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AUSTRALIAN Shooter

August 2020
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THE MAGAZINE FOR SPORTING SHOOTERS

**From breaking news
to breaking clays**

**ABC identity Liz
a AA Skeet shooter**

**Sauer 100 Classic
the budget beauty**

**AKKAR'S CHURCHILL
a Turkish delight**

REVIEWS

Bipods finally moving with the times / Conquest HD binoculars

ISSN 1442-7354



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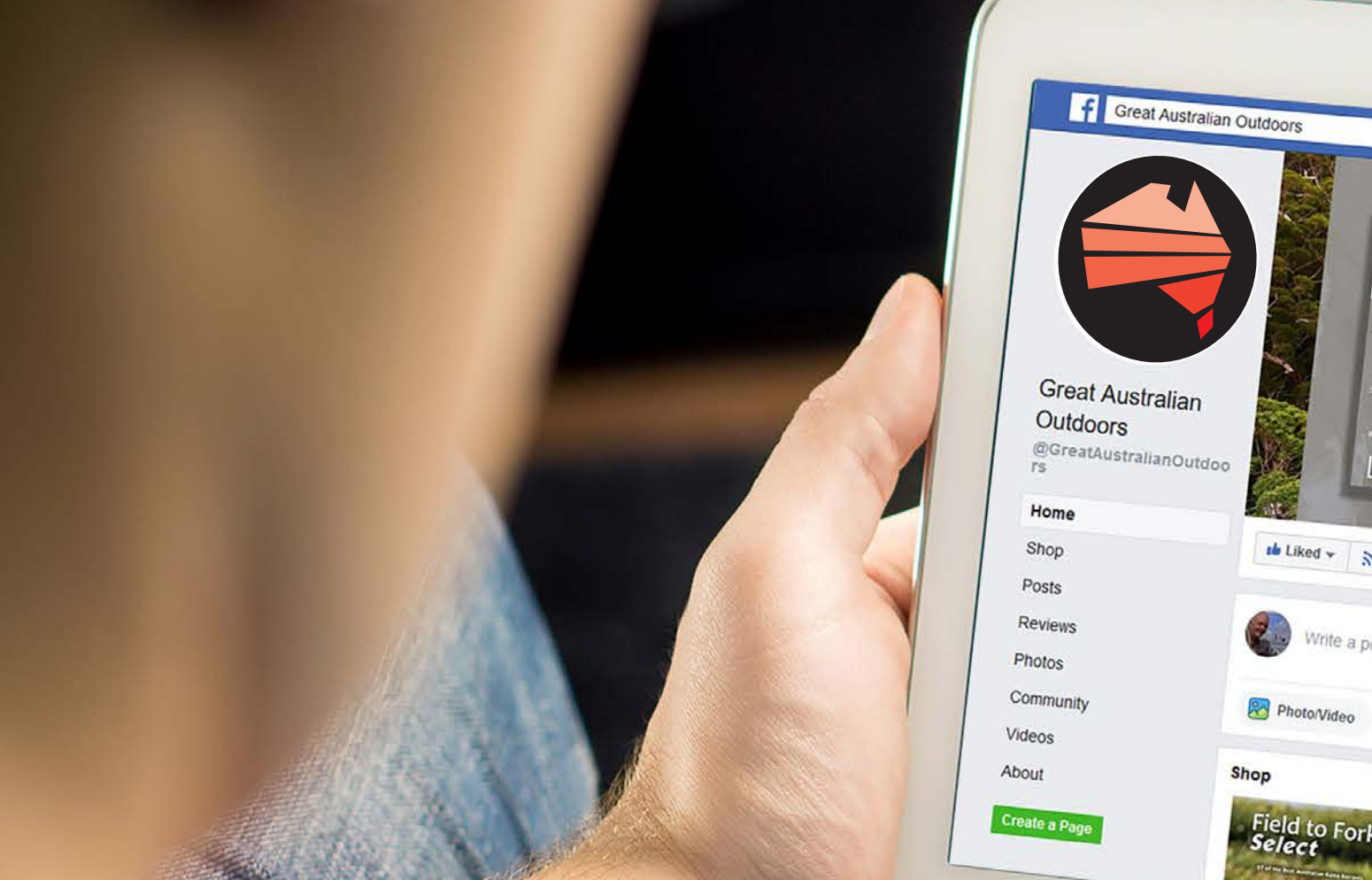
John Dunn's favourite rifle/cartridge/scope combo

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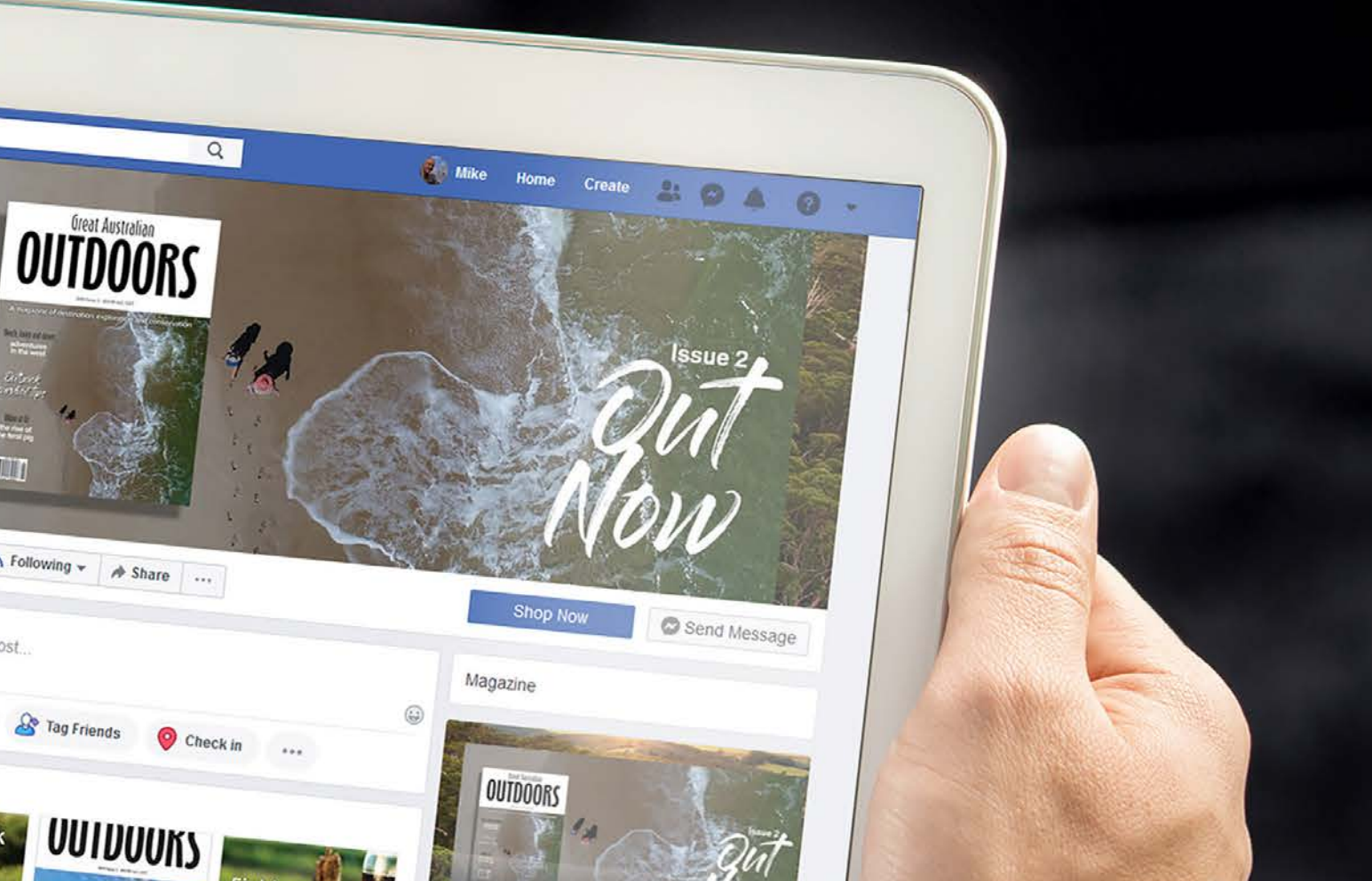
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Australian Shooter

With the enforced changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been necessary to reduce pagination in the print version of *Australian Shooter* in the short term. However, in order to bring you our regular content, we will be publishing a monthly digital supplement on the SSAA National website. When life returns to normal so will your favourite shooting sports magazine. In the meantime, log on to ssaa.org.au for the latest news and to view your digital supplement.

Allan Blane *Managing Editor, Australian Shooter*



Our August cover Page 24

NEXT ISSUE



Elise Jurasovic was joined by her dad and younger brother on a black bear hunt in Grande Prairie, Alberta and has penned an entertaining account of what turned out to be a nail-biting adventure.

Despite the large number of cartridges in use today there are only a dozen or so standard diameter rifle projectiles produced. Rod Pascoe takes a look at calibre confusion and lays bare a few of the myths surrounding this tricky subject.

In the latest instalment in our favourite rifle/cartridge/scope feature, Mark van den Boogaart outlines his selection as part of a project which became a real labour of love.

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Phone: 02 8805 3900

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PO Box 282, Plumpton, NSW 2761

Email: mem@ssaa.org.au

EDITORIAL POLICY

To create a better environment and community understanding of all forms of hunting and shooting sports.

EDITORIAL INQUIRIES

Phone: 08 8272 7100

Fax: 08 8272 2945

PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061

Email: edit@ssaa.org.au Web: ssaa.org.au

ABN 95 050 209 688

197,656

members strong
as of June 2020

This magazine is owned and published by the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia Inc. Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy of this Association.

EDITORIAL

MANAGING EDITOR.....	Allan Blane
ASSOCIATE EDITOR.....	Thomas Cook
ASSISTANT EDITOR.....	Dave Rose
CHIEF OF STAFF.....	Jennifer Martens
ART DIRECTOR.....	Mike Barr
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR.....	
& GRAPHIC DESIGNER.....	Elizabeth Tyson
GRAPHIC DESIGNER.....	Natalie Kuhlmann
MEDIA & POLITICAL LIAISON OFFICER.....	Nadia Isa
WEBMASTER.....	Mark Fieldhouse
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COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER.....	Sam Talbot
ADMINISTRATION.....	Debbie Wing
SENIOR CORRESPONDENT.....	John Dunn
SENIOR CORRESPONDENT.....	Rod Pascoe

CONTRIBUTORS THIS ISSUE

Peter Bindon, Russell Mark, Con Kapralos, Daniel O'Dea, John McDougall, Mark van den Boogaart, Chris Redlich, John Maxwell, Thomas Tabor, Joe Norris, Sam Garro.

STATE CONTACT INFORMATION

For SSAA inquiries please contact your state SSAA office:

NSW	02 8889 0400	WA	08 9497 7919
QLD	07 3281 3447	SA	0419 849 452
VIC	03 8892 2777	ACT	0423 043 663
TAS	0418 734 008	NT	0402 013 918

NATIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

SSAA National Chief Executive Officer

and Chief Editor Tim Bannister

Wildlife Programs Matthew Godson

PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061

Phone: 08 8272 7100

SSAA National Accounts Office

PO Box 282, Plumpton, NSW 2761

Phone: 02 8805 3900

Email: accounts@ssaa.org.au

SSAA General Insurance Brokers

Unit 1, 212 Glen Osmond Rd,

Fullarton, SA 5063

Phone: 08 8332 0281

Free call: 1800 808 608

Fax: 08 8332 0303

Email: insurance@ssaa.com.au

President

Geoff Jones

Senior Vice President

Lance Miller

Junior Vice President

Denis Moroney

National Secretary

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Treasurer

Alf Bastian

Please mail all correspondence for the SSAA National Executive to SSAA, PO Box 282, Plumpton, NSW 2761

Email: ssaa@ssaa.org.au



President's Message

WITH GEOFF JONES

Heartening surge in membership numbers despite troubled times

A membership of the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia continues to march towards 200,000 in spite of the country being in the grip of a pandemic, we have again produced a bonus *Australian Shooter* digital supplement for your isolation enjoyment.

Our membership in June surged to 197,656 and in excess of 197,800 at time of writing - the biggest monthly increase in more than 20 years - and we're now within touching distance of the magical 200,000. As a member of the biggest sports shooting organisation in the southern hemisphere, you can be rightly proud to be part of something special.

During these difficult times you may find your regular copy of *Australian Shooter* could be delayed in the mail but don't forget, for the latest articles and news, your magazine is also available online. Just log on to ssaa.org.au to access and enjoy *Australian Shooter* as well as your interim *Australian Shooter* digital supplement and digital versions of the popular *Australian Women's Shooter* and *Australian Junio Shooter*.

The adjustments we've made in continuing to bring these publications to you have been very well received and I assure you we fully intend to continue providing the full print copy of your favourite shooting magazine as soon as the challenges of the current situation allow.

On a slightly sombre note I noticed our legitimate firearm-owning cousins in New Zealand are now suffering similar demonisation and bureaucratic impost Australian shooters have for the past 25 years. Crass political opportunism triggered not only by the reprehensible actions of one criminal but also by a litany of administrative failures which appear to have facilitated the actions of the accused, has now labelled the vast majority of law-abiding New Zealand firearm owners as potential criminals.

With Australian authority 'experts' advising them, even the language of their own authorities appears to be straight out of

the Australian anti-firearms playbook. I'm certainly not a conspiracy theorist but the evidence would seem to be compelling and unfortunately they can now look forward to many years of unnecessary conflict and societal division. Nevertheless, I know our New Zealand counterparts will fight the good fight and seek justice and our thoughts and best wishes are with them.

Back on a positive note, many of my recent conversations with shooters here on the ground seems to suggest a great number of them have taken advantage of the forced time we've had available to investigate a broader and deeper involvement in the sport and I encourage any of our members to do likewise.

One of the great things about our sport is there are so many facets to it. The opportunity to consider a new cartridge, study in more detail the characteristics of your favourite cartridges, delve into the science and 'dark arts' of internal and external ballistics, investigate the pleasures, challenges and benefits of reloading ammunition, research an old or collectable firearm, knife or piece of equipment, refine your sighting and tweak that favourite firearm to suit a particular purpose should not be lost. And don't forget the hunters who are always trying to cultivate knowledge, skills and equipment to enhance their ethical hunting encounters.

With the array of products and accessories now available in retail outlets and information both in hard copy and online - although I advise caution in too readily accepting some online advice - there's a wonderful world of experience and enjoyment to be had from our great sport and belonging to such a go-ahead organisation as the SSAA.

G. E. Jones

Geoff Jones
SSAA National President



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Paradise lost . . . and found

IN RESPONSE TO the letter 'Private hunters in dreamland' (*Shooter*, March 2020), my plan to gain access to private property more than 50 years ago was to marry into it! Sadly that was thwarted by young bucks at the door of the bush dance telling me: "Local chicks for local blokes," was policy of the day.

My luck changed when, at a country funeral, I spied an old 'Cocky' (thanks to his identifying hat) and a conversation ensued along the lines of: "Yes my place is the perfect paradise for game of all sorts. Can you come up this weekend?"

Sadly, on arrival it was more: "Thank God you're here - we need a hand to bring the hay in." There's always a calamity as "the back fence needs replacing or the stock will get out." A hunter is seen as an asset in a thousand ways you can't imagine so beware what you wish for.

That said, nowadays when the present generation leaves the sheep and cattle station for holidays, I have keys to 'the perfect paradise for game of all sorts'.

Bruce Levy, via email

Vortex scope solution

I WAS READING Shane Slater's 'Top Shots' question in the March issue about his Vortex scope. I once had a similar issue with a scope which ran out of elevation and found the answer in an old article about scopes and zeroing.

The recommendation was to turn the elevation turret as far as it would go, whichever direction you choose, then turn the turret back as far as you can and count the clicks. Remember this number, which is the hardest part, so write it down. Now turn it back half that number of clicks as sometimes a scope's settings have been fiddled with. Windage problems can be sorted the same way if it has the same cause.

If that doesn't work, a simple fix is to take or send it to your Vortex dealer and have it checked out/repaired for free, assuming you have the purchase docket.

Daryl Brenton, via email

Pain worth the gain?

THE USE OF steel shot for hunting waterfowl has caused a rethink about muzzle velocities for shotshells. While it makes sense to boost both the size and charge weight of steel shot along with muzzle velocity, as a means of maintaining killing range there's a big price to pay in extra

recoil. Raising the muzzle velocity in some brands of lead shot ammo also seems to be on the agenda for the sake of increasing effective range - and sales.

Deciding if the extra recoil is worth it is hard if you don't know how much extra range you'll get. This depends on what shot size is being used - the smaller the shot size the quicker it loses velocity and the smaller the gain for the pain. An easy way to study all the options is to use the ballistic calculator at ctmuzzleloaders.com. I found that 7.5 size lead shot with a MV of 1300fps only travels four yards before dropping to 1152fps.

John Andrew, via email

Simple pleasure in simpler times

WITH REGARD TO Don Armitstead's letter (*Shooter*, February 2020) I remember well those times in the '70s when, as a youngster attending Fort St Boys' High at Petersham, I used to travel in a bus on Paramatta Road with a .303 rifle and ammunition in my school bag.

We'd bus it to and from school and the range to practise shooting in the Earl Roberts Trophy at Hornsby Range. Nowadays I'd be met by goons jumping out of helicopters shooting at me. How times have changed for the worse.

Robert, via email



Insurance Q&A with Trevor Jenkin

Send questions to: communications@ssaa.org.au

Q I've run my own plumbing business for years and am quite confused each year when it comes to insurance as I'm never sure if I have everything covered properly. Can you help?

Seb, via email

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and extend it to cover theft too. Being on the road you're no doubt taking tools and stock with you and probably keep these in your car permanently, so you can extend the Trade Package to cover these items away from the premises for any damage caused in a vehicle accident, fire or theft.

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No time to horse around

The wicked problem associated with wild Brumbies in Victoria's High Country has certainly gained media attention, being a perfect mix for sensational storylines - issues surrounding Australian and cultural heritage, community groups versus the government and groups against each other. Generally, a wicked problem is a social or cultural problem that's difficult or impossible to solve for as many as four reasons including incomplete or contradictory knowledge, the number of people and opinions involved, the large economic burden and interconnected nature of these problems with other problems.

Brumbies have a cultural link to many with ties to the land in the High Country. Australian bush poet Banjo Paterson published *The Man from Snowy River* in April 1890, the story of a horseback pursuit of a colt from a prizewinning racehorse which fled its paddock and joined Brumbies of the mountain ranges. Brumbies also have a special place in the hearts of many for their role in building Australia's early infrastructure and history. They were used for transport, cartage, farming, policing and as war horses during WWI and the Boer War and while many love the Brumby, they're regarded as a pest and threat to native ecosystems by environmentalists and state governments alike.

The battle for the Brumby has recently been to court where a local cattleman tried legal action to prevent Parks Victoria from undertaking cull activities to reduce their population and impact. The cattleman was attempting to save Brumbies from the Bogong High Plains area by rounding up as many as he and his friends could muster then relocating them to his own property. In an act of resistance against the state government, who he and his supporters believe are hell-bent on destroying their cultural heritage, they spend their own time finding, chasing and catching horses and use their money to feed them once on their property.

