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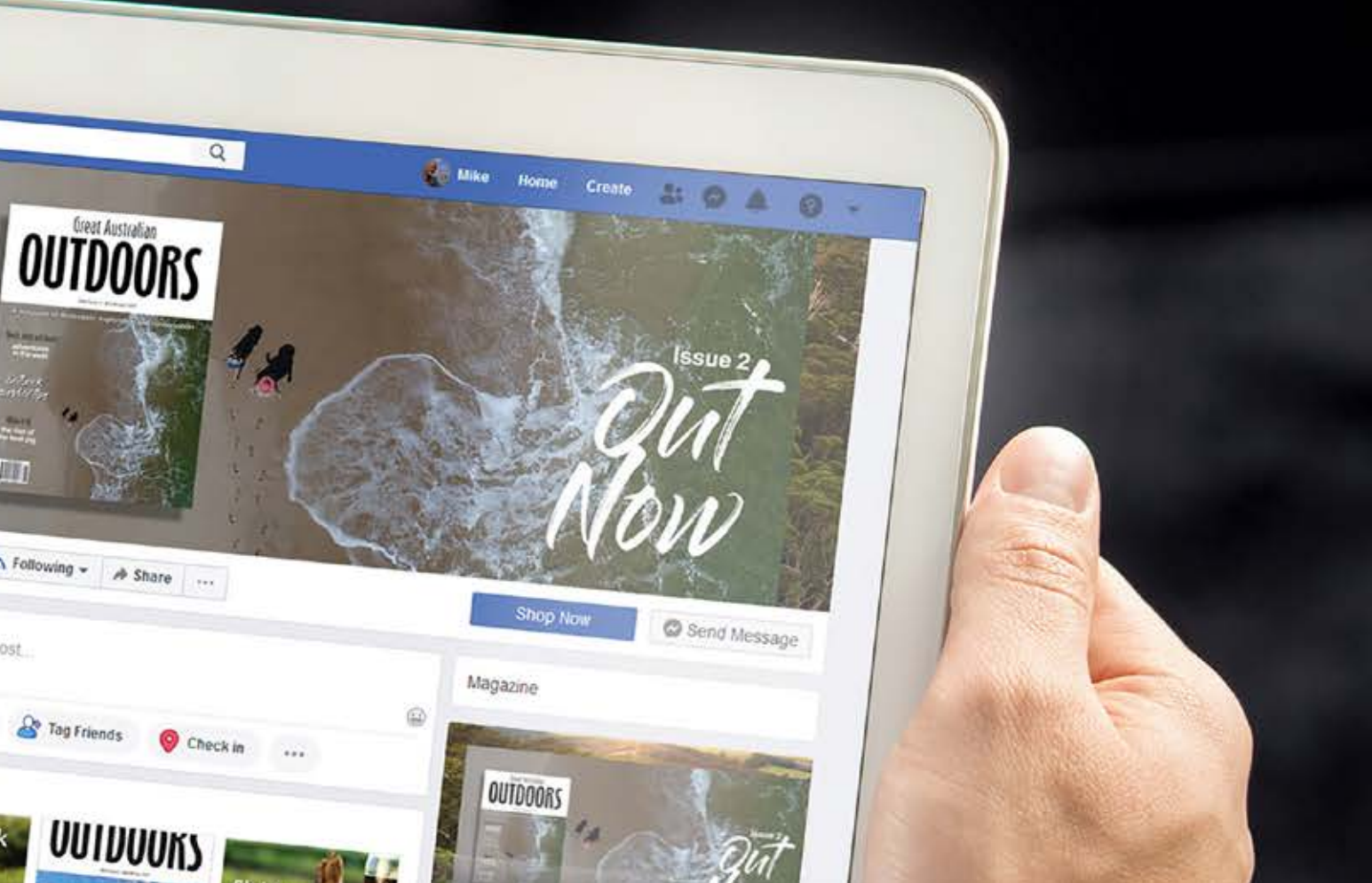
SSAA provides social media outlets for all of its major initiatives from SSAA National, the *Australian Women's Shooter*, *Australian Hunter* magazine and the *Great Australian Outdoors* magazine.

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Our milestone November cover

NEXT ISSUE



As we wrap up our feature on favourite rifle-cartridge-scope combinations, Senior Correspondent Rod Pascoe finds choosing your top trio isn't as easy as you think as he settles on a truly versatile option.

Having reviewed a selection of Mossberg firearms recently, next month Daniel O'Dea runs the rule on the company's MVP Long Range Thunder Ranch, a rifle he says is "well-featured, functional and accurate".

Quality binoculars are an essential part of the hunter's field kit and Con Kapralos has road-tested the latest Endurance ED 8x32s from UK-based Hawke Optics, concluding they provide "all the confidence you'll need when scanning for that favourite game animal".

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as of November 2020

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President's Message

WITH GEOFF JONES

Hunters' gradual return can bolster economy for our rural friends

The shooting fraternity, like everyone else, has been living through turbulent times in this strangest of years as we try to cope with the effects of COVID-19. But gradually restrictions seem to be lifting and there may finally be better days ahead - we don't quite know when but it will happen! So now, as the chaotic year of 2020 nears its close, there are ways SSAA members can lend a helping hand to some of those in our community who would really appreciate the support.

I'm thinking mainly of the influence and knock-on effects hunters can have. As we eventually go back to the norm of reconnecting with our glorious countryside in pursuit of game animals, it's worth taking on board that our presence can invigorate those regional areas which have suffered so much during the past months.

Remember Australia's rural environs have grappled with drought, flood and fire since the calendar ticked over into 2020 then, on top of all that, came the dreaded pandemic and all the associated social hardships. So please try to visit these expanses and buy fuel, spend cash on a burger and so on as every little bit will help people get back on their feet. They're good enough to provide hunting opportunities for our eager members so let's give something back. It's important we offer our backing and don't make them feel like they've been forgotten. But at the same time remember to stay safe yourselves.

Amid all the distraction it's good to enjoy some respite via a magical milestone for the SSAA as this month the Association passed the remarkable landmark of clocking up 200,000 members. It has been a long and sometimes difficult journey since our humble inception at a meeting of interested parties in Sydney way back in 1948, but having achieved this milestone I'm

confident we'll continue to push on and go from strength to strength as we cement the freedoms of our loyal members.

They relish participating in what I proudly continue to emphasise is a safe and family-friendly sport enjoyed by all age groups and abilities. I won't go into detail about the SSAA story down the years, but rather point readers to pages 18-23 of this magazine which gives a thorough and comprehensive overview of how we came to be where we are now.

Once we've taken stock of this achievement there's much to look forward to in the coming months on the reading front with more than a handful of publications under the SSAA umbrella to peruse and appreciate. Next month's *Australian Shooter* will provide a welcome distraction in the lead-up to the festive season and coupled with this will be another significant marker with the 75th edition of *Australian Hunter*. Also coming soon is our annual *Australian & New Zealand Handgun* and as we head into the New Year we'll be releasing the third edition of our ground-breaking and award-winning periodical *Great Australian Outdoors*.

That seems a fitting note on which to end, as I stress again the opportunity for the hunting contingent among our now 200,000-plus strong ranks to be out and about supporting our regional friends.

G. E. Jones

Geoff Jones
SSAA National President



SSAA - Protecting shooters since 1948

Wonderful journey with SSAA

I HAVE JUST received my 50-year continual membership of the SSAA badge. It has been a wonderful journey down the years seeing the changes in our sport from 303 conversions, 22 Hornets and Rem 222 and 17 cal being the norm, through the early years of unlimited access to most firearms, to Port Arthur and the buyback and now the present day of very sophisticated firearms with strict regulations on storage and use.

As a farmer I had the chance to be part of feral animal control with countless numbers of feral animals taken from our farm and environment. I was called up to serve my country on National Service with a 12-month trip to Vietnam in the late '60s, giving the opportunity to try out many different and interesting firearms.

I have shot many competitions with pistol and rifle and am now happy shooting clay targets at my local club. Thank you SSAA for fighting for our sport and allowing us to continue enjoying it. Without the people behind us we'd have a very different shooting scene today so I congratulate all those who have worked hard for us and long may you continue being our advocate. I recommend the SSAA to all budding shooters as you'll find yourself in good hands for the future. Keep up the good work and thank you.

Peter Southwell, via email



Insurance Q&A with Trevor Jenkin

Send questions to: communications@ssaa.org.au

Q: I'm a member of my local club which is not SSAA affiliated and I'm not a SSAA member. I want to go hunting and need liability insurance - would my club insurance cover me?

Fran Donovan, via email

A: I can only answer this based on the insurances we arrange for non-SSAA clubs. The answer is 'no' as club insurance will only cover their liability plus the member's liability while that member is engaged in

club activities. If you were involved in a club hunt your liability would be covered but if it's a personal recreational hunting trip you won't have cover.

I suggest you take out SSAA membership as that provides you with \$20 million liability cover for all lawful recreational shooting activities as well as giving you some personal accident cover (for an extra \$35 you can insure your firearms too). When it comes down to it, SSAA membership fees are a small price to pay

Check what's in the box

I WAS ASKED by a friend to sight-in a rifle with ammunition which appeared, from the box it came in, to be Tikka factory-loaded. After firing five rounds the cases were examined and the results are evident from the photo. One case was fine, one had a very small split and the rest are shown.

Further inspection of the Tikka specs showed the boxed rounds were certainly not what they seemed as the BC of the bullets wasn't even close to the factory spec on the box. I only mention this to highlight the risk of taking ammunition at face value, albeit from a trusted mate who was handling this for a third party.

Sandy Howard, via email

- The SSAA advises you should never use ammunition of doubtful or unknown origin.



In praise of Jumbunna

THE FIRST THING I do on receiving my copy of *Australian Shooter* is turn to the back page and read John Dunn's *Jumbunna* column. He turns shooting, hunting and the associated outdoor lifestyle into poetry. These are some of the most lyrical and evocative articles I've ever read, while maintaining humour and a real down-to-

earth feeling. Every article brings something fresh and new to mind - he makes me feel I'm living his experiences. I almost cried when I read his July column 'All that remains . . .' If John ever publishes his *Jumbunna* articles in a book, I for one will buy a copy along with extras as gifts.

Juel Briggs, NSW

for excellent insurance cover along with other benefits such as representation and our various publications to name but two, and something you need to look into before heading off on your next hunting trip.

If you have any queries about SSAA member insurance benefits, visit ssaaib.com.au or call (08) 8332 0281 and we'll run through them.



An inspiration to us all

NADIA ISA'S TOUCHING tribute to Paralympic champion Libby Kosmala (*Shooter*, September 2020) really warmed my heart and proved beyond doubt the human spirit knows no bounds. To read of Libby's achievements, given she was born paralysed from the waist down, just stunned me.

To then go on and discover that at age 31 she was invited to shoot at a rifle range, something she'd never done before and of course from her wheelchair just to 'square things up' with other shooters, she proceeded to sweep all before her. Her career as a Paralympian lasted four decades and accrued 13 medals, nine of them gold,

an astonishing record which still stands. She's now 78 and passes on her knowledge with great gusto to keen young shooters who, it seems, believe she might just be a national treasure which I'm sure she is, besides being a proud Hall Of Famer.

A beautifully written article Nadia, thank you so much for reminding us more able-bodied shooters that heroes come in many packages and that being born with a serious disability is no barrier to some becoming grand achievers. To Libby I tip my hat and expect you to continue on your inspirational winning ways. I wish you the very best of good health and good shooting.

Dave Burt, NSW

Westley Richards solution

With regard to the fine article by your correspondent John Maxwell about loading the 8x56R (*Shooter*, May 2020), I would like to point out the projectile for the 318 Westley Richards is .330 in diameter and fires well in the M95 rifle and carbines I own. I'm currently using lathe-turned monolithic with good success and will probably settle on them as the 318 W-R made by Woodleigh are quite expensive for just MRC shooting.

Keith Gallagher, via email

Time for some armchair hunting!

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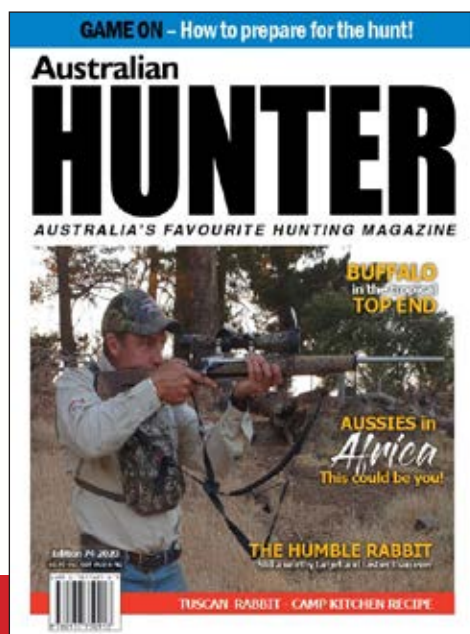
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Tasmanian deer control is up in the air

Results from a recent baseline aerial survey of wild deer in Tasmania showed strong correlation with, and support for, annual spotlight surveys which have been used by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (Tasmania) for some time to observe the distribution and abundance of their wild fallow deer population.

Spotlight surveys have been running since 1975 and the current dataset from them cover 90 transects which are each 10km long. The 2019 spotlight surveys were completed within two months of the baseline aerial survey and provided the opportunity to make comparisons between data collected on the ground and that from above.

While it would be advantageous to derive a scale factor between the average deer per kilometre from spotlight surveys and deer per square kilometre from the aerial survey, this couldn't be done. Since there's no aerial data prior to 2019, there's no way to determine if changes in density over time would be reflected in both survey methods.

As an alternative, the mathematical relationship between varying deer densities over geographical space in both 2019 surveys could be tested.

The aerial survey indicated a population estimate of wild fallow deer within the 19,905km² survey area to be 53,660, the estimated population density being 2.696 deer per km². The Coefficient of Variation (CV), a measure of the amount of variation present in the data, was 19 per cent. A lower CV means less variation and therefore an estimate closer to the approximate true population size. Generally, a CV of 25 per cent or less is regarded as satisfactory for management purposes.

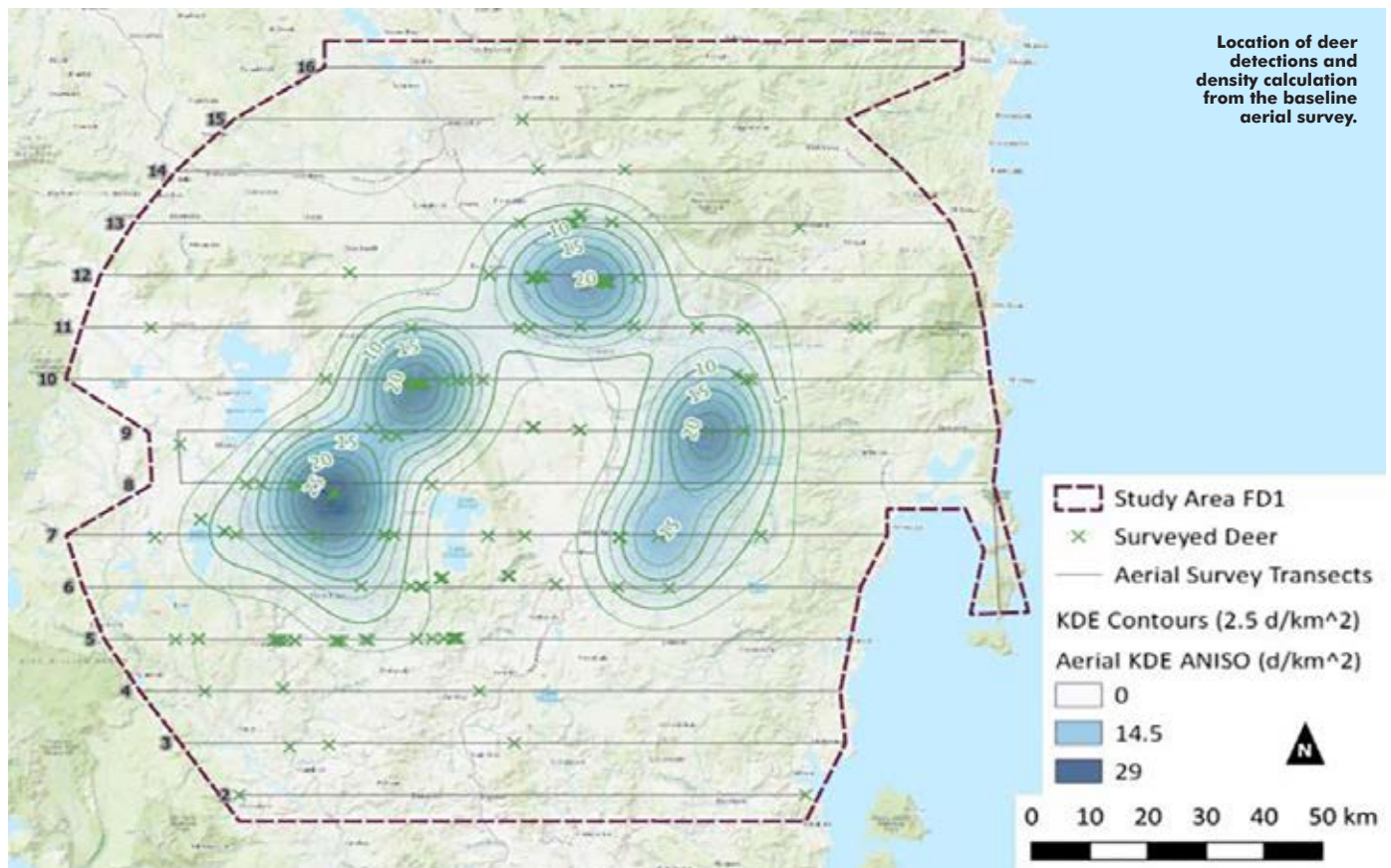
The 2019 spotlight survey indicated an average 0.417 deer per km. Both survey results are not directly comparable, as one is calculated over linear distance (per km) and the other over area (km²). To enable comparison, the spotlight data was converted to a comparable format which then revealed a high degree of correlation (connection) between the two wild deer density

estimates. The close agreement between density estimates has increased confidence in the continued use of spotlight data to monitor trends in the wild fallow deer population over time.

Population trends in spotlight data from 2006 to 2019 indicated an estimated net population growth of 5.4 per cent. With natural population growth (without harvest or crop protection take) estimated to be 27 per cent, it would certainly appear hunters and shooters are putting the brakes on the so-called rapid wild deer expansion which some 'green' groups suggest is happening.

Only a relatively modest increase in the current recreational and/or crop protection harvest would be needed to halt population growth, and this is a good opportunity for game managers in Tasmania to manipulate harvest rates to achieve this along with a sustainable outcome for most stakeholders.

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1350	7.5, 8	28gm

Try these handy hints when reloading cartridges

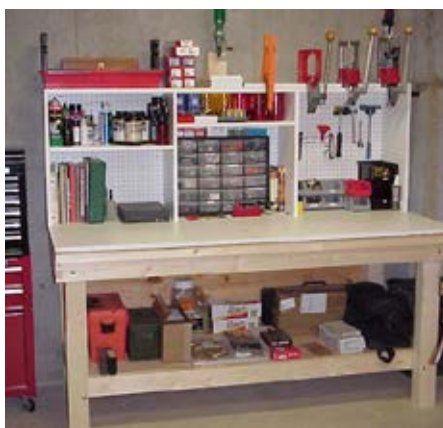
1 When loading a particular cartridge for the first time, never start with the maximum load shown in reloading manuals. Instead, choose the weight of powder shown as the starting load for the particular weight of the projectile you want to use, normally a couple of grains lower than the maximum recommended load.

