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**AUSTRALIAN**

October 2020  
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# Shooter

THE MAGAZINE FOR SPORTING SHOOTERS

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### Australia Post - Victoria

Australia Post in Victoria have been forced to reduce their staff numbers due to COVID-19 restrictions, resulting in delayed delivery of *Australian Shooter* there. In a bid to cut the delay, we have instructed the magazine packing company to supply Australia Post in Victoria before other states. This will take place from this edition until things return to normal.



Our October cover

## NEXT ISSUE



In what has been an uncertain year for everyone, Trenton Hardie eased the pain of lockdown by turning his attention to 'dry firing' - the art of practising your long-range shooting skills without firing a shot.

Seasoned hunter Chris Redlich weighs in with the penultimate instalment in our favourite rifle-cartridge-scope combination feature and nominates an ideal hunting trio which has stood the test of time.

Among new firearms under review next month, Con Kapralos laid his hands on the Blaser R8 Professional Success sporting rifle, one he reckons is "a marque the serious hunter can subscribe to".





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# President's Message

WITH GEOFF JONES

## Positive thinking prevails amid trying times

I don't know about you but despite what you'd think is a quiet period, I seem to be busier than ever. Or maybe it's just that we've had the chance to draw back and focus on fresh things we realise are more important than so many inconsequential day-to-day issues that we can easily convince ourselves are so crucial and occupy our space and time.

While electronic communications and online platforms have some serious drawbacks and pitfalls in a professional context, at SSAA we've been able to judiciously use the tools available to us to converse effectively with a minimisation of distracting chatter and trivial matters which so often keep us from focusing on the real concerns.

It should be heartening for you as members to know your respective state and territory associations have been continuing to lobby and deal with the many and varied legislative matters which continue to surface unabated at state level, while the National Association has also been in regular lobbying contact with the relevant Federal authorities. The effectiveness of SSAA lobbying is achieved in dealing with subjects before they become an insurmountable problem, when purely relying on the good grace of government or the authorities is never an option and open confrontation seldom achieves the preferred outcome.

A fine example of positive lobbying and negotiation is the recent passage of the Great American Outdoors Act through the US Senate. With overwhelming bipartisan support, this legislation will fulfil a promise to their future generations that conservation, access to public lands and outdoor recreation, including hunting and recreational shooting, will be safeguarded well into the next century. While there are significant and often misreported differences between our two countries, we have much to learn from the US in the wildlife conservation arena.

Hunters there are the single largest source of wildlife conservation funding through their Pittman-Robertson Federal

Wildlife Restoration Act. Our Australian authorities clearly have much to learn about the concept of real conservation outcomes. Matthew Godson's 'Open Season' column on Page 8 of this edition of *Australian Shooter* clearly demonstrates how vulnerable truth and fact is to manipulation and crass political abuse with total disregard for those conservation outcomes and why truth through lobbying is so difficult in Australia.

Regardless of the local challenges we always face, SSAA is being recognised more and more on the world stage. Well-established firearms trade magazine *Gun Trade World* with circulation to 120 countries, has in their latest edition published a five-page section - Doing business with Australia - in which they acknowledge SSAA as "the most prominent shooting organisation in the country" as well as referring to our significant and growing membership and, of course, our highly successful SSAA SHOT Expos.

We've all met the current restrictions particularly well and I wish to thank all SSAA members who've been affected by our shooting range limitations for their understanding and cooperation. SSAA has weathered the storm particularly well and we're making every effort to return to 'normal' as soon as it's possible and safe.

It's obvious that with so many of our sporting products and accessories being imported, there will invariably be some supply shortages into the foreseeable future. I would ask our members to also extend their courtesy and understanding to firearms retailers and, wherever possible, support their local retailers as they'll be under serious business pressure and will need your backing to survive and be there to service you into the future. Stay safe and enjoy your shooting.

*G.E. Jones*

**Geoff Jones**  
SSAA National President



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## Culling about management

JOHN MAXWELL'S ARTICLE 'Culling dilemma a question of education' (*Shooter*, April 2020) addressed the function of culling in managing wildlife. There's more to this than reason over emotion or cute animals. One further aspect is opportunity to balance the value of introduced wildlife by management to levels supported by available habitat.

The 'Brumbies' have charismatic heritage value but their population levels now exceed habitat capacity for that number which has to be addressed and this age-old scientific ecological principle applies to all wildlife, native and introduced.

A consideration not explored in the article was the benefit of culling (native and introduced) in resourcing sustainable hunting opportunities, harvesting meat and fur products. Culling is not only about reducing population levels but also selective management of species for preferred quality characteristics (removing genetics of diseased specimens).

Finally, a comment on use of language: Our wild deer were originally brought over by 'acclimatisation societies' looking to share the goodies of the 'old world' here. The term 'feral' is mainly used as a pejorative to put down wildlife valued by hunters but is more properly used to define the progeny of agricultural stock which has escaped or been

released and gone wild. Lack of management in restricting hunting access has allowed these to build up populations in non-traditional areas.

**Hans Witteveen, via email**

## Happy to be of service

MY USUAL INTEREST in each issue of *Australian Shooter* is to flip through it with my attention sometimes taken by a particular advertisement, but in the April edition there were a number of articles I read with interest - the one on .303 carbines; US military knives; the Lithgow Museum story; Kim Atkinson's piece on muzzleloading slug guns; and the English flintlock article. Keep up this good work as not everyone is excited about ultra-modern, large calibre firearms.

**John Cowie, via email**

## 'Sell' pest control to hunters

GRANT WALTERFANG'S OBSERVATION that many city-based hunters think farmers should pay for their ammunition and fuel costs when mitigating pests was enlightening (Drought hitting farmers hard, *Shooter*, April 2020). In response I would make the observation that perhaps the hunting community should make a finer distinction between recreational hunting and

volunteer pest control. The majority of city-based hunters hunt as a recreational pastime focused on enjoyment, not as a service to the farmer. Recreational hunting certainly brings substantial benefits to rural and regional economies, evidenced by the federal study which found recreational hunting contributes \$2.4 billion to the economy.

However, if city-based hunters are going into private property for recreation rather than pest control, they should not expect access to private property for free. I believe that encouraging as many people as possible to get into hunting through these two recreational avenues is how we'll generate a larger pool of volunteer pest controllers.

Volunteer pest controlling is the next logical step for those who cannot afford to pay to hunt as often as they like to, but who have the time and enthusiasm to commit to helping farmers mitigate pests. Similarly, those who start hunting on public land will soon find out that being successful is a tough gig, due to limited lines of sight in forests, less attractive food sources than on farms and the illegality of shooting at night. The logical conclusion is to promote volunteer pest control: I am convinced that building on how different types of hunting complement each other is the way to maximise participation.

**Rhys Bosley, Qld.**



## Insurance Q&A with Trevor Jenkin

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

**Q:** I'm a farmer and have been approached by an individual who wants to bring a group of mates on my property to hunt feral pests. He tells me he has insurance but what should I do to ensure I'm fully protected?

**Bert Barcroft, via email**

**A:** There are a couple of things you must consider, the first being your liability as a property owner. If you allow shooters on your property you could be deemed liable for any injury if you contributed in some way to an incident. For example, if a

shooter falls down a hill due to poor fencing and their firearm discharges and injures someone, you have essentially contributed to the injury through negligence as property owner. A lot of farm policies exclude anything to do with shooting activities, so I suggest you call your existing broker or contact SSAA General Insurance Brokers to cover this in more detail.

Secondly you must check if the shooters have liability cover before you allow them on the property. I strongly advise you check if they're SSAA members, as that provides

\$20 million of liability cover for all recreational shooting activities. If they're professional shooters or acting as a tour guide or similar, ask to see proof of their liability insurance (certificate of currency) and if they can't produce it, don't let them on the property. There are numerous things to consider with liability insurance so give us a call on (08) 8332 0281 or visit [ssaaib.com.au](http://ssaaib.com.au) if you have any doubts.

## The last post could be your death knell

One thing I regularly say is don't put anything on social media you wouldn't want on the front page of a newspaper. This popped back into my mind when I saw reports of an employee from Western Australian Parks and Wildlife being stood down after old trophy hunting photos from his private Facebook page were splashed across the internet.

With all the manufactured outrage generated by digital and print media, the Western Australia Premier threw in his two-cents worth and called for the wildlife officer to be sacked, believing the employee's actions were "depraved, disgusting and disgraceful". The Premier even suggested the employee's removal from the position of acting district manager for the Esperance region hadn't gone far enough.

It was reported the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions had originally stood by the employee as they were aware of his background in authorised African game reserve management (aka lawful and sustainable use of wildlife through trophy hunting). But it seems good old-fashioned political outrage can force a change of heart which resulted in the employee being thrown under the bus, even though none of his past actions would have a negative effect on his ability to do the job he was paid for.

Like it or not, trophy hunting in places

like South Africa has conservation benefits. The WA Premier and his deputy's reported opinions on the circulated photos and their relevance to the "values of the department" indeed show their lack of understanding in worldwide conservation actions and initiatives. Like many small-minded western conservation agencies and organisations, they don't understand the economic drivers for wildlife and biodiversity conservation in developing countries which are biodiversity-rich and rainfall-poor.

These developing countries with poor rainfall tend to be suitable for sustainable wildlife utilisation more than others and this would generally outperform conventional agricultural activities. There really is a need for policymakers and conservation organisations outside those countries to understand what the conservation drivers, incentives and markets are in these developing countries. Safari or trophy hunting is not the biggest threat to wildlife and habitat, it's land transformation primarily through agriculture which is the biggest problem in these areas. This is something the unfortunate employee may know all too well but others, including the politicians, need an education on.

There are others who seem to think this employee was harshly treated when you consider the International Union for Conservation of Nature, a global authority on the status of the natural world, supports

well-managed trophy hunting. Renowned sustainable use expert Professor Grahame Webb described the employee's demotion as "scandalous" when asked for comment by the ABC, making the point that people have to become more understanding of the diversity of approaches needed to conserve animals in different contexts. He pointed out that what works in Esperance is certainly not going to work in Botswana or the hills of Afghanistan.

No doubt the employee in question knows this but unfortunately those who called for his head are not so pragmatic in their views regarding conservation. It's simply another occasion where manufactured outrage has caused comment from the political class that doesn't deviate from uneducated popular opinion.

Unfortunately this whole sorry affair occurred due to an individual's decision to put a photo or two on his personal social media account which were subsequently shared to an unintended audience. And therein lies a warning to us all that there are people out there happy to troll through our photos and use them against us for whatever reason. Be careful what you post - you could be the next one making headlines for all the wrong reasons.

Send questions to:  
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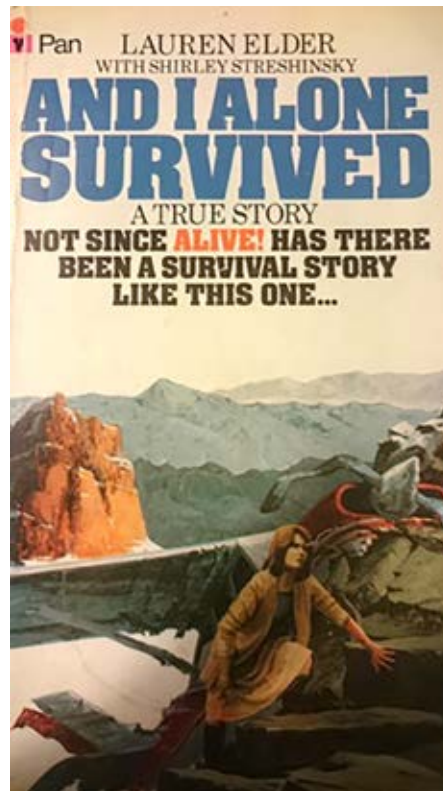
## A cool head is crucial to survival

**Y**ou won't be surprised when I tell you that recently I've been reading a lot. I first read *And I Alone Survived* in the late 1970s not long after the incident described took place. I remember thinking it was a well-told story by a young woman who was the only survivor of a plane crash in the Sierra Nevada mountain range in the US but I'd forgotten any other lessons her book offered.

Reading it again I had to acknowledge her amazing tenacity, deciding to descend 2500m from the snowy peaks to the desert below - and doing it. Leaving the site of a disaster and walking out can be a life-threatening decision as we've seen from various incidents in Australia's remote regions, and in rugged and almost inaccessible mountainous terrain you might think it was exceptionally foolhardy.

What Lauren did, however, was stay calm and carefully consider her options. Usually it's the decision made with a cool head which contributes most to survival in difficult times, and she was forced to make several difficult decisions over the relatively short time she was stranded.

Using the aircraft's fuel to make a fire and heat rocks which would keep her warm over the freezing first night of her ordeal was vital. The plane, with three on board, had pancaked into the top of the mountain pass above the tree line and no other inflammable material was available. As you can imagine she was completely unprepared for any emergency, wearing only light clothes, and the pilot's partner who did have a jacket had slid off the icefield and



over a precipice wearing the only warm clothing available.

Encountering and conquering a series of imagined rescuers and searchers demonstrated the mental strength Lauren was able to summon up and it was her determination to survive despite every physical and mental challenge that arose which I remembered from that first read.

Staggering into a town after her marathon descent and long hike across sparsely inhabited dry country didn't end her ill

fortune. Dirty, bleeding and with no money, the motel owners from whom she sought help, not surprisingly turned her away. One even called the local police who ultimately became her saviours having been alerted that a small plane was missing. An investigation into the incident revealed the wires leading from the battery box to the plane's emergency beacon were corroded and broken and the terminals so dirty that even if there had been a charge in the battery, it wouldn't have triggered the beacon.

Now we know her decision to leave was the right one. After finishing the book I must confess I went to my GPS receiver, headlamp and PLB to check the batteries and terminals and used a green dishwashing scourer to clean them up. I also removed the battery from my backup GPS receiver and a small pocket torch remembering previously it had been a difficult job to remove a corroded battery from the torch, which had an aluminium body.

Batteries containing sodium hydroxide are unfriendly towards aluminium and in combination may produce hydrogen gas. Remember the Hindenburg? In case you'd like to read her account: Lauren Elder - *And I Alone Survived*, available to buy online.



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**Q** I have recently taken up clay target shooting after a few years of rifle shooting and find I can make cheaper and more accurate ammunition for my rifle by reloading, but looking at the cost of setting up to load shotshells by hand, I doubt I could save any money. Is it your experience that better patterns can be achieved by careful trial and error with reloads or is factory ammunition just as good for clay target shooting?

**Chris Ewing, ACT**

**A** Sadly, 12-gauge shotshell reloading is a dying art. I say sadly because in my mind it was part of the culture and history of our shotgun sport and I would think less than five per cent of competition clay target shooters now reload 12-gauge ammunition. In some disciplines it would be half that percentage again.

I have fond memories of sitting behind a Mec 650 pumping out shotshells for hours and when I was finally given control of a Hydra-Mec (the hands-free hydraulic version) it was like being in command of the Starship Enterprise. I remember having AC/DC pumping out *Shoot to Thrill* in the background as I meticulously colour-coded each shotshell relative to its shot size in used 25-round boxes, never using the same box for a different velocity shell.

My powder of choice was Winchester's ball powder range (don't hold me to this, but from memory I used AA473 and AA452). The smell of opening a new can of powder was like heaven and the sound of crunching up a wad on top of the powder was like hell. I fitted the largest possible shot bottles on the press and would be mes-

Clay shooting is a real mental test in many areas and if you believe you can then you probably will.

merised by how it all worked. Rhythm was everything and no-one dared interrupt me when I was on a roll.

Back in the late 1970s and early '80s I'd estimate at least half the country's regular, serious clay target shooters reloaded at some stage. There was no shortage of reusable plastic hulls and the price of shot, powder and primers was not excessive due to the number of importers vying for the reloading market. Gradually the rising price of lead and added burden and cost of storing and importing gunpowder made the financial viability of reloading less attractive, coupled with the fact very few hulls now are 'reloader friendly' due to the plastic composition of their cases. Reloading is just plain hard work with no real dollar value reward.

Unlike rifle reloads where you can be exact on every round, you don't have the same consistency on a '500 rounds an hour' shotshell reloading press. While I'd argue you may never miss a target because you were using reloaded shotshells as opposed to factory-loaded rounds, I would also have to admit I never personally felt as confident

with my own reloads I put hours of sweat into. Clay shooting is a real mental test in many areas and if you believe you can then you probably will. Alternatively, if you have any doubts then you probably won't. I found opening a slab of brand new glowing factory ammo eliminated one of the many doubts which could enter your mind when you need to hit the last five targets to win a tournament.

In Australia and indeed around the world there's still a healthy reloading market in smaller sub-gauges, particularly in the Skeet shooting fraternity where often they put more trust in their reloads than they do in their wives and husbands! The cost of sub-gauge ammunition has always been high when compared to countries like the US where the smaller gauges are very popular. It's simply a case of supply and demand and that lack of supply has kept this market alive, but unless you intend shooting an awful lot of .410, 28 or 20-gauge shells, the initial cost of setting up the infrastructure means it could take years to reap any real financial reward.

You're right about not really saving money if it's 12-gauge shotshells you're thinking about reloading, especially when you factor your time into firstly reloading and secondly your time at the range, scavenging through thousands of empty hulls to hopefully find a few reloadable ones. Though if it's therapy you're after, the serenity and pride of a properly set up reloading room is hard to beat.



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

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



**Q** I have an old Saxton London 12-gauge side-by-side shotgun we inherited from my wife's grandmother and was wondering if you could tell me about it (photos of the markings attached). We assume it belonged to her great auntie Mabel who lived alone in a small shack on a property at Moorooduc, Victoria and hunted rabbits for food, probably using this gun. She'd go into Mornington on a horse and buggy for supplies but had to leave the property in her nineties due to it being flooded as part of the Devil's Bend Reserve. I have it at the back of my gun safe and could clean it up and re-blue it as a project one day but it may be appreciated more by a collector if it's that type of gun.

**Wayne, via email**

**A** The name Saxton refers to a town in north Yorkshire (originally meaning 'Saxon Town') and it would appear to have been adopted by a trade firearms dealer from around the turn of the 20th century. There are numerous references to this brand on the internet, some having been made in Belgium and others in England.

Your gun appears to have twist steel barrels and was made and proofed in Birmingham for black powder loads only. It would seem from the style of proof mark ('crown over BP', 'crown over BV' and '12 over C in a diamond') it was made between 1904 and 1925 according to Wirnsberger's *The Standard Directory of Proof Marks* (Blacksmith Publications, Arizona). Guns branded similarly to yours have turned up in the US as

well as Australia so it would seem whoever the dealers were, they had a substantial market around the world.

I wouldn't be firing this old gun as it isn't designed for modern ammunition and I wouldn't be re-blueing it either, as this will diminish its value. At present it's only worth what a collector is prepared to pay but the value of these elderly and important artefacts of our colonial past will increase as they're handed in to authorities and destroyed. I have a similar gun which I hold as a family heirloom, keeping it clean and tidy and periodically taking it out of the safe to handle and admire.

**Geoff Smith**

**Q** My father and I have been looking for a first gun and were wondering what calibre and brand is a good one for shooters with little experience.

**Henry Murnane, via email**

**A** Henry, if you and your father are just starting out it's hard to go past a good .22 rimfire rifle. The calibre is cheap to shoot and that's a major consideration for anyone starting out as the key to learning how to shoot well is practice.

