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Our May cover

See story on page 24

## NEXT ISSUE

Next month we launch a new series in which we've asked some of our regular contributors to nominate their favourite rifle-calibre-scope combination. Daniel O'Dea kicks things off with his top trio.

The CZ 455 Thumbhole Black Carbon rimfire rifle has been made specifically for the Australian market and, as Con Kapralos reports, CZ know a thing or two about making accurate rimfires.



Mick Chapman went to Zimbabwe in search of a prize warthog and found that while it's not as simple as it sounds, perseverance paid off in the end with a "handsome" trophy.



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# President's Message

WITH GEOFF JONES

## SSAA members will do the right thing in extraordinary times

COVID-19 - gun shops closed and hunting banned. It didn't take long for the sanctimonious few to show their true bias, clearly looking for any excuse and opportunity to demonise and disadvantage legitimate firearms owners and shooters - occupational or recreational - ostensibly the most regulated and trusted group in the country.

Decrees made totally oblivious to the perfectly valid claims to have highly regulated firearms-related activities continue in the current crisis, albeit with the compliant and well-managed restrictions already being observed by shooting organisations, groups and individuals.

You could reasonably assume there are serious political agendas at play here given the states which have been pre-eminent in restricting our specific activities, even making quite pointed but unsubstantiated announcements implying firearms owners were an increased risk to public order and of contributing to domestic violence, clearly fear-mongering and politicking. I implore you to identify your state's position in relation to firearms owners and remember this when your next state election comes around. The Federal Government has not made any such decrees, just several states to a greater or lesser degree.

Thanks to the mammoth efforts of your respective SSAA organisations, quite a number of concessions and adjustments to these decrees and existing regulations have already been made and this has been achieved, not by rattling around in the empty tin can of Facebook and online forums, but by sensible representation and negotiation on behalf of our members. But even then it may not be enough to pay the bills to keep a legitimate gunshop open and viable even with reduced capacity and costs. Nevertheless, SSAA will continue to represent its members and supporters at every opportunity.

Of course, SSAA and its members understand and appreciate the seriousness of the current health crisis in Australia and at the risk of sounding patronising, I call on all members to "do the right thing" and comply with all reasonable directions. I'm confident that we as responsible citizens are already doing just that, as frustrating as the side play is.

Be assured, SSAA has already made all the necessary adjustments to protect its staff and continues to provide all of your benefits as SSAA members including continuing membership services to provide genuine reason for firearms ownership, member insurance, firearms insurance, publications production, SSAA social media updates and legislation lobbying as is currently applicable. If you notice a slight delay in receiving any SSAA service I ask you to bear with us, as continuing a full service as we are does require some juggling.

I'd suggest this might be a great opportunity to catch up on your reading and research through the *Australian Shooter*, *Australian Hunter*, *Women's Shooter*, *Junior Shooter* and *Great Australian Outdoors*, apart from the myriad of video segments and research articles available through the SSAA website [www.ssaa.org.au](http://www.ssaa.org.au) and associated links.

You'll notice that *Women's Shooter* and *Junior Shooter* will be only available online during the current crisis in order to contain costs and of course *Australian Shooter* is always available online to members for your convenience.

Any shooting range openings are at the direction of the branch or club responsible for adherence to non-essential gatherings and social distancing restrictions as need to be managed. Please be patient with those responsible. In the absence of active shooting I'm sure we all have firearms cleaning, maintenance or reconfiguration to be done apart from reloading and preparation for a return to the range or bush.

The most important thing for all of us in these extraordinary times is to show that as SSAA members we are responsible, will abide by the rules as frustrating as they might be and, most importantly, stay safe.

Geoff Jones  
SSAA National President



## SSAA - Protecting shooters since 1948



## Still learning at my age

Sorry it took me so long to write but at my age (70 + GST) I don't do anything quickly. I read Gemma Dunn's article in *Australian Women's Shooter* Issue 5. I've been shooting for more than 60 years - mostly rifle and a little shotgun - yet must say I learned a lot from reading her article 'What's the right ammo for you?' and thought I'd let you know how much I appreciate it.

Aaron, via email

## Searching a specialised skill

Regarding the letter from Greg Kent (*Shooter*, December 2019) referring to Mike Slattery's suggesting for the formation of a search and rescue group for hunters. Each state has legislation outlining who the Hazard Management Authority (HMA) is with regard to searches for missing people on land and those missing at sea. In WA, the Emergency Management Act 2005 stipulates the Commissioner for Police is the responsible HMA.

The police, with assistance from the State Emergency Service, co-ordinate and conduct all operations for missing persons. These organisations have access

to personnel and assets including vehicles and aircraft, some equipped with specialized thermal imaging equipment, in order to conduct search operations.

Searching for missing persons requires a coordinated response, however the safety and welfare of responders is a fundamental priority and having untrained and unprepared volunteers could endanger lives. As a former police officer I've conducted many large scale land search operations in a variety of unforgiving terrain across remote WA and know full well the responsibilities attached to the role of Land Search Controller.

I've used people with local knowledge and experience related to specific areas but all assisting personnel, whether police, SES, local government or civilian, must be managed and controlled properly. Mike and Greg should be commended for thinking about the welfare of our fellow hunters should they become lost, but the risks and costs involved in these types of operations should remain with the relevant authorities.

Dave Tadic, via email

## Killing machine in action

During the Christmas break I was checking my paddocks in the Great Southern Region



The bobtail is a species of blue-tongued skink.

of WA when a dead bobtail on the road caught my eye. I'd stopped at an area where there used to be lots of rabbit warrens on the roadside. The bobtail was quite decomposed and essentially only the skin and bones remained but if you want to know about how destructive a single fox can be, keep reading.

Over the past year or so the rabbit population in the Great Southern has been smashed due to calicivirus and within a month of the virus hitting my area the rabbits were gone. As I walked around this former rabbit warren it became clear a female fox had moved in the previous year and made a den for her cubs. As there were no rabbits around she went for the native fauna - I counted 17 bobtail carcasses around the den.

I felt repulsed at what I saw. The poor bobtails didn't stand a chance and half the bodies had only been slightly eaten, like a play kill teaching cubs how to do it. Never underestimate the killing potential of a lone fox.

Andrew Coad, via email



## Insurance Q&A with Trevor Jenkin

Send questions to: [communications@ssaa.org.au](mailto:communications@ssaa.org.au)

**Q:** We're looking at buying a small hobby farm and I wanted to check if my home and contents insurance would cover that.

Geoffrey, via email

**A:** Most people assume home and contents is all they need as it's a hobby farm and they don't generate an income. To all our members, if you do live on a small acreage and even if you don't see it as a hobby farm, I suggest you call us to discuss what insurance exposures you should be aware of by living on three or more acres.

Hobby farms can be an entirely different insurance risk than home and contents and

the amount and type of cover you may need will depend on quite a few variables, such as:

- Type of activities carried out on your farm;
- Size of your hobby farm;
- Location;
- Number of livestock you may have;
- Whether or not you want vehicle cover;
- Turnover derived from the farm.

This can make choosing the right hobby farm insurance confusing. For example, you may be able to move existing car or boat cover to the hobby farm insurance at a more competitive premium. Our brokers will advise you on what can and can't be

included in the insurance and will provide you with terms and conditions including premiums.

We'll help you make sense of available policies and recommend the best option for your hobby farm insurance needs. When you're ready call us on (08) 8332 0281.





## In praise of the humble .22 Hornet

Still one of Australia's most popular small cartridges, the .22 Hornet has been around for more than a century and had its beginnings in 1885 as the .22 WCF black powder cartridge, driving a 45gr bullet at almost 1500fps.

It remained a popular 'wild cat' until the late to mid-1920s when it was developed at the Springfield Armory by Captain G.L. Wotkins, Townsend Whelan and Associates but it wasn't until 1930 that Winchester started loading factory ammunition for it, followed soon after by Remington.

The Winchester cartridge was available in either soft-nose or hollow-point, both with a muzzle velocity of about 2500fps. Interestingly, commercially made rifles didn't appear until 1932 when Winchester offered the .22 Hornet in their Model 54 lever-action and soon after Savage and a few others started making rifles for the Hornet cartridge.

Today there are many rifles available for the .22 Hornet cartridges, Ruger having a single-shot and bolt-action model, Savage a bolt-action and over-and-under shotgun/rifle combination, with Anschütz, Krico and Brno being some of the other more popular ones to choose from.

The .22 Hornet cartridge has a small tapered case and is quite easy to reload even with smaller reloading presses, but because it has a very thin wall at the neck

Another good tip is to buy all your cases in the one brand as different brands can vary widely in interior capacity...

it's a bit finicky and care must be taken when seating the bullet, making sure the neck is opened sufficiently to allow the bullet to enter properly or a crushed case may result.

Furthermore, because the walls are so thin and tapered, the case tends to lengthen with each firing so it's a good idea to measure case length every few shots and trim to the correct length before reloading again. It's also best to only reuse cartridges in the rifle they've been fired in as this ensures cases fit the chamber perfectly and cases need only be neck-sized, prolonging their life considerably.

Another good tip is to buy all your cases in the one brand as different brands can vary widely in interior capacity, and when loading only about 10gr of powder even a slight variation in case capacity can make

a big difference in breech pressure. Using a 45gr projectile the Hornet has a muzzle velocity of around 2700fps and, if sighted 25mm high at 100m, is only 75mm low at 200m, so trajectory is quite flat out to 200m though this should be considered its maximum range for humane hunting. The projectile retains enough energy to easily put down small game like rabbits and foxes and I've seen larger game like kangaroos and goats taken by those who can place a shot well at this range.

Many attempts have been made to 'pep up' or improve the Hornet's performance, most successful being the K-Hornet which has a 35 degree shoulder angle and almost straight body, allowing more powder to be used thus providing a slightly higher velocity while reducing brass flow in the thin neck area.

The .22 Hornet still has its share of hard-core devotees who are content with placing their shots on game carefully at short to medium range in areas like small farms, where the noise of a magnum cartridge is not particularly welcome.



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# Clay Target Q&A

WITH RUSSELL MARK

**Q** Is there any 'rule of thumb' as to what barrel length should be used for each of the clay target disciplines. I'm pretty new to the sport but have tried most disciplines and am looking at buying a new shotgun eventually though am unsure about what barrel length is perfect. Any advice much appreciated.

**Robert Sycamore, Vic.**

**A** There's certainly no set rule of thumb but I can tell you the most popular choice of barrel length currently being used in each of the clay target disciplines. Barrel length largely comes down to what length you can control. There are no rules which govern how long they may be (there are of course laws governing how short they can be, but they're not relevant to your question), but I always suggest using the longest barrels you feel comfortable with.

There has certainly been a trend over the years in the majority of clay target events to try longer barrels and this has largely been due to evolution in the quality of steel used to make the barrels. Longer barrels which have less weight mean the gun can be more spontaneous and balanced better than those of yesteryear which would often feel very barrel-heavy if the tubes were too long. Not knowing exactly what discipline you're thinking about buying your shotgun for, I'll give you a brief summary of what is currently popular.

For **American Skeet**, barrel length has become constantly longer during the past few decades. Imperial measurements are widely used when talking about barrel lengths (oddly metric is commonly used when referring to their weight) so I'll talk in inches here. As late as the 1970s, 26" barrels were very common for Skeet then 28" tubes took over and currently 30" is the most popular choice, with quite a few of the world's elite Skeet shooters using 32" barrels.

For the international version of **Skeet** there has been a slow change from 28" to 28¾" to 29" and some 30" barrels. The faster targets and the fact that when the target is called to be released the butt of the shotgun must be touching your hip, means slower and more cumbersome longer barrels have been less popular in this form of Skeet.

**Sporting Clays** has several disciplines ranging from the international versions of FITASC, Compact and English Sporting to the more domestic disciplines of Field and Game and 5-Stand Sporting. Again, all these disciplines have seen barrel lengths change over the years from 28" to 30" and now the most popular barrel length by the world's best is 32". The longer targets offered in Sporting Clays make longer barrels well suited to this discipline.

In the domestic disciplines of **Down the Line (DTL)** or **Trap** as it's widely known, the barrel length of choice is also slowly

changing from 30" to 32" and in the US where the Trap targets are slightly easier, 34" is a very common barrel length.

The international version of Trap is called **Olympic Trap** and this is the one discipline where there has been no real change in the popular choice of barrel length during the past 70 years. 30" barrels have pretty much won every Olympic medal on offer along with the occasional 32" barrel, but you could honestly count the longer barrel medalists on the fingers on one hand. The other faster disciplines of Trap - **Universal** and **Ball Trap** - have a few more competitors using 32" barrels successfully but the norm is still 30".

Your body shape, strength and, of course, ability will ultimately govern what barrels are best for you. Shorter barrels may point and feel better but as long as the shotgun remains balanced, I personally prefer longer barrels due to the longer sighting plane to help aid accuracy. And right there really is your answer - there's just no substitute for accuracy. Good luck in your quest.

**Questions to:**  
russell@goshooting.com.au



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## Misguided minister out for a duck

I can't say I was surprised when I noticed a social media post showing Victorian MP Lizzie Blandthorn posing with a feral duck after calling for a review into the hunting of native ducks at the Victorian Labor conference. I won't repeat my first thought but I will my second - *"Seriously? Does she even know what a native duck looks like?"*

Feral ducks, like the one in the photo she wants to be made safe, should in fact be removed from our natural environments. For some time now there has been concern regarding the breeding hybridisation of waterfowl, in particular between the mallard and our indigenous Pacific black duck. These ferals pose a serious threat to endemic duck populations and, as has already been seen in New Zealand, can be responsible for the extinction of some populations of Pacific black through hybridisation. We should certainly be doing all we can to protect the long-term genetic integrity of our native ducks by removing all mallards and other feral ducks from our waterways.

For an MP to promote herself in a media post/photo claiming she's trying to protect them is a disgrace. It also shows she is truly uneducated in the subject matter and is simply heading down the ideological path to attract city green votes where no duck hunting actually occurs.



Apparently her reasoning behind the move to call for a review, as reported in *The Weekly Times*, was "the recreational hunting of native waterbirds is completely at odds with the Government's (animal welfare) plan". Really? Hunters have codes of practice they must abide by, which take into account animal welfare considerations.

This follows on from an attempt by Animal Justice MP Andy Meddick to introduce a private member's bill to implement a ban on the recreational hunting of waterfowl in Victoria. At time of writing, Victorian Agriculture Minister Jaclyn Symes stated that Ms Blandthorn's actions did not change the

Government's current support of duck hunting. She reiterated the fact there are laws in place to ensure game hunting is conducted in a safe, sustainable and humane manner.

Opposition agriculture spokesman Peter Walsh has said Ms Blandthorn's entry into the debate has marked a turning point within the Government. Should Victorian hunters be worried? Maybe. This might be an opportune time to visit your local member and explain how much hunting means to you, your family and friends.

Send questions to:  
[wildlife@ssaa.org.au](mailto:wildlife@ssaa.org.au)



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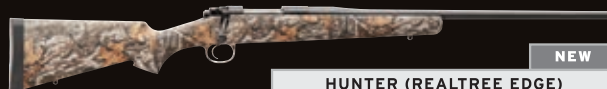
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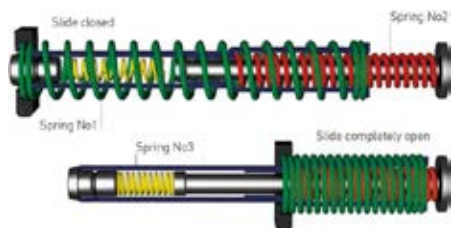
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# Got a question - ask our TOP SHOTS ?

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

email: [edit@ssaa.org.au](mailto:edit@ssaa.org.au)



**Q** I've heard about two-piece guide rods being available now for many self-loading handguns. Do these two-piece rods have any specific advantages or disadvantages over the traditional one-piece design?

**Rod James, SA**

**A** All sorts of methods have been tried to handle the dynamics of the recoiling pistol slide and the two-piece rod you describe is one of them. Two or sometimes three springs of different sizes and strengths are arranged in and around a telescoping tube and rod, resembling a pogo stick. While they're loosely called recoil reduction systems, there's a little more to it than that.

Their aim is to smooth out the motion of the recoiling slide from the time of firing to the time it has closed with a fresh round in the chamber ready to fire again. The system is primarily designed for shooters wanting to be able to shoot power factored loads (as required by the rules of their particular discipline) at the same time reducing the amount of bounce or jump of the handgun while the slide is operating, thereby making sight alignment quicker for the second and subsequent shots.

Sometimes extra springs of different 'weights' are included so shooters can adjust their guns and loads. These multi-spring systems also incorporate a degree of buffering to cushion the slide-to-frame impact when the slide is at the end of its travel, thereby protecting the frame and slide from damage. There is high-speed photography available online which shows the system working with different spring/ ammo combinations.

These spring and rod systems are available as after-market kits for many brands of pistols and speaking to a number of shooters who've tried them has revealed mixed opinions as to their effectiveness. This could of course come down to the

shooter not fully understanding what the system actually offers and the expectation to immediately improve their scores. Others say that once tuned to a specific load, the system works remarkably well.

All I can suggest Rod is that if you have a problem controlling the bounce or jump of your handgun, this system could be something worth trying. Unfortunately no online forum or research is going to tell you if this will suit you and your kind of shooting - that's something you'll have to find out for yourself.

**Rod Pascoe**

**Q** I have a Remington rifle using the .243 Winchester cartridge which I use to hunt small to medium game like foxes and goats. Most of my hunting is done at ranges below 200m but occasionally a target will present itself out to 500m. Can you tell me the holdover I should use. I'm using 80gr factory ammunition.

**Jim Anderson, via email**

**A** The first thing I'd do is visit a shooting range and readjust your rifle's zero to 200m. This would mean the point of impact at 100m would be 2.8cm high which would provide no problem for your shots out to 200m. At 300m the projectile would be 14cm low, at 400m it's 43cm low and at 500m it's 86cm low, meaning you would need to hold over 14cm, 43cm and 86cm respectively at those ranges.

A good idea would be to attach a piece of notepaper to the side of your rifle with these holdover figures on it, so when a long shot presents you can quickly establish what holdover is necessary to obtain a clean kill.

**Barry Wilmot**

**Q** I noticed a few competitors using .300 Blackout calibre rifles at recent state and national Rifle Metallic Silhouette championships. I wonder if this is a viable cartridge for silhouette shooting as it appears very lightweight compared with what we're used to.

**Jeff, via email**

**A** If you'd asked me this question a few years ago I'd have thought you were having a laugh, but over the past few years there has been a proliferation of lower power calibres being used for silhouette. The first brave souls turned up with custom 7mm BRs etc and were moderately successful, though the biggest change has been ready availability of cost-effective hunting rifles in smaller centrefires like the 6.5 Grendel and .300 Blackout, making them a very attractive, light-kicking firearm for the Hunting Rifle class.

Experienced Rifle Metallic Silhouette shooters know there's really only one target that requires power to put down - you can topple chickens, pigs and turkeys with quite moderate loads but 500m rams take a serious amount of whack to roll. Having said that I've witnessed some great scores shot on rams with the .300 Blackout, but you need to load projectiles from 190gr up for success as you're looking for momentum rather than speed.

Furthermore, the .300 Blackout is completely viable for Rifle Metallic Silhouette though you will lose some targets due to lack of power, but no cartridge is guaranteed for this game. It's highly recommended for young, small or infirm competitors, being very mild on the shoulder in hunting-weight rifles. Hell, as I get older I'm becoming more interested in rifles with less biff myself.

**Greg Riemer**

**Q** I'm looking to obtain, if possible, a set of scope mounts for a Ruger American rimfire .22 rifle. I wish to use the scope in conjunction with the open sights on the rifle. Can you advise if there are any mounts available for this purpose. Several years ago I had a Field side mount attached to a Cooney .22 cal for this purpose.

**Alan Neep, Qld**

**A** The idea of having a scope set-up which allows you to use the rifle sights as well is an old one. Years ago I had a Lithgow Model 12 set up with a side mount for the same reason as you. At one stage 'see through' mounts were heavily marketed for the same purpose, their main drawback being they put the scope up too high for comfortable use and were also

vulnerable to being easily knocked out of alignment. At present I don't know of any makers who offer mounts like those, nor are they necessary.

It's far more practical to set your Ruger up with lever detachable mounts which allow the scope to be easily taken off or replaced as required with no tools needed. All the major makers produce these mounts in various heights and provided they're set up properly they'll go back into the same place every time with no significant changes to the point of impact.

I have my 1885 low wall in .22LR set up with Warne lever detachable mounts and they've been doing a great job for many years so I can assure you they do work.

**John Dunn**

**Q** I'm keen on buying a shotgun for shooting sporting clays and hunting here in Queensland but am confused about whether a lighter 20-gauge would suit me better than a heavier 12-gauge. I'll mostly be shooting rabbits, feral pigeons and sporting clays. Any advice appreciated.

**Mike James, Qld.**

**A** That's a big question for a column like this but let's give it a go. Traditionally, the 12-gauge has been the most popular shotgun gauge for the bulk of shooting here in Australia. Field loads can be very heavily loaded with large quantities of various sized shot to ensure the best chance of cleanly killing whatever game you're hunting. It's possible to launch up to about 1½oz of shot with 3" magnums, alternatively you can use lighter payloads of 7⁄8-1oz to reduce recoil and crunch clay targets.

