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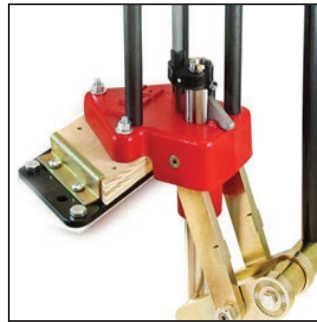
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Our May cover
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It was a long time coming but *Australian Shooter* is the first publication in the country to lay its hands on the long-awaited and much-anticipated Benelli Lupo bolt-action hunting rifle. Beretta Australia supplied the rifle in .30-06 Springfield and, as our reviewer Con Kapralos says: "It's like no other centrefire hunting rifle on the market - could it possibly be the start of a revolution in hunting rifle design and manufacture?" We put the Lupo through its paces using three types of top hunting ammunition and next month we'll tell you exactly how this ground-breaking firearm performed.





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National News

Hunting for the table

With more than 200,000 members across Australia, your Association is made up of a wide variety of shooters.

Some of us are weekend 'plinkers', others more serious competitors be it with rifles, shotguns or handguns engaging in our many disciplines, but the majority of SSAA members identify as hunters. Even with hunting, there is a wide variety of reasons we go bush walking with a firearm in hand: culling to help keep our native flora and fauna balanced, engaging with the outdoors, trophy hunting and the big reason – sourcing food for the table.

Those of us who have been a SSAA member for a while will remember when we published *Field to Fork – The Australian Game Cookbook*. It is a glossy, coffee-table book made up of recipes from you, the members, and won a prestigious international award for best new cookbook in Australia in 2012. It showcased the many types of wild-harvest meats available in this great country like duck, goat, kangaroo, buffalo, rabbit, pork and venison and most importantly provided a talking point to explain one of the main reasons we go hunting to non-shooters. In the past decade we have sold thousands of copies to members and the general public and helped to spread the message that our recreation is sustainable, green and ethical. We take pride in being competent marksmen and women and hone our skills to ensure clean dispatches and safe outcomes.

With hunting comes an appreciation of our surroundings and the challenges the ever-changing climate and battle of the species can have on our plants and animals. Recently we have seen widespread drought then dramatic floods, fire, mouse plagues



and increasing cat populations. We bare witness to these events and help provide the practical solutions through programs like Farmer Assist and our Conservation and Wildlife branches or as individuals or with friends on a weekend cull. Hunting and conservation goes together hand in glove. We are the true conservationists and it is up to us to teach others to hunt and to pass on other important skills.

To further promote and explain our recreation, we have published a second in the series of the *Field to Fork* cookbooks and titled it *Field to Fork: Second Helpings*. Again, it is a glossy, high-quality 130-page publication, with each recipe tested and photographed. It even features some of the more exotic proteins such as camel and crocodile as well as the more traditional table fare like venison, kangaroo and pork. Grab a copy for yourself from the SSAA Online Shop or, even more importantly, buy one for a friend or family member and have the conversation about why you go hunting and love the outdoors. ●

SSAA - Protecting shooters since 1948

Brunel a true innovator

I'VE JUST READ with great interest Geoff Smith's review of *Exactly - How Precision Engineers Created the Modern World*, (*Shooter*, November 2020) as the exploits of early engineering pioneers hold great fascination for me.

In the review there's perhaps one slight inaccuracy with the implication that Henry Maudslay was originator of the pulley block-making machine - it was celebrated engineer Marc Brunel who invented the machine, father of the even more famous Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

Henry Maudslay was commissioned to construct the pulley block-making machine, widely regarded as the first 'machine tool'. After acceptance by the Admiralty, Marc Brunel moved to Portsmouth to supervise installation of his machine in Portsmouth Dockyard, where manufacture of the blocks was revolutionised.

I heartily recommend to anyone interested in industrial history to read any of the many books written about the Brunels, who were giants of Victorian engineering feats. I.K. Brunel, in particular, was fastidious in accuracy, having in his teens worked under

A.L. Breguet, the most famous maker of chronometers. He also suggested designs for a 'great gun' and offered designs to the Admiralty for a gunboat.

Jon Radford, SA

Don't buy ammo in a hurry

LIKE SANDY HOWARD on Page 7 of your November issue, I also experienced some serious problems with shop-bought ammunition a few years back. I bought a couple of packs of 6.5x55mm Swedish ammo from a gunshop in the NSW Southern Highlands. The boxes were a bit tatty and had clearly seen better days, but I was in a hurry and foolishly didn't bother to check the state of all cartridges, just a cursory glance at the first couple of rows.

Once back home and after opening the box, several cartridges were so corroded they could have been dangerous to fire, or at least caused damage to my rifle. Since then I treat factory-bought centrefire ammo like my wife buys her eggs and closely check each one from top to bottom before leaving the shop! Thanks for the entertaining and instructive articles.

