub-Committee and reproduced at Annex F to this Report be adopted (paragraph 10.25).

**Chapter 12: Report of a
Working Group to con-
sider the criteria for rifle
and pistol clubs**

The Committee recommended that:

- the Home Office ascertain from the Ministry of Defence their position on inspection of ranges (paragraph 12.28);
- the recommendations made by the Working Group be adopted (paragraph 12.28);
- the new criteria for rifle and pistol clubs and accompanying notes which are reproduced at Annex G to this Report be adopted (paragraph 12.30);
- the new criteria for rifle and pistol clubs in schools which are reproduced at Annex H to this Report be adopted (paragraph 12.30);
- the Home and Scottish Offices notify all clubs which are currently approved of the new arrangements (paragraph 12.31);
- the Home and Scottish Offices produce a leaflet setting out the new criteria (paragraph 12.31).

ANNEX A

Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988

Firearms Consultative Committee

22.—(1) There shall be established in accordance with the provisions of this section a Firearms Consultative Committee consisting of a chairman and not less than 12 other members appointed by the Secretary of State, being persons appearing to him to have knowledge and experience of one or more of the following matters -

- (a) the possession, use or keeping of, or transactions in, firearms;
- (b) weapon technology; and

(c) the administration or enforcement of the provisions of the principle Act, the Firearms Act 1982 and this Act.

(2) The reference in subsection (1)(a) above to the use of firearms includes in particular a reference to their use for sport or competition.

(3) Subject to subsection (4) below, a member of the Committee shall hold and vacate office in accordance with the terms of his appointment.

(4) Any member of the Committee may resign by notice in writing to the Secretary of State; and the chairman may by such a notice resign his office as such.

(5) It shall be the function of the Committee -

- (a) to keep under review the working of the provisions mentioned in subsection (1)(c) above and to make to the Secretary of State such recommendations as the Committee may from time to time think necessary for the improvement of the working of those provisions;
- (b) to make proposals for amending those provisions if it thinks fit; and
- (c) to advise the Secretary of State on any other matter relating to those provisions which he may refer to the Committee.

(6) The Committee shall in each year make a report on its activities to the Secretary of State who shall lay copies of the report before Parliament.

(7) The Secretary of State may make to members of the Committee such payments as he may determine in respect of expenses incurred by them in the performance of their duties.

(8) The Committee shall cease to exist at the end of the period of five years beginning with the day on which this section comes into force unless the Secretary of State provides by an order made by statutory instrument for it to continue thereafter, but no such order shall continue the Committee for more than three years at a time.

The Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 (Firearms Consultative Committee) Order 1993

2. The Firearms Consultative Committee shall, following the expiry of the initial period of its existence specified in section 22(8) of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988, continue to exist for a period of three years beginning on 1 February 1994.

ANNEX B

Biographies of members relevant to their appointment to the Committee and record of attendance at meetings 1994/95 [in brackets]

- Mr B Carter [4/6] Director of the Gun Trade Association. Secretary of the Shooting Sports Trust. Member of the British Shooting Sports Council. Several times Great Britain Team Manager at various shooting Grand Prix, European and World Championships.
- Mr D E J Dracup [3/6] Solicitor. Chief Crown Prosecutor for the South East Area of the Crown Prosecution Service.
- Mr K Drummond [7/7] QC. Formerly Advocate-Depute and presently member of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. Chairman of Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland Discipline Tribunal. Former council member of UK Practical Shooting Association (UKPSA). Council member of Scottish Association for Country Sports. Competed in pistol and rifle competitions in UK and abroad. Participates in sporting shooting. Member of British Association for Shooting and Conservation, British Field Sports Society, and National Rifle Association.
- Mr C A Ewing [4/4] Chief Executive of National Rifle Association. Member of British Shooting Sports Council and of the Management Committee of the Great Britain Target Shooting Sports Federation. Formerly Regular Soldier (Colonel).
- Mrs B H Fair [4/4] Head of F8 Division, Home Office.
- Mr W Gray [1/3] A Guardian of the Birmingham Proof House. Former cataloguer with Weller and Dufty. Member of the Society of Gun Collectors and collector of vintage percussion handguns. Firearm certificate holder for over 20 years. Shoots shot guns and both black powder and nitro. Labour councillor in Birmingham to May 1995.
- Mrs M Matthews [2/4] Farms 650 acres in Wiltshire. Game Shooter and organiser of both private shoots and corporate entertainment clay pigeon shooting.
- Mr J Mellor [3/4] Small Arms Instructor, Royal Marines 1946-49. Police firearms instructor 1956-84. Firearm certificate holder since 1951 and shot gun certificate holder. Competitor at national level small bore 1947-55. Conservative councillor in Wolverhampton.
- Mr P Misselbrook [1/4] Solicitor. Chairman of the British Association for Shooting and Conservation.
- Dr I Oliver [6/7] Chief Constable, Grampian Police
- Mr D J Penn [5/5] Keeper, Exhibits and Firearms, Imperial War Museum. Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Gunmakers. Office holder in Muzzle Loaders Association of Great Britain and Historical Breechloading Smallarms Association. Member of British Shooting Sports Council, Arms and Armour Society, National Pistol Association and National Rifle Association. Has represented Oxford University and County of London in pistol shooting. Also shoots rifle and shot gun.