The 20-gauge is a smaller shell usually chambered in lighter shotguns for bird shooting in the US, UK and Europe. Loaded with between ¾ and 1oz of shot, these shells are not as long-ranging as heavily loaded 12-gauge shells but with intelligent choice of shot size and 1oz load, the 20-gauge probably covers about 80 per cent or more of most field shooting situations.

If you're planning a bit of field shooting with lots of walking then the 20-gauge is a good idea. Cartridges are more expensive but weigh less in your pocket and give a very good account of themselves on the small game you mention, and are equally

good for sporting clays where 1oz loads are generally the maximum allowed anyway.

Choice of shotgun is also important and the over-and-under is by far the most popular in the world at the moment. You can find some excellent 12 and 20-gauge guns in side-by-side configuration and they're generally designed for field shooting but can still be used for fun clay shooting events.

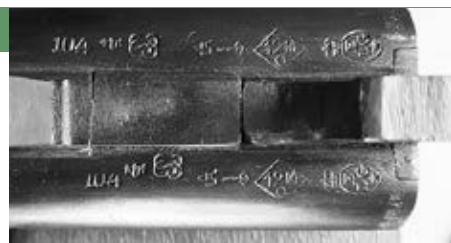
There's a definite movement at the moment here in Australia towards lighter gauges for shooting clay targets like Skeet and Sporting Clays as well as field shooting if only for the novelty value. So good luck with your choice - 12-gauge will be more versatile but the 20-gauge is potentially more interesting and lighter to carry in paddocks and hills.

**Paul Miller**

**Q** Could you assist with identification of a .410 shotgun bought recently. From the marks on the firearm I deduced it's a black powder gun made in Belgium. Some marks indicate dates from 1852 to 1893, others I can't identify - under the butt plate someone has roughly drilled a date of August 1925. There are no names on the rib or elsewhere and chamber length is 65mm. Any other information greatly appreciated.

**Ray Thomas, via email**

**A** Your gun - a side-lever double barrelled .410 - was definitely made in Liege, Belgium some time after 1893 since the crown over 'ELG' in an oval came into effect at that time. It bears only black powder proof marks. The numbers 10.4 on each barrel refer to the bore diameter in millimetres (equivalent to 0.410"). The 'Le Perron' proof marks (little towers) came into effect much earlier (Wirnsberger's Standard Directory of Proof Marks says they were adopted in 1811). The 'G' stamped under the barrels, according to website [www.damascus-barrels.com](http://www.damascus-barrels.com), suggests the gun may have



been made by Henri (or perhaps Hubert) Gulpen, one of numerous gun-makers from the Liege area.

After failing to find information on the '12M over C' in the diamond in books or from local contacts, I got in touch with Belgium's M. Alain Doubresse, an authority on firearms based in that country who explained this referred to the chamber diameter in millimetres (12mm being the outside diameter of a .410 cartridge). This also holds a clue to the age of the gun since this method of gauge specification changed in 1924. The other impressions (reversed 'P' below a star and 'LA' beneath a star) stamped into the barrels identify the 'controllers' (inspectors) from the Belgian proof-house. The intertwined 'EL' in script is a provisional proof mark.

There were hundreds of gun-makers operating in and around Liege at this time, many of whom mass produced guns for export. Alain's website [www.littlegun.be](http://www.littlegun.be) lists several hundred 'identified craftsmen' and admits there were many more. Interestingly, he also bewails the fact that some will fade into obscurity because of "the obstinacy of our leaders to fight against the easy targets - honest people!"

The other clue to the gun's age is it bears no marking with a date code. Since the Belgian gunmakers were very careful with markings, and since date marking began in 1922, in my opinion the gun can't have been made after 1921. Furthermore, the star over 'LA' and star over reversed 'P' suggest inspectors who worked at the Liege proof house prior to 1911, so this tightens the age-range to between 1893 and 1910. The marks drilled into the butt below the butt plate appear to be 'CMD, Aug 1925' but are difficult to decipher.

**Geoff Smith**







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# Lucky 13

## Baker's dozen of Stevens single-shots

John Dunn



**No.17 M1894 Favorite in .25 Stevens, top, and No.20 .32 rimfire shotgun.**

Single-shot firearms bearing the Stevens name have been a part of the American landscape since September 6, 1864 when Joshua Stevens was granted Patent No. 44123 in Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts for a tip-up action on a single-shot pistol.

That copyright founded a firearms manufacturing empire which lasted until 1920 when the J. Stevens Arms Company was bought in its entirety by the Savage Arms Company, with Stevens operating as a subsidiary. Some Stevens Ideal Model single-shots remained in production until around 1947 when, after 83 years, the end finally came.

During that period the company went through a number of name changes which were stamped on their firearms and can be

used to identify a manufacturing period on most models (see separate box for a list of company names and timeframes).

The No.52 J. Stevens Arms and Tool Company catalogue of 1907 declared the firm were: "Manufacturers of fine single-shot target and sporting arms, repeating rifles, single-barrel hammer and hammerless shotguns, double-barrel hammer and hammerless shotguns, single-shot pistols, 'Stevens Pope' rifle barrels and specialties, rifle and pistol telescopes, sights, cleaning rods, gun grease, gun oil and accessories."

The same catalogue also claimed: "We are now the largest producers of firearms for sporting purposes in the world and are maintaining this position by constant expansion and increase of business."

### Stevens single-shots

There's no doubt the Stevens name is best known for its huge array of single-shot rifles. From the plainest, low-priced boys' rifles to high-grade target rifles based on the Ideal action, there was something for everyone in the Stevens stable, depending on individuals' needs or the depth of their pockets. What follows are brief descriptions of a baker's dozen of Stevens single-shot rifles that reside in my collection.

### Tip-ups

The tip-up series was built on the Stevens patent of 1864, the action taking its name from the way it operates. When a locking button on the left of the frame is depressed it unlocks the barrel which then tips up to provide access to the chamber. The action



**No.2 open sight tip-up in .32 rimfire**



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# Lucky 13 - Baker's dozen of Stevens single-shots

was used on various pocket, target and sporting pistols, pocket and sporting rifles and single-barrel shotguns.

The tip-up series of longarms was introduced in 1870 and remained in production until at least 1898, some of the higher-grade ladies and target models fitted with forearms, most of the lesser grades not. Stocks were always made from walnut. Numerous variations of the series are known, using three frame sizes, and at present there are three examples of tip-up longarms in my collection.

## No.2 open sight rifle

This has a 61cm octagonal barrel which has been re-blued at some stage and still has the original combination sights listed as standard in the 1886 Stevens catalogue. The frame, triggerguard and buttplate are nickel-plated brass, indicating an early production date supported by a low, two-digit serial number. The walnut buttstock has a worn, varnished finish.

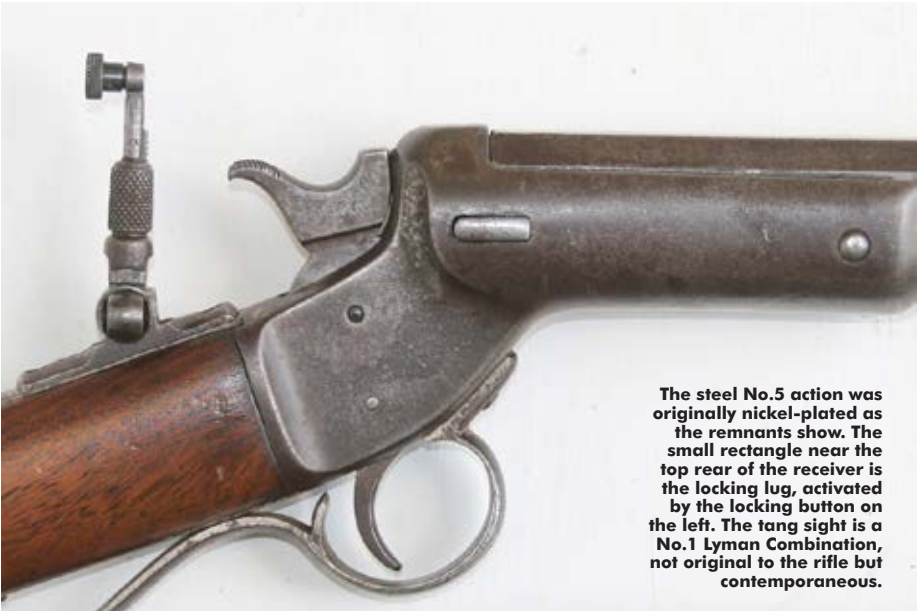
This rifle is in .32 long rimfire but was also made in the .22 and .25 Stevens rimfire calibres.

The earliest reference I've been able to find for it is the Enterprise Gun Works (James Bown & Son) catalogue of 1876 where it was priced from \$30-\$37.50 depending on barrel length.

## No.5 Expert rifle

This has a half-octagonal barrel 61cm long, fitted with a blade fore sight and original open rear sight, the tang sight a second variation Lyman No.1 Combination introduced in 1884. The steel frame, triggerguard and buttplate were originally nickel-plated

but most of this has long since worn away and the barrel lock button has a mushroom-shaped head, quite different to the one used on the No.2 rifle. The No.5 is chambered in the .25 Stevens rimfire, a cartridge introduced around 1890, other calibres being .22LR and .32 long rimfire.



The steel No.5 action was originally nickel-plated as the remnants show. The small rectangle near the top rear of the receiver is the locking lug, activated by the locking button on the left. The tang sight is a No.1 Lyman Combination, not original to the rifle but contemporaneous.



No.5 Expert tip-up in .25 Stevens rimfire.

## Dating Stevens firearms

Barrel or action markings	Period
J. STEVENS & CO. CHICOPEE FALLS, MASS. PAT. SEPT. 6, 1864 or J. STEVENS & CO. CHICOPEE FALLS, MASS, PAT. SEPT.6, 1864	1864-1886
J. STEVENS A & T CO. CHICOPEE FALLS, MASS. USA PAT. SEPT. 6, 1864 or J. STEVENS A & T CO. CHICOPEE FALLS, MASS. USA	1886-1916
J. STEVENS ARMS CO. CHICOPEE FALLS, MASS, USA	1916-1942
Some Stevens arms will be found stamped with SVG inside a circle. This indicates they were made after 1920 when the Savage Arms Company bought Stevens out.	
Reference: Flayderman, Norm. <i>Flayderman's Guide to Antique American Firearms</i> . 9th Edition, 2007	

## Tip-up shotgun

Introduced in 1875, Stevens tip-up shotguns were offered with a choice of 76 or 81cm plain steel barrels in 10, 12, 14, 16 and 20-gauge. Some had forearms, others like mine did not, and all were set up in frames larger than those used on the tip-up rifles.

Twist and laminated steel barrels in 12 and 14-gauge were available as an option with a price premium applicable. To improve the firearm's versatility, rifle barrels in .22, .32, .38 and .44 rim or centrefire calibres could also be purchased, the gun having to be returned to the factory for handfitting of the extra barrel.

In 1880 the Homer Fisher catalogue listed the shotgun for \$12.50 with blued frame or \$14.50 for one with a nickelled frame. My tip-up shotgun is a 12-gauge with a browned finished frame, steel buttplate and 81cm barrel, an interesting piece but not a particularly pleasant gun to shoot.

## Stevens boys' rifles

The term boys' rifles generally refers to a group of firearms made by a host of different companies from around 1890 to the early 1940s. These were specifically designed to introduce boys - and no doubt plenty of girls - to the shooting sports and basic levels of





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## Lucky 13 - Baker's dozen of Stevens single-shots

marksmanship. Stevens was a key player in the market and the rifles are just some of the many variations.

### The Favorites

Arguably the best-known boys' rifles ever made, Stevens Favorites ran from 1893-1939 in two varieties - the Model 1894 and 1915. Both used lever actuated dropping block actions designed for .22, .25 and .32 rimfire cartridges only and were never factory chambered in any centrefire cartridge. A take-down screw under the front of the receiver allowed them to be broken into two parts for easy carriage, storage or cleaning, a feature common to all the later Stevens single-shot rifles. The Favorites were the largest of numerous boys' rifles Stevens made.

### The 1894 Model

The 1894 Favorite Model is easily identified by a dip in the back of the breech block, the basic 1894 rifle designated the No.17. The catalogue description listed it as having a 22" (55.8cm) blued, half-octagonal barrel fitted with a Rocky Mountain fore sight and ladder adjustable sporting rear sight, longer barrels available at \$2 per 2" (5cm) up to a maximum of 26" (66cm).

The frame was case hardened with a solid breech block, the top flat stamped FAVORITE with serial number on the lower tang. The two-piece stock was made from oiled walnut and the shotgun-style buttstock fitted with a chequered rubber buttplate, overall weight listed as 4½lb (1.92kg).

In 1903 this rifle was advertised for \$6 and on special order could be supplied chambered for the .22 Winchester or 22-7-45 rimfire cartridge. Introduced for the Model 1890 pump-action rifle, this cartridge was the predecessor of the current .22 Magnum rimfire, the interchangeable Remington equivalent of the time being the .22 Remington Special.

Also available as special order items were additional barrels and breech blocks for different calibres as well as plain and fancy grade stocks, with or without pistol grips and/or chequering. Other 1894 models include the No.18 and No.19 rifles, essentially the same construction as the No.17 but with different sights.

The No.20 Favorite was similar to the No.17 except it had a smooth bore .32 rimfire shotgun barrel, a small brass bead fore sight and groove in the top of the receiver making the model easily identifiable. It originally sold for the same price as the standard No.17 rifle.

The No.21 rifle had a shorter 20"



No.2 M1894 and No.17 M1915 Favorites showing differences in shape of breech block and take-down screws and colour of receivers.



No.17 M1894 Favorite in .25 Stevens, top, and No.20 .32 rimfire shotgun.

(50.8cm) barrel fitted with plain open sights. For an additional \$1.50 a leather-bound canvas carry case could be purchased, designed to be slung under the crossbar of a bicycle where it fitted "snugly within the diamond frame, so the rider is never inconvenienced by the rifle, in fact hardly knows it's there". Hence the term bicycle rifle.

### The 1915 Model

This is readily identified by the squared profile of the breech block. Once again the basic model was the No.17 which had a 23" (58.8cm) blued round barrel fitted with a No.203 Rocky Mountain fore sight and ladder adjustable No.112 sporting rear sight. Calibres available were the same as for the Model 1894 with an automatic ejector fitted in the .22-calibre barrels only. Like the 1894 it also used a lever actuated drop block action with a blued, take-down frame, its overall length 38" (96.5cm) with a weight of just over 4½lb (2kg). In 1920 it could be had for the princely sum of \$10.50.

Other 1915 Favorites were the smooth bore No.20 at the same price and octagonal barrel No.27 for \$11.50. The 1925 catalogue noted the walnut stock as being of "suitable dimensions for men" and the rifle "... the favorite of men and boys for combined hunting and target shooting",



After the tip-up series all Stevens rifles could be taken down for cleaning, carriage or storage.



Reproduction and original Stevens catalogues are great sources of information.

both comments reflecting the widespread popularity the Favorites achieved across all age groups.

Next month: The Little Scout, Marksman and more. ●





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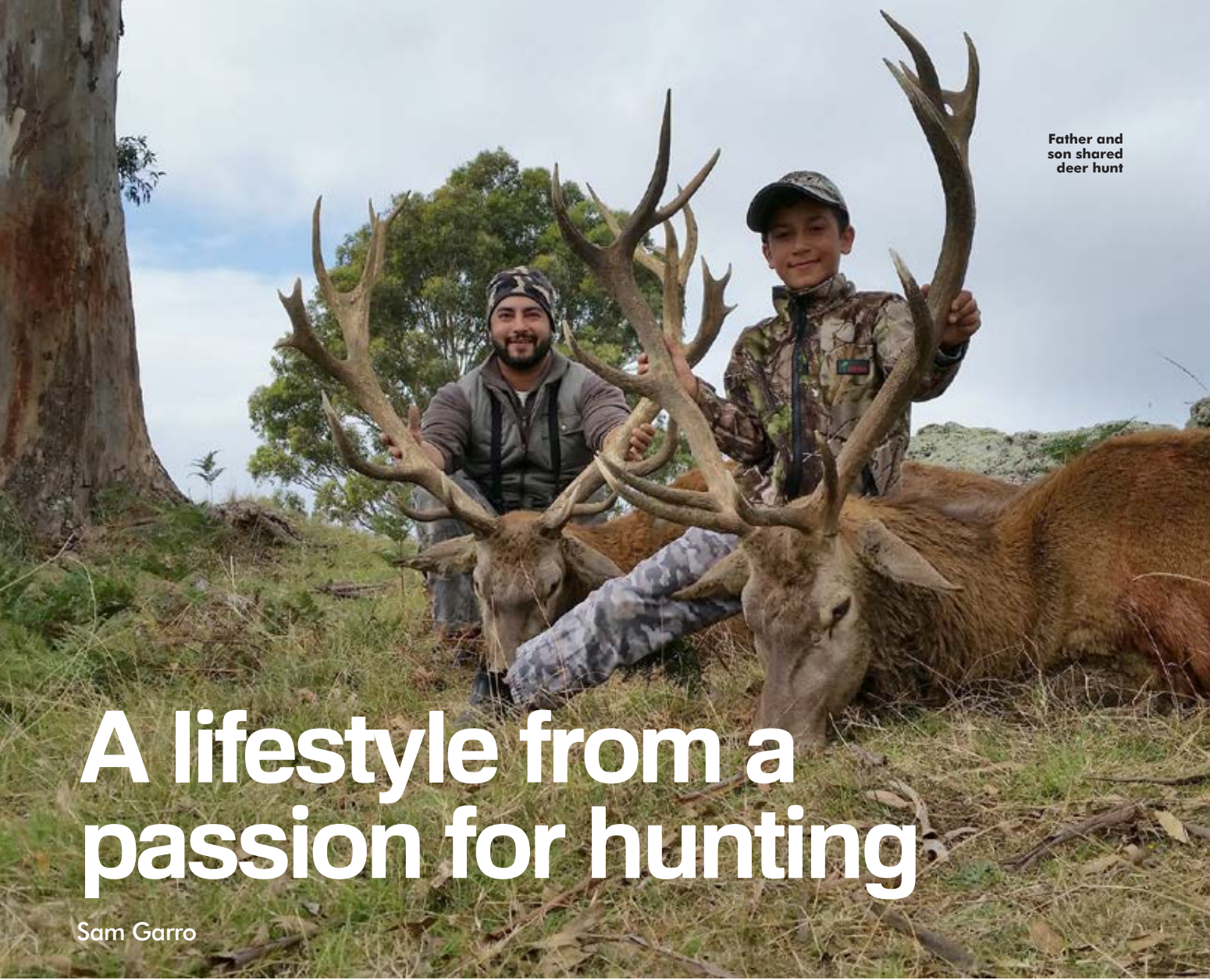


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A photograph of a man and a young boy standing in a grassy field with two large deer antlers. The man, on the left, is wearing a grey jacket and a beanie. The boy, on the right, is wearing a camouflage jacket and a cap. They are both smiling and holding the antlers. The background shows trees and a cloudy sky.

Father and son shared deer hunt

# A lifestyle from a passion for hunting

Sam Garro

In our all absorbing, liberating and capturing sport of hunting, you meet some interesting people who've made a profession out of a recreational activity they're passionate about and enjoy. Similar to taxidermists, gunsmiths, gun stock makers, wildlife sculptors, gun dealers and others who're also avid hunters, Bill 'The Tanner' from Melbourne's western suburbs has structured his work around what he loves most - hunting, tanning hides and skins, guiding hunts and providing client essential services.

From arranging property access, bookings and accommodation to attending to animal skull and antler horn preparation, organising game shoulder trophy mounts through reputable taxidermists and more, he's basically a one-stop do it all for the hunter. Bill's a busy man - but he wouldn't have it any other way.

## In the beginning

His passion began early while hunting and fishing with his father, their favourite pastime creating memorable moments together. Ultimately, as an adult licensed firearms owner he pursued a range of game, in particular the various deer species that held a special attraction for him both in Australia and New Zealand, including chamois and tahr.

His love of hunting grew stronger before taking him to Africa, in particular Namibia and South Africa in pursuit of majestic plains game such as impala, kudu, oryx, sable and eland and some of the smaller species including duiker and klipspringer, fond memories and unforgettable experiences leading him to further consider sharing all that Africa and its people had to offer.

## In time

Like others before him who enjoyed guided hunts and later established their own businesses in a similar vein, Bill wanted other hunters to experience and share what deer hunting in Australia and safari hunts in Africa were all about so set himself up as a guide for deer stalking and an agent for African hunts. While he remains an avid and dedicated hunter when opportunity and time allows, guiding others keeps him close to the action and in touch with nature and hunting.

## Tanning

In regard to his main occupation, Bill is essentially a self-taught one-man operator whose reputation has grown steadily through his excellent tanning work on all manner of game from fox pelts to deer skins, scrub bull hides and water buffalo



# sako s20

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## A lifestyle from a passion for hunting

cap. His treated skins and hides are stretched in the final process to result in pliable soft leather, especially important for taxidermists working on head or shoulder mounts who need to precisely position delicate facial parts to best effect.

With his field skinning, caping and game dressing experience through years of hunting, tanning of skins and hides became a natural progression as a viable business, although proved challenging at first in setting up and attracting work.

