A merry Christmas to all our members and readers

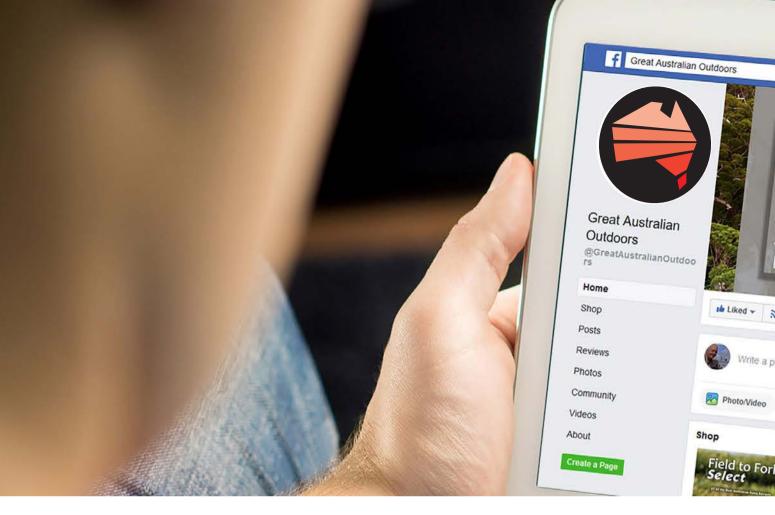




Rod Pascoe's favourite rifle/cartridge/scope combo







Let's get social

There's never been a better time to get social with the sport we love and there are so many ways to do it.

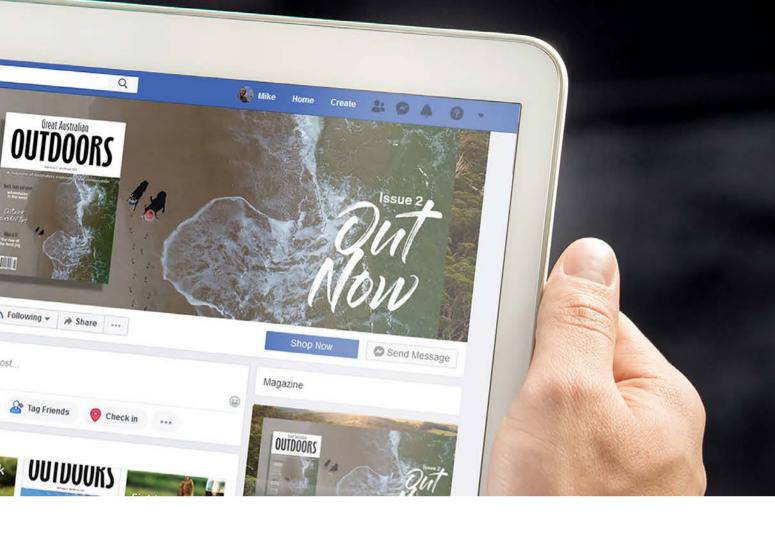
SSAA provides social media outlets for all of its major initiatives from SSAA National, the *Australian Women's Shooter, Australian Hunter* magazine and the *Great Australian Outdoors* magazine.

Also we have our annual SSAA SHOT Expo, SSAA Farmer Assist program and our ever-growing informative video library on SSAA TV.





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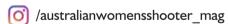




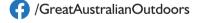












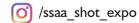






















FIREARMS

- 48 Thunderous applause for the MVP LR
- 56 Yildiz ProStar a versatile Turkish treat

HUNTING

63 Sixty years hunting the same property

PRODUCTS

- 42 A real gem for the stalking hunter
- 60 A shining light Powa Beam Meteor S1 Hunter's kit
- 72 ZOLEO gives you remote control

AND MORE

- 18 Favourite rifle/cartridge/scope combination Rod Pascoe
- 24 Feral cats and the risk to hunters
- 28 National amnesty to launch next year
- 30 MG 42 crucial cog in German war machine
- 36 Spotlighting rabbits on foot
- 44 SSAA donation eases the load on environmental adventure
- 46 Simple steps to avoid pinch marks
- 54 Army in the market for new handgun
- 66 Previously out of bounds restoration novice at work
- 69 RTV silicone bedding a Lee-Enfield No.4
- 74 Book review Australia's Creative Native Cuisine
- 75 Even RM Williams had to start somewhere
- 76 Book review Ted takes us back to where it all began

REGULARS

- 6 President's Message
- 7 Letters
- 7 Insurance Q&A
- 8 Open Season
- 10 Bushcraft & Survival
- 12 Clay Target Q&A
- 14 Top Shots
- 77 Competition News
- 78 SSAA Shop
- 81 Members-only Competitions
- 82 Jumbunna



Our December cover See page 18

NEXT ISSUE



It's something which affects every shooter and in our next issue Brad Allen takes a look at the curse that is recoil and helps us understand its causes and effects.

Con Kapralos has been out in the field with the Henry leveraction shotgun, one he says is "worth considering if looking for a .410-bore longarm". Mark van den Boogaart has run the rule on the latest HX 15x56mm binoculars from Steiner and reckons they're a practical alternative to a spotting scope.



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0,954 members strong as of November 2020

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President's Message WITH GEOFF JONES

A new dawn beckons . . . as it's time for me to step aside

ere we are at year's end wondering what happened to the past 12 months and trying to regain our senses so we can enter the new year with some sort of direction and hope for a return to a semblance of normality. While the possibilities of international travel for competition or hunting will be limited and slow to return, prospects for interstate travel and visits to New Zealand are looking positive and hopefully will continue to improve.

SSAA administration teams across Australia have coped well with different and constantly changing restrictions and ensured the balance between relevant legislation compliance, protecting our members and meeting their needs is met. In short, we're well placed to have a great year in 2021. All being well, domestic shooting competitions and range activities will be back to a managed normal and game seasons and hunters' travel will be permitted.

There will plenty of shooting and firearms-based entertainment available with our latest annual Australian & New Zealand Handgun magazine due for imminent release, stimulating stories and anecdotes in the quarterly Australian Hunter, lots of fresh insights into our sport with your monthly Australian Shooter as well as our Women's Shooter and Junior Shooter publications.

Our relatively new but already widely acclaimed Great Australian Outdoors annual magazine should not be forgotten by those looking for a broader perspective on how all aspects of our outdoor activities are inexorably linked. And just to top off our myriad of publications, the gourmets and bush cooks among us can soon enjoy a second edition of the SSAA's award-winning Field to Fork cookbook. Those members more technologically inclined can look forward to further informative segments on SSAA TV, a refreshed SSAA National website, increased Facebook activity as well as our regular SSAA e-Newsletters and e-Alerts. There really is something for everyone as part of SSAA.

And reflecting on these and other innumerable benefits of SSAA membership brings me to a personal crossroads, where I must acknowledge that this will be my last message as SSAA National President as, after 50-odd years of volunteer administrative involvement with the Association, I feel now is the right time to retire.

While I'm not going far, I intend to slow the pace and get back to blowing the dust and cobwebs out of many of my firearms and spending more time hunting in the bush and maybe even at the range, enjoying the camaraderie of fellow shooters. Both activities stimulated my interest in and commitment to the SSAA and I'm humbled and privileged to have had the opportunity to contribute to the fantastic advancement and achievements of our great Association over those years.

Retirement at any level from any activity always makes you thoughtful about the past, the future and your place in the world and even though I'm now just one of 200,000-plus SSAA members, I've had the chance to view our Association and sport from many different perspectives.

Never one to preach, I'd like to take this final opportunity to remind all members the SSAA has been successful because it's a grassroots organisation, controlled by the members if they wish to accept responsibility of being involved. It's vital we stay informed, maintain our individual integrity, ensure our leaders retain the focus of the members and maintain their and the Association's integrity and always remain accountable. I thank you for the privilege of serving and wish you all and our great SSAA well into the future.

Geoff Jones

SSAA National President



SSAA - Protecting shooters since 1948

Recoil can cause real damage

IN YOUR TOP Shots column in July, Bill from Canberra at 68 years of age wrote of his increasing intolerance of shotgun recoil as he gets older. An excellent answer by Paul Miller advised using lighter loads to reduce recoil but I hope Bill doesn't encounter the same problem I did.

I'd been shooting for about 60 years, mainly heavy calibre rifles and shotguns both in the field and range competitions and in my sixties began to develop a sore right shoulder (I'd been shooting Field Shotgun, Skeet and 5-Stand two or three times a week for years).

My favourite rifle was an ex-military, rebarrelled and cut down stock .308W with brass butt-plate and my shotguns had either hard plastic or solid rubber butt-plates. An X-ray showed my acromioclavicular joint (the one between collarbone and shoulder bone) was, to put it mildly, 'stuffed'.

It was badly distorted, arthritic and the outer third of my collarbone was surrounded by ectopic ossification - abnormal bone deposits in the tendons and ligaments around it, all the result of repeated recoil. I had to give up shooting so would advise all shooters, especially beginners with years of shooting ahead of them, to fit ventilated rubber recoil pads to their guns.

Alan Moskwa, SA

More on mystery scope

I READ WITH interest John Dunn's Top Shots answer on the mystery scope (Shooter, August 2020). Yes, these were made by Hakko and marketed by Beeman out of the US and were advertised as an air rifle scope. I bought two of the model SS-2 which is a 3x21 with fine plex reticule and multi-fit base.

I bought mine in 1998 and have one mounted on a single-shot .22 Magnum where it has worked just fine, the other still brand new in the box waiting for a home (they were about \$380 each at the time). They were very popular in the US for a time for mounting on flat top ARs. Target acquisition is quite fast and the 3x has a field of view of 11.5m at 100m. They're a very well made scope and the multi-fit mounting base is strong and secure.

Grant Connell, via email

Mike Papps: A real gentleman

I READ WITH great interest Rod Pascoe's article on Mike Papps (Shooter, July 2020). Around 1965 I joined Adelaide Pistol Club when the range was in Glen Osmond quarry. I was new to target pistol shooting but had some experience with a .22 rifle and .410 shotgun, keeping feral animals in check working part-time on a farm.

Many older members of APC took it

upon themselves to teach me about pistol shooting, in particular safety issues. Among those helpful members was Mike Papps and before I came to know who he was, as a famous competition shooter, he taught me 50m, rapid fire and centrefire shoots. Naturally I was nowhere near Mike's standard and I soon found out why - he was an Olympic Games shooter!

Around that time Mike became a Walther agent and even though he'd used his Hi-Standard (US) at the Olympics, he decided to sell it. I bought it, not because I thought if Mike shot well with it maybe I could too, I fell in love with the pistol for its shape and balance. I believe it was the same pistol pictured in your article as I'm sure he had only one Hi-Standard.

Then APC moved to a country location so I reluctantly gave up my membership and to this day can't remember to whom that pistol was sold. And yes, I've also bought Frontier Arms imports - a set of trigger shoes for my 3-in-1 Walther pistols and a .22 PCP Walther. As Mike and I live in Adelaide's eastern suburbs we bump into each other from time to time and I'll always remember him as a real gentleman.

Hassan Salleh, SA



Insurance Q&A with Trevor Jenkin

Send questions to: communications@ssaa.org.au

Q: I would much prefer to talk to someone about my insurances than to do everything online and by computer. Is that possible? Daniel Thomas, via email

A: I hear you Daniel and sometimes it's easier to ask those insurance questions and a lot easier for us to answer them directly over the phone or face-to-face. Thanks to your question I thought I'd take the opportunity to let you and all our members know how to get in touch with us. SSAA General

Insurance Brokers is located in Adelaide and is where I spend most of my time along with our Account Manager Megan Spiniello, her assistant Kathryn Fry and receptionist Adrienne Jenkin. In our NSW office we have Ali Mulla and his assistant Hayley Dunstan.

Ali manages the insurance needs for our members and clients in NSW, ACT and Queensland and can be contacted on 0455 777 685, while Megan looks after the other states and her number is 0438 756 009. Ali

and Megan will happily take time to discuss your general insurance needs and are available to arrange appointments. When Ali and Megan are interstate or on appointments, Hayley (0497 205 641) and Kathryn are here to assist with general enquiries as well as any claims issues.

Give us a call on (08) 8332 0281 or visit ssaaib.com.au - we're here to help and if you're ever in Adelaide, drop in for a chat and a coffee.

The advice offered in this column is of a general nature and does not allow for individual situations. SSAAIB recommends that you obtain professional advice before proceeding with any insurance investment. SSAAIB accepts no liability for any actions by an individual to change their insurance plans without seeking professional advice.

Insurance

Informing the next generation of hunters

he North American model of wildlife conservation relies on hunters. The model is implicitly and explicitly tied to the recreational interests of hunters and while in recent times wildlife management has shifted towards a more inclusive and broader stakeholder mix, many are worried about the decline in hunter numbers.

This drop has the potential to impact wildlife conservation as hunters are an important and engaged user group which supports vast tracts of habitat on both public and private land that enables broader wildlife conservation beyond the species hunted. Funding from licenses, fees, taxes and other sources enhance conservation efforts.

One knock-on effect from the decline in hunter numbers is the reduction in new wildlife employees with a hunting background. This has far-reaching consequences in that future wildlife professionals have limited understanding of the culture, motivations and wildlife habitat stewardship of hunters.

The problem has been highlighted in The Journal of Wildlife Management, wherein a paper titled Successes and Challenges of University First Hunt Programs outlines how certain US universities are providing hunting experiences to students undertaking studies which may lead them to managing or writing polices around wildlife management and conservation in that country.

Two university hunting programs were highlighted in this paper, one at the University of California Davis (UC Davis) and one at Louisiana State University (LSU). The aim of these programs was to provide students with firsthand hunting experiences where they learned the skills and tools to hunt successfully.

As potential future wildlife professionals, the hunting experience was aimed at helping them better understand the motivations of hunting constituents they may eventually serve. Across all professions it's important there's some degree of relevant practical experience to help understand cultural context as it relates to their work and wildlife management is no different.

The UC Davis hunting experience program targeted senior undergraduates who'd never hunted. Students would apply by writing an essay describing why they want hunting experience and how that might prepare them better for a career in wildlife conservation. There are only 15 spots available with 70 per cent typically filled by women. The camp is not intended to be a hunter recruitment effort, just a professional education and career preparation opportunity. The course is structured both online and on-site with hunter safety components completed online and hands-on training involving firearm handling, field safety and shooting skills held on-site.

California Waterfowl Association organises a hunting weekend where on-site training and hunting occurs and all students must participate fully with the intent of harvesting a duck. They spend intensive oneon-one time shooting clays and developing

hunting skills as part of training, hunting mentorship provided by club members and senior wildlife professionals who happen to be hunters. A mentor-guide provides support during a morning three-hour hunt and that time provides a myriad of professional and career insights to the young students.

The LSU experience has similar outcomes but hunting opportunities are made available to all students enrolled in the senior-level wildlife management techniques course, hunter education conducted in-house by the faculty on this occasion. Typically, students attend an early afternoon gun safety workshop run by the faculty and undertake clay target shooting. The next morning they hunt ducks in pairs under instruction from hunting club guides with deer hunting also available in this program. Any harvested game is used in class for scientific dissections and discussions with leftover meat becoming communal for an end-of-year cook-up.

These courses are a great idea to show young people who may one day write wildlife policy, what hunters' motivation and culture is like. It was refreshing to read that many of the students wanted to participate again and become hunters themselves, so can we do something similar in Australia? Maybe.

Send questions to: wildlife@ssaa.org.au



Need somewhere to hunt? Want to help farmers with their pest issues? Register now for SSAA's Farmer Assist program farmerassist.com.au



A business card affair

he 1980s and '90s saw major global escalations in airline hijackings. Back then I was flying internationally several times a year and what could be carried aboard an aircraft in hand luggage was strictly controlled, nothing sharp or pointed permitted.

Being interested in bushcraft and survival I decided to assemble a small kit of items that would be allowed in hand luggage, as in any emergency you probably wouldn't be able to access the more comprehensive kit and large knife you kept in your checked baggage. I wasn't thinking of escaping the tragic aircraft crashes which had been splashed across the news, more about surviving a forced landing in a remote area.

A common business card wallet which wouldn't attract attention was chosen as the container and I set about assembling a few things that might be useful in my kit. When I began this exercise a so-called survival card - a small rectangle of stainless steel with various punched holes that could be used to open bottle caps, undo bolts and turn screws - was the first item in my kit. There are dozens of patterns of these metal cards available now as any search of the worldwide web will demonstrate.

In truth, my early model wasn't particularly useful and when it became possible through changing regulations to carry a 'Swiss card' I substituted one of these for the survival card. Although the original card had

a suspension hole for attaching a thread and a north-pointing arrow, in my tests it never did manage to point to north. I decided the reason was probably because stainless steel isn't known for its magnetic qualities.

I didn't persist with updating this kit but while working on it was never able to find a really satisfactory cutting tool for inclusion. For direction-finding, compass manufacturers Brunton came to the rescue with a tiny compass disc which could be floated on a pool of water in the palm of your hand. Sadly these seem to have been discontinued although there are dozens of other similar cards, some with 'pop-out' tools and others which are simple survival aide-memoirs.