For generations, cattlemen in these areas would breed cattle in the valleys and move them in summer to the grass-rich plains above to fatten them up. Recent bans stopping access to alpine grazing in some areas has led to a level of disdain towards state authorities. Many cattlemen and other alpine park users blame poor management practices by bureaucrats for higher intensity bushfires, the number one cause letting fuel loads build up due to decreasing logging, controlled fire burns and grazing. They would certainly feel recent bushfires have caused much more damage to these areas, way beyond what cattle grazing or free-ranging Brumbies could ever do.

The wicked problem in the real sense is Brumbies are feral horses, seen by Parks

Victoria (and other state authorities) as an introduced species ruining the delicate Alpine ecosystem. By removing a large invasive herbivore from a sensitive landscape, Parks Victoria believes it's giving native species a greater chance of survival. One side wants to rehome Brumbies while the other wants to destroy them. The costs associated with widespread commercial catching, holding, training and selling of Brumbies will be much higher than that of a cull which reduces the population to a level that minimises their impacts. Of course, you won't be able to catch or cull every Brumby in the mountains.

Like many introduced species, Brumbies have done no wrong and it's not their fault, they just haven't been managed properly until a major problem has developed, a wicked problem of social, cultural and environmental significance. Both sides' arguments have merit and it looks very difficult to find middle ground either side would be happy with. Legal action has been fought and won and now Parks Victoria have been given the green light to launch their culling program. This all depends on whether the cattlemen ride back into court on appeal and continue their fight to save every Brumby on the Bogong High Plains.



Send questions to:
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The 'Three Rs' of survival kits

I could never believe that 'reading, riting and rithmatic' were actually the 'Three Rs' of education but my wife always accused me of being too pedantic and letting a little poetic licence get in the way of a useful description. Well, given the recent situation there has been plenty of time to consider what she said and thinking about them I was able to come up with something else.

What about the 'Three Rs' of survival? Not just 'survival', more 'survival kits' like the one I always carry in my jacket pocket whenever I leave camp. In this column I've previously described these small tins full of stuff which could make a difficult situation a little more bearable and I think it's especially important to teach youths and young shooters about safety and survival in the bush so that hard-won information isn't lost.

One of the activities I found my kids and their mates liked was making up a small fisherman's survival kit using only found items at a local fishing spot. There are always bits of line, lost hooks, sinkers and even lures to be found discarded or lost by careless fishers at most favoured spots which can be gathered and saved in case of 'emergency'.

Concerning my pocket survival kit, the 'Three Rs' I came up with should be Replace, Review and Reflect. **Replace** of course means two things. Firstly, anything which was used from the kit or has passed its 'use-by' date should be replaced as soon as you return home from a trip. If you leave it until later there's a chance you'll forget it altogether and be in strife next time that item is needed.

Occasionally you may want to substitute an up-to-date item for something which has been superseded and I did this recently with the small razor-sharp Swiss army knife in my kit. I found a one-bladed model with a very slim profile which replaced the bulkier example I had previously included.

Review refers to ensuring the items you've included are suitable for the likely location of your next trip into the scrub. For example, you may want to include extra water purification tabs and a few more plastic bags in your kit when going into dry country after goats. Reviewing the contents also helps familiarise you with the contents of your kit and should remind you about the various uses that can be made of the included items.

I hadn't thought about **Reflecting** for long before I was reminded of the sparkly

and sometimes much-maligned 'space blanket.' My first one of these was made by 3M and came compressed into a small pillow shape enclosed in plastic which you dare not open - there was no way of getting it back into the tiny bag it came out of once it had been spread out.

Although I'd never advise wrapping yourself or anyone else in a space blanket, with the right techniques they can form a useful shelter in hot climates, a shelter lining in cold weather and make a good reflecting device if you want to attract attention. As the base material is an impermeable plastic sheet, they're not toys and should be kept away from children. I think I've mentioned before you can find space blankets with suggestions for use printed on them and at least one type comes with the word 'HELP' printed on the safety orange-coloured side. A folded space blanket is attached to the outside of my kit with a strip of strong 100 mile-an-hour tape.

Otherwise, reflecting is what I do when considering whether to include a new item or discard an old one. As technology advances there's always an interesting gadget to catch the eye but do I *really* need it?



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Clay Target Q&A

WITH RUSSELL MARK

Q There has been much discussion recently in the UK regarding the push towards the more environmentally friendly use of steel shot in all forms of competition clay target shooting. As you're probably aware there are already countries in Europe, such as Sweden, where this is already standard practice. I feel it's a good move but have made a few enemies by airing my views. What are your thoughts on using steel shot in Australia for competitive shooting and do you think it will impact on scores?

Name and address supplied

A I'm aware of both the continued discussion on the shift towards steel in the UK and countries which have already been forced to use it. Ask any Swedish Olympic Trap shooter how they're training at home and expect a half hour answer on the difficulties they face. If I was confronted with the fictitious real-life scenario that my existence was on the line and the only way to stay alive was to break a 50m 'edge-on' crossing target and I was only allowed shells currently 'legal' in terms of shot size and charge, there's no chance in hell I'd choose a steel load over lead.

Even choosing the largest permitted shot size, which in most disciplines is number 6, the lead load will carry far greater down-range energy than its steel rival. The advantage you may argue for the steel load, and again using number 6 size as an example, is that with a lead load you'd have 216 pellets and the steel would carry an

extra hundred because of its lighter density. Sadly, at greater distances, tickling targets or wild game won't help, it's 'knock down' power you need to crack the edge-on target in half or drop a bird from the sky.

At closer distances, such as those offered on a Skeet field for instance, I don't think it would make any difference in performance using lead or steel. I'd go up a shot size, so for example in the domestic discipline of Trap, if I normally used 7½ in lead I'd use 6½ in steel if possible.

To accurately answer your question as to whether steel will affect performance in competition, it would obviously depend on the competition. I've already mentioned a typical crossing Sporting target which I believe is not perfectly suited to steel shot, but if that same target was thrown at 35m with more of its 'belly' presented, as opposed to edge-on, it would be fine.

If steel is eventually imposed on us for all clay target disciplines, events such as Sporting Clays will need some experienced target setters who are aware of steel shot's limitations. In events like Skeet I don't think using steel will make one bit of difference, as the longest shot on offer is barely 25m, but in events like Olympic Trap where 7 shot is the largest permissible legal shot size and 40m edge-on, going away targets are the norm, steel shot is just not the ballistic answer if you're looking to win Olympic gold, hence my previous comment on Swedish Trap shooters. There have been some decent ones but nearly all of them train and live abroad.

Whether steel shot is the long-term answer 'environmentally' is a whole new topic and one I admit I don't have the expertise to answer. There are countries where steel shot is totally banned - try hunting near a cultivated, top quality pine plantation in some parts of Europe with steel shot in your pocket and I promise you won't be welcome.

Some people argue steel has just as many problems as lead shot is alluded to cause. My view is that while I know the theory behind why lead shot is so bad, I'm yet to see definitive proof about how lead used in hunting or even a high volume shooting range has done anything detrimental to the environment.

There was a club closed down in Victoria a few years ago which threw lead into the bay in front of them for more than 100 years, yet no environmental study was ever presented publicly to prove marine life suffered one scrap of damage from shooters. More marine life would have been damaged by scientists standing on it or being dug up to look for answers which just weren't there. Rant over. Let's hope we avoid going down the steel shot path for as long as possible. I enjoy watching good shooters break 50m edge-on crossers too much.



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• John Dunn • Paul Miller • Greg Riemer • Geoff Smith • Barry Wilmot • Rod Pascoe

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Q Back in 2018, Barry Wilmot was able to provide some information about my Winchester 32-40 which was most helpful. I also have in my collection a Martini Enfield 303 and from the attached photos could you advise if it's proofed for modern ammunition? I have some rounds of 303 - would they be OK to use? As I'm 79 I intend to dispose of my collection but would like to fire a few rounds in this old piece first.

Rob Baker, via email

A Your Martini Enfield rifle was originally converted to shoot the black powder .303 cartridge, however the Martini action is quite strong and can handle the later smokeless .303 ammunition provided the rifle has been examined by a competent gunsmith and given the all-clear. The .303 cartridge in the photo was made at the Kirkee Indian Government ammunition factory near Poona, which was in operation from 1914 until 1960. The head stamping denotes it as a MK 7 cartridge made at Kirkee in 1954.

Barry Wilmot

Q Could you assist with regard to buying 9.3mm cast lead projectiles coated with Hi-Tek Lube Supercoat? I could buy the bullet mould and coat them myself but would rather not go down that path. I'd like to use these projectiles in my CZ 9.3x62 Model 550 with a 20" barrel and twist rate of 1:14.2. I haven't slugged the bore and have only used the .366" factory projectiles of 232 and 285 grains and am ideally looking for cast projectiles of 286 grains (round nose would suffice), with the purpose of pig hunting in the scrub (25-75m).

I'd like to keep the velocity of cast projectiles well below 2000fps to reduce recoil and lead fouling. Would you know of any data that specifies the powder and powder charge of a 250 grain projectile for the 9.3x62mm? At the moment I'm using Hawkesbury River RNFP cast projectiles in my Winchester 30-30 which are very good.

Alexander Lytwynenko, via email

A I found a few things which may help though none of the options are likely to be cheap. The 9.3x62 Mauser is a big, powerful cartridge designed by Otto Bock of Berlin in 1905 according to several sources (eg Barnes' *Cartridges of the World*). It features a bullet of 0.365" diameter weighing between 230 and 300 grains, fired at velocities in the 2300-2500fps range and by all accounts is an ideal cartridge for the type of hunting you propose.

I checked as many local bullet casters as I could find but none list a .366" diameter bullet, although John Clark at Spartan can make cast bullets coated with Hi-Tek to meet your needs if you're prepared to pay tooling costs to have a mould made for his casting machine. These are made in the US by Magma Engineering and would take four-to-six weeks at a cost of A\$300. John could then make your bullets for around \$200 per 1000 with a turn-around time of a couple of weeks, so you could possibly have projectiles within eight weeks or so of placing an order.

This means your initial 1000 bullets would cost 50c each compared with about 80c for the cheapest commercial jacketed bullets, and from then on 20c each, so you'd totally recover your projectile costs in about 1400 rounds. Against this you could also consider having a set of brass moulds made in Queensland by CBE for around \$145 (without handles) and tracking down a shooter near you who casts and coats their own.

While reduced loads in large capacity cases can be problematic, ADI's Trail Boss propellant is ideally suited for such a purpose. I have emailed you independently with a reply from their technical department which, in summary, says you should determine the case volume up to the base of the seated bullet then begin with a load 70 per cent of this value. Carefully working up from this starting point, in particular checking your fired primers to ensure pressures remain safe, should see you arrive at a useful loading.

Geoff Smith

Q I've had this scope for about 20 years. It was given to me as payment for an air rifle but I don't know anything about the scope, who made it and what value it could be. It has the word 'Mark' and 3x21 stamped on the side. Could you shed any light on this item and perhaps a rough dollar value as I wish to sell it.

Karl Penna, via email

A I've done a bit of research and am fairly sure the scope is for an air rifle. I believe it was made for Beeman by Hakko in Japan in the 1980s, one of three scopes in the series with the capacity to focus back to five yards. Unfortunately I haven't been able to come up with any more information and there's nothing whatsoever about it in any of my other reference material. Dollar-wise it might be worth \$100 but it probably boils down to what someone is prepared to pay for it.

John Dunn



• If anyone out there has any more information on this scope, email us at edit@ssaa.org.au.

Q I hear it's now possible to buy shotguns in Australia in lighter gauges between the 12-gauge and tiny 410 snake gun. Are the 20-gauge and 28-gauge viable alternatives to the traditional 12-gauge even though they throw a lot less shot?

Errol, NSW

A There appears to be increased interest in smaller gauges here in Australia going by what I've seen on my travels around gun clubs in New South Wales and discussions with importers of 20-gauge and 28-gauge shotguns and shells, Beretta Australia and Outdoor Sporting Agencies.

The 20 and 28-gauge have always been popular in the UK and US where they shoot species of birds which are able to be taken at closer ranges, especially hunting in the field or driven birds from hillsides.

Some guys I know are having a lot of fun

with both the 20 and 28-gauge for Sporting Clays and Skeet, as these cartridges have some advantages in that the guns imported for them are lighter than comparable 12-gauges and scaled down to suit the lighter cartridges. They're easier to carry in the field and around the clay target ranges and you can still shoot 28-gram loads in a 20-gauge, which makes it the equal of a 12-gauge fired with the same payload.

The problem is you get more recoil from a light 20-gauge than a heavier 12-gauge with shells doing the same speed. The 20-gauge seems to excel with loads around 24-grams and the 28-gauge with loads around 21-grams. Don't let these payloads confuse you. Small gauge Skeet shooters use these cartridges to shoot many 100 straights, shot with 20 and 28-gauge guns.

The top Skeet shots score high 90s and 100s using the tiny 410 bore with ½oz shotshells which are only about 14-grams of shot! It's all about picking the right-sized smaller pellets to fill the pattern and keeping the range you shoot at relevant to the cartridge you're using.

Paul Miller

Q Can you provide some guidance in relation to transportation of ammunition. The Police NSW website states ammunition must kept in "a locked container separate from the firearms when in transit". But what constitutes a container? For example, I own a Ridgeline Pro Shooting bag, a semi-soft bag and not a hard plastic case. Is that considered a container? And if I put a padlock on the zips so it can't be unzipped, is that sufficient to be considered a locked container?

Naomi, via email

A Before answering your question specifically, and for the benefit of all readers, as a general rule you're required to take every reasonable precaution to prevent your ammunition from being lost, stolen or falling into the hands of unauthorised persons. Most states and

territories make available the relevant Act and Regulations on their website and some produce fact sheets with, what the Commissioner of Police considers, minimum requirements as to how to achieve this. Readers should seek information on this subject from their own state or territory police.

In the case of NSW, the Commissioner's recommendations are quite specific. The Fact Sheet, *Ammunition Safe Storage, Acquisition and Possession* on the NSW Firearms Registry website states: 'The Commissioner of Police has determined the following as the minimum standard applicable to the ammunition storage container and locking mechanisms for a licence or permit holder: The ammunition container must be made of plastic, wood, metal or steel which is sturdy and not easily penetrated (ie, cash box/ammunition box) and be fitted with a lock which is either: 1. An internal locking mechanism (ie, cash box or similar) which is operated by means of a key, combination lock or other similar locking mechanism (ie, pin number), or 2. Locked by the use of a hasp and staple (or similar) and fitted with a padlock.

'NOTE: The key to the lock/padlock must not be kept within the firearm's receptacle or within the immediate vicinity. Police have the authority to seize firearms and ammunition under Section 42 of the Act if they have reasonable cause to believe the firearms or ammunition are not being kept in accordance with Part 4 of the Act. The Commissioner has not evaluated or approved any individual receptacles for safe storage of ammunition. However, any receptacle or lock meeting or exceeding the features described herein is approved for the purposes of sections 40(1)(d) and 41(1)(c) of the Act'.

Rod Pascoe



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Akkar's Churchill

a Turkish delight

John McDougall

For shooters who'd invite the extra challenge in the clay target sports or those who enjoy hunting quail and other upland birds with a lighter gun, the 28-gauge is certainly an option. Although not quite capable of handling a 28-gram load in a 2¾" cartridge, generally packing around 15/16th of an ounce or ¾oz, the 28-gauge is a nice shotgun to use being light, fast and when pointed in the right direction, just as capable of breaking most targets you'll be presented with in sporting clays. This is more so on a skeet ground but absolutely delightful for quail hunting.

To this end Nioa have sourced a smart little 28-gauge from renowned and highly respected Turkish gunmaker Akkar. Their Churchill 828 Silver is the subject of this

review and I have to concede the more I used the down-sized 28-gauge the more I enjoyed it. I won't pretend the Churchill is any more than an entrance level shotgun in its class, but with a five-year warranty and attractive pricing, the Australian distributors are clearly backing it.

Barrels

I had to look closely at these to ascertain whether they were blued or hard black chromed, as is the case with some brands of shotguns from Turkey. My final assessment was they're blued but not on a highly polished barrel surface we've come to expect with many modern shotguns, especially compared to those made in Japan. I can't really be critical of such a design, which looks more like the barrels are

rubbed down with 1200 grade emery or finer as I encourage a matte finish on guns, especially those for hunting.

With barrels weighing 1.14kg and the gun 2.65kg overall, it's a great deal lighter than a 12-gauge shotgun weighing around 3.8kg and coupled with shorter 710mm barrels, the little 28-gauge is nimble and extremely 'fast' to move, not carrying the weight of a 12-gauge nor their 760mm barrels.

At the muzzle end the Churchill 828 Silver has a barrel fluoro front sight and is fitted with internal choke tubes, five supplied and all packed into a handy plastic case along with the propeller-type spanner. Slots in the ends of the choke tubes immediately identified the choke constriction but these should only be checked or installed



An overall view of the Churchill 828 Silver 28-gauge.



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when the gun is unloaded - both barrels.

The barrels are joined by solid side ribs running from the muzzle down into the fore-end covering but not quite the full length of the barrels. The top rib is ventilated, measures 7mm wide and runs parallel to the full length of the top barrel, a cross hatching finish giving a non-reflective surface. At the chamber end the 28-gauge is suited to 2¾", 70mm cartridges and shorter, presenting the opportunity to use 15/16oz which is just short of 28 grams, although the majority of loads used during the review were 24 grams (English Eley loadings) and ¾oz (American Federal).

The ejectors are quite solid and timed well to eject empty shells well clear of the chamber when the gun is opened, construction of the monobloc robust with jewel polishing about the lower half to retain lubricants, an excellent idea. Locking of the action is via a bottom wedge/slide which travels the whole width of the monobloc, a couple of lugs built into the receiver wall mated with recesses in the monobloc and combining to maintain the integrity of the Churchill when fired. The system seems novel but well designed.

Receiver

Finished in plain matte silver the receiver is devoid of engraving except for the Churchill name stamped into the side and Akkar into the bottom of the receiver. As a base model gun this is acceptable and when you consider it retails for around \$1295 there can't be a lot to be expected in terms of lavish scroll engraving and the like.

Warrantied for five years, distributor Nioa has backed the gun's reliability and service, the five-year guarantee something usually reserved for more expensive shotguns as



The Churchill with its gun socks, stylish case, instruction manual and choke tubes.

most costing three or four times the price of the Churchill offer just a one or three-year warranty at most. The triggerguard is comfortable in size and while the gun is light and feels like a scaled-down 12-gauge, it's obvious parts such as the triggerguard and triggerfoot need to be generous for the shooter's comfort and you'd still be comfortable wearing thin leather shooting gloves. Trigger pulls are reasonable and measure 2kg (about 4½lb) for each barrel. The mechanically operated trigger system will be appreciated, especially for hunting which is where I believe the this gun will come into its own, particularly on quail and upland game birds such as grouse and partridge.

Operating the top lever became something of a skill as the new gun was pretty



Choke tubes supplied are internal and stored in a plastic container along with the propeller-style wrench.



The receiver is plain with 'Churchill' inlaid into both sides and 'Akkar' on the underside.