The tanning business has been operating for about seven years and attracts plenty of work from taxidermists, guided and unguided hunters, safari outfitters and others.

Bill revealed that in a bid to attract work he has kept his prices steady for some time, making it more affordable for the client, especially the everyday hunter, while maintaining a sufficient margin to keep the business going and support himself and his family.

### Skull preparation

Animal skulls are skinned, fleshed out, boiled and sanitised ready for European skull mounting or for taxidermist mounting with the associated cap. Bill also handles requests from other outfitters, sometimes for as many as a dozen Asiatic buffalo skulls and horns scored by enthusiastic foreign hunters in our Top End for cleaning and preparation for shipment overseas, vital the process is done properly to pass Customs inspections here and abroad.

### Guided hunts - Victoria and South Australia

These vary from free range backpack hunts into Victoria's High Country for several days, roughing it in nature's true wilderness areas, to hunting on interstate private concessions for deer and feral game such as goats and pigs. For deer hunts all is provided from wholesome and tasty meals through to comfortable camp accommodation and the creation of an overall friendly environment. Enjoying a meal



Packing buffalo skulls and horns into a crate for overseas shipment to Canada

and recounting the day's events around a glowing campfire is priceless.

Bill remains fully hands-on, attending to more menial tasks such as skinning, caping, retrieval of antlers, horns or tusks as necessary, assisting with meat carry-out

Bill, an avid hunter himself, with a magnificent Sambar stag







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## A lifestyle from a passion for hunting



Some of the soft fox skins tanned for clients

and more, allowing the hunter to fully enjoy the liberating feeling and ambiance of the outdoors and better appreciate the hunt itself. Ultimately if the hunter wants to do any or all of those tasks they're free to do so, with Bill providing guidance and passing on his experience.

He's particularly gratified when guiding 'father and son' teams where an aspiring young hunter can observe, experience and partake in associated activities from learning the different stalking approaches and techniques, bush survival, respect for property and game hunted to dressing out game in the field. Starting at a young age can be invaluable as he or she matures into an experienced and ethical hunter.

For safety reasons and better management, Bill will guide only two or three hunters at a time. His ability to coordinate and guide hunts to a client's individual

ability, requirements and satisfaction has attracted a steady stream of hunters and at the end of the trip, through established connections, he'll arrange for the client's European, head or shoulder mounts to be done by experienced and reputable taxidermists.

### Guided hunts - Namibia and South Africa

The allure of Africa and its game, once experienced, becomes a magnetic attraction and having hunted there himself many times, Bill believes there are reasonably priced hunting opportunities and quality game to be had. His trips there are now more along the lines of acting as an agent for other hunters and accompanying them all the way through the safari process from departure to return.

Successful African hunts he has

conducted with clients can be largely attributed to extensive research into the best guiding and safari outfitters in hunting locations who have access to good numbers of open range quality trophy animals.

Outfitter-critical requirements include proper credentials and satisfied hunter testimonials, suitable accommodation, amenities and meals, local or government authority approvals including permits for game species hunted, availability of game wardens etc.

Bill also sources trained skinner and trackers and access to experienced taxidermists, ensures trophies can be exported to Australia and, top of the list, organises safe and hassle-free passage through airport terminals and Customs while keeping abreast of any changes, political or otherwise, which may affect the African hunting scene.

### Taxidermy

Apart from providing his own tanning service for skins and hides, boiling out skulls and cleaning for European shield mounts, Bill also sends client trophy animal skins, capes and horns or antlers for head or shoulder mounts to reputable taxidermists locally and interstate, providing the service at a reasonable cost.

### Shared approach

Bill believes in reciprocating work among those involved in the hunting scene for everyone's mutual benefit be it gunsmiths, apparel and accessory suppliers, taxidermists or safari outfitters and through his unselfish approach has not only won favour among the traders and professionals he deals with, the hunters he guides are also highly appreciative. Anyone requiring the services of Bill 'The Tanner' can contact him on 0425 838 666 or email [nabilteffaha@yahoo.com.au](mailto:nabilteffaha@yahoo.com.au). ●



Bill and his brother in South Africa with a nice waterbuck



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# Go wild!

## Ruger American Predator in .308 Winchester

Con Kapralos

**T**he Ruger American Rifle in both rimfire and centrefire formats has certainly been a feather in the cap for Sturm, Ruger & Co as well as Australian importer and distributor Nioa. *Australian Shooter* has reviewed several models of the American Rifle in both rimfire and centrefire calibres and they offer an excellent firearm capable of very good accuracy as well as being affordable for new shooter and seasoned sportsman alike.

A recent addition to Nioa's Ruger American line-up is the Predator model, this variant aesthetically on a different playing field thanks to the technologically brilliant cerakoting finishes which are becoming more commonplace. The review rifle supplied was the Predator with cerakote burnt bronze barrelled action and concealment-enhancing 'Go Wild' camo stock finish. It certainly looked the part but the availability of a matching Leupold VX-3i 4.5-14x40 scope cerakoted in the same finish, sold separately by Nioa, makes the whole package a visually striking one.

### Features

The Ruger American Rifle Predator with 'Go Wild' camo stock is offered with the following:

- Burnt bronze cerakoted barrelled action which embraces the new metal protection technology and gives the rifle its identity.
- Cold hammer-forged 560mm heavy-tapered barrel with 1:9" twist in the tested .308 Win calibre (.300 Win Mag offered with 460mm heavy tapered barrel).
- Available in seven calibres - .243 Win, 7mm-08 Rem, 6.5 Creed, .308 Win (tested), 30-06 Sprg, .300 Win Mag, .450 Bushmaster.
- Detachable box magazine - AI-style, rotary or single stack (calibre dependent), three or four-round capacity (calibre dependent).
- Factory-fitted one-piece aluminium scope rail makes scope mounting easy.
- Threaded barrel fitted with muzzle brake, cerakoted to match barrelled action.
- Ruger's Marksman Adjustable trigger can be adjusted from 1.4-2.3kg to suit user.
- Ergonomic lightweight synthetic stock in 'Go Wild' camo pattern designed for quick, easy use with textured grip panels to ensure positive handling.
- Soft rubber recoil pad for maximum reduction.
- Patented Power Bedding integral bedding block system which positively locates the receiver and free-floats the barrel for excellent accuracy.
- One-piece, three-lug bolt with 70 degrees throw provides ample scope clearance and features a full-diameter bolt body and dual cocking cams for smooth bolt travel and cycling.
- Weight: 2.8-3kg.

### At the range

Testing the Predator 'Go Wild' in .308 Winchester was a joy, the Leupold VX-3i scope in 4.5-14x40 magnification with standard duplex reticle crisp and clear at all distances out to 300m (range distance).



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## Ruger American Predator in .308 Winchester

Pairing both rifle and scope with the burnt bronze cerakote finish attracted much positive attention and Nioa look to be on a winner offering the cerakote finish on Leupold scopes through their Australian-based custom shop. Admittedly it doesn't make the rifle shoot any better but there's no denying it looks the part.

Nioa also supplied a quantity of .308 Winchester hunting ammunition in 130 and 150gr bullet weights. The rifle was cleaned before accuracy testing and once the scope was dialed in to point-of-aim at 100m, testing commenced shooting five 3-shot groups with a barrel clean between changes of ammunition (accompanying table outlines the results).

The provision of a muzzle brake, supplied as standard, certainly tamed muzzle jump and recoil but the usual trade-off in muzzle blast was evident. I wasn't sure if the brake could be removed as there was no thread cap supplied and for calibres like the .308/.30-06 and smaller a muzzle brake really isn't needed, but for the .300 Win Mag and .450 Bushmaster it will be appreciated.

Any of the supplied ammunition would suffice as a general hunting load but the 130gr American Eagle hollow-point was the pick of the four with an average of 22mm for the five groups shot at 100m.

### Field testing

The Predator 'Go Wild' in .308 Winchester was taken afield in spring, specifically targeting deer for a dwindling venison supply. Using the 150gr Federal Fusion carried well in the field with the total weight of 3.54kg spot-on when stalking on foot over long distances.

The .308 calibre is well suited for harvesting fallow deer and several animals in prime condition were taken with a





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# Ruger American Predator in .308 Winchester

single shot at distances out to 200m. In all instances, be it range or field, the Predator 'Go Wild' in .308 Win performed without fault, cycling and extracting cases without issue.

For field use a five-shot detachable box magazine would be preferable but the three-shot AI-style magazine supplied with the rifle was still adequate for the task at hand and I'm fairly sure after-market AI-style detachable box magazines would work in the rifle if desired.

## Summary

The Ruger American Predator 'Go Wild' with burnt bronze cerakote finish and concealing camo-patterned stock, available in seven popular hunting calibres, is certain to appeal to new and seasoned shooters and hunters looking for a very capable rifle which not only shoots well but looks the part too. The cerakoted Leupold VX-3i scope supplied with the rifle but available separately matched perfectly. The 4.5-14x40 magnification range I reckon would have to be the new 'standard' for hunting riflescopes and the optics in this case were top-notch. It's been some time



since I used a Leupold optic and I was very impressed by the VX-3i. The Ruger American Predator 'Go Wild' is available through all Nioa network dealers Australia-wide and retails around the \$1100 mark. The custom cerakoted Leupold VX-3i riflescope can also be sourced from the Leupold Custom Shop through any Nioa network dealer. More at [www.nioa.com.au](http://www.nioa.com.au) or ask your retailer. ●



Ammunition testing, Ruger American Predator 'Go Wild' in .308 Winchester - 3-shot groups in mm			
Factory ammunition	Best	Worst	Average
American Eagle 130gr	16	26	22
Federal Premium Nosler Ballistic Tip 150gr	27	36	32
Federal Fusion 150gr	29	41	35
Federal Premium Power Shok 150gr Soft Point	32	37	35
Average group size calculated from five 3-shot groups at 100m			

## SPECIFICATIONS

- Manufacturer:** Sturm, Ruger & Co, USA
- Model:** American Rifle Predator - Go Wild
- Action:** Bolt-action, push-feed, 70° bolt throw. Chrome moly steel receiver, bolt receiver and bolt handle finished in burnt bronze cerakote.
- Trigger:** Ruger's Marksman Adjustable (between 1.4-2.3 kg).
- Safety:** Two-position tang-mounted.
- Barrel:** Cold hammer-forged, 560mm heavy-tapered, 1:9" twist in the tested .308 Win. calibre. (.300 Win Mag offered with 460mm heavy tapered barrel). Factory fitted with muzzle brake. Barrel and muzzle brake finished in burnt bronze cerakote.
- Sights:** Clean barrel, receiver drilled and tapped and fitted with one-piece Picatinny rail for scope mounting.
- Calibres:** .243 Win, 7mm-08 Rem, 6.5 Creed, .308 Win (tested), 30-06 Sprg, .300 Win Mag, .450 Bushmaster.
- Magazine:** Detachable three-shot AI-style made of polymer.
- Stock:** Synthetic with Ruger's patented Power Bedding integral bedding block system, stock dipped in 'Go Wild' camo pattern. Rubber recoil pad and sling swivel studs fitted as standard.
- Weight:** 2.8-3kg (bare rifle)
- Distributor:** Nioa
- RRP:** \$1100 approx (source: Horsley Park Gun Shop, NSW)





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Fig. shows firearm with optional extras.  BLASER | TRADEMARK © 2020

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Aiming for the Australian market

# Hornady American Gunner ammunition

Daniel O'Dea

Several years ago Hornady Manufacturing Company, US creators of reloading equipment and components as well as factory ammunition, saw a chance to market some of their most popular handgun calibres and loads under the 'American Gunner' label. The plan was to give shooters renowned load offerings in bulk packaging at an affordable price which in turn guaranteed quality and value to the end user.

At release the emphasis was on handgun calibres, catering naturally to the huge US demand, but more recently Hornady have repeated the concept with rifle ammunition via the introduction of five calibres to the American Gunner range in various load combinations. Recognising Australian shooters love a good deal just as much as their US counterparts, Hornady importer/distributor Outdoor Sporting Agencies sent *Australian Shooter* some American Gunner ammo for test and review purposes.

Of course we know the US sector is dominated by firearms (self-loaders) which

are either extremely limited or totally prohibited for civilian Australian shooters, so some of the five American Gunner calibre selection might not be the biggest drawcards Down Under. Thankfully the array does cover our local top sellers in .223 Remington, .308 Winchester and the new-favoured long-range kid on the block



in the 6.5 Creedmoor. Maybe more niche in this bracket the .300 Blackout and 7.62x39 calibres round out the options, though in bulk form they should prove popular with primary producers and feral animal controllers with Category 'D' rifles chambered in those groupings.

American Gunner rifle ammo comes packaged in quantities of either 50 or 200 rounds, the 50-round packs standing upright on a flat polystyrene tray ready for use on targets or in the field. The 200-round offering is loose packed in a tidy and reusable polymer ammo can, a bonus being the cans have two small ring tabs to accept a tiny lock for additional secure storage and transit - always check local legal requirements for compliance.

Ammo for review included a 50-pack in .308 Winchester and 6.5 Creedmoor as well as a 200-round can of .300 Blackout and while the first two calibres need little introduction, not everyone may be familiar with the .300 Blackout round, so indulge me a little.

The .300 Blackout is dimensionally close to, and in most cases interchangeable with, the .300 Whisper cartridge, both designed on a necked-up (from .224 to .30) .221 Remington Fireball cartridge, introduced by Remington in 1963 for their XP-100 pistol and mainly used in Metallic Silhouette. The .300 Whisper was developed in 1992 by J.D. Jones of SKK










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## Hornady American Gunner ammunition

Industries, primarily as a more accurate subsonic pistol round firing heavier rifle bullets while also being ideal in suppressed rifles.

The .300 Blackout was built up in 2009 by Advanced Armament Corporation (AAC) who'd been tasked by a military customer to expand a .30 calibre round to function in an M4 platform rifle using the same magazine and bolt face with no loss of magazine capacity. The client also required an ammunition supply to meet SAAMI (Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute) standards.

The .300 Whisper wasn't a SAAMI standardised cartridge so once the specification was finalised with the client (which does differ slightly from the .300 Whisper), AAC registered it with SAAMI as the .300 AAC Blackout and Remington produced the first factory ammunition.

Ballistically the .300 Blackout isn't all that far off the venerable 30/30 Winchester round but in a more compact and modern rimless case design. It works well on medium game under 200m and is chambered by many rifle manufactures in bolt-action offering and, as a result, has also found favour with some Aussie hunters for close-up work on pigs and suchlike in solid bolt-action rifles.

The Hornady American Gunner .300 Blackout loading pushes a 125gr Match grade hollow-point projectile at 2175fps to deliver 1313ft/lb of energy at the muzzle. Factory-stated ballistics have it 3.9" high (call it 100mm) at 100yds (90m) for a 200yd (180m) zero. The 125gr Hornady Match projectiles have a cannellure groove with solid factory crimp and I noted the primer's pockets appear crimped as well, both valuable features on ammunition that may be used in self-loading firearms where authorised by licence.

At time of testing I had a Warwick Firearms WFA1 straight-pull rifle on hand with an upper chambered for the .300 Blackout round, an ideal calibre match for such a trim, fast-handling rifle. I started testing with a low-powered variable before moving to an EOTech zero magnification red-dot sight. Accuracy was well up to par from the WFA1's short 14" barrel and even at 200m on my rifle plate rack, positioning the dot on the top edge of each plate had them ringing and swinging with relentless monotony.

I'd already received the good oil on the American Gunner 6.5 Creedmoor loading when it was recommended by chassis manufacturer Southern Cross Small Arms. I'd asked for some loading data on the 6.5 Creedmoor and was basically told: "Just



The 155gr .308 Winchester loads produced excellent accuracy.

grab a box of that American Gunner stuff." Turns out they'd experienced outstanding accuracy with it in their own chassis makes.

The American Gunner 6.5 Creedmoor load delivers a 140gr boat-tail hollow-point Match projectile at a muzzle velocity of 2690fps with 2249ft/lb of energy at the muzzle and a high Ballistic Coefficient of .580 (G1) keeps them flying soundly out to those extreme long distances where the 6.5 Creedmoor round excels.

For accuracy testing I turned to my recent Creedmoor chassis build using a Howa 1500 barrelled action in Southern Cross Small Arms' TSP X chassis with a GCPD high efficiency three chambered muzzle brake. Typical groups achieved measured around the 0.5 MOA mark centre-to-centre and often included clovers of three to four shots into roughly half of that. In reality that's about the best I can shoot on a good day with any equipment.

The American Gunner .308 Winchester offering is loaded with a 155gr boat-tail hollow-point Match bullet at 2700fps, making it reminiscent of the of the old 'Palma Match' target loading.

Ballistics printed on the box has the load 2.1" high (53mm) at 100yds (90m) for a 200yd (180m) zero while muzzle energy of 2509ft/lb holds strong, still clocking up 1007ft/lb of energy at 500yds (457m). This time I reached into the gunsafe for my own Remington 700 Police which is well set up

and I have great confidence in. Accuracy mirrored the 6.5 Creedmoor loading with five-round groups around the 0.6 MOA mark, groups in that vicinity always a good day in my book.

It doesn't seem that long ago you could have spent hours fine-tuning handloads for this type of accuracy so to achieve such results straight out the box from reasonably priced factory rounds is impressive and testimony to the quality of modern factory-made ammunition. I'd note the American Gunner loadings were also reasonably mild and not pushing absolute maximum velocities or pressures, something I see as a plus as I'd gladly sacrifice 100fps in velocity if still achieving premium accuracy. This also makes the loadings simple to shoot and easy on equipment and importantly brass should you wish to reload the cases.

From experience, Hornady's excellent boxer primed (single flash hole) brass is a breeze to resize and reload so even if you're determined to reload long-term, American Gunner ammo can be a great place to start a new rifle. Grab 200 rounds to run in your barrel and when you're done you have 200 Hornady level fire-formed cases to start working up reloads with.

American Gunner ammo is imported and distributed by Outdoor Sporting Agencies and available at all good gunshops. Check your local outlet for pricing. More at [osaaustralia.com.au](http://osaaustralia.com.au) ●



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Harold (left) and a mate shooting for skins in the 1930s.

# Gallant 'Rat'

## a victim of the MG 34

Chris Redlich



Harold Redlich with his SMLE No.1 Mark III .303 rifle.

In February 2018 I had the privilege of attending my great uncle's 'Last Post' ceremony at the Australian War Memorial (AWM). On reflection and although 78 years since his passing in North Africa, it was the funeral and memorial service Harold Redlich never had. Organised by my aunt in conjunction with the AWM historical research staff, the service was reverent and solemn. As the bugle sounded the Last Post and everyone stood in silence, we mourned the loss of a relative whom I hadn't know personally yet had heard so much about. My cousin Bill Redlich and I, both former infantry soldiers, were proud to lay a wreath together.

Australia's War Memorial is a valuable asset, the artefacts and memorabilia on display respectfully providing an accurate reflection of the theatres of conflict our service personnel have been involved in worldwide, inspiration for this article dawning as I browsed the WWII North Africa display. Often we hear about the personal weapon carried by a particular soldier but I took a keen interest in the enemy weapon and specifically the cartridge we suspect was used to kill my uncle in battle.

### A brief history

Born into a timber cutting family at Esk, Queensland in 1916, Harold Redlich was the middle child of five to Latvian immigrant parents. In what was undoubtedly a tough upbringing according to my late grandfather, Harold was restless, yearning for adventure and leaving home at an early age.

As with many young men of his generation much time was spent outdoors with a firearm in hand and recently sourced photos give an insight into his hunting where many a wallaby was shot for skins. After a few years goldmining, an adventure too good to refuse beckoned and Harold answered the 'Motherland' call to war in North Africa.

He enlisted in Brisbane on June 5, 1940 and was one of the founding members of the 2/15<sup>th</sup> Battalion (the original 15<sup>th</sup> was formed in Queensland and fought with the 1<sup>st</sup> AIF in the 1914-1918 war from Gallipoli

to France). Initially the Battalion was based at Redbank near Ipswich while training was conducted consisting of infantry drills, rifle exercises and bayonet practice, leading to more specialised training required for an Infantry Battalion of the era.

In July 1940 the 2/15<sup>th</sup> was sent to Darwin by ship to bolster the existing defence presence and by November was back in Brisbane to prepare for deployment overseas. According to letters I've read a strong rivalry between the Darwin Mobile Force (DMF) and 2/15 Battalion often resulted in 'fisticuffs' while on local leave, something my uncle never appeared to be too far from.

### Africa and the Middle East

Following a church service on Christmas Day 1940, the Battalion marched to Redbank railway station for a train to Sydney where they boarded the Queen Mary for the journey to the Middle East. After stopping briefly in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) they arrived in Egypt via the Suez Canal and boarded open box cars for the rail journey to Palestine (Israel), described by many as a 'nightmare'. Here the Battalion was stationed at Kilo 89 Camp just north of Gaza for additional training.

In February 1941 the 2/15<sup>th</sup> was sent to Egypt then into Libya using captured Italian Army transport to the front (early stages of enemy engagement saw Australians and Allied troops tame the Italian army in quick time). But a far more formidable opponent in the German Army led by 'Desert Fox' Field Marshall Erwin Rommel soon had the Allies on the back foot. The Germans were desperate to take the strategic port of Tobruk but the men of 9<sup>th</sup> Division AIF were never going to go down without a fight.