2: After you've selected the weight of projectile you want to use, consult the powder manufacturer's tables and a reloading manual to select the type and weight of powder you want to use. Sometimes information shown in reloading manuals varies considerably, so it's a good idea to consult more than one manual before deciding on the powder weight you'll use.

3: Before sizing the fired brass cartridge cases, inspect them all to ensure they have no splits in the neck or cracks in the lower body. Discard any with these defects as they may be dangerous to reload.

4: Clean the cases by hand or in a brass tumbler to remove any surface dirt which may scour and damage the interior of the loading dies.

5: When full length or neck resizing a cartridge case, to make the process much easier and a lot less stressful on the case, use a touch of case lube on the exterior of the case and to the interior of the cartridge neck.



6: When inserting new primers into the cartridge case, if they go in without a great deal of effort it usually means the primer pocket is enlarged. Should this be the case, on firing the cartridge high pressure hot gases may blow back through the pocket and erode and damage the bolt face of the rifle or, more seriously, injure the shooter. Any cartridge cases found with this problem should be discarded.

7: For individual components like cartridge cases, primers, powder and projectiles it's best to use the same brand of components, i.e. Winchester cases, Hornady projectiles etc when reloading. It doesn't really matter which brand you choose, it comes down to personal choice and it's a good idea to buy a quantity of each compo-

nent to achieve consistent results in future loading.

8: After the empty cartridge cases have been loaded with powder and are sitting in the loading tray prior to installing the projectile, have a look into the top of all the cases with a torch to make sure the powder in the cases is all at the same level. This will avoid loading a cartridge case with no powder in it or perhaps one which has been overfilled or only part filled with powder.

9: If using electronic powder scales to measure the weight of the powder, it's a good safety rule to check the accuracy of these scales occasionally against the weight shown by a set of mechanical scales.

10: While filling the empty cartridge with powder, never light a cigarette, smoke or have any naked flame in the vicinity of your loading area as smokeless powder is a significant fire risk.

11: Always keep a logbook or record of components used to reload your various cartridges. This way, when you achieve good results with a particular load you can easily duplicate them in future. Also mark any packets or boxes the cartridges are stored in with the date they were loaded, powder type and weight used and particulars of the projectile maker and weight for future reference.



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Clay Target Q&A

WITH RUSSELL MARK

Q I recently bought a Miroku MK38 and shoot mainly Sporting Clays and the occasional round of Skeet, but just for fun. I shoot it quite well and recently went to a club and shot some targets out of a Trap layout and didn't miss while everyone around missed heaps, even though people told me my new Sporting gun wouldn't be suitable for Trap as the stock is too low. I patterned the gun on a pattern board (as per your instructions in a previous *Australian Shooter* article) and it pretty much shot half the pattern below where I was aiming and half above, maybe a fraction higher. Is this an issue as I don't seem to have any problem hitting things with it?

Tony White, Qld.

A Absolutely no problem at all. The smartest thing you did was pattern the gun *after* you were comfortable you were hitting targets consistently. The percentage you describe may be called a 55/45 percentage pattern or 60/40 at best, as you suggest it may be slightly higher than dead flat.

I can name a multitude of Olympic and World Champions in Trap who shoot this percentage and quite a few who shoot 80/20 and even 100/0 in the domestic (slower) disciplines of Trap. What you've discovered is your 'sight picture', suitable for you, not me and maybe not any of your shooting buddies, but right for you.

So long as you maintain the same amount of face pressure on the comb of the stock every time you pull the trigger at your target, it should never vary unless you gain or lose a fair bit of body weight. The knowledge you attained by patterning the

gun is invaluable. If you ever decide to buy another shotgun or change body shape, you now have a blueprint of what your eyes are telling your brain in relation to the correct time to pull the trigger.

In saying that, not everyone patterns their shotgun. The greatest shotgun shooter on Earth in my opinion is England's George Digweed, who has 26 different world titles to his name. My wife Lauryn recently spoke to George about the 'point of impact' of his shotgun. George asked her: "What's that?" Lauryn replied: "You know, where your gun shoots on the pattern board". His response was: "How would I know, I've never done that. They did it for me at the Perazzi factory and I looked away."

**The last time I shot
in competition
they only handed
out prizes to
those who hit the
most targets**

George went on to tell Lauryn that if he places a £1 coin on his barrel down near the receiver of his shotgun and can still see the front sight then his gun should shoot fine, which tells me two things about George. Firstly, his shotgun may shoot relatively high - much higher than yours - and secondly, being the world's greatest shotgun shooter, he has so much natural ability he simply places the end of the barrel where

it needs to be in relation to the target and does so with ridiculous consistency, never doubting his ability to do so.

At the opposite end of the scale is Kimberly Rhode, America's six-time Olympic medalist who treats the shotgun like her favourite high calibre safari rifle and goes as far as using a rest to aid her when she patterns the gun. Her argument is she can't sight-in a rifle free-hand so why would she think she could do it with a shotgun? My gut tells me Kim is more technically correct than George on this issue, but how can you argue with someone with a record like George Digweed.

The bottom line is both are confident their shotguns are shooting in the correct position for them - it doesn't have to be correct for anyone else and there's no right or wrong answer. If you can hit Trap, Sporting and Skeet targets all with the same shotgun without having to alter it in any way, that's fantastic. It's not fundamentally correct but the last time I shot in competition they only handed out prizes to those who hit the most targets, there were none for who looked best or had their shotguns set up the most technically correct way.



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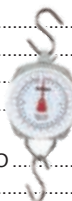
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Got a question - ask our TOP SHOTS ?

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

• Rod Pascoe

email: edit@ssaa.org.au

Q My mate was given this pistol and the only information he has is it was in his family for generations. The date was believed to be 1790. Can you find out anything about it?

Tim Sweet, via email

A The markings from your photographs are reasonably clear and the manufacturer's name is unmistakable. The pistol is a French-made cavalry Model AN IX (Year 9 model) made at the St Etienne arsenal sometime between 1805 and 1814. This flintlock single-shot was a typical military piece of the time and was in service until about 1840.

It has a 17mm bore, about .69" calibre and fired a 27-gram ball with an effective range of 10m at best. Around 300,000 were produced in a couple of variations. Your photos didn't reveal the manufacture date but you may find that stamped on it somewhere. Unfortunately yours is missing the iron ramrod, which is normally stored in the stock under the barrel, the hammer also missing the vice-like mechanism which holds the flint in place, and both will drastically reduce the sale price if that's your intention. Otherwise it appears to be complete with polished brass fittings and walnut stock, although the overall condition is only fair.



You mentioned the date of 1790 which is significant as at that time there was a similar-looking navy pistol, the Model 1789, in service with the French military before the AN IX. You never know, yours may have been at Waterloo.

Rod Pascoe

Q I use Winchester Super Ranger field shotshells and am aware there are nine pellets in a cartridge. My question is this: Can some of the nine pellets fly - is it possible for one or two to go either left or right?

Bill Phelan, via email

A Winchester Super Ranger shotshells with nine pellets (00SG buckshot) are potent 32-gram loads which leave the muzzle at 1275 feet per second and are specifically designed for dangerous game or larger pest species. They're meant for use at relatively short range and these large pellets tend to fly true to the target.



Depending on the choke they can be very effective to about 50m.

It's possible one pellet could fly out of the pattern but probably not by much, as they're well formed and protected as they travel up the barrel so should be minimally damaged if at all before they leave your barrel. These loads are ideal for close range feral pigs on the run and really bowl them over, ensuring a merciful kill so long as you shoot them within a reasonable range.

It would be interesting for you to pattern this load on a big piece of cardboard or paper at the approximate distance you usually shoot to see exactly what the results are in terms of pattern spread and whether you get any fliers. You could also experiment with chokes from half to full to see what difference this makes to the pattern and therefore maximum killing range. If all your shots tend to be really close, consider a more open choke assuming your gun has that option of changing chokes.

These Winchester shells and their components are high quality and I think you can rely on them to create a round pattern even though there are only nine large pellets in the load.

Paul Miller

Q I recently bought a Henry .22LR Classic which I use with a Skinner peep sight. I've been a sports shooter for 35 years but this short lightweight rifle offers as much fun as I've had and is an efficient rifle shooting in dense scrub country where a scope is just not practical. However, I do sometimes need a bit more f/p energy so have decided to buy a Henry in .22 Magnum. The model I want comes in three barrel lengths - 17, 20 and 24 inches. My question is: Does barrel length make much difference in a round as light as the .22 Magnum?

Alex Phillip, via email

A The simple answer is yes, barrel length does make a difference in the performance of all cartridges but whether or not it will make any real difference to a .22 WMRF at shorter ranges in scrubby country is probably more academic than actual. All cartridges have a barrel length which provides optimum velocities.

Ballistic data for the .22 WMRF are derived from a standard barrel length of 24" with a 1-16" twist though that hasn't stopped makers like Henry from producing rifles with shorter barrels as you know.

Some of the data I found online suggests the WMRF achieved maximum powder burn in a 19-20" barrel with a small velocity increase in barrels up to 26". Generally, shorter barrels mean less velocity which in turn means less bullet energy. That said, a shorter barrel can also mean better accuracy as the barrel itself is stiffer and therefore develops better and more stable harmonics as the bullet travels down the barrel.

With open or aperture sights a shorter barrel also means a shorter sight picture which may mean less accuracy, but given you're not trying to put all your shots through one hole at extended ranges, I doubt that's really a valid consideration. Finally, you'd need to try a range of different ammunition to see which brand the rifle prefers to shoot. I'd buy the rifle which rings the most bells, go hunting with it and leave the worrying to others.

John Dunn

Q Some years ago I bought factory loaded Winchester .223 ammunition with a new Ruger rifle and after firing these I put primers in all and reloaded half of them. When I went to use them they were very tight to load and extract after firing so I didn't load any more. Why should this be as I thought they'd be fire-formed to my rifle and how can I de-activate these primers so I can remove them and resize the cases?

Rob Heading, Qld

A I'm not sure why these once fired cases are so hard to chamber but I agree it would be a good idea for a start to remove unfired primers from the empty cartridges. This can be done by carefully putting the cartridges through the neck sizing die in the press to remove them and then running the cartridges through the full length sizing die without the primer intact.

Rechamber these full length sized cartridges in the rifle - they should all enter

without a problem - but if they're still hard to chamber I recommend you take the rifle and cartridges to a gunsmith and seek his advice.

Barry Wilmot

Q I've been thinking about casting bullets for the 9.3x62mm using No.4 shot from Ballantyne (bought decades ago). Is this a viable option and/or would I have to add any other metal to use for casting? Would paper-patching the bullets also be useful to reduce barrel fouling and create faster cast loads around 1500 to 1800fps?

Alex Lytwynenko, via email

A Lead shot varies a bit in composition so I can only give approximate answers. According to a Material Safety Data Sheet published online, you can expect lead shot to consist of 95 to 99.99 per cent lead, 0.5-6.5 per cent antimony and 0.1-0.2 per cent arsenic. The antimony is added for hardness while the arsenic is used to make sphere formation of the pellets more effective. You'll note there's no tin in this formulation although some shot may contain small trace amounts of tin.

For bullet casting it's better to have a higher proportion of tin, so shooters who reclaim spent shot generally add 1-2 per cent tin by weight. Tin can be bought direct from metal suppliers or added by using lead-tin solder available from hardware stores. If I were in your situation, given the cost of shot these days, I'd be selling the shot to a shotgunner and scavenging some car wheel weights or other lead alloys less likely to contain arsenic.

Specifically, for your bullets you'll need them to be hard enough to withstand the pressure during firing, so a hard lead alloy would be needed. The 'hard-ball' alloy made by Northern Smelters is used by several friends of mine who load large calibres similar to yours and paper-patching of your bullets would certainly reduce lead fouling. I strongly recommend Chapter 10 of Richard Lee's *Modern Handloading* which will give you a good insight into the hardness required for different breech pressures.

Geoff Smith

The numbers don't lie - 200,000 strong and counting

Communications Officer Sam Talbot

From modest beginnings in 1948 with just a handful of members, the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia is now more than 200,000 strong. We've grown into a large family which looks after not only the shooting sports but each other and together have developed a loud and powerful voice we use to ensure the longevity and security of the shooting sports. By standing together we will only continue to grow and flourish.

It's an undeniably impressive number but 200,000 is almost hard to wrap your head around. So, to help understand who we are and what our community looks like, let's take a closer look at some of the numbers and break down where we are and who we are. Before we do though it's important to remember the SSAA is a federation, each state and territory having its own association with all members belonging to one of these. Each state is independent and equal when making decisions and, alongside this, SSAA National is the service body for the states and operates independently.

While you're probably most familiar with your local range or club there are so many things together we offer the 200,000 members including insurance, a multitude of publications, lobbying, SSAA Gun Sales and online shop, training, competitions, conservation, Farmer Assist and much more. But however you use the SSAA, know that

we're working for you and doing our best to promote the shooting sports and protect the interests of legitimate firearms owners.

The most up-to-date figure has us comfortably over 200,000 with a grand total of 200,954 members. Just a year ago we had 195,862 and at this time in 2018 were 191,095 strong, a clear indication the SSAA and shooting sports continue to grow in popularity. This year alone the Northern Territory has increased its membership by seven per cent, while arguably more impressive due to their larger populations, New South Wales and Queensland both added almost four per cent.

Not surprisingly, adults make up the bulk of our membership but we do have almost 6000 junior shooters as well as more than 15,000 holding family memberships, as we work tirelessly to bring new people into our community and offer young people a healthy respect and appreciation of the shooting sports.

At the other end of the scale, pensioners account for more than 20,000 of our number, proving age is no barrier to enjoying the shooting sports. Yet most SSAA members sit right in the middle in the 46-50 age bracket for both men and women, although a healthy amount of our female members are in their thirties.

This is due in part to the work done in recent years to increase female participation

rates, including launching *Australian Women's Shooter* magazine and holding several popular ladies-only 'Come and Try' days. And if you're a male shooter seeking a like-minded female companion then Queensland's the place to be, as not only does it have most female members overall but also the most by percentage at 12.5.

One of the questions we're frequently asked is 'how many members does each state have' and we must admit Queensland has a special place in our hearts, being far and away our most populous state with 74,740 members. Making up the big three are NSW on 57,900 and Victoria with 40,611 members, the other states and territories closely following their overall populations, though the ACT deserves a shout for pulling well above its weight.

SSAA Firearms Insurance is held by 69,447 members who are covered for up to \$25,000 on their firearms and fixed accessories. Western Australians are leading the charge and keeping themselves safe with more than 57 per cent of members electing to take the coverage, Tasmanians also spotting a good deal when they see one with 53 per cent covered.

Finally, we must give a shout out to five amazing members over the age of 100 – maybe the time has come to introduce a 'super super veteran' category in competitions! ●

'Milestone' Marie - our 200,000th member



As the SSAA reaches the historic landmark of becoming 200,000 strong, **Nadia Isa** spoke to our milestone member to find out what she enjoys about the shooting sports

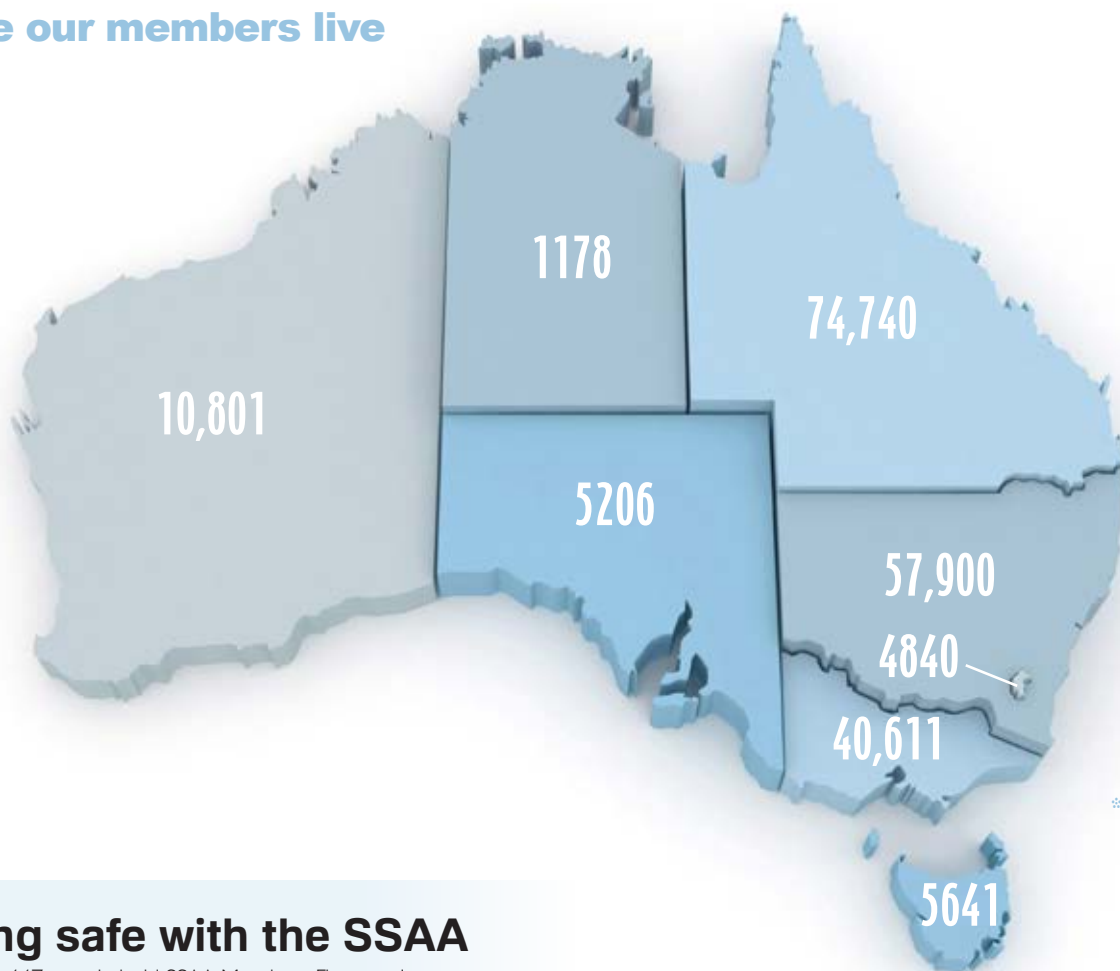
Family affair: 'Milestone' Marie Wheeler enjoys shooting with her son.

Marie Wheeler started shooting clay targets in the 1990s and enjoyed it immensely but, with life becoming ever busier, found she just didn't have enough time and gave up the sport for a while. Now 58, she's finally getting back into it after some encouragement from her son Connor, participating in shotgun and clay target shooting and thriving on the fact the sport is something she and her son can enjoy together.

Marie's biggest thrill is the sense of achievement she feels about her progress. "I thought I was past it age-wise but have met some older shooters here so I'm joining a club and getting my licence,"

200,000 members strong!

Where our members live



*Overseas: 37

Staying safe with the SSAA

Currently, 69,447 people hold SSAA Members Firearms Insurance, that's more than 35 per cent of our membership covered for \$25,000 worth of insurance on firearms and fixed firearm accessories. We also offer cover for travel, farming, shooting ranges and much more, so send your insurance premium back into the shooting sports through SSAA General Insurance Brokers. Call (08) 8332 0281 or visit ssaaib.com.au for all your insurance needs.

she said. "My favourite thing about shooting is seeing my own improvements and the sense that I'm getting better."

The Queensland resident has also discovered that since her time in the '90s, shooting has changed. "I've learned there are far more social shooters than I previously thought and they're trying to foster a more family-friendly environment for people who enjoy the sport."

More than anything, Marie loves that shooting is a fun activity she can share with her son and hopes to see the sport continue to flourish. "It's nice to see people enjoying a sport that's growing

in popularity, judging by the number of younger people who took the course along with me. I'm going to keep enjoying myself, build confidence to improve and savour this time with my Connor."