A tightly-folded plastic bag and strip of water-purifying tablets went in next and were followed by a Fresnel lens. A mini repair kit from a hotel room supplied some cotton, needles and a button or two and this was supplemented by a few metres of fine fishing line and some hooks. I notice some 'experts' dismiss fishhooks as useless unless you're surviving near water - which might not be often in Australia's outback - but hooks will catch plenty of game apart from fish. Creativity and ingenuity will yield birds, various reptiles and even small mammals.

A strip of adhesive bandage, an alcohol wipe or two and antiseptic dressings made up the first aid components and a late addi-



The credit card-sized survival kit.

tion was an Eze-Lap credit card-sized diamond sharpening stone. I intended to polish the back of this to make it efficiently reflective but never got round to it. Was I thinking of grinding a cutting edge on to a shank removed from the sole of one of my shoes? Maybe, but removing the shank without the help of a strong knife is not an easy task.

Perhaps the somewhat redundant business card wallet kit was just a convenient storage location for the sharpener. I rediscovered my kit during a recent lockdown clean-up and thought it may still be useful so I think I'll continue my search for a suitable 'sharp' to

include.







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I'm experiencing all sorts of issues transitioning from shooting my rifle to my shotgun, being right-handed but left eye dominant - I've checked this several times and am certain this is the case. I've tried shooting left-handed but I guess you can't teach an old dog new tricks as it feels so awkward shooting from my left shoulder.

I've read older Australian Shooter articles where you suggest trying to learn shooting clays from the same side as your dominant eye and have tried this but am just useless from my left side. Is there a second option? Currently I'm closing my left eye but am really struggling to see the clays - or anything else for that matter - with any clarity. I had my eyes checked and was told I have no issues and don't need glasses for distance. Any help appreciated.

Ron Coburn, Vic.

It's not the end of the world Ron, you're not alone. This is a topic we've covered several times but I'm happy to expand as it's such a common problem. Right handiness and left eye dominance affects about 28 per cent of the population (for reasons I don't know, I'm told it's more predominant in females than males).

If you're a new shooter then, as you correctly point out I strongly advise trying to learn shooting from your left shoulder, therefore gaining the advantage of being able to use your shotgun with both eyes open. In doing so you have the bonus of a wide peripheral use of vision which will dramatically enhance target acquisition, particularly on targets travelling at

unknown angles, distances and heights. Changing shoulders sounds great in theory but in reality, for many people it's almost impossible and I'm one of them, as there's nothing I can do left-handed that makes me look remotely natural. I'm very much righthanded in everything I do and if forced to shoot from the left shoulder, I'd need to find another sport to participate in.

I'm very much righthanded in everything I do and if forced to shoot from the left. shoulder. I'd need to find another sport to participate in.

If you're like me in terms of handiness - and it sounds like you are - I strongly suggest you buy a pair of shooting glasses. Even though you don't need a prescription, the frames I'm suggesting you wear will offer the chance to fire your shotgun while keeping both eyes wide open. You may feel that's a waste of money as frames without non-prescription lenses would be useless, but besides the safety factor the glasses will provide, the frames will give you the chance to shoot with both eyes wide open which will help your shooting skills.

Here's how to customise shooting frames for cross dominance use. Put your shooting glasses on with non-prescription lenses. I suggest you buy clear lenses for allround use and while you may be tempted to choose darker ones for use in the sun, these will inhibit you in poor light (if you can afford both then all the better).

Make sure the shotgun is unloaded and point it at a mirror. With a white-board marker, mark the point on your left lens (dominant eye) which covers the pupil of your eye after you've mounted the gun to your shoulder (you may need someone to assist). Once you've identified that point, take some smudged sticky tape and insert a piece of tape roughly 1cm in diameter over that point. If you don't want anyone to know what you're doing you can insert the tape on the inside of the lens. This will effectively stop you using your left eye to shoot with and, more importantly, allow you to keep both eyes wide open which will dramatically benefit your vision by letting more light travel to your eye.

Closing one eye often causes us to squint out of our good eye which in effect is stopping the amount of light entering, something which will have a substantially detrimental outcome in our ability to quickly and clearly identify the target. Your problem, as previously stated, is very common particularly among shooters who've learned to use a rifle where closing one eye won't be to their detriment, especially if using a scope. Try this simple remedy and I'm sure you'll be on your way.



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Got a question - ask our TOP SHOTS

• Rod Pascoe

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

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Please refer to this photo of a .177 calibre air rifle. The left side of the stock is stamped 'Kynock Limited Birmingham' and the right side has the imprint of a flying swallow. What can you tell me about this rifle?

Bexley Carman, via email

Thanks for your query about this very old and rare air rifle. Although the name Kynoch is well known in ammunition circles, your Kynoch Swift rifle is one of only about 1000 produced between 1907 and 1911 and is believed to have been made by external contractors on behalf of the Kynoch company to complement their airgun pellet manufacturing in Witton, Birmingham. The rifle was available in both .177 and .25 calibres and performed

well but has been described as 'over-engineered'. According to UK airgun expert John Milewski, the rifle was sold there for the equivalent of £2.50 which at that time would have been relatively expensive, probably the reason they weren't made for long. The originator of the brand was George Kynoch (1834-1891), a colourful character who worked as an industrialist and politician (his history on Wikipedia is worth reading).

Meanwhile, your old air rifle is quite valuable due to its rarity, although I don't want to guess an actual value. To a collector, especially in the UK, I imagine it would fetch a tidy sum so please don't be tempted to 'do it up' by re-blueing as this will reduce its value.

Geoff Smith

I have acquired a rather nice Martini Henry in .222 rimmed but am having trouble finding information on case specs, as in case trimmed length and overall length as well as load data using AR2205. Hope you can help.

The .222 rimmed cartridge is a rimmed-cased version of the .222 Remington cartridge so case length is 43.18mm, trimmed back to 42.92mm. Data from an ADI powder booklet says 11gr of AR2205 powder with a 45gr projectile will produce about 2260fps, while 10.5gr of AR2205 behind a 50gr projectile gives about 2120fps. Other ADI powders can be used for your cartridge in the Martini Henry rifle but, to be on the safe side, only use their starting loads.

Barry Wilmot

Rob Blyth, Vic.

I read your very interesting 'Shot towers of the Trans-Tasman' article by Lionel Swift (*Shooter*, April 2020). It has always intrigued me how the fall produces shot and diameter of the shot is resolved. Do you have anyone who could explain the operation of shot towers?

Ken Goodman, Qld

Thanks for a really interesting question Ken. To make pellets using a shot tower, lead is heated until molten then poured through a copper sieve situated high in the tower. The liquid lead forms tiny spherical balls by surface tension and solidifies as it falls like rain, the partially cooled balls falling into a deep water-filled basin in the base of the tower.

Size of the shot is, as you might imagine, regulated by the size of the holes in the copper sieve, a method invented in the 1780s by William Watts of Bristol. He apparently built a three-storey tower then burrowed a shaft under his house to achieve the required drop to make the shot round! There are still shot towers in operation around the world, most of them considerably taller than three storeys.

Shot is now predominantly made by the Bliemester method, invented in 1961 by Louis W. Bliemester of Los Angeles, his process best suited to making small shot sizes from approximately #7 to #9. This method requires very little drop as the molten lead is dripped from small orifices and dropped one inch into a hot liquid where it rolls along an incline then falls another three feet. The liquid temperature controls the cooling rate of the lead and surface tension of the liquid combined with the inclined surfaces make small droplets of lead into regular spherical balls.

In either method, if any of the shot is not

sufficiently round it's sorted to remove it from the perfect pellets then re-melted and dropped again. The Bliemester method only works for shot sizes up to about #5 and big shot like Buckshot and larger is traditionally swaged in high volume production or cast in smaller volumes. Search online for 'how is lead shot made' for some entertaining videos.

Paul Miller

I've been a target rifle shooter for many years but am now looking for a change of pace and firearm. I'd like to get into pistol shooting and was planning to buy a revolver in .357 Magnum and a 9mm pistol. Shooting steel targets also appeals to me. Any tips?

Chris, via email

I think it's a great idea to experience a variety of shooting disciplines. There are dozens of pistol competitions, each with its own appeal and each requiring specialised skills and equipment. Matches are shot on paper targets, others on steel, some require fast-shooting at close range while others are precision matches shot over longer distances. Some require the shooter to move quickly from target to target and others allow you to

lie down. Most metropolitan and regional centres have pistol clubs offering a range of disciplines and some larger cities have shooting complexes hosting several clubs. Those in smaller towns may limit events to suit the facilities available and the size and interests of their membership. Some SSAA branches have pistol clubs shooting a variety of matches and information is available on the SSAA National website - ssaa.org. au - under Disciplines.

Track down the pistol clubs in your area, find out when they shoot and arrange a visit to watch their matches. At the same time a club official will usually go through the membership and licensing process with you and at most clubs, depending on local regulations, potential new members are offered a 'try shooting' session to experience the different competitions first-hand.

I suggest you don't sign up there and then, be patient and keep exploring your options. Bear in mind your nearest club may not necessarily offer the matches which interest you and you may need to extend the search outside your local area. While going through this process, ask lots of questions and make sure you're able to commit to the sport in terms of participation and cost.

You mention the type of firearms you'd like to own but the matches you end up shooting will determine what pistols you actually need. Use your first Permit to Acquire a Pistol wisely as there are websites full of unwanted pistols for sale, many impulsive first-buys.

Rod Pascoe

• Don't miss Australian & New Zealand Handgun 19 - out now.



My father passed away many years ago and I inherited a C.Cowles. I wondered if you had any information on the company or the age of such a rifle.

Peter Evans, via email

This is side lever break action rifle which appears to be a variation of the Thomas Perkes' patent of 1878. Though the proof marks aren't particularly clear they indicate it was made in Birmingham, England. At that time many such rifles were produced by various craftsmen in the gun trade for other dealers and makers who subsequently stamped the firearms with their own name and/or brand and retailed

them to the public. The 'C. COWLES SYDNEY NSW' stamping on the top flat of the barrel indicates it was made between 1878 and 1885.

Charles Cowles was born in 1837 in Norfolk, England and trained as a gunsmith when he came to Australia with his employer William Green in 1864, arriving in Queensland before moving to Sydney and setting up shop at 96 Market Street. In 1865 Green became ill and returned to England and Cowles took over the business. In 1867 it was moved to 205 Pitt Street then to Cannon House at 411 George Street in 1875.

In 1885 Cowles formed a partnership with his brother-in-law Arthur Dunn, the business trading as Cowles & Dunn & Co (in 1895 the business name changed to Cowles and Dunn). They were agents for English gunmaker W. & C. Scott and Son and continued to trade until the start of World War Two. The company sold and repaired a wide range of firearms and fishing equipment and also produced a range of shotgun cartridges which are highly prized by modern collectors. Charles Cowles was an accomplished shotgun shooter and local councillor who served one term as the Mayor of Mosman. He died on December 24, 1923.

John Dunn



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Trio determined by all-round attributes



In the final instalment of our favourite riflecartridge-scope combination series, Senior Correspondent **Rod Pascoe** outlines a truly versatile option

Rifle: CZ 452 Varmint

Cartridge: .22LR

Scope: Bushnell Elite Tactical 5-15x40mm



hoosing a favourite rifle/cartridge/scope combination was not as easy as it may sound as all my rifles are favourites for one reason or another, so my decision came down to selecting the most versatile in the field and on the range. Added to which, my fellow writers have been covering centrefire rifles so I thought I'd stand up for the humble .22.

As with any firearm purchase decision, I wanted a .22 Long Rifle (LR) rifle which had to meet a number of requirements, so I settled on the CZ 452 Varmint as it complied with the rulebooks of the target competitions I was interested in shooting. But apart from satisfying the myriad of technical, weight and dimension

requirements it had other attributes which appealed, namely a short and weighty varmint barrel, accessible and easily adjustable trigger, a stock that would accommodate an accessory rail for a single point sling - and I'm also a fan of European-made firearms.

The rifle

My Ceska Zbrojovka or CZ 452 Varmint in .22LR is first and foremost a target rifle currently used for the SSAA events of Rimfire Metallic Silhouette and BR30, although it has also taken its fair share of bunnies and a few foxes. It's blued with a walnut stock, chequered palmswell and rubber buttplate, supplied without sights and with a 530mm heavy barrel (a tad

under 21"), adjustable trigger and five-shot magazine.

Twenty years ago I bought the Varmint specifically for the NRAA Rimfire Class Target Shooting match (RCTS), a competition requiring an off-the-shelf hunting rifle in original condition with no after-market custom barrel allowed. The match involves firing 20 shots each at 30m, 60m and 90m from the standing, sitting and prone positions respectively and even though RCTS is a field competition, it runs along the lines of a military format course-of-fire using a series of timed exposures of the target.

Targets are operated manually by 'markers' in the butts gallery and scored after each string of five shots, individual bullet holes 'spotted' with coloured discs to



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show the fall of shots which also allows the shooter to confirm scores being recorded. Obviously a five-shot magazine is required as is a reliable action, as malfunctions means lost shots and there are no reshoots and in that respect I found the CZ faultless, with smooth bolt operation and rounds feeding from the magazine freely and consistently.

The CZ Varmint is probably not one of the top-shelf rifles but the brand is well respected and popular and all .22 models are value for money and accurate with the right ammunition. Mine has operated faultlessly and despite thousands of rounds through the bore has retained its accuracy. The rifle is equally at home being fired from the standing, sitting or prone positions with the aid of a sling in the RCTS match, as it is from the standing unsupported position in Rifle Silhouette and even from a rest on the bench for BR30 (Metallic Silhouette requires the rifle to be fired from the standing unsupported position so a sling can't be used).

I find the balance of the CZ with its short, heavy profile barrel excellent for this match and, unlike most right-handed silhouette shooters who prefer to use their left hand to support the rifle close to the trigger and magazine area with thumb and fingertips, I tend to support mine with a more traditional hold just under the scope's objective lens.

Although the RCTS match requires an



unmodified hunting rifle, the rules allow the use of a target-style sling and fittings. I added a Gehmann leather rifle sling typically used in big bore rifle matches but, unlike those matches, I needed something which could be adjusted to suit the three firing positions.

A friend routed a channel in the timber fore-end and fitted an accessory rail. With this attachment, the sling can slide back and forth to suit each of the three shooting positions without having to unbuckle and adjust

the sling itself. The only other modification was to the trigger, also allowed by the rules. As such there's no minimum trigger weight for RCTS or Rimfire Silhouette so long as it's safe and passes the test for accidental discharges.

Thanks to an excellent trigger job by Robert Tobler of RDT Products in Robertson NSW, the Varmint has one of the nicest let-offs I've experienced. I don't know exactly what the trigger weight is in its 'light' setting but there's still plenty of



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Trio determined by all-round attributes



adjustment to bring it back to the Silhouette 'Hunting' Rifle requirement of 2lb (907g). Overall weight of the rifle including scope and unloaded magazine is 3.7kg and is within limits for Rimfire Hunting Rifle.

The scope

The one currently on the rifle is a Bushnell Elite Tactical 5-15x40mm but was not the original scope fitted as that was an older Simmons 'target' model transferred from another rifle. Unfortunately the Simmons suffered an accident and being out of warranty necessitated a replacement. The Bushnell ticks the boxes in terms of its magnification and large, easy-to-read turret knobs and Japanese-made optics.

There's nothing special about this scope and the reticle isn't too busy, the target - or centre of the target - unobscured by the crosshairs. I use around 10-power for Metallic Silhouette, between 12 and 15 for BR30 and for RCTS I adjust magnification to suit the shooting position and conditions on the day - somewhere between eight and 12 power.

The scope is attached via a pair of Sports Match mounts which fit directly to the dovetailed receiver of the CZ, these being reasonably high mounts which places my cheek perfectly on the high comb of the stock.

The cartridge

As with the scope, the ammunition I'm currently enjoying isn't what I started out with 20 years ago. Back then my choice was simply called Geco .22 LR Rifle which functioned well in all my .22s, rifles and pistols at the time. Over the years, reviewing different ammunition brands and types, I've settled on the Eley Sport round, a little more expensive than Geco but I believe the Sport has slightly better quality control on their production line and, as a result, I find I'm experiencing fewer 'flyers'. This subsonic ammunition provides enough energy to topple the 100m rams in a Silhouette match.

Conclusion

As stated, my CZ .22 set-up is a versatile mix of rifle, scope and ammunition put together for a specific job. There's nothing remarkable about any of its individual components, all are readily available value-for-money items and the combination shoots perfectly well, at least to my ability. In the intervening 20 years much has been done by manufacturers to make their products more marketable, and CZ has a number of fine-looking rimfire rifles offering a variety of stock and barrel options based on the newer 457 action. Elev has a huge range of .22LR ammunition which

caters to all budget and precision options and Bushnell continue their Elite Tactical line of scopes.