The Siege of Tobruk was a bloody affair for Allied forces and the tenacious AIF were a frustration to Rommel's Afrika Korps as the so-called 'Rats of Tobruk' who dwelled in desert holes halted the German advance. 'Rats' was intended as a demoralising term for the Allies but was typically embraced by the Aussies as a badge of pride. In what was primarily a defensive operation,

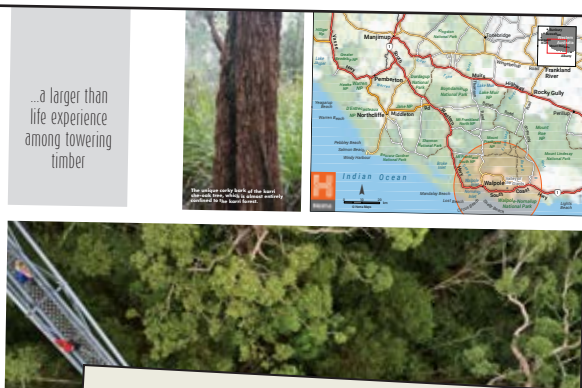


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### An introduction to metal detecting

Paul Selton

As though we're back in the days of the gold rush, metal detecting has become a popular hobby in Australia. It's a way to explore the landscape and uncover hidden treasures. The hobby is growing rapidly, with many people taking up the sport. It's a way to explore the landscape and uncover hidden treasures. The hobby is growing rapidly, with many people taking up the sport. It's a way to explore the landscape and uncover hidden treasures. The hobby is growing rapidly, with many people taking up the sport.

### Cruising the Savannah Way

Mark Brown

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On top of a tall, thin tree, a magpie sits on a branch, looking down at the ground. The bird is perched on a branch that is part of a large, old tree. The bird is looking down at the ground, which is covered in grass and small plants. The bird is perched on a branch that is part of a large, old tree. The bird is looking down at the ground, which is covered in grass and small plants. The bird is perched on a branch that is part of a large, old tree. The bird is looking down at the ground, which is covered in grass and small plants.

8 Great Australian Outdoors

### Lure of chasing pesky porkers entices hunters

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Great Australian Outdoors 111

## Gallant 'Rat' a victim of the MG 34

the Australians carried out offensive manoeuvres in the form of fighting patrols, many conducted under cover of darkness resulting in major casualties and equipment losses. The 2/15<sup>th</sup> was in the thick of it and their night patrols, nicknamed the 'Mad 60', were legendary in Battalion history. Consisting of two platoons, my uncle was one of 60 or so men who volunteered for night raids but, as it turned out, one night he didn't return.

### The disappearance

On the night of May 14, 1941 Harold's fighting patrol had advanced well within enemy territory and close enough to apply the notoriously impotent ST grenades, better known as 'sticky bombs' (anti-tank explosives developed by the British) to 88mm anti-tank guns, armoured and transport equipment. The patrol came into heavy contact in the early hours May 15, 1941 and Harold was never confirmed dead or alive again. A letter from the Army to my Uncle Leo Redlich sheds some light on the last of Harold's movements (see letter one below).

My grandfather Jim Redlich, younger sibling to Harold, told me years ago Harold's status was 'Missing in Action' and for official purposes 'presumed dead'. This was the status on his war records, updated in 1943, but for my grandfather 'presumed' offered no closure. This remained the case until I stumbled across a second-hand book at a Brisbane Gun Show in 2007. The book was compiled from diary entries by a soldier who served with the 2/15<sup>th</sup> and was co-incidentally one of the Mad 60 the night Harold disappeared.

The diary entry of May 16 by Pte (Snowy) Roselt, later killed in the Battle of El Alamein, says: "One good man killed in Redlick, 'killed' charging an enemy machine gun nest." My grandfather, also a WWII veteran, broke down when he read those words just before his death in 2008, as they confirmed his brother's status as not missing but KIA (killed in action), albeit unofficially.

The word 'missing' always left an air of conjecture, however this information

### Letter two

There were also two heavy machine gun posts, one approximately 50 yards to the left and another about the same distance left from the tank. These were both firing by this time, so Cpl SMITHERS split his section and under cover of half his men's rifles plus the Bren guns, led the attack using hand grenades to such good effect that both guns were silenced, and did not open fire again.

It was during the attack on the second machine gun post, that he received a burst of bullets as a result of which he lost his arm. He then called his section to withdraw and was helped back by one of his men, as were the other wounded.

In all, the casualties were one man missing, and three wounded. The patrol was in all approximately two and a half hours getting back and distance was 15 kilos each way.

has no bearing on the official war records or relevant documents but did raise some questions. Why Pte Roselt's version of events, who had witnessed Harold's probable demise, wasn't weighed heavily upon in the post patrol report or backed by other men involved in the raid is a mystery but not unusual given the dire circumstances.

We can only assume 'Snowy' was the closest section member to Harold during the action when others had begun the withdrawal. Harold may well have been killed instantly but that would have been hard to ascertain in such a short, savage engagement of noise, fear, darkness and confusion.

On examination, my cousin Bill and I concluded Uncle Harold was fatally shot by a burst of heavy machine gun fire during his advance to silence the machine gun post, our summation reinforced by the citation of DCM (Distinguished Conduct Medal) awarded to Harold's section commander Cpl Gordan Smithers (see letter two above).

The missing man was my Great Uncle Harold (LCpl Redlich) and we believe he most likely succumbed to a fatal burst of bullets fired from an MG34, the primary German machine gun of the time.

### The Gun

The MG34 was a pioneering machine gun and its design laid the platform with which a lot of modern 'general purpose machine guns' (GPMG) share its DNA. Introduced in 1934 (hence MG34) there were more than half a million produced during a 10-year period. It's a belt-fed, air cooled and recoil operated machine

gun chambered for the 7.92x57 Mauser cartridge.

The MG34 was a quality gun with many components made from cast and milled steel which was costly to produce compared to the later MG42 made largely from stamped metal parts. The MG42 achieved a higher cyclic rate of fire to the MG34 although the MG34 provided the German Army with continuous reliable service until the end of the war. Able to be vehicle or tripod mounted and equipped with a bipod for 'light infantry' use, Germany's MG34 outclassed the Anzac and British forces' WWI-era Vickers machine gun for its versatility and lighter weight.

### The cartridge

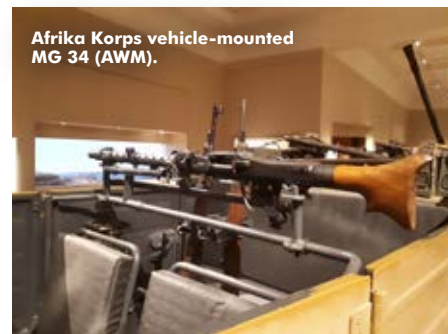
Adopted early last century, the 7.92x57 Mauser cartridge was the standard chambering for all German forces of both world



Afrika Korps enemy machine gun post armed with a tripod-mounted MG 34.



MG 34 with bipod legs extended and magazine fitted.



Afrika Korps vehicle-mounted MG 34 (AWM).

Unfortunately no one can give any further information than you have already. The last anyone saw of Harold was moving forward to attack a machine gun post. Though not present on the patrol myself, the story of it is well known throughout our B/n. It was known as the "Mad 60", all volunteers, for a very risky job. Though unsuccessful as far as the main task was concerned, some good work was done by the patrol and there were some acts of heroism performed that night. Not the least of which was your brother's action which have made this patrol one of the highlights of the Battalion's history. I first became acquainted with Harold at Redbank where was in my platoon. I found him a capable and willing soldier and a very decent chap who was well liked and had many friends in the B/n.

### Letter one



wars. Designed in 1888, the M/88 was originally loaded with a 226gr round nose projectile of .318" diameter which proved too slow and hampered its true potential. The later 1905 pattern 7.92x57 Mauser standardised military load with 154gr 'Spitzer' (pointed) projectile of .323", driven at 2880fps by a more powerful smokeless powder, improved the effective range and delivered a much flatter trajectory. Unlike the .303 British rimmed case round used by the Aussies, the 7.92x57 Mauser has a rimless bottle neck case design reminiscent of today's cartridges.

The German round's muzzle energy of 2835ft.lbf. outperformed the .303 Brit's 174gr projectile and enjoys a large following to this day for sports shooting and hunting, now known commercially as the 8x57mm or 8mm Mauser. The 7.92x57 Mauser is also thought to be the grandparent case and inspiration for many other cartridge developments, sharing some dimensional similarities. There's no hiding the fact the 7.92x57 was an effective 'man killer' in battle and at close range my uncle didn't stand a chance against a burst of bullets from an MG34.

#### In memory

This month marks the 79th anniversary of my great uncle's death. Known affectionately as 'Red' to his mates he wasn't the first Australian to die on active service and won't be the last, but he was a direct ascendant who died in battle and our family will never forget his sacrifice. Lance Corporal Harold Redlich's plaque has a space at the El Alamein war memorial in Egypt and Australian War Memorial in Canberra, one of thousands who made the ultimate sacrifice on foreign soil.

As I started writing this article and sought more information I unearthed more details of his death as I went. Countless families have lost loved ones in operational service but Australians are fortunate to have many avenues of obtaining records of service. There's untold information available from the National Archives and Australian War Memorial in Canberra and I encourage anyone who'd like to find out more to explore those archives and AWM website or call one of the helpful volunteers at the AWM family research centre.

- Acknowledgements - Bill Redlich: *The Last Patrol*; Margery McDonald Smith: *Half a Life: Diary of a Tobruk Rat*; Ron Austin: *Let Enemies Beware: History of the 2/15<sup>th</sup> Bn 1940-1945*; Bill Chard, SSAA Dalby for sample military ammunition; Brian Labudda, Wondai Traders.

- Page 44: MG 34 bolstered German war effort ●







# MG 34 bolstered German war effort

Ivo Dimitrov

**T**he Maschinengewehr 34 or MG 34 is a German recoil operated, air-cooled machine gun which, together with the later developed MG 42, served as the primary rapid fire items of the German Army in World War Two.

The MG 34 was introduced in 1934 and issued widely from 1936 onwards. It brought with it an entirely new concept to the machine gun world, namely the Einheitsmaschinengewehr (Universal machine gun) and is generally considered the world's first general-purpose machine gun, this at a time when armies fielded both light and heavy machine guns simultaneously.

Heavy machine guns being mainly of the water-cooled WWI Maxim type were primarily reserved for defence, whereas light machine guns being the air-cooled variety were meant for offence. In the case of the MG 34 the Germans decided one gun could do both jobs - when mounted on a lafette (gun carriage) it served in the heavy defensive role and on the bipod it served the light offensive task.

The lafette for the MG 34 was a sophisticated accessory with optics for indirect and direct line of fire as well as a recoil-operated mechanism which could be set to cover an area with fire by a simple pull of the trigger. In addition, the lafette folded into a backpack that could be carried by one man on his shoulders.

The versatile MG 34 was chambered

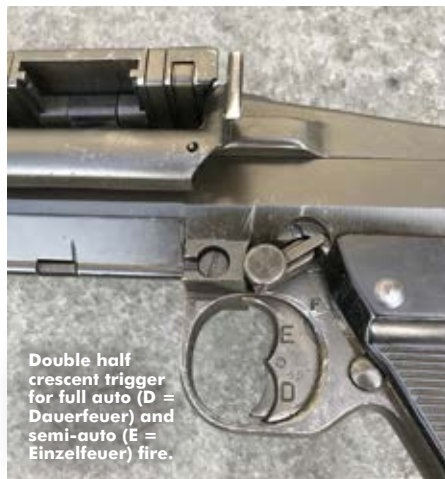


for the standard German rifle cartridge (7.92x57mm Mauser) and was arguably the most advanced machine gun design of its day. It was envisaged and well developed to provide portable light infantry cover as well as anti-aircraft duties and even sniping ability since it could be single-shot in semi-automatic mode, especially when mounted on the lafette.

The double half-crescent trigger could be depressed in two different locations, giving single or full auto fire as desired, was light enough to be carried by one soldier and offered a high rate of fire (900 rounds a minute). Nonetheless the outline proved complex, expensive and time-consuming for mass production as the whole gun was practically machined, the reason it was supplemented by the more famous MG 42 in 1942. Despite that, the MG 34 remained in production until the end of the war.

After World War One the German Army (Reichswehr) was restricted by the Treaty of Versailles to 792 heavy water-cooled Maxim machine guns and 1134 light machine guns, production and development of automatic weapons also prohibited. After Hitler came to power in 1933, Germany sought avenues to skirt around the Versailles limitations with their arms experts working or cooperating abroad.

The MG 34 was based on a 1930 Rheinmetall blueprint - the MG 30 - and both the Swiss and Austrian militaries had licensed production of the MG 30 from Rheinmetall. The MG 30 look was adapted and modified by Heinrich Vollmer who originally intended the feed mechanism to accept MG 15-inspired 75-round



Patronentrommel 34 spring-loaded saddle drums. These proved rather involved.

In 1937 the feed was revamped to employ the reusable non-disintegrating Gurt 34 metal belts and a 50-round Gurttrommel 34 (belt drum), feeding based on the direct push-through of the cartridge out of the belt into the chamber by the bolt. The Gurttrommel was designed to be clipped on the left side of the gun and wasn't a true magazine but rather held the curled 50-round belt. The capability to use the previous 75-round Patronentrommel 34 saddle drum magazines (with a simple change of feed cover for a Trommelhalter magazine holder) was retained.

As the MG 34 was technically based on, and featured framework elements of several other machine guns, the German arms industry worked out a complicated royalties system to satisfy all parties.



In the field the gun could operate in offensive or defensive roles. In offensive mode with a mobile soldier, either a 50-round Gurttrommel or 75-round Patronentrommel 34 was used, in stationary defensive role it was mounted on the lafette and fed by the non-disintegrating metal belt. Belts were carried in boxes of five, each containing 50 rounds and could be linked together for sustained fire. The MG 34 was the principal infantry machine



## MG 34 bolstered German war effort

gun until 1942 and remained the primary co-axial mounted tank machine gun.

The German tactical doctrine differed from that of their enemies in that the squad's firepower was based around the general-purpose machine gun in the light role, so riflemen were there largely to carry ammunition and provide covering fire for machine gunners, the advantage being it greatly added to the overall volume of fire which could be put out by the squad. The Allied doctrine centred on the squad's riflemen and the role of the machine gun was to provide covering fire for those riflemen.

The MG 34 fires from an open bolt and keeps the barrel open at both ends after firing ceases, allowing airflow to help it cool faster while retaining the next unfired round outside the chamber in the belt until the trigger is squeezed again. The firearm was designed with a rotating bolt operated by short recoil aided by a muzzle cone booster.

When the gun is ready to fire the bolt is pulled to the rear and held by the sear. With the pull of the trigger the sear disengages, sending the bolt forward under pressure from the recoil spring. A cartridge is stripped from the magazine or belt and the round pushed into the chamber and as the bolt moves forward into the battery it rotates, engaging the locking lugs and chamber, locking the bolt to the barrel. The firing pin strikes and the round is fired.

Recoil causes the barrel and bolt to move backwards a short distance, the rearward movement of the barrel causing the bolt to rotate back, disengaging the locking lugs

and unlocking the bolt from the barrel. The barrel returns to its forward position while the bolt recoils to its rear spot, the empty casing ejected and the cycle can repeat.

The MG 34 barrel could be quickly changed to avoid overheating during sustained fire and weighed 2kg. During barrel change the operator would disengage a latch on the left of the receiver which held the receiver to the barrel sleeve. The entire receiver section could then pivot off to the right, allowing the operator to pull the barrel out. For the heavy machine gun role a larger tripod, the MG 34 Lafette 34, included a number of advanced features such as recoil-absorbing buffer springs.

Another unique trait of German World War Two machine guns was the Tiefenfeuerautomat feature on the Lafette 34 tripod. If selected, this element mechanically controlled the rise and fall of the gun, elevating it for five rounds then depressing it for four, thus walking the fire in wave-like motions up and down the range in a pre-defined area. The desired scale of the sector could be set on the Tiefenfeuerautomat, sweeping of the selected zone continuing automatically as long as the gun is fired. A common accessory for the second gunner was the spare barrel container or Laufschießer (literally barrel protector), which contained a spare for changing when the barrel overheated due to sustained fire. The second gunner was also issued with an asbestos glove to remove the hot barrel.

The MG 34 was manufactured by five factories with the following approximate production figures. Factory codes found on the receivers are indicated:



**Bolt.**



**Receiver maker mark (BSW) plus the date of 1939 and serial number.**



**Laufschießer marking with manufacturer's code (bhm) and year of manufacture 1943.**

- Maget (Maschinen und Geraetebau Berlin) 70,000; code: cra.
- Waffenwerke Brünn 170,000; code: dot.
- Mauser Werke Borsigwalde 60,000; codes: S/243 and ar.
- Berliner-Suhler Waffen und Fahrzeugwerke/Gustloff-Werke Suhl 131,000; codes: BSW and dbf.
- Waffenfabrik Steyr 7000; code: bnz.

The example featured here was built by Berlin-Suhler Werke (BSW) in 1939. BSW, being the old Simson factory which was the officially approved weapons manufacturer for the German Army under the Versailles Treaty, did not disguise their factory in code like other manufacturers until the war started. Being a pre-war to very early war example it is profusely serial numbered and Waffenamt marked. It is fully matching apart from the top-cover and buttstock. ●



**Rotated sleeve for barrel change.**





# Let's get this straight

## WFA1-L a 'victim' of its looks

Daniel O'Dea



**B**ack in 2016 I reviewed a uniquely Australian-made straight-pull rifle in the form of the Warwick Firearms WFA1. To recap, the WFA1 is a manually operated straight-pull (bolt-action) rifle which shares several attributes with those found on some self-loading variants including modular alloy construction, pistol grips and other ergonomic features and controls.

But unlike the myriad of chassis systems on the market which use a more conventional turn-bolt-action format, the WFA1 employs an upper and lower receiver and spring assisted, manually operated, reciprocating bolt which arguably does share more in common with some self-loading firearms designs than other bolt-action rifles. Even so the WFA1 never was, can, nor ever will be a self-loading rifle and was specifically engineered with traits incorporated into the layout to prevent any possibility of attempted conversion.

Unfortunately, and primarily based on some obscure notion that firearms should be categorised on looks rather than reality of function, the WFA1 has fallen foul of 'appearance' regulations in some Australian jurisdictions. Currently it is correctly categorised as 'B' in Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and Northern Territory but labelled in the other States and Territories as a prohibited firearm based on its looks.

Ironically, many of the dissenting jurisdictions point to the National Firearms Agreement as reason for their negative classifications. The irony is this does nothing but demonstrate the ridiculousness of having such subjective regulations related to appearance in the first place as clearly half the country's regulators see it differently to the other half.

With that said and as far as potential ownership is concerned, I apologise in advance if while in reviewing Warwick's

latest improved version of the WFA1 for those who can own it, we may unduly whet the appetite of those who can't.

As mentioned, the WFA1 consists of both upper and lower receiver assemblies. The upper receiver contains the barrel assembly bolted into a unitary chassis along with the bolt, cocking handle, bolt carrier assembly and spring assembly, while the lower receiver contains the trigger group, bolt hold open, magazine release, safety lever and stock assembly. The action itself consists of a bolt handle positioned directly on to the bolt carrier assembly.

A rotating multi-lug bolt within the bolt carrier assembly runs along internal rails with a compressing spring assembly assisting the carrier into battery. In operation, once fired the bolt handle is manually pulled to the rear, unlocking the bolt and opening the breech. During this action any spent cartridge is withdrawn and ejected,



at the same time the bolt carrier rides over and re-cocks the hammer. On reaching maximum rearward travel and releasing the bolt, the now-compressed spring assembly drives the carrier assembly forward picking up a new cartridge from the magazine, loading it into the breech and locking the bolt back into battery. The rifle is again ready to fire with the process repeated for each subsequent shot.

The system is smooth, easy to operate and requires less manipulation than a conventional turn-bolt-action rifle but still needs removal of either the gripping or offhand to manipulate the bolt, which arguably makes it slightly slower to cycle than say a pump or lever-action rifle.

What it does offer in spades over other designs is its ease of modularity in that upper assemblies can be swapped out, literally in a minute, for calibre/barrel change. Likewise, many consider the functional relationship of pistol grip, trigger and safety selector as laid out on the WFA1 to be of a superior ergonomic design. Lastly, for those simply bored with conventional firearm layout, many find such a rifle fun to operate and dare I say, with more moving parts to play with, mechanically appealing.

So what's new with the WFA1-L? One



Sharing the same bolt assembly and magazine, calibre change from .223 Remington to .300 Blackout can be done in a minute.

main criticism of the original WFA1 was its weight. With its full quad rail monolithic upper receiver and heavy profile barrel it notched a hefty 4.5kg bare, unloaded and optic-free. In the latest version weight is stripped out by removing side and lower monolithic rails, replaced with a choice of either M-LOK or KeyMod side and lower attachment points. Likewise, the bolt carrier has lightening cuts to further

reduce the weight with the overall saving approximately 1kg depending on specification ordered.

Warwick Firearms' products have always been well built with attention to detail and proprietor Scott Warwick loves to keep up with the latest hi-tech finishes such as nitrided barrels and cerakoted receivers. This now steps up with the use of Guhring fire coating. Applied to the bolts and cam



Daniel favoured the WFA1-L in .300 Blackout when matched with a zero magnification EOTech holographic sight.