Without knowing what your budget will extend to it's hard to recommend a brand but the CZ range of rimfire rifles is hard to ignore, as are those from Ruger, as both produce rimfire rifles more than capable of delivering good results both at the range and in the field on small game. There are numerous other brands out there but these are two of the better ones available at reasonable cost. If you're after top of the line gear it's hard to go past the Anschütz 1761 I reviewed in the June edition of *Australian Shooter* - the choice is yours.

Before deciding what to buy, I suggest you visit your nearest SSAA range and take some on-the-spot advice from experienced shooters as SSAA members are always happy to welcome and help newcomers to the shooting sports. This will also give you some insight into what disciplines the range

shoots and perhaps give you the chance to try some (or all) of them to see which ones interest you most. Being involved in range shooting is an excellent way to familiarise yourself with a variety of firearms and learn how to shoot successfully. Some disciplines such as Field Rifle and Metallic Silhouette use field shooting positions which will make you a better and more responsible shooter should you decide to go hunting.

Whatever rifle you settle on, it will have to be fitted with a good quality scope and once again it all depends on how much you have to spend and where you want to go with your shooting. If you decide to settle for range and competitive shooting your scope requirements will differ from those you need for rimfire hunting of small game.

Lastly, don't be in too much of a hurry to get into shooting centrefire calibres as you'll learn a lot more from rimfires and the shooting skills you develop with them will set you up for anything you want to do further down the road. Best of luck.

**John Dunn**

**Q** I was wondering what the definition of a faithful reproduction is? Does a reproduction STI Classic 1911 fit into Pistol Class 3 in CSD?

**Chris Wood, via email**

**A** Faithful reproduction means something slightly different depending on the discipline. Since your question relates to the Combined Services Discipline I referred to the CSD rule book on the SSAA website and Steve Knight, National CSD chairman. Class-3 pistols are Class 1 (defence) or 2 (law enforcement/police) pistols which have been modified from their original specification or accursed to make them effectively target handguns. These modifications may include, for example, target shooting adjustable sights, hand customised grips, barrels, trigger systems and compensators.

Your specific STI model doesn't appear on either the Class 1 or 2 lists but may still



qualify if it's a faithful reproduction - that is, looks exactly like something which is on the list, remembering calibre and barrel length restrictions. In your case you'd be looking at a Colt or some other make of 1911 which your pistol has to match before any Class 3 modifications were made to it.

A final word from Steve Knight: "Ultimately it's up to each competitor to ensure their firearm complies. Because there are so many 1911 clones, not every gun may be on the list." Steve recommends that before you go to a major competition, alert the organisers of any firearm which could be contentious and discuss with them before you travel.

**Rod Pascoe**

**Q** I want to reload for my .243 using Nosler 90gr Ballistic Tip Hunting bullets - can you suggest a load using ADI powders? ADI don't have a load for 90gr BTs and Nosler had nothing for ADI powders so I feel it's better to check before exploring some suggestions made. Do you start using another projectile with a similar weight or does the type of projectile influence loads? I also intend to reload 7mm/08 using Nosler 140gr Ballistic Tip Hunting using ADI powders if you can assist.

**Greg, via email**

**A** Although ADI doesn't show loading figures for the Nosler 90gr Ballistic Tip projectile, it does show loadings for both 87gr and 90gr projectiles using their AR2208 powder. From this I'm sure you could use the Nosler 90gr .243 projectiles with a starting load of 32gr of AR2208 powder, which will give a velocity of about 2900 fps, increasing cautiously to a maximum of 36gr of AR2208 with velocity of about 3100 fps. Similarly, using your 7mm/08 rifle with a 140gr projectile, try a starting load of 39gr of ADI AR2208, giving about 2700 fps, moving with caution to 42gr of AR2208 for around 2800 fps.

**Barry Wilmot**



**Q** Late last year I was in southern France and stayed at an old farmhouse near Saint Remy de Provence. On the wall were some old firearms, one of them a shotgun with a loading mechanism I'd never seen so I wondered if you could tell me what it is (see photo).

**Roy Bullman, via email**

**A** Well darn me Roy, that's a Darne! What a great find hanging on a farmhouse wall in France - you wouldn't find it in Australia under our current laws. In 1881 Regis Darne invented and manufactured a shotgun with a revolving breech though it wasn't until 1897 he evolved his designs to produce the mechanism of the gun you saw with a sliding breech.

It sure is a novel way of operating a top-mounted lever with wings to grip and actuate which unlock the breech and levers it backwards to extract shells and allow new ones to be slid in horizontally. I've seen several of these in recent years and they work very well but I suspect they're not found here in any great numbers. Gary Georgiou of Safari Firearms in Sydney collects these unique shotguns and is an authority on them.

Darne firearms are still made today ([www.fusildarne.com](http://www.fusildarne.com)) on a custom basis and can be had with any stock dimensions, barrel lengths and levels of engraving the customer desires. They handle well and certainly catch the eye as they're so different from the classic top lever opening shotguns we invariably see and use in Australia.

Thanks for the photos, one of which we share here so readers can see just how unusual the opening mechanism and method of loading and unloading truly is. We'll look forward to the next unusual find.

**Paul Miller**

## Sydney to host Junior World Championships

**S**ydney will host the 2024 Junior World Championships for Pistol, Rifle and Shotgun disciplines after a successful submission to the International Shooting Sports Federation (ISSF) by Shooting Australia. The decision to host the Championships at the Sydney International Shooting Centre (SISC) at Cecil Park was made by the ISSF executive committee and is another coup for Shooting Australia which has staged the World Shooting Para Sports Championships and Junior World Cup in the past two years.

Shooting Australia CEO Luke van Kempen said the ISSF's award represents its continued confidence in Shooting Australia's ability to stage world class events. "The ISSF executive's decision is great news for the sport in Australia," said Mr van Kempen.

"Australia continues to produce high-quality world class athletes across all disciplines and the 2024 Junior World Championships is further incentive for our young athletes as they come through the ranks and aspire to reach the top of their sport.

"SISC was purpose-built for the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games and it's appropriate the ISSF decision has been made as Australia celebrates the 20th anniversary of the 'Best Games Ever'. I would like to pay tribute to the continued support Shooting Australia received from the Australian Olympic Committee, Sport Australia and the New South Wales Office of Sport in submitting the bid."

Dates for the 2024 Junior World Championships have yet to be finalised but Shooting Australia is pushing for September.



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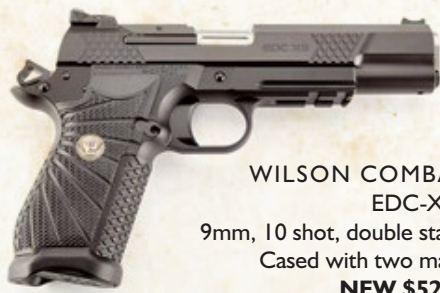




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# Perfect combo for tackling ferals



As we continue our feature on favourite rifle-cartridge-scope combinations, **Paul Miller** this month explains the reasons behind his selections.

**Rifle: Remington 700 CDL left-hand**

**Cartridge: 17 Remington**

**Scope: Leupold VX3i 4-5-14x40 CDS**



Paul's favourite rifle, cartridge and scope combination.

**K**een shooters invariably have several rifles and shotguns for different purposes and pride themselves on choosing what they think is the ideal firearm for the job at hand. The idea of picking a favourite rifle, cartridge and scope combination throws up a whole bunch of curly questions about what one person thinks fits together to make the perfect personal hunting or target outfit.

I have four centrefire cartridges which work flawlessly for me and are in some ways related as they start at one end of the shooting spectrum and match each other remarkably well as I move through what I like my cartridges to do. First three are the 17 Remington, 220 Swift and 25-06 Remington and when you line them up they

look remarkably similar but become bigger per calibre as though they're growing on steroids. They're all at the higher end of the performance curve for each calibre and work ideally for what I want them to do from small to medium game.

They also have remarkably similar trajectories with the various projectiles I load and in that way are well matched. You could achieve much the same with a 223, 22/250 and 257 Roberts but for some reason the more exotic cartridges have always appealed to me. The other cartridge is the famous 30-06 Springfield which covers anything I'm likely to do in the hunting field at the bigger end of the scale in Australia.

Thinking about these four cartridges I soon decided my favourite is the rather out of fashion and often maligned 17

Remington. The decision was easy as the 17 Rem is a fascinating cartridge which shoots like a laser beam with virtually no recoil and incredible accuracy. In my left-handed factory Remington 700 CDL it's perfect for foxes and rabbits around where I live. For shooting in closer settled areas the report is not too loud and there's minimal chance of ricochets with explosive projectiles running between an amazing 3900 and 4200fps.

It's not the barrel-burner it was said to have been in the past now we have modern powders and projectiles and top quality barrels. It's easy to reload for and no more difficult to maintain than the other three centrefires and is also incredibly accurate. Perhaps the most staggering thing about this cartridge and rifle combination is that





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## Perfect combo for tackling ferals

on firing at your target you see the result almost instantly, meaning a hole appears on the target or the bullet actually hitting that fox, rabbit or feral cat.

This is not unique among cartridges. The 22 Hornet has much the same felt recoil but its level of performance is nothing like the 17 Rem or indeed the other smaller factory 17s available like the 17 Hornet or 17 Fireball. These cartridges offer amazing performance on small game as they push light 20-25gr bullets considerably faster than the smaller 22 centrefires with similar wind drift and the bonus, as noted, is virtually no recoil.

That's why they're easy to shoot well and so much fun as you see the result of the bullet impacting when you pull the trigger. The 17 Rem is the most potent of the bunch but can easily be reloaded down to match the other 17s if you want even less recoil and report.

My rifle was bought chambered for the excellent and versatile 223 Remington and was highly accurate but I'd always wanted a 17 Rem in a left-handed rifle, though no rifle brands have ever been factory chambered in a left-handed action in the 17 Rem cartridge to my knowledge. It was an easy route to buy the CDL and have my friend and barrel maker Robert Tobler screw on a little-used 17 Rem factory barrel I found inexpensively on a used guns site.

To say I was pleased with the outcome would be a major understatement. The Remington 700 series of rifles have always had an enviable reputation for strength and accuracy and the deluxe short action CDL was perfect for my little project. Coincidentally, my 220 Swift is chambered in a left-handed Remington 700 BDL long action with a fast one in 8" twist barrel



Low-mounted Leupold 4.5-14x40 CDS covers all bases on this 17 Remington small game rifle

made by Robert and target accurate - an exceptional outfit though it doesn't get the use my 17 does.

When it comes to scopes I've always had a soft spot for the US-made Leupold brand. Each of my rifles sport a Leupold based on what I think the rifle's best use is and what the appropriate magnification, tube and objective size should be. Magnification range is important when using any of my dual purpose-style rifles but my biggest consideration is how to mount each scope as low as possible to the action and therefore the rifle bore.

When it comes to mounts I'm again a Leupold man and I guess my fondness for them started as a young guy looking to obtain the best optics for my hard-earned cash. I never had the courage to 'invest' the sort of dollars the exceptional European brands demand but found Leupold a great compromise in terms of excellent optical quality and price. I also liked their look and cosmetics and that famous golden ring on their VX2 and especially VX3 models. For many, the look of our rifle/scope

combination is an important part of the selection process and pride of ownership.

My first and only other 17 Rem many years ago was a brand new right-handed 700 BDL with a 6.5-20x40 Leupold Vari-X 111 and it was also a cracker. Perhaps a bit over-scoped but the combination was deadly and huge fun, though unfortunately for that outfit I succumbed to the younger man's need for more power and sold it for a 22/250. That round was amazing and led to me going all left-handed and buying the left-handed 700 BDL and converting it to the 220 Swift, another cartridge I believe has never been offered in a factory LH model.

My current 17 Rem had for several years an older but excellent 4.5-14x40 VariX 3 which I swapped for the latest 30mm-bodied VX3i 4.5-14x40 Custom Dial System (CDS) scope we reviewed recently and couldn't resist buying. I've yet to buy a custom dial for my favourite load in the 17 Rem but with its limited range and incredibly flat trajectory out to 250m or so, I'm in two minds whether to bother (which means I will, of course, find one).



Foxing on a misty morning in the Southern Highlands of NSW.



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## Perfect combo for tackling ferals

With this model Leupold I particularly like the change from front-focusing objective to side-mounted as it's so much more convenient to adjust quickly for perfect focus in the heat of a hunting moment with a nervous fox about to bolt. It's matte finished which I also think is practical in the field and the 4.5-14 power range covers most bases. The 40mm objective means I've been able to attach it in low Leupold 30mm mounts, which is good ballistically as well as achieving a firm cheek weld when mounting the rifle. This sort of gun-fit is important for consistent shooting, be it with rifle or shotgun.

The rifle came with a walnut stock thanks to Gary Georgiou from Safari Firearms who went out of his way to find the gun from the presumably limited number of left-handed rifles at the importer's factory. Being a typical walnut shotgun stock fanatic, this lovely bit of wood really appealed to me - until I started humping it around in scratchy terrain or on the back of a truck.

Recently it occurred to me a 'plastic' stock might be better from a purely practical point of view. As you might imagine there's little available in replacement stocks for left-handed rifles, but as luck would have it I was looking through the 'left-handed' section of the same online guns sales website and spotted an ad for a



The 17 Remington is the Ferrari of 17-calibre small game cartridges.

left-handed US-made black HS Precision stock in excellent condition which would hopefully fit like a glove.

The young guy I bought it from in Canberra was knowledgeable and an even bigger left-handed gun nut than myself so the deal was done and two days later the box arrived. I opened it with huge anticipation and slid out the stock which was in perfect condition and had been custom bedded for a 700 BDL action. Holding my breath I put my barreled action in and

tightened the screws - the fit was perfect so the next question was how would it shoot? The answer was as accurately as ever so I now have a svelte black rifle with low-mounted scope which looks ever so slightly 'tactical' and totally businesslike.

While I've no problem with tactical rifles I'm a walnut and blued steel guy but this new stock looks the goods and I've already had it out successfully whistling foxes. There may be temptation to revert to the fine walnut stock and see what effect that has on the point of impact then back to the black Precision stock. I guess that's all part of the fun.

So there you have it, the favourite rifle, cartridge and scope combination of a left-hander who loves few things better than sneaking around local hills and valleys whistling up red coats with a couple of mates, in the process helping preserve local wildlife. The 17 Rem isn't everyone's cup of tea as it's so specialised but it's an extraordinary round devised at a time when there was a boom in commercial fox shooting. Smart fox shooting professionals and recreational shooters alike gave it a short but glorious life. It's perfection for what it was designed to do and is all the more 'interesting' now there are more high-quality projectiles available for reloading in 20 and 25gr weights with plastic tips or explosive hollow-points.

In the super accurate Remington 700 CDL rebarrelled aftermarket in 17 Rem with an optically excellent but affordable 4.5-14x40 side focus Leupold CDS scope, it was an easy choice among my collection of rifles and cartridges as my number one. It's the perfect combination for what I love doing and gives me enormous confidence and pride of ownership every time I take it shooting. ●



The consistent accuracy the 17 Remington is capable of at 100m, even when it's windy.





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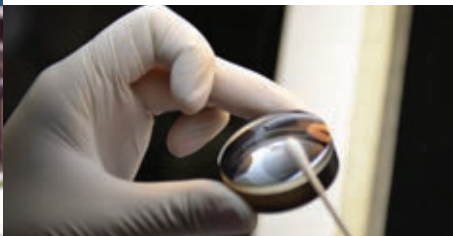
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The riflescopes reviewed - Vantage 6-24x50 SF:FFP (top) and Frontier 1-6x24.

# A pair of special scopes from Hawke

Con Kapralos

In the riflescope marketplace Hawke Optics are pro-active, catering to what the end-user demands and releasing exciting products. They also continue to offer some models which have a niche all to themselves, two such candidates being the Vantage 30 WA 6-24x50 SF: FFP (First Focal Plane) (14304) and the highly-regarded Frontier 30 1-6x24 (18401) with Circle Dot reticle. Guy Bedington of the Scope Store, Australian distributor of Hawke Optics, sent *Australian Shooter* review samples of both.

## Vantage 30 WA 6-24x50

The glass-etched half Mil Dot reticle is in the First Focal Plane (FFP) meaning as the magnification range is changed, the size of the reticle also alters, a feature appreciated when using ballistic data calculators with the Mil Dot subtensions on the reticle to hold over for bullet drop at long ranges and to allow for wind drift. Many enjoy the challenge of long-range shooting and ballistic

software apps and reticles with complex subtensions or 'dialing in' a target using the windage and elevation turrets, which has them on target with ridiculous ease.

Up close the Vantage is furnished around a 30mm, one-piece main tube made of aircraft grade aluminium finished in matte black, measuring 378mm and weighing 755g. Starting at the ocular (eye-box) end, an adjustable diopter focus allows the user to precisely focus the reticle image to suit their master-eye. Forward of the diopter focus the magnification dial consists of an aluminium collar with raised segments around its circumference, which gives a positive grip and allows the magnification to be adjusted from 6x to 24x easily. Eye relief is in the order of 90mm which is ample.

Midships is where the action is, so to speak, and the turret housing has had serious thought put into its layout. The windage and elevation turrets are of a tall, exposed style and adjusted by simply pulling the turret cover up/out and adjusting as needed, the turrets then locked in place

by simply pressing down on the cap. The elevation dial is in 1/10 MRAD per click value, one rotation of the elevation turret being 6 MRAD in 1/10 graduations, adjustment clicks precise and audible though there's no zero-stop feature. The windage turret is identical to the elevation turret but the dial is graduated with a '0' mark and then 1, 2, 3 MRAD (in 1/10 graduations) in either left or right adjustment direction.

Both windage and elevation turrets can be reset to the '0' mark using a small Allen key supplied and following instructions in the user manual. Total adjustment for windage and elevation is 20 MRAD and left of the elevation/windage turrets are the side focus and illumination dials, the side focus (SF) or parallax dial allowing adjustment from 10 yards to infinity, a handy feature.

Next to the side focus dial the illumination dial gives five levels of intensity in red and green illumination with an 'Off' step between colours, the illumination battery consisting of a single lithium ion



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## A pair of special scopes from Hawke

button unit accessed by removing the outer cover of the dial itself. Internally the glass lenses are of the wide angle (WA) design and feature precisely ground crown glass which gives a superior colour, clarity and contrast compared to standard glass lenses. All lenses in the Vantage optical system are fully multi-coated with 11 layers for enhanced light transmission and increased contrast, the scope nitrogen purged and built with quality seals to keep the internals free of moisture, dust and dirt.

### Frontier 30 1-6x24

The second riflescope is a modern classic. In an age where maximum magnification is all the rage it's heartening to see a simple, low-power variable scope on six-times magnification range is still being produced. For many hunters a scope with 4x or 6x is all that's needed, especially when it comes to stalking game where 300m is a long shot. The Hawke Frontier is top-tier bracket, the 1-6x24 with Circle Dot reticle (18401) designed around a 30mm, one-piece aluminium main tube and is the culmination of Hawke's research and development packaged into a superb compact hunting scope based on six-times magnification.

This scope's forte is hunting large game at close to medium distances, especially in thick cover and the advent of the Circle Dot reticle draws the eye quickly to the target for immediate acquisition. Its 30mm main tube gives an overall length of 283mm and weight of 495g and I consider anything under 500g a lightweight riflescope. The matte black finish complements the scope and comes fitted with aluminium flip-up lens covers.