As a thank you from the Association for helping us reach this significant landmark, Marie's membership number will be recorded as 200,000, she'll receive a paid SSAA life membership, our Great Australian Outdoors magazines and Field to Fork cookbooks along with a \$200 voucher to spend on official merchandise.

SSAA National President Geoff Jones



contacted Marie to offer his personal thanks on helping the Association mark this significant milestone. "I had the pleasure of speaking with Marie to congratulate her on becoming the 200,000th member and during our conversation I found out she'd taken up shooting with her son," said Geoff. "I was so heartened to appreciate the fact the SSAA philosophy and shooting sports offer the opportunity as a safe, family-friendly sport for all ages and abilities and is so well accepted in the mainstream community."

It's all about the members - what the SSAA does for you

Communications Officer Sam Talbot

As Australia's leading and largest sports shooting body, now with more than 200,000 members through its state federalism, no-one else comes close to the size and reach of the SSAA and as such, we provide an unparalleled level of benefits and services to members nationwide. Our mission since 1948 has been to promote sports shooting and recreational hunting while protecting the interests and freedom of firearms owners. Of course, we still do this through SSAA Legislative Action and other political lobbying at both federal level and within each state and territory, but we also offer various other services and membership benefits.

With continued expansion over the years we've developed several other ways to offer value, including 'Come and Try' days, conservation projects, new publications and expos. These are not only great benefits for members, they also feed back into our primary objective as mentioned above.

Some of these services you'll use on a regular basis while others may not apply

to you personally, but rest assured there's plenty your Association is doing. After all, the members *are* the SSAA and we have a dedicated team of professionals available to ensure you enjoy the maximum from your membership.

Clubs

Wherever you go there's always somewhere for you to shoot with the SSAA. We have more than 440 clubs and ranges throughout Australia and cater to every type of shooting - from small target ranges and silhouettes to those with electronic targets and ones more than 1000 yards long, we have you covered.

At our ranges, target shooters and hunters can sight-in their firearms, beginners or seasoned campaigners can try a new discipline or, if you're on a road trip and want to meet some friendly new faces, there will be a range not too far away. Our clubs are constantly upgrading their facilities and as an Association we're always looking for opportunities to expand current ranges or establish new ones.

Disciplines and competitions

SSAA clubs offer a host of rifle, shotgun and handgun competitions (known as disciplines), whether you're a weekend club shooter or aspiring to be a serious national or international competitor. These disciplines use many different types of firearms including shotguns, pistols, revolvers and rifles in rimfire, centrefire, air and black powder configurations and feature a variety of targets depending on the particular discipline or competition.

If you want to shoot black powder rifles we have a discipline for that, if testing your skills at long range is what you're after we're able to deliver, or if you'd like to race against the clock through a complex course using multiple firearms, we have one for that too - whatever your preference we have a discipline for it and a passionate group of competitors for you to connect with.

The SSAA conducts shooting competitions in all Australian states and territories at club, state and national level and, in addition to this, the Association regularly hosts international events and supports member participation in a number of competitions around the world.

Lobbying and SSAA-LA

The SSAA lobbies all aspects of government at local, state and federal level and can often be found consulting with firearms registries, state parliamentarians and round the table in Federal Parliament, negotiating to protect members' chosen recreations and pastimes. Through the SSAA Legislative Action department we applaud and publicise lawmakers and commentators who support us, while exposing the ignorance of those attempting to tarnish our sport. On the international front we hold non-governmental organisation (NGO) status within the United Nations and regularly participate in international forums.

Women shooters are becoming a major part of the SSAA.





SSAA funds teams to compete internationally.



As the Toblers demonstrate, sports shooting is a family affair.

We spread our message on billboards, TV and radio along with other major news outlets and with the *Journalists' Guide to Firearms and the Shooting Sports*, we assist media professionals and set the record straight for those reporting on the shooting sports and firearms, the publication a valued one in newsrooms around the country.

Publications

The magazine you're reading now is *Australian Shooter*, the Association's flagship publication which is mailed free to members 11 times a year, saving them almost \$100 annually on the newsagency price. But that's not all, as at no cost to members we also produce periodicals *Australian Junior Shooter* and *Australian Women's Shooter*.

Additionally, we have paid-for publications for which Association members are given discounts, including *Great Australian Outdoors* and *Australian Hunter*, with other publications covering topics as diverse as handguns, politics, cookbooks, how-to guides and much more. We also have a strong digital presence and newsletters to keep members informed, while the SSAA TV YouTube channel is a valuable source of information and features instructional videos on competition shooting, hunting,

conservation, firearms maintenance and more.

Insurance

With SSAA membership you're automatically insured for up to \$20 million public liability, personal accident and \$75,000 life insurance when participating in a shooting-related activity. SSAA General Insurance Brokers also offer cover for your home and contents, car, boat, caravan, business or farm, so when you use us for your insurance needs, that money stays in the shooting sports.

One of our most popular offerings is SSAA Members Firearms Insurance which covers your firearms for up to \$25,000 for theft, accidental damage such as fire or



Range Officers are here to help.

Culling of feral pests helps the environmental balance.



flood and accidental breakage, not just at home but at the range or out hunting and, for just \$35 a year is remarkable value, only available to Association members.

Hunting

Members can sign up free of charge to the SSAA Farmer Assist program, which connects you with farmers who require feral wildlife culled on their property. The program is administered online and requires members to undertake accuracy accreditation to be eligible, though there are plenty of clubs and volunteers happy to help with that.

Many states run dedicated hunting programs often called SSAA Conservation & Wildlife Management, where members can learn four-wheel driving, GPS and other outdoor skills to enable them to become better hunters while helping preserve Australia's environmental balance. Across



We cater to multiple disciplines.

the country are a variety of hunting-specific courses and clubs available to introduce you to game stalking, butchering and, of course, firearm safety in the field. Whether hunting rabbits, ducks, foxes, pigs or that trophy deer, the SSAA will point you in the right direction.

Online Shop

We wear our logo proudly and encourage



SSAA National Coaching and Membership Development Manager Gemma Dunn in action.

members to do likewise. The SSAA Online Shop offers a wide range of items including clothing, camping gear and firearms accessories and is full of things we feel will benefit our members - and you qualify for free postage. In the shop you'll find Association mascot Trigg the Koala, this Australian icon helping explain to Aussies and international friends alike, the crucial conservation role which hunting and the

From humble beginnings to strength

On April 15, 1948 around 100 shooters assembled at the Railway Institute building in Elizabeth Street, Sydney and agreed to form the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia and now, more than 70 years later, our organisation is a national icon with worldwide connections, having reached the incredible milestone of 200,000 diverse and passionate members.

Yet it hasn't always been a smooth passage. When the SSAA came into

existence, 500 publicity notices were printed and distributed via gun shops, but it took time for word to spread. By 1951, NSW membership had risen from 250 to 357 but attempts to establish rural branches and interstate associations came to nothing. Gradually the tide turned as, one by one, state associations sprung up, firstly Victoria in 1951 ahead of Queensland in 1957, followed by South Australia (1964), Northern Territory (1965), ACT (1965), Western Australia (1967) and Tasmania (1969).

Amid these developments it was still felt the organisation needed a federal bedrock to bind it together, so on August 18, 1962 SSAA National came into being after a convening meeting of 12 members. John Bradbury of Queensland became inaugural President and some of his early thoughts still resonate today, as he felt there was "a need for a unifying force so a federal body could advise and co-ordinate the independent state bodies. The SSAA name is becoming widely known and respected".

Since Bradbury there have been 16 Presidents, with fellow Queenslander Geoff Jones currently at the helm to further increase our Association's standing and influence. The SSAA addresses issues relating to politics, conservation,

competitive shooting and recreational hunting, with the accent on safety as we look to recruit and train new members in the arts and skills of sports shooting.

Another offshoot of unification has been this very magazine and its sister publications, which have evolved from the quarterly printed newsletter - *The Report* - initially appearing in 1959. The first *Sporting Shooters' Journal* was published in April 1963, changing to *Australian Shooters' Journal* in June 1968 before expansion and innovation saw it become *Australian Shooter* in September 1999.

Looking back on our progress, it would be hard to imagine the kind of world people were living in when the SSAA took those fledgling steps in 1948. Australia had suffered terribly during the Great Depression of the 1930s and, hard on the heels of that social catastrophe, the nation found itself plunged into the turmoil of World War Two. The aftermath of those tumultuous events was still being felt until rationing of meat and clothing finally ended in June 1948, yet despite the hardships there was a sense of hope and renewal as soldiers gradually returned from the various theatres of war and families were reunited.

And 1948 was certainly a year laced with sporting landmarks as cricket legend Don



200,000 members strong!

SSAA play in protecting our unique wildlife and environment.

SSAA Gun Sales

SSAA Gun Sales is an online service for members, dealers and the Australian shooting and hunting community, including firearm owners, collectors and enthusiasts. Designed as Australia's most comprehensive firearms and accessories trading website, it offers heavily discounted listing fees for members and is a safe, secure, legal and easy way to snare a bargain or sell on an unwanted firearm.

Youth development and firearm education

The SSAA conducts regular classes and practical instruction on firearms safety, working closely with the firearms industry in promoting responsible firearms handling among junior shooters across Australia.

We also host the annual National Junior Challenge which allows the nation's best young shooters to compete with each other in a friendly and supportive environment.

SSAA SHOT Expo

Each year we host at least one major professional shooting and outdoors expo, showcasing the best products and services available in the Australian market. The

annual two-day SSAA SHOT Expo regularly attracts more than 15,000 visitors, all searching for that next firearm, optic, knife or accessory to add to their kit. Previously held in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth, upcoming expos are promoted through our magazines, websites and social media. ●

SSAA SHOT Expos are always a popular attraction.



in numbers

Bradman played his final Test match against England at The Oval, bowled for a duck in his last innings (Bradman's Invincibles won by an innings and 149 runs and claimed The Ashes 4-0). And as one Aussie star stepped off the stage, so another arrived with the birth of future cricket captain Greg Chappell on August 7. And if the SSAA was looking for an omen on its future, those founding members could have revelled in the exploits of a horse named Rimfire which romped to victory in the Melbourne Cup at odds of 66-1.

Elsewhere, Ben Chifley was in office as the 16th Prime Minister of Australia, serving from 1945 to 1949 and leading the Labor Party from 1945 until his death in 1951. Another notable landmark was the first Holden rolling off the assembly line as 'Australia's own car' at the Woodville plant in South Australia and Port Melbourne in Victoria, the cost of a Holden Sedan back then being £760.

To compare our modern existence with the days of the SSAA's inception in 1948 would be almost akin to jumping into a time machine. Enormous progress has been made by the organisation during the past seven decades but as our Association reaches this milestone of 200,000 members, we must acknowledge that the SSAA

cannot stand still. In 2020, during a particularly difficult time across the globe, we thank you for your support and remind you that we remain as committed to protecting the freedom of our members as did those pioneering souls in 1948. ●



Still protecting shooters



WELL, WE MADE IT - two-hundred thousand members strong and still growing. Credit must be given to the states and their clubs for attracting and keeping Australian recreational shooters and those coming into our sport. If you're reading this the chances are you're a SSAA member, so thank you for putting your trust in the Association. Let me reassure you the state and national associations will always put you first and, as our motto says, SSAA - protecting shooters since 1948.

Tim Bannister

Tim Bannister
SSAA National CEO



HORNADY
Lock N Load Classic Kit
Everything you need less
Dies & Shell Holder...
SPECIAL NEW \$609

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Cleaner 2L
SPECIAL NEW \$220



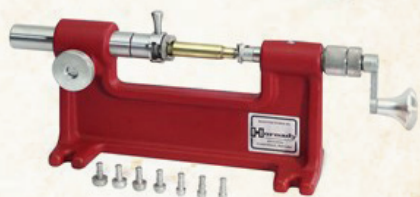
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Does Not Include Mag, Grip & Buttstock
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MDT
Polymetal Magazine
308win, 10 Shot, AICS Pattern
Available In: Black or FDE **NEW \$59.90**



MDT
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AICS Pattern, 10 Shot, Black
Available In: 223rem or 308win **NEW \$54.90**



MDT
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8.6" **NEW \$69.95**
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MDT
AR Style Pistol Grip
With Built In Palm Swell
Available in: Black Or FDE
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VORTEX
Strike Eagle
5-25x56, FFP, Illuminated
MRAD or MOA Reticle **NEW \$1115**



VORTEX
Diamond Back Tactical
4-12x40, VMR-I MOA Reticle
With Tactical Turrets **SPECIAL NEW \$349**



VORTEX
Diamond Back Tactical
6-24x50, EBR2C, FFP
MRAD or MOA **NEW \$649**



VORTEX
Venom
3 Moa or 6 Moa, Red Dot
With Weaver/ Pic Rail Interface
NEW \$425



VORTEX
Strikefire II
4 MOA
With Weaver/ Pic Rail Interface
Available In:
Bright Red Dot **NEW \$325**
Green / Red Dot **NEW \$335**



HORNADY TAP – Tactical
308win, 168gr, AMAX, ammo
\$32.90/per 20, \$329/per 200



HORNADY MATCH
308win, 168gr, HPBT, ammo
\$32.90/per 20, \$329/per 200



WINCHESTER
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9mm, 115gr, FMJ, ammo
\$32.50/per 100, \$325/per 1000



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WINCHESTER USA
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WINCHESTER USA
9mm, 124gr, FMJ ammo
\$17.50/per 50, \$175/per 500, \$329/per 500

NightTech



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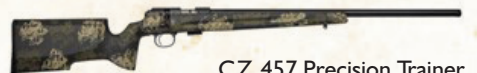
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Trusted Brno blend ideal for deer



For the penultimate instalment in our series on favourite rifle, cartridge and scope combinations, seasoned hunter **Chris Redlich** nominates a trio that have stood the test of time

Rifle: Custom Brno 601

Cartridge: .284 Winchester

Scope: Swarovski Z5 3.5-18x44

It would be fair to say my favourite deer hunting rifle has seen more than its fair share of action in recent decades – that’s right, decades. Bought new by a mate’s brother in the 1970s, the Brno 601 in .243 Winchester served ‘Snow’ well as a ute gun which travelled many a bush mile and was used for all manner of feral animal control on the properties he worked. A tragic farm accident cost Snow his life and the rifle remained in the back of a gun safe for at least another 10 years.

Snow’s brother Dave knew I was a hunter and eventually offered me the rifle at a price too good to refuse. Aware of its history and my connection to the original owner brought with it a real element of sentimentality and desire to look after the gun.

After taking ownership in 2003, just two years prior to the start of my passion for deer hunting, the rifle was eagerly put to use and many a feral succumbed to the .243 before a worn barrel forced the first of several changes. Little did I know in those early days the Brno would be my go-to deer hunting rifle for years to come.

Brno 601- the rifle

The Brno rifle made in the Czech Republic is a ‘control round feed’ bolt-action of solid Mauser design. Brno actions are regarded as very strong, able to handle high pressures of heavy recoiling cartridges

and more than adequate for my eventual conversion to .284 Winchester. My particular action is based on the Brno 601 model for short action cartridges. Model 600 is designated for long action cartridges such as the .270 Win and 30-06 Springfield while the 602 model rifles accommodated magnum-length cartridges such as the .300 Win Mag, 375 H&H and 458 Win Mag.

Starting life as a factory .243 Win and after many years of hard use, the Brno had reached the end of its tenure but not without an impressive service record as during this time I grassed many wild pigs, foxes and feral goats with 80 and 100-grain handloads. While hunting a south-west Queensland property in 2003 I successfully bagged a feral goat which ended up at the taxidermist and eventually on our wall.

A few years later a pre-hunt sighting-in session confirmed the .243 barrel’s demise and I investigated alternatives. By then my enthusiastic passion for deer hunting was in full swing and while my trusty .303 No. 4 SMLE factory sporter had served me well, I decided to rebarrel the Brno in 7mm-08 Rem as a replacement cartridge for the .243 Win and a ‘deer rifle’ alternative to the .303.

After some serious homework I was satisfied the 7mm-08 Rem would be the perfect round for taking all manner of Australian game up to and including most deer species. Our local gunsmith was



The Brno in .284 easily downed Chris’s first 6x6 red stag with a single 140-grain Nosler AccuBond projectile.



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tasked with the rebarrel work and the Brno fitted with a 24" (610mm) 'Douglas' stainless-steel medium profile barrel. He epoxy bedded the action to the timber stock and the stainless barrel had a non-reflective matte finish thanks to the combination of an orbital sander and lathe.

From the word go the rifle shot like 'stink' with factory ammo and before long I was experimenting with different projectiles and powders. The new 7mm-08 favoured 140-grain Nosler AccuBond and Ballistic Tip projectiles while further trophy success can be credited to 120-grain Barnes Tipped TSX handloads.

The timber stock was eventually replaced by a 'Corporal Trading' synthetic thumb-hole option. I anticipated lots of hard deer hunting miles and the comfort of a thumb-hole stock was money well spent. The original set trigger was replaced by a single stage and lightened to a pressure of 1.5lb and I honestly don't know how I persisted with that set trigger for so long, as the new one's a welcome change and probably one of the best of all my rifles.

The next few years saw the Brno in its 7mm-08 form account for more than its fair share of deer, wild dogs and ferals but I had an itch for change. Looking for a reason to tinker with the rifle again was answered by my wife's acquisition of her own in 7mm-08 Rem which sparked a fresh idea for another Brno conversion and possibility of a new chambering.

With good advice from close mate and Australian World Champion F-class shooter Cameron McEwan, I decided to convert my Brno in 7mm-08 Rem to the little-known but powerful .284 Win. After successful day surgery with the gunsmith, the 7mm stainless steel barrel of my Brno was perfect for the conversion and Cameron gave me the knowledge and brass required to get started.

My rifle twist of one in 10" not only suited the 7mm-08 Rem perfectly but equally the .284 Win, as essentially all I did was increase the Brno's horsepower with the new chambering. The fatter cases of the .284 Win reduced magazine capacity to three but all rounds cycle perfectly with no modifications to the receiver.

.284 Win - the cartridge

In 1963, the year Holden released the EH sedan, Winchester unveiled the .284 Win as a short action competitor to Remington's .280 based on the long action 30-06 case. Winchester designed the .284 Win cartridge for chambering in their Mod 88 lever and Mod 100 self-loading rifles. Commercially the .284 Win didn't find favour and languished for years then fell into obscurity as an odd cartridge. Target shooters can take credit for more recently giving the .284 Win a new lease of life as they discovered its superb accuracy and long-range attributes.

In 1999 Swedish firm Norma released its 6.5-284 cartridge for ultra long-range

shooting and, gaining instant popularity, it obtained commercial status and from there helped breathe impetus into its parent .284 Win case. After my own success with the .284 Win it astounds me this short fat cartridge doesn't have a larger following as a commercial hunting round.

It has so much going for it including expanded boiler room with a rebated case head based on the .308 Win diameter and a short-action cartridge capable of higher velocities than the long actioned .280 Rem or venerable .270 Win. The .284 Win could be mildly regarded as an 'original Short Magnum' but far more economical than its modern counterparts.

I tread lightly referring to the .284 Win as a Short Magnum though, and after blowing a fair amount of wind up its tailpipe it does have limitations. It's important to remember that for hunting, the .284 Win is designed as a short-action cartridge and works beautifully loaded with lighter calibre projectiles from 120 to 150-grains.

With overall length of 73mm, my rifle in .284 Win would be handicapped loaded



The Swarovski Z5 scope combined with the .284 Winchester provide outstanding long-range hunting accuracy, evident by a .461 MOA three-shot group at 300m.