- Mr R J Pitcher [4/4] Special Investigation Branch, Royal Military Police to 1984. Branch Proof Master, Worshipful Company of Gunmakers, Royal Small Arms Factory, Enfield to 1986. Proof Master, Worshipful Company of Gunmakers, London and head of British delegation to the Commission of International Proof. Pistol shot and rough shooter.
- Dr M J Pugsley [5/6] International shot, current member of Great Britain rifle team. First woman to win Grand Aggregate at Bisley. Also enthusiastic deer stalker and rough shooter.
- Mr P Russell [1/3] Head of Police Division, Scottish Office.
- Mr J Sharples [1/4] Chief Constable, Merseyside Police. Chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers' Crime Committee Sub-Group on the Administration of firearms and member of Crime and Terrorism and Allied Matters Committees.
- Mr T Warlow [5/5] Home Office National Firearms Forensic Service, Forensic Science Services Laboratory, Huntingdon. An active shooter for most of his life with experience in muzzle-loading, air weapons, rifle and pistol target shooting, game shooting, deerstalking, wildfowling and clay pigeon shooting.

Attendance figures include attendance at Sub-Committee meetings

ANNEX C

List of topics from which 1994 to 1995 work programme was drawn

Basis of calculation on fees

* Exemptions for film and TV work

* Deactivation standards

* Soft air rifles/air rifles and young shots

Paintball markers

* Administration of the firearms licensing system

Firearms statistics

Lack of 'good reason' to be included as grounds for refusal to renew/revoke a certificate

* Firearms amnesty

* Central database of lost/stolen weapons

* Use of pistols for vermin control

* Pistols/Carbines

* A tribunal to consider the status of firearms

* EC Weapons Directive

(* included in work programme)

ANNEX D

News Release: Firearms Consultative Committee: Programme of Work for 1994-95

The team of experts set up to review firearms issues published its sixth annual programme of work today.

Announcing this year's schedule, Lord Shrewsbury, the new Chairman of the Firearms Consultative Committee (FCC), said:

"I am looking forward to my first year as Chairman of the Committee.

"I hope, with the Committee, to build on previous years' work by examining some proposals which will both enhance public safety and reduce the administrative burden on shooters and the police.

"We look forward to a constructive year, working closely with all those concerned."

The Committee will be giving detailed consideration to a number of issues, this is in addition to any matters referred to it by the Home Secretary for advice. These are:

Pistols/Carbines

The Committee will be looking again at the problem of certain self loading and pump action weapons which are being described and sold as pistols but have characteristics similar to carbines.

A tribunal to consider the status of firearms

A discussion of the value of an independent tribunal to determine questions on the status of firearms.

Exemptions for film and TV work

A review of section 12 of the Firearms Act 1968, which allows possession of a firearm without a certificate for a person taking part in a film or play. It is considered that the exemption may not adequately cover the various categories of performance art today.

Deactivation Standards

Consideration of the issues concerning deactivation standards, including standards across Europe.

Air rifles and young shots

A review of the legislation covering the use of firearms and shot guns (including air weapons) by young people. The Committee is concerned that the present legislation is too complex.

The administration of the firearms licensing system

The Committee will consider whether it can make any recommendations to improve the consistency of efficiency of the firearms licensing system by police forces. This follows the Home Secretary's decision not to proceed with a national civilian licensing body.

Firearms Amnesty

A discussion of the merits and drawbacks of an amnesty.