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Akkar's Churchill - a Turkish delight

tight to activate but once the top lever was pushed well across to the 'open' position the barrels were able to be dropped down, albeit a bit stiff. Closing the barrels was similar. They were firm but after several hundred rounds had been fired during testing they opened and closed with minimum effort. Design of the top lever is novel, with the centre removed and only a frame to push upon though it served its purpose well. Position of the safety catch-cum-barrel selector is excellent and despite sitting proud it wasn't easily knocked to be deactivated, its operation solid.

Stock and fore-end

Made from Turkish walnut, the stock and fore-end match well, grain character quite basic and chequering completed at around 12 lines per inch. Coverage is reasonable, remembering the gun is light and has minimal recoil and it's clear the chequering has been completed by machine with a double line border and no overruns. A thin rubber composite recoil pad is fitted to the butt of the stock to help maintain gun mount as recoil is never an issue.

The fore-end catch is at the front of the fore-end wood and released it from the barrels with little effort. Reinstalling the fore-end to the barrels required a little more effort than I thought necessary but once fitted the wood was snug and secure.

In the field

Testing the Churchill 28-gauge was a pleasure and also a challenge, being almost a kilogram lighter than a 12-gauge and having 710mm barrels meaning the gun moved



briskly. I occasionally over-lead close targets due to its speed but at one station I smashed a battue clay target at 45m just before it hit the ground, much to the amazement of all. With a little more practice and good load selection the 28-gauge will do most things a 12 is capable of using 28 or 24-gram loads.

An important note is the Churchill 28-gauge, for reasons unknown, must be cleaned immediately after use. I noticed a few marks around the monobloc face when I left the gun a couple of days as I intended to use it again and didn't bother, so cleaning immediately after use is a necessity.

In conclusion I found the Akkar Churchill in 28-gauge great fun to use. It would be ideally suited to quail and rabbit hunting when coupled with correct shot size loadings - quick flying quail perfect, fast-bolting rabbits in swamp tussocks excellent. The lightness of the gun also means if hunting all day, carrying it won't be a burden. Priced at \$1295 and fitted into a smart suede case with all accessories and carrying a five-year warranty, the Akkar Churchill 28-gauge represents excellent value. ●

SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer: Akkar, Turkey
Distributor: Nioa, Queensland
Model: Churchill, Silver 828 28-gauge over-and-under shotgun
Overall length: 1145mm/45"
Overall weight: 2.65kg/5lb 13oz
Barrel length: 710mm/28"
Barrel weight: 1.13kg/2lb 8oz
Bore and chamber: 28-gauge/0.550", 70mm/2 3/4" chamber. Steel shot compatible, chokes no larger than Modified with steel shot loads
Chokes: Cylinder, Improved Cylinder, Modified, Improved Modified and Full chokes and spanner
Trigger pulls: Under barrel 2kg, over barrel 2kg
Length of pull: 360mm/14"
Drop at comb: 35mm/1 1/4"
Drop at heel: 50mm/2"
Warranty: Five years
Price: \$1295

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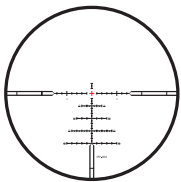
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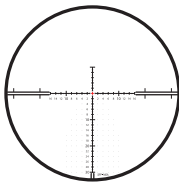


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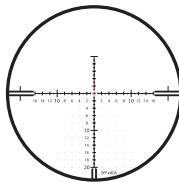
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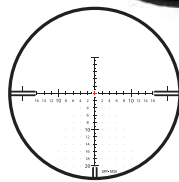
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Seeing beyond



From breaking news to breaking clays

ABC identity a AA Skeet shooter

Nadia Isa



Not your 'typical' shooter, Liz is trying to raise the profile of the sport she loves.



Sitting in the car outside her local gun club, Liz Rymill can recall her heart racing with nervous energy and anticipation as she arrived for her first club shoot - seven years on and she's regularly competing at state and national level in Skeet and Clay Target. Her advice? Give it a go. Growing up on a farm in the Adelaide Hills of South Australia, young Liz would go plinking in the paddock with her dad and as a teenager shot benchrest at the SSAA Para branch, yet she never really got into the sport.

After a 10-year stint as a media advisor

in federal politics, commuting between Canberra and Adelaide, Liz moved to Penola in the South-East where she met her husband and her shooting career truly began. "He had a hand-thrower so we went out in the paddock and tried a couple of shots," says ABC identity Liz.

Standing five-foot-three and right-handed, Liz was using a shotgun customised for her husband who's six-foot tall and left-handed. "I still managed to hit the targets, really liked using the gun and found I had the hand-eye coordination to be able to do it. I just wanted to do more of it."

Keen as mustard and with a strong competitive nature Liz bought an off-the-shelf Beretta, fitted it up following YouTube videos and went to the local club in Mount Gambier to join Friday night practice sessions. "I remember my heart rate was through the roof and I just didn't want to be completely shown up," she says.

The only woman shooting at that time, Liz felt pressure to perform. "I didn't want to be seen as a bit of a hopeless female and luckily that wasn't the way I was made to feel - I was encouraged to have a go. But I was the only woman and at least a dozen or

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From news breaker to clay breaker

more guys who were very good and I felt a bit of pressure. But despite my nerves I shot quite well on that first night so I came back and that was down to the guys being so welcoming and encouraging. They gave me a lot of pointers.”

Shooting competitively

From there Liz entered a monthly 5-Stand competition and while the enthusiast started out in Sporting Clays she found she excelled at Skeet – thriving on the pace, training and mental aspect - and decided to concentrate on that discipline. “So I focused on Skeet and that’s where I’ve centred most of my efforts,” she says.

Since she took up the sport seven years ago, Liz has shot competitively at state and national level and earlier this year competed in her seventh state Skeet competition. In 2019, the 34-year-old became the first woman in South Australia to reach AA grade in Skeet as she made the national postal team which recognises the top five Australian women shooting the discipline.

Not your typical shooter

As a young woman Liz says many people don’t consider her a ‘typical’ shooter. “Shooters live in the city, in the country, families do it, it’s hard to say ‘this is a typical shooter’ which is great as most people would look at me and not think I’m a typical shooter.” But she says shooting lends itself to all kinds of people. “For those like myself who’ve perhaps come to it later in life, it’s a sport that has a great level of equity,” she says. “If you apply yourself mentally and seek out some good coaching you can take it as far as you want and it’s a fantastic sport I get so much out of.”

Liz has watched female participation grow but would like to see clubs and the shooting community promote itself more to women and newcomers in general. “I guess it’s still largely a male dominated sport and perhaps that’s just what men have gravitated to. Lots of women like myself never knew the sport really existed,” she says. “If you can overcome any perceived fears you may have it’s so rewarding and the people you meet are incredibly supportive - there’s a real community and family feel to it.”

Also a hunter, Liz shoots ducks and game animals as well as carrying out pest control on her property and acknowledges hunting can evoke strong reactions in some people. “When they understand we’re not out there with guns blazing looking for thrills, we’re doing it because we’re proud of that part of Australian culture to have the freedom to harvest our own food, I think they understand and respect that.

“Probably even more so than just going to the supermarket and letting someone else do the harvesting and you’re just buying. They get it when you talk about the pride you have in responsibly taking an animal and harvesting that meat, using it and valuing that life.”

Family affair

Liz has a son and daughter both under five who have already started learning about the joys of shooting from mum. “They’ll be brought up to learn about firearm safety and that education starts at this very early age,” she says.

Her son has a replica side-by-side cap gun and has been learning about shooting safely at the range with Liz. “He comes along and helps me load my pouch with shells and loves watching - he likes to call the target. I didn’t shoot when I was pregnant but as soon as I had the babies I was back out there. This is a sport I got a lot out of, especially as a new mum to be able to go to the range for an hour and have some time to myself, nothing better.”

A shooting advocate

Ever eager to promote the sport she loves, Liz has hosted many ‘come and try’ days at her club in Mount Gambier and says it’s a joy to see newcomers try the sport. “We see lots of women and families coming along,” she says. “When they start hitting targets the enjoyment they take from that gives me the best feeling, how proud they are of themselves and how much confidence they take from being able to responsibly and safely shoot a target and shoot it well.”

Aside from owning a farm with her husband in Penola and being the mother of two children, Liz is a journalist with the

Australian Broadcasting Corporation in the South-East and as part of the media the responsible shooter helps her fellow journalists understand the sport as a whole. “I regularly invite the media to come and have a shot at the gun club with me because I think people don’t know what they don’t know,” she says.

“If they only ever hear anti-gun material they don’t have another angle to draw on. I think with gun clubs and shooters it’s everyone’s responsibility to educate the broader public and show them the positive attributes of shooting as we know them to be.”

Liz hopes she has influenced some opinions on shooting and hunting or at least given people an alternative perspective. “Out in the community, I take every chance I can to talk about the benefits of shooting and it’s so important shooters promote and proactively talk about the positives of the sport, about the hunting lifestyle and safe firearms use, because Australia has so much to be proud of.”

Liz referred to recent policy changes introduced in the wake of COVID-19 which thrust heavy restrictions on licensed firearms owners and businesses and says any freedoms afforded to the firearms community can’t be taken for granted. “We can’t just do what we’ve always done, we have to modernise and use tools like social media and the media in general to our advantage and promote this sport. We can’t just protect it and not encourage new people because it simply won’t exist if we do that.

“The more people who come to shooting and participate in it either socially or competitively or just enjoy coming to watch, the better and brighter future our sport in Australia will have.” ●



Liz was the first woman in South Australia to reach AA grade in Skeet.

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The combination that made me a better shot



As we continue our series of favourite rifle/cartridge/scope combination, Senior Correspondent **John Dunn** has chosen one influenced by his father.

Rifle: Ruger No.1

Cartridge: 7.57 Mauser

Scope: Schmidt & Bender 1.5-6x24



A rifle for all seasons

For as long as I can remember, single-shot rifles in all their different forms have intrigued and fascinated me. I learned to shoot and hunt with a single-shot .22 rimfire, my father instilling in me the importance of making every shot count. He insisted the first shot was the best one you'd ever need, that if you hunted well and did your job properly one shot was all you'd worry about. Time and my own experience proved him right and I expect that's why I'm still using single-shot rifles for all my hunting almost 60 years down the track - especially my much-loved Ruger No.1 rifles.

When the No.1 Ruger was introduced in 1967 I was a teenager long on dreams but critically short on resources. As a first-year

apprentice on \$17 a week before tax, buying a No.1 rifle at the time was several country miles beyond the realms of possibility. Even so, the seed had been planted and I knew that wouldn't always be the case.

The first Ruger single-shot I owned was a No.3 Carbine, the not quite so fancy but highly practical little brother of the much-venerated No.1 in .22 Hornet. It served me well as a fox rifle for several years and at winter's end in 1977 when my skins had been sold and some outstanding bills put to bed, I had enough money left over to finally buy my first No.1, a 1-B-Standard Rifle in .243.

Since that time a dozen or so No.1 rifles in a variety of calibres and configurations have come and gone through my gun safe. For years there was even a custom-built

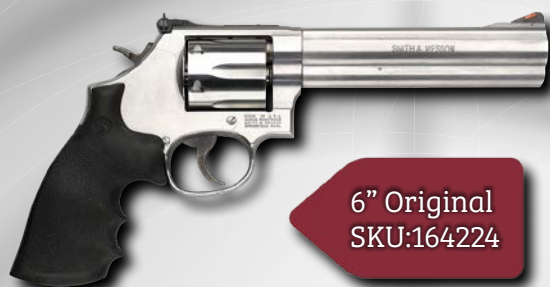
No.3 in .35 Whelen, made especially for the sambar deer hunting that was something of an obsession at the time. Some inevitably stayed longer than others, all of them contributing to my knowledge of the marque. In 2004 I bought a model 1-A, No.1 Light Sporter in 7x57 Mauser. From the outset I liked the way it handled and worked for me and some 16 years later it's still the rifle I automatically reach for when there's work to be done.

The rifle

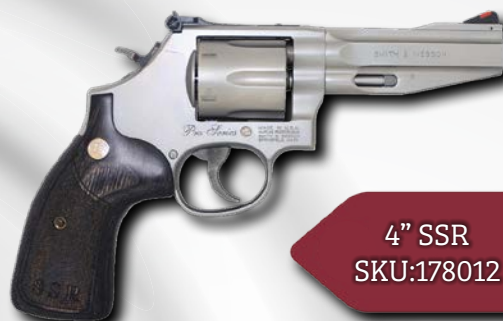
Reams have been written on the Ruger single-shot action and I doubt there's any need to go into a full description of how the action works yet again - suffice to say it's a lever-action, falling block single-shot rifle, an upgraded adaptation of the classic



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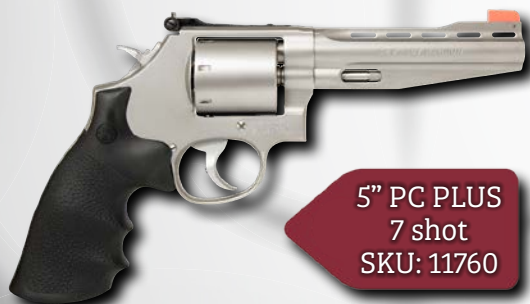
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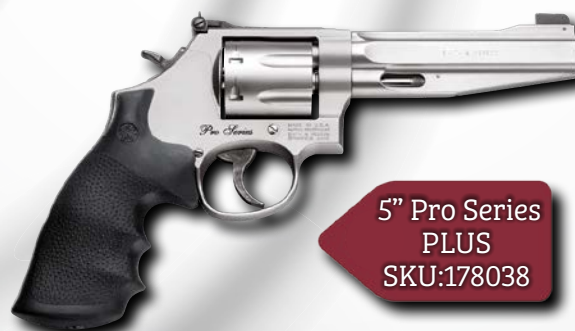
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The combination that made me a better shot

Farquharson rifle patented in England in the early 1870s. To paraphrase some of the No.1 advertising presented over the years: "The massive receiver forms a rigid connection between barrel and buttstock . . . and readily handles any type of modern cartridge . . . linking designs of the past with modern metallurgy to withstand the pressures of today's ammunition."

Catalogue specifications for the Light Sporter were always cryptic, given as "Lightweight 22" barrel, calibres .243 Win, .30-06, .270 Win and 7x75mm, weight approximately 7½lb. Catalogue No.1-A." My rifle has blued metalwork. Original factory sights consisted of a ramp-mounted, dovetail adjustable gold bead fore sight and adjustable folding leaf rear set-up on the front of the quarter rib on the barrel which was also machined to accept the Ruger rings supplied.

The two-piece stock is made from selected American walnut with a satin finish, fitted with a black rubber recoil pad, the 1-A rifle having an Alexander Henry forearm. Both pistol grip and forearm have panels of chequering cut at 20 lines to the old-fashioned inch. Sling swivels bases are fitted to the buttstock and on the barrel via a band forward of the forearm tip. The rifle normally wears an adjustable Safari Sling.

As functional as my Light Sporter was when it arrived, I've made a number of changes to it over the years to make it work just that bit better. Early in the piece I had the barrel and forearm hanger bedded into the forearm to eliminate any movement and ensure a consistent, reliable fit when the forearm screw was tightened. Though

it's a fiddly job to execute it did improve the accuracy, at the same time sealing the internal surfaces against moisture.

While the trigger on the No.1 is entirely functional and reliable, that doesn't mean it can't be enhanced and with that in mind, some 10 years ago I installed an after-market Kepplinger single-set trigger. In my opinion this trigger provides a better level of adjustment for everyday use and contributes significantly to the facility of an already useable rifle.

In general use there's no noticeable take-up or overtravel when the rifle is fired. In more deliberate mode the set trigger function - activated by pushing the trigger forward - allows me to take more carefully considered and deliberate shots, knowing that when I stroke the trigger sight disturbance will be minimal, especially when the shot is taken from some sort of field rest as it should be.

The third change I made was to replace the original Ruger quarter rib with its rear sight and fixed ring spacing with a custom rib which was made in limited numbers some years ago by Steve Hurt of Outer Edge Projectiles. The back of the rib sits over the top of the receiver and with its dovetailed top allows the back ring to be shifted rearwards by a full 20mm, making correct eye relief much easier to acquire.

It was designed to use Talley rings. Accordingly, there are no lugs or slots to prevent the rings shifting under recoil so regularly checking the tightness of the base screws is essential to avoid problems in the field - something that should be done on a regular basis with every rifle anyway.

The cartridge

The 7mm Mauser or 7x57 was introduced in 1892. Originally developed as a military cartridge it was used by Spain, Mexico and a number of other South American countries. Though primarily in bolt-action rifles, it was also employed by Remington in some of their single-shot rolling block rifles.

Despite its military origins the cartridge is probably best known as a sporting round and is still chambered as such by numerous US and European manufacturers in single-shot, bolt-action and combination firearms. Many people, this writer included, regard it as a definitive cartridge and that had a great deal of influence on my decision to buy the rifle. A classic cartridge in a classic rifle was a combination I found hard to resist, quite apart from the fact I'd used the cartridge



The loads that work best in the rifle RWS ID Classic 162gr factory load on the left and a 132gr HP Outer Edge handload.



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The combination that made me a better shot

previously in a Brno bolt-action rifle and knew just what it was capable of.

I experimented with all the different brands of factory ammunition I could find, eventually settling on the RWS ID Classic, 162gr nickel plated jacketed soft-point factory loads the rifle shot so well. I've used this load to take all six species of deer in Australia as well as feral horses, pigs, goats, wild dogs, foxes, feral cats and the occasional rabbit.

Since 2017 I've been handloading Outer Edge 132gr HP projectiles ahead of 44gr of AR 2208 with Federal 215M primers in RWS cases which are some of the best available. This load has exceeded my expectations in terms of accuracy and performance on game including fallow, red and sambar deer out to around 180m, about as far as I like to shoot.

To date I've only recovered one projectile, perfectly expanded to 15mm in diameter and retaining 100 per cent of its original weight, all the others having completely penetrated the target animal which in every case dropped to the shot, proving the old man's assertion a single shot is all you need if you hunt well.

The scope

The one my Light Sporter has worn for the past 15 years is a Schmidt & Bender 1.5-6x42 Zenith FlashDot that came my way for review about the same time I bought the rifle. They worked so well together I bought the scope, a decision I've never regretted. In terms of size it's a perfect fit, not too long or bulky with a magnification range that might have been designed with the cartridge in mind.

On 1.5x the scope allows the rifle to be swung like a shotgun on moving game with both eyes open, a plus in heavy cover where a fast, close shot may well be the order of the day. In more open country 6x is all the power this hunter needs for more planned, deliberate shots out to that 200m mark I've the rifle sighted in for.

The scope has a simple FD7 reticule, essentially a variation of the Duplex reticule we're all familiar with but minus the heavy vertical bar in the top hemisphere. The central crosshairs are finer with an illuminated dot in the centre, brightness adjustable via a rotating switch that looks like an additional turret on the left side of the scope. The light goes out between each numerical setting, allowing the required level of brightness to be set then turned off.

Over the years I've been lucky enough to review and test many different brands of scopes of all shapes and sizes and have to say I still regard the Schmidt & Bender

Zenith as one of the best I've come across. It has proved itself across the full spectrum of hunting conditions from the bright sunlight of the Top End dry season to the gloomy, damp and sometimes snowy conditions of early evenings in the sambar country of NSW and Victoria where conventional crosshairs can become invisible against the dark background of the bush. If I can see an animal through the scope, I can generally take it.