Successful conversion from 7mm-08 Rem to .284 Win - 140-grain Nosler AccuBonds' awesome group.



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with any projectiles heavier than 150-grain as powder space within the case would be sacrificed, reducing velocity, not to mention my twist rate insufficiently stabilising longer bullets. In this situation, long-action cartridges such as the 280 Rem and 7mm Rem Mag are a more sensible choice for heavier bullets of 160 and 175-grains. It's easy to get tied up with statistics but my experience and testing proved that pound-for-pound and velocity the .284 Win edges the others with 140 and 150-grain bullets, burning less powder.

As far as I know the only form of commonly available commercial brass for handloading the .284 Win is by easily expanding 6.5/284 Norma case necks. I bought Lapua brass for the job and they've stood up to numerous handloads, retaining almost original case dimensions thanks to its sharp 35-degree shoulders. My two favourite loads are the 140-grain Nosler AccuBond and 150-grain Ballistic Tips both powered by the extremely popular ADI AR2209 powder. The 140s burning 55 grains reach about 3100fps and the 150s smoking 54 grains 3000fps, printing virtually identical on paper.



The Brno has accounted for many a feral swine.



The popular 7mm hunting family flanked by the .284 Winchester cartridges. From left: 284 Win factory, 7mm-08 Rem, .280 Rem, 7mm Rem Mag and .284 Win handload.

Both are extremely accurate with repeated 'out of the safe' three-shot groups under $\frac{1}{2}$ MOA and more recently a one-off three-shot group with 150-grain Ballistic Tips to support this article printed 1.5" (.461 MOA) at 300m. Without a Ballistic Turret to dial up it's vital you understand the fall of shot at various ranges and with this kind of accuracy at 300m, a deer won't stand a chance. The consistency of the .284 Win allows me the confidence to take that difficult shot at a once-in-a-lifetime trophy.

Swarovski Z5 3.5-18x44 - the scope

A good rifle isn't complete without a sound glass and fitting a new Swarovski Optik scope to the Czech action completed the European look with the sleek dimensions of the Z5 matching the custom Brno's length. Swarovski's Z5 riflescopes are based on a one-inch tube made from aerospace-grade aluminium finished with a durable non-reflective satin black coating.

The Z5 and Z3's one-inch tube is popular with American hunters and was designed to compete with their locally-made scopes by offering Swarovski ware in a slimline package and is now equally popular with Australian hunters. The Z5 mounted to my Brno has 3.5x to 18x magnification and the 44mm objective lens delivers superb resolution in all light conditions. The duplex reticle is perfect for rapid target acquisition and the bonus of parallax adjustment gives a clear picture at all distances. My only regret with the Z5 is not buying one

with a Ballistic Turret after reviewing BT-equipped Swarovski scopes. Z5s have a BT option which are a great addition to any hunter looking to customise their riflescope with cartridges to shoot accurately at long ranges with only a few clicks of the dial.

Over the past eight years the Z5 has endured some tough hunts and has the scars to prove it yet despite the knocks still provides faultless accuracy and shot-for-shot consistency at all ranges. The Z5 3.5-18x44 is the perfect configuration for the .284 Win and I have the success to back that claim.

Conclusion

I've no doubt I made the right choice of rifle modifications to suit my passion for deer hunting. All hunters should strive for that important one-shot kill and to this day not a single deer I've taken has required any follow-up. From its humble beginnings as a .243 ute gun to almost unrecognisable current status as .284 deer rifle the virtually untouched receiver and bolt are the only reminder of its past.

The Brno has been a test rifle for many ammo and scope reviews due to its proven reliability and hitting power and I'd challenge anyone with a .243 or .308 due for a rebarrel to consider the .284 Win as powerful alternative - you won't be disappointed. I have other deer rifles but regard my Brno in .284 Win and Swarovski Z5 scope as the ideal balance for the ultimate deer rifle. ●



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Nationals get behind electronic licensing plan

Nadia Isa



The National Party has renewed its focus on an electronic firearms licensing system, standing by Australia's community of more than a million law-abiding firearms owners. Despite having some of the most stringent gun regulations in the world, licensing is currently spread across our states and territories and The Nats have highlighted the fact that inconsistencies across some 30 different registers and databases fuels the illegal gun trade, tarnishing the reputation of licensed and law-abiding firearms owners.

Recently the Morrison Government announced it is working with states and territories to move from paper-based licensing systems to electronic versions so information can be shared between states and the Commonwealth in real time. Federal Assistant Minister for Community Safety, Jason Wood, said the states and territories have agreed to review their firearm management systems and identify a baseline level of functionality which should be nationally consistent.

Mr Wood, who has been talking with states, territories, the shooting industry

(including SSAA) and gun control groups on the plan, said "making sure our firearms systems talk to each other is essential for effective firearms management".

"The Australian community expects that access to firearms is limited to fit and proper people and that relevant information is readily available to those who are making decisions about whether people should have access to firearms," he said. "Gaps in the current system mean criminals could divert legal firearms into the illegal market without immediate detection by law enforcement agencies and this can have grave consequences for public safety."

The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia supports the move to an electronic database with the aim of fewer human errors and allowing police resources to be redirected towards detection of criminal misuse of firearms. SSAA National President Geoff Jones said every state should use the same electronic system for firearms licensing records, firearms descriptions and permits to purchase. "This is not a difficult concept to implement," he said. "The only hurdles would

be bureaucratic impost for its own sake and parochial division between the states." Leader of The Nationals in the Senate, Bridget McKenzie, said the technology will also provide hard data to demonstrate to the government and law enforcement authorities in no uncertain terms what The Nationals already know - guns used in crime do not originate from licensed firearm owners.

The facts were made abundantly clear in the 2015 Senate inquiry into the *Ability of Australian law enforcement authorities to eliminate gun-related violence in the community*, in which the Greens attempted to connect law-abiding firearm owners with the illicit gun trade. The hypothesis that illegal guns are mainly stolen from registered gun owners was not supported by any evidence.

Senator McKenzie said the national database must also prioritise the security of personal information. "Many licensed and law-abiding firearm owners have been the subject of multiple breaches of privacy, with their safety and that of their families put at risk by state governments and law enforcement," she said. ●

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Long-range practice without firing a shot

Trenton Hardie

Enforced COVID-19 restrictions and lack of range time had made my trigger finger itchy and I really wanted to be putting in some much-needed practice. So when thinking about what else I could be doing, I remembered some training techniques I don't use enough and realised I don't need to go to the range to hone my shooting skills.

Dry firing is the art of firing the gun without ammunition - the rifle is cocked and trigger pulled as if actually firing but the firing pin doesn't strike live ammunition. This doesn't sound like much fun but can be a great way to work on your basic marksmanship principles. Dry firing can be a source of contention with some but I'm a big fan and rather than waste valuable bullets on getting your shooting position, hold and trigger pull correct, you can do it for little expense. Before you start there are a few things to consider. Where are you

going to practise? Parking up on the front lawn or balcony with your target rifle in all its glory may sound like a good idea but I guarantee there will be neighbours who disagree and the ensuing police response may have you regretting your choice of location. So find somewhere that won't frighten or annoy the locals - a shed or room is all you need with a mark on the wall to aim at.

Centrefires yes, rimfires no as dry firing a rimfire can damage your firearm. Without a case in the chamber of a rimfire, the firing pin could strike the edge of the chamber and cause a burr which will lead to jamming and potentially tear cases, so avoid dry firing rimfires.

Snap caps

Snap caps are inert cases with a rubber insert instead of a primer to absorb the firing pin strike. While I've never had any

noticeable damage done to a centrefire rifle by dry firing, snap caps are a good way to go through the motions. When dry firing I make absolutely certain I don't have live ammunition anywhere near the firearm and for this reason don't use spent cases to avoid confusion. Snap caps are usually a different colour to regular ammunition and can be easily identified as practice inert cases.

The projectile striking the target is the culmination of a great number of components which come together to place that projectile precisely where we want it. At least, that's what's meant to happen. Technique is a big part of the component to consistent shooting and there are a number of things we can work on by dry firing.

Consistency is key

It doesn't matter what part of long-range shooting we talk about, without

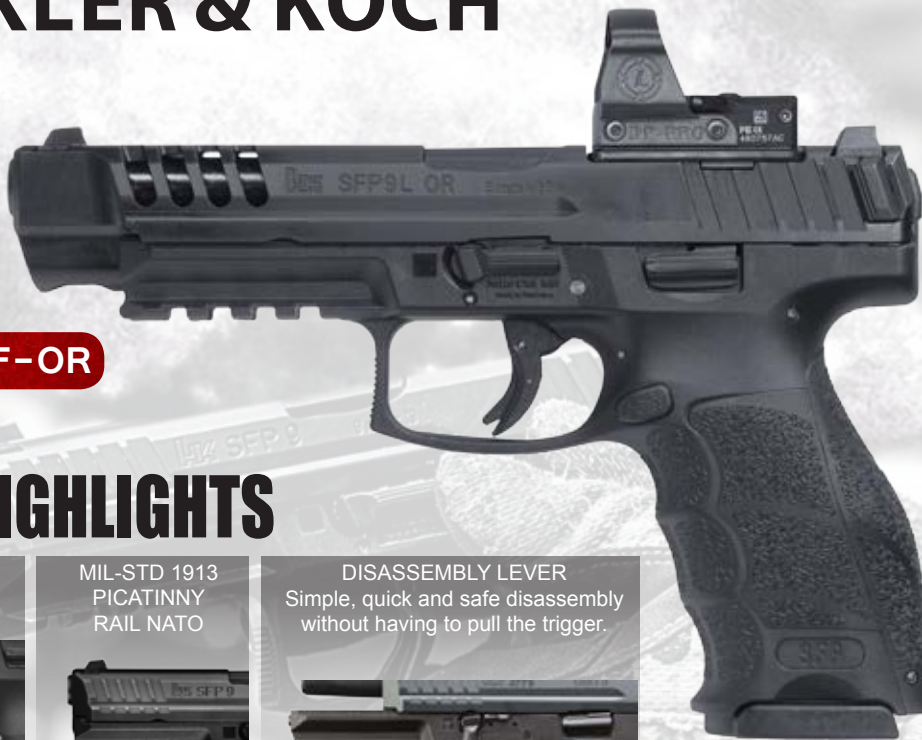


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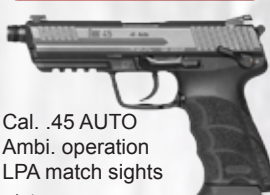
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consistency we're not achieving precision. There are lots of variables and removing the ones we can control moves us closer to ultimate precision.

Shooting position

When dry firing I use the gear I would at the range - mat, bag, bipod - everything I take to the range or the field. I wear the same clothes and boots and while this may be a little over the top, I've previously worn a different jacket with a buckle in the wrong spot and wasn't comfortable until I was rid of the jacket so now I always wear the same one.

Some like to have one leg kicked up, some straight - do whatever's fine for you but work it out before you arrive at the range. Each change in position adjusts your shoulder contact, angle of contact, cheek contact, hand position and grip of your master hand, so try various positions until you find your comfort zone, hold it for 10 minutes and gauge how your neck feels. Are you able to hold that position for a length of time without hurting? Your master hand position will impact point of contact for your trigger finger and how you pull the trigger can affect rifle alignment. Remember consistency.

Firing mounds aren't all flat so be prepared for some slope. How high is your bipod, is your rear bag the right size? This may be a case of how big is your stomach and does your gear match your body shape, so I'll leave that one hanging. Once you find your position, get up, move and go back into it, making sure you adopt the same position each time. The firearm should be pointing naturally at the target don't move the gun, move your body.

Once I'm set I line up my sights on a target, get comfy, close my eyes then pull the rifle to simulate recoil (only a little pull, you don't need to bounce the rifle off the bipod). Then open your eyes and check if the gun is still pointing at the target. If yes, good, if no, adjust until it points naturally at the target and ask: Did the gun slide off your shoulder?

Long Range Precision uses soft rear bags so make sure yours is as close to the correct height as you need, sliding forward or back or squeezing up, ensuring the stock is in the centre of the bag or close to it with an even amount of pressure on each side. How much pressure are you putting on the gun with your cheek and master hand? I aim for a nice cheek weld without pushing the gun and ensure my master hand has just enough hold

to keep my trigger finger steady and in the same spot, so not much pressure.

As you squeeze the trigger, listen and watch for the firing pin strike and view very closely the sights on the target. Did you push the trigger, move your head, did the gun move off the target? Even on the range I do this before almost every detail as it's a great way to gauge your trigger control. In an ideal world the rifle should remain on target and return to the same position after the shot.

Each range and sometimes each firing mound is different so it's not always easy to find your position. Some days I just can't nail it at all and with my head in the wrong spot I can't be comfortable. Being able to identify what's wrong is important and dry firing will help you progress there a little quicker and cheaper.

So without the need for a range we're practising for Long Range Precision. If you know your position and can feel when it's not quite right and adjust, you're well on the way to being a more consistent shooter and I know I'll be doing it a little more often. Just remember, no live ammunition.

• Trenton Hardie is SSAA National Discipline Chairman for Long Range Precision. ●

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Family values in another Mossberg marvel

Daniel O'Dea



US firearms manufacturer Mossberg recently reached the milestone of 100 years in business. Started by Swedish immigrant Oscar Fredrick Mossberg in 1919, the company is one of few manufacturers which has remained family-owned, now run by Ivor Mossberg of the fourth generation. Oscar ran the business with the view of Mossberg as a brand being associated with

the value-budget end of the firearms market but that's never been at the expense of building solid, reliable firearms. In the US it's been said it didn't matter if you drove a Cadillac or caught the bus to work, you'd still be proud to shoot a Mossberg.

When I was a teenager and looking to buy my first rimfire I didn't have much money and the budget was tight so I settled on a Mossberg 640K in .22 Magnum, not

the flashiest rifle I've owned by far, but it served me well at the time. Likewise, I shared the common experience of more than 10 million (yes 10,000,000) other citizens in owning a reliable Mossberg 500 series 12-gauge pump-action shotgun. That turned out to be a great investment as back in 1996, after years of hard use, a bloke named John Howard bought it from me for more than twice what I paid for it.

Grycol International is the appointed agent for Mossberg in Australia and sent me an M464 lever-action rifle in .22LR for review. On first impression the Mossberg appears a traditional timber and steel lever-action but, like many copies of older designs, has been modernised to include use of more current materials and manufacturing methods as well as safety features.

On close inspection the use of cast alloy and modern polymers can be found, as can the addition of a grip and tang safety. There was a time when if you found something cast or plastic (polymer) on a rifle you'd be aghast, but these days we rightfully accept items are built to a price and as long as function, reliability and accuracy standards are maintained we seem happy enough.

The rifle features a traditional grip hardwood timber stock and fore-end which is





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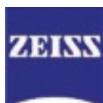


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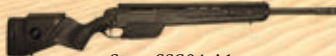
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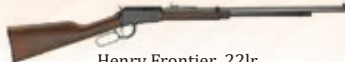
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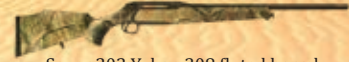
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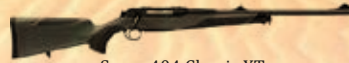
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Family values in another Mossberg marvel

straight grained and although unremarkable in timber terms, well finished with excellent timber to metal fit. It carries an 18" (457mm) blued/black barrel slung under a tubular magazine holding 14 rounds of .22LR.

For the record the manual states it's for the calibre inscribed on the barrel only which in this case is .22 Long Rifle so I guess no .22 shorts or longs need apply. The rifle weighs 5.5lb or just under 2.5kg which for a compact .22 is still hefty enough to feel quite solid at hand. The receiver cover incorporates a typical rimfire 3/8 dovetail rail for easy optics mounting and the rifle comes with a screw-in side hammer extension if you actually do mount a scope.

Standard sighting is by way of a hooded front bead and fully adjustable folding rear leaf sight, height adjustment achieved via a large sprung screw forward of the folding leaf and windage by way of a small screw acting as the sight leaf's hinge pin along which the sight leaf transverses. The iron sights are surprisingly good and I was happy to find that, even with my ageing eyes, I could still manage centre hits on a 25m target with them.

There's a loading port starting 75mm forward of the fore-end on the underside of the magazine tube. If you've ever used a rimfire with an underslung tubular magazine you'll be familiar with the drill - you turn a small knurled knob at the end of the tube to line up the retaining pin with the pin slot and draw out the brass magazine inner tube until the loading gate or port is exposed.

You then drop the required number of cartridges, rim down, into the port before returning the inner magazine tube back to the locked position. This process is generally idiot-proof as the loading gate replicates the outline of the cartridge in orientation so bullets must be correctly presented for loading into the magazine. The magazine is basically a tube within a tube, the brass inner having a captive spring and follower and when reinserted into the outer tube the bullets ride the follower up into the inner tube.

For safety the magazine follower is bright orange and can be clearly viewed on inspection through the open receiver when empty. If you look in there and see brass, it's still loaded, if you see orange the magazine's empty. Also, in good practice you should still maintain muzzle discipline when loading a tubular magazine. You may be tempted to go rifle butt down and muzzle vertical when loading, but avoid at all costs climbing over the muzzle or even having



your hands or fingers forward of the muzzle at any stage. Best practice is to keep the muzzle forward in a safe direction tilted up from the horizontal just high enough for the cartridges to slide down the tube.

In stating the obvious, as a lever-action rifle the rounds are cycled from magazine to chamber by operating the rifle's lever loop which traverses through a short arc of about 70 degrees on the down stroke, cocking the hammer and releasing a round on to the cartridge carrier. On the back stroke the round is chambered and the rifle ready to fire. On release of the trigger the hammer falls, striking the firing pin which in turn ignites the cartridge, sending the bullet on its way, a sequence repeated as quickly as you can cycle the lever.

The rifle has several safety features both

active and passive. As an active measure it incorporates a spring-loaded grip safety, a small protrusion extending below the frame just rearward of the trigger. This is under spring tension and the lever must be actively squeezed to depress it. With lever ajar the hammer is blocked and prevented from falling.

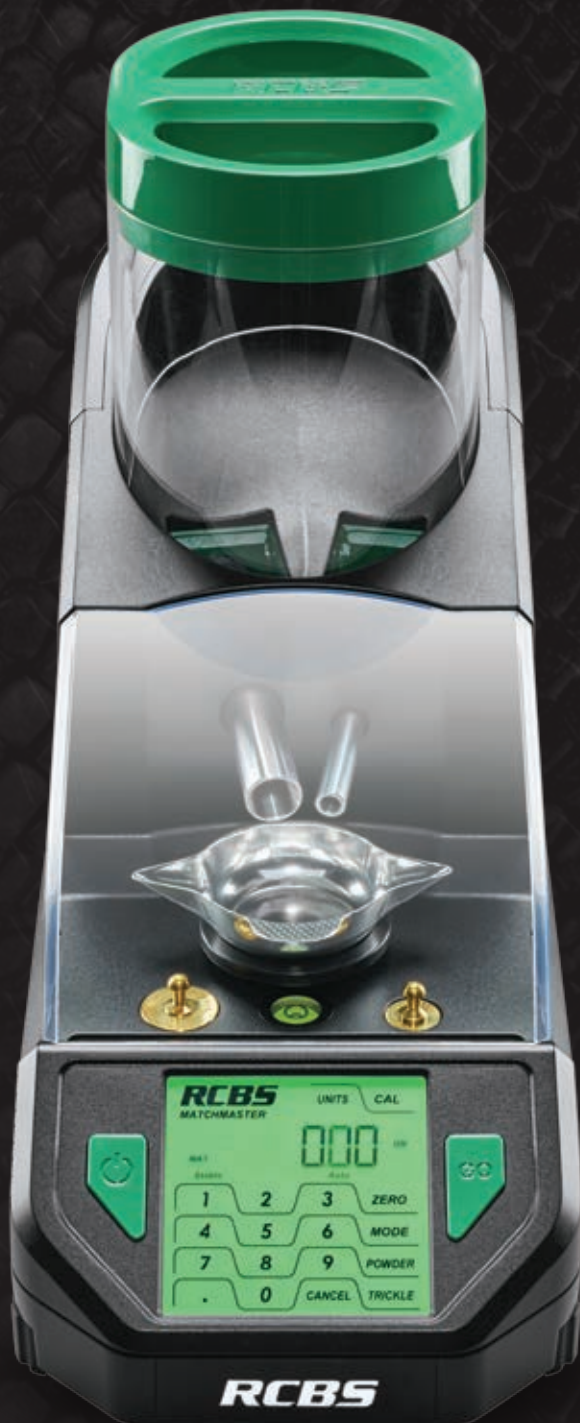
Squeezing the lever depresses the protrusion, removing the block and allowing hammer fall when the trigger is pressed. This prevents out of battery discharge as well as acting as an effective drop safety. There's also a tang safety which can be operated easily with the thumb, when engaged, in the rear position. The hammer can still fall if the trigger is pulled but the safety prevents complete forward movement of the hammer which is blocked

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Straight-gripped hardwood stock and contrasting timber/blued finish lends a traditional feel to an otherwise modern .22 lever gun.

from striking the firing pin. Of course the hammer can also be used as a safety as when lowered manually it's blocked from contacting the firing pin and cannot fire until re-cocked. In short it's impossible for the firearm to discharge unless the chamber is loaded, the safety off, hammer cocked, lever loop squeezed firmly and trigger depressed.