Central database of lost/stolen weapons

Further consideration of the idea of a central database of lost and stolen weapons which could be accessed by the trade, the police and the public.

Use of pistols for vermin control

Discussion of a suggestion that the use of pistols for vermin destruction in forest areas should be permitted.

EC Directive on Weapons

Further consideration of the implementation of the EC Weapons Directive.

Dealers Sub-Committee

The Committee has appointed a Dealers Sub-Committee. This was recommended in the Fifth Annual Report. The Sub-Committee would welcome representations on any aspects of the firearms legislation related to firearms dealers.

The Committee welcomes topics for discussion raised by shooting organisations and members of the public which involve issues of national importance to the shooting community.

Anyone wishing to make representations to the Committee or the Dealers Sub-Committee should write to the Secretary, Firearms Consultative Committee, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT.

ANNEX E

Membership of the Dealers Sub-Committee

| | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| Mr K Drummond | FCC, Chairman |
| Mr B Carter | FCC |
| Mr D Dracup | FCC |
| Mr T Greenfield | Chairman, Gun Trade Association |
| Cmdr W Griffith | Metropolitan Police |
| Dr I Oliver | FCC |
| Dr M Pugsley | FCC |

ANNEX F

Summary of recommendations of the Dealers Sub-Committee

1. There should be a specific power in the Firearms Acts for the police to be able to seize a firearms dealer's register. The register should, however, be returned to the dealer as soon as possible to enable the dealer to continue trading.
2. Section 8 of the Firearms Act 1968 should be amended to read 'a servant **or agent authorised in writing**'. This should be further clarified by an addition to section 8(1) which said that 'provided that all such authorisations to agents shall be in the form of a certificate issued by the registered firearms dealer in terms of Rules made by the Secretary of State under section 53 of this Act'. Rules should also include a requirement for the chief officer of police to be notified 48 hours in advance as to the form of any temporary agent appointed for transfer of work or carriage and the identity of the party so authorised.
3. The police should be able to refuse to renew a firearms dealer's certificate of registration on the grounds of failing to trade to a substantial extent (at present the power is limited to refusing an initial grant).
4. There should be a prescribed form for registered firearms dealer's certificates (detailed recommendations for change were made by the forms group) and the certificate should carry a photograph of the person applying for the certificate. In the absence of legislation necessary to implement this recommendation, the Home Office should issue guidance to the police recommending that they use a standard certificate printed on security paper. *
5. The existing certificate for additional places of business, and the application form for it, should be scrapped. The Home Office have added the caveat that this should not be done without prior formal consultation with ACPO and ACPO(S). *
6. The application form for registering additional places of business should be amended and brought into wider use for registering new places of business inside and outside the 'home' force area and for registering for game fairs, etc. Use of the long form should be restricted to initial applications for registration and on renewal. *
7. The idea of a certificate for employees and servants of firearms dealers issued by the GTA should be explored. *
8. On renewal, dealers should not be asked to provide information which the police already had. *
9. The application form for registration as a dealer should be revised as suggested by the forms group. *
10. A dealer's register should be kept in a bound book rather than loose leaf but dealers should **not** be required to keep their register in a standard form only available from HMSO. *
11. Pending a change to the Rules to implement recommendation 10 above, chief officers should be reminded that they can include a

condition on a dealer's certificate of registration requiring him to keep his register in bound form. This should not be a standard condition but used in appropriate circumstances.

12. Transfers between dealers should not be notified to the police. *

13. Dealers should not be required to show knowledge of the law and firearms before being registered.

14. The Sub-Committee endorses the Committee's recommendation in its second annual report that firearms dealers should be able to keep their registers on computer.

15. Civilians working in police firearms licensing departments should have equivalent powers to their police counterparts to inspect dealer's registers.

16. Police powers of inspection of dealers premises should not be extended.

17. Dealers should not be required to notify the police of deactivation of weapons.

18. The transfer requirement should be changed so that anyone who parted with a gun, whether to a firearms dealer or not, or otherwise disposed of it or destroyed it should notify the chief officer of the area in which his certificate was granted. This would eliminate the present anomalies between section 1 and 2 weapons.

19. There should be no set definition of 'in business'.

20. Guidance to the police should be issued on the supervision of dealers. The detailed content of such a document should be a matter for the Home Office in consultation with the police and relevant shooting organisations.

21. Detailed guidance to dealers along the lines of Firearms Law: Guidance to the Police should be issued. *

22. Schedule 4 of the Firearms Act 1968 and the format of the firearms dealer's register should be simplified on the basis of the framework provided by the SST.

