FIELD ARCHERY DEMYSTIFIED

Duncan Busby answers the most common questions about field archery from a compound perspective

Field and 3D archery can often be a bit of a mystery to a lot of target archers; as most of us start shooting at our local target club, we're often not aware of this diverse and exciting form of archery until we are introduced to it by someone in the know. As a result there are a few misconceptions surrounding this discipline which puts off a lot of target archers from giving it a go. So here's your myth busting guide to field and 3D archery – and why you really should take your bow out into those woods…

"I NEED COMPLETELY DIFFERENT EQUIPMENT TO SHOOT FIELD OR 3D ARCHERY, RIGHT?"

I've encountered many compound archers who believe that in order to shoot a field round they need a short fast bow, a multi pin sight and short stabilisers – in short, equipment more likely to be used for bowhunting than on the target range. But this couldn't be further from the truth; the majority of field archers use the exact same equipment to compete at target archery as they do around a field range. When I won the European Field Championships I used the same set up I had been shooting target with all year.

Although you don't need any special equipment to do field archery there are a few additional things you may need to get the most out of your field experience:

A backpack stool – some of the courses can be physically gruelling so you'll be glad of a supply of food and water and a place to sit down as you make your way around.

A range finder and inclinometer – some rounds allow you to use a range finder; it can be an invaluable piece of equipment for working out distances. And inclinometers can make the difference between hitting and missing the target on particularly steep courses.

Comfortable footwear – unlike target archery where you walk up and down the shooting line at a gentle pace, field archery can require you to scale uneven ground for hours at a time so make sure you don't cause pain or damage to yourself while you do it by investing in good quality boots. It's a small detail, but field requires attention to yourself, too.

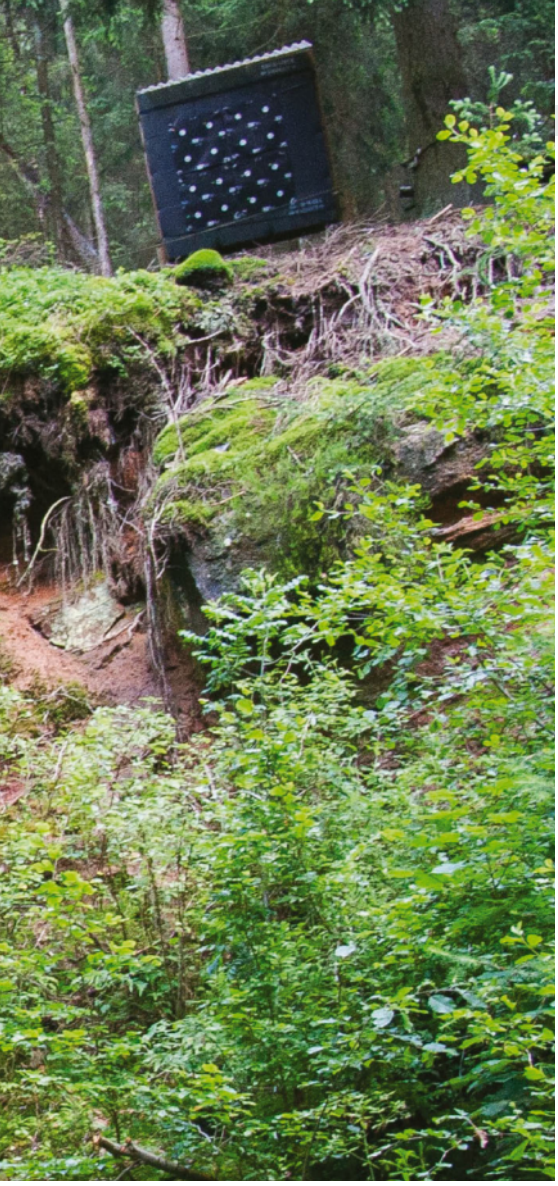
"WON'T I NEED TO CHANGE MY SET-UP?"

The key to shooting field and 3D well is preparation; you don't need to start changing how your bow is set, just setting up your equipment right in the first place will ensure that you get the best out of your experience.