After a little work with the iron sights I got serious and mounted a 2-7x33 Leupold Vari-X Compact I had kicking around - I have several of these on .22s and find them

a good pairing for a rimfire. This rifle is what I'd call a plinker, a galley gun, lots of fun with good practical accuracy but forget it if you think you're going to win rimfire benchrest competitions with one. At 25m groups were tight and a 25c coin wouldn't stand a chance with just about any ammo tried, move out to 50m and groups start to open up a little but not enough to miss anything you'd likely be shooting at.

I have a small swinging plate rack I made with three 100mm x 6mm flat bar sections about 150mm long, welded on rods hanging

off a crossbar. At 50m I could keep them all swinging under rapid fire so long as there was ammo in the magazine tube - great fun. The Mossberg M464 lever-action .22 rifle at the time of writing has an RRP of just \$655 which represents great value. More at grycol.com.au. ●

Specifications

Rifle: Mossberg M464

Action: Lever

Trigger: Single-stage

Calibre: .22LR

Capacity: 14-round tubular magazine

Barrel: 18" round profile (457mm)

Twist rate: 1:16

Sights: Bead front adjustable rear blade, 3/8 dovetail for optics

Barrel finish: Blued (black)

Stock finish: Traditional timber straight grip

LOP: 13.875" (352mm)

Weight: 5.5lb (2.49kg)

Overall length: 35.75" (908mm)



On the sled the M464 showed good practical accuracy at 50m.



Mossberg's M464 Lever Action in .22LR and a fistful of ammo is all you need for a day of plinking fun.



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Hard yards on Yukon moose hunt

Davey Hughes



The scale of Yukon knocks me flat on my back. When you look across a valley and try to estimate distance to the far side, you invariably have it wrong, totally wrong. What you may have thought would be a two or three-hour horse ride will end up taking a full day if not longer and at night it's even more awe-inspiring, as the northern lights (*Aurora borealis*) fire up the sky and put on an amazing show of every colour you could imagine.

Hunting in Yukon is special. I'd been there, north of Drury Lake, two years prior with Bill Sandulak of Trophy Stone Outfitting from the capital Whitehorse. On that trip I hadn't seen a bull moose I wanted but had been taken aback by the grandeur of the landscape and remoteness of the wilderness, so at the end of that first hunt I made myself a pledge to return in search of the elusive bull.

And here I was, back for another 10 days with Bill. When choosing any



Taking care of the horses in camp.



The cabin provided welcome shelter from the bitter cold.



One step at a time amid dense forest.

outfitter or guide, as well as going by their hunting prowess you'll want to interact with them personally, the reason I picked Bill again – he's a mighty fine hunter and super human being. From my home town of Levin on New Zealand's North Island it's quite a journey. First you have to negotiate four flights in relatively large planes which takes you to Yukon and the last major airport, Whitehorse. From there it's a smaller plane to fly into camp, this time an amphibious De Havilland DHC-6-300 Twin Otter, and from there all travel was by horseback or on foot.

We arrived at the main camp, which was quite a large affair with horse corrals and individual cabins along with a kitchen cabin for meals. Lower down the hillside below camp there was even a shower, the water heated in a 44-gallon drum then gravity-fed down to the shower room. In the bathroom, scribbled on the wall, was a note dating from 1981 from the builder of the shower explaining how to use this basic device.

A glance at the instructions was followed by the shock realisation this shower builder just happened to be a friend of mine from New Zealand, one of those moments you realise what a small world we live in. Imagine his surprise when I grabbed my satellite phone and rang him to say: "Mate, I'm standing in your shower . . ." – especially as it was 3.30am for him.

Winter arrived the day after we did, heavy snowstorms making travel interesting to say the least as the main storm lasted three days before the skies cleared. As a result progress was slow but the

physical stalking of moose was easier due to the fact you could spot their tracks and determine fairly accurately when they'd passed a particular spot. From base camp we rode to the outer camps which some days was a journey of up to eight hours. I generally feel nothing about hunting is that difficult, some things will be harder than others but every single experience and occurrence is enjoyable.

Ironically, riding in Yukon is one of the things I do find challenging as for some reason my backside doesn't like western saddles. I can ride all day on a Kiwi stock saddle or English saddle but me and the western version just don't get along. Having reached the outer camp we'd be back in the saddle or walk to prime hunting spots where we'd call and do lots of glassing. My advice to anyone going on a moose hunt is take the best optics you can afford as you'll spend a lot of time looking through them.

With these, as with clothing and all other kit, Yukon is a place for the tried and tested, it's no place for the unknown. With most of the travelling done on horseback it's also vital your kit can take a bit of a bashing, as it tends to do when stuffed into saddlebags. I've taken my Leica 10x42 rangefinding Geovids with me on numerous hunts for a decade or more and they're still my preferred binoculars but for a closer view of trophy potential I use a Leica APO-Televid 65 spotting scope.

The hunting wasn't always what you might call easy but I never think of the



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Hard yards on Yukon moose hunt

day-to-day challenges of hunting as hurdles, for me it's about moving on and savouring the moment. If you embrace the entire hunt you'll find yourself learning every day because, as a hunter, you're not just there to hunt moose but to hunt your true self.

Every day of this hunt was different and brought its own highlights. You might not see moose on a given day but you'd spot a wolverine stealing meat from a wolf kill, or eagles overhead hunting prey then swooping on a fox that's trying to escape, there's always something happening. You have to open your eyes and take in every experience using all your senses, including your sixth, and live each day as it comes. I like the saying that if you ask a bull moose what time it is he'll answer "Now." We should all try to live more in the now and most hunters are pretty good at it.

Something else I believe is the kill is not what makes a hunt successful, it's the whole experience. Did I down a moose? Not on the first trip with Bill where we saw moose but I decided not to take one. On this expedition, two years later, I did take a nice bull but regard both hunts as successful. One thing that can make or break both an experience and a shot is good kit and the day I shot my bull I lay in the snow, hardly moving, for more than five hours waiting

for the perfect shot and without good gear there's no way I could have done that.

You need great boots, good clothing and a rifle fitted with excellent optics. Everything from base layers to middle and outer layers has to perform in an exemplary manner when the mercury drops - you can't leave

anything to chance. I carry two pairs of gloves, one fleece which are reasonably light, can be easily stowed in pockets and dry very quickly, plus a heavier set of over-mitts which are rain and snow-proof and fit over the fleece pair. With all that, those long hours lying in the snow weren't so bad and



Salting the hide before delivering to the taxidermist.

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I was able to make the most of the moment when it came. Yet a successful shot doesn't mean the end of the work as we set about preparing the carcass, quartering the moose in the field and retrieving every ounce of meat, including those morsels between the ribs, also taking the entrails as another hunter in camp wanted them as bait for wolves. We loaded everything including antlers on to the packhorses and struck out for home.

Back at camp we weighed both meat and antlers to let our pilot know roughly how much gear we'd be flying out aboard the pocket-sized De Havilland DHC-3 Turbo Otter which would take us out of the wilderness, the total coming to 1452lb - about 660kg. Luckily we were just within the weight limit and I was able to take the antlers and hide to a taxidermist outside Whitehorse who'd strip the skull and clean it, dry the hide then ship it off to be tanned, ready for mounting back home.

Hunting somewhere as breathtaking as the Canadian Yukon deserves a magnificent memento but deciding to mount a full body moose is a huge undertaking and one which I think I'll only do the once. For more on Trophy Stone Outfitting visit www.yukon-hunting.com ●

Happy landing in the small, amphibious plane.



Dovey with his prized moose.





GERMANIC GENIUS

The Blaser R8 Professional Success

Con Kapralos

Ask any hunting aficionado to pick a rifle and nine times out of 10 a model from Europe would be their choice. So rich is the hunting culture throughout that continent it's reflected in the excellent firearms used and during the past decade one action has been the option for serious hunters - the straight-pull. This action still uses a bolt to lock into the barrel but movement of the bolt to chamber to unload a fired/unfired case is a linear one, unlike the standard

turn-bolt repeating action based on the Mauser M98.

There are many makes based on the straight-pull action and a fair percentage use a replaceable barrel system, giving flexibility to have one stock/action to which you can apply different calibres simply by changing the barrel and bolt-head if required.

These rifles are expensive as they're technically brilliant and engineered to extremely high standards. Fortunately for

the discerning Australian hunter such rifles are available here and the cream of the crop is made by Blaser of Germany, who incorporate such gun-making marques as Mauser and Sauer under their umbrella but as separate entities.

Blaser's R8 model is arguably the pinnacle of the repeating straight-pull action design, the Professional Success made to be used in the most testing hunting conditions with complete reliability and application. Outdoor Sporting Agencies



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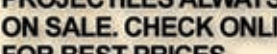
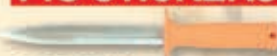
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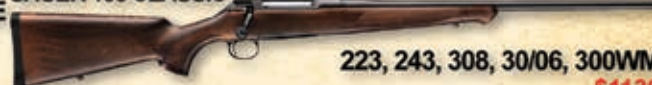
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Germanic genius - The Blaser R8 Professional Success

supplied *Australian Shooter* with the Blaser R8 Professional Success with a .30-06 Springfield barrel and superb Blaser rifle-scope and saddle mount.

At a glance

The rifle and parts come with comprehensive instruction manuals, both rifle and optic having many features you wouldn't normally find on conventional equivalents. There's a synthetic thumbhole stock which cradles the steel/aluminium R8 receiver platform, together with detachable trigger group/magazine assembly and 580mm sporter barrel in .30-06 Springfield. The rifle weighs 3.38kg, measures 1020mm and with the Blaser optic fitted recorded 4.29kg.

Stock

There are alternate stock configurations but the review rifle sported the one-piece 750mm synthetic thumbhole in dark green. The provision allows comfortable ergonomics and lets the user access the safety/cocking/de-cocking lever with the thumb of the master hand easily. Looking at the stock closely, it's a sculptured unit of high-density synthetic polymer with scalloping and black rubber grip panels inletted into the body where the user would expect an increased level of grip, namely the fore-end, pistol grip and cheekpiece.

The full pistol grip is pronounced but fills the hand perfectly, while the scalloping lines the contour of the master hand around the grip area and the leading hand around the fore-end grip. Holding the stock, it morphs into the user's arms and becomes one with the hunter. Sling swivel studs are fitted, one at the fore-end tip and another around 80mm from the toe of the stock, a thin 10mm sorbothane pad just the right thickness to absorb recoil but not too heavy to look awkward.

Receiver and barrel

The receiver platform assembly is sheer



There's no mistaking the model of this Blaser R8, printed on the integral cheekpiece.

engineering genius. The platform, which accepts the bolt and interchangeable barrel, is a mix of aluminium and steel parts precisely inletted into the body of the stock. It houses the bolt raceways, trigger sears, bolt stop and release provisions and a steel recoil lug which mates to a slot on the underside of the barrel.

Either side of the recoil lug are two holes which accommodate the steel threaded lugs under the barrel. There are two captive Allen nuts in the stock body which are accessed through small holes in the stock forward of the magazine well, the barrel simply dropped into the channel with the steel threaded lugs positioned accordingly. It's then secured by the supplied T-wrench snugly tightening the Allen nuts (accessed through the underside of the stock body). It's simple but must be done with bolt removed and always following the manufacturer's instructions.

The barrels come in calibres ranging from .204 Ruger up to .500 Jeffery and all that's required is the appropriate bolt head and the calibre is changed in minutes. Barrels are available in either standard, semi-weight or match profiles in standard,



The bolt is characterised by two long forks and pivoting bolt handle. The radial 'locking petals' can be clearly seen.

magnum or special calibres and can be had with or without sights at no cost. The test rifle had a 580mm barrel made by the cold-hammer forging technique, internally the finish showing no evidence of tooling or machining marks. Options such as barrel fluting and Express Hi-Viz sights are also available.

Bolt

This is characterised by a solid aluminium shroud with the internal componentry of the safety system, bolt handle, firing pin and locking systems. Two steel 'forks' protrude from the front of the bolt assembly and mate with corresponding raceways in the body of the receiver platform, the bolt handle also made of steel with a small



Review rifle in component form.



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Germanic genius - The Blaser R8 Professional Success

polymer knob. The bolt has a toggle which lets it move around 40mm or so on its pivoting axis and this is instrumental in locking the front of the bolt into the rear of the barrel. This is done through 12 radial 'petals' which, with the bolt rearward and action open, are retracted into the bolt-head body. When the bolt handle is thrust forward to chamber a round, the 12 'petals' are forced out from the bolt-head body and lock up into a recess in the rear of the barrel. Once the bolt is locked into place a strong reliable locking system is set, case ejection accommodated by a plunger at the six o'clock position on the bolt-face and claw extractor at 10 o'clock.

Trigger and magazine system

This sees both mechanisms incorporated into a single unit which is removable, giving the rifle an additional security feature, the entire unit made from high strength polymer with metallic parts such as the magazine spring. The trigger blade and triggerguard are at the rear and the magazine is forward of the trigger blade/guard. Incorporated into the trigger itself is a small cam which directly acts on the trigger sear mechanism in the receiver platform and will only work when the detachable trigger/magazine unit is inserted.

There's no way the rifle can be fired without the detachable trigger/magazine unit installed. This clips into place firmly but is easily removed by pressing the retaining tabs on either side of the magazine body. Additionally, Blaser supply a purpose-made plastic cover to clip over the detachable trigger/magazine unit to keep it free of dust, dirt and moisture. Internally the magazine is of a rotary design and accepts four rounds in the .30-06 Springfield calibre, feeding rounds easily for the linear bolt to chamber at lightning-fast pace.

Cocking/de-cocking

The large thumb-operated lever allows you to manually cock or de-cock the firing mechanism even with a round chambered, the lever serving as a release which permits the bolt to be cycled or the action opened. Gently thumbing the safety lever forward a few millimetres allows the bolt to be cycled towards the rear (if in the closed position).

2.8-20x50 iC scope and saddle mount

These are sold separately, the Blaser scope retailing for \$4935 while the saddle mount will set you back \$821. Expensive, yes, but quality unsurpassed. The saddle mount is quickly attached to the barrel using two

static, one-piece locating lugs which mate with recesses on the right of the barrel and is secured by adjustable camming levers on the opposite side of the mount. This system guarantees no loss of zero when the scope/mounts are removed as one.

This model was tailored for the Blaser scope with the mounting rail on its base. It doesn't use scope-rings as such, the rail being the surface to which the saddle mount directly attaches. It's a real European-style scope attachment which tends to be found only on high-end optics such as Blaser and Zeiss. Optic quality is exceptional, the scope and saddle mount adding 910 grams to the overall weight.

In the field

Accuracy testing off the bench was done in controlled conditions on private property with a safe 100m firing range. I sighted-in using Remington Core Lokts in 180-grain bullet weight and had three-shot groups averaging 1.5 MOA at around 60mm above the point of aim at 100m. I'd have preferred a proper accuracy test using several hunting loads but time was against me.

I managed an outing for deer in early winter and this is just what the rifle's designed for - operating in harsh elements hunters face in pursuit of their quarry, and while deer were present they were either out of range (smart fallow bucks) or a tad too quick for me stalking in dense cover.

The only downside was the overall weight of the outfit. As mentioned, scope and saddle mount add 910g and I'd have preferred a scope which kept the weight under 4kg - a 2-8x variable around 500-600g would have been ideal.

Conclusion

The Blaser R8 Professional Success is at the pinnacle of sporting rifle layout, tailor-made for hunters who demand the best to deal with everything Mother Nature can muster. More ornate models of the R8 are available with exhibition grade walnut and commissioned engraving as per customer



Riflescope fitted using the saddle mount.



Magazine well with cover in place.

specifications, if money is no object. But the Professional Success with interchangeable barrel system, detachable trigger/magazine, manual cocking/de-cocking safety system and one-piece high-density polymer stock mated to a steel/aluminium receiver platform is an engineering marvel.

It displays Germanic ingenuity and is a marque the serious hunter can subscribe to. Join the circle - invest and never look back. The rifle retails for \$7105 (with one barrel in specific calibres) and additional barrels and bolt-heads are available on request. More at www.osaaustralia.com.au. ●



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Coating with Hi-Tek - clean, quick and easy

John Moore

Last year in a very interesting and informative article (*Shooter*, August 2019) Geoff Smith introduced us to Hi-Tek, the Australian-designed coating which can be baked on to lead bullets, so I bought some and started coating bullets with it. I followed the instructions and placed a measured weight of the powder in a sealable screw-top jar and added the prescribed volume of acetone (the solvent dissolving the powder).

This concentrated solution is stored, ready for a small quantity to be added to a batch of bullets to be coated. More acetone is then added before I tumble the bullets around in a cut-off HDPE bottle (high-density polyethylene) enabling them to be lightly coated and, when the solvent has evaporated leaving the coated bullets quite dry, the coating is cooked on.

I place them in an old toaster oven and bake at 200C for 10 minutes with two or three coats required. The coated bullets can then be sized if desired before loading and no added lubricant is required as this coating is a high temperature and high pressure lubricant, Hi-Tek coating effectively a very thin jacket - and it works!

However, after a few days I found the solvent in my stored concentrate had somehow partly evaporated meaning I had to guess and add a bit more acetone before I could use a small quantity to coat another batch of bullets. So what point had I reached? I'd worked out how to coat bullets with Hi-Tek and had been able to coat enough to satisfy myself that this is a truly revolutionary invention.

I'd cast and coated bullets for .357 and .44 revolvers for shooting metallic silhouette.

They were quick to make and had shot extremely well but, because of the evaporation of some of the solvent, adding the right amount of concentrate of powder and acetone to coat each batch was a bit haphazard, meaning some coats were quite thick. And even having taken great care, I found the process of handling the concentrate was messy so while coating with Hi-Tek looked a great idea, applying it was a bit of a trial.

Two weeks later I went to coat two more batches of bullets and found my concentrate had dried out completely and locked the screw cap of the jar it was in, so I mixed a small quantity of concentrate for what I thought I'd need that afternoon. This worked but I ran out of time and was one coating short and when I went out next morning to finish the job, I found the



Uncoated .44 calibre bullets.