The 50mm Vantage objective lens (left) dwarfs the 24mm Frontier objective.



Elevation and windage turrets on the Vantage 6-24x50 have been given a lot of thought.



The ocular housing is the largest part of the scope, visually speaking, and contains an ocular flip-up lens cover, diopter adjustment and the magnification zoom ring, generous ridges on the aluminium ring giving a positive grip and changing from 1x to 6x is super smooth, though Hawke do supply a zoom lever which can be fitted to the zoom ring for even quicker adjustment.

Eye relief is 102mm, which is excellent considering it will be mounted on some heavy recoiling calibres. The turret housing comprises capped elevation and windage turrets which are removed easily to expose the laid out dials which have a 1/2 MOA adjustment value per click, adjustments beautiful, smooth and positive, being easy

to feel and hear. Turret caps are aluminium as opposed to the plastic variety some European makers still insist on using and total adjustment for elevation and windage is 140 MOA.

Adjacent the elevation and windage turrets is the illumination dial which gives six levels of reticle illumination with an 'Off' setting between each brightness level. The Circle and Dot of the reticle is illuminated in red and a single lithium ion button battery powers the illumination and is housed in the body of the illumination dial. The objective end of the scope is the same diameter as the tube body (30mm) and also contains a flip-up aluminium lens cover which can be removed if required but I found them perfect to use as is.

Internally the quality of the glass is top shelf, index matched lenses setting the Frontier apart from other scopes in its class with exceptional clarity through the field of view, together with crisp image transmission which results in brilliant colours, contrast and images. All lens surfaces are fully multi-coated with 21 layers of advanced coatings for high light transmission in all conditions.

The Circle Dot reticle consists of a circle and central dot (which can be illuminated) that sits between two horizontal stadia and on top of a thicker vertical post with a pointed end. It's made for fast snap-style hunting (when using the scope at low power) but even at 6x the reticle was still accommodating when shooting out to 300m. This reticle along with Hawke's LR-Dot would have to be my two favourites in any riflescopes I've tested. The Frontier is fully shockproof, waterproof and fogproof to





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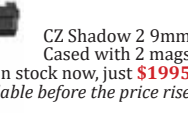
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## A pair of special scopes from Hawke

withstand the heaviest of recoiling calibres and, like all Hawke scopes, comes with a lifetime warranty for total peace of mind.

### At the range

For testing I had two rifles in mind. The Frontier I decided to mount on my handy Howa Mini Action in 7.62x39 Russian, a short to medium-range stalking outfit ideal for goats and deer out to 200m while the Vantage was mounted on my regular test platform in the guise of a Weatherby Vanguard S2 in .243 Winchester. Even with all the fancy new chamberings available these days, the good old .243 Winchester can still perform at extended distances but for the review and range, 300m was the maximum I could work with.

The scopes were put through a point-of-impact tracking test where two shots were taken at a target before point-of-impact was adjusted, with two shots after each change. Ultimately the final two shots would be at the same point-of-impact as the first two - that's how it should pan out anyway - and happily both tracked faultlessly. Shooting from 100m out to 300m the Frontier was optically superior to the Vantage, no doubt about it, though having said that the Vantage with its four-times magnification range and wide-angle crown glass lenses still produced excellent results at 300m.

I did find that from 6x to 18x images were crisp at 300m but above 18x started to become grainy, which is perfectly acceptable. The Vantage is Hawke's entry-level offering and priced competitively and we all know you get what you pay for when it comes to optics. I highly recommend the Vantage as an ideal riflescope for someone starting out in long-range shooting or for



informal target/long-range use. As for the Frontier with Circle Dot reticle, it's the ideal candidate for a big game outfit or your favourite stalking rifle. The quality in its glass really stood out shooting steel plates at 300m with the scope set on the maximum 6x and using correct hold-over. At closer distances images were superb with exceptional colour, contrast and clarity from edge-to-edge of the field-of-view.

### Conclusion

It's refreshing to see that as shooting sportsmen and women we're spoiled for choice when it comes to riflescopes with some great optics coming out of Europe, Japan, China, the Philippines and US. I enjoy using and testing all manner of optics and have never considered myself a 'scope

**The Vantage 6-24x50 SF: FFP was range tested on a Weatherby Vanguard S2 Sporter in .243 Winchester.**

snob', but having tested several Hawke scopes over the past few years I found them top-notch, well thought-out riflescopes which cater to all budgets and shooting scenarios.

Whether you're after a budget scope for a rimfire .22 or serious long-range precision version, Hawke Optics has something for you at a price to suit every budget. The Vantage 30 WA 6-24x50 SF: FFP retails for \$855 while the Frontier 30 1-6 x 24 with Circle Dot reticle is \$1220. More on the Hawke riflescope range at [www.thescopestore.com.au](http://www.thescopestore.com.au) ●



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# Mossberg marches on with MVP LC

Daniel O'Dea

**T**he Mossberg MVP series is a family of bolt-action rifles developed over the past decade and at the launch the MVP moniker stood for Mossberg Varmint and Predator and the original rifle in basic appearance didn't look unlike most varmint-style options.

It had a conventional-looking laminated stock with wide beavertail fore-end, broad butt and deep pistol grip and came with a medium-heavy profile, 24" barrel and Mossberg's Lightning Bolt-Action (LBA) adjustable trigger. The main feature which set it apart was the rifle's ability to accept STANAG (Standardization by NATO Agreement) .223/5.56 magazines which are cheap and plentiful in the US.

Of course, ready access to cheap 10-round magazines from companies such as Magpul helped the cause and even here you can pick up such magazines for \$40-\$50 which means you can have several preloaded for when the action heats up, be it sitting off a busy rabbit warren or some other feral environment. Having spare magazines is just as handy for spotlighting and far easier than fumbling with ammunition in the dark.

Mossberg quickly saw openings for other shooting sports and disciplines which could take advantage of rifle platforms using

universally available magazines, such as with any form of timed rifle competition. They also decided to upscale and developed the same concept for .308/7.62 action length cartridges with rifles to accept both AR10/M14 type magazines - quite a feat as both magazines lock up in a variable fashion and are generally not compatible.

Currently the Mossberg MVP Series incorporates six rifle lines with even more subvariants and that's before we look at calibre options. The six are MVP LC (Light Chassis), LR (Long Range), Scout, Patrol, Predator and Precision and newly-appointed

Australian Mossberg agent Grycol International offered *Australian Shooter* the chance to review a selection of rifles starting with the LC.

The MVP LC is a basic design incorporating a one-piece tan MDT LSS light aluminum chassis which uses a Mil-Spec buffer tube to accept any MSR-type stock. Likewise, the MDT LSS chassis can use any standard MSR-type pistol grip. MVP LC rifles come supplied as standard with an excellent Magpul CTR stock and MOE pistol grip, the matte blued barrels of a medium 'Bull' profile and fluted forward of



The oversized bolt knob makes for positive manipulation.



Mossberg's patented 5.56 Drop Push bolt design has a spring-loaded, hardened steel flap at the lower edge of the bolt face to feed rounds from common AR-type magazines.



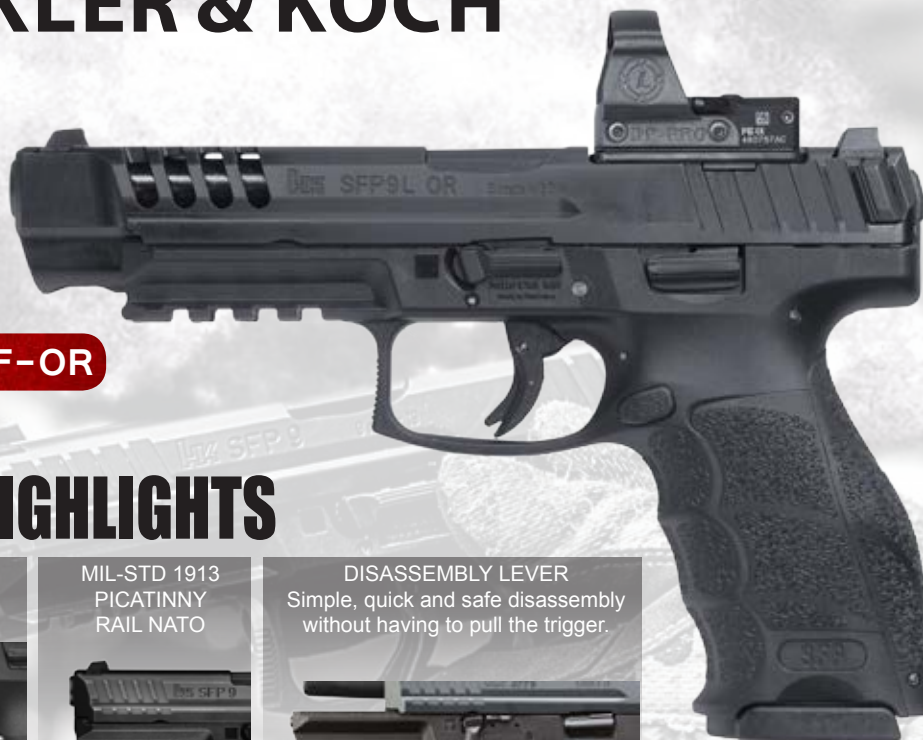


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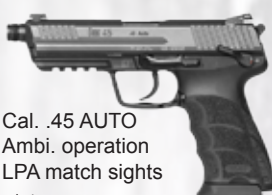
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## Mossberg marches on with MVP LC

the fore-end, muzzles threaded and fitted with a knurled flush end-cap with all variants having Mossberg's LBA adjustable trigger.

Specifications such as weight and barrel length will vary slightly due to calibre, of which for the LC there are three choices - 5.56 NATO (.223 Rem), 7.62 NATO (.308 Win) and 6.5 Creedmoor, the supplied rifle chambered in 5.56 NATO, basically the military version for what's commercially known as the .223 Remington. It has a 0.125" longer throat, cartridges are loaded to high pressures and it runs at about 58,000psi as opposed to 55,000psi in the .223 Remington.

A common fallacy is these two chamberings are compatible but that's only partly correct as, due to the difference in chamber pressures, it's perfectly safe to fire .223 Remington in a 5.56 NATO chamber but the same cannot be assumed in reverse as firing a 5.56 NATO round in a .223 Remington chamber can spike pressures to dangerous levels in some firearms due to the shorter throat and hotter loading of military 5.56 NATO ammunition. It should be avoided.

The bolt on the LC is of a traditional dual opposed lug design but with recessed bolt face and extractor positioned within the right bolt lug. Uniquely, the bolt head features Mossberg's patented 5.56 Drop Push bolt design incorporating a small spring-loaded, hardened steel flap at the lower edge of the bolt face. This extends



Barrels are partially fluted with muzzles threaded and capped for fitment of a muzzle brake or suppressor (under permit).

on the forward bolt stroke to collect the cartridge rim and feed the round from the magazine for perfect presentation into the chamber. The bolt also features spiralled grooves or sand cuts in the body and an oversized handle with generous knob.

Atop the action is a Picatinny rail for ease of scope mounting. Forward, the barrel extends for 16.25" (413mm), six flutes cut for a length of about 125mm starting roughly 35mm back from the muzzle. Fluted barrels have increased surface area for added cooling, reduced weight and are supposedly stiffer (for barrels of equal weight) than non-fluted. The muzzle is thread  $\frac{1}{2}$ "-28 so will accept most common .223 muzzle brakes, flash hiders and suppressors where permitted under licence.

General ergonomics are good, the pistol grip position allowing quick access to the



The MVP LC comes as standard with Magpul furniture including CTR stock, MOE pistol grip and 10-round Gen M3 PMAG.

extended bolt hand for fast and easy manipulation. At 7.5lb (3.4kg), for its compact size it's not that light in conventional terms but this is not a conventional rifle, being advertised as 'light chassis' and in this sense it's exactly that.

The MVP LC fitted with a Nightforce 2.5-10x32 NSX compact scope made for a well balanced, lightweight package.







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## Mossberg marches on with MVP LC



Daniel tests the rifle close up.



The stocky barrel feels solid in the hands and the package is well balanced, the fore-end short and rather narrow but the natural palm position is to grip just forward of the magazine housing. The fore-end has a QD stud for sling or bipod fitment and a series of threaded holes for fitment of a rail section. It doesn't enclose the barrel and the top half is fully exposed and floats freely from the receiver forward. I noticed six more threaded holes, three each side of the barrel on the flat top edge of the fore-end tip and the MDT website revealed these are for fitment of a night vision hood, a section which provides a rail for direct alignment of the scope and NV equipment.

Magazine, stock and pistol grip are all Magpul. Unfortunately the LC's adjustable stock, being collapsible, suffers the same fate as many similar rifles under NSW legislation which requires such stocks to be fixed (permanently pinned) in place. Magpul also do a fixed carbine stock which could easily be swapped out and that may be an option.

It's tough on NSW shooters as the Magpul CTR is an excellent option with such a carbine as it allows 'length of pull' adjustment for different physical statures. Likewise LOP adjustment is great where shooting positions may change your relative eye relief, such as when you're padded up for a winter night spotlighting and trying to find full field of view in your scope.

The Magpul CTR has a neat lever lock to take out any rattle or play between stock and buffer tube, the stock also fitted with Magpul's cheek riser kit for better head alignment with scope fitment. As for other Magpul products present, the pistol grip is an MOE rubberized version with a slightly sticky feel and base cap for storage of small

items. Lastly, Magpul have perfected the feed dynamics of the 5.56/.223 round in their PMAG design, the supplied magazine a 10-round Gen M3 PMAG.

If there's any small criticism of the layout it might be positioning of the magazine release button. It needs to be where it is based on the design but it's a long stretch to reach with the trigger finger unless you have hands like an orangutan. It would be more practical if it was ambidextrous for operation from the left with your thumb and a high beer can grip on the magazine. I found the most practical solution was to sit the magazine base against the palm of my left hand, grip the base with my thumb and, with four fingers riding up the right side of the chassis, trip the magazine release button leaving the strong hand firmly where it should be, around the pistol grip.

Shooting the Mossberg MVP LC was a lot of fun and I liked the solid feel. I mounted a Nightforce 2.5-10x32 NXS scope which fitted the compact theme and with my first shots on a wet and miserable day, on paper most ammo types hovered around 1 MOA. On a return visit in better conditions I loaded 55gr V-max projectiles with ADI 2208 and Win 748 propellants and also had some Hornady TAP 60gr factory ammo. The average of five 5-shot groups measured 0.90 MOA and with the best four from five the overall average dropped to just 0.60 MOA.

These days I find it more enjoyable having all five plates ringing and swinging on my 200m chain rack, rapid fire than punching tight groups on paper and often see it as a more practical test and had no problem doing so with this little Mossberg. More at [www.grycol.com.au](http://www.grycol.com.au) ●

**Plenty of accuracy with this series of five-shot groups averaging 0.90 MOA.**

### Specifications

**Rifle:** Mossberg MVP LC (Light Chassis)

**Action:** Bolt-action (with spiral fluted bolt)

**Trigger:** Mossberg two-stage LBA System 3-7lb adjustable (1.36-3.175kg)

**Calibre:** Tested .556 NATO/.223 Remington (also available in 7.62 NATO/.308 Winchester and 6.5 Creedmoor)

**Capacity:** 10-round detectable box magazine

**Barrel:** Medium profile 16.25" (413mm)

**Twist rate:** 1:7 (5.56 NATO as tested)

**Sights:** Picatinny rail

**Barrel finish:** Matte blued

**Chassis:** MDT LSS (tan in colour)

**Stock:** Magpul CTR with riser

**Stock LOP:** 11.25"-14.5" (286mm-362mm)

**Weight:** 7lb (3.18kg) .556 NATO tested

**Overall length:** 33.5" (851mm) to 36.75" (933mm) subject to LOP

**Price guide:** \$1890 RRP





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# PILATES, PIGS and a new hunting buddy

Brendan Jones

*Pilates (noun) a system of exercises using special apparatus designed to improve physical strength, flexibility, posture and enhance mental awareness.*

What does Pilates have to do with hunting? Usually nothing but what does it have to do with hunting in this story? Everything. They say opposites attract but the thing about proverbs or sayings is you often find one which declares the opposite, like 'birds of a feather flock together'. This is a case of the latter, rather than the former, ringing true.

It has long intrigued me how the only

hunters in a crowd manage to find each other. Be it a wedding reception, your partner's office Christmas dinner or any other social event you've been dragged along to. As sure as gravity pulls stuff down, sparks fly upwards or toast lands butter-side down, a pair of hunting tragics will find each other in a cast of thousands - and it won't take long either. This phenomenon, I'm sure, is true of most other hobbies but this rumination is about hunting partners and where

to find them. Sometimes this law of attraction - let's call it the law of 'hunter-tivity' - is accelerated by something small and seemingly insignificant to the non-hunter yet clear as a distress flare in the night sky to the keen eye - a T-shirt of a particular brand, bullet-case keyring and so on.

These type of things stand out like a 100kg boar in the middle of a farm-track to the keen and desperate eye of the uncomfortable hunter milling around the





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## Pilates, pigs and a new hunting buddy

punch bowl. Even more impressive is when there's no trigger yet somehow, even without a catalyst, the law of 'hunter-tivity' still works - but how? I have no answers, though just like I'm not completely sure how gravity works, I know for certain it does. This case, however, isn't nearly so subtle.

Was it a hat or an overheard snippet of conversation? No, it was a fully road-registered Suzuki Jimny painted top to bottom in 'Auscam' parked out front of the physiotherapists. I was late for a Pilates class which I attend in a bid to maintain core strength after a lower back injury, and I chuckled as I paused and snapped a photo on my phone. I spent that class looking round the room trying to figure out who the owner might be and, in a group mainly comprised of women over 50 in Lorna Jane tights, it was no big riddle.

The smart money was on the bloke in the Berretta cap with blood type tattooed on his arm and leg. As we filed out the door I positioned myself for an off the cuff: "Nice paint job - you wouldn't be into hunting by any chance?" Does a one-legged duck swim in circles? Of course he was and so we began: "Where do you hunt?" "Oh, out west a bit, and you?" "Same, out west a bit . . ." We were in Townsville on the east coast so neither of us was giving much away, 'west' narrowing it down to pretty much anywhere from here clear across to Broome.

In a state which only allows hunting on private land and more than its fair share of numpties ruining it for those who try to do right by landholders, 'west' was hunter speak for: "I don't trust you anywhere near enough to risk anything but a vague compass reference as an answer to your question". We said we'd contact each other if ever in need of an extra man on a future trip, exchanged numbers and left. The law held true, the two hunters in the room had collided but I was left wondering if anything would come of it.

For the next month or so our Pilates schedules didn't align. I texted Dave once or twice to ask if he was keen for a quick trip to a small nearby property but he was unavailable. I'd mostly forgotten about it until one Friday afternoon my phone buzzed with a message from Dave trying to sell me his mate's 30-30. I declined the offer and he replied saying he was planning a run later that night and was I interested. Silly question.

Then it dawned on me I hadn't been hunting with someone new in years. I felt like I was going on a first date - what do I wear as I didn't want to over dress and come across too keen, like the keyboard



Pilates instructor Tegan with Dave, left, and Brendan.