Overview

Hunting with a single-shot rifle isn't for everyone and I know there are many who'd

never dream of doing so, some of them my friends. Personally, I like the idea. Choosing to do so has made me a better hunter, knowing I have to work more carefully to put myself in a position where my single-shot can be best applied to do what I expect of it. Such were the basics the old man drummed into me all those years ago. No matter how much firepower you carry, game has to be taken one animal at a time and I can do that with the Ruger, the main reason it became a permanent fixture in my gun cabinet. ●



Red stag taken at 120m using an RWS 162gr factory load.

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SSAA-LA
LEGISLATIVE ACTION

National report finds firearm owners safe and responsible

Nadia Isa

The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia has welcomed the release of a Federal Government report into firearm theft in Australia. The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) statistical report has collated data from each state and territory to produce *Firearm theft in Australia 2018*, released in May.

While SSAA was glad to see the release of an evidenced-based report by seasoned author Dr Samantha Bricknell, the Association remains cautious about certain assumptions as well as references to anti-gun lobby group Gun Control Australia. "It's simply outlandish to quote Gun Control Australia in a government report," SSAA National President Geoff Jones said. "They're a lobby group with a targeted agenda - certainly the group has biases which have made their way into the report."

A federal and state operation targeting trafficking and illicit firearms, Operation Athena, commissioned the AIC to examine firearm theft data for 2018 to establish the rate of change of firearm theft in Australia. Dr Bricknell used data from state and

territory police on incidents of stolen or lost/mislaid firearms reported between January 1 and December 31, 2018. SSAA was pleased to note Dr Bricknell then discarded reports of lost firearms.

The report found there were 847 incidents of reported firearms theft in 2018 and the distribution of incidents reflected the population size of states and territories. One quarter of incidents were reported in Queensland and Victoria followed by one fifth in both New South Wales and Western Australia.

The number of reported incidents of firearm theft increased by 15 per cent in the 10-year period between 2008-09 and 2018, however SSAA would like to note a parallel increase in Australia's population during this same period according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Similarly, Dr Bricknell stated the national firearm theft rate was almost on par when comparing the two time periods at 3.4 incidents per 100,000 in 2018 and 3.3 incidents per 100,000 in 2008-09. This would discount the claim there has been a significant increase in national firearms theft across the previous decade to 2018.

The proportion of thefts occurring in major cities has decreased substantially, with a corresponding increase in theft in inner regional, outer regional and/or remote locations depending on jurisdiction. Data showed most thefts occurred in inner and outer regional areas at 61 per cent of all thefts as well as an increase in outer regional (23 v 34 per cent) and remote (3 v 8 per cent) theft incidents.

However, the report noted the locations of theft incidents were classified by remoteness status using postcode data. Mr Jones said this method could be flawed, particularly in areas such as Queensland where postcodes extend many kilometres from inner to outer regional areas.

The report stated that "most incidents resulted in the theft of multiple firearms" as well as one incident where 27 handguns were stolen from a retail location. SSAA would like this highlighted as it disproves the theory from anti-gun groups that firearms owners should store their firearms in one location, such as a gun club. "SSAA has always argued against firearms being stored in one honeypot location and now we have the stats to back it up," Mr Jones said.

National report finds firearm owners safe and responsible

The data used in the report indicated most stolen firearms were being stored in a safe or a similar device at the time of theft, dispelling the myth that firearms owners are careless with storage of firearms. In fact, the report found storage compliance had increased 13 per cent from the previous study which ended in 2009. "Most stolen firearms were stored in firearm safes or similar receptacles at the time of the theft. Force was applied or tools used to cut the locking device in 18 per cent and 13 per cent of incidents respectively," Dr Bricknell said in the report.

"The entire receptacle was stolen in 14 per cent of incidents. Most of these cases required offenders to force the safe bolted to the floor and/or wall from its mooring and haul or drag it to a vehicle. Of note is that firearms were reportedly secured in 15 per cent of incidents but it was not evident how the receptacle was accessed."

While the Association is pleased with an evidence-based report being published on firearms thefts, it advises caution when referencing certain assumptions in the study as well as strongly disagreeing with the inclusion of an anti-gun lobby group. Further, if firearm safety is to be treated as a public health concern as some commentators wish then, like seatbelt safety

**SSAA members
have continued
to be responsible
law-abiding
firearms owners
and understand
the necessity
of thorough
safety efforts**

campaigns, it needs to be funded. The Association has seen the success of such campaigns like its *Secure Your Gun, Secure Your Sport* campaign and is convinced of the value in investing in such messages.

Because of this campaign and other education efforts, SSAA members have continued to be responsible law-abiding firearms owners and understand the necessity of thorough safety efforts. The Association's insurance brokerage has received almost two-and-a-half times the amount of damage claims compared with theft claims in the 12 months to date, as members are smart and conscientious firearms owners. Only 0.04 per cent of SSAA Insurance Brokerage customers have made theft claims in the past 12 months as well as just 0.09 per cent of members claiming damages.

Because of its demonstrated knowledge, SSAA has developed a rural firearm security campaign which it plans to discuss with the Federal Government. The initiative would continue to improve the safe storage of firearms and aid in reducing the amount of firearms thefts in regional and rural communities. ●



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Keeping tabs on 3D trends for illicit firearms

John Maxwell

Back in October 2016 the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC) released its report on Illicit Firearms in Australia, giving an authoritative assessment along with some warnings. It estimated there were 250,000 longarms and 10,000 handguns in the black and grey markets, none registered and many in the hands of criminals. All these guns came from various sources - those not registered or surrendered at the 1996-97 buyback, theft from legitimate owners, illegal imports and from illicit manufacture.

Criminals have long made their own guns ranging from basic single-shot pen guns through to sub-machine guns but the media really picked up on the prospect of illicit manufacture of guns using the technique of 3D printing, especially after a US company released plans for a near-wholly 3D printed single-shot pistol and called it the Liberator, after the FP45 Liberator made by the US military during World War Two.

That was in 2013 and anti-gun groups imagined closet mass murderers downloading plans from the internet and turning out assault weapons on hobby 3D printers bought for \$200 or less. The Liberator was the first widely distributed design of this technology but the gun itself was made almost entirely of plastic and lacked the structural integrity of conventional steel - if it didn't blow up on the first shot it would soon after.

ACIC said it identified only three attempts to manufacture such firearms in Australia with none functioning when detected by police. One police agency did manufacture and test a 3D single-shot pistol, concluding it would fire a single round but was unreliable and potentially



dangerous to the user. In the same period ACIC traced almost 1000 factory-made handguns and concluded 3D guns were not a big threat but could be in future. "The capabilities of 3D-printed firearms are limited and, in the short term, this production method is unlikely to be a significant source of illicit firearms," it said.

However, it went on to warn that organised crime was exploiting the rapid development of technology and its increasing availability to users worldwide. That was a judgment of 2016. So what has changed since in the world of 3D manufacturing? The answer is a lot but 3D manufacturing still isn't really capable of easily turning out reliable firearms from your garage without considerable skill and dedication - and a willingness to break multiple Australian laws and risk serious jail time.

Firstly a bit about 3D printing. Traditionally, manufacturing involves removing material by file, lathe, drill or

mill to create the finished item, termed subtractive manufacturing. In 3D printing, material is added layer by layer according to a computer design, referred to as additive manufacturing. At the most basic level, 3D printers employ a plastic material called PLA (polylactic acid) which looks like whipper-snipper cord and is available in multiple colours. This is weaker than aluminium but can produce novelty items and also lower stressed gun parts such as grips, magazines and even some receivers as well as accessories like holsters. More advanced and costly 3D printers produce higher quality parts, though for some gun components such as springs, firing pins and barrels there's really no alternative to good old-fashioned steel.

For mainstream manufacturers including gunmakers, lower end 3D printers are particularly useful for prototyping parts. 3D printing is amazing and revolutionary technology which continues to find new

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Keeping tabs on 3D trends for illicit firearms

applications from building houses to making body parts from human cells. Central to 3D printing is a CAD computer file which instructs the printer to make a particular object and, once posted on the internet, this file is available to just about anyone anywhere.

So what's the current state of 3D gunmaking? A new study titled *Desktop Firearms* by the well-regarded Armament Research Services (ARES) organisation examines the emergent smallarms craft production technologies. It says increasing affordability of hobbyist machines such as desktop lathes and CNC mills and proliferation of consumer grade 3D printers has led to significant advances in home manufacturing techniques, allowing greater ease in the production of certain otherwise unavailable or regulated firearm components.

"The process for producing fairly complex parts now requires significantly fewer skills and less experience on the part of an individual craft-producer than at any other time in history," the study says. "Although not quite a case of hitting Ctrl-P, these new technologies do significantly reduce the barriers to entry for those wishing to attempt manufacture of a firearm. Accordingly, such methods also represent a challenge to the governmental control and regulation of firearms manufacturing."

Following the Liberator launch, another US company demonstrated it was possible to 3D print a functioning handgun, an all-metal copy of a Colt 1911 using a high-end printer and 3D printing technique called direct metal laser sintering. This was no hobby machine - it cost US\$600,000. The company offered more of its unique 1911s at the jaw-dropping price of US\$11,900 each.

The ARES study placed currently available 3D guns into three broad categories. First is fully 3D printed guns including the original Liberator and some subsequent designs. Hybrid designs use some 3D printed parts but include metal springs and tubing for the barrel. Then there's parts kit conversions (PKCs) which use a 3D printed receiver but commercially produced steel barrels and slides. In the US, parts and parts kits, comprising everything but the receiver, are available at a modest cost for many guns.

Commercially 3D printed frames and receivers are also available for guns such as AR and AK pattern rifles and Glock and other handguns, however the inclusion of any commercial gun parts seems to offend the small number of gun designers and experimenters who have done most to advance format and construction of 3D printed guns.

This is a mostly US group with an explicit gun rights agenda and a belief that any gun regulation deprives citizens of the ability to defend themselves against tyrannical government and the ability to fight oppression and genocide. This seems to ignore the reality that other than curious experimenters, guns 'off the books' are of greatest interest to criminals, terrorists and the mentally unhinged.

The latest development is the FGC-9, a 9mm self-loading carbine which the ARES study said was widely regarded as being the most capable 3D-printed firearm and one which can be constructed without any regulated firearms parts. FGC stands for F*** Gun Control and according to an unnamed designer interviewed by ARES researchers, the main driver was the goal of circumventing European gun regulations. FGC-9 uses an AR-15 trigger group, components unregulated and readily available in the US, and elsewhere the FGC-9 can use a modified trigger group from an airsoft gun. The big innovation in FGC-9 is a homemade rifled barrel rather than the smoothbore barrel from earlier designs.

Barrel rifling is typically a factory process which requires techniques and equipment beyond all but the most dedicated of home gunmakers - think hammer forging and button rifling. But a US designer with the colourful moniker IvanTheTroll demonstrated the ability to home produce rifling in steel tubing using electrochemical machining (ECM). This process is essentially the reverse of electroplating and still requires the knowledge to 3D print a conducting mandrel carrying the rifling pattern. Beyond that the actual 'tooling' is minimal, requiring a power supply and a bucket.

ARES said this technique had been used to make barrels for many years, what's new

is its potential application to home production. The FGC-9 draws much of its design from the Shutty AP9, itself a derivative of the Luty, a sub-machine gun designed by UK gun rights activist Philip Luty whose basic design relied on common hardware items and home-built steel components including a smoothbore barrel (the Shutty AP9 used a Glock barrel). Guns made to Luty's designs have turned up around the world, including Australia, overwhelmingly in the hands of criminals and extremists.

ARES notes that while new technology has significantly advanced home firearms production, home manufacture of ammunition remained problematic. Handloading of fired cartridge cases certainly qualifies as home manufacture but there are limited alternatives to using commercially produced cases, primers and powders. However, one US developer has demonstrated 3D printing of plastic shotshell hulls.

The reality of 3D printed firearms seems to be the genie is out of the bottle, so more 3D guns are likely to be encountered and the people who find them most appealing would appear to be overwhelmingly the type who shouldn't have guns. "This new breed of hybrid design offers adopters a cheap and effective firearm that's very difficult to trace, and may have the potential to rival or outstrip previous trends in the acquisition of illegal firearms modified from replica and deactivated firearms - themselves subject to increasing legislation," ARES said.

"There are very limited control options for restricting access to the materials or design files used in craft-producing such weapons, and progressively more affordable machines and tools - as well as ongoing refinement of techniques - are likely to make their continued development and acquisition increasingly commonplace." ●





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Mossberg adds new twist to old formula

Daniel O'Dea



Having previously used Mossberg's sweet little .22LR Model 464 lever-action rifle, that budget-minded gun was just too much fun for the money and would make a great weekend plinker. As the new Australian Mossberg agent, when talking with Grycol International principal Gary Collibee, I lamented on how I'd previously taken a look at the .22 rifle's big brother in the Model 464 Mariner 30/30 version about four years ago and found it rather disappointing.

I reviewed it for *Australian Shooter* and back then experienced problems with the rifle. Basically, I ran into issues with the

cartridges either sticking on the lifter when loading or failing to eject clear. I tried two different types of factory ammunition as well as some handloads and although accuracy was good I simply couldn't make the rifle function reliably, cycling the action at speed when firing. Ironically, I could cycle loaded rounds (without firing) flawlessly.

I wrote it up at the time and reported the issue to the then supplier thinking it was likely a one-off but was surprised later to find, after some reader feedback, the problem was not necessarily an isolated incident for this model.

Now four years is a long time in any industry and Mossberg have a good name

for reliable products, so on mentioning this to Gary he took me into the Grycol warehouse and insisted I randomly select a new one from a pallet of 464 30/30s to revisit the rifle. Just to be different I picked the Mariner version which is identical to the timber format I'd reviewed previously apart from the finish which is in Mossberg's Marinecote matte stainless look and with a laminated stock.

As stated, the rifle is chambered in the venerable 30/30 cartridge which has been around since 1895 - that's 125 years! The 30/30 round aka the .30 WCF (Winchester Center Fire) was first chambered in the Winchester 1894 lever-action rifle and the 30/30 moniker was derived from the original loading which was a 160gr .30 calibre bullet behind 30 grains of early smokeless powder. In fact, the 30/30 is reportedly among the first commercially sold US smokeless cartridges. The original 160gr jacketed lead projectile was in a short time replaced by the more recognised 170gr loading and later a 150gr option.

When I last took a look at the 30/30 I said that by comparison to many modern sporting cartridges it might be considered anaemic, but at moderate ranges firing 150 to 170gr projectiles it still strikes like the 'Hammer of Thor' which has made it a favourite for hunting in heavy scrub. Combine that with a light, fast-handling carbine, six-plus-one magazine capacity and quick lever-action reload and you have a winning mix. A long-time preference with US deer hunters stalking in thick



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Mossberg adds new twist to old formula

woodlands, the same set-up is equally at home in thick lignum chasing wild pigs. All still rings true today.

To recap further on the Mossberg Model 464, at first glance you may think it's identical to the Winchester 94, a clone if you will, but there are quite a few differences. They do share a similar flat-sided receiver, tubular magazine, open top ejection and side-loading magazine port. Likewise, they both function with a forward lever stroke which directly cycles the bolt.

Differences for the Mossberg include a tang safety as opposed to the cross-bolt system as seen on later Winchester 94s, a rounded bolt and not square and no half-cock function as apparent on the early Winchesters. The Mossberg's angle ejection and solid rear top receiver makes optics mounting easier along with some other internal differences, while the lever stroke is slightly longer in the Mossberg, giving a small length advantage in the chamber area.

The Model 464 Mariner as mentioned features an attractive grey laminated buttstock and fore-end which has a barrel band that includes a conventional QD sling swivel. The Mariner's stock was a pistol grip design but the standard timber version can be optioned with either a pistol or

straight-gripped stock. Functional sharp-diamond patterned chequering completes grip surfaces on the pistol grip and fore-end and the stock is finished with both a slim spacer and effective black rubber kick pad.

The rifle's metal work is finished in Mossberg's Marinecote, a baked-on proprietary coating said to have outstanding anti-corrosion properties which presents as a matte stainless-steel look. Fit and finish are good with metal work to furniture gaps held to tight tolerances. Like its timber blued brethren, the barrel length on the Mariner is 20" (508mm) with a one in 10" rifle twist, at the muzzle end is a fixed bead front sight while the rear blade sight is adjustable for both windage and elevation and folds forward for scope fitment. The rear receiver housing is also tapped for bases for ease of optics fitment.

During testing I fitted a set of Warne Maxima M827 bases specifically made for the Mossberg Model 464 and topped them with a set of Warne Maxima Horizontal all-steel fixed scope rings and a compact Pride Fowler 3-9x32 scope to finish off the package.

The M464 has a threefold approach to safety. Firstly you have the conveniently positioned tang safety which can be easily operated with the thumb of the grip hand.



Daniel takes aim with the 464 Mariner in 30/30.



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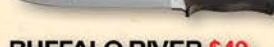
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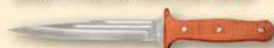
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Mossberg adds new twist to old formula

The rifle also has a hammer block safety designed to prevent the hammer from striking the firing pin unless the safety is off and the trigger is actually pulled. There's also a grip safety so the trigger can only be pulled when the lever is squeezed firmly against the bottom tang which prevents any chance of the firearm discharging unless the bolt is fully into the battery.

I noted the tang safety doesn't lock the trigger, it rather blocks the hammer so the trigger can be pulled and the hammer will fall with the safety on, only when it does, the hammer will not strike the firing pin. This is the same as later Winchester 94s with the cross-bolt safety.

Further specifications has the Model 464 with length pull of 13.875" (352mm), overall length of 38.5" (978mm) and a weight of 6.75lb (3.06kg). The magazine holds six rounds and one in the chamber for a total of seven, a benefit of the tubular magazine with side-loading gate meaning you can top off the magazine between shots as and when required.

The 464's grip safety is clearly displayed just behind the trigger.



So how would it perform? Not unsurprisingly if there were any past issues it would seem Mossberg has sorted them out as no flaws were apparent during testing. Digging through the ammo store I had a good selection on hand including loadings from PMC, Winchester and even some old Sako ammo along with plenty of components, and Grycol sent me an excellent set of Lee Pacesetter reloading dies, so I hand-rolled a few rounds as well.

Accuracy on paper was surprisingly good. Generally speaking, lever-action rifles are not afforded the same inherent precision as a good bolt-action and 1.5-2.5 MOA groups should be considered good practical exactness. The Model 464 fell well within this standard on average and I even managed a three-shot group measuring just 0.65 MOA or about 16mm centre-to-centre at 90m. Perhaps it's a case of even the blind squirrel finding a nut occasionally, but it does highlight the potential of the rifle and either way I was impressed. I ran the rifle both with and without the scope mounted and ejection was flawless with cases flicking neatly out sideways at full forward stroke of the lever, the

lever cycle pretty tight but smooth and no doubt will slicken up with use.

In summary, the lever-action platform mated with the 30/30 cartridge just about 'goes together like peas and carrots' as Forrest Gump would say. It's relatively mild in recoil while still developing solid performance on most game out to 200m and while it wouldn't be my first choice for the task, I'd hazard a guess the humble 30/30 has taken thousands of black bears in the US over the years, even elk.

In Australia the combination is just the ticket for feral pigs in thick brush or lignum and a flat-sided lever gun receiver does ride nicely slung across the back while chasing pigs across the plains on your dirt bike. Compact, relatively light, fast-cycling, good ammo capacity and enough accuracy for the job - no wonder it has stood the test of time.