Adding powder to the cut-off HDPE bottle.



Adding the acetone.



Coated bullets - not yet baked.



Bullets with final coat baked on.



Completed bullets after swaging.

acetone had attacked the small plastic tube I'd used, so it followed the first one into the bin.

I then made up the concentrate I thought I'd need by picking up small quantities of powder on the blade of a flat screwdriver to feed it into the thin plastic tube I'd used and thought, why not use this to measure the powder and place it straight into the HDPE bottle, put in the desired volume of acetone by way of a syringe, add the bullets and swirl around. It worked a treat.

So I no longer mix a concentrate and try to store it, I simply mix for each batch from dry and don't have to handle concentrate

and find coating like this is clean and very quick. There's no mess on my hands or bench to the point I now don't wear gloves or have to cover the bench.

Working this way I'm able to produce very thin coats and usually apply three to achieve the quality of coating I'm after. This method is extremely fast - I can go to the workshop, decide to coat a batch of bullets and have the dried bullets going into the toaster oven in less than four minutes.

Over the years I've made paper-patched bullets, bullets with straight sides which don't need grease grooves as they're covered in a paper jacket and I'm now

casting the same type of straight-sided bullets for Hi-Tek coating. The mould is of course a plain cylinder, meaning casting is also an extremely speedy process.

Furthermore, I size by way of a swaging press which I find is just as quick as using a lubrisizer and is less messy, which removes the dings and bumps and squeezes out the odd hole in my cast slugs, in particular giving the bullets perfect bases. So I've found a way to make Hi-Tek bullets - casting, coating and swaging - in quick easy steps without a mess. And most importantly, these bullets are wonderfully accurate. ●

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MK70 Grade 5 adds to Miroku's glowing reputation

David Crofts



The MK70 was a pleasure to use in the field.

Miroku shotguns are highly respected in Australia, having been imported from Japan since 1963 with many shooters using them successfully for clay targets and hunting. The company was formed in 1893 to produce hand-made sporting guns for hunting and the Miroku over-and-under shotgun reviewed here is a variation of the legendary Browning Superposed.

Miroku modified John Moses Browning's design to allow easier use of automated methods of manufacture in many of the processes involved, the most noticeable difference to shooters who use them being the fore-end is detachable and not captive, as on the Superposed.

Legend has it that initially the Browning Arms Co. wasn't happy with the Japanese 'copy' of the Superposed and sent a delegation to Japan to meet with Miroku over the issue, the result of that summit being the launch of a partnership between the two firms which has existed ever since.

The various field and target shotguns Miroku make are extremely popular in Australia, with noted shots such as Robbie Hall and Laura Woolley having used them to great effect. In the UK, Miroku target shotguns are commonly referred to as a 'competition-winning gun straight out of the box', which is fair praise indeed and UK clay target shooters such as Carl Bloxham and Mickey Rouse have won national and international competitions with them.

The shotgun reviewed here is the Grade 5 variant of the MK70 which, according to the Miroku Shotguns Australia catalogue, has 'presentation scroll engraving and Grade 5 wood'. Even though Miroku modified the Browning design to allow production of the gun to be more automated, there's a still a lot of hand-finishing goes into their products, far more than most of their competitors. Not only is engraving on the higher grades still hand-finished, jointing of the barrels, barrel regulation and chequering of woodwork is

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MK70 Grade 5 adds to Miroku's glowing reputation

still done by hand on all over-and-under shotguns made in the Miroku factory by skilled craftsmen and women.

The catalogue lists this particular model as a 'Game' type although it's engraved 'MK-70 Sport' on the underside of the action and has the 10mm parallel rib, usually fitted to Sporter and some Trap models. The gun comes with five Invector Plus chokes, a choke key, proof and inspection certificate specific to the gun supplied and an instruction manual. As delivered, this particular model came in a cardboard/expanded polystyrene box, not a Miroku hard case.

Barrels

The barrels are 32" (813mm), 3" chambered, back bored as standard and have Invector Plus multi-chokes fitted, making them suitable for use with steel shot. The chokes supplied are Full, Improved Modified, Modified, Improved Cylinder and Skeet and, as mentioned, the barrels are fitted with a 10mm tramline-type parallel rib with white terminal and mid beads.

Miroku barrels are hand regulated in the factory for point of impact testing and when I took my gun to the pattern board at my local club, results spoke for themselves with the top and bottom barrels sharing exactly the same point of impact. The barrels are mono-block in construction unlike earlier Miroku models made up to the pre-mid 1990s, which were of the demi-block type.

Joining the tubes to the mono-block is so well done you really have to look closely to spot the join, exterior of the barrels well finished with a dark gloss blue/black with no indication of rivelling or unevenness. The interior of the tubes are highly polished to a mirror-type finish and chrome plated. The barrels weigh 1575 grams which is mid-weight for 32" barrels and can be a significant



The action and Grade 5 deep scroll engraving.

benefit in a model intended to be used in a Game/Sporter role.

Action

The design is of the classic, proven Browning/Miroku trapdoor type with the full width hinge pin and sliding locking bolt which engages into a slot machined into the mono-block beneath the chamber of the bottom barrel, both action and ejectors powered by coil springs.

While design of the action - due to positioning of the hinge pin and locking bolt - means the receiver has a higher profile when viewed side-on than a Beretta or Perazzi (the actual difference is only around 4mm), it's not as wide as those types when seen from above. The 'presentation engraving' on this model is of the acanthus scroll-type and easy on the eye, the metal-to-metal fit and finish of the highest quality. The trigger is steel

and non-adjustable. Barrel selection is the usual way on a Miroku via positioning of the safety catch left or right prior to pushing the safety to the 'off' position. Trigger pulls are good straight out the box, averaging 3.75lb for the bottom barrel and 4lb for the top and can be adjusted by a competent gunsmith if required.

Woodwork

The figured American walnut is listed in the catalogue as Grade 5 but this example isn't as well figured as some I've previously seen fitted to guns at this level. The stock and fore-end are oil finished, the grain still a little open and would have benefitted from additional coats of oil but this can be easily done if a slightly better finish is desired.

Wood-to-metal fit is as neat as the metal-to-metal, stock shapes generally good with a fairly open radius pistol grip and no



Attractive Grade 5 black walnut stock.



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MK70 Grade 5 adds to Miroku's glowing reputation

palmswell (ideal for shooting sporting clays and game), a slight right-hand cast and length to centre of 375mm.

The fore-end is of the classic Browning/Miroku Schnabel-type usually fitted to game and sporter models. For me, the stock was way too low in the comb with a drop of 39.5mm at comb and 63mm at heel. I prefer a firm cheek weld with the comb of the stock, which still gives a good view of the rib with the classic figure 8 sight picture of the two beads fitted. With my usual cheek weld I could only see the rear of the top lever, which led to me shooting with a 'heads-up' stock hold. This model would benefit from an adjustable comb being fitted or using the same stock dimensions as fitted to either the MK10 Sporter or the MK10 Sport Deluxe. Some manufacturers like to offer variations to suit different shooting styles and body shapes but it's always easier to lower the comb of a stock than trying to raise one.

Shooting impressions

The MK70 felt good in the hands, weighing 3.75kg and balancing at 75mm from the breech face. The balance point is just on the muzzle side of the hinge pin and seemed ideal for a sporting gun fitted with longer barrels. Using the gun at my local club on our Skeet and 5-Stand layouts I was impressed by its dynamic handling and pointability, assisted no doubt by the 32" barrel length combined with the slightly lighter than usual tubes. I managed some good scores during testing and consistent patterns from the MK70 shattered the clay targets I connected with in a most satisfying way. Unfortunately I wasn't able to test the gun in the field on game but I'm more than sure it would give a good account of itself due to the handling characteristics Miroku have built into this model.

Summary

Despite a few little gripes about lack of a hard case, timber finishing and stock



Underside of the action showing trapdoor mechanism.



The safety catch/selector, top lever and chambers.

dimensions, let me stress the Mk70 Grade 5 is an excellent product which, when you think about the level of hand-finishing involved, offers exceptional value for money.

At the moment Australian shooters can buy a new Miroku shotgun for around two-thirds of what a shooter in the UK would pay and a European-made product with the same level of hand-finishing would be way more

expensive. Distributed here by Outdoor Sporting Agencies, this particular model has a recommended retail price of \$3990 at time of writing but it's worth shopping around. In summary this shotgun is attractive, handles superbly, has a reputation for reliability and, if looked after, will last a long time. Despite my minor misgivings I was so impressed with the test gun that I bought it. ●



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A SSAA member advantage



Fresh challenges for ambassador Brydon



S SAA ambassador Scottie Brydon, the former world Trap shooting Para champion, has been forced to switch his competition focus in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the virus reduced world travel to zero, the Canberra shooter had to rethink his entire 2020 program and concentrate on a schedule on home soil.

But rather than rue his ill fortune Scottie, 34, put the time to good use and has been concentrating on mental and physical training during visits to the range at his local Canberra club. Sadly those trips are mostly restricted to two days each week, so he turned his attention to dry mounting to keep the momentum going. Yet with no competitive outings possible, Scottie has found his alternative agenda almost therapeutic.

"I call it mind training. It's a good routine and at least I'm picking up the gun again," he said. "I found myself struggling for

consistency. It's crucial really and I can work on it at home using Snapchat access on my phone - I find it good to go through the motions. I still have goals to aim for, to get back to being the world number one. I'm over the moon to be number two but that has to be my goal."

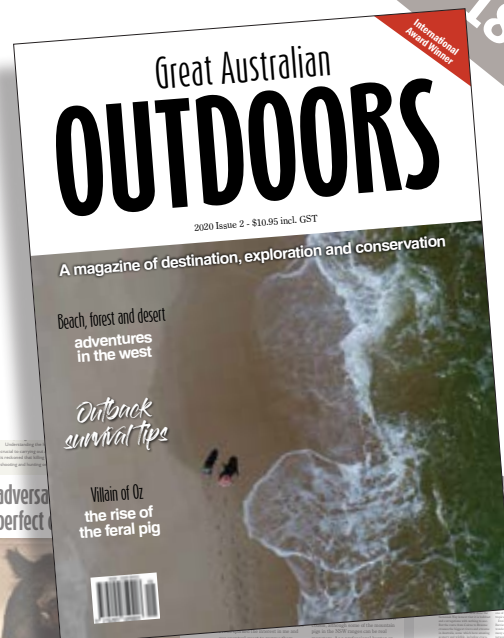
And Shooting Australia has encouraged Scottie to take up air rifle, the thinking being that discipline is recognised as a Para Olympic sport where Trap is not. Scottie is still hopeful that one day Trap will attract enough participating countries to step up to the Olympic stage but meantime is enjoying the new challenge of air rifle.

That has kept him busy as the virus left his 2020 itinerary in tatters. Firstly he missed a World Cup event in Al Ain near Dubai in March, then another scheduled World Cup round in Hanover, Germany in May was cancelled before September's World Para Championships in Lonato del Garda, Italy suffered the same fate. ●

Scottie Brydon: Staying active.

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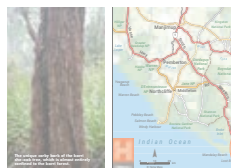


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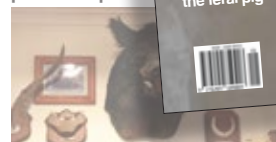
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Captain Safe supplies a variety of safes for a variety of reasons and their latest offerings specifically designed to cater for firearms will have gun owners around Australia excited. Not only are they some of the strongest safes around which are almost impossible to break into, according to business owner Nigel “they’ll last forever and ever - so long your grandkids will be using them”.

The all-Australian firm operates out of Geelong but delivers and sources safes from round the country and this network is key to their firearm safes since most of them have previously served in banks, police departments and other buildings with high security needs.

“These safes are of incredibly high quality and were built to a specification, not a price tag,” says Nigel. “Often the safes we’re taking out are a much higher specification than the new ones even governments are installing now. In fact, these safes usually have a ‘cash insurance rating’ which standard firearm safes won’t have.”

Nigel and his team take these old but incredibly robust safes and refurbish them for new customers. They go far and above most firearm safe legal requirements and, according to Nigel, it was by a happy accident he started selling to firearm owners at all. “Firearm collectors have become a huge part of our business, making use of the larger ones because they can’t buy the sort of quality products we have. And it doesn’t hurt that we keep the prices down.”

While Nigel can and does customise interiors of the safes, he says a lot of his customers do the interior themselves, shooters being a handy bunch after all. “We’re happy to put the safe in order for

them though a lot of our clients are quite handy and do the finishing off on their own.”

Captain Safe also supplies regular firearm safes but not nearly as many as the refurbished ones. Nigel says standard safes are made cheaper than his refurbished

versions. “Everyone I’ve come across in the firearms community has been fantastic to deal with so we look forward to supplying many more safes.” ●

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Long journey in the making of a hunter

Sam Garro

Events and learning experienced at a young age can have lasting memories and sometimes lay the foundations for a greater purpose or destiny and I recall fondly those days as a child on my grandfather's farm in Euston, NSW in the 1950s. It was a time when the flame of a kerosene lamp lit a room at night, meals were cooked over a wood stove and a horse and cart were still used to travel into town for supplies. Rural life was one of self-reliance and dependency.

Witnessing firsthand the humane slaughter and processing of farm animals be they chicken, sheep or calves, or the occasional game hunted taught me improvisation, respect for the animals we relied on and greater appreciation of how meat ended up on the table compared to buying trimmed cuts from a butcher or supermarket.

I must admit, and perhaps due to my young mind at the time, I didn't feel any nervousness but rather accepted the process as a matter of necessity and part of everyday farm life. It helped later in my development when it came to despatching a live chicken bought from Victoria Market destined for the pot, and at another time a sheep gifted to the family by a farmer friend from which I also managed to tan

the skin. Those were different times. As an accomplished hunter and thanks to those early experiences, I've since field-dressed all manner of game from quail, ducks and rabbits to goats, pigs and deer, retrieved meat, skinned hides for tanning and caped trophy heads for mounting.

Early days

My first firearm, a .177 Gecado air rifle, bought at a time when a licence for such calibre was not required (now compulsory) greatly contributed to my accuracy later as a fully-fledged shooter. And while it would be some years before I qualified for my shooter's licence, it didn't stop me pursuing outdoor hunting activities, ferreting with nets for a time in the fern-covered hills an hour out of Melbourne providing a welcome escape.

On the occasions I was invited to a friend's cattle property in Gippsland I spent most of my time exploring and setting steel rabbit traps (now illegal) in and around the blackberry bushes with regular success, something the adjoining farmers also appreciated. In later years the same good friend entrusted me with a handful of cartridges and his SxS 12-gauge shotgun, it was my first hunting experience with a real firearm which resulted in five rabbits

for the afternoon. He taught me a valuable lesson I still practise today, to always scan the distant ground or horizon for game. If I saw it first without being detected then I had the advantage and chance to stalk and bag it, he told me. After that I waited impatiently for the next few years to pass so I could apply for my shooter's licence and acquire my own firearm.

Eventually a Mossberg SB bolt-action 12-gauge shotgun with three-shot magazine became my first affordable gun of choice, not the most desirable shotgun by today's standard but at the time it was all I wanted. Over the years I bagged copious amounts of rabbits and other small game and with experience, a few more dollars to hand and better appreciation of the various name brand quality shotguns on offer, I bought a Beretta S686 Special 12-gauge U/O and, for medium game, a Churchill Mauser .243 Win, later replaced by a Schultz & Larsen 6mm. Since retirement a few more rifles have mysteriously joined the collection.

Influences

On reflection, there was no single thing which contributed to my development as a hunter but rather an accumulation of experiences and events and most things related to hunting or shooting. Hunters' stories

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of outback adventures always caught my attention, certainly some special people along the way who shared their experiences, expertise and knowledge, the lure of the outdoors and strong innate hunting desire being major contributors.

Safari hunting movies and documentaries associated with living off the land were favourites. Wilderness adventurers, indigenous tribes such as Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert, primitive tribes of New Guinea and South America and others were always educational and captivating to watch. Those wildlife documentaries to better understand animal behaviour and mannerisms and primitive tribes to better appreciate their unique and instinctive hunting methods, hand-fashioned hunting implements and bush survival skills, I soaked it up like a sponge.

Africa's plains game, British Colombia for elk, goats and big-horn sheep, Tajikistan for ibex, New Zealand for chamois and thar, Northern Territory for wild boar, scrub bull and Asiatic water buffalo and other far flung places became destinations I hoped to one day visit. Shooting magazines with informative content on a diverse range of hunting-related matters, interesting articles by everyday shooters and experts and broad product reviews were a regular

purchase. Gun shows and expos were also great places to visit and meet like-minded people.

Self-reliance and gear

A hunter's success is greatly dependent on preparation, planning, self-reliance and equipment carried and I quickly learned the importance of essential gear in the field to accomplish the intended task and avoid disappointment. Depending on the extent and duration of a hunt such items as a sharp field knife, backpack, water bottle, tourniquet with a few bandages, lighter, length of cord, spare ammo, food or snacks, binoculars and GPS will make for a more enjoyable outing.

Vietnam-era khaki clothing and later three-colour auscam apparel, together with 8" high sturdy hunting boots, became my favoured wear for stalking, modern camouflage clothing and accessories added to the wardrobe since then. As years progressed I favoured feasting in camp on game taken and encouraged others to participate, much to their surprised delights. To further improve my chances in a survival situation I trialled various type of bush tucker and practised bushcraft, the SAS Survival Guide a handy pocketsize reference book.



Sam holds his Mossberg bolt-action 12-gauge 5B shotgun of 50 years, in front the Gecado .177 air rifle and behind it the 6mm Schultz & Larsen rifle.

Hunter instinct

With experience I learned to read the bush for potential game, always scanning the landscape for what didn't belong and not ignoring certain hunter instincts. Checking for tell-tale signs such as tree scrapes,



Sam with his first buffalo in Arnhem Land.



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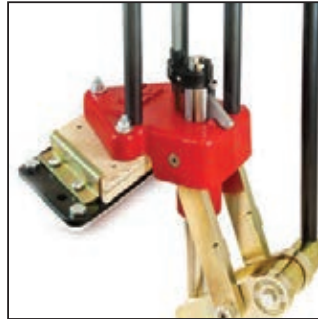
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partly-eaten shrubs, wallows, rest areas and game trails, indicators of recent or previous game activity. A hunter's instinct can be attributed to experience, the expectation of where game is likely to be, an acute awareness and skill in the way a hunter reads the signs, a natural or innate ability or a combination of all.

Game pursued

Safari or guided hunts were initially a distant thought with my focus more on pursuing goats and pigs on private property, yet gaining access to such land whether in Victoria or NSW proved difficult. Nothing has changed but when I gained permission I did my best to uphold the owner's trust by respecting his requirements, showing appreciation for the hunting privilege, keeping in touch in good times and bad and always phoning before setting off. Through this approach I was eventually able to access properties for the desired game and between infrequent interstate trips, the humble rabbit remained a favourite.

Aspirations

While I hunted game for its meat, my hunts in outback western NSW were mainly focused on trophy boars for their ivory and



Sam cooks damper in a camp oven.

goats for their widespread horns and the adage 'never say never' couldn't be truer. I didn't end up going abroad for exotic game species due to family and financial commitments but in the pursuing years after my retirement, I managed to book hunts in Arnhem Land for wild boars and buffaloes



Sam skins a young red deer stag for meat.

and later in Cape York for boars. In more recent years I was fortunate to hunt my first red deer in Queensland's Brisbane Ranges, all treasured experiences of a lifetime with lasting memories and while I didn't travel abroad I couldn't be more content.