## WFA1-L a 'victim' of its looks

pins, this titanium aluminium nitride (TiAlN) multi-layer coating is the same used on carbide drills and offers outstanding wear resistance and low friction. Another upgrade is the ambidextrous bolt release making it even easier to lock, open or free the bolt in either left or right-handed operation. The trigger has also been highly refined from the earlier model, which is a lot snappier.

In reviewing this type of firearm it's important to point out that design and construction is full of compromise. For example, a heavy barrel may be more stable and aid accuracy but its benefit - the weight - is a deficiency if you carry the gun more than shoot it. The WFA1 does have some characteristics which need to be considered for fair comparison and one I'd like to cover is 'primary extraction'.

When a cartridge is fired the case expands to conform with internal dimensions of the chamber. As the projectile leaves the muzzle, pressure releases and the cartridge case slightly contracts but (depending on a myriad of factors) may well still grip tightly to the chamber wall. With a conventional turn-bolt-action, as the bolt is lifted the camming action of bolt lugs lend mechanical advantage to break the cartridge case free. This is primary extraction.

Conventional turn-bolt-action rifles generally offer the strongest primary extraction, pump and lever designs mostly less, and most straight-pull actions little to none. Self-loading firearms generally rely on brute force via direct gas impingement or gas pistons to operate the action and overcome any sticky extraction. As a result, don't expect to be able to run random reloads in your WFA1.

Like all major manufacturers, Warwick recommend only the use of factory loaded ammunition in their rifles. Whereas in a turn-bolt-action rifle you might manage with reloading mixed cases of multiple firings stretched and expanded, you're more likely to run into extraction issues with a straight-pull rifle. For those who insist on reloading I recommend starting with new brass, keep it monogamous to that rifle, leave the loads moderate and full length resize on every firing. I'd hazard you'll have no problems at all.

Likewise, with split receiver designs such as with the WFA1, the receiver is nowhere near as stiff as with other action types. Also, hammer fired triggers have longer lock times (the phase from which the sear breaks to when the firing pin strikes the primer) than with striker-fired bolt-action rifles, neither of these aspects conducive to fine accuracy.



Military acceptance for split receiver designs go as high as 5MOA (125mm at 90m). That's not to say the WFA1-L is inaccurate - on the contrary, as a precision engineered firearm that maintains tight tolerances accuracy is good for one of this design. But think more in terms of a fast-handling lever gun than a half-minute bolt-action rifle.

At the range the WFA1-L with the .223 Remington (.223 Wylde cut chamber) upper fitted, I experienced good practical accuracy with most ammo tried at 100yds. In one exercise I fired a 15-round group using Winchester 55gr soft-points and at the extremities the group measured 50mm but 10 out of the 15 rounds cut a group about half that size.

I also had a .300 Blackout upper to try with a stumpy 14" (356mm) barrel and used Hornady's American Gunner 125gr HP loading. I started with a low-powered variable but just about fell in love with the combination when I mated the short barrelled .300 Blackout upper with a zero magnification EOTech SPX3 holographic sight. Zeroing the centre dot at 25m had me ringing and swinging my steel plate chain rack at 200yds with relative ease. This is where the WFA1-L really shines - compact and fast-handling, this combination would be perfect for bowling pigs at close to medium ranges.

The WFA1-L excels in the fun factor - easy to shoot, well balanced with great ergonomics and ideal for smacking steel plates, general plinking or even going after the local feral pig population. Find out more at [warwickfirearms.com.au](http://warwickfirearms.com.au) where you can configure, build and order your own rifle and even nominate your local Warwick's approved supplier to have it shipped to on completion. For original WFA1 owners,

Warwick Firearms offer several levels of retrofit upgrade to new WFA1-L specifications starting from \$1000. ●



## Specifications

- Rifle:** Warwick Firearms WFA1-L
- Action:** Straight-pull bolt-action
- Trigger:** Single stage adjustable
- Calibre:** Tested .223 Wylde and .300 Blackout
- Capacity:** 10 rounds detachable box magazine
- Barrel:** 14", 16" or 20" options
- Twist rate:** Calibre dependant
- Sights:** Magpul MBUS flip-up optional
- Barrel finish:** Black nitrate
- Receiver finish:** Cerakote (choice of colour)
- Weight:** 3.5kg approximately, depending on specifications
- Length overall:** 830-930mm approximately, depending on barrel/stocking options
- Price guide:** From \$3245



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# Three and easy

## Akkar triple-barrel shotgun

Ben Unten

When I heard Akkar had released a triple-barrel shotgun with 20" barrels I wasn't sure what to expect but certainly wasn't ready to be taken aback on first viewing. I also anticipated the thing to 'swing like a fencepost' but was pleasantly surprised in that area too.

Made in Turkey, the gun comes in an attractive suede-look take-down case, the finish being Realtree *MAX-5 camouflage* which contributes to the 'looking good' part with any exposed metal surfaces of the action deeply blued, including trigger and triggerguard.

The shotgun is configured like a side-by-side with a third barrel sitting in the middle on top. It has a synthetic fore-end and buttstock which keeps the weight down, the fore-end a beavertail arrangement featuring some medium chequering also found on

the pistol grip. There are mounting points for sling swivels towards the back end of the buttstock and just ahead of the fore-end under the barrels.

The Akkar features 76mm (3") chambers with extractors and a recoil pad and comes with three screw-in chokes installed. All Akkar shotguns are steel shot compatible though the owner's manual recommends steel not be used with any choke tighter than modified.

For such a revolutionary concept the Akkar is actually a fairly conventional shotgun in many ways, levers and controls located exactly where you'd expect them to be. For example, there's a single mechanical trigger which works in the same way traditional shotguns do in that the recoil (or inertia) of the previous shot readies the next barrel for firing.

There's a thumb-operated top-lever at

the rear of the action to break open the barrels with the safety positioned just underneath within easy reach, and to break the Akkar down you simply pull the take-down lever under the fore-end, move out the fore-end and the barrels from the action.

But from there the Akkar begins to depart from tradition. There's no rear sight or sighting-rib along the top barrel but that leads to one of the features I really like - a red, fibre-optic front sight. There's been talk in the gun world about fibre-optic sights being too 'distracting' to the eye, but I don't agree as I found this one extremely easy to see and use, more like using a rifle sight which I found helped me 'point' at the target. Many experts, including SSAA columnist and Olympic champion Russell Mark, say you should 'point' rather than 'aim' a shotgun, preferably with both eyes open.





I was able to mount the shotgun where it felt natural then used the front sight to line up the target and once this was done I could work out where to position the sight in relation to the target. I found this to be an intuitive method of aiming (sorry, 'pointing') the shotgun.

This smooth-bore weighs approximately 3.4kg unloaded, surprisingly light considering my old Miroku over-and-under is 3.6kg. Without trigger pull scales I was unable to give a kilogram weight to the trigger which felt a tad on the heavy side (as many shotguns do) but broke cleanly with no creep.

I recruited a hunting partner of mine, Jamie, to do some field testing. Unfortunately the wind was howling but as I prefer to pattern a shotgun at around 40m, it wasn't as big a handicap as I feared. We patterned it on butcher's paper to get

used to 'point of aim' and the barrels fire in the following order (from the shooter's perspective): bottom right, bottom left then top.

The removable choke configuration from the factory is as follows: The first barrel to fire (bottom right) had a three strike (III) marking on its choke which according to the owner's manual indicates a modified choke and measured approximately 17.9mm on my digital callipers.

The second barrel (bottom left) had a choke marked with four strikes (IIII) which is improved cylinder and measured roughly 18.15mm. The final barrel to fire (top) had a choke marked with five (IIIII) strikes which is skeet and measured approximately 18.4mm.

All of which means the first shot has least spread and final shot the most, although this can be modified to suit the shooter's

needs. For example, if I was using shot to hunt pigs I'd consider reversing the order of chokes, that way the first barrel might be fired at closer range at an undisturbed mob and the second and third fired as the pigs were running away.

We took our time on the patterning between shots and found all three barrels shot to the same point of aim, while extractors functioned flawlessly and made it easy to discard spent shells into your pocket or a nearby bucket instead of having to lift them off the ground.

Then we moved on to testing the real benefit of this firearm: its rapid follow-up shot ability. We started slowly, allowing time to reacquire the target between shots, then gradually increased speed as we became more familiar with how the gun behaved under recoil. Aside from being great fun I could absolutely see the potential

## Three and easy - Akkar triple-barrel shotgun

for this shotgun in both clay target shooting and hunting situations where that triple-shot ability could prove invaluable.

Next up, I dragged out my spring-loaded trap thrower and a box of unbroken clays which proved problematic on three fronts: the wind was still howling, we were shooting BBs and it had been a while since I'd shot competitive Trap. Still, I wanted to know how it felt to track a moving target with the Akkar and was pleasantly surprised. It swung far better than I anticipated and while I was a fraction off a perfect score, we broke enough targets that I felt confident enough to take it hunting.

A fox had been hassling my chooks for months and I'd tried unsuccessfully to trap it in my new \$400 animal-friendly cage. I considered staking out the bait station but, according to the time-stamp on my trail cam photos, its usual hours of activity were mostly between 1am and 5am - far too unsocial for me.

Then one afternoon I spotted two foxes approaching from a distant paddock so I tracked their progress and watched them move closer. Eventually they sauntered along a boundary fence close to the house and headed towards our back paddock so I noted the time and decided to try next day.

Sure enough I saw them in the distance heading my way. I went straight out to where I had the breeze blowing across me and hoped to have a decent shot if they continued to advance, which they did. The leader approached, I coughed quietly until it stopped then slapped the trigger on the Akkar, the fox barely twitching as it went down for good. I was thrilled and the young fox was in good condition considering the dry conditions we'd been experiencing.

About 10 days later I was sitting on the deck when I again saw two foxes making their way towards my place. Surely lightning couldn't strike twice yet they kept coming so I retrieved the Akkar from the gun safe and waited. The pair separated and I saw the larger one hanging back, hugging the tree line, the younger one clearly more confident



The second victim of the Akkar.

and heading for the henhouse. As I called "hey" he stopped and looked towards me and with one pull of the trigger down he went, the Akkar impressing once again.

Make no mistake, this firearm has the potential to divide opinion as purists may not fancy the triple 20" barrels and camo pattern while pragmatists might argue this is a revolutionary concept. The triple-shot ability of this shotgun carries extra significance in Australia as current firearm laws do not allow the average shooter access to pump-action shotguns.

There is some recoil and muzzle flip to contend with but I've never used a firearm with faster follow-up shot ability. If I owned one I'd opt for a thicker recoil pad and the

option to select barrels would be a bonus, as would ejectors. The action and take-down process was a little stiff but Jamie and I agreed this would 'wear-in' given time.

This is one of those occasions where performance of the review product didn't just live up to expectations, it exceeded them and as if to prove that point, Jamie is currently saving his pennies to buy one. The Akkar 3 triple-barrel shotgun 20" camo retails for around \$2325. Visit [nioa.com](http://nioa.com) for dealer locations. ●



Removing the barrels from the action.

### Specifications

**Maker:** Akkar  
**Model:** AK320C  
**Distributor:** Nioa  
**Overall length:** 950mm  
**Barrel length:** 508mm (20")  
**Weight:** 3.4kg  
**Chamber:** 12g, 76mm (3")  
**Proof:** For use with steel and lead shot  
**Chokes (supplied):** Modified, Improved Cylinder, Skeet  
**Accessories:** Suede-look case  
**Price:** RRP \$2325





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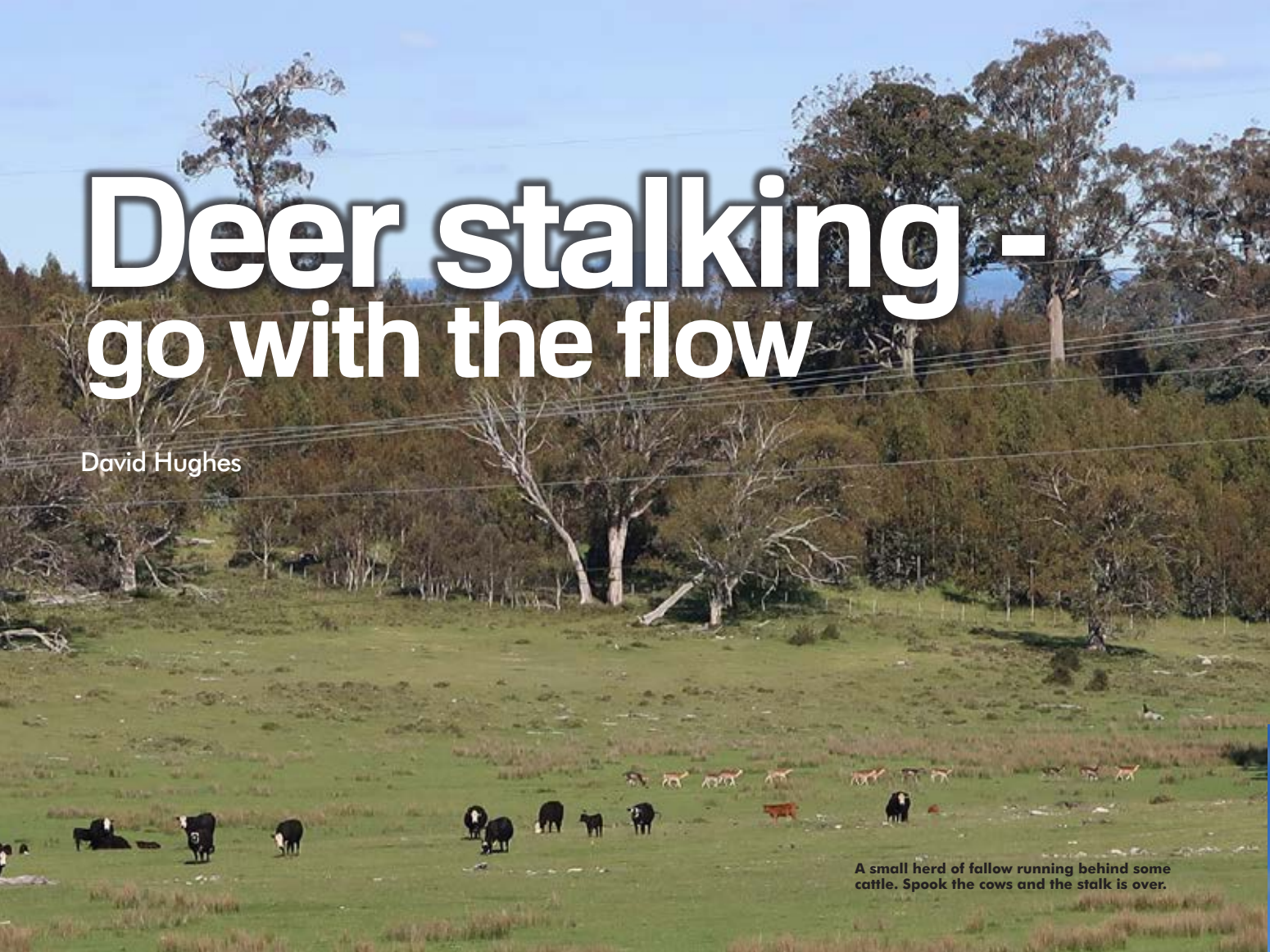
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# Deer stalking - go with the flow

David Hughes



A small herd of fallow running behind some cattle. Spook the cows and the stalk is over.

A fallow doe which had been grazing peacefully a moment earlier now stood rigidly in the alert position, head erect its keen eyes and ears fixed in the direction of the rising fear. For a while it stood frozen, trying to figure out what menace was represented by the dark mass crawling slowly towards it.

Through my binoculars I'd been watching Zeke's slow belly-crawl through the yellow tussocks and knee-high bushes sparsely covering the 500m between my position and around a dozen or so fallow deer. I'd noted the sentinel doe and thought the stalk could be blown when, as if by mental telepathy, another nearby doe locked-in on the alert and the contagion quickly spread.

More and more previously hidden bedded deer stood up, within moments their nervous shifting translating into a fast-disappearing herd. The big-antlered stag which was the motivation for Zeke's stalk could be seen lagging at the rear of the departing mob. The stalk was ruined.

To the true hunter the stalk encapsulates the essence of the hunt, bringing together all his or her knowledge and experience. To

outwit their quarry the hunter needs to intimately understand its habits and the environment in which it lives. The relationship of the quarry with the weather, vegetation and other creatures sharing its domain all become important.

Look out for the wallaby feeding between deer and stalker as it will unsettle the deer if it bounds off. Be alert to possible movement of cattle in the distance - if they stampede in response to an unwelcome intruder the hunt will be over. Likewise, avoid the unnecessary attention of lookout birds which could betray your position with warning calls, white cockatoos, apostlebirds and scrub wrens all common culprits in alerting that something's amiss.

Yet sometimes hunting success can come easily. We've all heard tales of beginner's luck where a novice bags the trophy of a lifetime under the nose of a seasoned veteran. But consistently pulling off successful stalks takes a lot more than luck, and the more effort extended the greater the memory of your hunt. The memento of a stalk should not be measured purely in terms of antler size but also in terms of

the effort and skill required to execute a successful outcome.

My mind reverted to our Tasmanian highland hunting ground where Zeke ruefully retraced the 100 or so metres he'd covered before being rumbled by the deer. Our vehicle was parked under the tree from where we'd originally spied the deer, it was close to midday and in bright sunshine and certainly not the classic time to put a stalk into effect.

Our attention initially had been drawn to one or two deer in the distance, heads down and feeding. Through the binoculars we saw more deer bedded among scattered tussock and fallen timber, then our pulses quickened at what appeared to be a sizeable antler poking out of the grassy cover.

Minutes ticked by as we struggled to assess the quality of the bedded stag but, try as we might, all we could be sure of was that single antler. At such a distance we had the impression of a big, palmy head but beyond that little by way of tines or other detail. Regardless, it was an opportunity not to be missed and the promise of that heavy rack had sent Zeke on his abortive mission.



We reconvened to discuss our next move. The herd had run to my left along a fence line which we knew would direct them to a steep drop-off into a large open valley. Driving there was possible via a roundabout route which would take 10 or 15 minutes. Our rapidly-revised strategy meant me driving to the valley with the intent of scaring the herd back in the direction from which they had come. Zeke would position himself along the fence line which we hoped would limit their escape route to the easiest path available and while it seemed an optimistic plan, it was the best we had under the circumstances.

As I drove slowly up the grassy valley I kept my eyes peeled for any sign of deer sky-lined on its craggy lip. In the absence of a formed track my progress was slow and when I stopped to glass the lightly-timbered valley, several hundred metres away I could just make out a few deer.

I sounded the horn, again and again, and after a few minutes the distant figures disappeared in roughly the desired

direction. I thought there may still be some hope of reviving the stalk and while retracing my tyre tracks down the valley I fancied I'd heard the faint report of a rifle shot.

As I pulled in under the tree I could see Zeke in the distance making wild arm movements which I took as a sign of success. Approaching on foot I wondered what our improvised, vehicle-assisted stalk had delivered. I could see a great-looking palmed antler protruding above the carcass and the rack held more intrigue on closer inspection.

The beams were thick, rough and knobby, by far the most gnarly and ugliest head I'd ever seen. One antler was very respectable albeit with a bey tine and second point on the trey. The left one was just plain goofy, stunted and sporting a right-angled bend a quarter of the way up. The extra bey tine was there too. A cull head if ever I saw one yet a fantastic memento because of the protracted two-stage stalk as well as the curious headgear atop the stag.



Venison harvested from the stag was cooled in the shade of a nearby tree.

Our unconventional strategy resulted in Zeke bagging a fallow stag with peculiar head-gear.





## Deer stalking - go with the flow

As Zeke butchered the stag he recounted the finale to our hunt. As I'd driven off he had positioned himself about 100m from the fence line along which the deer seemed inclined to run. After something of a wait, a mob of does and youngsters came running back but disappeared after crossing the fence before reaching Zeke's ambush point.

Bringing up the rear was the stag which, in typically contrary and wily fashion, didn't follow the herd but continued along the fence only to encounter a 150gr pill from Zeke's heavy-barrelled .30-06 Ruger Model 77.

We bagged the venison and hung it in the shade of the closest tree to cool down in the breeze while planning our next move. By now it was mid-afternoon and after lumping all the meat back to the truck we drove to a spot from which the wind would favour a sunset stalk.

We walked slowly into the southerly airflow, stopping frequently to ensure my quest for another stag wouldn't be stymied by other deer. There were plenty of animals about and they'd be on the move as the sun dropped. Time and time again we had to outwait or skirt around a vigilant doe or small band of deer before continuing on



our way to something hopefully more in keeping with our expectations.

The sun was about to drop below the horizon when Zeke's urgent pull on my arm

signalled something was afoot - straight ahead and only 100m away a stag was approaching. It seemed oblivious to our presence in the fading light as our scent was carried away by the wind in our faces.

As the animal angled across our front from right to left, I deployed my bipod and put a 150gr hand-load up the spout of my .30-06 Winchester Model 70. I had little chance to assess the attributes of the antlers - it was almost dark as I picked up the stag in my Leupold - but my impression was positive so without much thought I locked in my aim and squeezed the trigger.