23. A system should be set up whereby police forces and the GTA are notified of any dealers who have their certificates revoked or cancelled. The GTA would circulate such information to their members.

* Those recommendations made, or also made, by the dealers forms group (see Chapter 10).

ANNEX G

Proposed new criteria for Home and Scottish Office approved rifle and pistol clubs and accompanying notes

The criteria to which a rifle and pistol club must conform in order to be, and remain, approved are as follows :

- the club is a genuine rifle and pistol club with a written constitution;
- the principal officers of the club are responsible persons who can be entrusted with the proper administration of the club;
- the club has at least 10 members at the time of application for approval and at all times whilst approved unless, exceptionally the Secretary of State determines that there are special circumstances which justify a lesser number;
- members must be of good character;
- members, prospective members and guests must be asked to sign a declaration to say that they are not prohibited from possessing a firearm or ammunition by virtue of section 21 of the Firearms Act 1968 (as amended). (This will usually apply to persons who have served a term of imprisonment);
- the club has regular use of ranges which are suitable for the categories of firearm in respect of which approval is sought or given, as the case may be;
- the security arrangements for the storage of club firearms and ammunition are satisfactory;
- the club does not run a day or temporary membership scheme;
- the club does not have more than 12 **guest days** a year. Guest members must be either members of a recognised outside organisation (see note 8 below) or individuals who are known personally to at least one full member of the club;
- guests must be supervised on a one-to-one basis at all times when handling firearms and ammunition, by either a full club member or someone who is a coach with a qualification recognised by the Great Britain Target Shooting Federation and governing bodies. The club secretary must notify each guest day to the police firearms licensing department of the area in which the guest day is to take place, at least 48 hours in advance;
- anyone who applies for **probationary membership** must be sponsored by at least one full club member;
- before becoming a full member, individuals must have a probationary period of at least **3 months** during which time they must attend and shoot regularly. The probationary member

must be given a course in the safe handling and use of firearms on a one-to-one basis by someone who is either a full member of the club or who is a coach with a qualification recognised by the Great Britain Target Shooting Federation and governing bodies;

- once a probationary member has satisfactorily completed a course in the safe handling and use of firearms, he/she must be supervised at all times when in possession of firearms or ammunition by either the range officer, or a full member of the club, or someone who is a coach with a qualification recognised by the Great Britain Target Shooting Federation and governing bodies;
- the probationary period may be waived, **at the club's discretion**, for someone who
 - is already a full member of another club which has been approved by the Secretary of State in respect of the same type or types of firearm; or
 - holds a firearm certificate; or
 - has handled firearms in the course of his/her duty in the police or the armed services, and has a statement from his/her existing or former senior/commanding officer saying that he/she is fully trained in handling the type of firearms in respect of which the club has obtained approval and is able to use them safely without supervision;
- the club never has more probationary members than full members unless the Secretary of State determines that there are special circumstances which justify a greater number of probationary members; and
- there is nothing else that would make the club unsuitable for approval.

Notes on the criteria

1. The club must be a genuine rifle and pistol club, set up for the purpose of target practice. The constitution of the club should implement the requirements of the criteria.
2. Clubs should make their own arrangements for assessing whether members or prospective members are of good character. Police firearms licensing departments should **not** be asked to disclose whether someone has a criminal record or not. Prospective members should not be required to apply for a firearm or shot gun certificate as a means of determining 'good character'. The police will not normally grant a certificate to a probationary member of a club.

3. The National Associations are able to provide advice on the construction and use of ranges. Clubs which are affiliated to the National Rifle Association or the National Small Bore Association may be able to obtain a safety certificate for their range from the Ministry of Defence.
4. Recognised coaching qualifications for the purposes of the Home and Scottish Office criteria for approved clubs are : [list to be determined by shooting organisations]
5. The National Associations are able to give advice on safety training courses for probationary members.
6. A club may end a probationer's membership at any time or extend the probationary period if it considers that this is necessary.
7. The Secretary of State may, in exceptional cases - such as university or college clubs - allow a club to have more probationary members than full members.
8. Examples of recognised outside organisations whose members may be guest members of approved rifle and pistol clubs are Scouts and Guides, schools, Rotary Clubs and Women's Institutes.
9. Clubs can have non-shooting categories of membership such as associate, family, social or honorary members. Such members are not covered by section 15 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 and must not, under any circumstances, have any access to firearms or ammunition.