Despite the new offerings by all three manufacturers I have no immediate plans to change or replace anything, certainly not the rifle or scope. If I do find .22LR ammunition which performs better than my current choice I may consider a switch, otherwise what I have is a fit-for-purpose and versatile combination. •





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Douglas Riach

he damage to native wildlife populations caused by feral cats is well known but there are two other concerns to be considered by hunters. Firstly, cats pose a risk of transmitting disease directly to those involved in culling and handling the animals. Secondly, harvesting wild game meat means an increased risk of germs being transmitted from feral cats to wild animals and from them to the hunter. Cats are hosts and spread a parasite and illness known as toxoplasmosis which can infect most game including rabbits, goats and deer and can also be transmitted to humans.

What is toxoplasmosis?

A cat-borne parasite/disease which produces initial symptoms then cysts in the second host which can be humans, these cysts are reasonably large and often visible to the naked eye. The parasite is known as *toxoplasma gondii* but will be referred to here simply as toxoplasmosis.

Toxoplasmosis has a two-host life cycle, the

first host the cat (feral or domestic) where the parasite reproduces (sexual reproduction) in the animal's digestive tract. A cat can produce millions of microscopic oocysts (cysts containing a zygote) which can be considered like an egg. Cat faeces spread the eggs (oocysts) which can survive for more than a year on the ground, in water or on grass.

The second host eats the grass or drinks the water and becomes infected. In this part of the life cycle the eggs develop into a stage of the parasite which rapidly divide (asexual reproduction) and spread throughout the body, at which point the majority of symptoms appear.

Toxoplasmosis can infect most warm-blooded animals. The second hosts don't produce or spread oocysts but are themselves infected. The true life cycle of toxoplasmosis is for non-infected cats to consume the infected second host animal -mice, rats, bilbies etc - for the parasite's life cycle to start over.

Larger animals such as sheep, goats,

deer, kangaroos and humans are not normal prey for cats but may become hosts in the life cycle of the parasite. After the initial infection in the second host, the parasites enter a latent period where they form cysts protected by a membrane not responsive to antibiotics and resistant to the body's immune system. In humans the cysts can form in the muscles, tongue, esophagus, diaphragm, heart, brain and spinal cord. When detected in sheep, toxoplasmosis cysts are trimmed from the meat or, in highly infected cases, the carcass is deemed unfit for human consumption. South Australia employs a slaughterhouse surveillance program to reduce the risk of toxoplasmosis.

In many cases the original animal may not have any obvious signs or symptoms of the illness, so deciding whether or not an animal is 'sick' is impossible when looking through a riflescope and deciding whether to harvest it or not.

Symptoms

According to Tasmania's Department of



Feral cats - the risk to hunters

Primary Industries, toxoplasmosis spread by cats has taken a massive toll on local wildlife. Apart from a high death rate, indications of infection include neurological signs such as blindness, altered behaviour and unsteady gait.

In humans, initial symptoms are usually stated as flu-like illnesses, nausea, vomiting, stomach ache and diarrhoea. Sometimes there are muscle aches and tender lymph nodes which can last for months though in healthy adults there are often no initial symptoms. In a few cases eye problems such as blurred vision, inflammation of the retina, seizures, lung problems (which resemble tuberculosis) and poor coordination have been reported. Toxoplasmosis has been associated with birth defects, foetal deaths and abortions as well as neurological deficits and neurocognitive deficits in infants.

Portugal, France, Austria, Uruguay, Italy, Germany, Switzerland and Belgium routinely screen pregnant women for toxoplasmosis. Several biologists have a theory of toxoplasmosis affecting human behaviour, which is supported by research linking it to schizophrenia, high incidents of motor accidents, impaired psychomotor performance and risk-taking. Obviously cysts in the heart, brain or in a foetus can be fatal and those in the lungs or other vital organs can cause serious consequences. In people with a compromised immune system the risk is higher.

Arthur Ashe, the renowned former tennis player who won three Grand Slam titles, is reported to have suffered neurological problems from toxoplasmosis and died aged 49. Merritt Butrick who featured in two Star Trek movies died aged 29 from the disease.

Diaanosis

Toxoplasmosis mimics several other diseases, making diagnosis difficult. The presence of the parasite may be detected in the blood, amniotic fluid and cerebrospinal fluid if a test is conducted for toxoplasmosis antibodies.

How caught

Exposure to cat faeces or eating undercooked meat containing cysts are the most recorded means of infection in humans. However, humans can also become a host for this parasite from drinking raw milk (cow or goat), ingesting its eggs on unwashed salad or vegetables, having contaminated hands from handling feral cats (dead or alive), contaminated game animals, gardening or cleaning cat litter trays.



Prevalence

Prior to the Kangaroo Island bushfires, a far higher density of toxoplasmosis was detected there compared to mainland South Australia. Factors affecting the prevalence include cat density, type of soil and environment. A 2019 study identified an 11 times greater feral cat abundance on Kangaroo Island compared with the Adelaide Hills and Fleurieu Peninsula areas.

Prevention

Person-to-person spread of toxoplasmosis normally does not occur. As cat's fur or faeces may contain toxoplasmosis eggs so when handling feral cats or cat bodies, gloves should be worn or hands washed thoroughly immediately after handling. Washing to remove possible eggs is more effective than using hand sanitiser.

Meat must be thoroughly cooked to kill parasites inside the cysts if present in the animal, while freezing for 24 hours at -20C or for 48 hours at -4C has also been found to kill parasites and render the meat safe to eat. This may be nothing new for some people as reptile owners regularly freeze rats and mice for 48 hours before feeding to their pets to prevent transmission of parasites. For human consumption all meat should be cooked thoroughly though this may be an issue for those who enjoy their meat rare or medium-rare, especially with venison which often goes dry when fully cooked. The Quality Deer Management Association (US) issued a recommendation for cooking venison if you insist in a pink centre. The safest way is to fully cook the venison but treat the meat at high temperature (at least 145 degrees F) then allow it to rest for three minutes before carving,

which should produce enough heat to kill parasites. Of course if previously frozen for the required period and temperature (see above) the meat doesn't need to be thoroughly cooked to be safe.

Water can also be contaminated so should be boiled, filtered or treated with UV such as a Steripen when drinking from a potentially suspect source. Chlorination has been found to be less effective and requires more time and free chlorine to kill parasites, so if using chlorine-based water purification tablets, ensure the chlorine added to your water bottle is of the right concentration to guarantee the water safe to drink.

Vegetables should be properly washed before eating with all soil removed. Hands and cooking utensils should be washed after handling raw products and gloves worn when emptying cat litter trays. Pregnant women or immune compromised people should avoid changing cat litter trays.

Children's sandpits should be covered when not in used. A few years ago child care centres removed these or covered them at night after a reported increase in toxoplasmosis in children, traced to such areas contaminated by stray cats. Wear gloves when gardening, especially if the area is visited by cats, and if you own cats don't allow them to hunt or roam. RSPCA Australia policy encourages the containment of cats at least from dusk to dawn.

Summary

During initial infection in humans, if correctly diagnosed, treatments are available in the form of combinations of drugs. There is currently no vaccine to prevent toxoplasmosis and no drug has been confirmed effective for the parasite once the cysts have formed.

This article is merely a summary of known information on toxoplasmosis and not written as a medical observation or advice. It is of general information on the illness spread by feral cats. Emphasis is on safety when handling feral cats, prevention of illness, care of field harvested game and in supporting the removal of feral cats from Australia. Further advice on toxoplasmosis should be obtained from medical specialists if needed.



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National amnesty to launch next year



ustralia's permanent National Firearms Amnesty was discussed at a recent virtual meeting between SSAA President Geoff Iones, key stakeholders and the Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs, Jason Wood.

Other representatives were present from organisations including Shooting Australia, Shooting Industry Foundation of Australia. the Australian Clay Target Association and National Farmers' Federation along with the Department of Home Affairs, Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, Australian Institute of Criminology, Australian Federal Police and Australian Border Force.

Discussions included a Commonwealth Firearms Information Booklet and an Australian Firearms Information Network. though the primary point of interest for the SSAA was the National Firearms Amnesty. In November of last year the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management agreed to the permanent National Firearms Amnesty but given the "diversion of resources by the Department and law enforcement agencies to respond to COVID-19, and concerns relating to the safe surrender of firearms during the pandemic" the start of the amnesty was delayed by a year and will now launch in July, 2021.

A previous national amnesty which ran in 2017 for three months resulted in more than 57,000 firearms being handed in for registration, sale or destruction and Assistant Minister Wood believes a permanent amnesty will "improve public safety by reducing the number of unregistered firearms in Australian communities".

Geoff Jones noted there was some discussion on using dealers as points for hand-in during the amnesty. Ultimately each state and territory will develop its own model for how firearms can be handed in, and currently some jurisdictions have decided not to allow firearms to be surrendered to dealers.

During the national amnesty in 2017, Queensland was a particularly successful state with firearm surrender available at participating licensed dealers. During the most recent meeting this success was recognised, with many groups noting the efficacy of including dealers in the process. Federal MP for Bonner and SSAA Brisbane member Ross Vasta, said he'd like to see the 2017 Queensland model implemented across the country for the permanent national amnesty

as it resulted in a substantial number of firearms coming back into the system.

Mr Vasta noted that the place of firearms return is a key variable which can impact the success of an amnesty, as many people would not go to a police station but would return guns to their local firearms dealer. The MP also stressed the aim of the amnesty is to remove firearms from illegal circulation and have them registered.

As part of the process leading up to the permanent amnesty, the Department of Home Affairs will look at what variables worked well during the most recent national amnesty and provide an evidence-based guide to best practice for states and territories. However, it will ultimately be up to those individual governments to determine which model they'll adopt.

Also discussed at the meeting was the Australian Firearms Information Network. The aim of the Network is to provide a life-cycle view of registered firearms in Australia from manufacture or import to dealer and through to export or destruction. The Network will supposedly benefit firearm users by keeping a history of firearms as they move across states and/or territories.

The Australian Capital Territory, Western Australia and Tasmania have integrated with the Australian Firearms Information Network with other jurisdictions working to ensure their IT systems can integrate by July 2021, which is the expected completion date. The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission explained the Australian Firearms Information Network is different to a firearms registry. Registration of firearms will remain the responsibility of individual states while the Network will enable jurisdictions to share information between registries.



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Ivo Dimitrov

he MG 42 (Maschinengewehr 42 or 'Machine Gun 42') is a general-purpose machine gun designed in Germany, chambered in 7.92x57mm Mauser and used extensively by the German Armed Forces during the second half of World War Two. It entered production in 1942 intending to supplement and replace its predecessor, the MG 34, which was more expensive and took longer to produce. The MG 34 was fully machined whereas the MG 42 used a lot of stamped metal sheet parts, but both remained in production until the end of the conflict. The MG 42 is arguably the most famous machine gun of WWII.

Designed to be low-cost and easy to build, the MG 42 proved a highly reliable option. It's notable for its high cyclic rate of fire, averaging about 1200 rounds per minute compared to around 850 for the MG 34 and perhaps 450-600 for other common machine guns like the M1919 Browning or Bren. This feature made it effective in providing suppressive fire and its unique sound gave it the nickname 'Hitler's buzzsaw'.

The MG 42 was adopted by several armies after the war and was both copied and built under licence. Its lineage continued past Germany's defeat, forming the basis for the almost identical MG 1 (MG 42/59) chambered in 7.62x51mm NATO (.308 Winchester), which subsequently evolved into the MG1 A3 and later the Bundeswehr's MG 3, Italian MG 42/59 and Austrian MG 74. It also spawned the Yugoslav unlicensed and nearcarbon copy Zastava M53.

The MG 42 lent many design elements to the Swiss MG 51 and SIG MG 710-3, French AA-52, American M60 and Belgian MAG general-purpose machine guns and the Spanish 5.56x45mm NATO Ameli light machine gun, though these feature other operating mechanisms to the MG 42.

Its predecessor the MG 34 was the first general purpose machine gun to be adopted into military service. The concept

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MG 42 crucial cog in German war machine

of the general purpose machine gun was that one system could serve both light and heavy machine gun roles, thus eliminating the need for two separate guns. The MG 34 was a revolutionary concept but was fully machined and therefore comparatively complex, expensive and time-consuming to produce.

In order to address these issues a contest was held for an MG 34 replacement. Three companies were asked to submit designs: Metall und Lackierwarenfabrik Johannes Großfuß AG of Döbeln, Rheinmetall-Borsig of Sömmerda and Stübgen of Erfurt. Of the proposals submitted Großfuß AG's proved the best design by far, employing a unique recoil-operated roller locking mechanism while the other two designs used gas-operated systems.

The roller-locking bolt contributes to the gun's quick locking and unlocking of the barrel process and consequently its high rate of fire. The company had no earlier experience in firearms manufacture, specialising in pressed and stamped steel components (their staple product was sheet metal lanterns). Dr Werner Gruner, one of the leading design engineers with Großfuß, knew nothing about machine guns when he became involved in the project but did specialise in the technology of mass production.

Gruner attended an army machine gunner's course to familiarise himself with the characteristics and also sought input from soldiers. He then recycled an existing Mauser-developed operating system and incorporated features from his experiences with army machine gunners and lessons learned during the early stages of the war. Being made largely from stamped and appropriately hardened metal, the new design required considerably less machining and fewer high grade steel alloys. It was much simpler to build than other machine guns, taking 75 man-hours to complete as opposed to 150 man-hours for the MG 34, and cost 250 RM as opposed to 327 RM (a 24 per cent reduction).

The MG 42 was fed with the same metal belts as the MG 34 and could also attach the same 50-round drum-shaped Gurttrommel belt container, the gun being air-cooled, recoil operated and open-bolt firing. The roller-locked recoil operation functions as follows: two cylindrical rollers positioned in tracks on the bolt head are pushed outwards into matching tracks in the barrel extension by the striker sleeve and lock the bolt in place against the breech.

Upon firing, rearward force from recoil of the cartridge moves the barrel and bolt assembly rearwards about 8mm. These two















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MG 42 crucial cog in German war machine

parts unlock when the striker assembly moves far enough back and allows the rollers to move inwards to their previous position, unlocking the bolt head and allowing the bolt assembly to further recoil rearwards, extracting the spent cartridge and ejecting it down. Simultaneously the barrel is pushed forward by a recuperator spring to its original position, the recoil spring then pushing the bolt assembly forward again, thrusting a new cartridge out of the belt into the breech. This sequence repeats as long as the trigger is depressed.

Due to its high rate of fire the original MG 42 roller-locked action had an undesirable tendency to exhibit bolt-bounce which causes unacceptably dangerous conditions on firing and upon investigation, the rollers in the bolt were found to 'bounce' back and forth as the bolt locked. The roller-locking system's inherent problem was solved by developing and adding an anti-bolt bounce spring buffer inside the bolt. The cyclic firing rate of the MG 42 can be altered by installing different bolts and recoil springs - a heavier bolt uses more recoil energy to overcome inertia so slows the cyclic rate of the gun.

Another unique feature of the MG 42 is the quick change of barrel, which can be accomplished in seconds by simply opening the barrel release latch to the right and pulling the barrel out, this being necessary as barrels were prone to overheating due to the high rate of fire. The second gunner carried spare barrels and asbestos gloves for a quick change.

The gun, like its predecessor, could be fired in the light MG role on a bipod or mounted on a lafette tripod in the heavy role. The MG 42 lafette featured the same sophisticated characteristics of the MG 34 lafette, indirect and direct line of fire adjustable optics and recoil operated mechanism which could sweep a predetermined area with fire in a wave-like motion.

The MG 42 (like the 34) was sometimes called 'Spandau' by British troops, a traditional generic term for all German machine guns left over from the Allied nickname for the MG 08 Maxim derivative used by German forces during World War One, originating from its manufacturer's plates noting the Arsenal of Spandau in the suburb of Berlin where some were made.

Production began in 1942 and contracts went to Großfuß Maget, Mauser-Werke Borsigwalde, Gustloff-Werke and Steyr, assembly during the war amounting to more than 400,000 units (17,915 units in 1942, 116,725 in '43, 211,806 in '44 and 61,877 in '45). In order to disguise the origin of manufacturer each one was assigned a







three-letter code (in the case of Mauser a two-letter code: ar). MG 42s made in 1942 were dated with the year and from 1943-45 the date was also disguised with a two-letter code. In 1945 the manufacturers' three-letter codes were also altered.

The following maker/year codes can be found at the rear end of MG 42 receivers: Maget: cra GH (1943), cra NC ('44), cra NC ('45) serial numbers from 1211 up. Gustloff Werke: dfb FG (1943), dfb mu ('44), svq sm ('45). Mauser-Werke Borsigwalde: ar jt (1943), ar df ('44), dd df ('45). Steyr: bnz Gz (1943), bnz pj ('44), swj PJ (late '44), swj xe ('45).