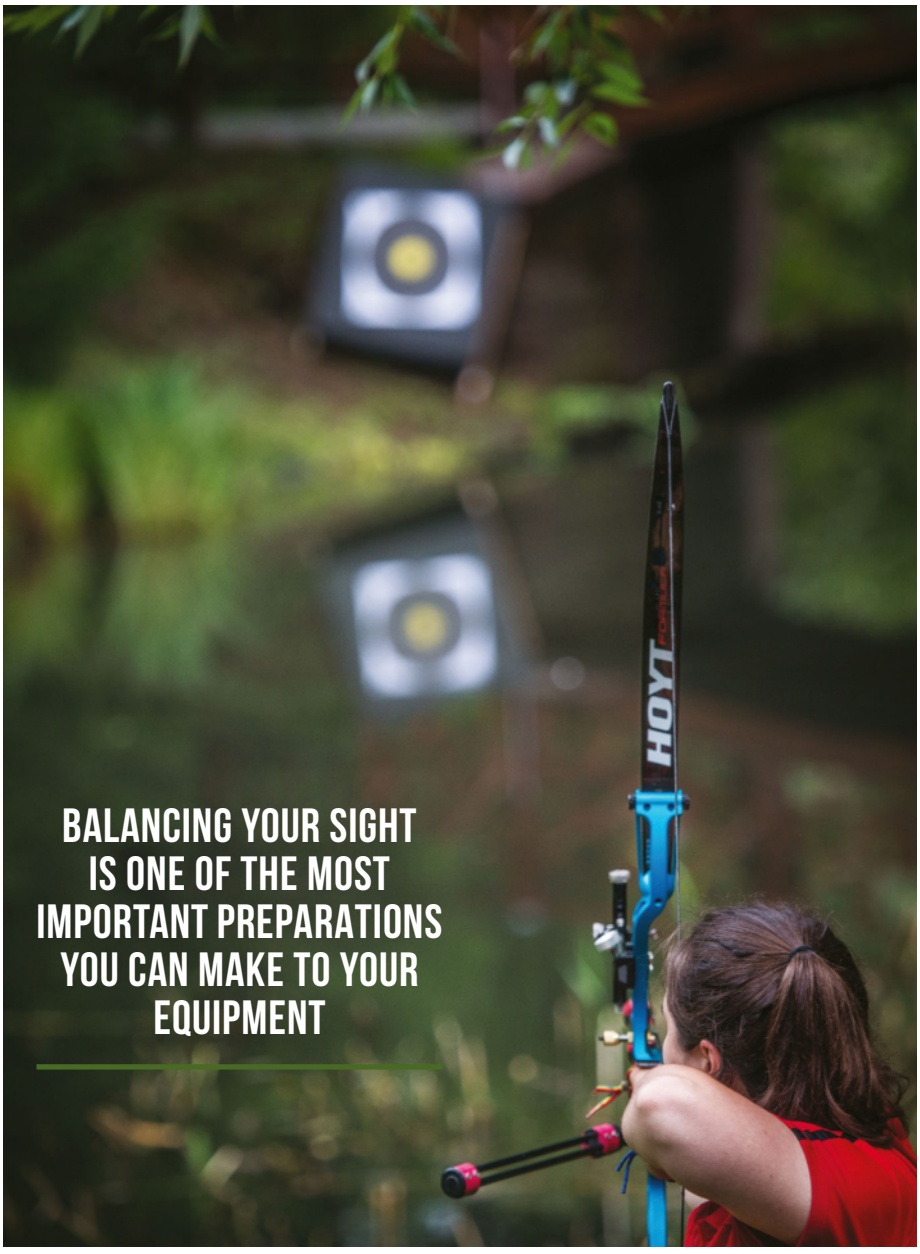
Balancing your sight is one of the most important preparations you can make to your equipment and best of all it will only ever improve your set-up for target archery too. As field and 3D targets are at different angles it's important to make sure that your sight's second and third axes are set correctly, these are the invisible lines along which your sight moves and in order to achieve true accuracy, both axes need to be level.

Not all sights allow you to make adjustments, but those that can be adjusted will have screws in strategic places. If in doubt consult your sights manual and I'd recommend using a sight levelling device, such as a Hamskea, for maximum accuracy.

First you need to balance your second axis; this axis refers to your scopes orientation to



YOU DON'T NEED TO CHANGE YOUR TARGET SETUP TO SHOOT FIELD



BALANCING YOUR SIGHT IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PREPARATIONS YOU CAN MAKE TO YOUR EQUIPMENT

the sight track and many consider it to be the most important axis to set, particularly in target archery, as any misalignment can cause your arrows to hit left and right as if you were canting the bow. To visualize your sight's second axis try imagining an invisible line running straight through your scope as you would look through it; the movement of the second axis is like the hands of a clock with the scope rotating clockwise or anticlockwise on this imaginary line.

To measure your second axis you need to attach the levelling tool to the sight track, the bubble in your scope should match the one on the sight leveller, if it doesn't make the necessary adjustments until it does. Every manufacturer uses a slightly different adjustment mechanism so you may need to look at the manual to see how your specific sight is adjusted.