Simultaneously with the report of the rifle and without so much as a quiver, the stag hit the deck. The bullet had pierced its left shoulder, raking through the vitals for an instant and satisfying one-shot kill, and the last rays of sunlight provided barely enough light for a quick photo. This one had nice even palms and lovely up-curved brows, but was far too narrow to claim as a trophy. Nonetheless its skull mount would take a worthy place on my memento wall.

Our Tassie stag season had delivered two very different stalking experiences, one taking several hours and requiring a blend of conventional and very 'outside-the-box' techniques, the other coming so easily the unfortunate stag practically committed suicide. In deer stalking the hunter must accept the hand that's dealt - sometimes it comes easily and sometimes you must work very hard. But that's hunting. ●







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# Parting can be painful

Henri Lach



A usual haul with the open sights Brno Model 2.

Collectable rifles, shotguns, handguns and antique firearms of all types and from all corners of the globe have passed through my hands over the years. They all came and went to appreciative homes and I waved them a cheerful farewell and gratefully pocketed the proceeds of the transactions. There was never any emotion attached to their departure.

So why am I choked up over this impending sale? Two reasons. Firstly, this sale heralds my total departure from physical gun ownership - this will be the last firearm to leave my keeping. From now on my association with firearms will be purely academic - on paper so to speak - and for academic reasons I'll retain my A and B licence in Queensland, just so I can wave the flag in the cause of gun ownership, keeping up the good fight in any way I can.

My SSAA membership will also continue as will anything I can do to promote this organization and contribute to it. Nothing will ever change my mind about my right to own a gun and to paraphrase the late Charlton Heston, actor and former NRA president, as he hefted a hunting rifle "... from my dying hands".

Secondly, the sale of my last firearm also signals the end of my hunting days. No more will I awake worrying about the weather with fallow deer or rabbits on my mind. No more will I worry about whether the gear is properly packed in the old 4 x 4 which has now been replaced by a very ordinary sedan suitable only for supermarket shopping. The astute reader will have noted by now my age and health are serious factors in this missive. Today, I'm not a suitable inclusion in any team on its way out for game, big or small, in fact I'd be a downright liability.

And so to the subject of this impending sale. It's a rifle that's been by my side for more than 40 years, closer to 50 actually, while others of its type and make have found new masters after passing through my portals. That rifle is a Brno Model 2 .22LR rimfire bolt action with original 5-shot box magazine and front sight shroud of 1968 vintage. Among all the Brnos I've owned this one stood out as a particularly accurate member of its species. I used to joke to my fellow hunters: "I only have to



point it in the direction of a bunny and the bugger falls over."

It never went to an official target range, it was just my bush companion and that's where it proved its worth and although the Model 2 is branded LR (long rifle) it never ceased to amaze with its taste in ammunition. It didn't matter what I shoved down its throat it apparently knew what I wanted to hit - high velocity, medium velocity, longs, even shorts (readily available in both grades in my time).

And like anything considered by its owner to be more special than a 1930 penny, it evoked much discussion, argument and criticism among rabbit hunting mates. "Why don't you put a nice little scope on it?" fellow bunny exterminator Steve used to chide me, waving his expensively scoped .22 BSA rimfire in my face.

He constantly played on my good nature and since he was a long-time mate I couldn't serve him full vitriol, though did suggest on many occasions that my tally of bunnies, without a scope on the 1968 Brno, exceeded his fancy-scoped BSA. He always made some excuse about having reached his quota but as I just counted heads at the end of the day, I had a right to query his judgment.

The only adornment on that Brno is an attractive handcrafted sling, a very functional item when tramping through the bush. I also retained its original front shroud for two reasons - it protected the front sight and was useful when zeroing in on my quarry. Maybe that's just my eyesight but it certainly worked.

Now I know I'm going to cop flak for what I'm about to say but, to put it bluntly, I don't believe a .22LR rimfire hunting rifle with good accurate open sights needs to be equipped with a telescopic sight, nor should it be. Paper punching at the range with expensive optics on a .22LR rimfire is great fun and I recommend it as a family pastime, but if you're going hunting, leave the .22LR scope at home.

I believe the effective killing range of a .22LR rimfire high velocity round out of a 22-24" barrel on small game like rabbits and feral cats is 80m top and feral dogs need to

be at least 30m closer for a clean kill. If you can't achieve that with good open sights like those on a Brno Model 2 then maybe stick to the aforementioned paper punching with the .22 and take your centrefire rifle for a walk instead.

You'll hear plenty of once-a-month hunters boasting they head-shot a rabbit at 200m with a super-scoped whatever on their .22LR rimfire, but an accurate measure of the distance may have shown it to be closer to that optimum 50m range. Telescopic .22LR rimfire hunters appear to live in a parallel world of distances and like my mate Steve will swear that feral cat they dropped with a head shot was at least 150m away.

The other argument I have against scopes on .22LR rimfire hunting rifles is their vulnerability and there's no doubt in my mind that such .22s tend to be treated with a lot less respect than their bigger brothers. Monetary value may have something to do with it as I've seen many scoped .22LR rimfires tossed carelessly into the back of the ute while an expensive deer hunting piece would always receive tender loving care.

The result is the next time that rifle is pulled from the ute for a shot at a bunny, the scope has taken a slight knock that's going to put point of aim out at 20m, never mind that boastful 200, so Bugs hops off into the bushes as the hunter works another round into the chamber, wondering where he went wrong. And before you reach for that keyboard to give me a serve, I assure you I'm no anti-scope troglodyte. Optic technology today means greater hunting rewards and less trauma to game. I just feel it should be kept in perspective.

That's why I never scoped my 1968 Brno - it didn't need one. Open sights very rarely missed our target at .22LR rimfire optimum range and we never aimed at that fox sitting more than 100m away on a grass patch. A very lucky shot may have been fatal, an ordinary hit certainly would have caused injury that gave Reynard pain and suffering and that's something I never liked to think about so we never took stupid long shots.



Excuse me for lapsing into the plural but it's heartfelt. We were a great team and my unscoped Brno and I spent many fruitful years together. That rifle has been a real-life mate, following me from our original first outing in the foothills of Victoria's Warby Ranges to the plains of Tasmania's Huon Valley, into Queensland's Brisbane Valley, on rabbit forays into the Granite Belt in the state's south and Edward River in the far north.

It wasn't dedicated as a hunter in the north, it was just nice to have it handy for a bit of sport on empty cans in a quiet moment. And there was the occasional feral cat - those buggers are everywhere.

The bloke who bought my Brno came round one weekend to fix up the paperwork so he could take possession. He wasn't to know he was buying a substantial piece of my life and to this day I swear he could see the tear in my eye. ●







# The .300 Sherwood - well worth the wait

Dick Eussen

Once in a while I come across a rifle and cartridge combination I've never heard of, as when SSAA Mareeba Pistol Club member Trevor Evans showed me a neat little double rifle. "It's a .300 Sherwood in a Belgium Janssen double," he told me. "Just got it back from the gunsmith - it took eight years to have the restoration completed since I bought it."

While I was familiar with the .300 Sherwood cartridge the maker's name was new to me. The .300 Sherwood is a straight-rimmed cartridge introduced by Westley Richards to compete against the .310 Greener cartridge in 1901. It was intended for use in the Martini-action and Sherwood target rifles.

The round was available in a solid lead projectile or unique but expensive LT-capped Leslie Taylor bullet (he was a Westley Richards director). It had a nickel base, was capped off by a copper jacket at the nose and rated for its impressive accuracy, performing well on game. The

ballistics were impressive for the day with the 140gr JHP bullet using 8.5gr of FL powder (cordite) having 1400fps muzzle velocity and 610lbs energy. Interestingly the bullet calibre is 7.6mm as opposed to the .308 (7.8mm).

WR created the round by lengthening the very mild .300 Rook. The new round was also called the .300 Extra Long or .300 Westley and would probably be termed a magnum today though it's an obsolete cartridge rarely seen. However, in its day it was highly rated as a specialist target round but was introduced at a time when .22 Rimfire Long Rifle shooting, especially in indoor ranges, was become the vogue.

People shot longer ranges than is done today and even in Australia school cadets shot up to 400yds with .310 Martini Cadet rifles, while shooting up to 200yds was the norm for .22 Rimfire competitions. On the continent the .300 Sherwood proved a good round for roe deer and wild boar and the exploits of parties hunting abroad also speak highly of the .300 Sherwood's performance.

BSA, Vickers and Francotte chambered single-shot rifles for the round while quality doubles were made by Westley Richard and Holland & Holland. WR produced a special double rifle for the .300 Sherwood as recently as 2002 while the Europeans also made rifles and doubles for the round, including Belgium's Janssen Fils & Co.

Oddly, I found no record of Janssen ever chambering the .300 Sherwood in their firearms as they were basically a maker of fine shotguns, including a .410 sidelock hammerless model which I believe was the foundation for the double rifle Trevor has. On the barrels it says Janssen Fils & Co, Liege, Belgium so there's no doubting its origin and breeding.

The company underwent major changes in ownership and management from 1880-1915 so records are vague or non-existent apart from some of their shotgun productions. Even the worldwide web knows little and I found no record of the company ever producing a .300 Sherwood. Yet here we are with one in our hands.





**Trevor Evans with his classic Janssen .300 Sherwood double rifle.**

It's a nice double fitted with a quality walnut stock, handles well and, like most shotgun action-based doubles, comes up direct to the point. The action is a .410 box-lock cross-bolt fitted with double triggers, the barrels 710mm long and fitted with fold-down express sight leaves set at 200-300-400, though there's no indication whether that's yards or the European metric system. It has a front ivory bead, a strap swivel set between the barrel and another on the butt stock and weighs about 3.6kg. Trevor fitted a Weaver 1.5x4.5 scope as he intends to hunt game.

He bought the rifle in poor condition from John Saunders of Century Arms. It came in an Army & Navy case with a double-cavity .300 Sherwood mould casting a 130gr bullet by Cast Engineering, plus 40 Bertram cases. Where would old shooters be if it wasn't for Bertram who have resurrected so many obsolete cartridges?

John Saunders warned Trevor the right-hand chamber had been butchered so he sent the rifle to Alex Beer, a



**The Weaver 1.5 x 4.5 scope looks well on the double rifle.**



## The .300 Sherwood - well worth the wait

Tasmania-based gunsmith who repaired and re-reamed the chambers. With that done Trevor cast and coated his first lot of 130gr lead bullets, primed the Bertram cases with Federal small rifle primers, dropped in 12 grains of ADI 2205 and headed to the range.

The loads grouped well at 25m but he was dismayed to discover the right barrel shot 300mm left of centre so decided to have it regulated by an expert. He mailed it to a 'gunsmith' but after three years recalled it as it had only been gathering dust.

After asking around he sent it to Andrew Hepner, a dealer in Geelong and active member of the SSAA Big Game Rifle section. Andrew forwarded it to an armorer who regulated the barrels and told Trevor it didn't shoot too well with 130gr bullets and recommended 150gr for best results.

A Cairns-based CRM Firearms gunsmith fitted a Skinner Lo-Pro aperture sight and scope rail for the Weaver. Following the armorer's advice Trevor swaged some 150gr Sierra HP .308 bullets down to the .300 Sherwood diameter and began again. He started with 10 grains of ADI 2205 for the swaged projectiles which shot well but, never one to rest on his laurels, he sourced a new .301 155gr mould from David Commens at Toowoomba's Cast Bullets Engineering.

With work now complete, Trevor is in the process of building up a sweet load for his dream double rifle project. The .300 Sherwood is comparable to the .357 Magnum in power but Trevor, who suffered a serious back injury in a car accident, says the main attraction of the little double is the low recoil of the .300 Sherwood which has made it possible for him to continue his love of rifle shooting and especially hunting. ●



The front sight has an ivory bead fitted.



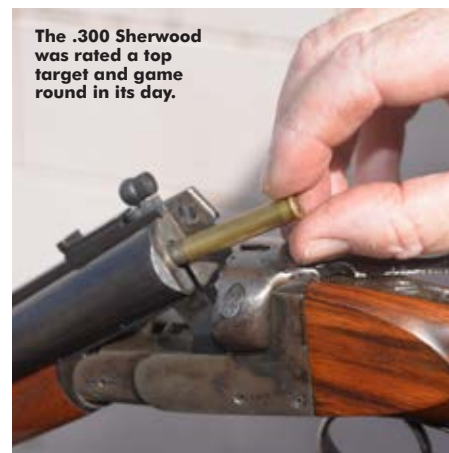
Twin triggers were used on all early shotguns and double rifles.



Fold-down express sight leaves make range sightings simple.



Solid steel surrounds the chambers. Note the Skinner Lo-Pro aperture sight.



The .300 Sherwood was rated a top target and game round in its day.



**Australian WOMEN'S SHOOTER**

Issue 7 online next month at [ssaa.org.au/women](http://ssaa.org.au/women)

**Avid hunter and Conservation and Wildlife Management member Michelle Pares tries her hand at setting some traps on a family farm for pesky wild dogs and foxes.**

**Expert insight into ammunition selection continues with a focus on pistol ammo and everything you need to know.**

**Recent South Australian Sport Hall of Fame inductee Libby Kosmala discusses her 13 rifle shooting medals across 12 Paralympic Games.**



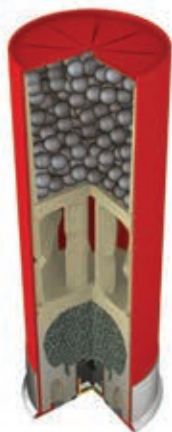
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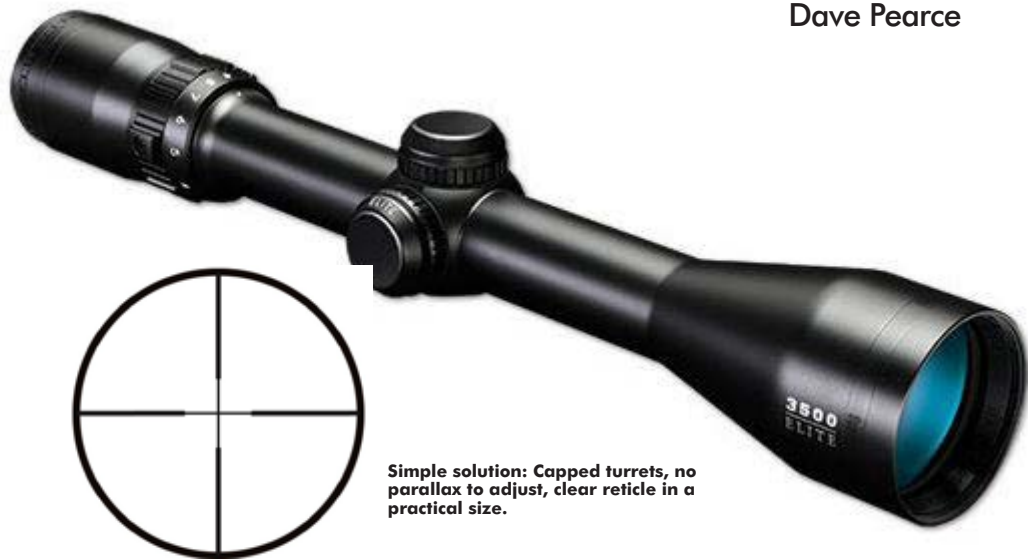
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1290	7.5, 8	28gm
1350	7.5	24gm
1350	7.5, 8	28gm

# Find the right scope FOR YOU

Dave Pearce



**Simple solution: Capped turrets, no parallax to adjust, clear reticle in a practical size.**

**D**uring the past decade we've been spoilt for choice with numerous new scope offerings but what features do you actually need and how expensive, heavy and complicated do you want your scope to be? While many shooters love the technical challenge of calculating the effects of wind and gravity over longer distances, some just want a scope they can point swiftly and shoot without changing settings.

## The simple scope solution

If you want a straightforward scope with no gimmicks or gadgets, an uncluttered reticle you can point at your target and shoot with confidence at typical hunting distances, grab

something like a duplex reticle 3-9x power scope. Use it at 3x when walking and 9x for longer shots and zeroing.

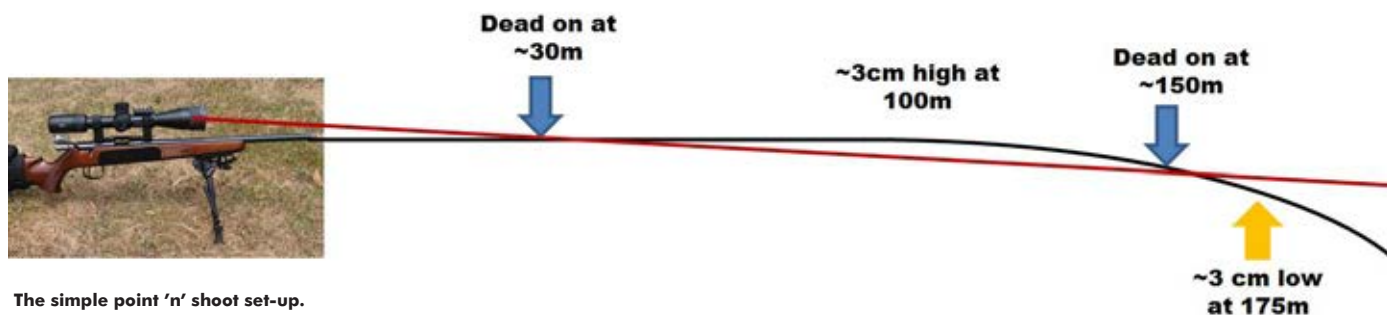
Such a scope will cost around \$300, add about 400g to your rifle and have capped turrets with no parallax or illumination dials to knock. Look for features like clear multi-coated glass, waterproof construction and one-piece 25mm tube. After focusing the reticle to your eye and mounting it securely to your rifle (use a torque wrench and Loctite to make sure every fixture from the rifle to the scope is locked), you're ready to zero your scope.

With common centrefire calibres (2700-3000fps) you can set a scope to point and shoot to almost 200m depending on the

size of your target. This is called the point-blank distance or distance you can point directly at your target and hit it without compensation.

In the diagram, the straight line of sight from the scope (red line) needs to be angled down to meet the always-dropping path of the bullet (black line) and it typically crosses the bullet path twice. This diagram shows the point-blank distance of a bullet for a 6cm target, the distance you can simply point straight at the centre of your target and be close enough to hit all the way to 175m.

If your shot is a good one the bullet should never strike more than 3cm high



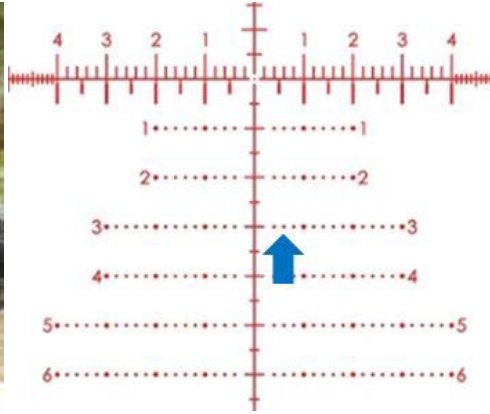
The simple point 'n' shoot set-up.



## Find the right scope for you



Dialable and repeatable turrets on the IOR Recon.



A reticle design that allows for wind and elevation holds.

or 3cm low, until beyond 175m where the bullet drops away. If you're shooting larger targets you could place your rifle to be 5cm high at 100m and stretch your point-blank distance to around 200m. Many hunting rifles are set up in this way. For a 22LR shooting standard velocity this system works with a 50m zero and you can point and shoot to about 60m (+/- 2cm) before having to hold-over.

The simple point 'n' shoot diagram is just a guide and each rifle and ammunition will need to be verified at the range as numerous variables will affect the bullet path. While a low scope mount is traditionally preferred, a higher scope mount will actually extend your point-blank distance but you need a stock with a higher cheekrest to gain eye alignment. Also, as you can see in the diagram, the height of the scope above bore will cause shots inside about 30m to strike below your point of aim, something which can be a factor if euthanising an injured animal at close range as you'll have to aim as much as 4cm high. It's worth practising.

### Technical or tactical scope solution

While the point-blank set-up is an elegant solution for common hunting ranges, many of us enjoy the challenge of shooting out to distances where we need to calculate and adjust for atmospheric conditions, wind and bullet drop. For such shooting, a scope with a hold-over reticle and larger, easy-to-dial, repeatable turrets make the task a lot simpler. Tactical scopes generally start at three times the price and are at least twice as heavy but well worth it for some.

The popularity of SSAA Practical Rifle Shooting competitions and events like the Precision Rifle Series (PRS) resulted in the development of a raft of new equipment to enable accurate shooting from challenging field firing positions to distances beyond 1000m. This new sport blends the technical challenges of long-range F-class shooting with the practical shooter's ability to quickly build a stable shooting berth from all sorts of objects.

This calls for different features in a scope. If you read Cal Zant at [precisionrifleblog.com](http://precisionrifleblog.com) you'll find some excellent details and

reviews of popular scopes and equipment chosen by the top PRS competitors, though he tends to focus on higher end gear and only rates their suitability for use in 200m-1200m competitions.

### Dialable and repeatable turrets

Traditionally, turrets are capped and used to zero the rifle once then recapped and (hopefully) not touched again, but many shooters will dial their turrets up and down for each shot. So bigger, numbered, uncapped turrets with a far more robust and precise mechanism are required, especially in competitions where you might dial for three different distances in a 90-second stage.