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## Pilates, pigs and a new hunting buddy

warrior who learned everything he knows about hunting from YouTube videos and internet forums. Conversely I didn't want to show up in a singlet and thongs to find Dave head to toe in camouflage, lest I and give the impression I was some redneck out for a night of spotlight poaching, so I opted for the middle ground, smart-casual hunting attire you could say.

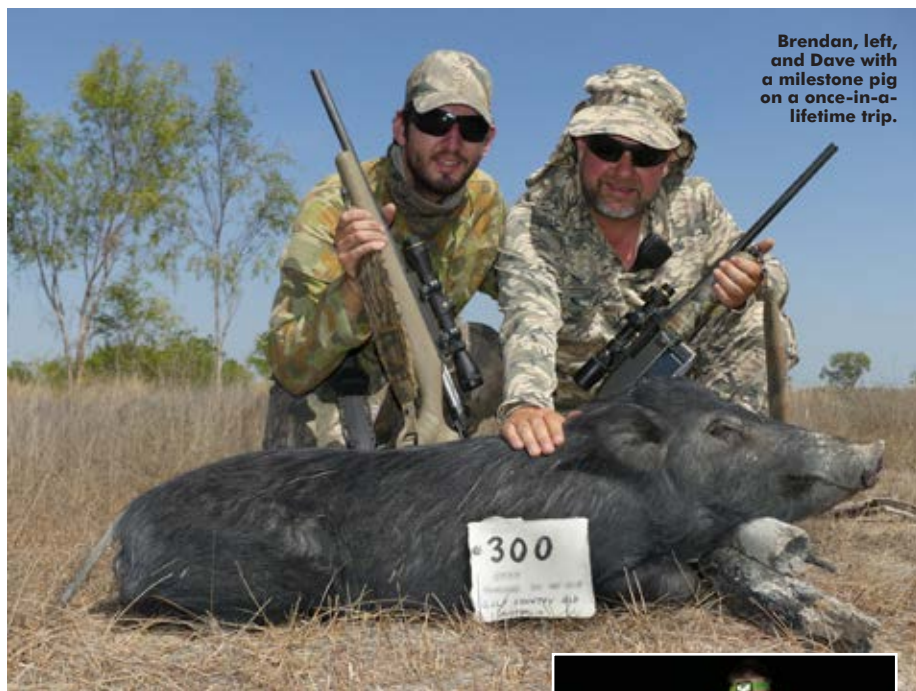
So what gun to take? Calibre considerations and personal opinions, as we know, can be volatile and best avoided on a first hunt so I was kicking myself I hadn't got round to checking the zero on my usual go-to bolt .308. On its last outing a first-timer I'd taken along dropped it scope-down and sent five inches of mud up the muzzle.

I was also kicking myself for selling my pre-Rem 1895 in .44 Mag topped with a Leopold 1-4x a week earlier due to lack of use. I settled on my Browning A-bolt II in .243 Win and had no doubt about 95gr Nosler BTs being up to the task of dropping big porkers, but stopping them dead in their tracks before they run off on adrenalin and die 50m away in nocturnal scrub was another question.

Turned out the knockdown power of the .243 wouldn't be tested that night as we didn't stumble across a single target species. Still, it was better than watching TV and gave us plenty of time to discuss those first-outing topics - hunting background, favourite species, first gun, the one that got away and so on. Time flew by in the Auscam Jimmy as the roof-mounted spotlight scythed back and forth probing the darkness and it was late by the time we called it a night. I could sense Dave was disappointed he hadn't been able to put us on to some game. "That's hunting," I said and thanked him for the invite.

This article pretty much ends here but the story doesn't as Dave and I often hunt together and still attend the same clinical Pilates class. If space permitted I could regale you with tales of being charged in the dark by boars, taking chital in places they weren't supposed to be and testing equipment to failure. Coming up with hare-brained theories and testing them, trying new techniques like thermal-sight hunting and using recorded sounds to draw in big boars. Small runs close by evolved into longer hunts further afield then extended trips far away.

I don't believe there's a moral to this story, just a reminder to be patient and keep your eyes and ears open as hunting opportunities and reliable partners can seem few and far between. But they are out there and sometimes in the most unexpected circumstances. My wife still laughs when



Brendan, left, and Dave with a milestone pig on a once-in-a-lifetime trip.



Dave stashes a chital trophy for the ants to clean up before our next visit.



Blutetooth speakers, thermal optics and big boars.

the answer to her question of "who are you hunting with?" is "Dave from Pilates" and I'm told Dave's missus has the same reaction. Birds of a feather do flock together and the law of 'hunter-tivity' states two keen hunters will find each other in a crowd, that's a fact. Results for what happens after

that will vary but in this case I'm typing slowly with tired, quadbike-fatigued hands after returning from the trip of a lifetime to the gulf where two of us cleaned up a respectable cricket score of feral pigs in a week. No prizes for guessing who'd invited me and yes, they were all Pilates pigs. ●



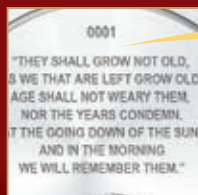
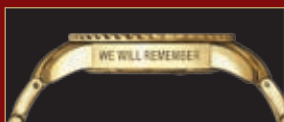
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# Three days, three bush stags

Kieran Biggs

Kieran with one of the three stags

**T**his year's roar was going to be different to previous ones. In the grip of COVID-19 and with my hunting partner unable to travel due to health issues meant this year I'd be hunting alone. I was on a property we'd been hunting for a few years where we'd never failed to spot red deer in healthy numbers as well as the odd fallow.

I set up camp smack bang in the middle of the property beside the farmer's cattle yards and was super keen to get started but after glassing a few gullies and open country for several hours, the afternoon ultimately proved uneventful. As the sun set and the temperature dropped I felt sure I'd start hearing a few roars, but not a sound all night. I woke next morning around 4.30 with still not a single roar to be heard.

I decided to head for the western boundary of the property where my hunting buddy had taken a nice 10-pointer last year. Walking in darkness, I pulled up every few hundred metres or so to check for a roar but still the silence was deafening. By 6am the sun had broken through and provided enough light for me to glass an open paddock which ran into a large area

of crown land. Immediately I spotted three hinds and a healthy young 10-pointer.

I sat watching them for half an hour or so - they were only 500m away but were gradually moving back towards heavier timber and as I attempted to edge a little closer I eventually lost sight of them. By 8.30 I still hadn't heard any roaring so resorted to letting out a few of my own.

Within 15 minutes came a response - maybe my luck was in after all as I roared back and we began exchanging calls. I reckoned he was within 300m but hadn't actually set eyes on him so I made my way to a boundary fence where I glassed intently in the direction of the stag which was still roaring.

Suddenly I spotted him casually walking along the face of a steep escarpment. I began calling again and watched him pull up in his tracks before moving on until I eventually lost sight of him. Within minutes he let out a huge roar which told me he was heading my way, a fact confirmed when I picked him up in the rangefinding binos at exactly 107m.

I crouched behind an old tree stump and let out one more roar. He was gradually

heading in my direction as I settled in behind the Kimber Subalpine in .30-06 and dropped him at 64m. He was a heavy 11-pointer and I could barely fit my hands around his beams.

I set the camera on auto, fired off some photos and began the caping process - he was a huge-bodied animal and by the time I'd finished caping him and removing as much meat as possible, it was mid-afternoon before I made it back to camp.

Over the course of the next two days another two handsome stags were taken almost from the same spot and both around 7am. From what I could see only one of the three had grouped up a mob of hinds and it was only when they came to within 400-500m of me they started roaring.

I was able to watch all three from about 800m slowly make their way across the open paddock towards my roar, the last two called in to about 180m and in all three cases the stag was dropped on the spot - I doubt they even knew I was there. Needless to say, after caping and butchering three mature stags my back was shot to pieces but I was delighted with the weekend's return. I doubt I'll ever see another like it. ●



# Enemy of the state . . . every state

**SSAA-LA**  
LEGISLATIVE ACTION

## SSAA submission to feral cat inquiry

Nadia Isa

The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia has made a submission to The Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy, SSAA National submitting its statement to the *Inquiry into the problem of feral and domestic cats in Australia*.

The Inquiry is accepting submissions addressing one or more of the following terms of reference:

- Prevalence of feral and domestic cats in Australia;
- Impact of feral and domestic cats on native wildlife and habitats;
- Effectiveness of current legislative and regulatory approaches;
- Effectiveness of Commonwealth action and cooperation with states and territories on this issue including progress made under the Threat Abatement Plan, the national framework and national declaration relating to feral and domestic cats in Australia;
- Efficacy, cost-effectiveness and use of current and emerging methods and tools for controlling feral cats including baiting, establishment of feral cat-free areas using conservation fencing and gene-drive technology;
- Efficacy of import controls for high risk domestic cat varieties to prevent the impact of feral and domestic cats, including on native wildlife and habitats;
- Public awareness and education in relation to the feral and domestic cat problem;
- Interaction between domestic cat ownership and the feral cat problem.

**T**he SSAA National submission referred to a number of these categories, including regulatory impediments to effective feral cat control such as Victorian hunters' inability to legally cull feral cats on public land open to hunting while targeting other species such as wild deer. Our submission also suggested restrictions to availability and use of suppressors in all states and territories removes access to a tool which could increase efficiency of current and future volunteer feral cat control operations.

The Association also made comment regarding ground shooting as an effective control option and the common commentary that ground shooting is expensive and labour intensive. We highlighted the fact that ground shooting is extremely effective when activities are undertaken by volunteers and those happy to use their spare time conducting operations such as SSAA's Farmer Assist program. Every feral cat control tool is important and enlisting and empowering skilled volunteers to conduct activities is an appropriate method of control which should be acceptable and utilised.

Our involvement in the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Supplementary Pest Control Program in New South Wales has proved volunteer shooters are a successful component of the NPWS's integrated pest management approach. This type of pest control model is seen and accepted by the wider community as an effective tool to remove pest animals from NSW National Parks.

SSAA National Wildlife Programs Leader, Matthew Godson, acknowledged the role ground shooting can play in lowering the impact of feral cats. "It's important for us to keep pushing the message that ground shooting is a target-specific, humane and effective method of controlling feral cats," Matt said.

"New technologies such as night vision and thermal are no longer cost prohibitive and many of our members have these new tools. Using them with the old favourites such as predator callers and spotlights, enable volunteer shooters to be well-equipped to be part of the solution with regard to reducing the impact of feral cats on native species." ●

# Everyday items can be riskier than you think

John Maxwell



## DANGEROUS

Last summer's bushfires created devastation which destroyed lives, homes, businesses and vast areas of bushland, stock and wildlife and among those who lost property were shooters and shooting clubs. As the fires raged I surveyed my garage and realised much of what had come to reside there created an unnecessarily high fire risk. In one corner in an insulated cupboard sat my store of smokeless powder, a reasonable but not excessive amount, and most every shooter and probably every reloader knows smokeless powder ignites easily and burns with a fast, intense flame.

Yet that smokeless powder wasn't the most flammable material present. Far more dangerous were common liquids and other materials found in most home workshops and garages - fuel for the lawnmower and chainsaw, gas cylinders for home and camping barbecues, containers of

turpentine, methylated spirits and acetone, aerosol cans of automotive degreaser, brake cleaner and more.

Plenty of authorities have recognised these everyday items pose a far greater fire hazard though they're almost totally unregulated, while regulation of smokeless powders is far more rigorous (in New South Wales the maximum amount of powder you can own is 12kg). Generally the requirement across Australia is the powder must be stored in original containers and, like ammunition, in a secure location inaccessible to unauthorised persons. Black powder is classed as an explosive and is a different matter with only small quantities permitted so if in doubt, check your state or territory regulations.

Esteemed US ordnance officer, experimenter and gun writer Julian Hatcher touched on the issue of propellant fires in his reference guide for shooters, *Hatcher's*

*Notebook*, and to satisfy his curiosity he conducted experiments, placing various types of smokeless powder in their original 1lb (500g) cans on campfires. The cans eventually popped along the seam, burning intensely for not much more than a second without even disturbing the burning sticks.

A can of black powder caused more of an effect but even then the pile of burning sticks wasn't disturbed and Hatcher concluded small quantities of propellant powder posed a negligible fire hazard, although advised it's still smart to store it where it can't be reached by fire. He also concluded flammable liquids pose a far greater risk - a 1lb can of powder wouldn't demolish a house, unlike the same quantity of petrol in vapour form.

More recently the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute (SAAMI) in the US conducted its own experiments. SAAMI is the peak body which sets standards for the country's firearms industry and, by extension, the global industry, for example it sets cartridge dimensions to ensure ammunition made by different manufacturers will function in different firearms.

For the benefit of US firefighters SAAMI produced a couple of quality videos demonstrating effects of accident and fire on different quantities of ammunition and propellant powder. For the ammunition tests they used more than 400,000 assorted handgun and rifle rounds and shotshells which they variously shot, dropped from height and even ran over with a bulldozer, stressing this was sporting and not military ammunition. In some trials a few rounds went off but there was no mass detonation.

Fire trials sought to replicate what could occur in a gun shop or commercial vehicle transporting ammunition. These fires were noisy and produced a large quantity of flying fragments able to penetrate a single thickness of plasterboard wall but posing little risk to firemen in standard protective gear. Such fires were easily extinguished within



...these 'hardware store' fires were more likely to spread beyond the initial fire seat.

seconds using wide-pattern water sprays, indicating that exploding ammunition fires were sustained by burning packaging and shop shelving, not the ammunition itself.

SAAMI conducted various experiments based on UN standards using different quantities and types of smokeless powder totalling 220lb (100kg), one test involving electronically igniting one 4kg plastic powder canister in cardboard packaging with one other canister (to maximise the effect of close confinement the box was buried). The ignited canister went off with a bright flash but the second canister didn't ignite, showing ignition of one powder container, even in close confinement with others, was unlikely to cause sympathetic ignition of nearby containers.

Other experiments included powder containers being dropped on a metal surface from a height of around 15m, the only effect being a few dents. Further tests involved powder containers being ignited, containers placed on a steel frame over a stack of timber pallets, simulating the effect of a building on fire. As to be expected the powder (including a trial with 104lb of fast-burning shotgun powder) burned speedily and energetically yet there was no explosion or fragments and it was all over in less than 40 seconds.

Most illuminating was the effect of 100lb of typical hardware store (or garage) flammables - containers of petrol, aerosols and cans of camping gas, SAAMI noting these materials could be found in shops in much greater quantities than is permitted for smokeless powder. These materials took longer to ignite with the first container rupturing three minutes after ignition of the bonfire while exploding aerosols projected more than 40m, with one placing a significant dent in a witness screen 4m from the fire seat. Furthermore, cans continued to burn for more than 10 minutes, spreading flames well beyond the initial bonfire so unlike the short duration powder fire, these 'hardware store' fires were more likely



to spread beyond the initial fire seat. The hard lesson is this could be *your* garage. In January 2013, esteemed Canberra shooter Jim McKinley died in a fire in his garage. So what to do? In some circumstances such as last summer's bushfires, the blazes will be so intense that no amount of preparation will be enough, in which case heed expert advice and if necessary get the heck out. Your guns and equipment can be replaced but you can't and for this reason it's worth investing in insurance such as that available from SSAA Insurance Brokers which offer \$25,000 cover for \$35. My suburban garage is unlikely to be affected by bushfires but a look around made it clear assorted aerosols, flammable liquids and gases would be better stored elsewhere.

And it's not just the flammables, there are health concerns surrounding compounds such as glyphosate herbicide and creosote and exposure should be minimised. The solution was a special flammables and toxic chemicals store, essentially a small tin garden shed bought in Bunnings for \$230 which houses flammables outside the garage and away from potential ignition sources. If these do catch fire, damage will be limited.

So why not store smokeless powder in the shed? As SAAMI observed, powder

poses less of a fire risk than flammable liquids such as mower fuel and is a great deal more valuable, one US writer suggesting fine ammunition (and presumably powder) should be stored like fine wine. Powders and ammunition brand ADI recommends powders be stored in a cool dry location separate from solvents, flammable gases and other combustible materials. That location should be free from any possible source of excess heat and isolated from open flame, hot water heaters, furnaces, chimneys and flue pipes. Areas likely to be heated by the sun or where electrical, electronic or mechanical equipment is operated should be avoided.

ADI says an average temperature below 25 degrees is needed to achieve a shelf life of at least 10 years as improperly stored or old powders can deteriorate and may spontaneously ignite, the reason why ADI recommends an annual sniff test. Rather than the distinctive sweet scent of ethanol, powder going off has a noticeably acrid smell and in this case is no longer safe for reloading and ADI suggests carefully burning in thin layers, though it's apparently also a good garden or lawn fertiliser. There's plenty more useful info in the ADI reloading manual or on their website. ●



# Hands-on history - a tale of two Henrys

Barry Musgrave



The presentation Martini rifle.

I am not an avid collector as such but over the years have come across some interesting guns worth obtaining, my main focus being early British firearms and those used by the Australian services and police.

My oldest original rifle is a Martini Henry No.3 Mk.1 in .577/450 calibre which was presented to Private E.J. Young of the 7th Reg. Scottish Rifle Club in 1888. I obtained it from an old relative of his who could give me little information other than the then owner hunted deer for food in Scotland with this very rifle in the 1800s. Sadly all searches for any other military history proved unsuccessful.

It was never used in the military and was a civilian purchase so had no serial number as all military rifles did (I used the small number under the rear sight). The rifle was with E.J. Young for a lifetime and was clearly well cared for then kept in the family and never used again, so when I bought the gun it may have not been fired for almost a century and is in pristine condition for its age.

The barrel is exceptional and shoots remarkably well. I reload my own ammunition as you just can't walk into a shop and buy .577/450 ammo. I load mine to the same specifications as the military but preferring to keep my shoulder intact, I dropped the

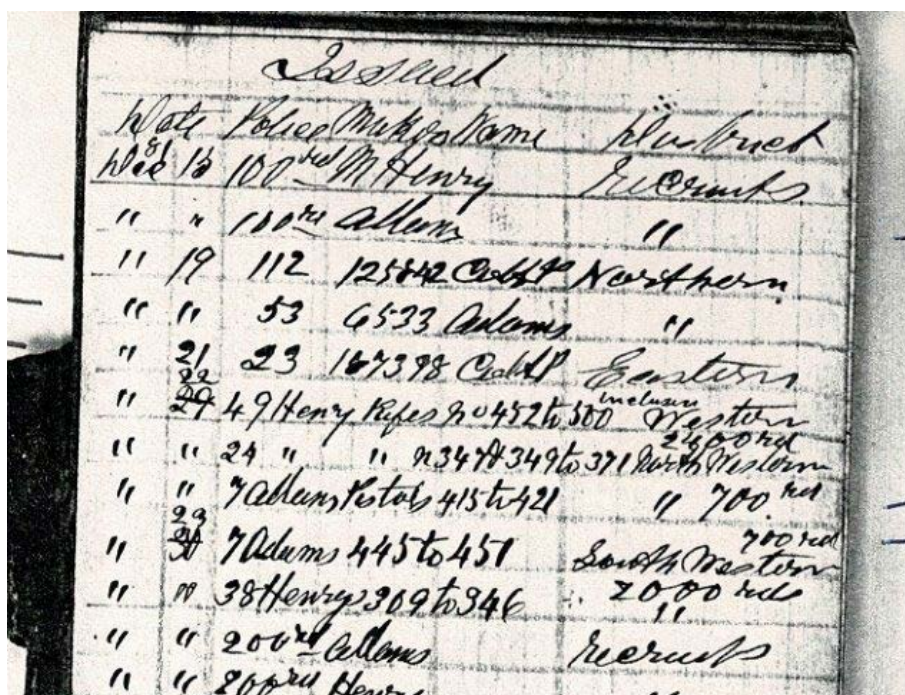
black powder load from 85gr to 70gr using 485gr cast wax round-nose projectiles as near to the original as I could manage.