The example shown here was made by Maget (Maschinenbau und Gerätebau-Berlin) (cra) in 1944 (NC) and was refurbished and used post-war as seen by the force matched electro pencilled serial number on the top cover. •







Sam Garro

ormally, spotlighting rabbits is done from a vehicle with a rooftop rotating fixture to free-up the driver if he or she is the sole shooter and if there's more than one shooter the spotlighting, driving and shooting is shared between two or three, giving everyone a chance. But spotlighting rabbits on foot is a whole different experience with its own rewards.

While I've employed various hunting methods over the years on all manner of game from field-shooting rabbits, quail and duck, spotlighting rabbits from a vehicle, stalking pigs over bait to a buffalo-hunting safari in the Top End, it was only recently I had the chance to spotlight rabbits on foot, a pursuit I'd always wanted to try but for various reasons never did. The occasional article on the subject in shooting magazines also piqued my interest.

On reflection, trepidation or uncertainty of the hunt at night on foot and alone - and the gear required in the past such as a weighty battery hanging from a shoulder strap and having to juggle a spotlight, rifle and bagged rabbits - all would have been discouraging factors. Now with the availability of lightweight powerful LED or Cree LED hand-held spotlights, torches and firearm barrel attachments and accessories, the task is made easy.

A fellow shooter and acquaintance had been successfully bagging rabbits by this method for some time and while his nights were productive, he needed another shooter or two to help with culling the increasing rabbit population. Soaking rains and warm weather had promoted abundant green growth which was welcome fodder for the property owner's cows but not the rabbits.

In mild night conditions we took our time spotlighting, visited likely areas around clusters of blackberry bushes, warrens, mounds, haystacks, dams and along the outskirts of timbered growth and also walked open sections between knee-high ferns where rabbits had concealed burrows. Our headlamps lit the ground ahead while

an easy-to-carry, lightweight 9cm hand-held spotlight powered by a rechargeable lithium battery or a bright long beam LED torch was used to spot rabbits. Once spied, the spotlight or torch was turned off until we came within shooting range.

The night's hunt proved more rewarding than anticipated. Where rabbits were skittish or evasive during daylight hours, at night outside their burrows and in open sections they appeared to feed unperturbed so in close and out to 60m or so, head shots for clean meat retrieval were achievable on a regular basis.

Between myself and mate Alex using Brno 2 .22LR rifles and Mark with his U/O shotgun, we bagged a couple of dozen for the night and a decent result for the owner. After experiencing the night hunt and putting aside any trepidation or concerns I may have had, I'm looking forward to my next session when conditions are right. If you're contemplating such a venture, here are a few pointers which may help.



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Spotlighting rabbits on foot

Required skills

As a hunter of many years, stalking in daylight and using learned skills such as operating up-wind, remaining as inconspicuous as possible and the need for a quiet approach have become instinctive. Hunting at night is really no different except the shooter has the advantage of darkness, as most game is unable to easily detect your approach until you're reasonably close or under the light of a full moon.

Night vision aids

In the past, a spotlight wired to a weighty battery pack slung over the shoulder, coupled with carrying a firearm and backpack or other accessories, would have placed some restriction on the hunter and number of rabbits retrieved. But now there's the availability of compact, lightweight, hand-held spotlights and torches of varying sizes, designs and makes. These are powered by longer-lasting lithium ion batteries of 6-10 hours or more before they need replacing or recharging. There are also different configuration firearm attachments and accessories so the mission is

Sam's 1967 Brno 2 .22LR rifle and gear. From left: GPS and spare batteries, headlamp, spotting torch clamped to scope, lightweight 9cm-wide lens, 10w rechargeable lithium spotlight (6-10hrs) and magnetic barrel/torch clamp option.

simplified. Thermal imaging or night vision monocular and/or riflescopes certainly provide real sight and game location advantages at night, albeit presently costly and out of reach of most hunters.

Equipping yourself

For lighting the ground ahead, particularly

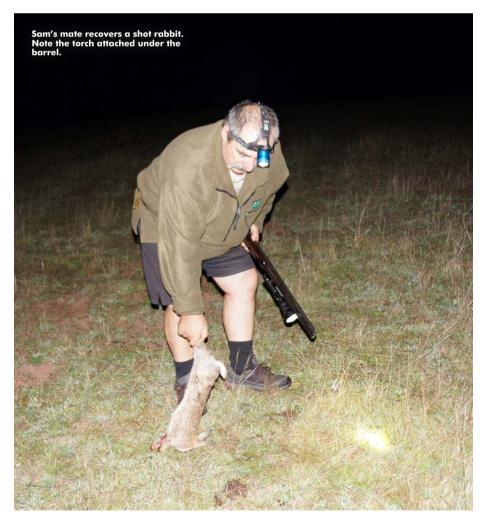
if trekking over unfamiliar terrain, a quality adjustable headlamp with good light output and back-up batteries is essential. A smaller version, lightweight hand-held Cree LED spotlight to pick out rabbits or one of the better quality hand-held torches such as Olight, Jetbeam, Led Lenser or Wolf-Eves to name a few, will cast a strong and concentrated beam out to 100m and more. As they're available in different sizes, luminous strength, weight and configuration, choose what's appropriate and ergonomically comfortable for you.

A barrel or riflescope mount bracket or magnetic gun mount to attach a spotting torch makes for a quicker shooting response when the opportunity presents, and a red filter cover or red lens spotlight or torch will prove more effective as they cast softer light compared to a blinding white beam. This is less likely to spook game and while a plastic red filter may reduce light intensity and beam length, red light LED lenses maintain beam strength and distance.

Know your territory

Skirting around the property during the day with everything in full view is easy enough but at night if you happen to even briefly veer off track, the surroundings can appear totally different and create real doubt and uncertainty. Chasing a scurrying or wounded rabbit on foot as it weaves and circles out in front will surely confuse and disorientate a hunter.

Making a mental note of gates, the lie and direction of fence lines, landmarks such as sheds and dams or even a rough diagram of the property with landmarks and/or features will help. Certainly a GPS with location of the car and homestead as a minimum will obviate any embarrassment and inconvenience to all concerned.



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Spotlighting rabbits on foot



Precautions

Awareness and location of livestock is paramount and, most importantly, any requirement or directive from the property owner should be strictly adhered to. A shotgun or .22LR rimfire rifle in a safe manner is the preferred firearm of choice in this type of hunting scenario.

Venturing out

So readied with night vision equipment and firearm it's also appropriate to carry some food or a snack and drink, depending on the intended duration of the hunt, together with a field knife and GPS. Also factor in a locator, small medical kit as a safety precaution, a backpack to carry items and a hessian bag, if not a backpack, to carry the rabbits. Whether a novice or experienced hunter, it's always best to go out in company and ensure the farmer or property owner is aware of the area you'll be hunting and when you're likely to return.

Where to hunt

Drive around the property during the day and note places occupied or frequented by rabbits. These could be clusters of burrows or warrens, stacked hay bales, stances of blackberry bushes, patches of concealing grass, feed or crop paddocks. Also check dams or reservoirs and other natural or man-made features such as sheds or old farm buildings as this will assist in the bunnies' location at night. Apart from obvious plain sight places, walking around the ground during the day to note fresh diggings or droppings outside thick growth such as blackberry bushes and fern patches will also indicate activity.

Nights to hunt

Over the years, spotlighting in gusty wind conditions has generally proven unproductive with rabbits preferring to remain underground. In calmer settings and particularly during a full moon they seem to be more active and during spring or under favourable situations as a result of good rains, we can expect a rapid rise in their numbers. Where they exist in abundance, most nights in mild or warmer conditions should prove productive.

Hunting approach

Adopt a patient and slow walking pace, avoiding unnecessary noise under foot. Stopping at intervals to scan ahead for those red eyes will produce results and if your quarry is spotted out of range, turn off the main lights, wait a few moments for the rabbit to start feeding or settle then move closer. When readying for the shot, be prepared to quickly scan again as the rabbit may have moved from its earlier position.





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Seeing beyond





A real gem for the stalking hunter

Con Kapralos

s a hunter you must take any advantage with you into the field as, whether you choose to hunt on foot or with some form of motorised transport, being able to scan your surrounds for intended quarry just makes sense. Glassing refers to using a good pair of binoculars or spotting scope, not relying on your riflescope, and while spotting scopes are excellent for covering long distances, a pair of binoculars is more realistic and definitely more practical. Yet the dilemma exists - what size binoculars are best for the hunter?

There are compact options which easily fit your pocket right up to huge 15x56 units best used with a tripod mount, certainly not to be carried around your neck in high country. Recently, many European hunters have gravitated towards binoculars which

combine practicality with performance - the 8x32. Where the 10x25 is a tad small at the objective end (for field of view) and the 8x42 and 10x42 a bit bulky and on the heavy side, common ground in the 8x32 has won many new fans.

In the UK one of the best sellers has been the Hawke Endurance ED 8x32s, perfectly suited to the stalking hunter who demands an optic which is lighter, trim but still performs as required. This model is available to Australian hunters through The Scope Store, importer and distributor of Hawke Optics, and on request a pair of Endurance 8x32 ED binoculars were supplied to Australian Shooter for review.

At a glance

Hawke Optics make a variety of binoculars to suit all budgets and applications. The

Endurance bracket is one of the premium models, eclipsed only by the Frontier grouping, while the Vantage and Nature-Trek options sit below the Endurance. The Endurance family has two sub-pockets - the standard Endurance with phase corrected BAK-4 roof prisms and Endurance ED with extra-low dispersion glass and phase-corrected BAK-4 prisms. The Endurance ED category consists of 10 individual models covering 8x32, 10x32, 8x42, 10x42, 8x25 and 10x25.

Up close

The review binoculars are finished in black but can be supplied in attractive green, the customary white Hawke Optics carton containing binoculars, carry-case, neck strap, lens covers and cloths. Immediately I was appreciative of the trim unit and light 539g



weight, measuring 134mm and between 99-119mm wide with intra-pupillary distance of 55-75mm. Externally, Hawke haven't scrimped on quality with the Endurance ED, the binoculars sitting beautifully in the hands with two textured grip panels on either side giving a good grip surface, the focus dial perfectly located just behind the bridge and easily reached with both index fingers. The body feels like firm rubber with some scalloping and patterns which are more aesthetic than anything.

On the side of each barrel are integral anchor points for attaching the supplied strap. To the rear, the adjustable eyecups are rubber lined for comfort and have two click settings when screwing them out from the body, handy for those who wear glasses. An adjustable diopter setting on the right barrel ocular lens makes optical adjustment perfect, the rear eyecups protected by a set of slip-on rubber covers, fairly standard these days.

At the front end the objective lenses are protected by two flip-down rubber covers which are easy to remove with the bonus of being permanently anchored to the binocular body and impossible to lose, reinstalling them taking just seconds. Looking at the internals and technical features, the Endurance ED 8x32 is built around a chassis made from magnesium alloy and optically the field of view is 129m at 1000m with a close focus distance of 2m. eve relief set at 18mm.

The lenses on the ED series feature extralow dispersion glass for optimum clarity with fully multi-coated optics producing sharp images from 2m onwards. The prisms are high-resolution phase corrected BAK-4 roof prisms, which give excellent light transmission with minimal colour fringing

or chromatic aberration - something which seems to hamper lower-quality binoculars just look through a set of quality binoculars to see the difference. These binoculars are nitrogen-purged, waterproof and fogproof and covered by Hawke's lifetime warranty.

In the field

My regular hunting binoculars are pocketsized 10x25s and larger (heavier) 10x42s which are used either from a vehicle or a ground blind and I chose to leave both at home and use the Endurance ED 8x32s on a late winter deer hunt. I was never disadvantaged using the 8x32s as they performed beyond expectations and, dare I say, were neck-and-neck with my 10x42s - a \$1000pair from a renowned Japanese manufacturer.

Even in low-light conditions images were positive and spotting deer from the scrub background was easy. Just having binoculars which fall between 10x25 and 10x42 was reason enough to decide to keep this pair for my own needs and send The Scope Store a cheque in return - they're a superb optic for the money.

Endurance ED binoculars in 8x32 represent fantastic value at around \$470 and they certainly punch above their weight, losing nothing to the traditional 8x42 and 10x42 equivalents with the biggest benefit being their compact size and weight. Glass quality with the ED lenses and fully multi-coated surfaces, mated with the phase-corrected BAK-4 prisms, gives all the confidence you'll need when scanning for that favourite game animal.

SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer: Hawke Optics, UK Model: Endurance ED 8x32

Magnification: 8x

Objective diameter: 32mm Field of view (129m at 1000m)

Close focus: 2m Eye relief: 18mm

Lenses: ED - Extra-low dispersion, fully multi-coated

Prism: Phase corrected BAK-4 roof

. **Weight:** 539g

Dimensions: 134mm x 119mm (widest)

Accessories: Carry-case, neck strap,

lens covers, lens cloths, user manual

Warranty: Hawke lifetime warranty

RRP: \$470

Distributor: The Scope Store,

Toowoomba, Old

www.thescopestore.com.au



Billy thrives in the outdoors.

eases the load on environmental adventure Assistant Editor Dave Rose

SSAA donation

tudent Billy Curtis hit the jackpot as part of his studies at the University of Tasmania with an \$800 grant handed down through the SSAA Academic Bursary program. Billy, 22, is originally from Queensland where he earned a Bachelor of Business (Accounting & Economic) degree at the University of the Sunshine Coast.

Growing up in Bundaberg, he was blessed to have parents and grandparents who were farmers at heart and their passion has been passed on to him. He hopes to make use of this to further his educational adventures in new surrounds on the Apple Isle, while he lives in Hobart's Blackmans Bay for the duration of his change of base. "For a young fellow it was easy to take the farming life for granted but one thing you never forget is the skills, knowledge and gratitude you have towards the land," said Billy.

His focus in Tasmania is on securing a Bachelor of Science, Environment & Geography major and Ecology minor which will keep him busy until June 2023. The move to Tasmania hasn't been straightforward given the challenges we've all faced this year but the financial input from SSAA will help Billy press ahead with his studies. "It has made a big difference in my general life," he said. "Moving so far away is difficult and has meant giving up a few things."

But Billy is pushing on and knows his agricultural background has him well placed, as the future of conservation as sustainable food production becomes more important. And with a Bachelor of Business degree already in the bag he's expertly qualified to explore farms, companies, workplaces and environmental issues from a business-based perspective.

With the world such an uncertain place at the moment, Billy hopes his itinerary will eventually be able to go ahead as planned. He has already lived and studied in the city of Fulda in Germany and Brno in the Czech Republic and managed a self-sustainable farming project in Tenerife for three months.

His thorough knowledge in wholesale nursery work will be a solid foundation for volunteering and working on conservation projects and organic and sustainable farming practices in New Zealand leading up to February 2021. After that Billy has pencilled in studies and more volunteer assignments in eastern Europe and south-east Asia which should see him through to July 2022.

Such expansive programming will hopefully bring rewards in understanding animal ecology and behaviour alongside the benefits of human intervention in conserving future populations of native animals. Added to this will be practical training in monitoring the effects of disasters, weeds and feral animals on the environment.

"Sustainable food consumption is an area I'd like to make a difference in eventually," said Billy. "From having fresh venison with my family to making curry with Bruny Island wallaby in Tasmania, I feel so many are missing out on reducing their footprint, consuming healthy, cheap and accessible food." Billy's goals are admirable so let's hope his travel plans come to fruition and the SSAA cash donation helps him along the way.

The ongoing SSAA Academic Bursary Program is for tertiary students to further the community's understanding of conservation, hunting, recreational shooting and all related matters. Visit ssaa.org.au/bursary



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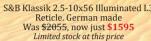
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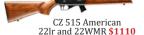


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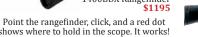




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Simple steps to avoid





ave you ever experienced that sinking feeling when you remove one of your favourite scopes from its rings only to find the dreaded pinch marks on the tube? I have and probably wouldn't be writing about it if I hadn't. I'd often be the reader skipping over important articles on scope mounting techniques, content to lose myself in a juicy hunting story and not worry too much about rifle set-up.

Recently I removed a nice scope from one of my rifles and noticed ring pinch

marks on both sides of the tube and was disappointed in myself for not taking more care in the mounting procedure and more notice of those all-important articles on scope mounting.

While not detrimental to optical performance, pinch marks on a scope tube look unsightly and will almost certainly render it worth only half its second-hand value. With recent experience gained in riflescope mounting techniques, I hope the following steps offer a basic knowledge of pinch-free riflescope set-up.

Step 1

Check for burrs or sharp machined edges which sit proud of the ring-to-scope mounting surface, most commonly found where the half rings meet for clamping. Generally, these sharps edges are on the outermost circumference and are main offenders for pinching the tube when mounting the rings tight.

Step 2

Position the rings in a vice with soft jaws - a solid piece of folded cardboard or thin MDF



















packing board works well for soft jaws which will prevent the steel of the vice from damaging the rings while clamped tight.