Nick Stokes, ACT

A pen friend for life

THANK YOU VERY much for the .30-cal pen set and deer antler stand which I won as a prize, it's very much appreciated and something I'll hand down to my family when the happy hunting ground calls me in the years ahead. To all members, I recommend you look at buying this wonderful item for yourself or as a gift, as it's so well made and deserves a place on your desk or work area.

Steven Fine, via email

Arsenic and old shooters!

BEING A TRADIE and practical type, I've always followed tech specs and instructions and grew up being educated that lead was an unhealthy product to mess with. I always used masks and gloves as specified and washed my hands whenever I worked with the stuff.

But until reading Geoff Smith's Top Shots answer to Alex Lytwynenko (*Shooter*, November 2020), I was unaware some lead products contained arsenic. Yikes! So now I know another reason for coated projectiles. A great read, all good stuff and one is never too 'mature' to learn.

Ray Atkin, via email



Insurance Q&A with Trevor Jenkin

Send questions to: communications@ssaa.org.au

Q What are the benefits of general insurance - I don't have much and feel the premium is better in my pocket.
Susan Gayle, via email

A General insurance protects you and your assets from the financial risk of something going wrong. It can't stop something happening but if the unexpected does occur, it's covered by general insurance and means you won't have to pay the full cost of a loss.

That means if something goes wrong you're far less likely to have to raid your savings or investments, borrow money, ask family or friends for financial help or sell your assets to pay for repairs, building or outstanding debts. You won't have to rely on assistance from governments and

community groups which usually only help in disaster situations such as floods or bushfire, where the assistance may not reflect the extent of your loss and so may not help rebuild your life.

Most people take insurance to protect something they've bought which has a high value (house, car, jewellery, artwork) and would be expensive to replace. You can also buy cover to protect yourself when doing something not covered by normal insurance policies, such as playing sport or travelling overseas. Most people are willing to pay an insurance premium to protect things such as their home and contents, car, boat or caravan and business owners usually take cover to protect assets and stock and provide financial help if they face legal issues.

Choosing a policy is a matter of identifying what's important to you. You should consider general insurance when the cost of a particular financial risk is much greater than the cost of protecting yourself against that risk - and almost anything of value can be covered. Call us on (08) 8332 0281 or visit ssaaib.com.au to see your options for adequately insuring your assets.



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.

Wasting prime venison nothing short of 'insane behaviour'

The *Australian* recently ran an article entitled 'Push to put deer on our radars and menus' which highlighted the thoughts of a celebrity chef regarding utilisation of wild deer and the dilemma of meat wastage as a result of current aerial culling operations.

Chef Mark LaBrooy discussed why he's passionate about changing the way wild deer populations are controlled so more and more people can experience the versatility and rich flavours of venison. He's been hunting deer since 2015 and has made it a regular feature on menus in his restaurants around the country. He realises wild deer should become a more widely-eaten ethical meat option and their management should also become a potential multimillion-dollar industry, providing additional employment opportunities in rural areas.

LaBrooy said: "Deer is an organic, wild food source with one of the highest nutrient counts of any protein in Australia and at the moment we just kill and leave it on the ground - it's insane behaviour." He was referring to the way government agencies in numerous states, including Victoria and New South Wales, use helicopters to cull hundreds if not thousands of deer where the carcasses are simply left to rot. To him it seems a shameful waste of a premium food source and there are many who share his view.

Australia's appetite for game meat has increased in recent years with staples like beef steaks being replaced in favour of kangaroo in many trendy inner-city pubs. With more chefs across the country starting to use game meat, experimenting and

perfecting methods and recipes to present to their customers, this demand should continue to rise. More people are becoming admirers of the taste along with the nutritional benefits and sustainability of game meat.

TV shows like *MasterChef* have been responsible for people becoming more adventurous when it comes to eating meat and cultural anthropologist Catie

tasty, chefs such as LaBrooy believe the meat is very much restaurant quality with tenderloins and backstraps being the most prized cuts you can work with.

When it comes to managing deer populations, the article expressed views from recreational hunters who say they can play a much bigger role in taking more deer out of the environment, at the same time using as much of the venison as possible. Barry

Howlett of the Australian Deer Association says no hunter wants to see deer shot to waste and if you're going to kill an animal it should be used as much as possible.

This is a constant message from hunters that hunting for the table is very much what we do. We understand wildlife populations need to be managed and where at times overpopulations exist and are causing economic and environmental impacts, action should be taken. For us generally, we want to be involved in the wildlife management process and the hunting/shooting opportunities that presents, so we can use the resource and minimise waste.