### Hold-over reticle

For me a hold-over reticle is a leap forward and real game changer as it provides so much information and so many options. Such a reticle can be used for ranging the distance to an object of known size but nowadays a rangefinder is easier and more accurate. The real value of a hold-over reticle is to measure and compensate for drop and drift of your bullet once the distance is known.

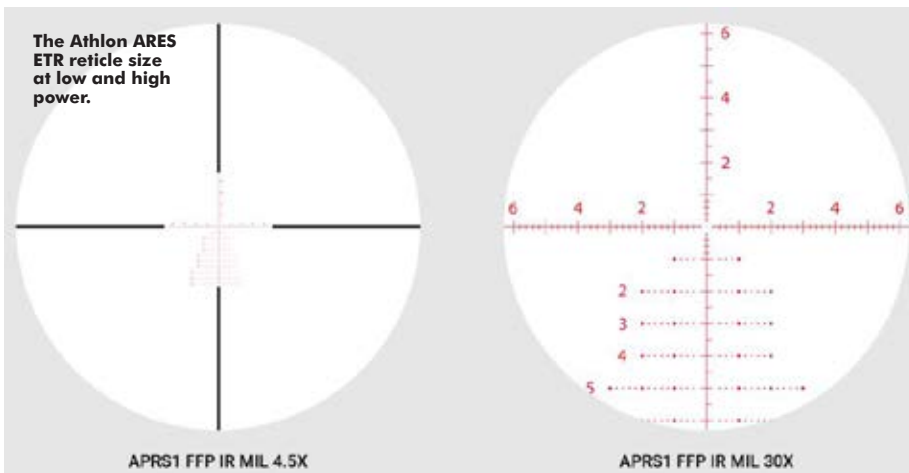
Reticle design is key - look for an uncluttered, numbered 'Christmas-tree' type reticle with a fine centre aim point, ideally with 0.2 milliradian (mil) hash marks in most directions. This style of reticle lets you hold off for wind and elevation and under time pressures you can use the hold-over reticle without touching a dial.

For example, for my .260 Remington rifle zeroed at 100m to hit a 500m target in a 10km/h right to left wind, I'd hold-over 3.1mil and push 0.6mil into the wind, so I could simply align the target with the reticle as shown by the blue arrow in the diagram above. Also, if I had the wind call wrong and my first shot misses, I can watch my impact and use the reticle to count how far I need to adjust to make a hit with my next shot.

For a hold-over reticle to be most useful you must be able to spot your shots and for this a muzzle brake is helpful - it will keep you steady enough to see the bullet splash through your scope.

### Front focal plane reticles

For a calibrated hold-over reticle (with numbers and hash marks) to read correctly at all magnifications, the reticle must maintain exact proportions to the target as magnification is increased and decreased. This means the reticle must be in the first focal plane (FFP) of the scope, so the markings magnify exactly the same amount as the target does - at any power 1mil on the



## Find the right scope for you

reticle will equal 1mil on the target. In the traditional second focal plane (SFP) scope the reticle has a different relationship to the target at every magnification. Some early scopes had hash marks or hold-over lines that were only correct at one magnification, somewhat limiting their usefulness. While the FFP reticle solves the calibration issue it creates another one: the reticle becomes thinnest at low power and thickest at high power, the opposite of what you naturally want. See the example of the Athlon ARES ETR 4.5-30x56 on page 67.

### Technical scope for point-blank hunting

For me it makes sense to set up my competition rifle so I can also use it for hunting, so all the skills I practise at the range and muscle memory I create practising can directly improve my hunting ability. It also justifies spending a bit more on a competition scope and rifle if it has a dual purpose. However, my first FFP scope had a hold-over reticle that was impossible to use for hunting at lower powers (4-8x); while great from 12x upward it actually couldn't do what a simple 3-9x duplex reticle could achieve at close ranges.

### Overcoming FFP limitations

If you only shoot targets beyond 100m and rarely use less than 10x then most FFP reticles are designed to suit you, but if you still want a scope that works well at low magnifications and has a reticle that's clear against busy backgrounds, I suggest the following.

- Consider a FFP scope with lower



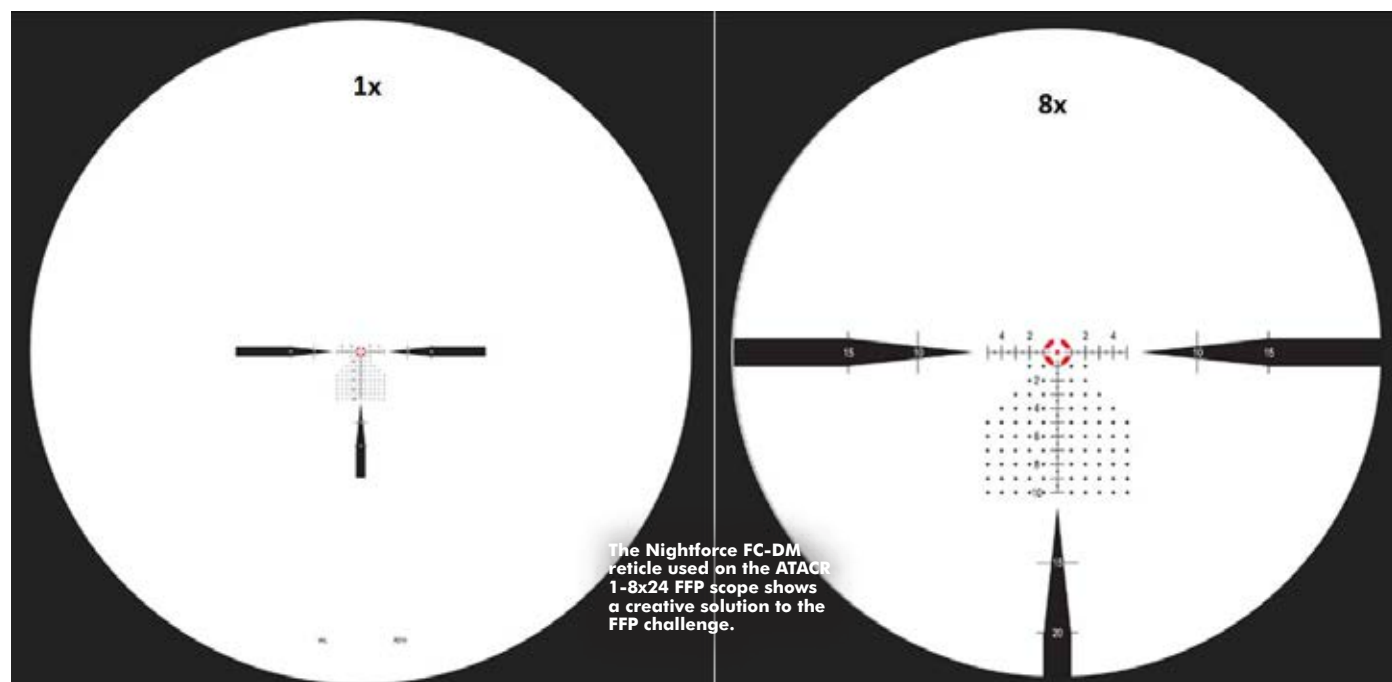
magnification range: For example, the 3-15x Vortex Viper PST Gen II reticle is proportionally thicker than the 5-25x version and on 3x is perfectly usable at close ranges.

- Select a reticle with illumination: This can brighten a fine reticle in cluttered backgrounds and low light.
- Select an overall heavier reticle design that works at lower powers: I have an IOR Recon 4-28x50 which has a reticle that, while usable at all magnifications, is heavier than a target shooter might like at 28x. However, this enables it to be clearly seen at 4x which meets all my needs better.
- Trial your scope reticle before you buy: The pictures of reticles in brochures don't give an accurate representation of how they look in the field.

While the FC-DM reticle reduces at 1x, it still provides a clear central aiming point (further enhanced by an illuminated centre circle) but at 8x the detail of the hold-over reticle becomes usable.

### The all-round option

I'm a convert to a FFP hold-over reticle as, for me, the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages and even they're reducing as designs improve. Reticle proportions are being refined, illumination is brighter and all of this is coming at lower prices in lighter scopes. Now you can have all the advantages of a simple point and shoot scope for close shots and the versatility of a hold-over reticle and dialling turrets for longer shots. The future is looking bright, clear and calibrated. ●





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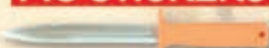
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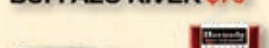
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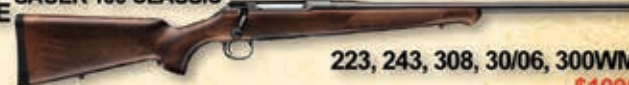
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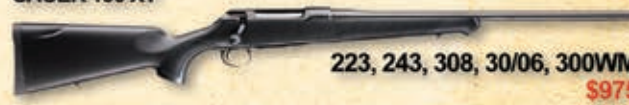
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# SSAA's famous five named in Olympic line-up

Russell Mark



Tokyo bound . . . Laetisha Scanlan will be one of five SSAA members at next year's Olympics.

No fewer than five SSAA members will represent Australia next year at the rescheduled Olympic Games in Tokyo, after Shooting Australia announced the final team selection. World Cup champions and SSAA members Laetisha Scanlan and James Willett were selected for the national Olympic team along with fellow Association members Laura Coles, Tom Grice and Elise Collier. Willett said he's absolutely "stoked" after making his second Olympics: "I've been working very hard as I transitioned from Double Trap when that discipline was removed from the Olympic program after Rio (2016) and to have made the team for Tokyo is a huge personal achievement."

"I'm really looking forward to working hard in the lead up now to the 2021 games and performing at my best and am truly grateful for the support I've had on my journey to making this team."

World Cup gold medalist and reigning World Pairs champion Scanlan was picked ahead of reigning Olympic champion Catherine Skinner, such is the strength in depth of our women's Trap squad. Said Scanlan: "I'm humbled and beyond happy to reach my second Olympic Games. With the uncertainty and unique times due to the COVID-19 virus, I feel like Tokyo is a light at the end of the tunnel. Postponing it for 12 months was the only logical option and I believe the Games will be the ultimate celebration of the world coming together again through sport after these incredibly difficult times for everyone."

Originally scheduled for July this year, the summer games will now take place from July 23 next year and still be known as Tokyo 2020. The announcement to reschedule the Games due to the COVID-19 pandemic was made only a few hours after Shooting Australia's final Olympic selection event had ended at the Sydney International Shooting Complex in Cecil Park. There was serious doubt as to whether the final trial would go ahead as government restrictions around the virus tightened daily, but the decision was made to hold the last selection event with only the Minimum Olympic Qualified athletes.

The selection process for the designated 12 events (four categories each for pistol, rifle and shotgun) started in January and included four competitions. Each athlete's Olympic nomination score comprised points



from their best three events, their qualification score and bonus points for finals placing. For example, if an athlete shot 121/125 in the qualification rounds then won the six-person final, they'd collect six bonus points for first place for a total of 127 nomination points.

### Team selection

The Sydney Oceania Games last November provided Australia with the majority of its Olympic quota places. The host nation dominated the Championships, winning a total of 11 quotas. During the previous two years on the international circuit Australia also won four additional quota places in Men's Trap (Willett), Women's Trap (Scanlan and Penny Smith) and Men's 3P Rifle (Dane Sampson), giving Australia dual quota places in these events.

It's important to note these quota places are awarded to the country, not the individual who won them, so in total Australia won the right to have 15 shooters compete in Tokyo. At the Olympics a maximum of two competitors is allowable for each event, but if a competitor has shot the minimum qualifying score in an event which does not have two competitors from their country, they can cross over and fill the second spot, something commonplace in pistol and rifle but rare in shotgun.

The Shooting Australia selection policy stipulates the competitor with most nomination points is automatically selected and in events where there are two positions available the governing body reserves the right to subjectively select the second athlete.

At the end of the qualifying events, 11 athletes were automatically selected for the team as follows: Dina Aspandiyarova (Air Pistol Women), Daniel Repacholi (Air Pistol Men), Elena Galiabovitch (Sport Pistol Women), Sergei Evgleski (Rapid Fire Men), Dane Sampson (3-Position and Air Rifle Men), Katarina Kowplos (3-Position Women), Elise Collier (Air Rifle Women), James Willett (Trap Men), Paul Adams (Skeet Men), Penny Smith (Trap Women) and Laura Coles (Skeet Women). The High-Performance Committee then selected a further four athletes in Tom Grice (Trap Men), Laetisha Scanlan (Trap Women) and Alex Hoberg (3-Position Rifle Men) and Jack Rossiter (3-Position Men).

### Ones to watch

Tokyo will be Dane Sampson's third Olympic Games and hopefully he can keep the momentum going from his Gold Coast Commonwealth Games success, Sampson one of our best hopes of a medal. Rossiter makes his second Olympic appearance whereas Hoberg (18), Kowplos (18) and Collier will all make their Olympic debut which will hopefully launch a long international career for the trio.

Pistol has a wealth of experience in its team. Daniel Repacholi, like Sampson, is coming off a gold medal at the Gold Coast and will make an impressive fifth Olympic appearance in Tokyo. Elena Galiabovitch was a Sport Pistol World Cup gold medalist in 2019 in South Korea so could well provide Australia's first pistol medal in two decades. Tokyo will be Dina Aspandiyarova's fourth Olympic Games - she was a finalist back in 2000 and at 43 is the veteran of the team. At the other end of the scale is debutant Sergei Evgleski whose mother Lalita was an Olympic medalist for Belarus at Sydney 2000 in Sport Pistol.

Shotgun looks like being our best chance of multiple podium places next year. Scanlan had an extraordinary international season in 2018 and 2019 reaching world No.2, while Men's Trap world record holder and former world No.1 Willett will make his second Olympic appearance after making the final at the 2016 Rio Games. His teammate will be Tom Grice who competed at the Gold Coast and has a World Championship Pairs gold medal to his name. Impressively, he also beat more than 500 competitors to win last year's prestigious Beretta Gold Cup in Italy.

Dual women's World Cup Trap gold medalist Penny Smith makes her Olympic debut but the pressure of the occasion won't affect the young Victorian whose scores in Olympic trials would have pushed for a place in the men's team. The Trap Mixed Pairs should prove one of our best medal hopes with Willett, Smith and Grice all being World Champions in the discipline. Grice and Smith will pair up again in Tokyo with Willett and Scanlan forming the other partnership and both combinations are excellent medal prospects.

Skeet shooter Paul Adams will make his second Olympic appearance and has finished on the podium on three occasions since Rio. In Women's Skeet, 2014 Glasgow

Commonwealth Games gold medalist Laura Coles makes her long-awaited Olympic debut and carries the hopes of Western Australia.

With the 2020 international season so badly disrupted, the 2021 World Cup early next year should be the next big competition. There should also be a test event on the Tokyo range prior to the Olympics as well three World Cup outings for competitors to hone their marksmanship skills. There will be much debate over a team being selected so far out from a competition - 16 months in fact - but there really was no other way as to reselect the team would have opened a minefield of moral and ethical issues as well as legal appeals.

- with Nadia Isa



### Australian Olympic squad for Tokyo 2020

#### Pistol

**Sergei Evgleski:** Rapid Fire Men; **Daniel Repacholi:** Air Pistol Men, Air Pistol Mixed Teams; **Elena Galiabovitch:** Sport Pistol Women; **Dina Aspandiyarova:** Air Pistol Women, Air Pistol Mixed Teams.

#### Rifle

**Dane Sampson:** 3-Position Men, Air Rifle Men, Air Rifle Mixed Pairs; **Alex Hoberg:** 3-Position Men, Air Rifle Men; **Jack Rossiter:** 3-Position Men; **Katarina Kowplos:** 3-Position Women; **Elise Collier:** Air Rifle Women, Air Rifle Mixed Pairs.

#### Shotgun

**James Willett:** Trap Men, Mixed Pairs; **Tom Grice:** Trap Men, Mixed Pairs; **Penny Smith:** Trap Women, Mixed Pairs; **Laetisha Scanlan:** Trap Women, Mixed Pairs; **Paul Adams:** Skeet Men; **Laura Coles:** Skeet Women.



# Reflections on a brutal summer and scoring an unlikely century

Ben Unten

Writing this on the first day of autumn officially means the worst summer of New South Wales bushfires in my memory has dragged itself to an exhausting and smokey close. I find the scale of the losses of bushland, property, animals and, tragically, human life almost too big to comprehend. The 'Buy a Bale' campaigns and other charity events, including huge musical concerts featuring international stars, right down to cake sales at the local school fete were a constant reminder of this summer's struggles in Australia's eastern states.

On a personal level we had our bushfire plan ready to implement from November, when the temperatures were unseasonably hot and windy on the back of a two-year drought. We had some clothes and medicines packed in a bag along with a fireproof folder for important documents all ready to go at the back door. We kept 20L of drinking water in both vehicles, ran drills and parked vehicles on opposite sides of the house overnight to potentially increase our

odds of a successful escape. We checked to make sure gates in neighbouring properties weren't locked as we scouted for possible escape routes should we have to evacuate, and discussed the potentially terrifying scenario of having to stay with the house if the fires blew through without warning or under cover of darkness.

Yet despite all those plans we were just plain lucky. We had several fires close to us which posed a potential threat but the fact remains we were dumb-lucky. In one instance the wind changed direction, blowing the opposite way to the prevailing wind and took the fire away from instead of towards our place. On another occasion fire broke out at 7pm - the wind had been howling like a banshee until an hour earlier then strangely fell still so the threat was fairly easily contained.

On the road we live in lightning struck a tree, causing it to burst into flames but luckily that particular storm brought a little rain with it, so the fire remained more-or-less contained and was eventually

controlled. On another occasion I raced to a nearby fire alert and happened to be driving into the property as a bloke was driving out. We chatted through rolled-down windows and it turned out he'd been on his way to work and saw the fire start.

He performed a brisk U-turn and had the presence of mind to put the fire out armed with nothing more than the rubber floor mat from his ute. It was only after the blaze was extinguished and the 50m x 5m strip of burnt grass could be seen, he realised the fire had been caused by a power line dropping on the grass. He'd almost trodden on it - in thongs. The guy is forever a hero in my eyes and I don't even know his name.

With all this as a backdrop, life went on. I had work to do, I came home, enjoyed weekends and all the wonderfully mundane day-to-day stuff that makes up life. But back before we knew what lay ahead with the heat, the drought and the fires, I had shot my first rabbit of the season on our block on Friday, July 5 - fifth day of the new financial year. For reasons I can't quite explain I



started to log the dates and numbers of any rabbits taken and by November 8 had tallied 34 rabbits.

The freezer was almost full to the brim of cleaned carcasses ready for food preparation and for whatever reason rabbit numbers seemed to be increasing - they were everywhere. By December 1 I'd almost doubled my tally to 66 rabbits, halfway through the month the total was 88 and I started wondering if there was a chance I might crack 'the ton' by Christmas.

Then the fires changed things again. My outlaws' home two hours away was under serious threat so we cancelled plans to go to their place for Christmas and invited them to stay with us where the threat was reduced. It was a happy though nervous time for everyone as we checked the 'Fires Near Me' app a dozen times a day. Conversations always seem to work their way back to the latest heartbreaking statistics on the chaos these blazes were wreaking.

As a smoky Christmas Eve dawned I had 98 rabbits in the bag and began to think the magical three figures might not happen. Then, as late afternoon gave way to early evening, I was lucky enough to shoot a rabbit by the side fence and, as I walked down to retrieve the carcass, another one flushed nearby and I managed to take it as

well. That was it - rabbits 99 and 100.

I hung them on the fence and snapped a picture as a keepsake, having no intention of using it in an article. Then flicking back through the photographs, I noticed not the rabbits and rifle in the foreground but the smoke in the background, making it look like conditions were overcast and hazy against the trees, which got me thinking about the summer that had just been. My heart truly goes out to all those affected by the fires, including the brave men and women who fought them. I'm almost guiltily grateful for our luck this year as on another year we might not be so lucky.

As I write this, a press release has just been issued stating there are no bush or grass fires currently burning in New South Wales. I'm able to breathe a sigh of relief but it doesn't feel anything like as good as I thought it would when I imagined this moment when the threat was so real and constant.

I don't believe anyone who lived through this summer hasn't been affected by it in some way, but perhaps the changing of seasons gives us a chance to reflect and, perhaps in time, begin to rebuild and move forward. I don't go much for omens but as I write this it has just started raining in my little corner of the world. ●



Rabbits 99 and 100 against the smoky backdrop.

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# Challenge of reloading for the M.95

John Maxwell



The late 19th century was a fascinating time for firearms development as the world moved from black to smokeless powder and from single-shot to repeating designs. From this period came familiar types such as Mauser and Enfield which served through two world wars and numerous other conflicts.

The merits of the bolt action may appear obvious now, but back then a number of designers and many others believed the straight-pull action showed greater promise for improved firepower for the lowly infantryman and so emerged a series of designs including the Canadian Ross, Swiss Schmidt-Rubin and US Navy Lee.

Then there was the most successful of all - the Mannlicher Model 95 (M.95) - adopted in 1895 and the standard infantry rifle of the Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian armies through World War I, continuing to serve with Austria and Hungary separately and an assortment of middle European nations during the inter-war years.