Step 3

Using a fine hand file, proceed with a cutting stroke along the width of the rings and towards the base until the sharp edge of the outer ring circumference is removed. A slight chamfer or bevel will be noticed upon filing and if your file is new the process should only take a few light strokes.

Be careful not to remove too much steel. It's important to aim for an even amount of filing for the rings to look consistent and not resemble a backyard butchering once mounted (see the red arrows on completed rings). Alternatively, a Dremel-style electric hobby die grinder can be used though I prefer less aggressive hand tools.

Step 4

Check you haven't created any new sharp edges and prepare for blueing. Remove all traces of oil from the steel by wiping the rings with methylated spirits and a rag.

Step 5

Mix a small amount of blueing paste and rub into the bare steel surface. Neutralise the surface by wiping with a wet rag or washing under a tap, repeating the process until desired blueing depth is achieved.

Step 6

Wipe or blow-dry the steel rings and apply a light coat of your chosen gun oil or silicone spray to the surface. The rings are now ready for mounting to the bases.

Step 7

The most common riflescope tube diameters are 1" or 30mm. For mounting both diameter tubes I use a machined bar stock in 1" or 30mm. To avoid damage to the rings while positioning, use a timber dowel to turn into the base receptacle.

Once the rings are mounted in their bases (I'm using Leupold STD dovetail turn-in rings and bases) position the bar stock in the rings and tighten. Use the bar stock to make any windage adjustments for alignment to the barrel to ensure your scope sits true. I initially overtighten the ring screws at this point which I believe helps the rings settle true against the solid bar stock and square with the accompanving ring.

Note that rings not aligned or concentric with each other are also a big contributor to scope pinching. If you can't put your hands on some bar stock, a length of heavy wall steel pipe in 1" or 30mm will do the job and is available from a hardware or steel supplier.

Step 8

Once satisfied with the ring alignment to bases, you can mount your riflescope to the rings but do not tighten. Check and adjust for the correct cant of reticle and eye relief. Once scope position is satisfied, tighten the ring screws to the manufacturer's torque specifications using a torque wrench. If you don't have a torque wrench the supplied tool that generally comes with the rings is sufficient. Nip up the screws but don't overtighten. The riflescope is now ready for use.

Conclusion

There are more advanced procedures available for fine-tuning riflescopes to mounts but usually left to a competent gunsmith. If you follow these basic steps in pinch reduction it may just help preserve the appearance and value of your favourite scope. •



Daniel O'Dea

ecently I've had the chance to review a selection of Mossberg rifles including the MVP LC (Light Chassis) chambered in 5.56 NATO/.223 Remington and just to recap, the Mossberg MVP series incorporates six different lines with even more subvariants and calibre options. The MVP range includes the LC as previously tested, LR (Long Range), Scout, Patrol, Predator and Precision. The little LC impressed on review so I was keen to try the next contender, the MVP LR chambered in 7.62 NATO/.308, and to add a little spice the one I'd be testing was a Thunder Ranch edition.

The Thunder Ranch is basically the US shooting equivalent of celebrity product endorsement of the standard Mossberg MVP LR. Thunder Ranch is a firearms training facility in Lakeview, Oregon, owned and operated by Clint and Heidi Smith, the former a legendary straight shooter from both the hip and the lip.

A veteran of military and law enforcement with more than 45 years in the industry, he tells it how it is. If your Mossberg carries the Thunder Ranch moniker it has been Clint Smith approved which, in the case of the MVP LR, means it has a camo stock and Thunder Ranch logo.

The LR has a varmint/target style stock with wide beavertail fore-end, broad butt and deep pistol grip. On first appearance you may think it's a polymer stock but I understand it's wood of some description, painted with a durable coating. It's certainly thick and chunky enough in the fore-end to sit flat over a bag or rest and carries plenty of swell in the palm for solid grip.

The buttstock has a pillar-recessed rubberised Mosscote comb, height adjustable via a push button on the right of the butt and finished with a slim rubber kick pad and black spacer. Both magazine housing and triggerguard are black polymer and the stock carries three QD sling swivel

studs, one at the rear and two on the foreend so you can run both a sling and bipod.

The Mossberg MVP LR as tested in 7.62mm NATO/.308 Win has a medium-heavy profile 20" (508mm) barrel, partially fluted forward of the fore-end and threaded at the muzzle with a muzzle brake or suppressor where permitted. Twist rate is 1:10 which seems to be industry standard for .308 rifles as it will stabilise a large selection of popular .30 calibre projectile weights.

The receiver is a cylindrical design using a barrel nut for headspace. A recoil lug is sandwiched between barrel nut and receiver to anchor the action into the stock for bedding and the barrel floats freely forward of the receiver in a generously relieved channel. For ease of scope mounting the action is bridged by a 6" (152mm) Picatinny rail as standard.

The bolt follows the basic Mauser format of dual opposing locking lugs but, departing

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Thunderous applause for the MVP LR

from the traditional Mauser look, the claw extractor is recessed into the right bolt lug and a plunger-style ejector sits proud on the bolt face, the lower front edge of the bolt head incorporating two small feed horns to supply rounds from the magazine. The bolt body has shallow spiral fluting, the bolt handle an oversize bolt knob and the bolt shroud is extended to the left which I suspect is to act as a gas shield in the unlikely event of case rupture.

A primary feature of the MVP series in .556/.223 is its ability to accept commonly available STANAG (Standardisation by NATO Agreement) magazines (AR mags). With the MVP in 7.62 NATO/.308 Win, Mossberg pull off the same trick only with AR10-type magazines (the platform also accepts M14-type magazines). This is quite a feat as the two have completely different lock-up systems, M14s traditionally a 'rock and lock' arrangement which would normally locate off a small recess cut out on the front magazine edge and retain via a large lug on the spine of the magazine. AR10-types do this through a slot or recess on the left.

With the MVP, when using M14-type magazines the lug on the spine becomes redundant with the magazine retained via the locating recess on the front edge. The magazine release on the MVP operates two separate protrusions within the magazine well which act as catches, one at the front for M14s and one on the side for AR10s. The rifle is supplied with a single Gen M3 Magpul Pmag 10-round magazine.

For testing I mounted a Sig Sauer Whiskey3 riflescope in 4-12x50 with BDC-1 Quadplex reticle in a set of Warne Maxima horizontal steel fixed scope rings. As far as ammunition goes I had a good selection of standard and premium factory .308 Winchester loadings, some favoured handloads and even some mid-'60s date-stamped Australian ex-military 7.62 NATO from when they were readily available as surplus.

For accuracy testing all groups were shot over my Caldwell Lead Sled, providing a rock-steady rest and removing almost all felt recoil. Firing three-shot groups I'm sure Clint Smith himself would've been more than happy with the accuracy, on paper my tailored handloads using 168gr Sierra MatchKings and ADI2208 propellant faring best, measuring just ½ MOA or 0.5" at 100 yards (12.7mm at 90m).

In the factory ammo stakes, Hornady American Gunner 155gr in the 50-round bulk pack proved great value with shots landing at just 0.625 MOA and even your basic but ever-reliable 150gr Winchester Power Points measured under 3/4 MOA at













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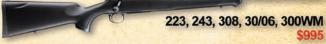
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0.675. The Winchester 178gr Match and Federal 150gr Power-Shok were robbed of glory when I failed on the trigger and pulled one of the three shots left in each of those groups, though they still managed 1.4 and 1.9 MOA respectively. Lastly, the 7.62 NATO crackers from the Vietnam era still managed a respectable 1.3 MOA five-shot group - straight out the box and, previously unfired save the factory proving rounds, I regard that exceptional accuracy.

I removed the rifle from the Lead Sled and fitted a Harris bipod on the forward of the two front QD studs for a session on my 200m plate rack and, as I had half a can of the old ex-military NATO stuff left, I started on the plates. Zeroed at 100, a centre hold using the first subtension down on the BDC-1 Quadplex reticle of the Whiskey3 scope had me smashing plates like I was at a Greek wedding. That coupled with the authoritative sound of .30 calibre rounds striking steel ringing through the gully certainly makes for good times on the range.

Apart from the standard factory-supplied 10-round GenM3 Pmag I had a couple of 10-round M14 magazines to hand. Both performed flawlessly but I'd note that M14 followers have a high rear shoulder which activates the bolt hold open on firing the last round in an M14 rifle. With the MVP

bolt-action this same shoulder ends up acting as its own bolt hold open as the bolt doesn't automatically clear over the top of it to close on an empty magazine. You'll know when you run dry as you can't push the bolt forward any more. If using M14-type magazines you just press the follower down to close the bolt on an empty magazine or alternately remove the mag altogether.

The rifle performed well and while the adjustable trigger may have had the slightest hint of creep, it broke crisply and surprisingly light at just over 2lb measured on my Lyman trigger gauge. It worked fine as set from factory so I'd no inclination to start playing with it. The adjustable Mosscote comb on the buttstock is a neat feature, its push-button adjustment locking up on a threaded centre pillar bolt, so modification is fine within the total range of movement. I had the scope mounted low so didn't need to use it but with larger, long-range optics set in high mounts an adjustable comb is often critical to achieve optimum cheek weld.

If I want to be harsh on the MVP LR, perhaps it doesn't have the slickest bolt cycle I've experienced but would likely smooth out once run-in, that aside the Mossberg MVP LR Thunder Ranch is hard to fault and is a well-featured, functional and accurate rifle. More at grycol.com.au •

Specifications

Rifle: Mossberg MVP LR (Long Range) Thunder Ranch

Action: Bolt-action (with spiral fluted bolt)

Trigger: Mossberg two-stage LBA system

Calibre: Tested 7.62 NATO/.308 Winchester (also available in 5.56/.223 Rem)

Capacity: 10-round detectable box magazine

Barrel: Medium-heavy profile 20" (508mm) threaded

Twist rate: 1:10 (7.62 NATO as tested)

Sights: Picatinny rail

Barrel finish: Matte blued

Stock: Pillar bedded with rubberised Mosscote cheekrest

Stock LOP: 13.25" (337mm)

Weight: 8lb (3.63kg) 7.62 NATO

tested

Length OA: 39.5" (1000mm) **Price guide:** \$1755 RRP









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John Maxwell

he Australian Army is in the process of choosing a new handgun to replace the ageing Browning which entered service in 1964. It was named the Browning Hi-Power (or High Power) because its magazine capacity of 13 rounds was near double that of rivals such as the Luger and Colt 1911. Adopted by more than 50 nations and widely used, the Browning has remained almost unchanged from the original pre-Second World War design, the new handgun (yet to be determined) due to be in the hands of soldiers from 2023.

In 2017 the US Army chose the SIG P320 to replace the Beretta M9, itself selected in 1985 to replace the Colt 1911. In 2015 the New Zealand Defence Force opted for the Glock 17 to replace SIG Sauer P226 handguns which entered service in 1992, while in 2013 the British Army chose the Glock 17 to replace their equally venerable

"The ADF has a large suite of weapon systems. Some are quite long in the tooth and have been in the ADF for a considerable amount of time," explained Colonel Stuart Davies from the Army's headquarters in Canberra. "We're looking at taking the opportunity to acquire a new and contemporary next generation fleet of weapons to balance being ready now and future-ready."

The new army handgun is being acquired in two categories - the standard sidearm and low profile weapons systems - in all up

to 10,000 handguns. With allies the UK, US, New Zealand and Canada adopting or in the process of acquiring a new handgun, Australia is in a privileged position to draw on the lessons of others. Fortuitously this grouping makes up the Five Eyes community, a long-standing arrangement for sharing intelligence.

Under a \$7 million contract announced in mid-July, Brisbane-based NIOA will perform the job of prime contractor and come up with a list of options across the different categories. "There will be a normal series of trials including test and evaluation, acceptance test and evaluation and operational test and evaluation," said Lieutenant Colonel Cameron Fraser, who heads the lethality project for Land 159.

The Army is even leaving the calibre of the new handgun open, although acknowledges it would require a compelling case to depart from the existing 9mm. Another significant move is the service handgun no longer needs to feature a manual safety catch, opening the door for consideration of a number of striker-fired designs which feature internal safety systems but no external safety, including the Glock.

Lt. Col. Fraser said the ADF was taking a contemporary view of what was world's best practice in weapons design. "Obviously safety is of paramount importance and ensuring the system we acquire is technically sound for use across the ADF and a very diverse workforce," he said.

It would follow the Glock and SIG P320

(in US service designated as the M17 and its compact M18 variant) would likely feature on any Australian shortlist but there are many other potential contenders. These days the ADF won't buy a weapon without full consideration of ancillaries (holsters, cleaning equipment, additional magazines), munitions, estate and infrastructure (secure storage), sustainment (spare parts), target systems, simulation, doctrine and policy.

The acquisition of a new handgun will take the ADF where Australia's state and territory police forces ventured long ago in replacing their standard-issue pistols, then mostly six-shot Smith & Wesson revolvers in .38 Special. This transition was well under way in the 1990s with each state and territory making their own choices between the Glock & Smith and Wesson.

Overwhelmingly, Australian police service handguns are in .40 Smith & Wesson calibre rather than 9mm. Victoria and South Australia opted for the Smith & Wesson M and P (Military and Police) while NSW, Tasmania, Western Australia, Queensland and Northern Territory police carry the Glock 22 as their primary sidearm with smaller variants for plain-clothes officers. Australian Federal Police carry the Glock 17 as their primary arm, again with smaller Glock variants for concealed carry.

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a versatile Turkish treat

John McDougall

ith so many Turkish guns on the Australian market it's difficult to discern which brands are most reliable. The good news is Yildiz shotguns have been coming here for more than a decade and for the past couple of years, importer Spartan Global of Melbourne has introduced the high-grade and impressive ProStar series. These shotguns are spectacular to look at and on internal assessment by respected Australian gunsmith Ian McGeoch have been given a clear stamp of approval as excellent value for money.

Pedro Da Silva and John Gilopidis are behind the ProStar grouping and have been inundated with enquiries so are busy keeping up with orders as the guns become increasingly popular as discerning shooters see their worth. I have to say the gun on review is stunning, extremely well made and assembled and unlike many Turkish guns on the market, the ProStar stable uses an inertia trigger system while the engraving and quality of the woodwork is hard to beat for the price at \$7450.

This is the complete gun, left or right-handed with adjustable comb piece, hard case, gun socks and all accessories making it a buyer's delight. Coupled with a five-year warranty and sophisticated Turkish stock work, the ProStar is destined to become a winner in value and on the podium. Stock dimensions have had input from noted stock maker Kevin Wright of Ballarat and with complete interchangeability of stocks, fore-ends and barrels, a superb gun can be assembled to the shooter's specifications.

Barrels

These are silver soldered together for optimal strength and faultlessly blued. The side and top rib are ventilated while the latter can be ordered in either a parallel or tapered configuration, extra barrel sets also on offer for around \$1900. At the muzzle end is a single sight and the distributor also

offers a mid-sight. Barrel sets can either be ordered with interchangeable choke tubes, both extended or fully internal, with extra choke tubes costing another \$25 - a bargain. For the gun on review the barrel set measures just under 32" at 810mm and weighs 1.56kg.

The Yildiz ProStar is chambered for 76mm cartridges and supplied with a proof guarantee from the Turkish government. Design of the ejectors is robust and their timing is perfection as empty cartridges were thrown well clear from the breech or, selectively, unfired loads were gently raised for removal.

All around the monobloc is highly polished to the point where it almost looks as if it's been chromed. I was impressed by the groove cut in the bottom barrel to avoid hitting the firing pins, the finish on the monobloc and barrels sheer perfection and the quality assurance before these guns leave the factory is clearly to a high standard.



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Yildiz ProStar a versatile Turkish treat



Receiver

Yildiz incorporate a Boss locking system with their ProStar chain, a time-proven method usually reserved for more expensive guns. A Boss locking system can be described as two lugs coming out either side of the receiver face and fastening on to two bites milled from the monobloc on either side of the barrels, jointing via bifurcated, replaceable pins in either side of the receiver walls. Circular mating recesses are milled into the monobloc and the barrels pivot on these and should wear occur after years of service, the pins are simply replaced with oversized pins.

Engraving about the receiver, triggerguard and top lever and top tang is exceptional, the scroll work tastefully designed and the ProStar label coming with either scroll engraving (as with the gun on review) or with game scenes. I was impressed with both options as viewed at the distributor's premises in Melbourne when I collected the gun.

Design of the top lever allows for plenty of purchase as the gun opened smoothly. Placement of the safety catch-cum-barrel selector is tremendous as the top lever can be pushed open without interfering with the barrel selector - top marks to Yildiz. Being an inertia-operated trigger mechanism where the first barrel must be fired before the second can be selected (unless the barrel selector is operated). I'd have preferred a mechanical trigger but most guns these days operate on inertia firing mechanisms and Yildiz appear to be no different.