Your third axis is particularly important in field archery; this axis refers to the scopes orientation to the archer when viewed from a shooting position, angling the scope towards or away from you. The invisible line of this axis runs from the ground up through the top of your scope, the movement of your sight is like that of a door hinge swinging open and closed on this line. When you shoot on level ground your third axis means nothing, but on inclines a poor balance can produce similar results to that

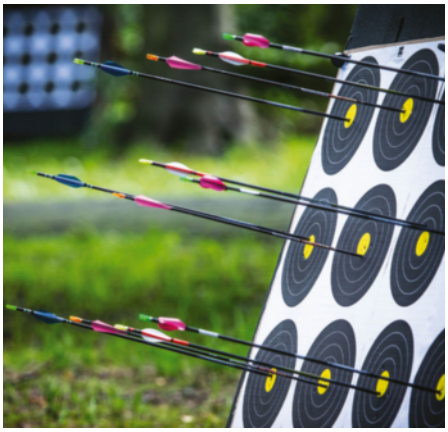
LEARNING HOW TO SET YOUR SECOND AXIS WILL IMPROVE ACCURACY

UK FIELD RESOURCES

The National Field Archery Society has lots of information on local clubs, tournaments and the rounds they shoot, go to www.nfas.net for more information.

For more information on Archery GB's field archery go to www.field-archerygb.uk where you can brush up on the rules and rounds shot, and also find information on taking part.

www.efaafieldarcher.com has all the information on the English Field Archery Association including the various rounds they shoot, membership and where to take part.



of a misaligned second axis. To balance this axis attach the levelling tool to the sight track and angle the bow down towards the ground, check the bubbles in both the scope and the sight leveller are the same, if they are different make an adjustment to the sights third axis setting and re-check to ensure both levels match.

Once you have successfully balanced the second and third axes you should make sure that your sight itself is square to your bow and perfectly upright with no lean. Place a spirit level on a flat part of the sight's extension bar or onto a part of the bow you know to be flat with no chamfered edges, and look to see if the scopes bubble is level when the bow is held perfectly upright. If it's not, loosen the mounting screws holding the track to the extension bar and re-align it so that the bubbles in both the scope and spirit level are sitting in the same position.

Remember the more thorough you are now in balancing your sight, the fewer arrows you will lose out the side of each target.

"I DON'T KNOW HOW TO TUNE MY BOW FOR FIELD ARCHERY."

A good centre shot will produce straight arrow flight whatever distance you shoot, so setting this correctly will not only help you shoot field well but you may even find that your target results also improve.

You can adjust your bow's centre shot by eye by moving your rest left or right until your arrow is perfectly in line with your string, but this doesn't always give you a true centre setting.

If the centre shot is off by even a small amount your arrows will tend to go further left or right as the distance to the target increases. This is less of a problem when shooting a target round as there is time to adjust your sight to compensate for this, but on a field round, where the distance to the target changes every three arrows, having an incorrect centre shot can be costly.

The easiest way to fine tune your centre shot is to carry out a French tune, which is an abbreviated form of walk back tuning. There are many videos on YouTube that can explain French tuning, so get searching.

HINTS AND TIPS

As you will be shooting at a number of different distances, getting sight marks for each one is almost impossible so most archers choose to make a sight tape so they can set their sight perfectly for each target. You can do this using a computer program like Archers Advantage which allows you to input various data about your set up along with some reference sight marks. This creates a scaled tape specific to your bow, removing the need to collect countless different sight marks. It can take a few goes to get the perfect tape but it's well worth the time as you can be sure your sight is perfectly set to whatever distance you are shooting.

Many compound field archers choose to shoot with a fibre pin in their scope instead of a dot or ring; this is because a fibre will stand out better in poor light conditions and against black target faces making it much easier to aim accurately.

Get to know the target faces you will be shooting on; most archery shops carry a good range of target faces for the many different rounds you can shoot so invest in a full set. Make sure you know which face size is used for what distance, so you can be confident you have practiced for the round you will be taking part in.

Start learning your cuts: uphill and downhill shots require you to set your sight for less distance than the actual flat measurement, this is known as a cut. As gravity only affects your arrow for the lateral distance to the target, field archers become quite proficient in trigonometry. You should think of it like a right-angled triangle with the archer at the top corner and the target at the bottom, the long edge you are shooting along is the measured flat distance to the target, but gravity will only affect your arrow for the distance travelled along the bottom edge. It sounds a lot more complicated than it is and you don't need to be Pythagoras to work it out, just remember to take a small amount off the distance when shooting at a steep target, somewhere between two and ten percent of the measured distance will usually work depending on the severity of the angle.

Field and 3D archery isn't as scary as you might think; and can make a nice change from the repetition of target. So get out to the woods – and see what you have been missing.