The design was updated in the 1930s to create what is technically the M.95/30

which found service with Nazi German client states in sufficient numbers to justify ongoing production of their peculiar ammunition, some modified to fire the standard 8x57 Mauser cartridge.

After the war, M.95s remained in service with Austrian police into the mid-1950s but compare that to the record of other straight-pull designs. The Schmidt-Rubin can boast similar longevity but never fired a shot in anger and having put a few rounds through a mate's Schmidt, I can attest they're smooth operating and accurate. But noted small arms expert Ian Hogg says under the stress of war, the deficiencies of the finely engineered Schmidt would have shown up more clearly.

The Lee was adopted in 1895 and superseded just five years later by the bolt action Krag-Jorgensen. In the trenches of the Western Front the Ross was found profoundly wanting and speedily replaced by the Lee-Enfield. Which leaves the M.95 of which many found their way to Australia. Yet this most successful of straight-pull military rifles isn't shot all that much, as loaded ammunition is almost non-existent

and handloading poses some real challenges. Barnes' *Cartridges of the World* notes M.95 rifles should be primarily regarded as collector pieces due to the shortage of ammo.

But where there's a will there's a way as I discovered after acquiring an M.95, the initial attraction the novelty factor as, having owned Enfields, Mausers and a Nagant, I'd never had a straight-pull. The price was right, just \$380 for one of the comparatively rare M.95 long rifles described in the ad as in excellent condition.

And indeed it was - on the outside. But the bore was dark as many apparently are thanks to a diet of corrosive ammunition and a design shortcoming. Everyone knows you should clean from the breech end, right? Removing an M.95 bolt is easy, just push the trigger forward and out it comes, but the bolt head is under strong spring pressure and snaps back to the rear position. Returning the bolt to the rifle requires the bolt head to be held forward, a task most easily accomplished with three hands or a bench vice. YouTube says not all M.95 bolts do this but mine does.





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## Challenge of reloading for the M.95



Simon puts his M.95 through its paces at the range.

Consequently, soldiers issued with this rifle never removed the bolt or, when they could be bothered, cleaned from the muzzle, resulting in cleaning rod damage to the last few centimetres of bore which is a shame as the rest of the rifling, although dark, is fine. This problem was mostly fixed when a friend used his lathe to counter-bore the muzzle for about a centimetre.

When introduced to service in the mid-1890s, the M.95 was chambered for the 8x50R cartridge, a rimmed design firing a 244gr round-nosed projectile at a touch under 2000fps. In 1930-31 Austria and Hungary adopted the improved 8x56R cartridge, firing a lighter 205gr projectile faster, around 2300fps. This has different names in different places - Barnes'

*Cartridges of the World* lists it as 8x56R Austrian/Hungarian Mannlicher and 8mm Hungarian M31.

Although Austria was a major combatant in World War I, their small arms and design logic behind key features aren't nearly as well understood as Mauser or Enfield. For reasons unknown, the original Mannlicher designers opted for a bore diameter of .329", as close to an orphan dimension as it's possible to be. That's a decision which makes modern day handloaders curse and grind their teeth, as projectiles in this unusual diameter are rare.

According to useful YouTube source Bloke on the Range, the original 8x50R loading did use a projectile of 8mm (.321 or .323 - sources vary) featuring a flat base

which, on firing, expanded to engage the rifling. Yet 8x56R ammunition features a .329 diameter FMJ boat-tail projectile. If designers had stuck to a standard 8mm bore diameter there'd be no problem but .323 projectiles fired from an M.95 rattle down the barrel and result in poor accuracy.

So what to do? There is actually some ammo out there and surplus WWII-era 8x56R can occasionally be found at gun shows, albeit at \$2 or more per bang. This is of course corrosive. Some of it is actually quite collectable and I have a late 1930s Austrian-made round which features the Nazi eagle and swastika on the headstamp.

Prolific Serbian munitions manufacturer Prvi Partizan lists loaded FMJ and soft point 8x56R ammunition on its website,



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A .338 projectile goes into the Lee resizing die.



Troublesome M.95 bolt with bolt head retracted. The bolt head needs to be rotated forward against strong spring pressure to be returned to the rifle.

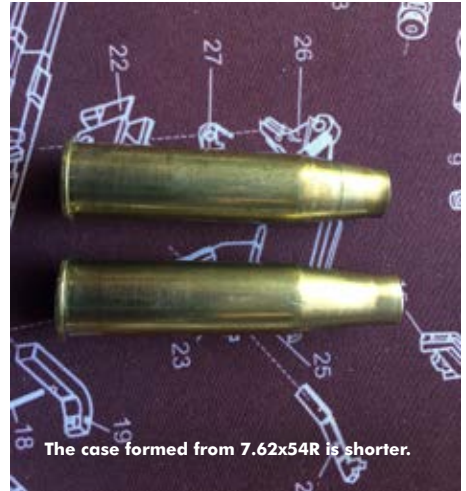


A case formed from 7.62x54R before fire forming.

presumably to feed the large number of M95s which still exist across Europe, and some of this has been sold by Hornady in the US.

I've never seen this ammo in Australia but the company does make projectiles and unprimed cases which have made their way down under, cases imported under the Highland brand with the 'nny' headstamp. I acquired 100 from Western Firearms in Sydney which also supplied a Lee die set and shell-holder.

Victorian firm Bertram Brass has previously produced high quality 8x56R brass and, if all else fails, it's possible to form 8x56R from 7.62x54R Russian - just pass the 7.62x54R through the 8x56R die, load and fireform. This isn't a perfect solution



The case formed from 7.62x54R is shorter.



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though, as reloadable 7.62x54R brass isn't that readily available or cheap and the formed case is about 0.10" short.

I wasn't prepared to sacrifice one of my prized Lapua cases but to show this really does work, I successfully converted a Sellier & Bellot case in the interests of scientific research after buying some of the Partizan projectiles, both FMJ and spitzer, from an online seller.

There's yet another way to accrue suitable projectiles and that's to form them from more commonly available .338s and while I was initially sceptical, this proved remarkably simple thanks to an inexpensive sizing Lee die made specifically for that purpose. Just lube up the .338 projectiles, pass them through the die and hey presto - .329 projectiles which shoot like the genuine item.

There is little authoritative 8x56R load data available and none of my loading manuals feature this cartridge but there's no shortage of load suggestions on the various internet forums, though these all feature US powders and vary widely.

The data sheet accompanying the Lee die set suggested a starting load of 40.7gr of Accurate Arms 4350 for a 200gr jacketed projectile, to a maximum of 44. My ADI loading manual says AR2209 is comparable

in burning rate to 4350 but even 44gr of 2209 proved fairly anaemic.

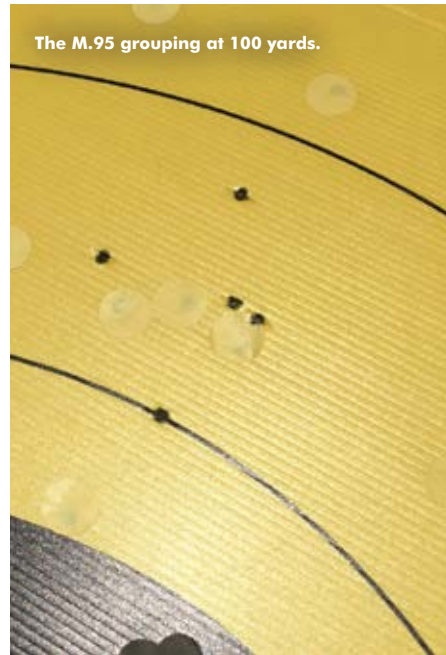
Of more use was other online advice which suggested 7.62x54R load data was a better guide - and so it proved. I settled on a load of 49gr of 2209 which drove a 205gr jacketed projectile around 2100 fps. Cases extracted easily and showed no pressure signs, suggesting this loading remains mild and anyone who has fired a few hard-kicking factory rounds through an M.95 carbine will agree that mild is good. Furthermore, rounds could be placed on the large Combined Services target at reasonable sight settings - there's nothing more exasperating than finding you can only put rounds on target with the sights set on 800.

M.95 foresight blades appear to be the same dovetail as the Mauser 98. To fine-tune point of impact the old blade could be drifted out and replaced with a Mauser sight blank (Brownells Australia) which come very high and can be filed down to suit.

As for accuracy, my rifle grouped around 5-6" which is acceptable for the Combined Services rapid fire competition or close range clobbering of pigs. Some internet commentators claim they've achieved fine accuracy, around MOA, so maybe there's a load available out there which will make an M.95 shoot like an M.96 Swede.

My colleague Simon's long M.95, with a far better bore, shot much the same as mine while another club member's M.95 carbine fared much worse. Alas my M.95 isn't going to shoot like a Steyr SSG but just making them shoot again is reward enough. ●

**The M.95 grouping at 100 yards.**



78 Australian Shooter





# Value and versatility

## Nikko Stirling's Octa 2-16x50 scope

John Rutkay

**T**wo centuries of development have made the modern scope an essential component of all but a few specialised areas of rifle shooting and one significant development trend in recent years has been the extension of the magnification range for variable scopes. In the mid-1900s, 3x magnification variable scopes such as the popular 3-9x allowed a wider field of view for closer encounters and a higher magnified sight picture for longer ranges. By the turn of the century we had 4x magnification and now scopes with 10x are available.

Significantly increased versatility is the net gain for shooters. Versatility to the point where a scope can be effective at close and medium range hunting as well as at longer range precision and target shooting is a significant step forward. A magnification range of 8x and above with well-chosen power limits can propel a scope into a new multipurpose category.

Although a multipurpose rifle and scope combination will never quite match one specialised to a particular task, it can be relied on to do at least a satisfactory job in any situation. Practicalities limit a hunter to one rifle and scope at a time, so by choosing a multipurpose combination a hunter is

simply stacking the odds on being well equipped for any eventuality.

At the range our hunter can wind up the power and enjoy a magnified sight picture with reduced aiming error to test and develop ammunition, sight-in or participate in target competition for valuable practice and familiarity with the rifle. While these are good reasons for buying a wide magnification range scope, their price has been somewhat of a deterrent for the average shooter as most of these scopes come from high-end manufacturers with premium glass, coatings and build quality. They're about three times the price of an average hunting rifle.

Nikko Stirling has been a part of the variable power scope industry since the 1950s, making affordable, solid-performing durable items. It recently released the 10x power range C-More and 8x range Octa variable series so currently makes options with three, four, five, six, eight and 10x magnification. To see their impressive range download the Catalogue 2019 at [www.nikkostirling.com](http://www.nikkostirling.com).

Their 8x range Octa 2-16x50mm scope was chosen for this review as it's in an affordable price range, roughly the cost of a lower-valued hunting rifle. Added to this

was the belief that multipurpose scopes are the way forward for any keen shooter looking to make the most of the diverse hunting and shooting opportunities available in this country. The scope was supplied to *Australian Shooter* courtesy of Outdoor Sporting Agencies.

The Octa looks classy with black anodised scratch-resistant finish and modern design. The stout 30mm tube appears proportional to the substantial bell of the 50mm objective lens assembly and ample size of the ocular housing, its 35cm overall length and weight typical of a 16x magnification scope while mounting length of 155mm (6") allows generous eye relief adjustment.

A large reinforcing boss to strengthen the tube at the turret attachments and visible step-up in tube diameter (wall thickness) at the structurally compromised power ring section are reassuring indicators of build strength and quality and naturally the Octa is rated shockproof for all centrefire calibres. Following assembly, the sealed scope is purged with nitrogen to displace air and moisture and ensure fog-free operation.

The Octa 2-16x50 has hunter-friendly capped turrets to keep the set zero secure, the thimbles held on the turret splines by

## Value and versatility

a central screw which can be removed to reset zero after sighting-in with thimbles finger adjustable and clicks easily felt, controlled and counted. Adjustment increments are the familiar  $\frac{1}{4}$  MOA per click and clearly marked. An elevation and windage adjustment range of 80 MOA ensures a reliable 40 MOA in each direction from original zero.

Parallax adjustment is on the left-side turret, the most convenient position for use in the field, the parallax free distances marked being surprisingly accurate and therefore useful. This turret also controls reticle illumination and houses the battery. Only the central dot of the reticle is illuminated on the Octa, the preference of most hunters as any more lighting of the reticle is a distraction.

There are red and green colour options with variable control between low and daylight visibility and a distinctly-felt audible 'off' position. The power ring is clearly marked, easily gripped and its resistance to rotation strikes a good balance between ease of use and staying put. A neoprene padded ocular fast-focus ring will sharpen the second focal plane reticle image for less than perfect vision and protect eyebrows if needed.

The etched glass reticle allows the cross-hairs intersection to be replaced by a hunting dot which is normally black but can be precisely illuminated to make accurate shot placement possible in limited light. This is a highly desirable feature on the Octa as it goes a long way towards bridging the low-light effectiveness gap between a highly expensive and this affordably priced scope.

Optically, well-established brands of scopes are all 'good to very good' in bright daylight. A multipurpose scope needs to also



perform well in the foggy dawn, evening dusk and under spotlighting conditions and the Octa was tried in such conditions and impressed. The morning fog didn't cooperate but the bushfire haze was a fair substitute which affected the spotlight as well.

It was also directly compared to a more expensive US brand with 56mm objective lens in lowlight conditions. Both scopes were set to 8x magnification and aimed into the same lowlight areas but I couldn't see a difference in resolution, the Octa's fully multiccoated lenses obviously doing their job on light transmission.

In use, the Octa looked at home and balanced well on the rifle with markings clear and controls easy to operate. Zeroing the scope at 200 yards was a simple task as click adjustments were followed reliably by the point of impact, groups shot as tight as ever, indicating a rock solid zero. A quick test for target shooting suitability saw two shots fired at the 200-yard Field Rifle target

from the sitting post position. Both landed comfortably in the 10 ring but the 6mm bullet holes could not be reliably 'spotted' on 16x power in difficult light (any shooter looking to use their regular hunting rifle for Centrefire Field Rifle competition and avoid the need for a spotting scope could consider the 3-24x56 Octa).

The Nikko Stirling Octa 2-16x50 performed well in all areas tested and showed no fault or weakness. There's a lifetime warranty on defective scopes to the original owner following product registration, excluding scopes exposed to abuse or unauthorised work.

This is an effective blend of all the 'must-have' features of a good multipurpose scope, namely low and high magnification, easy parallax adjustment, good lowlight performance and an illuminated reticle as well as the assumed fundamentals of reliable zero, optical clarity and sturdy airtight construction.

Thimble markings are clear and precise.



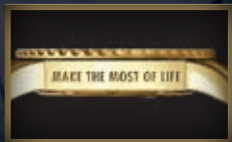
Remove the centre screw and slide off the thimble to set new zero.





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## Value and versatility

The wide field of view on 2x magnification bolstered by the quick target acquisition of the uncluttered 4-Dot reticle makes the Octa ideal for hunting in heavy cover. For small or distant game and paper targets, the 16x magnification combines well with the precisely etched glass reticle. Good lowlight performance of the fully multicoated lenses (further enhanced by the precise aiming made possible by the illuminated reticle), complete the comprehensive abilities of this outstanding

product. For the user it means an effective response to more shooting opportunities, extended hunting time in the productive lowlight periods as well as being a pleasure to use on the range.

It's easy to recommend this scope as it has no apparent fault or weakness yet is a distinct notch above the typical variable scope in terms of effectiveness in a wider range of situations. An astute hunter will see this as well as the outstanding value for money, considering scopes with similar

quality and features can cost about twice the price of the Octa. Closer to home I'm keen to see a Nikko Stirling Octa become a permanent fitting on the Model 700 used in this review. ●

### Specifications

**Manufacturer:** Nikko Stirling

**Origin:** Made in China

**Model:** NSOC21650

**Power:** 2-16x (8x zoom)

**Length:** 352mm

**Field of view at 100m:** 2.6-21.1m

**Main tube:** 30mm (one piece)

**Objective lens:** 50mm

**Lenses:** Fully multicoated

**Reticle:** Glass, 4-Dot, illuminated

**Parallax focus:** Side turret (range 9m-infinity)

**Eye relief:** 90mm (2-16x)

**Turrets:** Capped, 1/4 MOA/click

**Sealing:** Dust, fog and waterproof

**Recommended retail price:** About \$550 but shop around



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SSAA National's 'Sign up a Junior' campaign was launched to help introduce youngsters to recreational shooting. Juniors are essential to the ongoing strength and vitality of the SSAA and we are seeking your support to protect and ensure the future of the shooting sports in Australia.

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# Gun & Knife Show List

Due to the uncertainties of scheduling because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic our Gun and Knife show list has been temporarily suspended.

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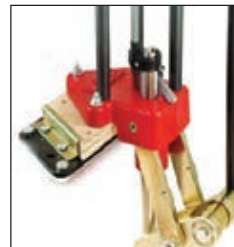
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# EVENT CANCELLATIONS AND POSTPONEMENTS

With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic causing widespread chaos, it is reasonable to assume ALL scheduled shooting events over the next few months - local and national - have now been either cancelled or postponed. To that end, anyone wishing information or clarification on the status of scheduled competitions is advised to contact their local club, range or SSAA state office for the latest information as the situation is constantly changing.

## NSW cancellations

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Board of SSAA New South Wales has postponed all State Championship shoots and all National Championship shoots scheduled for NSW until further notice. Additionally, no SSAA teams will be travelling to compete in events overseas for the foreseeable future.

## SSAA 2020 National Junior Challenge

Please note this event has been cancelled. The next National Junior Challenge will be held in 2021 at the Belmont Range in Queensland, date to be confirmed.



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Membership No.

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

--	--	--	--	--	--



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

First name

Middle name

Last name

Residential address

Town/suburb State Postcode

Postal address

Town/suburb State Postcode

(IF DIFFERENT FROM ABOVE)

Phone (Mobile) (Home)

Email

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

☐ Tick to subscribe to the FREE SSAA National E-newsletter via email

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☐ \$123

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## PLEASE READ AND SIGN

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](http://ssaa.org.au/code)

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Competitions close April 30, 2020

(Name of competition)  
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## Competition winners

**Australian Shooter March 2020**

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Jason Wright, VIC

**SSAA Green Shooting Vest**  
John Burrows, NSW

**SSAA Cobb Oven and Cooks Companion cookbook**  
Elaine Mathieson, Qld

**March AWS – Women's Browning Clothing Pack**  
Jennifer Holliss, ACT

**Best Shots Mug**  
Jean Janickovic, WA

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## The reluctant rabbit

As I eased down along the fence line in the shadow of the trees, a rabbit hoisted itself upright in dew-wet grass, watching me with one bright eye. For a second or two it sat there then dropped down and bobbed around behind the double-stayed stanchion of a weathered grey corner post.

At about the same time a small flock of gang-gangs swooped into the tree above me - when the hawthorn trees fruit in February they gather to feed on the ripening berries. At times their numbers are sparse and scattered, other times there are hundreds that can be heard several minutes before they arrive, the noise only reducing when they wheel into the trees and start feeding.

Some take berries one at a time, others bite off a bunch and balance on one leg as they hold the fruit in the claws of the other and carefully pick out individual berries. The rejects are dropped, pattering through the leaves as the birds move on, squalling softly to each other, perhaps comparing notes on the taste of the last bunch or how good the next one looks.

Usually the red-crowned males make most noise and whenever I watch them I'm reminded of the rules in my grandfather's house where kids at the table were expected to eat quietly unless spoken to and conversation was an adults-only prerogative.

For quite a while I stood and watched the birds feeding, not moving unless I had to so as not to disturb them in any way. I even managed to take a few photos though the light wasn't good and several times what looked to be a decent shot was gone before I focussed.

It all fell apart when a group of crimson rosellas landed almost on top of me, didn't like what they'd found and fled, shrieking in panic. Protesting loudly, the gang-gangs followed suit only to settle down again in trees further up the gully. I didn't go after them as the morning was dribbling away and I had other things to do with home still a steady walk away.



At the corner of the paddock I stopped as a rabbit sat up under a lone hawthorn about 10 metres outside the fence. It watched me for a moment then began nosing carefully through the short grass, stopping here and there to chew. I wondered if it might be eating the reject berries dropped by the birds and as I wandered over, curious to test my newly minted theory, the rabbit saw me and hopped hesitantly away into an old

contoured run-off channel lower down the slope.

There wasn't a berry to be found anywhere under the tree even though the gang-gangs had been feeding there only minutes earlier, circumstantial evidence which perhaps indicated the rabbit had been enjoying their surplus. Satisfied with my findings I walked down to the channel, intending to head back along a cattle pad on the top of its wall. As I jumped the ditch a rabbit bobbed hesitantly away ahead of me, seemingly reluctant to leave.

Camera poised I followed behind, ready to take its picture should the chance arrive. Twice I clicked the shutter and each time the rabbit hopped a little further on. The third time I tried it had finally had enough, bounding through the drain and into a thin cover of dead grass and blackberry canes on the far side then as I walked past the cover, the rabbit darted out and raced back along the drain the way we'd come.

I was almost back at the creek when the raspy, squalling clamour of an approaching flock of gang-gangs made me turn and watch as they banked and twisted with practiced ease and settled into the tops of the

trees I'd not long ago been standing under.

As I lifted the binoculars for a last look at them, a rabbit hopped out of the drainage line and began to nose through the short grass under the lone hawthorn tree outside the fence. The same rabbit? I'll never know of course, but it made me wonder. ●





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