Like all Mossbergs the Model 464 Mariner is a lot of gun for the money and both it and its timber blued compatriots can be found in most good gunshops at a fair price - expect plenty of change from \$1000. More information and stockists can be found at the Grycol website www.grycol.com.au ●

Specifications

Rifle: Mossberg Model 464 Mariner
Action: Lever
Trigger: Single stage
Calibre: 30/30 Winchester
Capacity: Six-round tubular magazine
Barrel: 20" round profile (508mm)
Twist Rate: 1:10
Sights: Bead front, adjustable rear blade (Warne M827 bases used in testing)
Length of pull: 13.875" (352mm)
Metal finish: Marinecote
Stock finish: Laminated
Weight: 6.75lb (3.06kg)
Length OA: 38.5" (978mm)



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Bird hunting

it's never over so long as there are pigeons

Thomas Tabor

The feral pigeon is an invasive species which has ranged throughout the world devouring the grain of farmers, delivering diseases harmful to both man and beast and spreading faeces which damages monuments and equipment wherever they make their home. However, the pigeon makes an excellent substitute for normal bird hunting activities and, possibly best of all, because they're considered an invasive and essentially unwanted species in most areas, there are precious few hunting restrictions.

Where in Australia

Feral pigeons are widespread throughout

Australia with the heaviest concentrations centred on South Australia, New South Wales and south-eastern Queensland. They're particularly fond of open agricultural land which often lies in close proximity to human life and if cliffs and rocky outcroppings are present, these provide excellent nesting potential as do old barns and equipment buildings in farming country.

Health concerns

The major problems associated with pigeon infestations are the health dangers which accompany these birds as well as the damage incurred as a result of their droppings. The uric acid contained in their

droppings has the ability to eat through painted surfaces, encourage rust and corrosion and even destroy canvas tarps. And that same waste matter contains many fungal, viral and bacterial diseases which can be dangerous when it comes into contact with humans.

Hunting tactics

Pigeons are social creatures which prefer to live in flocks. Habitual by nature, their life loosely consists of roosting at night, feeding and watering in the morning hours and loafing during the afternoon. Recognising the patterns then exploiting them will work in your favour when it comes to hunting.

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Bird hunting - it's never over so long as there are pigeons

In the morning, pigeons will often fly from their roosting areas to obtain food and water then return to their elevated perches to lull away the hours, so devoting a little time to scouting will help locate these patterns for pass-shooting opportunities. Striking at these key locations usually doesn't immediately deter or disrupt the birds' movements, but after repeated barrages of gunfire eventually your shots will move them out or shots will progressively become longer, signalling a need to change locale and tactics.

Pigeon hunting in the UK is a popular sport and often decoys are used to lure birds into shooting range. But while pigeon decoys seem to be commonly available in Europe, finding them for sale in Australia may not be so easy. An alternative would be to use dove decoys which resemble the feral pigeon and in this case I'd choose as large a bunch of decoys as you can find in order to better match the larger size of the feral pigeon.

The use of live birds as decoys is frowned upon or illegal in most places but I have a

trick I've used successfully when hunting ducks and geese which works equally well for pigeons. Rather than hiding your harvested birds away, I like to pose them on the ground in front of your shooting position to simulate decoys.

While pass-shooting is great fun and one of the most successful methods of hunting pigeons, I particularly enjoy jump-shooting them which better simulates the usual technique for hunting upland game birds. In times of slow flight activity, especially during the middle of the day, this is a great chance to work the areas around old barns and rock cliffs where birds might be whiling away the hours.

A place to hunt

Feral pigeons are considered a nuisance by many, worthy of total annihilation, and millions of dollars are spent each year to eradicate the species though in most situations those attempts have been unsuccessful. Farmers deplore them because of the grain they devour and the mess they leave in their wake and for these reasons it's often much easier to obtain hunting access on privately owned properties for pigeon shooting than virtually any other type of game.

Unfortunately, pigeons often inhabit areas not conducive to shooting. City environments, commercial grain elevators and around livestock pens are common places where they live and prosper and understandably, these areas are often off-limits to a shotgun. On the other hand, rural ranches and farms, around grain fields and along railway spurs can be perfect places to shoot.

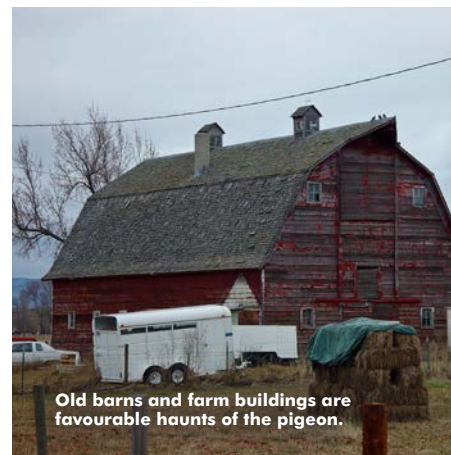
Rail carriages often spill grain which makes easy pickings for pigeons. Even though the actual railway may be considered out of bounds, I've frequently found good pass-shooting opportunities around the fringes of those locations. The habitual nature of pigeons often results in them



If you can't find pigeon decoys, dove replicas can draw the birds within shooting range.



A quickly-made blind can be beneficial in pigeon hunting.



Old barns and farm buildings are favourable haunts of the pigeon.

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Bird hunting - it's never over so long as there are pigeons

flying the same route back and forth day after day and properly positioning yourself to take full advantage of these flights can be rewarding.

The gear

If you hunt upland birds or even waterfowl it's likely you can use the same shotgun and equipment for pigeons as long as you understand these can be tough birds which sometimes require long shots and a substantial degree of knockdown power.

A 12-gauge with a fairly tight choke constriction would be my first choice but a similarly choked, heavily loaded 16 or 20-gauge will all suffice and I mostly use one of my doubles, either a side-by-side or over-and-under which are often in 12-gauge.

For most of my bird hunting, pigeons included, I'm willing to sacrifice on the side of slightly less individual pellet energy in favour of a denser pattern. I simply prefer more shot impacting the bird, even if those pellets are a little smaller in diameter and come with a few less ounces of energy.



Sometimes there's an advantage to loading cartridges with a little larger shot size for the second round.



The feral pigeon's colouration is often varied but commonly consists of patterns of grey.



Eyes on the sky will help identify the birds' usual flight patterns.

Clearly this is a personal option and one which other wing shooters may not agree with. Nevertheless, my choice for pigeon shooting is usually a handload consisting of $1\frac{1}{4}$ or $1\frac{3}{8}$ ounce of either #6 or #7 shot which has as much velocity as I can squeeze into them.

Even though the feathers on a pigeon seem to be more loosely attached than on many other species, for some reason pigeons seem to be able to take a lot of punishment before they succumb to a shot. Size #7 can be difficult to find in factory loaded shells, so in this case I've on occasion reluctantly had to settle for the slightly smaller #7½. When shooting this smaller shot I usually restrict this to the first shot out of the barrel and for follow-ups I prefer a full-powered load of #6 as the birds are frequently further out.

A little pigeon history

What we now recognise as the feral pigeon - also called the rock dove - is native to and

came originally from Europe, Africa and Asia, brought to Australia as a domesticated species which eventually escaped confinement. Over the decades that followed inter-breeding took place, blurring the characteristics of the original species and resulting in the colour variations commonly found today. Pigeons are monogamous and prolific breeders, further adding to the spread of the species, and eight to 12 days after mating the female will lay one or two eggs, the young leaving the nest at four to six weeks of age though more eggs are sometimes laid in the interim.

As long as there's an adequate food source nearby, an adult female pigeon will continue to breed and propagate on an almost endless basis. Unless your shotgun disrupts that cycle, this can in some instances account for a single breeding female adding up to 15 surviving fledglings to the population. The preferred nesting areas are dark, enclosed spots which simulate the caves or crevices preferred by their ancient ancestors. Today, rocky cliff areas, old barns and under bridges are their preferred nesting sites.

The way I see it

As wing-shooting season comes to an end this is usually a time for cleaning and storing away your gear while you count down the days until the beginning of next season, but you don't have to do that if you live anywhere near where a band of pigeons reside. If you've never taken advantage of this valuable hunting resource you're missing out. As soon as you pull down on that first bird you'll likely recognise just how challenging it is to overcome the erratic and fast-flying patterns of this hidden hunting resource.

And while shooting pigeons has the potential to provide a great deal of fun and practice, you can take a certain amount of pride in the fact you're helping eliminate a bird which causes a great deal of problems for a great deal of people. ●

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A SSAA member advantage





Cameron, centre, won the Heavy Benchrest event from Steve Sori, right, and Mitchell Taller.



Cameron is a keen hunter, often going after sambar deer.

Record-breaker Cameron won't Benchrest on his laurels

Communications Officer Sam Talbot

At just 15 years of age, Cameron Bailey is the youngest-ever shooter to claim a grand aggregate victory in a major Australian Benchrest competition. The talented youngster took on a field of seasoned competitors and came first in Heavy class during day two of the Australia Day weekend Benchrest competition at SSAA Majura range in the ACT.

Proving the feat was far from a fluke, he performed consistently throughout the weekend including seventh place in the two-gun and 15th in Light class. For the record, Cameron shot an impressive .3221 for Heavy and .3625 in the two-gun. "You never know how you're going in a competition as all it takes is one bad group," said Cameron. "My focus is on being consistent and shooting accurately. You can easily move up from fifth or sixth to second or third but it can quickly go the other way too."

While 15 may seem young, even unusually so given typical Benchrest fields, Cameron has a surprising amount of experience up his sleeve. The youngster has been accompanying his dad Fergus to matches and the range since he was five, which equates to a solid decade of 'observational

experience' making him no stranger to shooting ranges.

In reality though Cameron has only three years of shooting experience. He started attending matches as soon as he acquired his junior permit and has since competed at every Australia Day Benchrest match and Benchrest Nationals since 2017. So despite his tender years Cameron is far from an overnight success. "I felt nervous in some of those matches but having been shooting for so long helps a lot," he said. "Benchrest is my favourite discipline and it's very satisfying to have five shots all go into a dot together."

Cameron picked up a bronze medal for Sporter class in the 200yd aggregate at the 2017 Nationals in Jarrahdale and followed it up with another bronze for Heavy class in the 200yd aggregate at the 2018 Nationals in Springsure. "My dad has coached me and taught me how to shoot as well as other aspects of the sport such as how to reload my own ammo," he said. Cameron and Fergus also have matching custom rifles complete with Scoville stocks and March scopes.

"We watch each other shoot and that allows us to help each other out," said Fergus. "Cameron watches me and I



Benchrest might be his favourite but Cameron shoots other disciplines.

watch him." But in addition to watching dad, Cameron also keeps a close eye on his blood sugar levels. As type 1 diabetic he's used to handling his condition but it does mean he occasionally needs a snack between rounds of fire.

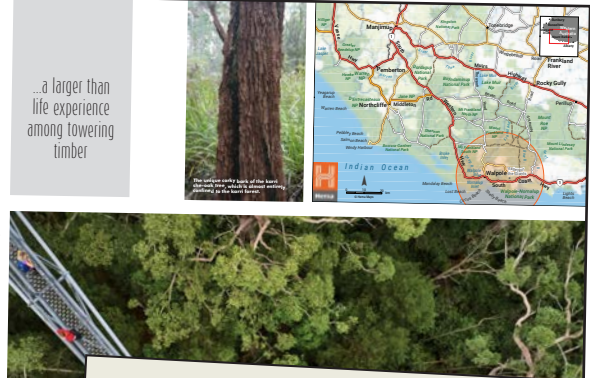
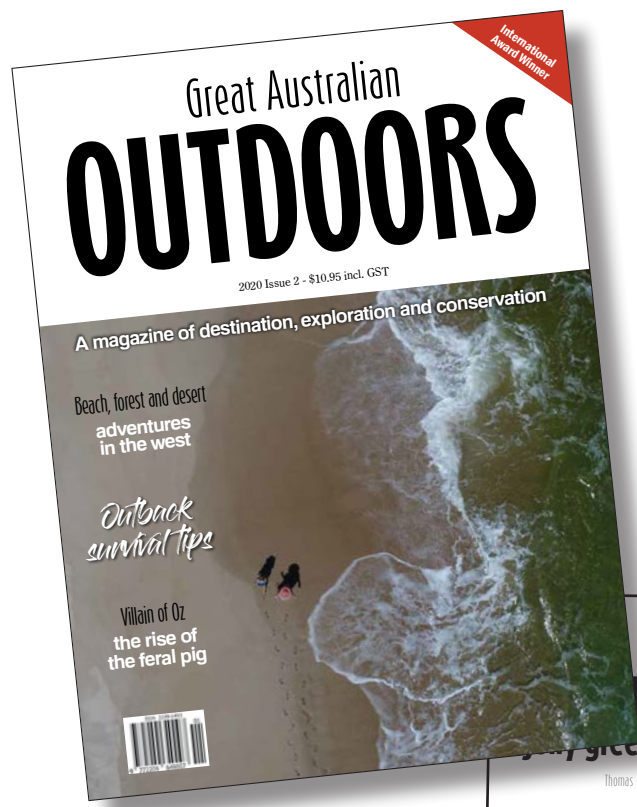
"I think of monitoring my blood sugar levels as just another part of the safety process that goes with shooting," he said. "I'm used to controlling my blood sugar but it also limits me to an extent as sometimes I can't physically do what I'd like to. It's something I'm conscious of, especially when hunting."

Despite that Cameron is determined to repeat his first place performance. "One of my goals is to make it to the SSAA Australian team for the Benchrest World Championships," he said. And if his current trajectory continues as accurately as his shooting, there's every reason to believe he'll be setting more 'youngest-ever' records. ●

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Mark picks off rabbits from the gully ridge.

Long-range gully rabbits

Sam Garro

Over the past few years in parts of country Victoria I've seen a drop in rabbit numbers, as attested to by fellow hunters lamenting their general absence on properties previously holding good amounts. This may be attributed to the introduction of a more potent strain of calicivirus, the combined eradication efforts of farmers and the Department of Primary Industries, certainly the drought and perhaps all of the above.

Whatever the case, it's working. When I received a request from a shooting companion to help cull rabbits on the property of a farmer concerned with their growing ranks, I welcomed the opportunity as it had been some time since I'd bagged a few for the pot. I later learned the farmer

preferred shooting rather than poisons or the usual eradication methods, mainly as his cattle property with hilly terrain, stands of forest and gullies supported a variety of wildlife he didn't want harmed or affected.

Furthermore, shooting by a trusted and licensed shooter would be cost-effective at a time when many farmers are struggling with their own hardships. Recent and welcome soaking rains had promoted green growth everywhere, triggering and stimulating the propagation of wildlife in general, in particular the humble rabbit.

While there were a few small pockets of rabbit warrens about the property, the main concentration lay in a sizeable open gully strewn with large patches of dense ferns, tangled blackberry bushes and gumtree forest at the rear of the basin. Similar

growth trailed up the hill to the right. Due to regular shooting and their subsequent skittish behaviour, distant shooting from the ridges was the more effective and productive method.

On arrival in mid-afternoon we were greeted by ominous grey skies and misty rain and hoped anything more serious would hold off until after our shoot. My introduction to the property owner was brief but necessary as, while an ongoing cordial relationship existed between my mate Mark and the owner, it was important I gained his trust and acceptance, not just for the afternoon but for any future visits.

First order of the day was to check our rifles were properly sighted in as missing shots later due to complacency can prove disappointing and frustrating, even leading



Sam with a target at 100m checking bullet groups from his Sako A1 HB .222 Rem.

to loss of confidence. A paper target was erected at 100m in a shallow depression to prevent any bullet straying.

Just as well we made the effort as both our rifles needed some tweaking. Apart from a scope receiving an unnoticed bump or knock, a simple variation in a batch of handloads such as using a different primer, bullet design, change in bullet seating or crimping and the like can have an effect on accuracy. When satisfied with the bullet groupings we headed for the gully.

Nearing the location we kept to the high ground overlooking the gully and stuck close to a line of gum trees to remain undetected. It wasn't long before we spied rabbits through the binoculars emerging from the undergrowth and burrows to feed. Some sat just outside the safety of

their burrows while others hopped short distances to stop and feed. The moderate wind that blew across to where we were positioned was ideal as it would significantly muffle the sharp crack of our rifles.

For long-range shooting, Mark brought along his trusty and proven custom .17 Ackley Hornet rifle built on a 1950s Brno ZKW 465 action fitted with a heavy duty one-in-10" twist, 22" Shilen barrel mounted with a Leupold VX2 6-18x50 variable scope and fitted with an adjustable low mount bipod. The neat package spits out hand-loaded 20gr Hornady Z-MAX projectiles at around 3600fps, a very effective rabbit stopper.

I sported a 1970s Sako A1 HB in .222 Rem mounted with a Leupold VX2 3-9x40 scope and extendable 1m Vanguard bipod,

enabling me to take shots either kneeling or sitting. My bullets were loaded with 50gr Sierra BlitzKing projectiles in front of 21gr of AR2007 powder with a muzzle velocity around 3100fps, also very effective on small game. While I was smacking rabbits out to 200m with the scope set on maximum nine-power, they were mostly body shots. If I wanted to achieve consistent head shots for meat retrieval I'd need to upgrade or invest in a higher powered scope.

With bipods extended and ammo by our sides, we settled into comfortable shooting positions, took time to line up the quarry and squeeze the trigger. One by one the distant rabbits started to drop to the just audible familiar thud of a high velocity bullet hitting home. From the high vantage point and favourable wind we were also far

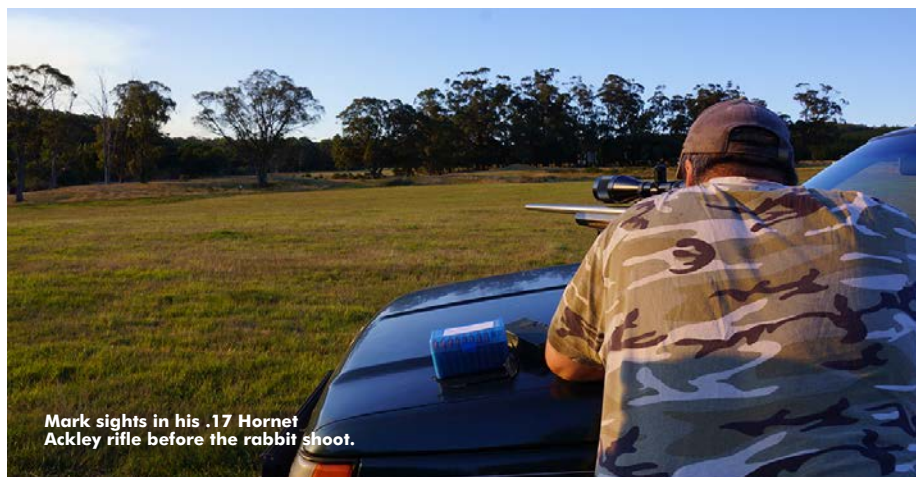
Long-range gully rabbits

enough away not to be detected, enabling us to drop several rabbits in succession.

Within the first half hour or so we accounted for around 10 rabbits, although we started to lose count trying to fully focus on felling as many as we could. Not every shot hit the mark, some rabbits missed altogether requiring follow-up efforts, but when we did they dropped where they stood without moving, the high velocity little pills positively devastating.