To me these older variations are history you can touch and having a firearm in your hands from the days of Jack the Ripper, the Zulu wars or Ned Kelly means something real, to actually fire it is a bonus. The Martini Henry was used throughout Australia by various police forces.

The Alexander Henry I was lucky enough to acquire is in superb condition, No. 356 which was issued to the North Western District NSW Police on December 22, 1881. The gun was introduced in the 1870s originally in .450x2½" calibre but due to availability of the .577/450 were converted to that, as is mine. They were made in long rifle and carbine versions of various styles but didn't find much popularity, which doesn't detract from its collectability.

The rifle is a falling block style with a lever under the triggerguard, simple with few parts. It was made with the hammer sitting right of the breech like most from that era, then the hammer was moved to the left, apparently to facilitate easier loading of the cartridge mainly because most users were right-handed and with the hammer on the right I suppose this was more difficult.

What drew me to this rifle was the fact I'll probably never find another one in my lifetime. I stripped it to check the working parts which needed no restoration at all with the woodwork, metalwork and all parts in excellent condition as was the barrel rifling, being similar to the Martini Henry.



A copy of the relevant page showing the issue of Barry's rifle on the 12th line down.



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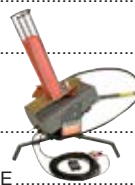
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## Hands-on history - a tale of two Henrys

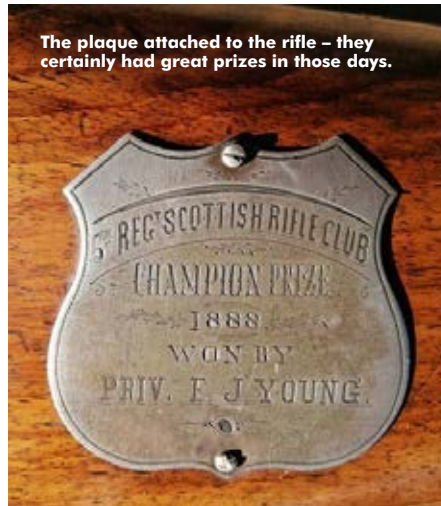
This makes loading the same but loads are different to the Martini anyway as they're much reduced and I use a 55gr black powder load with a 435gr cast wax projectile, paper-patched. All other loading is the same with wadding and packing as the Martini, but I clearly mark the cartridges even though it wouldn't be a problem putting a full load through the Alexander, other than wasting powder for no gain.

So it was off to the range where there were a few double-takes as the rifle only just fitted the rack due to the shortness of barrel. With my loads all done I managed to put three shots away before it jammed, such a shame as I'd prepared 20 loads. The lever wouldn't budge so I couldn't extract the fired case - I guess 140 years after being issued it may need some attention after all.

Luckily the fix was simple. It has a small firing pin which naturally goes through the block with a spring and washer and is on an angle, so either the spring was a bit weak or the aperture where the firing pin goes into the chamber was gummed up. It turned out to be a bit of both so forming a makeshift tool from a screwdriver I removed the firing pin which I hadn't previously done, cleaned the hole and reassembled.

I discovered the firing pin was staying in the primer and not pulling back, hence the falling block wouldn't open. This was clear from a scrape mark leading from the primer on the base of the cases which could be extracted, furthermore I was using large pistol primers which are softer and the impression in the primer was quite deep. So I changed to large rifle primers which fixed the problem of the firing pin catching in the soft primer.

What really sealed the deal for me with this firearm is the fact it was a NSW police issue from 1880 and being an ex-member of NSW police made it a great addition to my collection. With the help of other former officers with access to the archives, I made some enquires and managed to track down the original paperwork when this rifle was issued.



The plaque attached to the rifle – they certainly had great prizes in those days.

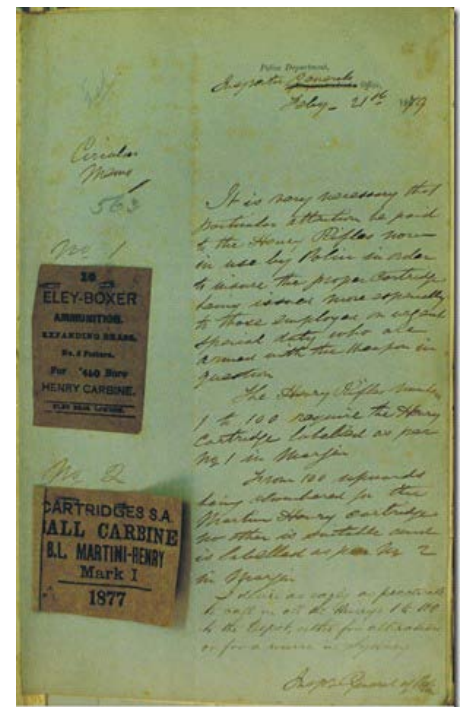
As mentioned it was issued with 2400 rounds of ammunition on December 22, 1881 to the North Western District. At the time there was a problem in that a quantity of the .460 calibre was delivered with the .577/450 rifles. I also found a copy of the original report (right) by the Inspector General of Police outlining the complaint about the ammunition and their return to the depot to be converted. I also sourced photographs of NSW mounted police at the time carrying Alexander Henry carbines which didn't have a sling. They had the eye hooks but were carried in a scabbard attached to the saddle.

Apparently 2500 guns were imported into Australia and distributed in NSW to police and corrective services. Sadly the rifle didn't attract much attention and was soon overtaken by updated versions though a number of them were made for sporting ventures by private users and some are rather elaborate compared with the bland military offerings.

In my opinion the rifle had a number of failings, one being it was difficult to load, like a miniature howitzer artillery piece. Once fired, the case was sometimes awkward to remove as the extractor



Mounted NSW Police around the 1800s carrying the Alexander Henry carbine.



Inspector General Office  
July 21st 1878

It is very necessary that particular attention be paid to the Henry rifles now in use by the Police in order to ensure the proper cartridge being issued more especially to those employed on urgent special duty who are armed with the weapon in question.

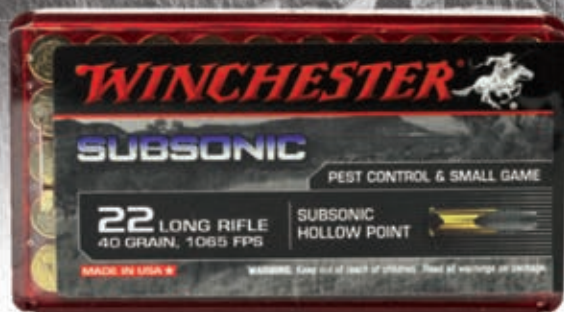
The Henry rifles numbered 1 to 100 require the Henry cartridge labelled as per No. 1 in margin. From 100 upwards being chambered for the Martini Henry cartridge no other is suitable and is labelled as per No.2 in margin.

I desire as early as practicable to call in all the Henrys 1 to 100 to the depot, either for alteration or for a reserve in Sydney.  
Inspector General of Police



The open breech with hammer in the half-cock loading position.





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## Hands-on history - a tale of two Henrys

operated with the lever so it had to be jerked down sharply and not released slowly. Even then, the case could just sit in the loading bay and the rifle had to be turned upside down and shaken or you had to manually remove the case.

One thing in its favour was it could be safely carried loaded on half-cock position so could be made ready to fire just by pulling the hammer rearwards. One drawback with the Martini Henry was that once loaded it was ready to fire, so a hard knock or accidental trigger pressure could be problematic, particular when carried in a scabbard. I don't know how they overcame this issue other than carry it unloaded, which could cost you your life as it would take at least 10 seconds to retrieve a cartridge and load a Martini.

The sole issue I found with the Alexander is that perhaps the chamber is slightly oversize, something I noticed when I resized my cases as they're slightly harder to press. Naturally I keep cartridges for the Alexander and Martini separate and marked accordingly to prevent a mix-up. There would be no problem firing a full load in the carbine but most of the powder would still be burning about six or eight feet from the muzzle. You'd have a beautiful muzzle flash with little or no extra velocity but probably a sore shoulder to go with it. ●



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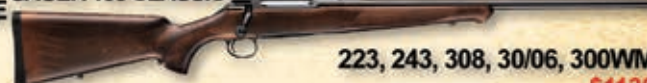
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Many military surplus cartridges, especially older ones like these .303 rounds, leave salt residues in barrels that quickly rust and corrode unless cleaned immediately after use.

# Storing firearms for the long term

Geoff Smith

With the exception of professional marksmen and perhaps primary producers, most recreational shooters have their firearms in storage the bulk of the time. The weekly or fortnightly matches or perhaps infrequent hunting trips see us take our firearms out, clean them before use, then after we've completed the shoot ideally we clean them again and return them to storage.

Regular inspection should be a part of every firearm owner's routine to ensure neglect doesn't lead to damage. This is fine for the majority of us, although sometimes our firearms need to be put away without even being seen, let alone inspected, for longer periods.

Neglected firearms in long-term storage are possibly subject to deterioration because of corrosion due to moisture, residues from fingerprints, accumulated dust and occasionally from chemical attack. Proper storage then, includes measures which can be taken to ensure unattended firearms don't become damaged. Of these, the first and most important is to begin with cleanliness.

Although modern ammunition is usually not corrosive, certain military surplus ammo is and if bores are not cleaned after

shooting, even for short periods, substantial rusting and damage will ensue. Black powder firearms are also subject to corrosion if not carefully cleaned immediately after use.

Guns stored in vinyl bags or leather holsters are particularly prone to deterioration and this is of greater importance when unattended for long spells. The recommended manner of storage in general is in open racks within the safe, standing vertically, some shooters preferring to have the muzzle downwards so any surplus oil won't migrate back into the stock.

Yet others favour storing long arms horizontally for much the same reasons but modern firearms safes, as required in most of Australia, don't usually allow this. Bags, holsters, styrene packaging and cardboard boxes should all be avoided since they can hold or attract moisture and perhaps exude corrosive chemicals.

There are several reasons why we may put firearms into long-term storage. Changes in employment or location (especially in the armed forces), changes in ownership following a death or extended overseas holidays all spring to mind, and in earlier times I've stored firearms for other people for long periods when odd circumstances have arisen.

A while back a young farmer was killed along with several family members in a plane crash, leaving his children orphaned. His .22 rifle was to be inherited by the young son who was several years short of being able to obtain a licence and I was able to hold the rifle (a Category 'C' Anschutz) in my safe for several years. The only requirement in that situation is it was taken out, wiped with an oily rag periodically with my own firearms and after a few years it went back, in perfect shape, to the now young man. Sadly he had to surrender it after the Port Arthur tragedy, but that's another story.

These days though with changed legislation it's no longer acceptable to just say "I'll mind them for you for however long it takes". Going through the formal process of obtaining a permit to acquire firearms is one option, with the firearms possibly needing to be re-registered to the temporary owner. Another alternative is placing it with a dealer and paying the relevant fees to have it stored and, ideally, periodically serviced and cleaned. Security is the issue here since all legally owned firearms must be secured according to relevant state legislation.

It's critical the firearm be stored in such a way it doesn't deteriorate. Many of us



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## Storing firearms for the long term

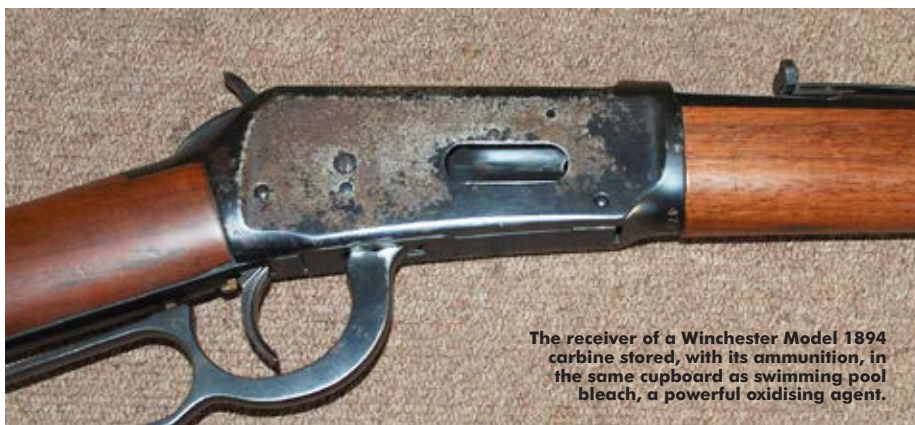
will have heard horror stories of firearms seized by the authorities for whatever reason and on their ultimate return having been damaged through improper storage, by having masking tape labels carelessly applied, felt-tip pen markings soaking through on to delicate woodwork and having accumulated a coating of surface rust.

You occasionally see firearms in police armouries which have been seized for alleged offences being stored in large numbers simply jammed, stocks scratched and bruised, muzzle down in 200-litre drums, hardly ideal. The military is one area where large numbers of firearms are routinely stored for extended periods. Such firearms are kept in secure armouries, ordinarily packed in wooden or synthetic storage boxes where, after being liberally coated with a product such as Cosmoline, they're wrapped in waxed paper and the boxes sealed up. Cosmoline and similar items used by the military are typically hydrocarbon-based liquids containing dissolved water repellent waxes. Applied by dipping or painting, the coating dries out leaving a film of protective greasy wax over and throughout the firearm.

Many readers will have bought military surplus firearms which have been stored this way and had fun trying to clear grease out the timber. Before security was a serious issue, I recall leaving a Lee Enfield No.1 Mk3\* I'd bought from Army Disposals for the princely sum of \$10, on the back veranda on newspaper in full sunlight for several days to enable the grease to run out. I remember scrubbing the stock with rags dipped in kerosene to remove the grease yet 50-plus years later there are still



The chamber and bore of this Winchester Model 1894 rifle in .25-20 calibre corroded by not being cleaned after use with corrosive ammunition.



The receiver of a Winchester Model 1894 carbine stored, with its ammunition, in the same cupboard as swimming pool bleach, a powerful oxidising agent.

traces of it in the stock, though there was no rust anywhere on the steel of that old rifle made in 1926.

New firearms and other metal parts often come wrapped in paper, typically brown paper impregnated with volatile corrosion inhibitor VCI, a chemical which releases vapours to prevent rusting or tarnishing of metals so wrapped. It may be surprising to know that stainless steel will discolour under some circumstances and the use of modern metal finishes such as nitrides applied via extremely hot cyanide salts baths during manufacturing create surfaces



Dangerously corroded .30-30 ammunition stored with the Model 1894 rifle.



Geoff's \$10 Army Disposals 1926 Lee Enfield rifle - even after 50 years Cosmoline is still evident near the grip.

highly resistant to corrosion, though even these need proper care over time.

Climate has a distinct bearing on the storage of firearms. In the tropics, ambient humidity and temperature can greatly accelerate corrosion and rusting of metal parts and stainless steel can rust if left in a sufficiently damp environment. Likewise in cold climates, water vapour can condense on stored firearms and lead to damage, particularly where guns are stored in metal safes inside buildings but attached to external solid walls. The air in the room may be warm but the safe is attached to a brick or concrete wall that's substantially colder, so the humidity in the warm room will condense on the colder metal of the safe and its contents.

In these situations it's recommended to use dehumidifying hardware or desiccant



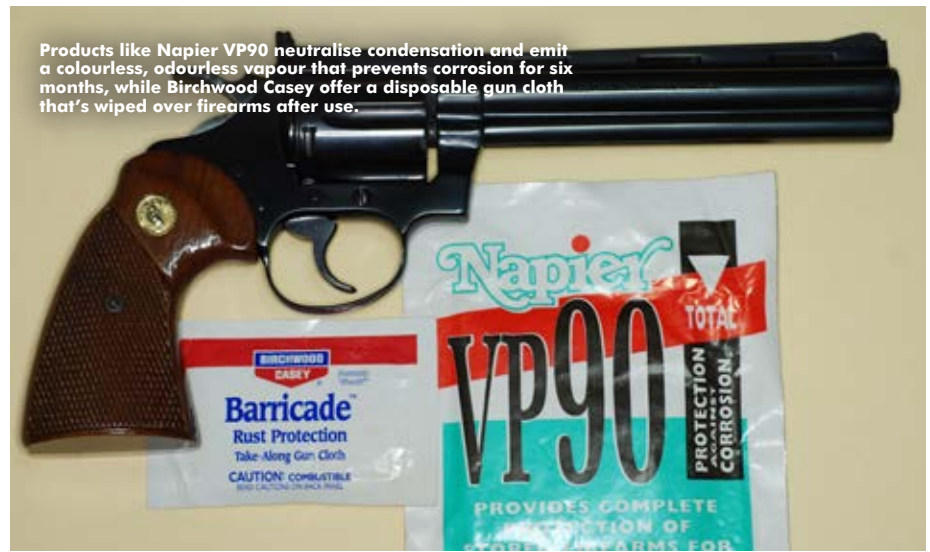
materials such as silica gel to reduce moisture and there are commercially available products specifically aimed at firearm protection, such as Napier VP90 which releases similar inhibiting vapours as the VCI paper. But dehumidification must be done carefully as timber stocks are hygroscopic, meaning they will attract moisture. As humidity increases they swell and when it decreases they shrink and unconstrained humidity, or the lack of it, can also cause finishes to deteriorate and adhesives to fail.

I recall reading an article on how a fellow living in the tropics made a fully sealed gun cupboard and placed a large quantity of silica gel in the base, which effectively dropped the humidity to zero. After a few weeks he was horrified to discover the timber stocks of his prized rifles had warped and several had developed cracks. There's an optimal residual moisture content in timber which needs to be maintained and some authorities, including museums, suggest the ideal humidity at normal room temperatures around the 20C mark should be near 50 per cent.

Other less likely things can still offer traps for the unwary. I recall being shown a package of .30-30 ammunition and a Winchester Model 1894 rifle (see photos) that had been stored near a large drum

of swimming pool bleach. The exterior of the barrel and receiver were rusty and the interior even worse, being corroded beyond repair. The ammunition was so corroded the zinc had been eaten out of the brass and, had it been fired it would almost certainly have ruptured. Strong oxidising agents like these must never be stored near anything which could be harmed in this way. So the general rule is to store firearms in a cool,

dry location secure enough to be legally compliant, having first ensured they're cleaned thoroughly inside and out. For extended long-term storage when they're not likely to be inspected often, it would be prudent to coat metal parts, including inside the bore, with modern reputable corrosion-inhibiting substances which will not lose effectiveness or run into the woodwork and cause further problems. ●



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# Beretta revamp adds lustre to 694 Sporter

John McDougall



**B**uilding on more than 400 years as a firearms manufacturer and industry leader, Beretta has consulted with their sponsored team of shooters to build the latest shotgun offering, the fully redesigned Beretta 694 Sporter. With several new features such as a completely remade action, steel fore-end iron along with a press release fore-end catch and many more, let's see how the latest offering stacks up. Their dedication to quality is a long appreciated trait by a gun reviewer of more than 40 years, so has consultation with some of the finest shooters in the Beretta stable borne fruit?