The size of the triggerguard is generous and enables wearing of thin leather gloves. Although not adjustable, the triggerfoot is sufficiently raked to be a comfortable distance from the pistol grip, making its use very direct. Trigger releases are around 4lb for the bottom barrel and 5lb for the top, a little too firm for the top but still reasonably comfortable to release and I'd have favoured them both to be around 4lb but this can be adjusted by a competent gunsmith if desired.

Stock and fore-end

Made from magnificent Grade 5 Turkish walnut, the stock and fore-end are well suited to the quality of the Yildiz ProStar with its stunning engraving, the oil-finished woodwork complementing the gun well. Fitted with adjustable comb piece as standard, the gun can be ordered in either left or right-handed stock and for those who



Location of the top lever in relation to barrel selector-cum-safety catch is perfect.



prefer a customised stock, inletted blanks can be supplied with exceptional quality wood for the same price as a standard stock. It's then up to the shooter to have it shaped from the blank.

Ballarat stock maker Kevin Wright usually does this for the distributor for around \$750 and completed additional stocks can be ordered in Grade 5 walnut for \$990. The avid shooter has the option of choosing a standard fitted stock for hunting along with an adjustable comb stock for competition clay target shooting.

Walnut on the Schnabel fore-end is sensational with great character and grain, release via a lever under the fore-end which is also heavily engraved, operation easy but firm to maintain the fore-end in a rigid position. Chequering on both stock and fore-end is around 18-20 lines per inch and is faultlessly completed and sufficient in coverage to provide a good, firm grip. An adjustable comb is fitted to the stock, complementing the engraving, and all tools and spacers for the adjustable stock are supplied.

It's pleasing to see a significant recoil pad fitted to the butt of the stock for consistent gun mount and recoil reduction, always an appreciated addition as to have one fitted aftermarket can cost in excess of \$200. The stock is easily removed with an extension tool and this can be done smoothly if the shooter has two stocks and may wish, for example, to change between field shooting (where the stock might be flatter) to a higher stock for the various clay target disciplines.



Spartan Global offers a complete set of fully internal or external chokes

Over the traps

Removing the Yildiz ProStar from its fitted case, it not only looks good but shoots well and I was fortunate to test it at my local gun club as target after target was demolished. I was impressed by the performance of the choke tubes and while the 32" barrels took a little time to get used to the gun balanced well, swung effortlessly and the chokes did their job as targets were reduced to a puff of smoke.

In summary Yildiz ProStar shotguns are striking, well built, superb value for money for what they offer and their configuration is a recipe for success. There will be those with reservations about Turkish guns but they are well put together and I have no hesitation in recommending Yildiz ProStar competition shotguns for clay or field. •



SPECIFICATIONS

Model: Yildiz ProStar Sporting (scroll engraving)

Manufacturer: Yildiz, Turkey

Distributor: Spartan Global, Melbourne (Pedro - 0409 726 949 for inspection by appointment)

Overall length: 1260mm/493/4" Overall weight: 3.68kg/8lb 3oz Barrel length: 810mm/313/4"

Barrel weight: 1.56kg/3lb 6oz Bore and chamber: 12-gauge, 76mm/3" chambered. 18.6mm bore/0.732" for both barrels

Forcing cones: Extended

Chokes: Interchangeable choke tubes or fixed barrel chokes upon order. Internal and external choke tubes optional. External chokes 73mm long including collar. Dimensions Cylinder: 0.735", Improved Cylinder: 0.725", Modified: 0.715", Improved Modified: 0.710", Full: 0.700". T-bar-style choke tube wrench supplied. Extra chokes available for \$25 Trigger pulls: Under barrel: 4lb, Over:

5lb. Non-adjustable triggerfoot with inertia trigger set.

Stock configuration: Gun on review supplied with Grade 5 walnut as standard, stock fitted with adjustable comb as standard. Left-handed, custom stocks and inletted blanks available on request. Drop at comb adjustable, drop at heel adjustable, length of pull 382mm/15 1/8"

Warranty: Five years.

RRP: \$7450 with lockable hard case, choke tubes, stock Allen keys and spacers, gun socks and basic instruction booklet



A shining light Powa Beam Meteor S1 Hunter's Kit

Daniel O'Dea

uring the past 40 years there has been great advancement in battery technology and lighting. When I was vounger the majority of small hand-held torches were useless for anything more than the briefest period of illumination. Of course this was more to do with battery life, so if you wanted more run time you needed bigger or extra batteries.

Back then the gold standard for tradesmen, fishermen and outdoor types was the good old six-volt Dolphin torch, its massive battery giving good run time, it was waterproof and the flat base meant it wouldn't roll away. Another favoured option was the Maglite and I guess it's no surprise both these great products are still with us in improved versions.

Back then, apart from shooting rats at three or four metres across a barn, a torch was practically inept for spotlighting. When factory-built spotlights such as those from Powa Beam started to come of age, smaller units could be directly mounted to your rifle, either above the scope or beneath the barrel for solo spotlighting. Such set-ups

are still effective but generally require some form of battery pack which also needs to be lugged around.

Thankfully, with development of LED technology and perfection of lithium-ion batteries, torches have never been brighter for longer nor been more technically advanced and a great example is the new Powa Beam S1 Meteor Torch Hunter's Kit, sent to Australian Shooter for review.

It comes in a padded black hard case and at the heart is the torch itself, measuring a compact 244mm with 63mm diameter reflector housing which tapers to around 40mm at the switch block before dropping to 25.4mm at the main tube body. I'd note at 25.4mm we're talking exactly 1" which lends additional mounting options. Both body and reflector housing are adorned with machined circumference rings and grooves which are visually appealing and provide practical grip surfaces.

At the rear of the tube just forward of the grip cap, a lanyard ring rotates freely around the main body and is retained by the end cap. This ring, being of greater diameter, also acts as a grip stop but can be removed

and there are still two small loop points on the end cap if you'd rather connect the lanyard there. The unit is made from highstrength aerospace aluminium, uses CNC precision machining and has a premium Type III hard anodised anti-abrasive black finish for extreme durability. Making up the rest of the kit are a couple of spare O-rings, dual battery charger, 2 x 3400Ah 18650 rechargeable lithium-ion batteries, scope mount, tape pressure switch and user's manual.

The two batteries power an Osram 5400K~5600K LED light source which can project a beam to 1300m. As a smart torch it features six programable modes: Mode 1 offers 1200 lumens for about three minutes (based on temperature) continuous before dropping to 600 lumens which last another four hours. Mode 2 is 400 lumens for five hours straight. Mode 3 punches out 100 lumens for 20 hours with Mode 4 offering just two lumens but for an amazing 285 hours.

These four modes are also referred to as High, Medium, Low and Eco and there's also Strobe Mode if you fancy a little



outback disco and SOS Mode should you end up popping a hip and need to signal the rescue chopper. The whole unit weighs 280g without batteries which, at 50g a piece, would give you a 380g loaded gross. It has a waterproof rating of IPX-8 (2m in depth) which would indicate it's fine at the bottom of the pool but not the bottom of the ocean. Impact is rated for 1.5m and it carries a limited lifetime warranty.

In operation there's a bit to learn if you want to understand and use all the features, so where to start? The main on/off button is in the tail of the end cap. The light has a memory so when you use the tail switch to turn it on, it recalls which light mode (High, Med, Low or Eco) it was in when you turned it off and returns to this setting. However, the strobe is always full noise at 1200 lumens or High.

Just behind the reflector housing is the side button which controls the mode settings, breathing function as well as the strobe and SOS modes. First up, with the torch on (tail switch activated) to adjust the mode, click the side switch and with each click it will cycle through the Eco, Low,

Medium and High options. Again, this sets the memory so whatever mode you leave it in that's where it stays when switched off.

Now to the breathing function which I'd refer to as 'pause' mode. With the torch on, if you press and hold the side switch for half a second (a long press without a full click) the light goes off but a multi-coloured LED in the centre of the side switch slowly pulses through a series of colours, just as if it was breathing. The real purpose here is if you put the thing down in the dark, this blinking light will help you quickly locate it. A full click brings the light back on and the memory function recalls which mode it was in.

Similar to the tail switch, when in the 'on' position a quick double press on the side switch also activates strobe mode but this time, if you give another two quick taps, it drops into SOS mode and flashes the international Morse Code distress signal. Lastly the LED in the centre of the side switch also acts as a battery level indicator. When you turn the torch on this LED lights up and various colours indicate battery strength, below 10 per cent it flashes red

to remind you to charge it. The remote switch can activate the torch when mounted to your rifle. The remote tape switch has a cord with a rubberised pad at the end, within the pad are two small pressure switches which when held down activate the light. To install the remote, simply unscrew the end cap and replace with the remote tape switch end cap.

Scope mounting the Meteor S1 using the clamp supplied is a quick, simple and practical solution to attaching a light to your rifle, however my preferred method is to use a spare 1" scope ring and directly rail mount the torch to the rifle's fore-end, something easily achieved on my Howa .223 Remington with APC chassis. Either way it adds a new dynamic to spotlighting as, once on target, the shooter is no longer reliant on a spotter who may not be able to clearly follow a target with the naked eve as can be done through the shooter's optic.

In practical use the Meteor S1 certainly punches out a significant beam. At my farm using it hand-held I was surprised I could identify a 300x300mm metal plate I have on a flash target 400m across the gully

Powa Beam Meteor S1 Hunter's Kit

from the house - this with the naked eve. Likewise I could pick up the reflectors on my front gate 900m away. Side-mounted on my APC Howa it proved highly effective spotlighting when used in tandem with the remote roof-mounted 9" Powa Beam in my shooting rig.

As an important point of safety, a firearmmounted light should never be used to search for targets, only to clearly identify a recognised target. To do otherwise breaches fundamental firearm safety of maintaining good muzzle discipline as you wave a light attached to your rifle around

in the dark looking for a target. So only use such a set-up to illuminate a known target that's been identified with another light. source or a target in an established safe shooting lane such as from a hide or stand over a bait site.

The Powa Beam Meteor S1 is a wellfeatured, powerful modern light source perfectly adaptable for firearm mounting while the Hunter's Kit neatly packages everything you need for the task. The kit retails for \$299.95.

More at powabeam.com.au •



Specifications

Beam distance: 1300m Candlepower (CD): 422,500

Waterproof rating: IPX 8 (up to 2m)

Impact rating: 1.5m

LED: Osram 5400K-5600K

Batteries: 2x18650 (supplied) or

4xCRI23

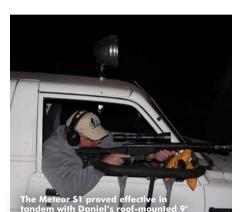
Dimensions: 244mm (L), 63mm

(HD), 25.4mm (BD)

Weight: 280g (without batteries)

Program: 4 x light modes 2LM to 1200LM plus strobe and SOS

Warranty: Limited lifetime









Greg Kent

hristmas 1960 saw our family travelling around south-west Queensland on holiday, six of us cramped in an FJ Holden with camping gear. Goondiwindi provided the opportunity for dad and I to visit a barber, a fortuitous interlude as it led to us meeting a country gentleman who was a grazier and farmer.

Jack invited us to his property, giving us the use of an empty house for a week and all the hunting we wanted. We were up at daylight and chased the crows from his drought-weakened sheep, shooting any we could, while at night Jack took dad and I chasing foxes on his stubble paddock using a self-loading shotgun from the back of his ute.

One morning after an early start, he ushered us to a property he'd just acquired. We opened the front gate at sunrise, drove about 300m and saw a big boar. Dad and I

bailed out and set off to intercept, dad armed with our Remington self-loader filled with slugs and me carrying our Beretta rimfire. As dad fired we saw the slug fly high so he quickly adjusted and fired again - down went the boar and that was our first pig.

Yet seconds later the boar was up and heading our way fast, even with a great hole through his middle. Dad let it approach but when he went to fire again his gun had jammed so I stepped around and opened up with the 22, for seven shots rapid. This time he was down for good and only 3m away, dad commenting: "I'm glad you didn't run." We both thought the boar had been charging but then realised it had simply ran the way it was facing as it rose, straight at us.

Five years later when I was 18, dad sadly passed away just short of his 52nd birthday so now it was up to me to make myself properly equipped. I was working and eventually acquired an old Sako in .243 and learned how to load my own ammo, my preferred projectiles being 85-grain Sierra BTHP. I took every chance available to visit my western friends and was welcomed as part of their family. I grew up with Jack's kids and was only a few years older than their eldest daughter. They eventually moved to that new property permanently.

The estate then was mostly cleared with brigalow suckering, clumps of lime bush and cane grass in the melon holes providing good cover for pigs, the stock largely sheep and a few Hereford cattle. In the 1970s and '80s during dry times I remember seeing the ground apparently 'move' as thousands of rabbits ran for cover before their sandy warrens were ripped apart.

One spring night we went spotlighting and shot 23 foxes in a few hours, the technique being to find the fox, move the light

Sixty years hunting the same property

off but close enough to register eye-shine occasionally then pretend to drive by at 25m. When adjacent we lit up the fox and sent a load of 6-shot on its way. There was one year when we found a white lamb skin about every 300m in one paddock - the pigs were feeding well.

Jack was slowly clearing the brigalow suckers and I hunted around there with mates in my later teens, right up until my own kids were old enough to hunt. Early in the mornings we'd walk about spotting pigs from a distance, sneak in and open up at close range to down as many as possible. In the afternoons we walked in a line throwing sticks in the cane grass, great fun when there was a 'woof' and a big boar suddenly appeared. As evening approached the pigs came out to feed and we stalked again, at night spotlighting for hours taking every possible fox, cat and pig seen. Chasing a mob of pigs on stubble with a ute and my 12gr self-loader with SGs was immense fun and a good driver could really help a shooter score well, with most weekend hunts at that time delivering at least 20 pigs.

One year we bought a family pet, a mongrel from the pound which seemed mostly foxhound. Patch really took to hunting pigs though initially we missed quite a few as he became too excited and scattered them before we were ready. It was a couple of years before he was proficient, then we claimed many more and never lost a wounded one with him. He'd casually trot at heel until he could smell them then would lead us towards the pigs with his tail wagging vigorously, always letting us shoot first before he moved in and grabbed one for himself. In one good season when the grass was so long it was hard to spot pigs, we took 63 in a week - without the dog it would have been about 15.

As Jack grew older his son Bill started taking over and more changes were made. Extra clearing was done and sticks were raked, making the ground suitable for cultivation. Some paddocks were ripped and seeded with bambatsi, the ripping allowing rain to penetrate but made walking on the broken ground almost impossible for a year. Eventually the stock trampled it flat. The cane grass was mostly gone, replaced by the bambatsi, but the pigs still had good places to hide and sheep had gradually been replaced by cattle.

Square mile paddocks were cut into eight cells by electric fences and water points were moved to the centre where all cells met. We assisted Bill with this task by using our scopes from the corners, sighting diagonally across the paddock and giving









him directions until he stood in the middle. Naturally, all bolts were out. The grazing and frequent movement of stock allows the paddocks to spell and grass to recover, grass gradually taking over and replacing the burrs.

Our hunting changed again as, with sticks and stumps gone, riding a bike was safe. My boys bought a guad bike and action was found by riding around until pigs were spooked. The rider, while guiding some towards where we were waiting on more open ground, had to keep an eye open for the single wire electric fences. Nothing compares to the satisfaction gained from taking a fast-running pig cleanly and those which wouldn't accept guidance were often despatched by the rider once they bailed.

More of the neighbours were clearing their brigalow so now pigs were mostly residing on this property and not travelling back and forth. We still checked the cultivation at first or last light but most were found by walking them up as in most paddocks the grass was too long to spotlight. A few years ago Bill and others collaborated and put an exclusion fence around their properties. At five feet with solid mesh, no pigs, dogs or kangaroos could walk through - the pigs were still inside but harder to find so I'll have to buy a new dog to assist.

On a recent trip hunting alone, I flushed a boar but couldn't manage a shot then a few hundred metres later the grass started moving 3m from me. It was a big pig which had heard me but couldn't smell or see me. I stood ready but nothing, just movement in the grass. I caught glimpses of black and white and if he flushed there was more cover only a few metres away.

Finally I decided enough was enough and, pointing the rifle like a shotgun, fired at the part of the pig I could see. There followed a great screaming so I knew I'd made good contact but had no idea how mobile the pig was so I was definitely not going into the grass. I moved around the clump until I was 2m from the movement. Two shots pointed carefully at the movement missed, so I threw in a stick and out he came, dragging his hindquarters. A swift response finished the job and luckily my first shot had wrecked his pelvis and anchored him.