Summary

Hunting the great outdoors is and will always be a liberating experience to be cherished and valued for a multitude of reasons. The making of a hunter is not necessarily about me or any one individual as the experiences and learning in each will be different, but how we in our way evolve and adapt through what motivates us and the things we do to get to where we are or aim to be.

I consider the real worth of a hunter is ultimately in the sharing and passing on of his or her experience and knowledge. I've tried to do that with young hunters through example and imparting to them a sense of fair play and respect for the game we hunt, property and people and especially the estate owners and farmers who give us permission to hunt their land. ●



Sam with a mud-covered boar taken in a basin south of Pine Creek, NT.

Fabarm's fabulous Classis Grade IV double

John McDougall

I have great respect for Fabarm shotguns which stems from a trip I made to their factory in Brescia, Italy almost two decades ago sponsored by then-distributor Spiros Teboneras. Before his passing, Spiros transferred his agency to Raytrade in Victoria who now proudly circulate the excellent Fabarm line.

During that factory visit the Fabarm research team had just developed their Tribore system of barrel construction. Thanks to their design these barrels hit harder than standard configured options and more recently along with their HP (Hyperbolic Profiled) choke tubes, patterning is superior to many mass produced shotguns. Targets are simply demolished with this combination.

When I was hosted by the owners of Fabarm I was intrigued by the quality of wood offered on shotguns, their warehouse holding literally pallet upon pallet of amazing Turkish walnut blanks of all grades. And the amount of CNC machinery was overwhelming, these computer-driven machines capable of making and milling parts to the finest of tolerances.

Their sturdy double guns, or side-by-side shotguns, have four huge lumps as part of the monobloc of which they're formed, ensuring integrity of the locking system and reduction of lateral forces that would eventuate from a single row of two lumps formed between the barrels. So let's take a closer look at one of the premium models, the Classis Grade IV.

Barrels

Measuring 760mm (30"), the finish on the barrel set is perfect with a deep lustrous blueing. Joined at the top by a 'swamped' rib which runs beneath the upper height of the barrels, tapering from 10mm at the receiver to 7mm at the muzzle, this is complete with a fine anti-glare finish and topped with a single brass bead front sight. At the muzzle end the barrels are fitted with versatile interchangeable choke tubes



Fabarm's fabulous Classis Grade IV double



An overall view with stylish lines, single trigger and sideplate engravings.

which enable the shooter to use either open chokes for driven birds or tighter chokes for passing shots or high flyers, such as pheasants or waterfowl.

At the chamber end, for a 3.29kg gun it's chambered to accept 76mm loads (3" cartridges) somewhat outside the petite 6lb guns for English game species such as partridges, quail, woodcocks and grouse. In Australia our game species are more restricted and generally larger - ducks, magpie geese - with introduced partridges and pheasants along with smaller stubble and brown quail where permitted.

So it could be argued the added advantage of 76mm, semi-magnum loads in the Classis are justified but of course lighter 12-gauge, 70mm, 28-gram loads can also be used for quail and smaller game to devastating effect. The 76mm chambering and HP Steel Proofing is a bonus for the hunter who enjoys shooting a well-balanced double gun in the field.

Furthermore, Fabarm have tighter than industry standard chokes, those for a full choke being 70 per cent patterning within a 30" circle at 40 yards. Fabarm's full choke will produce an 80 per cent pattern so it's

essential you fashion your favourite load with a Fabarm gun to be able to select the correct constriction for the type of shooting you're doing.

These barrels are also bored their whole length rather than hammer forged, a seemingly superior approach to barrel manufacture. The ejectors on the Classis Grade IV are well-timed and split so each operates individually, their timing perfect and the power of the springs sent spent shells well clear of the chamber for fast reloading. This is an exceptionally well-made double shotgun built on the traditions of an old-style double gun but with modern manufacturing based on the demands of the contemporary shooter and cartridge loadings.

Receiver

Engraving about the silver receiver is spectacular with game scenes designed by Cesare Giovannelli, the scroll borders around the triggerguard and along the bottom tang also complementing the Classis IV. The gold inlaid model identification banner on the underside, also completed beautifully, reminds me this classy gun is a far cry from the 'trade' old English doubles which



Fabarm provide five Hyperbolic Profile choke tubes to adapt to any situation.

proliferated in bygone years, not quite up there with premium English guns but drawing aesthetics for the practical hunter and shooter of today at an affordable price.

Design of the top opening lever is superb and functions well. Finished with a touch of engraving and hatching for a non-slip surface, it swings aside comfortably to release the barrels then spritely kicks back into position when the barrels are closed, resting slightly to the right to allow for gradual wear.

The safety catch-cum-barrel selector is to the rear of the top lever in a traditional position on the top tang and works positively, requiring some effort to select its positions. This is quite acceptable as you don't want a safety catch-cum-barrel selector that's easily moved if knocked inadvertently.

The triggerguard is quite generous, significant enough to accommodate hands wearing thin leather gloves while the triggerfoot is fixed and comfortable. The Classis Grade IV uses a single trigger system incorporating an inertia firing mechanism which requires the first barrel to fire to cock the second. This is standard for many guns though I prefer a mechanical mechanism whereby either barrel can be fired without relying on recoil from the first but few guns, except those from Turkey, appear to incorporate such a mechanism now. Trigger releases are around 4lb for each barrel.



Right-hand engraving depicts a pointer setting partridges.

Stock and fore-end

The Classis Grade IV is exactly what it says - a 'classic' double gun in that the stock is straight English or 'swan neck' with great chequering coverage at around 20 lines per inch. The wood-to-metal fit about the stock and fore-end is completed perfectly with stunning walnut an identical match to the splinter style fore-end.

I suggest pushing the fore-end wood tight against the barrels to facilitate release as the fitting is tight. Care is needed in replacing the fore-end to ensure the retaining lug on the underside of the barrels is precisely aligned to accept the fore-end and its retaining catch. Once correctly fitted the front button moves forward.

I'm a little concerned for the buyer who may want to take advantage of the gun's proofing and pursue some geese shooting using high velocity and HP Steel Shot loads, as the wooden buttplate with its chequering may not be the most comfortable option. It's fine for shooting quail with 21 or 24-gram loads of 10-shot but not so comfortable when shooting semi-magnum loads of size three steel shot with velocities in excess of 1500fps. I think I'd be investing in a reliable recoil pad if that was the case, available from Fabarm dealers as an original accessory or you may prefer an aftermarket addition.

In the field

Work entitled me to visit my local gun club for the purpose of testing the Classis Grade IV which I did with great delight, firing a host of 28 and 32-gram loads without a problem. The heavier the shells, the more the muzzle flipped which is standard for any shotgun but maybe more so with a side-by-side or double gun as they're known. As mentioned, if shooting magpie geese in the NT or Cape Barren geese culls on Flinders Island, I'd invest in a recoil pad that could be easily interchanged.

In conclusion I found this gun a delight. It was a great compromise between a traditional English gun, being a double with straight stock and modern day twist - single trigger and HP proofing along with interchangeable choke tubes for various shooting conditions. Suited to clays or the field, I'd enjoy shooting it in competition in its class or out and about on quail, rabbits or ducks.

It's a striking gun, well balanced with sensational timber and retails for about \$6850, ideal for the double-gun shooter who appreciates the pleasure of such a sporting firearm. Along with a great case, instruction booklet, full set of chokes and set of gun socks, the Classis Grade IV is perfect for the avid double-gun enthusiast. ●



Top lever and barrel selector-cum-safety catch with barrels closed.



Remington loads supplied for testing patterned sensationally.

Specifications

Manufacturer: Fabarm Spa, Brescia, Italy

Distributor: Raytrade, Victoria

Overall weight: 3.29kg/7lb 4oz

Overall length: 119cm/46¾"

Barrel length: 760mm/30"

Barrel weight: 1.52kg/3lb 6oz

Bore and chamber: Tribore, 12-gauge, 76mm chamber/3", HP steel shot proof

Chokes: Fabarm HP (Hyperbolic Profile, 82mm long, internal), Cylinder: Short, Medium, Long and Extreme

Trigger: Inertia-operated single. Trigger pulls: Right barrel 4lb 6oz, left barrel 4lb

Length of pull: 365mm/14¾"

Drop at comb: 37mm/1½"

Drop at heel: 58mm/2½"

Warranty: Five years

Price: Cased with all accessories, chokes/spanner and gun socks, \$6850

A tale of two cities

Shooters spoil for choice in 'Aldonga'

Lionel Swift

"It is the best of times, it is the best of times," to borrow loosely from Charles Dickens in describing two very interesting gun shops in Albury and Wodonga - or Aldonga as locals and visitors refer to these Murray River towns in New South Wales and Victoria respectively. Customers are provided the best service, equipment and information at both businesses, which I've visited on several occasions over the years, and if you ever find yourself in the area both are well worth a look.

Albury

• *Elk's Hunting and Fishing*

About 30 years ago Colin and Jane Elkington bought a firearms business from an existing owner in Smolett St, central Albury. The business increased steadily and some 10 years later they bought a much larger, now heritage listed building on the outskirts of Albury CBD at the corner of Wilson and David Streets where the business continues to flourish (ph 02 6021 8494).

On the Wilson St side of the building the original name of the business can still be seen - The Model Store, General Merchants - and on the corner is a brass plaque announcing the much more recent heritage listing. The building is now divided into two large departments, fishing and firearms, the latter covering hunting of all types with an emphasis on deer hunting while also catering to target shooters.

In the firearms department a huge range of guns and rifles are on display and on all four walls, under a very high ceiling, is an extensive display of mounted game animals. These cover most of the deer found in Australia including a full body mount of a beautiful Sika deer, several African trophies, water buffalo, bison and others. Some archery equipment is stocked but this is not large when compared to the fishing and particularly firearms department.

No gun owner or history buff should miss this building, its people and the trophy display. For the many hunters who fish, as I do, the equally large fishing department will require a considerable amount of time to do it justice. A staff of about eight full-time and five part-time workers are happy to answer any questions on firearms or fishing-related subjects with the shop open five-and-a-half



Jason and Dustin Elkington check out a sale item.

days a week. The success of the business has meant an early semi-retirement for the founder, Colin, and a busy work week for sons Jason and Dustin, with part-time assistance from their sister Hayley. Another sister, Tamora, participates in clay DTL target shooting, as do Jason and Dustin, so firearms more than commerce drive this family affair.

Wodonga

• *Bluey's Hunting, Fishing and Archery*

This business was established in Wodonga, coincidentally like Elk's about 30 years ago, by Bluey Williams and wife Lynda in the main street and after 20 years or so

moved to its present location at 65 Thomas Mitchell Drive, just a kilometre or so east with more parking (ph 02 6056 1259). It sits on the main road to Dartmouth, a fishing and hunting hotspot for so many from Victoria and New South Wales.

Bluey is also semi-retired these days and the day-to-day operation is conducted by their son Luke. Like the Albury store, Bluey's trades in both hunting and fishing gear with the emphasis on firearms and hunting in general. Luke has shot targets and hunted from an early age, something he still enjoys along with simulated field clays.

Again like the Albury store Bluey's has an excellent display of mounted trophy animals,

perhaps the most spectacular being two magnificent Red/Wapiti hybrid heads, as well as some interesting fishing trophies.

Since these businesses are only about 15 minutes apart they can both be conveniently visited by a back road connecting them via the Hume Freeway. Hunters and fishermen of the 'Aldonga' area are extremely well served by these shooters' dens and many from further afield also recognise their worth and make the most of what they have to offer.

Common ground

Staff in both shops are familiar with all local hunting and fishing areas and happy to advise newcomers, and with several State Forests and National Parks nearby in northern Victoria, as well as Lakes Hume and Dartmouth, this pool of knowledge is well drawn from.

It seems co-operation is key to their success as the proprietors of both businesses regularly play golf together and are conversant with each other's way of working, a further convenience for customers and, as already mentioned, both stores are a genuine pleasure to visit.

Note that both Albury and Wodonga are in the same telephone area code (02) should the numbers quoted cause confusion. ●



Luke Williams with one of Bluey's best-sellers.



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GPO excels with Spectra Dot

Mark van den Boogaart

German Precision Optics, or GPO as they're more widely known, are a relatively new player in the sports optics market. Designing, engineering and quality managing their array of equipment in Germany, GPO was created after a number of leading executives from the big-name German optical companies decided to go it alone.

The GPO line-up is extensive and appears to be constantly growing. In terms of build quality their gear is very good and performance right up there with their more established rivals, but it's the highly viable pricing which is really of interest to many shooters and hunters.

My first real look at their offerings came during a visit to British distributor Raytrade UK in December 2019 and after that introduction I ended up buying a pair of GPO binoculars which I hunted with in England the following month. At that time GPO hadn't ventured into red dot-style optics so I was keen to investigate their version when I received a package for review from *Australian Shooter*.

The GPO Spectra Dot is an aluminium tube-bodied red dot sight and at just 65mm in total length and weighing 103 grams is a

compact unit. The mounting is confirmation the Spectra Dot is a low-profile Weaver/Picatinny-style fitting and interestingly, the mount is attached via four Torx head screws so I'm assuming different mounts could be fitted to suit.

Aside from the Spectra Dot, out of the box you get a set of lens protectors, CR2032 battery, instructions and a Torx key to fit the sight, GPO advising typical battery life is 50,000 hours. The Spectra Dot follows the standard optical layout with the small, capped elevation adjustment on top of the unit and capped windage adjustment on the right. The caps on each protect the adjustment dials and also act as a tool to fine-tune elevation and windage, as the dials themselves are a little small for most fingers. Adjustment increments on both are 0.5 MOA.

In front of the windage adjustment on the right is the illumination control dial, a much larger adjustment and having both day (D) and night (N) setting increments. Movement of the illumination dial is positive with firm, clear division between each setting, the dial itself comfortable to turn with thumb and finger and unlikely to slip or move without you wanting it to. To install the battery, remove the

GPO-branded cover on the dial, place the battery and secure it by refitting the cap. Once fitted, the red dot is clear and bright though obviously brighter on the higher settings. The front lens is 20mm in diameter which sounds a little small in today's world of 50mm-plus front objective scopes, but looking through the Spectra Dot you don't have the feeling of a compressed or limited image. In fact you find the opposite is true, a big picture with illuminated red dot right in the middle, all of which helps with quick target acquisition.

As the Spectra Dot is classed a 1x magnification device it's intended to be used with both eyes open so if new to red dot sights this can take a little time to familiarise yourself with, but is a good habit to develop. Along with the 1x magnification eye relief is classed as unlimited, which generally means you can position the Spectra Dot along the length of the action and forward of the action if you have a compatible base. Deciding to experiment a little, I fitted the Spectra Dot on the Forward position on my Ruger Scout rifle. With that done it was range time and shooting off the bench I began testing with illumination settings and found either D4 or D5 best for my eyes.

As red dots are best suited to hunting

GPO excels with Spectra Dot

The Spectra Dot comfortably deals with a rain shower.



moving targets, be they sambar busting through heavy cover or pigs in the lignum and long grass, I then began dialling it in for an inch high at 100 yards. Over the course of a few hours' experimenting I began to achieve some really good results and, as you can see from the best 3-shot target of the day, the Spectra Dot is a capable red dot optic.

With clear optics, a simple mounting system and low-profile compact design, the Spectra Dot is well suited to hunting heavy cover and comes at a very competitive price. And while the review rifle was a Scout in .308 Win, I think the Spectra Dot would be equally well suited to a lever-action and, thanks to its build quality, I wouldn't be worried about mounting it on a heavy hitter like a .45/70. ●

Spectra Dot with lens cover removed.



Best 3-shot group on the day.



Specifications

- 2 MOA dot size
- IPX 7 rated
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- 50,000-hour battery life
- Effective diameter 22mm
- Parallax free
- Weight 103 grams
- Weaver/Picatinny-style mount
- Six day-time and five night-time illumination settings
- Australian RRP \$750

Firearms engineering as an exact science

Simon Winchester is a prolific English-American author and journalist who has written some 27 books covering a wide range of topics. The book under review here by **Geoff Smith** is a well-documented study of how engineering, with increasing precision, has changed the face of our world over the past 240-odd years.

Imagine you're a gunner on a naval ship in the late 18th century. The battle is raging, your 32-pounder long gun is loaded and you're lining up in readiness to fire. You ignite the priming charge and . . . boom! Your gun blows apart and kills you.

This apparently all-too-common scenario led John 'Iron Mad' Wilkinson to patent a new way to make cannon barrels. Instead of casting them hollow he cast them solid then precisely machined the interior barrel to an accuracy of "the thickness of an English shilling". This was the starting point, many say, of the Industrial Revolution, as Wilkinson's techniques were quickly adopted by James Watt and Matthew Bolton in the manufacture of efficient steam engines.

The prologue of Winchester's book is a delightfully personal testament to his father's work as an engineer and how he used to bring items home to show young Simon. His father, he said, was engaged in turning shapeless lumps of hard metal into objects of beauty and utility and he discusses the difference between precision and accuracy using rifle shooting as his model.

Each chapter is prefaced with a level of tolerance, the first being 0.1", or the thickness of an English shilling. This chapter talks about John Wilkinson but there are brief fascinating asides, such as the Antikythera clockwork instrument made more than 2000 years ago which accurately plotted the movements of the moon and then known planets, and to John Harrison the clockmaker, whose work enabled the accurate determination of longitude by sailors during the 18th century. It was the steam engine though, which really marked the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.

The second chapter, now at a tolerance of 1/10,000", introduces Joseph Bramah and Henry Maudslay. Bramah invented a variety

of things including flushing toilets, but was mostly famous for his locks, although his apprentice Maudslay went on to become renowned for inventing and improving machines, including the micrometer which enabled measurements of thickness down to 1/10,000".

Although the wooden treadle lathe had been known for several thousand years, Maudslay's were made from steel and included the leadscrew and slide rest, his factory for machine making of pulley blocks for ships operating right up to 1965. He introduced the concept of precise interchangeability of parts, which was soon to become important in gunmaking and also subject to protests as workers realised machinery was taking their jobs.

At a tolerance of 1/100,000" the third chapter moves to the US War of Independence where, at the Springfield Armoury, they realised that if a single component broke then the whole rifle became useless unless parts were identical and replaceable.

Until that time guns were made individually and each was unique. This concept had been realised previously in France but their revolution had seen the idea lost in 'The Terror'. The American Eli Whitney, described as something of a rogue, had become famous for inventing cotton gin before becoming heavily involved in gunmaking. At this time inventors John Hall, Thomas Blanchard and Simeon North introduced various machines to expedite gunmaking at the Harpers Ferry works, inventing and using drop forges, templates, gauges and copy lathes to mass produce guns which were identical, using few individual workers and minimal hand-fitting tasks.

The book catalogues names which remain familiar to shooters as factories were established in Connecticut. Joseph Whitworth, now most famous for his eponymous thread form and formerly apprenticed to Maudslay, had a stand at the Great Exhibition in London's Hyde Park in 1851 in which he had a micrometer that could measure down to one-millionth of an inch. Queen Victoria, on July 2, 1860, opened the Grand Rifle Match at Wimbledon by accurately firing a .45 calibre Whitworth rifle at a target 400 yards away.

At the US Battle of Spotsylvania four years later, General John Sedgwick famously said of the far-off enemy: "They



couldn't hit an elephant at that distance." Seconds later he was killed by a shot to his head from a distant Whitworth rifle.

Chapter five covers divergence from firearms to the fledgling automobile industry, contrasting the techniques of the two prominent Henrys - Royce, whose hand-made cars were expensively out of reach of mere mortals and Ford, whose far cheaper production line cars were accessible to the world at large. Ford, allegedly, watching pigs being "dismantled" at a slaughter house, conceived the idea of the production line by applying it in reverse.