## Barrels

Finished in a magnificent blued colour and polished to perfection, the 710mm barrels are typically up to Beretta's high standards. Topped with a tapered ventilated rib running from 10mm at the chamber to 7mm at the muzzle, the rib is fitted with a white barrel-type, trap front bead and I was amazed to find a mid-bead wasn't included to avoid canting. Maybe somewhat of an oversight by the designers?

Otherwise the barrel set is perfect. At the muzzle the Optima Choke High

Performance (OCHP) chokes are installed with a 20mm collar protruding from the muzzle. The collar is great for hand-fitting the choke tubes before tightening with the spanner provided. Beretta has seen fit to label the chokes with a colour coding band and written constrictions on the outside for immediate identification - an excellent

idea. There are five chokes supplied with spanner and a bottle of Beretta lubricating oil, so all good for maintenance.

At the chamber end the gun is suited to 12-gauge, 76mm cartridges (3" shells) and proofed for High Performance steel shot, 1320 bar. The barrels are stamped with the CIP Fleur de Lys to show they're suited to

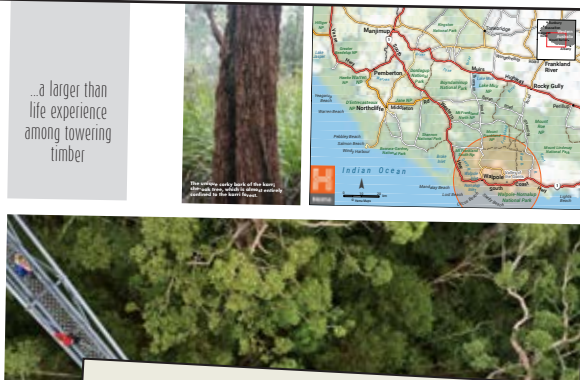




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### An introduction to metal detecting

Paul Dobson

**A**part from the fact that you can find anything from a lost coin to a hidden treasure, metal detecting is a hobby that has grown in popularity in recent years. It's a great way to spend a day outdoors, and it can be a real thrill to find something that you've been searching for. There are many different types of metal detectors, and you can find them for a variety of different budgets. If you're just starting out, a basic detector will be fine, but if you're serious about the hobby, you might want to invest in a more advanced model. Whatever you decide, metal detecting is a fun and rewarding hobby that can take you to some of the most beautiful places in Australia.



### Cruising the Savannah Way

Dick Dixon

**E**xperience some adventures by travelling the Savannah Way, a scenic route that winds through the heart of the Australian outback. The route is a mix of dirt roads and paved highways, and it takes you through some of the most beautiful landscapes in the country. You'll see some of the most iconic Australian wildlife, including kangaroos, wallabies, and emus. The route is also a great way to see some of the most famous Australian outback towns, including Alice Springs and Uluru. If you're looking for a unique and unforgettable experience, the Savannah Way is the way to go.



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### Lure of chasing pesky porkers entices hunters

Paul Dobson

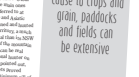
**B**efore the lure of chasing pesky porkers entices hunters, it's important to understand the impact of feral pigs on the environment. Feral pigs are a major pest in Australia, and they can cause a lot of damage to the land and the wildlife. They are also a threat to the health of humans and domestic animals. It's important to take steps to control their numbers, and one of the best ways to do this is by hunting them. Hunting feral pigs is a challenging and rewarding experience, and it can be a great way to spend a day outdoors. If you're interested in hunting feral pigs, make sure you have the right equipment and that you are following all the rules and regulations.



### A dangerous adversary that provides the perfect challenge

Paul Dobson

**P**roviding a dangerous adversary that provides the perfect challenge, the feral pig is a pest that has caused a lot of trouble in Australia. They are a major threat to the environment, and they can cause a lot of damage to the land and the wildlife. They are also a threat to the health of humans and domestic animals. It's important to take steps to control their numbers, and one of the best ways to do this is by hunting them. Hunting feral pigs is a challenging and rewarding experience, and it can be a great way to spend a day outdoors. If you're interested in hunting feral pigs, make sure you have the right equipment and that you are following all the rules and regulations.



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## Beretta revamp adds lustre to 694 Sporter

High Performance steel shot loads, remembering that no tighter than Modified choke should be used with these loads should you intend to go waterfowling.

The ejectors have jewel polishing about the monobloc and typical Beretta locking mechanism via conical extensions protruding from the receiver face locking into recesses either side of the barrel set. The gun's tolerances are extremely fine when the monobloc is joined to the barrel set, testament to the excellent fit achievable when using CNC milling machinery.

To accommodate the competition shooter there are five recesses on the barrel side rib separating the barrels and covered by the fore-end, enabling weights to be added to the barrel to obtain the utmost in balance. These are evenly spaced with added weights altering both the balance and swing of the gun should the shooter desire. The remaining rib not covered by the fore-end wood is ventilated and matches the aeration of the top rib well.

### Receiver

Design of the receiver is quite innovative. Completed in a satin silver Nistan finish with the model name tastefully engraved and coloured about the receiver side and with the replaceable pivot pins still obvious, the Beretta 694 receiver is unlike any other preceding model. Engraving about the receiver is minimal and the receiver, while looking futuristic, is largely plain in its presentation. The revamped and ergonomically comfortable top lever is a bonus along with the stock fitting to the receiver which gives the shooter better peripheral vision with its thinner profile.

I found the lower top lever interfered with my thumb and safety catch-cum-barrel selector but this is obviously a compromise Beretta are prepared to accept with the new look. The pressure required to open the gun is minimal but the close proximity of the barrel selector-cum-safety catch is distracting.

Beretta has continued to use their time-proven jointing system for the 694 Boxlock Sporter shotgun. The two hinge lugs in the receiver walls mate with recesses cut from the barrel monobloc and deliver that wonderful balance and feel Beretta guns have had for years as a result of their lower profile. This is the top bracket of Boxlock models before going to the triggerlock varieties in the Beretta collection with their detachable triggerplates. The lugs, or trunnions, in the receiver wall are replaceable along with the conical lugs protruding from the standing breech face to lock the barrels which makes the gun highly serviceable

**The revamped receiver looks futuristic with excellent modifications.**



**The ergonomically designed top lever and lower profile are great innovations.**



**With action open the split ejectors are obvious along with jewel polishing about the monobloc to maintain lubricants.**





Close-up of the proof marks showing the Fleur de Lys third from right.



Beretta's latest 694 Sporter is supplied in its custom silver hard case along with a host of accessories.

for years. In fact Beretta has a 'forever servicing' program with their guns along with the chance to have your new purchase custom fitted.

The shape of the triggerguard is generous and enables the shooter to wear a thin set of leather gloves should conditions demand. The three-position triggerfoot is appreciated for correct adjustment for comfort, especially for those with shorter fingers (the triggerfoot can conveniently be moved rearward to accommodate), trigger pulls measuring around 4lb 4oz for both barrels and are comfortable. I enjoyed the crispness of the trigger releases, the mechanism inertia operated as opposed to mechanically. The first barrel must be fired before the second can be activated unless the barrel selector is quickly managed.

### Stock and fore-end

There are certainly some innovative changes in this area to assist the shooter achieve peak performance. A thinner stock where it joins the receiver to increase peripheral view is one modification and provision of a comfortable palmswell another for increased gun control and positive grip. The fore-end has been completely redesigned and looks fabulous with an excellent coverage of chequering, completed at around 20 lines per inch on both pistol grip and fore-end woodwork. I enjoyed the fore-end release catch being a button that's depressed rather than a lever, so simple and a pleasure to operate.

Use of grade 2.5-plus walnut on the 694 is indeed well chosen and really makes the gun stand out. The colour, character and grain is excellent and befitting a gun priced around \$6799. I like the option of the adjustable comb piece on the stock for a more precise fit, the gun on review having the standard stock configuration. The Beretta 694 Sporter comes to my shoulder well, straight out the box, though I'm sure there would be many shooters who'd need minor adjustments.

As well as the barrel weighting system to precisely tweak the gun to exact requirements, there is additionally a weight system which can be added to the stock for finer balance adjustment, the kind of refinements you'd expect from a top of the line offering in a Boxlock shotgun, especially from Beretta. The provision of two Micro-Core recoil pads is another nice addition to the assortment of accessories provided to achieve correct length of pull.

### In the field

I tested the Beretta 694 at my local club on Phillip Island and it was a pleasure to shoot over a small ground I'd set up with some challenging targets, the gun performing beyond expectation and completely blitzing targets. The Steelium Plus barrels with their over-boring to 0.740" coupled with the OCHP choke system was a real winner as target after target was reduced to a puff of smoke.

I used a variety of ammunition with velocities from 1235 to 1290fps and some in excess of 1300 and found the gun to be not as comfortable as I'd have liked with recoil using faster ammunition, despite it weighing 3.77kg. This could also have been attributable to the ammunition used and its ensuing recoil.

Overall the Beretta 694 Sporter is a delight and I can see how input from the Beretta shooting team has influenced the design of this top of the Boxlock models. I found the gun to balance beautifully, swing smoothly and, as mentioned, the combination of Steelium Plus barrels and OCHP chokes reduced targets to dust.

The price at \$6799 is obviously affected by exchange rates but given Beretta supply a three-year warranty and 'forever service' option along with personal fitting, if you're in the market for a top of the line competition gun the 694 would be a superb option. And with regard to the Beretta shooting team's input, if this is their design they've done well. ●



John McDougall puts the Beretta 694 Sporter through its paces at a private opening of his local gun club.

## Specifications

**Maker:** Beretta, Brescia, Italy

**Distributor:** Beretta Australia

**Make and model:** Beretta 694 Sporter

**Overall length:** 1220mm/48"

**Overall weight:** 3.77kg/8lb 3oz

**Barrel length:** 710mm/28" as tested

**Barrel weight:** 1.62kg/3lb 6oz

**Trigger pulls:** Under 4lb 4oz, over 4lb 4oz

**Bore:** Steelium Plus barrels, 0.740", 12-gauge, 76mm/3" chambered

**Chokes:** OCHP choke tubes, 82mm long, external collar. Skeet 0.744", Cylinder 0.730", Improved Cylinder 0.720", Modified 0.712", Improved Modified 0.705"

**Drop at comb:** 35mm/1 3/8"

**Drop at heel:** 50mm/2"

**Length of pull:** 375mm/14 3/4" (triggerfoot in central position)

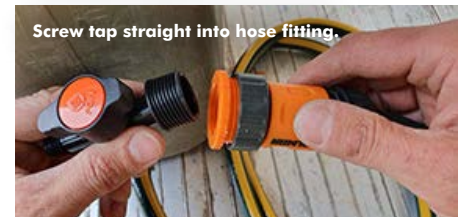
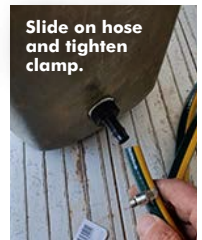
**Warranty:** Three years

**RRP:** \$6799 with Beretta hard case, all accessories, stock spanner, spare ejector parts and stock weights (Beretta 'forever servicing' and free gun fitting included)

# Water you waiting for!

## jerry can joy for less than \$20

Ben Unten



Sometimes you come across something so simple and effective you wonder how you ever managed without it. Well I discovered this trick online, built it, used it and fell in love with it, so I thought I'd share the joy for all those shooters and hunters out there who've ever struggled to maintain a flowing fresh water supply in the field.

I keep a 20L jerry can of fresh water in the tray of my ute (having sold my previous 'Lux which had the 'OASIS' - Overland Adventure Survival Irrigation System, an under-tray water carrier). But jerry cans can pose a couple of problems like the tap being knocked around and damaged and having to tie it down and untie it to drag the darn thing around the back of the tray to use it (which I do at least a dozen times a day). But this little trick has solved all that.

### You will need:

- A 20mm male thread to 13mm barb;
- 2m length of garden hose (those with fittings supplied are cheaper);
- A 20mm male thread to barb with tap;
- 6mm-16mm hose clamp;
- Thread tape.

All these items are available from most hardware stores and you should end up with enough change from \$20 to buy a small coffee - you may have to add a few bob from under the ashtray if you like fancy coffee.

### How to:

- Wrap some thread tape round the male 20mm thread opposite the 13mm barb and screw into the bung hole on your jerry can. Don't overtighten as they're only plastic threads.
- Take the fittings off one end of the garden hose, slide the hose clamp on and push the hose on to the 13mm barb.

- Slide the hose clamp up and gently tighten it.
- Cut the hose to length.
- Screw the 20mm thread with tap into hose fitting at the other end. There should be a rubber washer inside the hose tap fitting which should prevent leakage but you can also add thread tape to the male thread if you wish.

That's it! Make sure the jerry can is able to breathe by loosening the top cap then just turn the tap on and off as required. An added bonus is you can actually fill your jerry can using the same hose. Just disconnect the tap from the hose, insert a standard hose joiner, plug in a hose connected to mains water and voila (which is French for 'You beauty'). Just beware of overfilling, especially if the jerry can is in the back of your wagon. ●





# Travelling with firearms - what you need to know when the time comes

Rod Pascoe

Every year hundreds of Australians travel the world to pursue their shooting sport. Be it hiking over the Rocky Mountains for that elusive elk or competing for the Queen's Prize at Bisley in the UK, jetting overseas with firearms and ammunition requires processes to be followed, both for authorities at home and in the destination country.

It's not difficult but you need to lodge documents which may appear a bit overwhelming though are quite straightforward, and every time you travel it becomes easier as you familiarise yourself with the routine. If travelling overseas to a shooting competition it's important to let the host club know you're coming. The club will usually require a nomination form completed and sent with the required funds to confirm your participation and if paying nominations by international bank transfer in NZ dollars, your bank will charge a fee of around \$30. If the host club doesn't have a credit card facility you can ask if nominations can be paid on arrival.

You'll need to establish communications with various agencies when preparing to take any firearms overseas: your airline, Australian Border Force and the relative authority responsible for importing and exporting firearms at your destination.

## Your airline

While there's normally no problem taking firearms on commercial aircraft, you must declare them to airline staff at check-in and they can only travel as checked baggage. However, there's a requirement prior to travelling to obtain permission to carry ammunition as it's considered dangerous goods so before you buy your ticket, make sure the airline you choose can provide a 'dangerous goods certificate' for ammunition and can carry firearms to the destination country.

This information is available from your airline and remember some countries also have restrictions on transiting their airports with firearms and ammunition so it pays to check if you're travelling on a multi-sector flight to a final destination.

There are international aviation rules allowing a passenger to carry up to 5kg of ammunition and in the case of Qantas, you can visit their dangerous goods website to find out more and apply for approval, the site also showing what ammunition packaging is flight-approved.

## Australian Border Force

First thing to do is register as a client with Australian Border Force (ABF) as

effectively you're about to become an exporter (see [www.abf.gov.au](http://www.abf.gov.au)). You'll be issued with a Cargo Customer Identification number (CCID) to use on all paperwork to do with ABF as you're now a client in the 'integrated cargo system'. ABF also administers the paperwork required by Department of Defence for exporting firearms and ammunition and will process the 'Restricted Goods Permit' on their behalf (see [www.defence.gov.au](http://www.defence.gov.au)).

Thanks to the SSAA's successful lobbying, as of late 2015 you no longer need a Form B709 from your state firearms registry allowing you to import your firearms and ammunition back into Australia. The 'Export Declaration Advice' issued by ABF doubles as an import permit on your return, provided the firearms you're bringing back are the same ones which left Australia without any change, additions or modifications such as having a new barrel fitted. This decision, apart from making sense, takes a big chunk out the paperwork process.

If you're unable to attend an ABF office at one of the international airports or capital city offices, there's provision to lodge the paperwork by email. Because of my proximity to Canberra, I decided to

## Travelling with firearms - what you need to know when the time comes

The image shows three overlapping Australian Government forms. The top form is 'Registering as a client in the Integrated Cargo System' from the Department of Defence. The middle form is a 'Restricted Goods Permit (RGP)'. The bottom form is an 'EXPORT DECLARATION Or Application Under Subsection 162A(6A)' from the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. It includes a notice about the Customs Act 1901 and a table for providing EDN Customs information.

EDN Customs to provide	
3. Your Reference	1. Reference: Customs Use Only
5. Intended Date of Export	2. Reporting Party Type <input type="checkbox"/> Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Agent
6. Unique Consignment Reference No.	4. Reporting Party ID
7. Warehouse Est. ID	7. Customable/Excisable Indicator <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
8. Goods Owner Party ID (ABN/CCID)	8. Prescribed Goods Indicator <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
11. Branch ID: Confirming export only	

visit the Border Force HQ near the airport. If it's your first time going through the process it's not a bad idea to lodge all ABF paperwork at the same time, face-to-face. The ABF website link lists capital city and regional office locations and there are no fees for ABF services.

### Destination procedures

This is where you must do your research as each country has individual requirements and restrictions on bringing in firearms. The airline may not be able to guide you on this so contacting the embassy or diplomatic mission is necessary.

I found most websites have a section dedicated to prohibited or restricted goods such as firearms and ammunition and in New Zealand, all information required to enter and exit are spelt out on the NZ Police website. New Zealand has a similar system to Australia where the visitor's firearms permit allows you to import and export firearms without further paperwork, provided the firearm has not been changed or modified before leaving.

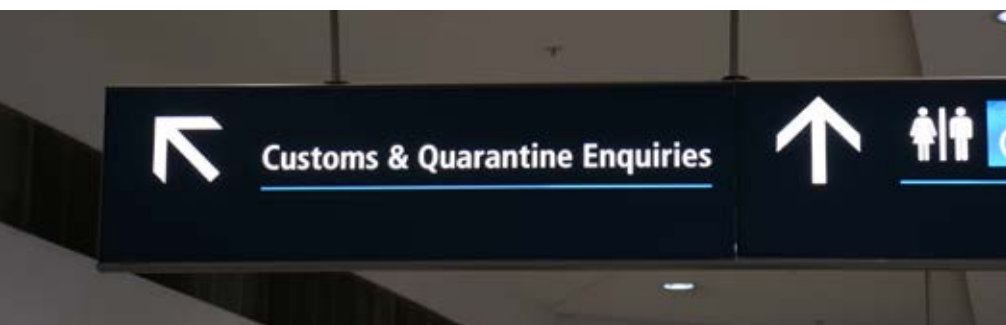
### Packing

Something to consider when buying your airline ticket is baggage allowance. Typically you'll be checking in two bags and carrying one with you in the aircraft cabin. Unless you're travelling business class you may have to pay extra for that second bag, depending on the airline. One checked bag will be for clothing, ammunition and accessories such as cleaning gear, earmuffs, glasses and hat, the other will contain your guns and anything else which didn't fit into your main bag.

One or two security cables and a padlock will be useful when securing guns in a hire car. I converted my range bag into a carry-on bag for the flight then turned it back to a range bag for the shoot, reversing the process when it was time to leave. If you believe in the importance of checklists it's doubly crucial when travelling overseas, as leaving your prescription shooting glasses at home could mean major disappointment.

### Leaving Australia

When you arrive at the airport and before you check in, go to the Border Force office and tell them you're taking firearms out of the country, which will involve matching the serial numbers with your 'Export Declaration Advice' previously issued. Even though this takes no more than five minutes, depending on their workload you may have to wait to be served by ABF staff, so allow extra time. Border Force staff are attentive and professional and appreciate



The three Border Force forms: Ammunition must weigh no more than 5kg; Have your guns cleared for export as soon as you arrive at the airport; Check-in is straightforward with prior approval from your airline.