After each shooting session it was only a matter of 15 minutes or so before more rabbits emerged and we resumed our positions. Even though the culling exercise had started several weeks earlier, they were still evident in numbers. We stayed on the hilltop until shortly before dark so had sufficient daylight to retrieve the felled rabbits, half a dozen on their sides clearly visible from the whites of their belly, the others we had to find among tussock grass, ferns and bracken. On the valley floor we collected them as quickly as possible as the blowflies were doing their best to infest the downed bunnies, the falling temperature and setting sun seemingly no deterrent.

Of the 20 or so rabbits collected, those that were chest shot or hit a little lower were a bit of a mess. As someone who's always had an appreciation of game meat I couldn't leave them without trying to retrieve the salvageable parts such as the upper body or hind legs, especially as they were mostly plump, three-quarter grown rabbits which would make excellent table fare. In the absence of a carry bag, a sturdy branch threaded through the coupled hind legs was used to haul them back to the vehicle where they were stowed in a large



Mark sights in his .17 Hornet Ackley rifle before the rabbit shoot.

container, the skinning, cleaning and refrigeration done later at home.

While our efforts were appreciated by the owner, rabbit numbers will prevail or remain high when you have a situation where the adjoining property owners do little or nothing, or for good reason are unable to control pests on their own estate. The bunnies simply migrate across and take up residence and in such a scenario a trusted shooter is sometimes welcome to extend culling to bordering properties, hence the importance of the SSAA's Farmer Assist program.

The few hours' shooting passed quickly enough, rabbits which sat beyond 200m certainly challenging our shooting skills as we tried our best, but I wasn't complaining. We'd enjoyed an afternoon in favourable conditions, retrieved some meat for the table and, more importantly, made a bit of a dent in rabbit numbers for the owner. ●



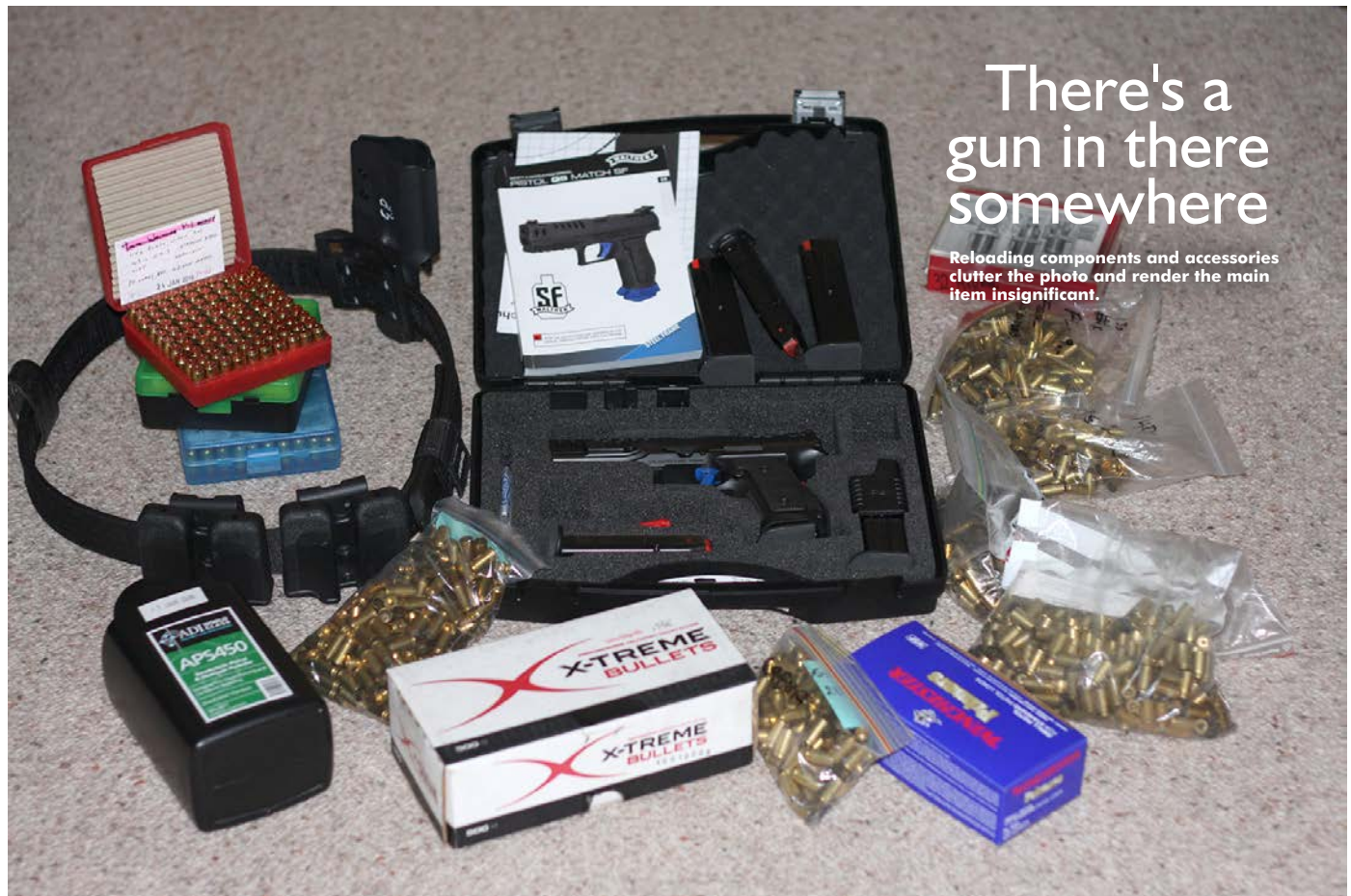
Mark with custom .17 Hornet Ackley rifle and shot rabbits.



Another half dozen for the pot.

Improve your chances of selling that gun online **MAKE YOUR WEBSITE LISTING STAND OUT**

Senior Correspondent Rod Pascoe



Businesses spend much time and effort promoting their products and telling the story of what they're selling is vastly improved when they use quality images in their adverts. Whether it's a bottle of wine in a glossy magazine or the latest gadget on eBay, the image draws the viewer to the ad before they even read the text.

When a potential buyer scans an ad, the effect of the image will go a long way towards determining the success of that ad. A bright, well-lit, ideally produced picture will always trump a poorly lit and messy

composition and by following a few basic tips on lighting and picture composition, you can improve the photographs you post on SSAA Gun Sales and greatly increase your chance of a sale.

Most photos posted online originate from a mobile phone or tablet, so let's look at how we can gain an appealing image of a firearm or other item you want to sell online. While mobile phones are capable of taking quality photos they're not as good as a dedicated camera in some circumstances.

The reason for this is your mobile is fitted with many automatic functions for

taking quick and easy happy snaps or 'selfies'. On a digital single-lens reflex (DSLR)-type camera, focus, exposure, colour temperature, film speed or ISO, shutter speed and focal length of the lens can all be manually adjusted to suit the situation.

The human eye/brain system can deal with a vast range of lighting conditions and compensate for differences in the amount and colour of the light. The eye also has the ability to focus over a wide range of distances and adjust from one extreme to another quickly but the automatic functions

Make your website listing on SSAA Gun Sales stand out



of our phones are not so clever. If you're lucky enough to have a phone or tablet with manual settings, use them by all means, though even if you're using manual settings the following information may be helpful in improving your photographs.

High-resolution pictures are possible from most phones so that's generally not an issue. More importantly we must consider the look of the image and that is all about composition of the shot and lighting. When I say lighting I don't just mean having enough light to see the object, but using light to enhance the object's features.

Lighting

Use a soft or diffused light rather than a direct source and definitely don't opt for the in-built flash in your phone, or any type of camera for that matter, where the flash comes from the camera itself. A camera or phone-mounted flash tends to make the centre of the photo brighter, especially at close range, and as the flash is near the camera lens it tends to bounce directly back into the lens.

This has two effects. Firstly, the camera believes the image is brighter than it actually is and the automatic exposure darkens

the overall semblance to compensate, also making the subject darker. Secondly, you suffer an unfortunate reflection of the flash right in the middle of the picture. The other issue is this intense single point light source will not evenly light the subject and you don't gain much detail of the subject itself, making the image look flat. The best and easiest soft light source is indirect sunlight or sunlight reflected off a white surface such as cardboard or corflute. The softer the light the more even the lighting over the entire subject and it also helps in reducing shadows which, in turn, assists with contrast.





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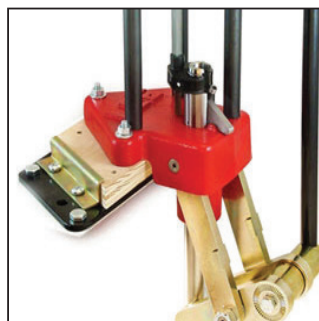
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One way of achieving this is to take photographs near a window and supplement the lighting with a piece of kitchen foil glued to a card and hold it on the other side of the gun to reflect the daylight back from outside. This balances the lighting and will highlight some details of the subject you wouldn't see with just one light source. You can achieve the same result by photographing your firearm outside in overcast conditions, not direct sunlight.

The colour of the light or colour temperature is also a factor. Where there's no white in the frame from which the camera can automatically adjust the colour of the overall picture, the automatic white balance or AWB system comes into play. Where manual operation is available, use the setting for either overcast or indirect sunlight.

Composition

A plain background is an important part of the composition. Think of a watch or string of pearls in a glossy magazine advertisement, no distractions, just the item the advertiser wants to sell you. A white background is as plain as it can be but be careful with those dreaded auto features on phone cameras. The automatic function will look at the whole frame and expose the photo for the majority of what it sees. The white background may predominate the frame and the camera will automatically expose for the brighter background rather than the darker gun.

If you don't have manual settings available and want the gun to be properly exposed, you have to trick the camera's automatic exposure by using a darker background and showing less of it. A piece of coloured card is one idea so long as it doesn't distract from the subject. A bit of trial and error is always useful here and if you have access to a post-production app, that can help adjust the image after



you've taken the photo. In composing the shot, the firearm you're advertising should dominate the available space in the photo, don't confuse the image or distract the viewer with unimportant objects either in shot or in the background. Avoid filling the frame with a set of \$30 dies or \$5 trigger lock, a \$10 cleaning kit or pile of brass set around a \$3000 gun, it's the gun you want people to see.

Mention these extra bits and pieces in the advert by all means, photograph them and upload them as the second or third picture to support your ad. Remove trigger locks and empty chamber indicators from the firearm and have the action closed. If there's a hammer fitted to the gun, have it down and if you must support a firearm on a table try and hide the prop behind the gun and out of shot. If there's a detachable magazine on the firearm, attach it and show extra magazines in a separate photo.

Photos on SSAA Gun Sales

When you upload pictures to the SSAA Gun Sales website you'll be able to select which will be the main image, you can crop that photo and there's a guide to show you the shape of the rectangle the picture will fit into. The space available for your image is roughly a 3:1 rectangle in landscape format so try to use all the available area with your main photo for best effect (it's a little more difficult to use this zone fully with pistols and products which don't fit the rectangle neatly).

However, with some clever manipulation of the composition when you take the photo you can use the space creatively. You can post up to six images with your advert on SSAA Gun Sales providing each file doesn't exceed 5 Megabytes (Mb). Remember it's the main photo people see first, so make it stand out as that's the one which will make them read your ad and look at any other photos you've uploaded. ●



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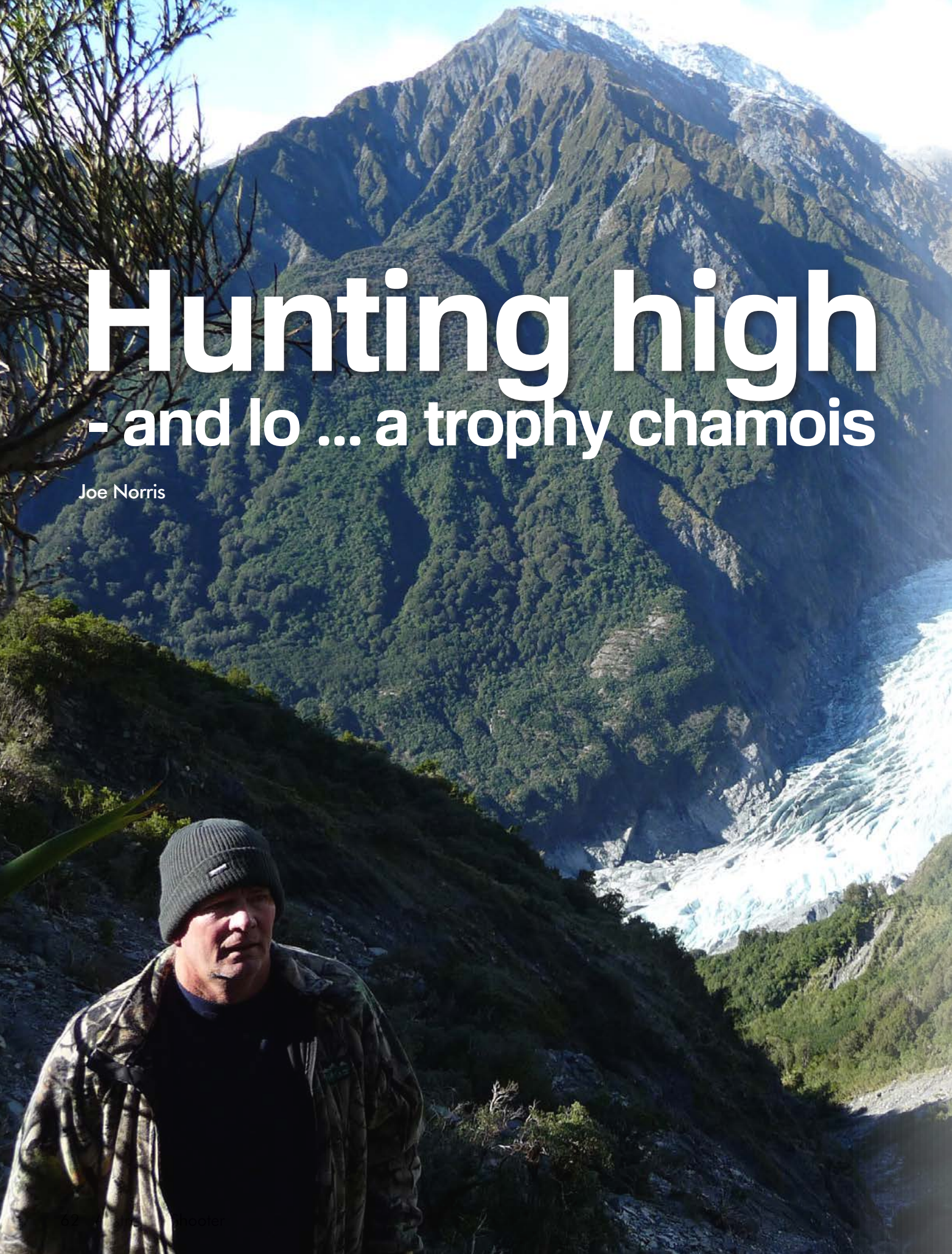
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Hunting high

- and lo ... a trophy chamois

Joe Norris



I've always wanted a chamois and when Kelvin suggested we go on a hunt together I was keen.

I first met Kelvin when he was directing me for thars in New Zealand and as we grew to know each other during the week or so we spent in the bush, our client/guide relationship developed into a friendship. I've been over the ditch several times since that trip and Kelvin and his family have visited us in central Queensland.

I've always wanted a chamois and when Kelvin suggested we go on a hunt together I was keen. I found out just how much being reasonably fit contributed to a successful outcome in the southern Alps of New Zealand when I hunted for thars and, after being found wanting last time, was determined to be match fit before I attempted to tackle chamois. The nearest hills to me are more than 50km away so to train on them is a substantial round trip before I even set foot on the ground.

At first I didn't make it up the incline very far before blowing out, so put a pile of stones as a marker and next time I wouldn't stop until I made it past the stones. Over a number of weeks I found I was able to make it the full 7km to the top of the hill and back again in good time, so I started carrying a backpack initially with a couple of two-litre bottles of water, figuring I could always drink the water on the way down so it was better than carting rocks. After a while I could carry 20 litres of water the 14km without any dramas so decided I was ready to have a go at New Zealand's southern Alps.

After the usual hassles to transport a rifle out of the country and filling in the necessary paperwork to retrieve it again, I booked flights and was on my way to the land of the long white cloud. As it was May it felt absolutely freezing to me though Kelvin reckoned it was unseasonably warm.

Along for the trip with Kelvin and I was his mate Shaun, and after sorting out the gear we decided to try gentlemanly hunting by staying at the backpackers' place in Franz Joseph and travel to various spots around the immediate area to search for our quarry. I had no idea where to look and without local knowledge would never have found a chamois.

A pleasing aspect to me came when hunting the Glacier Valley at Franz Joseph. We'd pull up in the tourist car park and after shouldering our backpacks and rifles, would walk along the valley floor with the tourists and rangers before climbing up the side creeks to the tops of the surrounding mountains in search of chamois. Rangers just asked what we were hunting and wished us good luck, some even offering locations where they'd spotted chamois. This may have changed since the tragedy in Christchurch but that was how it was then.

The view from the bottom of Glacier Valley up into the surrounding tops is daunting when you know there's no easy way through the bush and monkey scrub to reach the open tops, but if it's chamois you're after then that's the scenario which awaits. Glacier Valley has no helicopter

Hunting high - and lo ... a trophy chamois

access except for tourist trips, so stretching your legs is the only option. We climbed every day and saw several chamois but always either does or immature bucks, not what we were after. Every night we'd grab a feed at the pub and retire to the backpackers' hostel. It sure beats camping in the rain and we even had dryers for our wet hunting clothes.

A few days into the adventure Shaun had to leave to attend to the dairy farm he was running so Kelvin and I were left to hunt on. Kelvin recalled a spot he thought we may find good chamois as it was a tough climb to an area which didn't attract too many hunters. Looking up at the creek we had to climb to access the tops, it was

plain we had to negotiate a sheer bluff first so we headed into the forest. After fighting our way through thick bush we eventually made it to a creek bed above the bluff. From there we rock-hopped up the crystal-clear creek for another few hundred metres, before leaving the creek system to climb vertically up the side of the mountain through monkey scrub and on to the ridge from where we could access Kelvin's secret spot.

As we topped the ridge Kelvin motioned with hand signals to stay quiet and keep low, so we crawled the last couple of metres to the crest of the knife-edged ridge from where we glassed a big slip of exposed rock which extended for a couple

of hundred metres around the valley in front of us.

It was the only place at this elevation we could see any distance because of the monkey scrub but clearly chamois favour scree slips as there were a couple of bucks on the slip in front of us. I'm a trophy hunter who doesn't really care about scores and in fact have never measured any of my trophies. I'm more interested in the experience of the hunt and perhaps picking up a decent representative trophy, so was happy with either one of the bucks present.

My riflescope had failed shortly after arriving in New Zealand so Kelvin let me use his Browning 7mm-08 instead of my .243 to avoid buying a replacement scope.



Joe and his chamois.