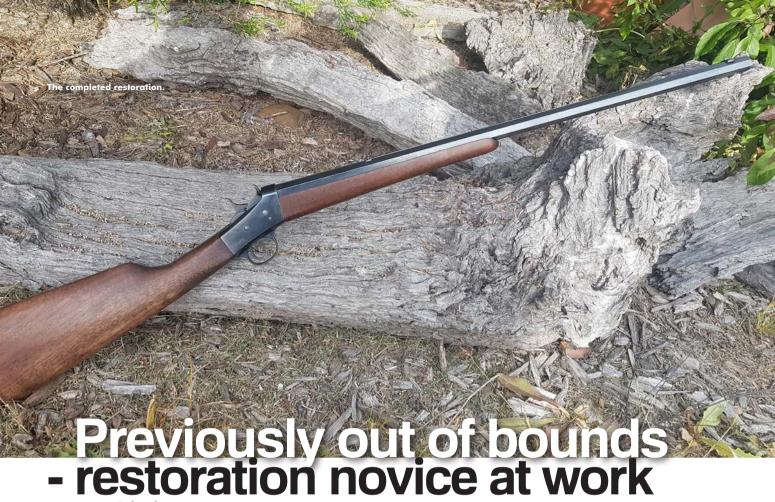
A few days later I spotted a big boar feeding between clumps and managed to move in until smaller pigs were spooked from the grass. A quick shot killed him but I really needed my self-loading shotgun in those conditions - I miss those days.

My mate Bill is now preparing for retirement with his sons poised to take over. New blood, new ideas and innovations mean the



property will change again and I intend to be hunting for many years to come as nothing is slowing me up yet. One thing's for sure - the pigs will still be there as they're breeding, they have cover, feed and water and, after 60

years of hunting the same property, I hope my grandchildren will soon be doing likewise and become friends with the current generation of the family. •



Peter Schade

recall the rifle hanging on the dining room wall, for display only, despite numerous requests from a much younger version of myself to inspect it more closely. The home belonged to my aunt and uncle with whom I'd spent considerable time over the years and during two house moves, the second being 500km to a new town, the gun remained 'packed' somewhere.

Eventually the rifle was registered in my name and research revealed it to be a Remington No.4 Rolling Block, also known as Model 4. On this example the tapered octagonal barrel shows the maker and their address along the topside flat, the receiver devoid of markings but the serial number and chambering on the underside of the barrel placing its manufacture around 1900.

Its initial overall condition would best be described as poor. Well-developed corrosion covered the exterior, the buttstock was cracked and steel buttplate reflected considerable time 'propped in the corner of the old dirt-floored shed'. After some deliberation and aware that refurbishing antique items can reduce their value, I decided to restore it anyway, both to challenge myself and preserve it for future generations. Besides, the rifle in its current condition was practically worthless apart from returning to its

previous life as a wall-hanger.

After a thorough disassembly I drafted an action plan. Underneath the fore-end was surprisingly clean but disassembling the action only added to my earlier dismay. It appeared at some point someone felt the need to take to the internal components with what must have been a chisel, with prominent gouges, nicks and cuts adorning hammer and breechblocks along with the extractor. At the same time the action screws were replaced with crudely fashioned dowels, driven through the blocks and into the female threads of the action's righthand side. The myriad crescent-shaped bruises to the action sides also indicated a drift wasn't used during installation of the dowels. The buttstock escutcheon nut was replaced with a square nut more befitting an old roofing screw, along with necessary modification to the underside of the grip to fit the square nut.

I knocked up a soaking tray from stormwater PVC for full coverage of the barrelled action and small parts in Evapo-Rust, removing them after a day to closely assess



Previously out of bounds - restoration novice at work

for damage. The extent of corrosive attack was even greater than first thought, with deep pitting over essentially all surfaces and by this stage I was seriously questioning my motives regarding restoration.

The mechanical removal of pitting started carefully with wire brushing and wet and dry emery paper and considering the depth of damage. I reached for a second cut file. The sides of the action and barrel flats were obvious areas to tackle first, rotary tooling assisting with the curved surfaces around the action, lower triggerguard and tang. Numerous days later all surfaces resembled a finish something like they should be, pin and screw counterbores refreshed and screw threads recut, an online search locating reproduction action screws made in the US and an order placed. Being careful not to overly reduce critical widths or depths where possible, the hammer and breechblocks were carefully dressed free of damage by filing, scraping and polishing.

A triangular needle file restored life to the chequering imparted on the thumb levers of the two blocks. Trigger and extractor pivot about two small pins looked less than the best and certainly not particularly straight, so replacement pins were made from suitable material. The extractor had suffered a serious blow from 'that chisel' and the face which engages into the barrel and carries the cartridge rim was also burred. Struggling to locate a replacement part meant building this component up through welding before restoring it to its original dimensions, quite a task with an item of its diminutive size especially including cutting the 0.040"-deep semicircular rim groove by hand. Flat mainspring, three-finger spring and fasteners were revived fairly easily.

Once ready, all internals went into the blueing solution. Cerakoting was considered for the metalwork but I discounted



this as too far removed from tradition for this project so only used a cold blue. A set of semi-finished furniture was found and ordered from the US listed as American black walnut and pleasingly it appeared the new timber would match the original well.

I began work on the fore-end as the supplied fit was the closer of the two parts. Strokes along the barrel with emery paper between the parts achieved a matched fit of fore-end to barrel flats and a slight reduction in diameter of the tenon aligned it with the socket of the action. The fore-end is secured with a single machine screw into a tapped thread in the barrel's underside.

With clearance hole drilled and counterbored for the screw, the fore-end was ready for its oil finish but the buttstock was a little more challenging. The 'sand a bit, trial fit, sand a bit, trial fit' routine took some getting used to but with a soft lead pencil and powdered graphite to guide the way, the fit was achieved. Fit-up of a compound curved buttplate would prove the next and most problematic test with my welding skills required again.

Satisfied with the buttstock it was time to start the staining and oil finish. Due to the item's shape I elected to leave it fitted to the action and the barrel could be held in



the bench vice rather than juggled with oily hands. The barrel is tapered, not greatly but enough that sufficient pressure must be applied to suitable soft jaws to hold the rifle securely.

At one point while vigorously working oil into timber it became apparent this vice hold was insufficient, as I found myself with oil bottle in one hand and rag in the other, watching the rifle plummeting towards the concrete floor. The heel point of the butt took the brunt of the impact, splitting the timber, but after some careful glueing and clamping the repaired crack adds a little character (at least that's what I tell myself).

With blueing of the barrelled action complete, reassembly could begin. Sight base dimensions had changed slightly during the pitting removal, resulting in a loose fit but nothing a hammer and brass drift couldn't fix, tightening up the female dovetail grooves of the barrel to once again hold the sights firmly. All was going well until a barely audible metallic 'click' indicated the three-finger spring had indeed just lost one of its fingers, jammed under another component.

A replacement spring couldn't be found, so it was time to try my hand at spring manufacturing. After a few prototype fails an old feeler gauge provided the material to form, harden and temper a spring which did work satisfactorily during initial test firing. I didn't hold much faith in its longevity but



Previously out of bounds - restoration novice at work

during a return to researching parts online, I chanced upon another US site with a new stock replacement spring. A few weeks dragged by before I could reassemble the rifle again, more carefully this time.

With the work done all that remained was to sight-in and hopefully find an obliging rabbit to pose with it for a photo. Erring on the side of caution I bought some subsonic .22LR ammunition and arranged a target at 25 yards, the rifle by this stage attracting its fair share of interest from others at the range. Realistically I wasn't expecting much success considering the state of the bore, the resultant 10-shot grouping of around 150mm confirming my suspicions.

The restoration is far from perfect but it was never meant to be - nor anticipated. Sure, some screws aren't correct but they'll do the job until period-accurate parts are located. The stock appearance and blueing aren't flawless but possibly similar to finishes of the time and the bore is, for want of a better word 'shot' so any small game more than about five metres from the muzzle is probably quite safe. For now the restoration is complete and I doubt I'll receive offers of employment from Holland & Holland or Westley Richards, but I think it looks good for my first solo attempt at a full refurbishment and has broadened my insight into gunsmithing and increased my respect for those who produce such high quality work.











RTV silicone bedding a Lee-Enfield No. 4

James Hoffman



Red areas mark how James' No.4 was bedding, which could be improved.

ccurising a Lee-Enfield No.4 is hardly new ground but what is novel is the use of RTV (Room Temperature Vulcanising) gasket silicone as the barrel bedding agent. I merged the idea from my experiences in RTV-bedding lever gun fore-ends and in both cases the objective is to obtain better consistency under match-like conditions.

RTV silicone vulcanises, bonding with tremendous durability and tenacity. An RTV silicone bed is also slightly cushiony - the magic elixir that will not produce or allow significant stressing between fore-end and barrel (with heat and changing environmental conditions).

As a bonus, RTV silicone should also far outlast the old cork-strip solution which requires ongoing maintenance. I surmise RTV silicone will extend the same, if not a higher level of support, while still offering that bit of breathing room as the barrel and action heats.

Compared to an older SMLE, the No.4 is considerably easier to accurise because the barrel is almost free-floating out of the grease. There's no SMLE-style nose cap to deal with - the only contact point along the barrel of an as-issued No.4 should be a small wooden platform at the tip of the

fore-end, offering between 2-6lb of upward pressure on an otherwise free-floating barrel.

It goes without saying the No.4 also wears that rear-mounted aperture sight with the slightly heavier contour barrel, both desirable for competition. The principles applied here to the No.4 could be equally relevant to an SMLE, at least that's how I'd try accurising an SMLE.

Bedding the action

Firstly we need to understand how our action interfaces with the fore-end. Remove the action from the timber fore-end as normal, spray the timber around the action area with WD-40 then dust with talcum powder. Reassemble the action and triggerguard and tighten up the king screw then disassemble again and observe how the action has imprinted into the talc dust. In my example I can see the distinct area immediately behind the king screw where the action has made contact.

Moving rearward (beside the two small vertical faces known as the 'draws'), there is little observable contact but on the upside, my draws look to have equal distribution from both recoil lugs, something crucial to accuracy. If your gun's

not centering on the draws, stop here and address that issue first (amending the draws is beyond the scope of this guide).

Ideally the action should bed down all along its length. In addition to where the action will sit, it's advisable to free-float then add a small epoxy bed roughly 1" wide for the reinforce point to sit on (this area can be masked using painter's tape). Clean as much oil and grime as you can from the timber using acetone, a toothbrush and heat gun and after the targeted area has been thoroughly cleaned and dried, roughen it up with a small file to give the epoxy something to 'grab'.

Mask any areas of the fore-end you don't want the epoxy to bleed, thoroughly degrease and apply release agent per instructions to any areas of the action and knox form likely to contact the epoxy, then fill problematic holes with air-drying modelling clay. Mix some Acraglas Gel per instructions and apply to the targeted areas of the timber, reassemble the action and triggerguard and tighten the king screw. Let the epoxy harden for 24 hours then remove the action from the fore-end using a piece of timber and hammer to gently tap off a stuck fore-end.

Carefully clean any bulging epoxy which



RTV silicone bedding a Lee-Enfield No.4

has extruded around the action using a Dremel tool. Cut away the areas of the reinforce point bed overhanging the masking tape, leaving just the little pad for the reinforce point to rest. The action should now mate perfectly with the timber.

RTV centre bedding

Two popular bedding methods for the No.4 are known as central bedding and centre bedding. Central bedding defines laying a stabilising bed on the second platform, after the reinforce point, nearest to the central barrel-band/sling attachment.

Centre bedding is similar but done on the first platform and gives possibly the best accuracy of the two as it leaves the longest possible length of barrel free-floating beyond the bed, the only caveat being the potential for droop/fore-end contact under recoil. Centre bedding is probably better suited to a slightly heavier barrel than the earlier SMLEs. I opted for the centre bedding method, after all, it will be possible to Dremel away then change the bedding style down the track. We'll see how my scores pan out.

There are two renowned barrel bedding materials, the modern epoxy bed and more flexible and traditional cork-strips method. This is where I deviate, opting for a third option in the form of RTV gasket silicone (commercially known in Australia as Permatex Ultra Black). Don't use common



acetic cure silicone as it will badly rust your barrel. I see an RTV bed as more comparable to the cork, yet much more concise and permanent.

Again, thoroughly clean and roughen the timber on the targeted platform and mark and mask your barrel in the appropriate locations. Degrease and apply release agent to the barrel around the circumference, mask adjacent areas of timber with painter's tape on the fore-end to protect from any extrusion then lay a thick, consistent bead of RTV silicone on the targeted timber platform.

Reassemble the barrelled action and triggerguard and tighten the king screw (silicone should slightly extrude out either side as the barrel beds down). Wait 48 hours for the silicone to dry then carefully cut away the extruded bead slightly lower than flush to break any mechanical lock, cleaning up any mess with a scalpel.

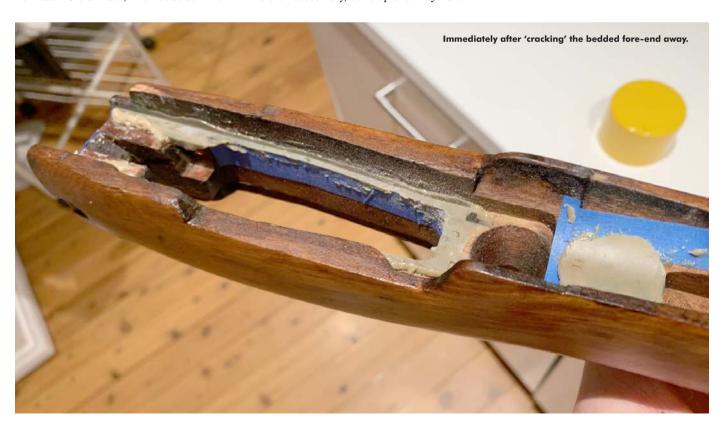
Now do exactly the same only this time for the top timber, above the same platform. Before reassembly, build up a few layers of



masking tape between the fore-end and top wood on the flats where the two timbers meet. The idea is that once dried and tape removed, upon reassembly the RTV should clamp down tightly around the barrel, providing support and rigidity.

Free-floating the fore-end tip

This part is relatively straightforward. You just need to relieve the timber swell at the tip of the fore-end and along the channel such that the barrel is completely freefloating past our RTV bed. A playing card should slide easily under the entire length back to the RTV bed. This can be achieved incrementally using machinist's blue but I prefer matte red lipstick as a cheap and convenient alternative. Again, the Dremel can greatly speed up this step with care. Keep removing material until the barrel can flex in all directions a couple of millimetres - once reassembled, the last thing we want is the barrel to badly whip against the foreend under recoil.



Triggerguard

It's common to bed the triggerguard using a small amount of epoxy. Only the front third of the plate needs doing, nothing too remarkable here. What's probably more important is to analyse how the guard is interacting with the king screw bushing and timber - if one or the other is favoured, the gun's point of impact may string from cold, often vertically.

Start by pencilling the orientation of the king screw on the timber, slowly unscrewing the king screw and counting the turns until the thread 'jumps', resulting in an audible click (it was around 61/2 turns for me). Now remove your king screw bushing and reassemble.

If it takes more turns to tighten, you know your timber has shrunk over time. In this case the epoxy should help bed the metal plate again. If your triggerguard goes back together the same way (ie, the pencil mark lines up and the turns to unscrew are the same), the length of the main screw bushing is either perfect or too short, probably the latter.

If the bushing is too short you're likely to see a vertical string - your main screw bushing shouldn't be too long or too short. Target shooters accurising this component will find a longer main screw bushing then incrementally turn it down until the exact moment when wood and metal clamp tight simultaneously.

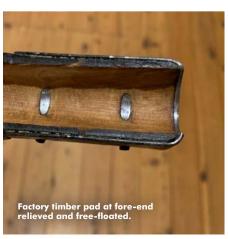
Conclusion

A visit to the range produced an encouraging result, 10 Sierra Match Kings over a full case of AR2209 shot in less than two minutes, with sling tension and a rudimentary bag under my stabilising hand. I used the factory front blade sight with an original No.4 Mk 1 micrometre rear sight, so shooter error is likely. •















gives you remote control

Mark van den Boogaart

was 15 when I started to really explore, learn and test my skills. I fished, hiked, mountain biked, rock climbed and ventured by foot, bus, train and bicycle as far as my meagre funds would take me. Later with a car I travelled further, including the Belmont shooting range where the long journey to becoming a hunter began but never gave much thought to what would happen if something went wrong. I'd deal with it, look after myself.

But with a family, that changed. People were relying on me and more recently with little people along for the ride, I'm directly responsible for their safety. With that in mind I started to look into Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs), Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) and other crisis communicators and ended up with a small PLB. Technically it's great but it's really just the modern version of a flare gun. So when the editor of Australian Shooter asked if I'd like to review a satellite communicator, I said "you bet." What I received in the mail was the ZOLEO Global Satellite Communicator, developed through a joint venture between Beam Communications and Roadpost. Beam Communications is a Melbourne firm which designs, expands and manufactures satellite terminals and accessories while its partner is a Canadian operation with offices in the US.

Out of the box you have the unit, a carabiner to hang the unit off your belt or pack, a USB charging lead and instructions. With the unit powered up all you need do is download the ZOLEO app to your phone or tablet, connect the Satellite Communicator via Bluetooth and you're good to go. I know it is overstating things but it really is easy to set up.