The book continues with increasing levels of precision to explore flight, photography, GPS and precision timekeeping. The origins of the transistor, then the integrated circuit and computer chips and the machines and personalities that made them are explored in some detail. By this time the orders of precision are so far removed from "the thickness of an English shilling" as to defy the imagination.

The technical content concludes with LIGO, the interferometer which can measure the distance between us and Alpha Centauri A, some 4.3 light years or 26 trillion miles, to an accuracy of the diameter of a human hair. In short, this is a breathtaking book which will be of great interest to shooters with a bent towards engineering.

• *Exactly - How precision engineers created the modern world* by Simon Winchester (Collins, London, 2018) - paperback, illustrated in black and white, 396 pages. ●



The thief meets his end or things that go bump in the night

Joe Norris

The macropod feed container was on its side again when I walked over to the house early in the morning. I stood there looking at the spilt feed, thinking the rufous bettongs we nourish every night were too small to knock over the metal rubbish bin that held the pellets, let alone take the clip-on lid off. A closer look revealed huge pig tracks all round the upturned bin and clear evidence of a porker devouring the pellets.

My father and his partner have been feeding the local rufous bettongs for years and they come every night. At times there can be as many as 20 of the friendly little animals hopping around our feet as we sit outside enjoying the relatively cool evenings on our remote North Queensland cattle station. They really lap up bread and biscuits but in the interest of maintaining a healthier diet they mostly receive commercial macropod pellets and vegetable scraps

and they love pumpkin and potato peels.

The other benefit to having these delightful creatures around is they dig up the tap root on bindis (khaki burr) and eat the carrot-like tuber. This effectively kills the bindi and makes it much more pleasant to walk around the yard, not to mention saving us from having to dig them up. Of course this also means trying to grow carrots in the vegetable garden is almost impossible.

Apparently the pig had been raiding the feed bin on an irregular basis but had ramped up his visits to almost nightly in recent times. My father's no longer a spring chicken and I was concerned he or someone else could inadvertently finish up between the pig and his escape route during one of the feed bin incursions and sustain serious injury as a result. I decided I had to do something about the porker before he hurt someone.

I was mustering at the time and had some extra people with me to help including Darryl, a Kiwi who wanted to see what farming here was like. So after a full day of branding and processing cattle we sat outside enjoying a quiet ale and a bite to eat, talking about how I could deal with the feed thief. As there was too much feed in the house paddock I couldn't spotlight the pig. I didn't have time to hunt him as I had cattle work to do and only enough days to finish it while I had help, so it looked like an ambush was the only answer.

After everyone had gone to bed I took my customised Tikka T3 chambered in .223 out the ute and sat on the veranda in the shadows with just the glow from the garden fairy lights and the stars illuminating the night. I was tired after working cattle all day but was equally determined to fix the pig so sat dead still with the rifle across my knees, the scope set on 3x power, with a

The thief meets his end

bullet chambered and bolt half closed. And then I waited.

I know from past experience the .223 isn't the best pig calibre but it was all I had with me. I was much keener to shoot wild dogs which prey on my calves than pigs at the time, making the .223 an ideal option. My Tikka .223 is supremely accurate so any misses are definitely my fault. Anyway I sat there trying to stay awake and still in the shadows as the insects and nocturnal wildlife carried on around me. I must admit I had more than a few micro sleeps before there was a sudden stillness in the night air and it took a little while to realise the insect noises had stopped and I was instantly awake, straining to hear anything. Only silence was the reward.

Then I heard a soft grunt which seemed to come from the trees out by the front gate, so I waited but nothing else happened

for quite a while. Thinking the pig had somehow spotted me, I lifted myself up slowly and carefully so as to make no noise. Then, holding my LED lenser torch against the fore wood of the rifle, I carefully sneaked out the front gate before closing the bolt on my rifle and turning on the torch.

The brilliant white light instantly illuminated a large boar only 20m away. The pig immediately hit top gear with the explosive acceleration typical of his breed but, instead of running away from me, he scurried across my front from right to left so I was able to follow him in the crystal clear optics of my Nightforce SHV 3-10 power scope and as the crosshairs met his shoulder I fired.

The pig didn't seem to react to the shot so I quickly reloaded and shot him again as he finally collapsed. After checking he

was dead I went to bed at about 2.30am hoping to grab some sleep before daylight had us up and going again. After breakfast I enlisted Darryl the Kiwi to help me lift the pig into the ute for the trip to the dump as he was too big to carry on my own. After the drive to the end of the airstrip to dispose of the ex-thief it was back to the yards for another day of cattle work, satisfied in the knowledge we wouldn't be bumping into the nocturnal raider again. ●



Rufous bettongs eating pellets outside the house.



Darryl helps Joe load the pig for a trip to the dump.



Versatile

quick-detachable scope mounts

Thomas Tabor

When my brother bought his new .270-chambered Savage Model 110 rifle in the late 1960s he also purchased a set of detachable scope mounts for it. If memory serves, those mounts were produced by Redfield but that was a long time ago and I could be mistaken. My brother had high hopes a set of quick-detachable mounts would be perfect for the variable hunting conditions he often faced. Unfortunately, those mounts proved unreliable when it came to retaining the same bullet impact point after the scope had been removed and remounted.

For decades Europe seemed way ahead of the rest of the world when it came to producing quality detachable mounts and European hunters loved the concept of being able to quickly and easily remove their scopes. In many cases, at the end of the hunting day those same hunters would ceremoniously remove scopes from their rifles to store them in separate cases.

Some of those European mounts gained considerable favour on the Dark Continent. Safari hunters, especially those seeking dangerous game, became particularly fond of the ability to swiftly ditch their scopes in favour of using the iron sights on their

rifle. In these situations when things had a tendency to turn close and personal, opting for a set of open sights over that of a scope simply made good sense.

As far as I know, most of those European mounting systems were fairly reliable when it came to maintaining the same point of bullet impact but on the downside most of those systems were expensive, heavy and bulky, especially by today's standards. From the beginning I could clearly understand the potential advantages inherent in these mounting systems, but my brother's poor experience weighed heavily on me for years. Eventually a pair of Leupold QRW (quick release) mounts found their way into my hands which caused all of my perceived reluctance to disappear.

Thomas found Leupold & Stevens' QRW rings extremely reliable.



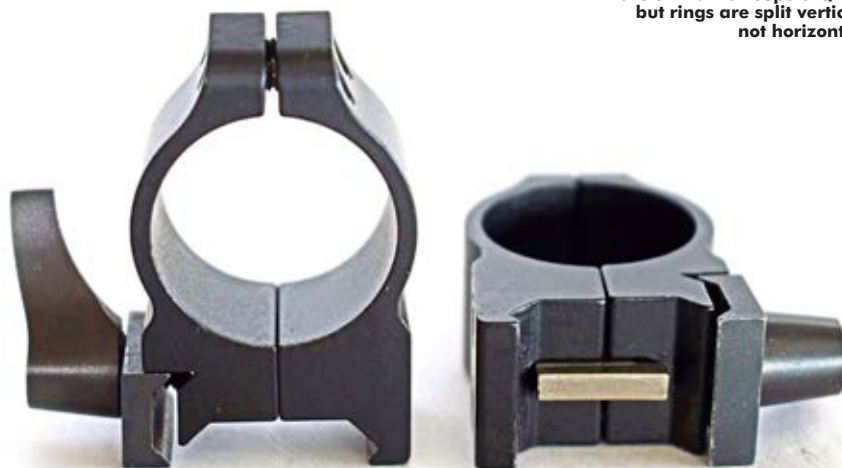
Leupold & Stevens systems

For the usual hunting-style rifles Leupold now has two systems to choose from - the QR and the QRW2 mounts. These two are starkly different in design but both are reliable when it comes to returning to the same general impact point of the bullet. The original QRW design was produced decades ago but has recently been upgraded to include a new easy-installation ring-top format, an improved keeper and larger contact area with the bases to encourage a more precise and reliable seating ability.

These rings have only become better over the years. The QRWs are steel cross-slot designed which includes a bar in the

Versatile quick-detachable scope mounts

Warne's quick-detach rings are similar to Leupold QRW2s but rings are split vertically, not horizontally.



foot of the rings which fits into a matching slot within the bases. This helps prevent any movement forward or aft as a result of the rifle's recoil or from other outside influences. To secure the scope in place, each ring comes with its own locking lever and once tightened down the position of these levers can be changed simply by pulling upward on them and turning them to the desired pointing direction. Once that new position has been achieved, internal springs hold the levers in place.

One of the major differences between the QRW and QR mounts lies in the location of their locking levers. While the QRW levers are located on the rings themselves, QR mount levers are built into the corresponding scope mounting bases. A big advantage of the QRW and new QRW2 rings is the fact they're compatible not only with their corresponding Leupold brand bases, but can be used with most Weaver-style bases and even today's popular standard mounting rails. On the other hand, QR rings must be used in conjunction with their specific corresponding QR bases.

QR bases are available to match most rifles but there's also a base specifically intended for older and less common firearms - the QR Gunmakers 2-PC is a work in progress. While it comes equipped with all the necessary locking mechanism, the base itself consists of an oversized triangular block of steel which can be machined to match whatever dimensions and contours needed.

Both Leupold mounting systems use Torx-style screws which the company says can be tightened with up to 25 per cent more torque than slot-headed type screws and in this case a special star-headed Torx wrench is needed for installation, though Leupold supplies one with each set of rings or bases.

Warne quick-detach mounts

These are similar to the Leupold QRW system and also come with Torx screws. Like the QRWs, Warner rings have with a steel crossbar which corresponds to a slot cut in the bases and can be used with Warne, Weaver-style mounts or a standard

rail. The main difference between the Leupold and Warne designs is Warne rings are split in the company's signature vertical fashion as opposed to Leupold's horizontally split design.

For years I've used Warne quick detach mounts and found them to be just as reliable and consistent in their abilities as the Leupold QRW-style mounts. I favour Leupold QRWs slightly over Warne rings as I find the horizontal cut ring to be easier to assemble and, like the Leupold QRWs, the locking levers of Warne rings are fully adjustable by pulling upward and turning them to the desired direction.

Advantages

Being able to remove your scope then remount it with an assurance there will be little or no change to the point of bullet impact is certainly a worthwhile consideration but there are other advantages which can go unrecognised. I sometimes find having a second scope ready to be slipped into place provides flexibility. The most common situation would be to have a high magnification scope for when long shots are the norm and a secondary scope with lower magnification for close shots ready to mount, though that could also include some form of night vision optics or even a reflex-style sight.

Having a secondary back-up scope set up with quick-detachable mounts could make good sense in another way too. Unforeseen problems can occur while hunting in the outback and if that should involve taking a fall, your scope could be damaged or knocked out of alignment so having a back-up ready to slip into place could salvage an entire hunting trip.

I sometimes find it beneficial to remove scopes while cleaning rifles and have always harboured a fear that cleaning chemicals used to scrub the bore and for lubeing could penetrate the scope seals. While those worries may not be totally founded it still lends a degree of confidence my scope will come through those activities unharmed.

Reliability

Conditions in the outback can be harsh, dry and dusty and, as a consequence, I became curious about how a light deposit of dust on the mounting surfaces of these mounts could affect scope alignment. In an effort to simulate those conditions I removed the QRW-mounted scope on my Model 70 .375 H&H rifle and sprinkled the surfaces with some baby powder and remounted it. In my opinion the results of that test showed an inconsequential amount of variation in the impact point.

Directional position of the QRW levers are adjusted by pulling them up then turning them.



In addition to testing my Winchester Model 70, I also put a couple of other rifles through their paces by shooting a group followed by pulling the scope and remounting it with Leupold QRW quick-release mounts, including my Savage rimfire .17 HMR and custom Mauser in .300 Win. Mag.

The way I see it

Over the years I've used all these systems and found reliability to be essentially on par. As mentioned, I have a fondness for the Leupold QRW-style mounts but that preference has little to do with their actual differences in performance.

Nothing in this world is 100 per cent and neither are these quick-release scope mounting systems. While I've found they all return their point of bullet impact point reliably, frequently there's a minor amount of deviation and while that could have consequences for a 1000m long-range shooter, it would mostly go unnoticed by the everyday hunter. As a result of my favourable experiences with these systems I have quick-release mounts on almost all my hunting rifles, centrefire and rimfire.

One piece of advice I always follow when mounting scope rings and bases, including remounting quick-release rings, is to tighten the screws gradually, alternating back and forth from screw to screw or lever to lever. Much like when you replace a car tyre, it's best to rotate tightening of the lugs to encourage uniformity. ●



A benefit of quick-release mounts is being able to have a couple of different-sized scopes zeroed in for the same rifle.



Quick-detachable mounts work equally well on rimfire rifles and centrefires.



Rock Chucker

Supreme Master reloading kit

Con Kapralos

The reloading of metallic cartridges, be it rifle or pistol, is something many shooters and hunters the world over subscribe to. While reloading of shotgun ammunition, at least here in Australia, has waned during the past 10 years, reloading of rifle and pistol ammunition continues to be popular. Whether as a cost-saving exercise or to tailor an exact load to a particular firearm and application, the benefits are obvious with improved accuracy being the main reason for reloading a metallic cartridge.

There are many manufacturers of quality reloading presses and accessories, most of them based in the US and one of the

biggest and most respected is RCBS. Whether you're a serious target shooter or avid hunter striving for accuracy, RCBS has the tools to make your hand-loading easy and trouble-free. Just check their website and you'll realise RCBS take cartridge reloading seriously.

For the new shooter or hunter, getting into reloading metallic cartridges can be daunting. While most new handloaders will have a mentor to guide them, buying the right equipment can be confusing. Thankfully the folks at RCBS took notice of this and have some excellent reloading kits for those new to the game. One of these is the Rock Chucker Supreme Master kit,

which contains the legendary Rock Chucker Supreme reloading press and accessories to make your start to reloading easy.

The kit up close

Nioa, Australian agent and distributor for RCBS, supplied the kit which arrived in a sizeable and hefty box. The Rock Chucker Supreme press itself is made from cast steel for strength and is heavy - it needs to be to perform its task with accuracy, precision and without compromise.

The kit includes the following: Rock Chucker Supreme press, Nosler 8th Edition reloading manual, M500 mechanical reloading scale (0-500 grain capacity),

Uniflow powder measure, hand priming tool, Universal case loading block, .17-.60 calibre deburring tool, hex key set, case lube kit (includes case neck lube brushes, lube pad, case lube) and powder funnel. All items are high quality as we'd expect from RCBS and in the traditional green colour synonymous with the brand.

Getting started

The kit contains everything you need to get you going but it's strongly recommended those new to reloading read the supplied manual before proceeding. Upon reading this excellent manual it's evident there are several steps in the reloading process which require some additional equipment not supplied with the kit.

Firstly, a method to clean fired cases is highly recommended as this permits easier re-sizing and less wear-and-tear on your sizing die and can be done with either a vibratory/rotary case tumbler or ultrasonic cleaner. RCBS make some excellent units to suit all requirements and budgets.

Secondly, a method of measuring the metallic case (to ascertain case length in several steps) is mandatory and a vernier caliper is a must to accurately do this. Thirdly, a means of trimming re-sized cases is required and RCBS make an excellent version in the Trim Pro 2 Manual Case Trimmer. Don't forget a set of dies for the calibre being loaded and a shell holder for that case is a must.

All items are simple to use with the supplied instruction manuals and it's imperative the press is set up on a solid, vibration-free bench with ample room available to accommodate the accessories you'll need in the various reloading steps.

Having a designated area to perform the reloading process without interference or distraction is a priority and RCBS make an accessory plate which can be screwed to your bench to which the Rock Chucker Press and other equipment (powder

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measure stand, case trimmer etc) can be attached for use and removed when finished. This avoids the need to drill a multitude of holes in your benchtop and enables easy storage of your reloading gear.

The Nosler No.8 reloading manual is excellent. Not only does it take you through the entire process, it looks at troubleshooting problems which may arise when preparing and reloading cases. Added to that it contains load data using Nosler projectiles in a complete range of rifle and handgun calibres as well as a foreword for each calibre. One excellent resource for new reloaders is a series of YouTube tutorial videos by RCBS senior product manager Kent Sakamoto. These

short videos are an excellent training resource and I've watched them numerous times prior to starting my reloading. Mr Sakamoto's wealth of knowledge and expertise with his product base is evident and he makes it easy for new reloaders to follow with his clear and concise demeanour.

If you're new to reloading rifle or pistol ammunition, consider the Rock Chucker Supreme Master reloading kit by RCBS. It retails for around \$850 and is available from all good firearms dealers Australia-wide. More at nioa.com.au. ●

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Still learning on a journey through the past

It's sometimes said individuals are a product of their environment, that the how and where of growing up are major influences on the way we live our lives. For some I expect it's a bit more complex than that but for others a rule of thumb that's eerily close to the mark, so in support of that statement I offer myself as an example.

Growing up on the fringe of the east coast city of Wollongong there were times I thought I could live within the bright lights, but it wasn't to be. The pull of the hills and mountains, rivers and beaches was always stronger than the contrived existence of suburbia and the city, something the old man had been working on, inadvertently or otherwise, from the time I was old enough to follow him around. Not a lot of encouragement was required given I was born with a natural inclination to hunt, fish and collect. Everything beyond that was occupational training.

Apart from hunting and fishing, within our family and perhaps more broadly as well, the old man was also recognised as a bit of a bower bird. He had an eye for unusual and interesting items, an enquiring mind and, in his later years, the where-withal to bargain for and acquire whatever took his fancy. We were never sure what treasures he was likely to bring home from a Sunday market, auction, swap meet or car boot sale.

Perhaps I'm drawing a long bow here but I always thought his collecting habits may have had something to do with growing up hard between the wars, that subconsciously or otherwise he was trying to make up for what he'd missed in those formative years. He also hated waste and would never throw out anything he thought might come in handy later. When hunting or fishing he insisted we only take as much as we could use and leave what we didn't need where it was.

For better or worse all those things were part of what he was and if he was still



A lifelong hunter and collector in his new trophy room, a place the old man would've loved.

around I'm sure he'd be pleased to know his legacy lives on - much of what he considered right and important rubbed off on me. According to one of my fashionably woke, urban-centric sisters, that makes me a conservative who's been living in the bush too long. She spits the label out like a mouthful of swear words and the old man would've loved that.

All these thoughts were mulled and distilled during the recent, protracted business of moving into town as, for the first time in 26 years, I was forced to confront the accumulation of 'junk' (my wife's word, not mine) gathering dust in the shed. Some of it I didn't recall collecting in the first place, other bits I'd forgotten I even owned. Some of it had belonged to the old man, packed into boxes when he died as too good to throw out then shoved under a bench and left in peace simply because it had once been his. Sorting through it became a journey through the past.

Many of the bits he'd originally put aside

hadn't proved useful to either of us, other pieces I'd gathered in my own right but couldn't remember why, some I gave to good homes where someone else could see potential for it down the track. I didn't throw out any of the good stuff yet still managed to almost fill a modest skip bin with the off-casts.

By comparison, building a new trophy room and shifting the various mounts into place was easy. Sorting through, reorganising and displaying my collection of knives, reloading tools, old cartridges, powder tins and rabbit traps from my entrepreneurial younger days was a doddle and moving my library into the new office a breeze. I emerged from the process with the realisation I'm no longer just another hunter and collector, I'm undoubtedly a product of my environment and, in my own way and time, have become the old man. Just ask my kids and their families, they'll tell you.



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- Accidental loss and damage of the equipment (including whilst in use, excluding chipping and scratching of stock).
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- Fire & extraneous perils.
- Flood
- Theft.

NOT COVERED.

Theft where the equipment was not stored in an approved gun safe as required by State or Territory authority, other than when the equipment is in use or away from the Insured's premises. Where the Insured or any person or entity to whom the equipment has been entrusted to fails to comply with any law relating to either storage, use or handling of the equipment.