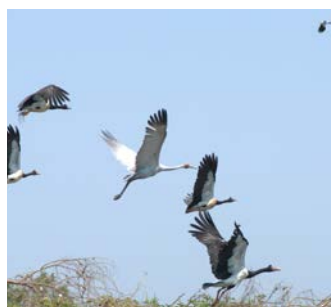
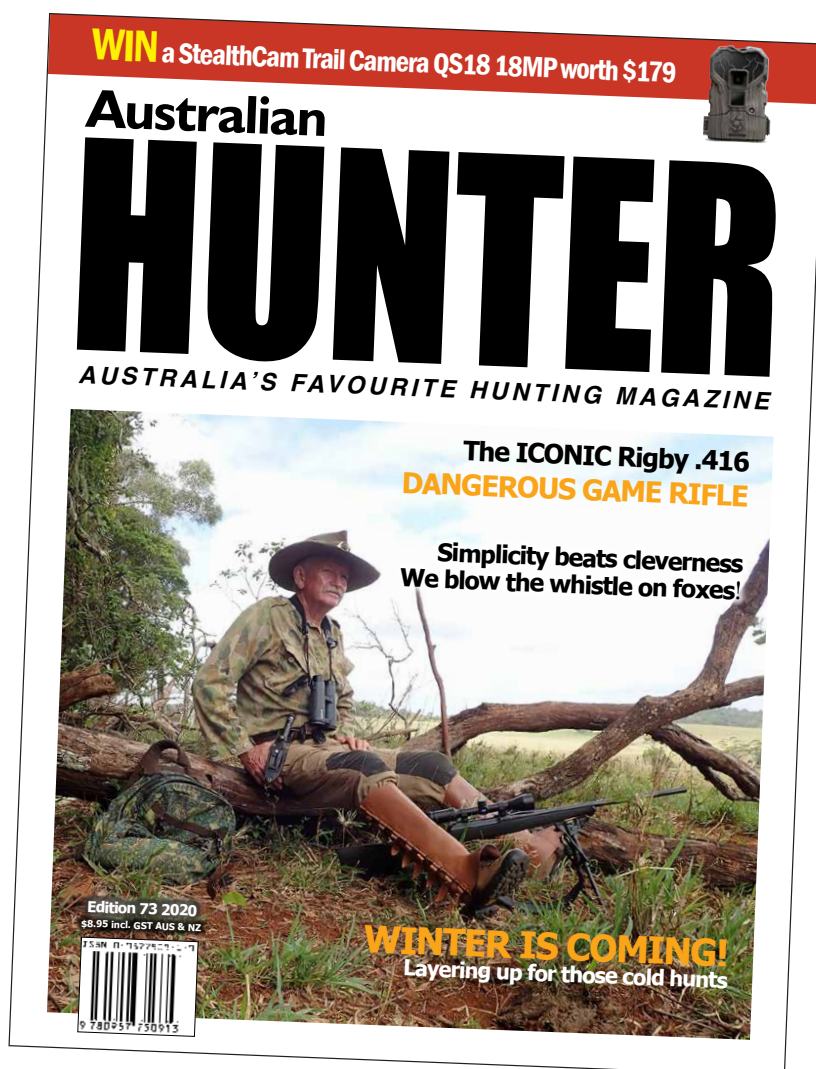
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Hunting high - and lo ... a trophy chamois

I slowly crawled forward, pushing Kelvin's rifle ahead of me until I could gain a clear shot at the lower of the two bucks which looked the bigger of the pair. Setting up the rifle on a backpack I was rock steady on the chamois buck but had to wait for him to turn broadside before I was comfortable taking the shot. It seemed an eternity but the buck eventually turned and I squeezed the trigger.

The mild recoil of the 7mm-08 allowed me to watch the impact of the bullet right where I wanted it and the buck collapsed

on the spot. As it was in the middle of a steep scree slide, he tumbled down the hill for some distance before coming to rest against a couple of large rocks. I'm not at all comfortable on loose scree due to having dodgy knees, so Kelvin climbed down to the chamois and dragged it back up to a spot that would allow me to cape it out and remove the meat.

The walk out, or rather climb out, was interesting to say the least as the area which had been a struggle to climb up was even more challenging on the way

down, but we made it without mishap even carrying the extra load of meat and cape. As we were walking out on the track from the glacier we ran into some tourists and a ranger and once again I was reminded of the attitude to hunting in New Zealand when the ranger asked to see my trophy. He then promptly showed the partially caped head to some of the European tourists who were also interested in what we were doing, proving yet again that in New Zealand hunting is regarded as a legitimate pastime and accepted as such. ●



Sauer 100 Classic - the budget beauty

Chris Redlich



A featherweight-style rifle always appealed to me as the slimline classic with timber stock and Schnabel fore-end sets them apart from other options, and stumbling across an advert the Schnabel fore-end of the Sauer 100 Classic caught my attention so I carried out some research to help inform my decision to buy one.

Browsing at my local gunshop I was instantly attracted to the coffee-coloured timber stock and feel of the Sauer 100 Classic and, at a price too good to pass, I ordered my new rifle in the increasingly popular 6.5 Creedmoor cartridge. The Model 100s are Sauer's entry-level rifles designed to compete with the barrage of other economically priced European-made varieties. Built entirely in Germany, Sauer 100 rifles are by no means made cheaply and are actually equipped with barrels structured to the same high standard as Sauer's prestigious Model 404 rifles, a strategy also used by Tikka which have Sako-made barrels on their T3X rifles.

Arriving in a 'no frills' cardboard package, I was pleasantly surprised to find the rifle came supplied with a cotton gun sock for protection, an Allen key for trigger adjustment and user manual.

Stock

The Classic style is designated the 'Ergo Max' timber stocked version which sets it apart from other Model 100s fitted with synthetic stocks, dura beechwood the timber used as a cost-effective alternative to walnut. To walnut purists this may not have the same appeal but beechwood is still an attractive piece of hardwood, robust enough to handle the rigours of hunting and heavy recoiling calibres.

Sauer 100 Classic - the budget beauty



The matte finish highlights the natural grain of the timber and Classic-style chequering on the pistol grip and Schnabel-style fore-end reinforces its European heritage, ambidextrous palmswells on the pistol grip and slightly inclined straight comb enhancing its functionality. The feel of the rifle is one of the main reasons which sold me from the start, the palmwell natural in the hand and the comb made shouldering and taking aim a breeze. This seems a common trait with most European rifles and Sauer have done a great job adhering to tradition. A rubber butt pad helps absorb felt recoil and tastefully embossed on the base of the pistol grip is the Sauer logo.

An impressive design feature on this rifle but not exclusive to the Model 100 is Sauer's flush-fitting detachable polymer magazine, locked securely by their trademark one-piece alloy triggerguard and magazine bottom frame and removed easily by pressing a release button forward of the magazine. The double stacked magazine holds five 6.5 Creedmoor rounds and additional magazines are available on request.

In quick time my inquisitive nature had me removing the barrelled action from the stock. A little puzzled at first, I soon

discovered only the rear hex head screw is a direct action screw, the front one not, the short front hex screw only tightening to a double-ended, female-threaded nut, securing the alloy bottom frame to the stock. The other end of the female-threaded nut tightens to the front action screw, holding the barrelled action securely to the stock. A recoil lug integral to the alloy bedding block fits snug to a recess on the receiver, correctly positioning the action before the screws and nut are tightened.

A 10mm socket is needed to tighten the threaded nut and this isn't a simple rifle to strip and assemble out in the field but nonetheless a solid bedding platform. All take-down information is in the user manual.

Action

The distinct sloped sides of the Sauer 100 receiver are CNC-machined from a single bar stock with non-reflective matte blue finish, the cylindrical base allowing for positive bedding with the top of the receiver drilled and tapped to suit Remington Model 700 bases. Available to order are Sauer Hexalock mounts though I had some Model 700 bases on hand.

The ejection port is wide enough for fast,

The Sauer 100 Classic stripped and ready for assembly.





Recess on the receiver mates snugly to the aluminium pillar block of the stock.



Simple and effective alteration made on the run by placing a single washer between the metal bottom and front hex nut.



Three-position safety is quiet and comfortable to use.

unobstructed ejection and easy top-loading of single rounds, the offside of the receiver carrying the tastefully machined Sauer 100 logo. Three action sizes are available for small, medium and magnum calibres.

Bolt

The triple lug push feed design of the bolt allows for a 60-degree bolt throw, enabling ease of bolt cycling with low mounted scopes, and the bolt face almost entirely surrounds the cartridge case head with the claw extractor sealing the ring of the face, dual plunge ejectors ensuring positive ejection. Once closed, the rear of the bolt sits flush with the receiver and the tang. The cocking piece indicator is at the centre rear of the bolt and protrudes, highlighting the red indicator of the firing condition and retracts once fired.

The bolt knob has an unusual looking bolt grip but is firm to hold, practical in every sense and can be unscrewed and replaced with alternative bolt designs available on request. The bolt action glides beautifully in the receiver with no lateral movement and is removed easily with a small release button to the left rear of the receiver. On the right rear is the three-position safety, the 'fire' condition indicated by a red dot occupying the foremost position, 'safe' by the central white dot and 'bolt lock' the rear white dot. I found this safety conveniently operated by my master thumb and one of the easiest and quietest I've used.

Trigger

The Sauer 100 has a fully adjustable single-stage trigger and can be safely and easily adjusted from 4.4lb (2kg) down to 2.2lb (1kg). Adhering strictly to user manual instructions and using the supplied Allen key I adjusted mine as close as possible to the minimum 2.2lb, and while not adjusted as low as my custom rifle triggers, the break was crisp with no noticeable creep.

Barrel

Not quite as pretty as the S202 or S404, the Sauer 100 barrels are all personality and not so much looks. In my opinion the practical matte burnished blue finish bucks unwanted reflection and looks good enough without added 'lipstick or eye shadow'. The cold hammer forged barrel is guaranteed for sub-MOA accuracy, the medium sporter being 22" (560mm) long, having a recessed crown and free of open sights. The 6.5 Creedmoor has a 1/8" twist.

Range and field testing

First impressions had me a little frustrated with the functionality of the magazine to stock fit. On loading and fitting the magazine up, the distinct click of the magazine release catch wasn't felt or heard - the catch was stuck to the recess of the stock. A quick flick with the fingernail released it but to fix it permanently, I fitted a washer between the front action screw hex nut and magazine bottom which relieved pressure between the timber and release button and I had no more issues.

My original intention was to use factory ammo only and trialling Hornady 129gr SST Superformance, 129gr InterLock American Whitetail and 140gr BTHP American Gunner ammo confirmed the 1/8" twist favoured the heavier 140gr projectiles.

With ambition taking hold I couldn't help myself and succumbed to the reloading bug, buying Hornady dies and my all-time favourite Nosler Ballistic Tip bullets in 140gr. I settled on a load of 41gr of ADI 2209 shooting consistent sub-MOA groups, which virtually duplicates on paper the same point of impact as the 140gr BTHP American Gunner factory ammo at 100 and 200m.

The Sauer 100 Classic has accompanied me on numerous outings but due to relentless drought it seemed nature was implementing pest control in its own way



Bolt face boasting dual ejectors, triple locking lugs and large claw extractor.



Trigger adjusted easily with supplied Allen key.



Magazine displaying five double-stacked rounds.

Sauer 100 Classic - the budget beauty

and nothing of any game status presented, but during this time I formed the opinion the 100 Classic was comfortable to carry in hand and slung over the shoulder. Late seasonal rain saw the shades of landscape change from brown to green and with it a change of fortune. More recently the rifle was used to take a red deer feeding on fresh green shoots of grass, the hind poleaxed by the 6.5 Creedmoor for our first venison cuts of the year.

Conclusion

Confident of its hunting credentials, the Sauer 100 Classic is ideal for those seeking a practical rifle with traditional timber look. For a rifle of prestigious German heritage costing a competitive \$1130 at time of writing, the Sauer 100 Classic is a budget beauty. Distributed here by Outdoor Sporting Agencies, the added advantage of a five-shot magazine and availability to buy additional magazines makes it perfect for pig culling, wild dog and deer hunting. For the full array of calibres and specifications visit the Sauer website. ●



A successful red deer hunt courtesy of the Sauer 100 Classic in 6.5 Creedmoor.

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New from Zeiss Conquest HD binoculars

Con Kapralos



The Conquest HD 10x42 binoculars were a joy to use in the field.

In the world of sport optics you get what you pay for - pure and simple. For most intended purposes and applications, sport optics such as riflescopes, binoculars and rangefinders will be an accessory the average hunter and shooter will give limited thought to. Many will buy an optic a friend has recommended or a well-known brand and not be concerned about the quality of glass within as that optic will normally be used during daylight hours.

However, when it comes to shooting in low light or conditions which make target identification a challenge, that's when optical quality shines through. Average optics will fail dismally in such circumstances and this is enough reason why many committed hunters and shooters spend a lot more on their optics. Brands in this realm are mainly European and one of

the biggest and best is Carl Zeiss.

Zeiss are always refreshing their brand options as they know only too well if they rest on their laurels the competition will take advantage. One new line is the Conquest HD binocular series, which already complements several other models they offer.

What makes the new Conquest HD bracket so special are the seven models on offer - 8x56, 10x56, 15x56, 8x42, 10x42, 8x32 and 10x32 - a selection created from new and encompassing the best in Schott glass and German design, engineering and manufacture. Yes, they're made in Germany but are attractively priced for an optic from the Zeiss motherland.

Outdoor Sporting Agencies, Australian distributor for Zeiss Sport Optics, sent *Australian Shooter* two new Conquest

HD models in the 10x42 and 15x56, both arriving in a sizeable white carton. Zeiss are clearly keen on first impressions and the carton was essentially two boxes joined together with a picture of a majestic kudu on the enclosing flap. The binoculars were housed in a high-density foam holder and the other accessories - two straps, carry case, lens covers and user manual - were in the other half of the carton.

Features of the Conquest HD 10x42 and 15x56 binoculars

- Made in Germany
- Schott high definition (HD) glass
- LotuTec lens coating system
- 90 per cent-plus light transmission
- Ergonomic design with compact size and light weight
- Use either Schmidt-Pechan or

New from Zeiss - Conquest HD binoculars

- Abbe-Koenig prism systems
- Waterproof to 400 mbar
- Nitrogen filled
- Supplied with full range of lens covers, carry pouch, binocular strap, user manual (selected models also supplied with tripod mount)

Conquest HD 10x42s

These, along with the 8x42s, would be the most popular models in the stable when it comes to general-purpose hunting binoculars. The review unit in 10x42 are 150mm long by 120mm wide and weigh 795g, which translates to a compact and lightweight optic. The new single bridge design with perfect ergonomics ensures easy operation, comfortable observation and precise focusing with the well-appointed focusing dial.

Technically, the field of view of 115m at 1000m is the largest in its class. Exit pupil at 4.2mm, eye-relief of 18mm and a close focus distance of 2m equate to an optic which is versatile not only for hunting but any other outdoor activity. The adjustable ocular cups at 54mm-74mm wide make the Conquest 10x42 HD highly adaptable for all users, and the eyecups also have a range of click-stop settings which come in handy for those who wear glasses as well as a diopter adjustment.

The lenses are as expected from a German-made optic by Zeiss. Schott High Definition (HD) glass precisely crafted and polished in the T* HD lens system guarantees the best in colour reproduction and flawless observation, further assisted by the Zeiss LotuTec lens coating system. The 10x42 uses the Schmidt-Pechan prism (with dielectric mirror) where other models in the range use the Abbe-Koenig prisms. Only serious optics buffs need worry about these two options and which is superior.



The binoculars are waterproof to 400 mbar and nitrogen filled to keep internals clean and dry.

Conquest HD 15x56s

These are the flagship of the new Conquest HD range and the biggest and heaviest unit. They're 210mm long and 145mm wide and weigh 1295g, the 15x56 sharing many attributes with its smaller 10x42 cousin but using the Abbe-Koenig prism system. Field of view of 80m at 1000m coupled with the 3.7mm exit pupil and 18mm eye relief equate to binoculars developed for extremely long distances while providing a razor-sharp view of even the smallest details, even at longer range.

The necessary comfort is provided by the included tripod adapter, which enables the binoculars to be mounted on a tripod in next to no time. Lenses are Schott HD glass with the Zeiss LotuTec treatment, which results in images at all distances with optimal image quality and colour fidelity.

Light transmission of 90 per cent-plus is present in all Conquest HD binoculars and this allows for observation well into the twilight hours and dusk. The 15x56s are



The contents of the Conquest HD 10x42 binoculars pack.

squarely aimed at users who demand high performance, high magnification binoculars such as hunting guides, maritime users, security/law enforcement applications and astronomy.

In the field

Both Conquest HDs on review are undoubtedly made for the discerning outdoors enthusiast. The addition of a quality Cordura carry case, neoprene straps, eyepiece and lens covers as well as the tripod adapter on the 15x56 gives the user the utmost in ergonomics and comfort along with protection for the optic itself.

The 10x42s were my favourite as optical quality in general hunting binoculars is superb. Comparing them side-by-side with my normal 10x42s (which cost around \$900 years ago) was no contest, the Conquest HD unit surpassing it on all fronts. I used to subscribe to the mantra that you can "only see what's there" but these take things to a whole new level.

The 15x56s need a tripod to fully appreciate their optical quality and, once mounted, viewing hillsides 5km away and spotting grazing cattle and sheep was a sight to behold. The crispness, contrast and clarity even at extended ranges was



New from Zeiss - Conquest HD binoculars



Contents of the Conquest HD 15x56 pack. Note the included tripod adapter.



remarkable and no doubt the result of the Schott HD lenses, LotuTec coatings and Abbe-Koenig prism system. For those after the best in long-distance binoculars, the Conquest HD 15x56s are definitely worth considering.

Conclusion

The Zeiss Conquest HD binocular range isn't Zeiss's top-tier line - that's the Victory range. Zeiss have flagged the new Conquest line-up as a 'mid-range' optic with price point to match, but in my opinion they certainly compare to the competition's 'top-tier' brands at a much lower price. The Conquest HD 10x42 retails for \$1735 and the 15x56 at \$2358. More at osaaustralia.com.au. ●

SPECIFICATIONS

	Conquest HD 10x42	Conquest HD 15x56
Magnification	10x	15x
Lens diameter	42mm	56mm
Exit pupil	4.2mm	3.7mm
Field of view at 1000m	115m	80m
Close focus	2m	3.5m
Eye relief	18mm	18mm
Pupil distance	54mm-74mm	54mm-74mm
Lens type	HD	HD
Prism system	Schmidt-Pechan	Abbe-Koenig
LotuTec	Yes	Yes
Nitrogen filling	Yes	Yes
Waterproof	400 mbar	400 mbar
Length	150mm	210mm
Width	120mm	145mm
Weight	795g	1295g
Accessories included	Cordura pouch, neoprene strap, eyepiece, lens covers, tripod adapter	
RRP	\$1735	\$2358
Distributor	Outdoor Sporting Agencies	



Bipods finally moving with the times

Mark van den Boogaart

I've owned a few bipods over the years and while they've all been perfectly serviceable, they've also been a little clunky. Problem is, bipod design hasn't moved with the times. If you're interested in camera and photography gear you'll know camera tripods are well made, light and interconnect with a world of fittings and options. Camera gear is cutting edge, typically rifle and shooting bipods not so much.