So what is a ZOLEO? In essence it's a subscription-based device which allows your existing phone or tablet, via a ZOLEO-specific phone number, to transmit messages over the Iridium satellite network. What that means is you have the ability to send and receive global two-way texts, emails and app-to-app messages. The unit also provides a monitored emergency/ SOS back-up service via the SOS button, along with a one-touch check-in function which shares your GPS location and lets others know you're okay. And there's access to weather forecasts via the Dark Sky app.

First impressions are the unit is small, compact and designed to be used outdoors. It's also familiar as you're using your existing phone or tablet as the satellite interface and the stated 200 hours of battery life means it will probably outlast your phone charge. For testing we headed south to our favourite fallow block and over the weekend had a chance to take deer and test the system in the field. Using it to message home we were never out of range or signal and the battery lasted across the four days we were away.

The field test did highlight two points worth mentioning. The first was that, out of the box, the ZOLEO is designed to be carried via the strap and carabiner, so it hangs from your belt or pocket which is not so good when hunting. Obviously carrying it in a pocket or pack is a sensible alternative but that could mean it's not to hand when you need it most. The good news is there's an optional cradle kit which includes a universal cradle, strap infill, belt clip and camera mount and I definitely recommend the kit if you intend hunting with the ZOLEO.

The second point relates to the ZOLEOspecific phone number. In these days of spam texts it's a good idea to let friends and family know you have a new number, or some of your intended recipients will likely ignore the message.

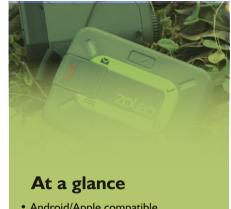
The second test involved taking the unit on an 11-day, far west Queensland family road trip. As part of the journey we tested the unit along the Thomson/Diamantina Development Road, a 515km stretch running south from Longreach to Quilpie. There's no signal out there so we decided to create an electronic breadcrumb trail via the ZOLEO using the one-touch check function. Along the way I also sent a couple of texts to a friend about all the goats and pigs we saw and again the unit performed as expected.

Throughout the review and field tests the system proved effective, compact and easy to use. What I liked most was that rather than replacing my phone, it transformed it into an operational satellite communicator, emergency beacon-style device and weather forecaster.

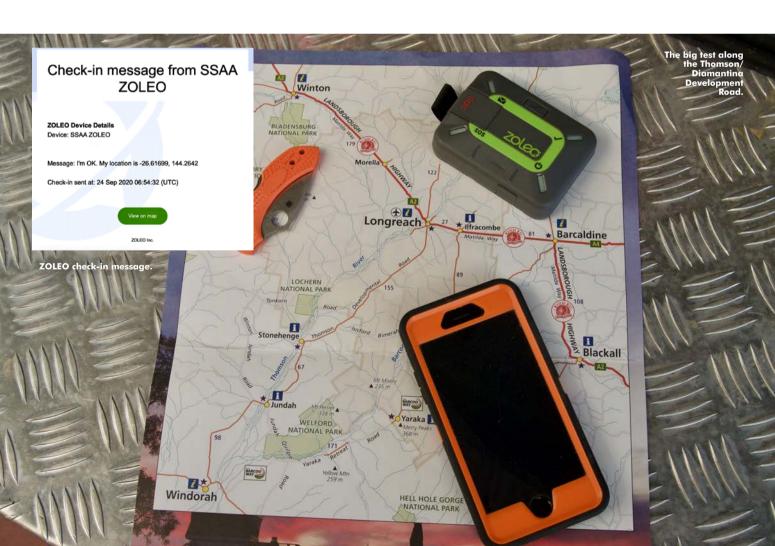
As an everyday option the ZOLEO would be pretty good for people travelling in more remote locations and a smart addition to your hunting kit.

Cost-wise it has a recommended retail price of \$345 with monthly subscriptions ranging from \$32 to \$80 depending on the plan and your intended usage. More importantly, once you've had your plan for three months (minimum lock-in period) you can suspend and reactivate it whenever you

By way of optional accessories, as mentioned the cradle kit is \$49.95. There's also a universal mount kit which comes with a cradle, RAM suction cup mount and USB car charger for \$119.95 and even a ZOLEO float for use on the water (\$19.95). The test unit was provided by ZOLEO. Find approved retailers at https://www.zoleo. com/en-au/where-to-buy/



- Android/Apple compatible
- Up to 200 hours battery life (stated)
- Charge time: 120 minutes micro-USB
- 150 grams
- 91mm x 66mm x 27mm
- \$345 + monthly subscription plan
- One-touch buttons for messages. SOS, check-in and power
- Audible alerts for messages
- Connects via Bluetooth Low Energy
- Two-year warranty



Australia's Creative Native Cuisine

Dave Rose

delaide gastronomic guru Andrew Fielke remembers where it all started - he was 10 years old and busied himself making crumpets over a camp-stove toaster with a mate. He has certainly come a long way since then, winning acclaim as a master practitioner using Australian native produce in a host of colourful and flamboyant recipes.

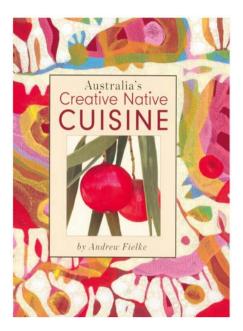
Now Andrew has served up his 35-plus years of experience in a lavish book, Australia's Creative Native Cuisine, which turns the spotlight on the abundance of natural resources to be harnessed on a copious menu list. His introduction leaves vou in no doubt as to the direction he would head after becoming fully involved in cooking almost by accident via a home economics course at school, "I can do this, I can travel the world and be a chef!" is how he describes his 'Road to Damascus' moment.

And his endeavours in culinary experimentation did indeed enable him to see the world. Stints working in Switzerland, Austria and at London's iconic Savoy Hotel followed by transit van forays through the food havens of Italy and France saw Andrew return to Australia full of zest for how dining and imbibing were a cornerstone of the culture in these European countries. So he thought: Why not Australia?

All of which led to Andrew setting up his Red Ochre Grill restaurant in Adelaide in 1992 followed by branches in Cairns and Alice Springs then in 2001 he changed tack to concentrate on Creative Native Food Service, his supply and procurement network. His abiding love affair with native ingredients, leaning heavily on indigenous influences, is wonderfully mapped out in these 270 pages which include numerous colour photographs to accompany the 135 recipes. And if some ingredients are hard to find on shopping excursions, there are panels alongside most of the recipes with suggested substitutions.

We kick off with 'Chef's notes' which offer the starting points of ingredients, equipment and utensils. Initial advice is to study each recipe in full before familiarising vourself with the ingredients, method. equipment and time required. This may sound obvious but makes perfect sense as there's no point starting a cooking process then realising it's not for you. Then it's a trip through a host of Australian wild spices and herbs with helpful explanations and graphics.

It's from here we segue into the recipes. Despite the perhaps intimidating 'coffee table' nature of Andrew's book, some of these appear remarkably simple, a case in point being the saltbush scrambled eggs and chicken in paperbark with white kunzea, each recipe prefaced by Andrew's introduction (he refers to paperbark as 'Aboriginal aluminium foil'). The next section features



Australia's wild fruits followed by wild vegetables then nuts and seeds, each of these supplemented with summary tables, before he wraps up with a run-down of where you can source Australia's native and wild ingredients.

Andrew has been delighted with the feedback since the book's release. "The response has been phenomenal," he said. "I'm pleased to say it seems to have resulted in blossoming native food sales and has built such interest we've had to expand our online retail shop."

The author also reflected on evolving trends. "Many people would love to support native foods but say they just can't find the stuff," he said. "So remember there are substitute ingredients on all the recipes." More at creativenativefoods.com.au

• Australia's Creative Native Cuisine by Andrew Fielke, Tandem Publishing, RRP \$49.99 (hardback), \$39.99 (paperback).



Even R.M. Williams had to start somewhere

n the year of iconic Aussie company R.M. Williams returning to Australian ownership via WA mining magnate Andrew 'Twiggy' Forrest, I thought readers might be interested in these pictures. My father, John Mack, lived in South Australia and had several photographic stores both there and in Western Australia.

In his early years during the hard times of the 1920/30s he made ends meet, like many of that era, by selling game meat via his friend's parents' butcher shop (Taylor's). Reginald Murray Williams - 'RM' to dad - was one of the group he associated with back then and I went on to work in our family photographic shops in SA and WA during the 1970s through to the '90s. Dad had taken the red roo hide on a field trip to the Flinders Ranges and 'RM' tanned and platted the leather, making a gun case for dad's Mauser. I contacted the manager

of R.M. Williams' Perth store to ask if Mr. Williams ever visited WA to be told "he'll be here next week."

'RM' signed the case which to this day has pride of place in my sports room. The rifle still earns its keep, dad having departed for the big hunting lodge in the sky 10 days after his 100th birthday in 2015. The rest, as they say, is history.

- David Mack



One of those scopes belonged to 'RM' along with others from dad's hunting group.



'RM' made this gun case for dad's Mauser, later signing it on request.



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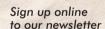
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Ted takes us back to where it all began

e've already been entertained by the hunting exploits of Australian Shooter contributor Ted Mitchell Snr, whose colourful forays in the field as detailed in his Australian Adventures Book Two caught readers' imagination after we reviewed it in June this year. So if you're eager for more there's good news - Ted has revisited the days when his passion for hunting was ignited by re-releasing Australian Adventures Book One in a revamped A5 format, which covers 334 pages and includes full colour pictures. The recollections were first published in 2006 but the new layout puts a fresh slant on things. In modern parlance it's a prequel.

Ted kicks things off by professing he's "in love with longbows". He equates the look of a longbow at full draw as being "akin to a waning moon, magnificent" and recounts how his dad bought him a small bow set and by the age of nine he'd stalked and shot his first animal. Sadly it was a false start as the beast in question was the family dog. The wounded pet duly recovered and dad's wrath subsided, so Ted took things from there and at age 12 was carving his own self-bows from bamboo bound from tape, string and glue to stop splinters.

From such humble beginnings Ted's skills grew and down the vears game animals such as deer, goats and wild boars succumbed to his aim. He even fulfilled an ambition by downing a buffalo in the Northern Territory. Ted's encounters with wild dogs make for fearful, edge-of-the seat reading while huge-tusked boars

also present a daunting challenge. It seems like almost a relief as Ted and his sons go off on a fishing break and bag some sizeable barramundi. As the years roll by Ted employs rifles to good effect but it's clear his favourite accessories are his various bows.

Other contributors chip in along the way with assorted varns, notably Ted's sons Scott and Brenton as well as good friend Dale Dance, who Ted hails as an expert exterminator of wild dogs. The pair duly share some rewarding treks which involve trapping some of the ferals, which brings into play more potential hazards when the menacing marauders are snared. Danger also lurks as Ted recounts crossing paths



with the big red bulls of Cape York. In his words: "These bulls can be dangerous as they have no fear of man and are used to attacking and running off anything they think could prove to be a danger." Some of the shooting interactions described with charging bulls sound a little too close for comfort.

Having survived multiple hunting escapades Ted's life is turned upside down when routine shifting of equipment on his car roof results in a slip and him losing sight in his right eye. Initially feeling sorry for himself. Ted knuckles down and over nine months finds the spirit to improvise - it's a story of bravery and determined resolution. He admits that various other injuries down the years and what he terms 'old age' have hampered his hunting exploits, but didn't stop him enjoying a testing trip to New Zealand on the trail of the wily sika deer.

As before, this volume is available through primalhuntingandoutdoors.com.au for \$29 plus \$10 postage and handling. •



Beretta Australia now offering personalised services

eretta Australia has opened up its workshop to general repairs and custom work for the first time in 20 years, meaning shooters can now have their firearms repaired by the world's oldest gun manufacturer. With more than 300 dealers nationwide, Beretta Australia said it had identified a need in the industry for quality gunsmithing services.

"We've been providing this type of servicing on our products for more than 20 years. Now, through our established dealer network, we would like to extend the Beretta Australia gunsmithing services to you across all makes and models," a spokesperson for the company said.

The gunsmith workshop will be based at Beretta's head office in Melbourne and operated by a team of highly trained and experienced technicians. One of the specialty areas available will be custom shotgun woodwork making - customising and making a shotgun stock to your exact specifications while you

As custodian of many of the world's most famous firearm brands, Beretta says it shares the same passion for their products as individual owners do. "We are pleased to be able to provide our years of expertise and skills to bring your favourite firearm back to its full glory, from stock refinishing to re-barrelling or simply a comprehensive clean and

service," the spokesperson said. The new services includes all manner of general repairs from accuracy testing to trigger adjustments and performance upgrades. Furthermore, the Beretta team will now be available to work with individual shooters to create an iconic piece from a favourite movie or game, or a one-of-a-kind piece that's truly unique and personalised.





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January 15-17, 2021

SSAA (ACT)

Early Australia Day Rifle Metallic Silhouette State Titles

SSAA Majura Range, Hector McIntosh Grove, Majura, ACT

Program: See National website for full event details, Contact: Mark Lovell 0401 867 839 or email mnl1@live.com.au

January 18, 2021

SSAA (ACT)

Black Powder Cartridge Rifle Silhouette **State Titles**

SSAA Majura Range, Hector McIntosh Grove, Majura, ACT

Program: See National website for full event details. Contact: Mark Lovell 0401 867 839 or email mnl1@live.com.au

TAS

March 20-21, 2021

SSAA (Tas)

Lever Action Silhouette State Championships

Westbury Shooting Club, 1053 Birralee Road, Westbury, Tas. 7303

Program: See National website for full event details and entry form. Contact: Ian Collins 0417 531 184 or admin@westburyshooting.



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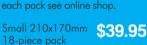
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The cutting edge of COVID

ike a lot of other hunters I didn't get to the bush much this year as COVID-19 border restrictions kept me out of the sambar country that's been my second home for the past 30 years. It also put the kibosh on planned trips to South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory and personal commitment to isolation saw avoiding unnecessary interaction with other people become the norm rather than exception. My wife and I canned a couple of holiday trips due to my reluctance to transit through domestic air terminals and only went to our nearest, bigger town to shop when we had to. There was lots we'd have liked to do but didn't because staying safe and well was significantly more important, given we both slot effortlessly into the most at-risk age group.

For all of that, as the year draws to a close we don't have much to gripe about. Moving house was a welcome distraction which kept us busy at a time when it would have been easy to let the woes of the world override our lives. We made minor adjustments to the new house, I oversaw construction of a new trophy room and organised the shed, sorted out my library and cartridge collection and put in a new vegetable garden.

More importantly, I went back to the workshop and made a deliberate effort to immerse myself in the knife-making I've been meaning to do for some years now but never quite got around to. My first few efforts were fairly ordinary - shaping a knife is one thing, grinding the bevels evenly quite another. I persisted and they improved but not to the levels I aspired to.

An established artisan once told me a real knife-maker never ruins a blank, he just prepares it for conversion into a smaller knife, which may well be the case but I'll bet he never factored someone like me into his calculations. All I could manage was a pile of steel dust and some almost knives that would have felt at home in any pile of scrap metal.

The challenge remained and rather than destroy all my limited stock of purposepurchased knife steel, I forged some blanks from one layer of a flat leaf car spring I'd



salvaged from an ancient wreck down along the creek. I made a few mistakes as others have before me but persisted until my hammer arm was too weary to do any more. The therapeutic benefits of beating a piece of hot steel into shape are amazing, especially when it moves the way you intended it to.

I also cut some blanks from a length of sawmill bandsaw blade and normalised them in the forge then gathered my raw materials together and went back to the grinder to begin the knife-making processes all over again. It took a little time. Improvements have been incremental but practice has improved my confidence and by thinking before acting, I've learned yet again it's always easier to avoid mistakes than trying to repair them.

My bevels are getting better, even if my plunge lines are still a little wonky at times. Learning to harden and temper the finished blades has proved challenging at times but results are becoming increasingly consistent and I'm pleased to be able to write that I can now make a half-reasonable knife from start to finish, in my own workshop with zero input from anyone else. That's something of a personal goal, one I set myself

Long time coming - Top: A hunter/skinner forged from a car spring, red gum handle; Middle: Camp knife ground from a bandsaw blade with red box handle; Bottom: An already well-used kitchen knife made from a bandsaw blade with red box

a long time ago but have always been too busy to pursue with the resolve or dedication I knew I didn't have time for. I don't aspire to commercial production nor do I seek recognition as a knife-maker, I simply enjoy the work and processes involved, showing someone the finished product and being able to say "I made it".

Without the upheaval and all it entailed, I expect I'd still be thinking about making the effort to have a crack at hand-crafting a good knife - a 'one of these days' project I probably never would've found the time for. COVID-19 gave me the time - and that's the positive I'll remember it for. All the best for the festive season.

· A few remaining copies of The Jumbunna Collection (\$16 + P&P) are still available and can be ordered by emailing footsteps5350@gmail.com



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