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A cable is handy to secure firearms in your hire car.

you having the correct paperwork completed before arriving.

An ABF staff member will accompany you to the check-in counter then to the oversize luggage counter to lodge the case containing your firearms. At check-in, produce your ticket and passport with the airline email approving you to carry ammunition, staff will ask which bag has the firearms, which has the ammunition and your bags are then tagged for special handling.

They'll also ask the weight of the ammunition and how it's packed, then with your baggage checked you're just another traveller and won't be required to produce any paperwork other than passport and boarding pass.

### On arrival

During the flight you'll receive a customs/immigration declaration card you must hand to customs officers at the destination airport and remember to tick the box which asks: Are you carrying prohibited items? Clearly the answer is 'yes'. On clearing passport control your baggage will appear at either the carousel in the baggage claim area or the counter where 'special' baggage items are processed, normally labelled 'oversized luggage'. Again, the specific procedure for that country will be contained in the information you receive when applying for a visitor's or import permit.

### Returning to Australia

The trip back is effectively the reverse of everything you've gone through. During the flight you fill in the Australian customs/immigration arrival card, again declaring you're carrying prohibited items and on arrival ABF will check serial numbers against your paperwork and that's that.

### Handy tips

Before completing the export/import paperwork for local and overseas authorities, have all the necessary information about the entire trip on hand. Depending on the country you're visiting you may have to list flight numbers and travel dates along with the address and contact details of your accommodation. Additionally, you may have to provide the name, address and licence number of the person responsible for safe storage of firearms at your destination.

If going to a shooting competition you may have to offer proof you have nominated for the event. Some documents may have to be scanned and forwarded with the application, typically the front page of your passport and shooter's licence. For a New Zealand application you're also asked which hire car company you're using so keep your credit card handy in case there's an application fee.

As far as ABF is concerned you can only take firearms registered in your name, so

no dealer stock or borrowed firearms are allowed and always check the registration certificate issued by your Firearms Registry that all numbers are correct. One of my single-shot rifles was originally described as semi-automatic so have any mistakes fixed and have your Firearms Registry issue a new certificate before travelling.

If making a domestic connecting flight, say from Auckland to Rotorua, allow plenty of time to make the connection. In this instance your baggage will only be booked as far as Auckland from where you'll have to clear immigration, collect your baggage, have the firearms inspected and cleared by NZ Police, clear customs, go to domestic check-in and re-book your baggage to Rotorua.

If using your range bag as carry-on luggage, make sure you've no shooting-related bits and pieces in it. I heard of someone who accidentally left an empty cartridge case in the pocket of a shooting jacket which was picked up by the X-ray machine. Awkward or what?

### Summary

Travelling overseas with firearms requires attention to detail and commonsense, the work involved in sourcing information, applying for permits and dealing with authorities a necessary chore. The first time is a steep learning curve but it prepares you well for future trips in pursuit of your sport. ●



# Hopkins & Allen

## rarities to treasure

Senior correspondent John Dunn

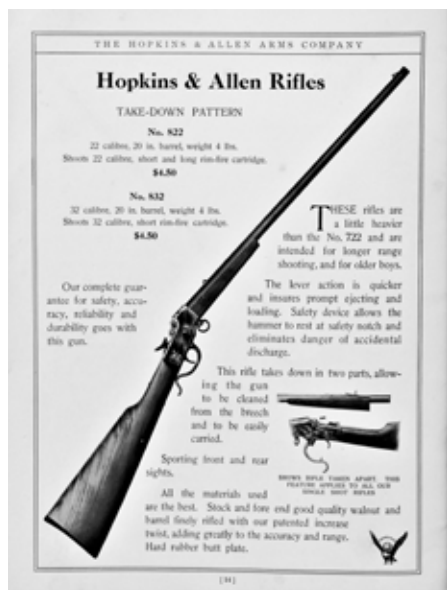
Writing about the two Hopkins & Allen rifles I have in my collection of single shots is one of those things I've been meaning to do for years but never quite got around to. That all changed last year when I spent most of the latter part unable to do any serious hunting and, being not much good at sitting around doing nothing, I passed time researching my single shot collection and in the process came up with information about Hopkins & Allen I didn't even know I had.

### Potted history

The Hopkins & Allen Manufacturing Company began producing firearms at Norwich, Connecticut in 1868, most of their early creations being revolvers. In the 1870s their entire stock was sold by Merwin & Hulbert who were the sole marketing agency for Hopkins & Allen. All revolvers carrying the Merwin & Hulbert tag were actually made by Hopkins & Allen and both names are stamped on some of them.

By 1890 H&A was also turning out shotguns and a single shot boys' rifle called 'The Junior' which was based on the Bay State rifle but wore the Merwin & Hulbert moniker. In 1897 Merwin & Hulbert went into liquidation owing H&A \$90,000, the latter receiving just 10c in the dollar as settlement. As a result they reorganised as the Hopkins & Allen Arms Company in 1899 and began selling firearms direct to the shooting public.

On February 4, 1900 their plant burned to the ground with the company suffering a loss estimated at \$500,000 but, despite this, the concern reopened in new premises and soon was bigger and better than ever. James J. Grant in *Boys' Single Shot Rifles* records that: "Around 1904-1905 the



Advertising for the 822/832 lever-action rolling block boys' rifle; The Hopkins & Allen Schuetzen rifle.

company was manufacturing 186 varieties of revolvers, rifles and single and double-barrelled shotguns which found a market all over the United States and Canada. The export trade included Australia, South America and Europe."

At the start of World War One H&A ceased output of sporting arms to meet military contracts. Around 1915 the firm was taken over by the Marlin Rockwell Company and their plant used to pump out machine-gun barrels for the government.

### Single shot rifles

Eight pages of the 1908 Hopkins & Allen Gun Guide and Catalog were given over to single shots and a rimfire magazine rifle produced by the company, prefaced by the following: "A small calibre rifle is a source



of pleasure to all the family and can be very useful in training the mind and eye of the growing boy to accuracy and quickness of action.

"The next eight pages describe and illustrate the different Hopkins & Allen models and you will find among this large assortment just the rifle which suits your particular needs. There are rifles for the boy, the young man, the 'grown up' man and the hunter. The expert rifleman can also pick from among these the best gun for his purposes and we even make heavier calibre arms for those who wish them, as shown by our 25, 25-20, 32 and 38 calibres.

"From the smallest and cheapest to the largest and highest priced, each is guaranteed to the fullest extent for accuracy, reliability and durability. None but the

## Hopkins & Allen rarities to treasure



The 722 action ready for loading. The hammer had to be on full cock to open the breech.

best materials are used and the finished arm is perfect in every detail. Hopkins & Allen rifles have a worldwide reputation for accuracy and lasting qualities and this reputation is upheld by every rifle shown in the catalog."

### The 722

This was the cheapest and smallest of the boys' rifles produced by H&A from 1903-1915. Weighing just 1.58kg (3½lb) it had an overall length of 86.3cm (34") with a 49.7cm (19½") gain twist rifle barrel that shot the .22 Short and Long rimfire cartridges, sights consisting of a bead front and non-adjustable open rear.

The blued, take-down barrel slip fitted into the receiver where it was secured by a screw through the bottom front section of the frame. Top of the barrel at the breech end is marked with the model designation and calibre and the word TESTED in small print. Forward of the rear sight the top of the barrel is stamped THE HOPKINS & ALLEN ARMS CO. NORWICH, CONN. U.S.A., also in small print.

The receiver was made from colour case hardened malleable cast iron and used a thumb operated rolling block-type action which was more than adequate in terms of strength to handle the .22 cartridges it was chambered for. Like the Remington rolling block rifles before it, the hammer of the 722 had to be cocked to open the breechblock and load the rifle.

The stock and forearm were walnut, the buttstock held between the tangs of the frame by a single screw from the top, the buttplate hard rubber with a chequered face. The forearm was secured to the barrel by a screw directly into the bottom of the barrel. In 1908 the 722 was advertised by H&A as

"an up-to-date rifle made to shoot straight yet small enough in weight to meet with the requirements of a boy". It cost \$3.50.

The 722 example I have has had a fairly hard life. None of the colour case hardening is left on the now dark receiver and the barrel has light external pitting under what remains of the original blued finish. The barrel has been bobbled almost to the front edge of the fore sight dovetail and the bore is rough, the action still tight though the rifle doesn't shoot particularly well. In the greater scheme of things that's hardly an important consideration as it's one of only three such rifles I've ever seen and accordingly is a valued part of my collection.

### The 922, 925, 932 and 938 rifles

After the fire in 1900, the 9 series rifles were a reprise of the Junior rifle first made in 1890 - take-down, lever-action falling block with rebounding hammers. They had colour case hardened receivers and were initially fitted with a 55.8cm (22") blued, round barrel in .22 Long rifle, .25 and .32 rimfire as well as .38 Smith & Wesson centrefire, all with gain twist rifling. Around 1904 the barrel length was changed to 60.9cm (24").

Standard sights were a bead fore sight and Rocky Mountain rear, step-adjustable to 182.8m (200 yards), Lyman Combination sights available on order as an extra for \$4.50. The two-piece stock was walnut, fitted with a military steel buttplate, the weight listed as 2.38kg (5¼lb) and in 1908 it sold for \$6. H&A advertising of the era described the rifles as "for experts; quick-acting, accurate, long-range rifles that cannot be surpassed at any price".

My example of this model is a long barrelled 932, a bit rough around the edges.

The Hopkins & Allen 722 boys' rifle.



The 932 Hopkins & Allen rifle.



The wood work has been knocked around and the rear sight has suffered an application of soft solder somewhere down the line. As it often is with .32 rimfire rifles, the bore is in surprisingly good condition with sharp, clean rifling, the action still in sound working order with a five-digit serial number in the mid-20,000 bracket. Like the 722, examples of the 9 series rifles are hard to find these days.

### Other H&A single shots

Hopkins & Allen made other single shot rifles as listed.

### The 822/832s

These had a finger lever operated rolling block action with the lever and breechblock in one piece. They could be loaded with the hammer on half cock, making them a safer boys' rifle than the 722 and were also slightly heavier and larger than the 722. In 1908 they sold for \$4.50.





The 722 taken down.



**The 1922, 1925, 1932 and 1938s**

These were the same as the 9 series rifles except they had octagonal barrels, selling for \$6.50 in 1908.

**The 2922, 2925, 2932 and 2938s**

These had the octagonal barrels of the 19 series as well as better quality walnut stocks with chequered forearm and wrist and cost at \$7.

**The 3922 and 3925s**

Promoted as Schuetzen rifles, the 39 series had 66cm (26") barrels in .22 Long Rifle and .25-20 calibre respectively. They were stocked in English walnut with chequered wrist and forearm, the buttstock fitted with a nickel Schuetzen buttplate. According to H&A advertising they were "intended for the finest target work and meet every requirement for the man who knows and wants a perfect rifle". In 1908 they were advertised at \$12 each with an additional



The 932 action set for loading. All the rifles in the Hopkins & Allen 9 series could be opened and closed with the rebounding hammer resting in the safety notch.

\$4.50 required if supplied with Lyman Combination sights.

As mentioned, none of the Hopkins & Allen rifles seem to be particularly common in Australia and even ordinary specimens

are rare. Over the years I've seen no more than a handful of 722 and 922/32 rifles - the main reason I'm so pleased to have one of each in my strong room. Or perhaps I just haven't been looking in the right places. ●

At the range.

# Look sharp with Steiner Predators

Mark van den Boogaart

**S**traight out of the box I liked the Steiner Predator 10x42mm binoculars. Why? Because you get lots of cool Steiner features at a competitive price - tough, lightweight, roof prism design binoculars which fit well in the hand and won't take up too much space in a pack.

For your money come binoculars which use Steiner's Makrolon housing system, essentially a polycarbonate chassis wrapped in NBR Long Life rubber armour with an impact rate of 11G. To finish off the build the binoculars are then sealed using the N2 Injection dry nitrogen system designed to prevent fogging in both hot and cold climates.

Combined with high-build quality the multi-level coated lenses used in the Predator bracket feature the Colour Adjusted Transmission (CAT) treatment which provides great light transmission and low-light performance, while controlling it all is the Fast-Close-Focus central focusing wheel, a precise adjustment dial which allows you to really tune focus at a particular distance, like a red deer rack.

Finally there's the smart ClicLoc system which does away with a buckle and loop fitment for the neck strap and uses a push-in, click-out connector - simple but really useful. If there's one thing I don't like so much about the Predators it's the flip-down objective lens covers. While a great idea, they just they don't work as well in the field as they do on the test bench and my answer to the lens covers would be to use a binocular chest rig and remove the covers when hunting.

My first outing with the Predators was to the range. I was actually reviewing a new red dot sight and while I had my spotting scope with me, the visit gave me the chance to see how they performed. As an alternative to a spotting scope the Predators worked remarkably well and affixing them to a tripod I was able to use them to help set up the red dot sight. While not a true test the outing further reinforced my opinion these are good binoculars at a reasonable price. My next test was in a hunting situation and the chance to take

a red deer on a property not too far from home, which was good enough reason for me to hit the road at 3am. I was also under instruction to leave the stags alone which meant I'd have to be particular about target selection. In the field the Predators really came into their own and following my own advice I carried them in the Marsupial Gear chest rig. Throughout the day I was constantly surprised by the quality of these binoculars when compared to the cost as they certainly outperformed their price tag.

Light to carry, easy to focus and re-adjust they performed well and even though they were review binoculars, I didn't have to 'baby' them which meant I could focus on the hunt and not worry about the gear. Unfortunately, while they performed well, all I saw through them was stags - in the open and among the trees I spotted numerous deer, all carrying timber.

With an Australian RRP of \$599 the Steiner Predator 10x42s face some stiff competition for your hard-earned dollars but when you consider you're owning



quality European optics with a host of high-end features, I firmly believe they're top of their class.

At the risk of repeating myself, Steiner Predator 10x42s are excellent hunting binoculars and with the addition of a chest rig would be ideal for hunters who spend a lot of time on the move. Alternately, if you're after quality European binoculars which might travel in a vehicle, straight out of the box the Steiner Predator 10x42s would make an excellent choice with the objective lens covers and armoured body well suited to the task. Distributed by Beretta Australia, Steiner Predator 10x42mm binoculars won't let you down. ●



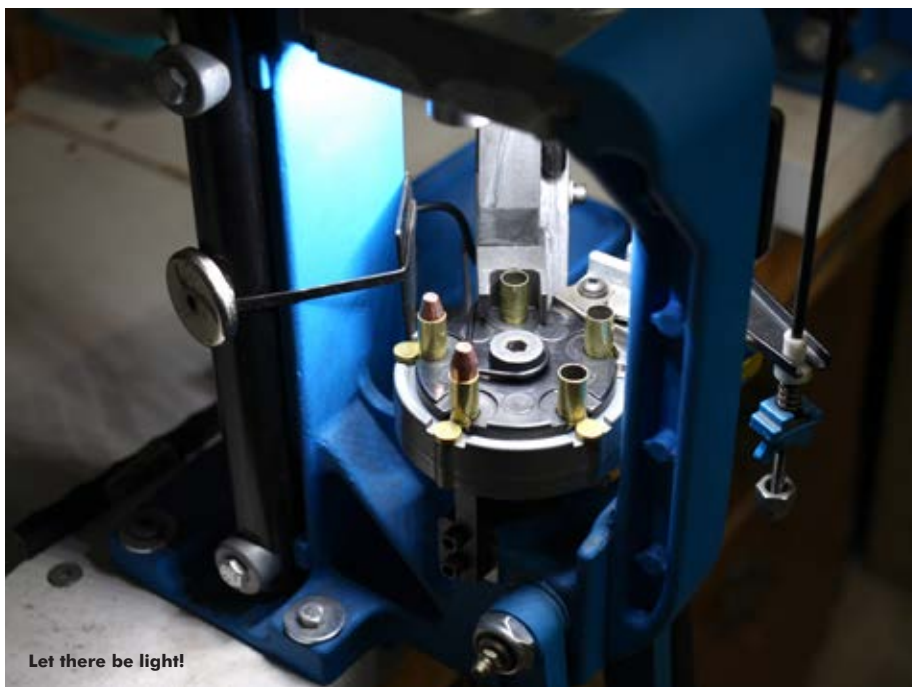
Set up for general observation, clarity of definition in the Steiner Predators is top quality.

# Shining a light on reloading

Rod Pascoe



The kit as supplied.



Let there be light!

Most reloading occurs in well-lit sheds and garages and some shooters may even have the luxury of being allowed to work inside the house but, as hard as we try, it's not always possible to access enough light where it counts. Until now.

Many reloading presses, especially the progressive kind, have a large mass of dies and other gadgets casting a shadow over the critical job of safe and efficient reloading. A new idea, out of the US and imported here by Arivaca Enterprises of Sydney, are the KMS<sup>2</sup> reloading press light kits.

According to business owner Mark Flynn: "I was looking for products at the SHOT Show in Las Vegas which would help reloaders work more efficiently and

ergonomically when reloading their ammunition." Mark discovered some presses fitted with what are called UFO lights which easily mount on to the press itself, illuminating cartridges being worked on in the shell holder.

The array of miniature LED lights are arranged in a circle or semi-circle, depending on the press, and attach by an adhesive backing to the underside of the frame surrounding the die carrier or tool head. The header cable from the lights is attached to the press with supplied cable ties and a 12-volt plug pack powers the unit via a co-axial connector.

Light kits are available for the Dillon 650, 750, 450 and 550 as well as Lee Loadmaster and turret presses, Hornady Lock 'n' Load

presses and many O-Frame presses also having kits available. The kit includes the UFO lights and cable ties with mounting blocks along with some pot scrubbing material to help in attaching the adhesive backing, and there's a comprehensive set of mounting instructions.

I fitted the supplied light kit with its horseshoe of 24 miniature LEDs to a Dillon XL650 and, in a word, brilliant! The UFO lights are around \$30 and the 12-volt plug pack is bought separately for about \$10. Apart from the UFO lights, Arivaca is also importing Self-Sealing Reactive Polymer Targets. Check their website at [www.arivacaenterprises.com](http://www.arivacaenterprises.com) or contact 0438 705 098 or email [newbold.australia@gmail.com](mailto:newbold.australia@gmail.com) ●



# Hog deer high on Snake Island stakeout

Brad Allen

This hind keeps an eye on the crows as she feeds.

It's a sad fact that not many Aussie deer hunters who live outside of Victoria will ever have the chance to hunt the diminutive and elusive hog deer. With their limited habitat confined to the very bottom of Victoria's Gippsland region and some offshore islands, access has always been at a premium.

Some time ago my good mate and hunting companion Warren McKay alerted me to the existence of the Blond Bay Hog Deer Advisory Group (BBHDAG) who, in association with Parks Victoria and the Victorian Game Management Authority (GMA), run an annual ballot for punters to hunt hog deer in some of Gippsland's National Parks. On my third attempt at the ballot in 2010 I snared an invite to hunt the Boole Poole Peninsula, where I took a small stag and a hind and while thinking it unlikely I'd ever win the ballot again, I persevered over the next 10 years and was again rewarded with the chance to hunt the little deer.