So as a gear junkie it was with some interest I had my first look at Spartan Precision Equipment during a visit to Raytrade UK. Spartan Precision Equipment is a British firm which manufactures a wide variety of shooting and hunting equipment that use carbon fibre and 7075 aerospace aluminium in its products.

Even at first glance it's clear Spartan have tried to do things differently, their approach innovative and options extensive. That said, what follows is a general overview of

Spartan's Javelin range of bipods and the interesting Davros mounting system.

Javelin Original and Javelin Lite

The Javelin Original is Spartan Precision Equipment's first and most popular bipod system. Out of the box you have the bipod and a universal adaptor which replaces your forward swivel stud with a low-profile mount. You also have a selection of thread sizes to suit your rifle's individual swivel stud making fitment of the adaptor a simple task. Interestingly, also included is a gunsmith adaptor which enables you to have a more permanent mounting point fitted in your rifle stock.

With the universal adaptor in place you can plug and remove the bipod or any Javelin bipods and accessories using the Spartan Magnetic attachment system, the obvious advantage being you don't have to decide if you're attaching the bipod before you head out - leave it off and when you

need it just plug it in. As the bipod and adaptor connection is universal, if you want to move a bipod between rifles all you need do is buy another adaptor and fit it in place. It's kind of like a plug-and-play system for your rifles.

The Javelin Original uses machined 7075 alloy components to keep the overall weight down to 148g, meaning you can carry the bipod in your pocket until you need it or fold it up tight against the fore-end of your rifle. The legs are extendable from 17-24cm in the Standard version and 20.5-30cm (at 157g) in the Long version, leg extension and locking controlled via a simple twist function.

The individually extendable legs combined with the built-in cant allows you to level up the rifle, while the 120 degree rotation enables you to track a moving target without having to lift and reposition your rifle. Finally, the Javelin Original comes with tungsten carbide feet which dig

in on rock and dirt along with soft rubber covers if shooting off the car bonnet.

The Javelin Lite is the little brother of the Original, sharing a number of features and built to the same high standard using the same quality materials - it's just smaller and even more compact. The big difference between the two is the legs are fixed with three lengths to choose from, though fixed extra legs are available and interchangeable so you can have a selection of differing leg lengths.

One improvement of the Lite over the Original is Target Mode which allows you to quickly lock out the bipod, giving you the ability to have both a fluid moving shooting platform and a fixed platform when it's time to take your shot.

What I like most about the Lite is it's extremely light, portable and handy to have in your pocket and I reckon it would be spot-on for the hunter who prefers rifles with an external magazine as it gives you some clearance for the magazine, a level of protection for the fore-end and of course a stable shooting rest. If you're a hunter or shooter who uses a bipod in the field or are thinking you'd like to, it's worthwhile taking a look at the Javelin Standard and Lite as they're a big jump in design and build quality compared to their competitors.

Davros Head adaptor

The Davros Head is essentially an adaptor which allows you to connect your rifle to a standard camera tripod. At one end the Davros Head plugs into the same universal adaptor used by the Javelin range, or Gunsmith adaptor if fitted, while at the other it uses the standard tripod screw thread to give you a strong and stable connection between rifle and tripod.

As with all the Spartan Precision Equipment range the Davros Head is well made, lightweight and easily transportable, one of the interesting options being the Sucker Mount. While there are plenty of different clamps and similar options available which work with the Davros Head, the Sucker Mount is unique.

As the name suggests it's a suction cup-style unit which uses a vacuum principle to grip any flat, hard surface like the bonnet or roof of your mate's truck. Once fitted it allows you to connect your rifle to the Sucker Mount, providing a handy mount for shooting off a vehicle. The Sucker Mount weighs 330g and can be attached and removed from any hard, flat surface in seconds.

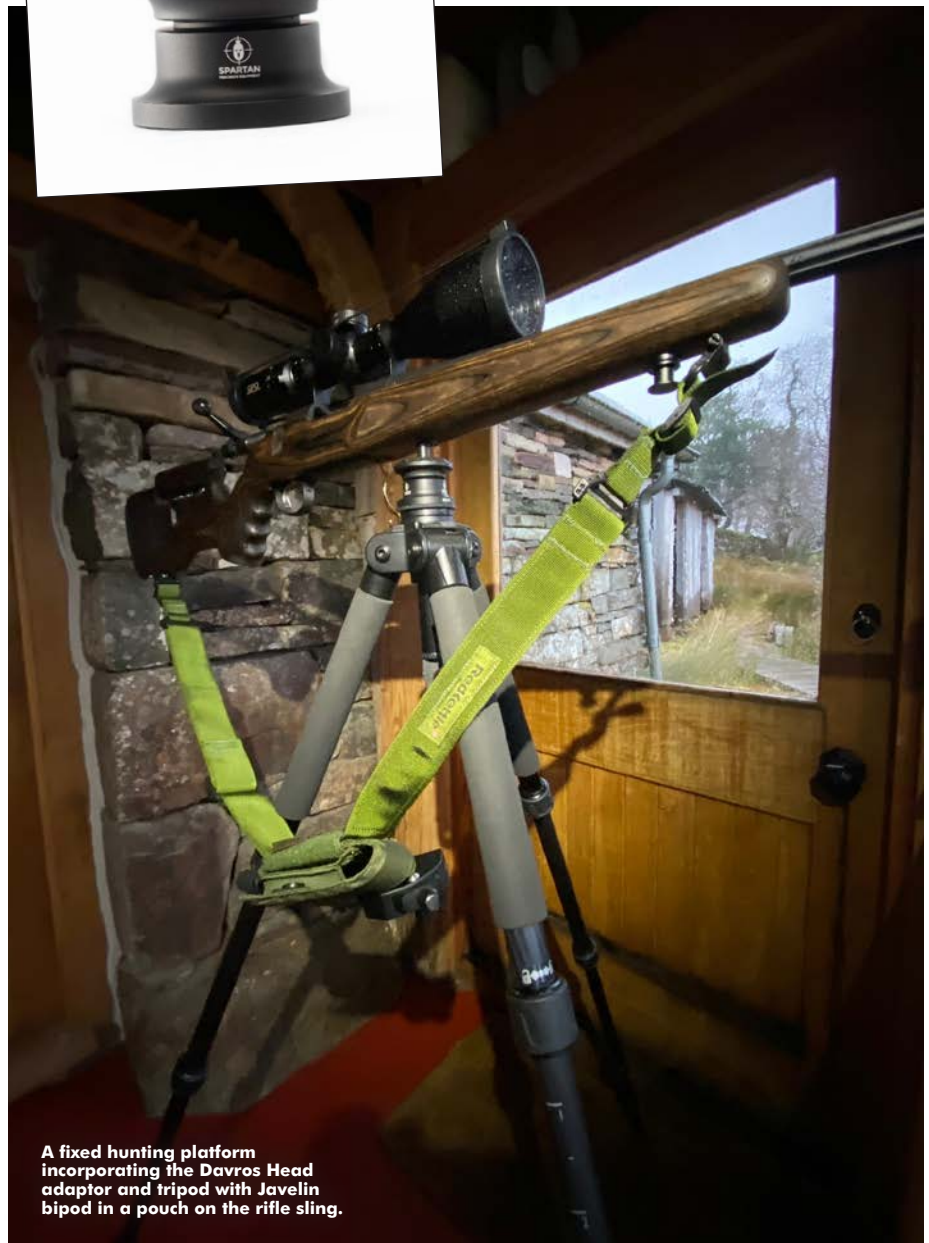
Spartan Precision Equipment have tried to raise the bar in shooting and hunting accessories, the gear thoughtfully

designed, well made, light and truly portable. If you're over clunky accessories which have dominated the market for the past umpteen years, check out this premium range distributed by Raytrade. Approximate Australian RRP's for the items mentioned are Javelin Original \$430, Javelin Lite \$270, Davros Head \$195, Davros Sucker Mount \$210. ●

Davros Head adaptor.



Davros Head adaptor fitted to the Sucker Mount.



A fixed hunting platform incorporating the Davros Head adaptor and tripod with Javelin bipod in a pouch on the rifle sling.

Gun Control

*What Australia did,
how other countries do it &
is any of it sensible?*

by David Leyonhjelm

BOOK REVIEW by John Maxwell

There have been relatively few politicians in federal parliament as openly supportive of shooters as David Leyonhjelm, the former Senator for NSW in the Liberal Democratic Party. From the start of his five years in Canberra from mid-2014 until resigning in March 2019, he made no secret of his belief in minimal government intrusion into the lives of Australian people such as responsible gun owners.

For that he was routinely branded as right wing but his causes covered the political spectrum, not just gun laws, and in his first speech he backed gay marriage and opposed excessive taxation. Were it not for the election of the Whitlam government, he said, he could have landed in jail for refusing to register for national service.

On departing federal politics to stand, unsuccessfully, for a place in the NSW Upper House, Leyonhjelm announced his plan to write a book on gun laws, something he has now done. He said he conceived the book and started writing while still in the Senate, though that proved more challenging than anticipated.

"There were lengthy periods when no progress was possible," he said. "I resigned from the Senate on March 1, 2019 in order to stand for the NSW state parliament. When I narrowly failed to win I was able to devote time to completing the book. That's not a complaint - I much prefer writing to being a politician."

His book is a worthy contribution to discussion on Australia's gun laws which argues that far from Australia setting a gun

control example for the world, the laws have contributed nothing to community safety while alienating shooters. "The sheer bastardry of the gun laws is one reason why law-abiding gun owners never 'get over' or even 'get used to' the gun laws. They live with the constant reminder of the injustice of being viewed as criminals in waiting. Illegal gun owners, naturally enough, have no such concerns," he writes.

Leyonhjelm says Australians have repeatedly been told our gun laws have made us safer. "It is a classic example of truthiness - it is not true but it sounds like it ought to be true," he said. He admits his book won't influence those who are afraid of guns and refuse to reconsider their fear, neither will it sway those who believe all government authority is legitimate, irrespective of its consequences.

"On the other hand, among those who harbour the feeling that governments are not always right, that unbridled power is a threat to a free and democratic society and that shooting guns just might be fun, perhaps it will prompt some to reconsider their views," he says.

In 340 pages he covers a great deal of territory including why Australians own guns, the history of guns and gun laws in this country, the licensing process and experiences of other nations. In discussing the 1996 Port Arthur massacre he notes the rise of conspiracy theories, then canvasses some threads which suggest the full story hasn't been told and maybe the man jailed for those 35 murders wasn't the actual shooter or didn't act alone.

GUN CONTROL

*What Australia did,
how other countries do it &
is any of it sensible?*

DAVID LEYONHJELM

With contributions by: Grant Bailey,
Frank Brophy, Chaz Forsyth, David Karasek, Richard Law,
Abhijeet Singh and Peter Whelan

Maybe he's just seeking to be provocative, though this theme does head worryingly into fringe territory. The key point is there was never a full inquiry, either an inquest or Royal Commission, into an event of this magnitude when there should have been. Almost quarter of a century on this would seem unlikely, though substantially older abuses in the Catholic Church for example have been examined in great detail. Prudently, New Zealand has launched a Royal Commission into the Christchurch massacre.

As everyone knows, the consequence of Port Arthur was the National Firearms Agreement championed by then PM John Howard, banning semi-automatics and some other firearms and implementing a national licensing scheme and registration of all firearms. But did all this achieve its main aim, namely fewer firearms deaths? A succession of academic papers, many drawing on the same data, have delivered a verdict.

Some papers found yes, Australia is a safer place, others found the Howard laws had no impact. Leyonhjelm says no. "Quite simply, the evidence does not show that the Howard gun laws had any significant impact on firearm homicides and suicides," the book says.

Indisputably, firearms deaths by murder and suicide are lower now than at the time of Port Arthur but that downward trend started well before 1996 and continued after. The Howard gun laws were prompted by an appalling massacre which followed other gun massacres, and various commentators point to the absence of any gun massacres since

Port Arthur as a big tick for Australia's tough gun laws.

Though there has been nothing on the scale of Port Arthur, Leyonhjelm notes there have been massacres, some involving guns, it all depends on the definition. Different US authorities define mass shooting as involving three or four victims, not including the perpetrator. By either definition Australia has experienced mass shootings. Example: Darwin last year (four dead), Osmington, WA in 2018 (seven dead including perpetrator), Lockhart, NSW in 2015 (five dead including perpetrator) and NSW Hunter Valley 2005 (four dead including perpetrator).

There have been other massacres which claimed many more lives through use of that most deadly and indiscriminate of agents - fire. The 2000 Childers backpackers fire killed 15, a nursing home fire in Sydney in 2011 claimed 11 lives and an arson attack during the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires killed 10. Leyonhjelm says it was technically accurate to claim that both the number

of shooting massacres and number of victims of such massacres had declined, although they continued to occur. However, the number of massacres of all kinds has increased along with the number of victims, he says in the book.

Australian shooters may not be too happy with the state of our gun laws but there are other nations where shooters are substantially worse off and better off, and some are examined by knowledgeable contributors in various chapters. New Zealand shooters enjoyed relaxed gun laws but that all changed with the murder last year of 51 people by an Australian extremist. In the first tranche of new laws, most semi-autos were banned with the country now in the process of rolling out a second round which includes a return to registration.

India's gun laws, derived from the British colonial era, are restrictive and arbitrary and include some unusual provisions. When an election is called, gun owners are expected to deposit their firearms with the

police or a licensed dealer until the result is declared. Media reports indicate bizarre instances where authorities have only approved firearms licences for those who had undergone a vasectomy.

The Czech Republic is a nation Australian shooters might envy. Emerging from the oppression of Nazi occupation and the Communist era, the country wiped the slate clean in 1990 and adopted laws which aim to keep guns out of the wrong hands through rigorous vetting. But once a licence is approved, there are few restrictions on type and number of guns a shooter may possess. That unfortunately puts the Czech Republic at odds with the European Union and its mandatory Firearms Directive which seeks to impose uniform and more restrictive laws on member states. ●

Gun Control: What Australia did, how other countries do it and is any of it sensible?
by David Leyonhjelm, 340 pages, Connor Court Publishing, RRP \$50.

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Please be aware that state and territory police firearms registries regularly cross-check firearm licences and your member status. To support your genuine reason and keep your firearms licence and to make sure that SSAA can support you, make sure you renew your SSAA membership.



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John Corcoran - Email: margandon@bigpond.com
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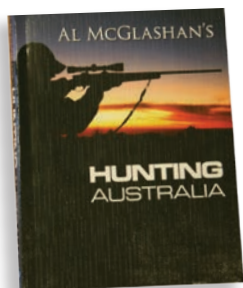
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**SSAA
pink ladies
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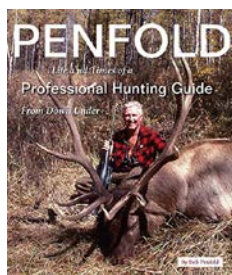


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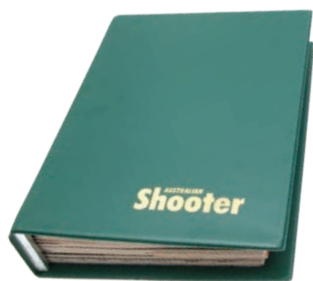
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Membership No.

NEW ☐ RENEWAL ☐ Have you been a member before? Yes/No

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Title (PLEASE CIRCLE) Mr Miss Ms Mrs or Preferred SSAA Branch

First name

Middle name

Last name

Residential address

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Postal address

Town/suburb State Postcode

(IF DIFFERENT FROM ABOVE)

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Email

Date of birth Male ☐ Female ☐ Member referral number if applicable

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This application is made in full recognition of the Association's requirement for responsible and ethical behaviour. I undertake to do all in my power to preserve the good image of the sport and the Association. I understand that members breaking the Code of Conduct may be subject to suspension or expulsion. The Code can be found at ssaa.org.au/code

SIGNATURE:.....

DATE:.....

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For your chance to win one of these competitions, write your name, address, phone number and membership number on a piece of paper and place it inside an envelope, along with the name of the competition on the front of the envelope, as shown in the example. Alternatively, you can enter online.

Competitions close August 31, 2020

(Name of competition)
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Enter online at
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Australian Shooter June 2020

Best Shots Mug

Jenny Wallace, NSW

AWS Issue 7 June 2020

FALCO Hunters Backpack

Michelle Coglan, Qld

SSAA Rechargeable Knife Sharpener

Keelan Billing, Tas

Howard Leight Impact Sport – Olive Green

Ian McDonald, NSW

Junior Prize – Trigga the koala

Jett de Silva, Vic

AUSTRALIAN SHOOTER is published monthly and is printed by IVE, 83 Derby St, Silverwater, NSW 2128.

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Easier said than done

Sharing your life with a dog incurs a suite of responsibilities which aren't always appreciated during the heady days of puppydom. The ancient need to feed and nurture them takes centre stage and it's not until they begin to grow and explore the world around them you realise keeping a dog at home isn't always an easy task.

From the day she arrived, Dixie loved to work the paddocks with me. Our morning walks were a natural outlet for her inherent need to hunt and though her exuberance had to be curbed at times, she was quick to learn and understand exactly what I expected of her. Her training became a voyage of discovery for both of us and if she chafed at doing as she was told, she never let it interfere with her enjoyment.

As an inquisitive pup she soon learned she could slip through the sheep mesh fence around the yard for a bit of independent, freelance exploring whenever she thought she could get away with it. When you live in the country that's not a good thing. To her credit she always came back when called, shamefaced at being caught out, knowing there was time on the chain to be served as penance. We both hated it and I wouldn't want to own a dog which had to spend its life tied up or confined to a pen, so a solution had to be found.

Going back to an old bush remedy I was shown years ago, I attached a length of fibreglass arrow shaft to her collar. She didn't care for it much but it kept her from

pushing through the fence. She learned to live with the impost, bided her time and eventually found a gap under the gate she could squeeze through with a bit of a wriggle. We fixed that with a star picket hanging off the bottom rail.

Over time she learned she had to stay



Dixie with the stick collar which stopped her pushing through the sheep mesh fence.

home and the stick collar was only used when we went away and left her on her own for a few hours. When we decided to move into town earlier this year, we knew keeping her in the yard would be more important than ever. Even so, we wanted to retain the open feel of the area, not construct an imposing, urban-style structure which separated us from the rest of the world. Our new neighbours liked that idea so we settled on a simple four strand, star picket fence with a panel of fine mesh on the bottom that a dog couldn't push through.

We thought that may have been the end of it but, as so often happens when there's a dog involved, it wasn't. The fence was built a month or so before we moved and the day after completion we went in to see if it was 'Dixie-proof'.

As I squeezed between the mesh panel

and top wire there was a rattle of movement behind me and by the time I had both feet on the ground on the other side, Dixie was sitting there waiting for me with a grin on her face and a glint in her eye. In her quiet, brown dog way she was showing me that while the fence looked the part, it wasn't up to scratch and if I meant to keep her in the yard I'd have to do better than that.

So we ran a couple of extra wires above the mesh. Dixie had a good look at the changes then tried to jump through as she'd done before. The new wires literally sat her on her tail and the look on her face when she collected herself was anything but smug.

To add insult to injury I also bedded a post lengthwise under the back gate to stop her digging out and, as I write, the yard appears to be dog-proof though if there are any other weak points I'm sure she'll find them. It's a game we've both played before - a challenge she enjoys, a contest I expect yet dread and as much as I love her, sometimes she's just too smart for her own good. Keeping the dog at home has always been easier said than done. ●





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