ANNEX H

Proposed new criteria for Home and Scottish Office approved rifle and pistol clubs in schools

The following criteria apply to rifle and pistol clubs at schools:-

- all aspects of shooting at the school are under the control of one adult who is nominated by and responsible to the Head Teacher, and who must as a minimum have personal experience of shooting with the types of firearms used by the club, and at least one year's experience of exercising control over pupils of a similar age group as those who are using the firearms. In addition, it is desirable, though not essential, that the nominated adult should own or possess a firearm for which he/she has his/her own firearm certificate or be a full member of a club approved under section 15 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988;
- the school has regular use of ranges which are suitable for the categories of firearm for which approval is sought or given, as the case may be;
- the security arrangements for storing the school firearms and ammunition are satisfactory;
- all shooting activities, including the handling of firearms and ammunition, are supervised at all times either by the adult nominated as being responsible for shooting at the school, or by at least one other equally experienced adult nominated by the Head Teacher, or someone who is a coach with a qualification recognised by the Great Britain Target Shooting Federation and governing bodies;
- shooting is normally available only to pupils and staff of the school, visiting teams from schools which have also been approved by the Secretary of State under section 15 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988, full members of rifle or pistol clubs approved under that section, members of Cadet Corps approved under section 11(3) of the Firearms Act 1968 or individuals who hold a personal firearm certificate;
- the school does not allow shooting by guests on more than eight days each year. On such occasions, only parents, guardians and other relatives of pupils of the school or other adults known to the adult nominated as responsible for shooting at the school, may handle firearms or ammunition. Guest members must be under constant one-to-one supervision when handling firearms and ammunition either by the adult responsible for shooting at the school, or another equally experienced adult nominated by the Head Teacher, or someone who is a coach with a qualification recognised by the Great Britain Target Shooting Federation and governing bodies. The person nominated as being responsible for shooting at the school must tell the local police about guest days at least 48 hours in advance;
- there is nothing else that would make the school unsuitable for approval.

ANNEX I

Organisations and other interested parties which have submitted representations

1. Association of Chief Police Officers
2. Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland
3. The British Shooting Sports Council
4. The British Association for Shooting and Conservation
5. The Shooting Sports Trust Limited
6. The Scottish Association for Country Sports

In addition the Committee has received a number of representations from individual police forces and members of the public.

ANNEX J

List of publications relevant to the Report

| | |
|--|--|
| Firearms Act 1920 | HMSO ISBN 0 10 8504107 |
| Firearms Act 1968 | HMSO ISBN 0 11 802339 |
| Firearms Act 1982 | HMSO ISBN 0 10 5431826 |
| Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 | HMSO ISBN 0 10 5445886 |
| Firearms (Amendment) Act 1992 | HMSO ISBN 0 10 5431923 |
| Firearms Acts (Amendment) Regulations 1992 | HMSO ISBN 0 11 0259025 |
| Firearms (Amendment) Act 1994 | HMSO ISBN 0 10 543194 X |
| Firearms (Dangerous Air Weapons) Rules 1969 | HMSO ISBN 0 11 0900472 |
| Firearms Rules 1989 | HMSO ISBN 0 11 0968549 |
| Firearms (Amendment) Rules 1992 | HMSO ISBN 0 11 0258924 |
| Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 (Firearms Consultative Committee) Order 1993 | HMSO ISBN 0 11 033390X |
| Firearms Law: Guidance to the Police | HMSO ISBN 0 11 3409036 |
| Approval of Rifle and Pistol Clubs leaflet | Home Office Public Relations Branch |
| Air Weapons leaflet | Home Office Public Relations Branch |
| Armed Robbery: A Study in London | University of Oxford ISBN 0 947811 05 2 |
| Research and Planning Unit Paper 84: The Theft of Firearms | Home Office Research and Planning Unit |
| Firearms Consultative Committee First Annual Report | HMSO ISBN 0 10 2543909 |
| Firearms Consultative Committee Second Annual Report | HMSO ISBN 0 10 257491X |

Firearms Consultative Committee
Third Annual Report

HMSO
ISBN 0 10 2074933

Firearms Consultative Committee
Fourth Annual Report

HMSO
ISBN 0 10 0210333

Firearms Consultative Committee
Fifth Annual Report

HMSO
ISBN 0 10 248894 0

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