This time it was for the recently acquired hunting areas on Snake Island, administered by Parks Victoria, which lies adjacent to Sunday Island where a successful private

hog deer project has been run for more than 50 years by the Para Park Co-operative. Fortunately I was able to attend a hog deer hunter education weekend in January on Sunday Island, where all attendees were thoroughly schooled in the habits of these beautiful animals and the laws, regulations and hunting procedures of Snake Island and other Parks Victoria areas were set out.

Fast forward to March and I hit the road with all the gear I'd need for the week-long island hunt. One of the main pieces of equipment was my 'ladder stand' with wheels that would be used as a dual purpose 'equipment cart' and 'stand' from which to sit and wait over the semi-open feeding and watering areas. The island is far too thickly vegetated to walk and hunt, the most successful method being the sit and wait approach as deer have to eat and drink.

The logistics of hunting Snake Island can be difficult but as I arrived several days early I was taken on a recce of the island by my good mate Matt, who owns a boat. Matt's also a keen hog deer hunter who'd experienced Snake Island via the BBHDAG ballot the previous year and had taken a respectable stag. The viewing gave me a



Signs were up at all Snake Island entry points, advising visitors of deer hunting in progress.

good sense of the island's topography and a chance to claim a camping spot reasonably close to my hunting area with regard to the prevailing westerly wind.

On completing the mandatory briefing from Parks Victoria on Sunday morning we were into the boats and off to Snake Island before the drizzly weather deteriorated any further. Monday dawned fine and cool with a mild westerly breeze, perfect conditions for my hunting area and 'ladder stand' location





A comfortable, protected campsite makes for an enjoyable time in the bush.

and with deer usually coming out to water and feed any time after 9am until 2pm, then again just before last light, it was a leisurely task to position my 'ladder stand'.

The sit-and-wait hunting approach was foreign to me before I hunted hoggies on the first occasion, where I learned just how effective it was, taking both a stag and hind. Attempting to stalk them through Snake Island's thick vegetation would've been a waste of time and the hunter education weekend had again reinforced this method as the most productive way of taking the elusive deer.

The day passed slowly on my semi-comfortable 'ladder stand' where I was fascinated by the abundance of native bird life, the array of brightly coloured parrots and small wrens a welcome distraction while awaiting deer. Throughout the day gangs of large, loud, arrogant crows swooped in to drink and swagger about with all other bird life vacating the immediate area, something akin to hoodlums ambling into a shopping mall, loudmouthing their arrival and strutting around to frighten everyday people. It was both educational and entertaining. Later in the afternoon as



View of the swamp clearing from Brad's 'ladder stand'.



## Hog deer high on Snake Island stakeout

I looked to the far end of the clearing, my heart skipped a beat when I identified a patch of brown fur behind a tussock though a quick scan with the Leicas revealed only a lonely swamp wallaby having a drink and nibble on the fresh green grass. He fed for a while before hopping back into the scrub.

Nothing moved on the swamp for the next half-hour except the ever-present parrots and domineering crows until, just after 4pm as if by magic, a deer appeared on the clearing 180 yards away. It was a nervous young spike which trotted swiftly back into the bush after a gang of crows kept following and moving towards him. Ten minutes later he reappeared on the clearing and anxiously started to feed, all the time keeping his distance from the crows.

By 9am next day I was back in my stand watching over the length of the clearing. The morning was warm with a hint of westerly breeze under a clear blue sky and the parrots, wrens and crows were again providing the entertainment. As the mild breeze swirled and changed direction I was startled by a sound I'd heard years before. It wasn't a bird cry but about 30 yards to my right, in undergrowth surrounding the clearing, came a sharp 'buhh, buhh' - the alarm call of a hog deer. The animal had clearly been coming in to water and feed when it caught my scent on the swirling breeze and retreated to the scrub. I couldn't help but wonder if this was the stag I'd been waiting for.

Later in the day as my concentration began to wane I noticed movement to the left of the clearing as an adult hind stepped out less than 100 yards from my stand. She



watered and fed as she pleased, taking scant notice of the crows dotted about the swamp, but when she neared them she'd walk briskly in their direction, causing them to scatter. She continued to do this as she fed around the clearing until they'd had enough of her and took off. This was clearly the learned behaviour of a mature animal as she wasn't worried by the crows at all, unlike the young spike who looked intimidated. She continued to feed and move about the clearing for some time, before heading back to the cover of the bush.

As the shadows began to lengthen I was contemplating the walk back to camp when

movement at the far end of the clearing caught my eye, and even without binoculars I could tell it was a mature stag, closer inspection through the binos revealing he was exactly what I'd been waiting for. The stag appeared nervous as he glanced around, checking the surroundings before putting his head down to drink. As he did I alighted from the stand as quietly as I could.

I'd set up shooting sticks just in front of the stand at the edge of the clearing and as he started to feed he turned to present his left shoulder at 220 yards. I carefully placed my rifle on the shooting sticks as the stag lifted his head and turned to face me and as the reticle centred on his chest I gently squeezed the 1kg trigger on the Ruger .270. I don't remember feeling recoil or hearing the shot though I did pick up the thwack of a solid hit echo back to me as the stag buckled before staggering a few short yards towards the scrub.

I marvelled at his unique antlers before attaching the GMA tag to his rear hock then completed the obligatory photo session and field dressing, and back at camp I carefully caped the stag before toasting him with a couple of celebratory ports. I organised my departure from the island for the next morning followed by the mandatory GMA checking station visit to weigh and measure the stag. The BBHDAG ballot is an excellent program which had again given me the chance to achieve something many deer hunters can only dream about. For anyone interested in hog deer, the ballot is well worth the \$25 entry fee for a chance to secure the potential hunt of a lifetime. ●





# Caldwell Ballistic Precision Chronograph Premium Kit

Don Caswell

Measurement of muzzle velocity is important to handloaders and for any hunter keen to determine the best load in their rifle, and while new technologies are evolving for the measurement of projectile velocity, the original know-how of optical sensing is still a competitive solution and attractively priced.

*Australian Shooter* was given the chance to review the Caldwell Ballistic Precision Chronograph Premium Kit courtesy of Nioa and it couldn't have arrived at a better time for me. Apart from weekly testing of various loads and different factory ammo in rifles I review, I'd just begun an extensive campaign of testing air rifle pellets and the weather in far north Queensland wasn't helping in my efforts to measure the muzzle velocity of several hundred shots from my air rifle.

The LED lighting in the diffuser screens of the Caldwell meant I could make use of my evenings and conduct testing under cover in the shed. This proved a great advantage as measuring air gun pellet speeds is a challenge for any chronograph but the LED screens on the Caldwell did it faultlessly. The reliability of measurement on air rifle pellets was matched with the higher velocity projectiles from centrefire rifles as well.

So just what do you gain from the Caldwell Ballistic Precision Chronograph Premium Kit? The package contains the following:

- Caldwell Ballistic Precision Chronograph.
- Two 16-LED lit diffuser screens.
- Adjustable tripod for mounting the chronograph.
- Battery pack to hold the four AA batteries (not included) for the IR lights.
- A 'Y' splitter cable for the lights.
- AC power cord with 220V adaptor for light panels.
- 25ft audio jack cable.
- Custom carry bag for the whole kit.

The Caldwell Ballistic Precision Chronograph is factory calibrated to an accuracy of  $\pm 0.25$  per cent and for a projectile travelling at 3000fps that equates to measurement uncertainty of  $\pm 7.5$ fps (there's a switch on the unit which allows the user to choose between fps or mps).

The chronograph is powered by a single 9V battery (not included) or via the power cable adaptor and the front panel has a large LED display that can be read at some distance.

There's also the option to run the 25ft audio jack cable from the chronograph to your mobile phone and view the results first-hand and a free, downloadable app can be installed to give advanced data access on your mobile. Just search for Caldwell Ballistic Chronograph and download through the app store on your mobile phone.

The app includes current velocity measurement, data logs, any notes and weather conditions, data which can be easily sent via email or SMS, and the mobile phone app has a pre-loaded database that includes most brands and bullet types. If your favourite projectile is not represented you can enter specific data for any projectile not included in the database. The app will record shot string data which can be either exported to an Excel spreadsheet or simply messaged to your PC and for a shot string, the app records the following:


- Average velocity.
- Standard deviation of velocity measurements.
- Slowest measured velocity in the string.
- Fastest measured velocity in the string.
- Spread of velocity measurements.
- A calculation of the true muzzle velocity, not just the measured velocity.
- Kinetic energy of each measured velocity.
- Weather conditions - ambient temperature and barometric pressure.

Like all optical chronographs, the Caldwell has diffuser screens to enhance detection of the bullet's passage over the sensors. Unlike most other chronographs though, the Caldwell features a panel of 16 high output LED microlights in each wide diffuser panel which enable the unit to detect a projectile's passage in low-light conditions, such as indoors at night. The tripod that comes with the Premium Kit allows the chronograph to be positioned in the range of 16" to 51" (40 to 130cm) above ground level.

Specifications for the Caldwell Ballistic Precision Chronograph state it can measure projectile velocities from 1 to 9000fps,

including not only projectiles and pellets but also arrows and slingshot pellets. The operating temperature is rated at 20 to 120 degrees F (-7 to 49C). The Caldwell Ballistic Precision Chronograph Premium Kit is available from most gun shops with a retail price starting around the \$350 mark but shop around. ●



A photograph showing three Martini rifles lying diagonally on a wooden surface. The top rifle is a 577/450, the middle one is a .303 carbine, and the bottom one is a 45-70. They all have dark wood stocks and metal receivers. The text 'Joe's Martinis from top the 577-450, .303 carbine and 45-70.' is printed in the top left corner.

Joe's Martinis from top the 577-450, .303 carbine and 45-70.

# Hunting with a 'new' Martini - shaking, not stirred

Joe Norris

I spotted the Martini on a used gun site and despite the fact I really couldn't afford it, made an offer for the rifle.

Fortunately the seller agreed to let it go at my price and after transferring the funds and applying for a permit to acquire, I waited somewhat impatiently for everything to arrive.

My initial impression when I finally got hold of it was that it hadn't seen much use since being rebarrelled to 45/70 Government, as the barrel looked almost new. The Martini-Henry entered service with the British Empire in 1871 and was chambered in the new self-contained small arm cartridge at that time, the 577/450. These cartridges were loaded with 85 grains of black powder behind a 480gr

paper-patched lead bullet and developed a muzzle velocity of about 1350fps.

Accounts from the battlefield say the recoil generated by these rifles could cause the troops' noses to bleed during rapid fire, considered to be 12 rounds a minute. The original cartridges were loaded with wrapped brass foil serving as the case and after it was discovered they could stick in the chamber, drawn brass cases were made.

With the advent of shorter and lighter carbine rifles there was also a lighter recoiling cartridge designed with a 415gr bullet and 75gr of black powder and patched with red paper to identify them. The British even made incendiary cartridges for the 577/450 designed to shoot down military observation balloons and there

were buckshot loads developed as well.

The 577/450 was no slouch when it came to long-range either and was known as the 900-yard target load, early Maxim machine guns also chambered in this calibre before the coming of the .303.

The Martini-Henry started life as the invention of American designer Henry O. Peabody, his format modified by Friedrich von Martini in Switzerland and renamed the Peabody-Martini. The British adopted the action and added a barrel rifled with the system of Scottish gunmaker Alexander Henry then christened it the Martini-Henry.

My rifle started life in 1885 as an MK3 and was chambered originally in the standard 577/450 calibre. I don't know if it was





Conversion marks and date of when it was altered to .303.



Original marks and date of manufacture of the Martini when it was a 577-450.



New Zealand issue marks.

ever issued in that calibre but in 1897 it was rebarrelled into the then new military round the .303 and became a Martini-Enfield. In 1898 it was issued to the New Zealand military and at some point after that was sold out of service into the civilian market. I'd love to know the dates and would invite anyone with knowledge of when this happened to contact me.

At some point, someone like me (a self-confessed 'single shot tragic' in the words of John Dunn) decided to give the old girl new life and rebarrelled it in 45/70 Government. They also fitted a rather unusual back sight with finger adjustment for both elevation and windage, although a lock screw must be loosened before the windage can be adjusted (the back sight can

also be lifted to become a ladder sight for extreme range).

I was smitten with the rifle the moment I picked it up. It's not light, due to the weight of the barrel, but comes to the shoulder nicely though I needed to check the sights so took it out to the old airstrip near my place to become acquainted with it.

First thing I noticed was it didn't recoil anywhere near as much as I thought it would which was a pleasant surprise. Bullets were striking way off to the left and when I tried to adjust the windage I needed a screwdriver to loosen off the lock screw. Once I had the windage sorted and found out where to hold the front sight in the wide notch of the back sight to hit at 100m, I was able to blow up ant beds out to

250m without a problem. I found I needed to put the thumb of my trigger hand on the recessed chequered indentation on the back of the action or I tended to belt myself in the nose with my thumb when firing. This also happens to me when using a SMLE .303 so I believe the stock is too short for me - a small price to pay.

#### Time for a walk

As my place was in the grip of severe drought and dams were drying up I had to constantly check the water for bogged cattle as well as continually top up the supplement lick stations, so I put the Martini in the ute and carried it with me in case I came across a pig or wild dog. I was attending the lick station when I spotted a

## Hunting with a 'new' Martini - shaking, not stirred

young stag coming to drink at the distant dam and, thinking a feed of venison would make a pleasant change, grabbed the Martini and a handful of fat cartridges and snuck away from the vehicle into a feeder gully so I'd have the wind right and the deer wouldn't spot me.

Hugging the bottom of the gully and crouching low I made it to about 500m from the dam where the deer was headed before I ran out of gully. The drought meant there was no cover except the ever-present ant beds and box trees, so it became a game of lining up the deer with a tree or ant bed between us and scurrying there, aligning another and repeating the process until I'd closed the gap.

The stag walked to the water to drink so I started to 'bum crawl' (my knees are gone) and by this stage there were no more trees to hide behind as we were in a hole that's normally full of water. Thankfully there are some large rocks we had to work around when we built the dam so I was able to sneak a bit closer but was still 150m from the stag.



The Martinis with cartridges.

When I made it to the rocks I thought I'd have to take the shot from there but wasn't comfortable with a live target at that distance. I've never had any trouble finishing off an ant bed if I don't hit it properly with the opening shot but didn't want to risk wounding a deer so sat wondering how I was going to creep closer.

Then as I was contemplating a 120m shot, the deer started to make his way around the water's edge in my direction, slowly sniffing the mud. I was willing him to keep moving while staying out of sight behind my rock and as he made his way closer to my comfortable shooting range I found myself shaking with excitement, unusual for me but probably because I really

wanted the stalk to be successful with my new rifle.

I had to calm myself down by taking deep breaths until I had the shakes under control and at 70m the deer must have sensed something wasn't right as he froze and stared intently in my direction. I knew the wind was right as I could see the dust he kicked up as he walked but as we were in the dam hole itself, there could have been a random eddy swirl back towards the deer. Even so, he wasn't coming any closer.

The stag was on high alert as he stood three-quarters on to me and I held the sights on his near side front shoulder, meaning the bullet would exit his back



Back sight in the raised ladder configuration showing adjustment knobs.



From left: an original carbine load in wrapped brass alongside a modern cartridge made from 24-gauge shotgun brass, the .303 and 45-70.



## Hunting with a 'new' Martini - shaking, not stirred

ribs on the off side after passing through the vitals. I was completely calm as I took the pressure on the surprisingly good trigger of my new Martini and as it broke the big projectile was on its way - I was using Federal Power-Shok 300gr loads and the stag was pole-axed.

As I didn't have my camera I had to carry the deer back to the vehicle so I could photograph the outcome of my first shot in

anger so to speak, before taking him home to process into meals for the family.

I now have Martinis in 577/450, .303, 45/70 and Cadet Martinis in 300 long, .22 and .310. I'm impressed with the action and am focused on buying a Hornet and 12-gauge to round out my collection. Then there's all the other chamberings 222 rimmed, 218, .357 and perhaps a .444 would be nice - I'm going to need a bank loan! ●



The stag taken for food with the 'new' Martini 45-70.



Unusual back sight.

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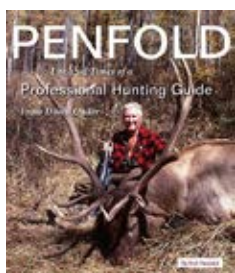


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## A bit more than your everyday ladder

**W**e were cleaning the workshop when one of my volunteer helpers looked hard at a step-ladder leaning against the wall and couldn't resist having a dig. "You'd have to be the only person I know with a camouflaged ladder." The look on his face indicated the need to know why an otherwise innocuous aluminium aid would be decorated in such a manner. "It's not just a ladder," I told him, "it used to be a high seat."

Back in 2008 I hunted for hog deer on some private country on Boole Poole peninsula. On the first trip I didn't fire a shot but learned a lot about the country and how the deer use it. Scattered throughout the block was an assortment of rough tree-stands overlooking game trails, water holes and feeding areas, historic indicators a sit-and-wait approach was probably the best way to hunt given the density and height of the tea-tree scrub.

I preferred the idea of a high seat to a tree-stand so, with an invitation to return for another hunt, I came home and bought a 1.7m aluminium step-ladder, about the right compromise between height and portability I reckoned. The next step was to paint it with overlaid swirls and splotches of black and brown, green and grey to hide the bright metal finish and to the top plate



The step-ladder which became a high seat inside the blind.



The hog deer hind as she fell.

I fitted a padded seat which would allow me to sit comfortably for as long as I had to, the steps a convenient footrest.

On my return I carried the ladder to what I decided was the perfect place. A rough track meandered through the scrub, marks in the sand indicating a regular flow of deer traffic. Off to the left and right were well-grazed grassy clearings interspersed with clumps of fern and tussock, perfect cover at ground level for deer, easily looked over from the elevated seat on the ladder. On the other side of the track, hidden in the scrub, was a small waterhole with worn game trails leading off in different directions.

I set the ladder up inside the bush then draped a length of camouflaged netting around it to create a blind. Satisfied with my handiwork I took some photos and walked away, leaving the site to settle down overnight. One way or another, I reckoned I had it pretty well sorted.

Though there were fresh deer tracks in the sand next morning, my first day in the seat was unproductive. I saw countless birds, several groups of kangaroos, a feral cat and a sow pig with half a dozen suckers - but no deer. My excitement for the day was the stealthy arrival of a carefully camouflaged bowhunter who wasn't meant to be there - he bolted when I spoke to him.

The second day was better. Around 9am I harvested a hind for venison when she stepped on to the track from one of the game trails leading away from the waterhole and in mid-afternoon I took a dog fox which stopped to sniff the spot where the hind had fallen. My high seat was working but any hopes of further success disappeared when a storm blew in overnight and hung around for three days.

My search for a hog deer stag eventually led me to other places and the camouflaged ladder was relegated to occasional domestic duties, the paint fading with age like the hunter who applied it, something my enquiring helper was happy to confirm.

It's Sunday night as I write this. The Canberra grandkids are here for school holidays and yesterday their father did a paint job in the family room for grandma. Somewhere along the line he had need for a step-ladder so the once-was-a-high-seat came out of retirement and was set up. He finished the job and was cleaning up when he looked at the ladder and commented: "You know Poppy John, you'd have to be the only person alive who owns a camouflaged step-ladder." Clearly there are more Philistines in the world than I realised.





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