

An introduction to Clout Archery



Clout shooting probably evolved out of a need to train archers for military purposes. The English had to be forced to practice to develop and maintain their skills. From these sessions clout was probably developed as a means of getting huge numbers of arrows to a particular part of the field. It was a primitive but highly effective form of artillery and had devastating results at the Battles of Crecy, Poitiers and famously at Agincourt in 1415.

- **1252** Assize of Arms. All males between 15 and 60 years shall keep arms, including bows. (Henry III).
- **1284** Statute of Winchester confirms Assize of 1252. (Edward I)
- **1349** Edward III banned football and other recreations in an attempt to stop distractions from archery
- **1369** Statute requiring compulsory archery for all.
- **1388** Law that all labourers were to have bows and practise with them on Sundays & holidays (Richard II).
- **1414** Royal proclamation insisting on archery practise for all men.

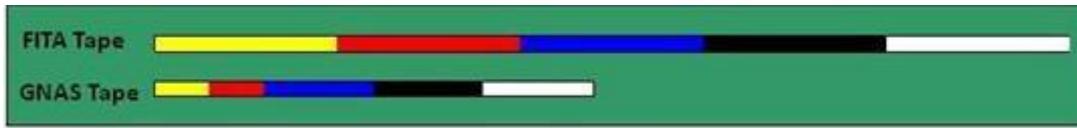
Today clout shooting is purely for pleasure. The aim is to get your arrows as close as possible to a flag some distance from the shooting line, 180 yds for men and 140 yds for women in imperial clouts and 165m for men and 125m for women in metric clouts. There are shorter distances for juniors and longer for compound archers in metric clout. Flags for imperial clouts are square, for metric they are usually triangular. In both cases they have to be no more than a certain height above the ground.

Clout can be shot with longbow, barebow, recurve or compound, although many recurve archers just take their sights off and shoot barebow as you can't usually sight on the flag with a conventional sight. To get the elevation necessary for the right trajectory to reach the flag most archers will have to adjust their stance. Only longbow archers are allowed a high trajectory.



Scoring is done using a tape or rope looped over the flag and walked round in a circle. The tape is divided into the scoring colours of yellow, red, blue, black and white. The scoring area varies according to whether it is a metric or imperial clout. In imperial within a radius of 18 inches – 5 points, 3 feet – 4 points 6 feet – 3 points 9 feet – 2 points 12 feet – 1 point. A hit in the gold area is called as a 'clout'.

Metric clouts have a much bigger scoring area – as you can see from this comparison (FITA is now metric, GNAS is imperial):



The circle for an imperial clout



Archers walk round in a circle with one person on each colour – they only pick up arrows for their own colour. The person at the end with the stick is moving the tape round. Scorers are not allowed to bring any arrows into the circle so there can be no accusations of cheating.



Scorers lay out the arrows on the appropriate score colour band.



There is usually one score-taker for each flag. The archer has to pick up each of their arrows as they call out the score.



After 6 sighters clouts are either single (3 dozen arrows) or double (6 dozen arrows). Ends of 6 arrows are shot. Metric clouts are always one way, but there are 2 way imperial clouts. For these the archer shoots 6 arrows then walks to the far end of the field carrying their bow and shoots back at a different flag.

As in target archery there are lots of awards. You can attain clout classifications. Master Bowman and Grand Master Bowman can only be claimed if shot at Tassel Award status shoots.



At Tassell shoots there are more badges to be won, much like the 252 scheme. You have to reach a certain score to win the Tassel badge for each colour. There are different Tassel badges for imperial and metric. The scheme is run by the Northern Counties Archery Society – details of this and the classification scheme, plus rules and rankings can be found here - <http://www.ncas.co.uk/clout.html>.

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