

AI SITE REPORT AIRSOFT ARMS FAIR

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AIRSOFT ARMS FAIR

I have to admit that I was a little sceptical having attended "Airsoft Shows" in the past that were underwhelming to say the least. However having experienced recently though how UK Airsoft has matured during my time away I set off with an open mind and a degree of excitement.

As we arrived at the stunning midlands complex which is The Grange I was immediately impressed with the setting; a beautiful country house set in immaculately manicured grounds with superb facilities and home to Gunman Midlands. We were politely marshalled into the more than adequate car parking area.

SINCE RETURNING FROM LIVING FULL TIME IN THE USA IT HAS BEEN MY REAL PLEASURE TO RENEW OLD FRIENDSHIPS WITHIN THE UK AIRSOFT SCENE, AND TO SPEND MORE TIME WORKING WITH THE CREW AT AIRSOFT INTERNATIONAL. HAVING PLAYED ALONGSIDE PAUL AND THE GUYS BOTH "ACROSS THE POND" AND HERE AT HOME IT WAS MY GREAT PRIVILEGE TO BE INVITED TO ATTEND THE FIRST AIRSOFT ARMS FAIR WITH THEM.

The show was spread over the grounds of The Grange, with the main vendor area under cover in the mustering hanger. Numerous tables were made available for everyone to set up their offerings, and straight away I was feeling "This is going to be a bit different..." All manner of stock and custom weaponry, along with a great array of tactical gear was placed out on display ready for the first of the players arriving at 10.00hrs to snap up.

Once we had set up the Ai display there was a chance to wander further whilst waiting for the Fair to open and again I was highly impressed by both The Grange, and the care that had gone into arranging the show.

Further stands were set up in the house itself, and numerous marquees on the lawns offered wider airsoft experiences. With the sun burning down the whole affair took on an almost "Fete" like quality!

Marshals, all connected by radio, were easily recognisable due to their Hi Vis vests, and they made everyone feel right at home. Their enthusiastic approach and "can do" attitude made things roll along smoothly. Obviously a huge amount of thought had gone into the running of the Fair; the layout was simple and user friendly, parking was straightforward, the toilet facilities were scrupulously clean, and the catering was excellent. A cuppa was 50p, a burger £1.50, and

the range of cold drinks was great. Snacks and even full meals for those travelling from further afield, were available all day.

As players arrived the check in process had been made simple too, with pre-registration offering "time slots" throughout the day. As folk checked in they were issued either a red wristband for those UKARA registered, or a blue for those not. This made life far easier for the vendors who were, at times, swamped!

GOOD FOR BUSINESS

From what I saw business was good. The first wave of players, booked in from 10.00 to 12.00, were mainly

experienced and had come on a mission. For the first two hours on the Ai stand we were flat out the whole time handing out free back issues, Viper Caps and Lanyards, and goodies to those wearing their Ai "Shooter" patches. Those buying new patches at the Fair (at a special show rate) were also entered into a raffle with the choice of a UMAREX HK416, a G&G MP5, or a tactical soft shell on offer.

Jay was on hand to answer technical questions, of which there were many, Paul and Ben obviously enjoyed meeting and getting feedback from fellow players and readers immensely, and I was in my element talking to players about their guns,

their gear, and where they play. We had a bit of everything really, from those who've been around the scene for a while, to those just starting out, and even whole families coming to enjoy an unusual day out.

The pace continued pretty much unabated until mid afternoon, when we finally got a chance to have a mooch ourselves. The sky was blue, the sun shining, and all I saw were smiling faces everywhere. I lost count of the number of players who told me "This is great. It's all very well to see stuff online, but coming to the Fair you have the chance to get hands on. Cool." There was even a Range set up where you could go and try various AEGs.