Returning to the subject of putting deer on the menu, the SSAA has just released its latest game meat cookbook *Field to Fork - Second Helpings* which features more than 50 recipes, including venison and other wild animals we can harvest ourselves or buy from game meat suppliers. If you're after a few new game meat recipes to add to your dinner repertoire, order your copy today at onlineshop.ssaa.org.au



Gressier says there's been a significant shift in consumer thinking about the ecological impact when choosing meat. Multiculturalism is another reason behind people trying new things and there's real diversity in what they're willing to experiment with in the kitchen.

Although there is some stigma attached to wild deer being seen as a pest and a general perception that venison's not that

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Some things just get better with age

Modern technology has enabled us to put men on the Moon and send spaceships to Mars - but let's go back and look at some of the firearm cartridges we use today, even though they were invented more than a century ago. One of the first US metallic cartridges was the .22 rimfire which was produced in 1857, had a 29 or 30-grain lead projectile and was loaded with four grains of black powder. In 1871 it was renamed the .22 Short when a slightly longer cartridge - the .22 Long - was introduced. It used the same 29-grain lead projectile but had a heavier five-grain load of black powder.

In 1873 two significant cartridges were introduced, the .44-40 Winchester also known as .44 Winchester or .44WCF (Winchester Centre Fire) being the first metallic centrefire cartridge made by Winchester for their new Model 1873 rifle. The other was the .45-70 rifle cartridge, also known as the .45-70 Government, a replacement for the .50-70 Government cartridge which had been adopted in 1866. It was developed for use in the US Army's Springfield Model 1873 rifle, now more commonly known as the Trapdoor Springfield.

Developed in England in December 1888, the .303 rimmed cartridge was put into service for use in the Lee-Metford rifle. It was loaded with black powder and fired a 215-grain round-nosed full metal jacket projectile fitted with a lead core. A couple of years later in 1891 it was adapted to use smokeless powder and went on to become the standard British and Commonwealth



military cartridge used in rifles and machine guns until the 1950s, when it was replaced by the 7.62 x 51mm NATO cartridge.

Around the same time another great cartridge had been introduced in Europe. Being a joint development between Sweden and Norway, the 6.5 x 55mm Swedish cartridge was adopted for use in the Krag-Jorgensen M/1894 rifle in Norway and Mauser M/1896 rifle in Sweden. It used smokeless powder in its rimless

bottlenecked cartridge case, had a lighter projectile than other full-power service rifle cartridges and was found to have low recoil and good accuracy, making it very suitable for combat conditions.

Another popular cartridge still around today is the 7 x 57mm Mauser, designed by Paul Mauser in 1892 and adopted as a military cartridge by Spain in 1893. Although now obsolete as a military cartridge, it's very popular worldwide as a sporting option and is known in the UK as the .275 Rigby.

On the other side of the world, in 1906 the US Army replaced its .30-03, 6mm Navy and .30-40 Krag cartridges with a new one designated the .30-06 Springfield. It remained in service for both rifles and machineguns until being replaced in the late 1970s by the 7.62 x 51mm NATO cartridge and its worldwide popularity as a sporting round is such that it's currently produced by all the major ammunition manufacturers.

In the medium-to-heavy cartridge class, one stands head and shoulders above all others. Introduced in 1912 by quality London-based gunmaker Holland & Holland, the .375 H&H Magnum was designed to be loaded with long strands of cordite, thus its long tapered shape, and had a belted base to ensure correct headspace. So successful has it been on thick-skinned game worldwide that it's still carried by professional hunters, African game guides and amateur hunters as the preferred cartridge when dealing with large and dangerous animals which need to be despatched quickly.



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Clay Target Q&A

WITH RUSSELL MARK

Q I wonder if you could explain exactly what it means when I'm told I need to 'See a Figure 8' down the barrel of my shotgun? I was under the impression I shouldn't see anything down the barrel as I should be concentrating on the target I'm shooting at. Any help appreciated.

Floyd Harris, Vic.

A The term 'Figure 8' refers to the alignment you may see when you look down the barrel of your shotgun should you have a centre-bead fitted. Many shotguns only have a front sight therefore this term is useless if that's the case. If you do have a mid-bead, then if your eye is perfectly aligned down the middle of the barrel the centre-bead should be in line with the front sight. If your stock has a high enough comb, top of the mid-bead should be 'stacked' on the bottom of the front bead therefore giving the illusion of a number eight. In reality it's more like an inverted snowman as the front sight will be much larger than the smaller mid-bead.

Many Trap shooters preach about seeing this Figure 8 alignment as it means their gun will shoot a slightly higher point of impact in relation to their point of aim, as opposed to the beads being perfectly aligned one behind the other. For fast-rising Trap targets this higher configuration is seen as beneficial and the illusion of the number eight only reinforces their gun will throw the shot pattern high. Many actually prefer seeing a small gap between the two beads, therefore throwing their shot even higher. Everyone has a different sight picture so there's really no 'one size fits all' winning combination.

You're correct in the description of what you should be seeing on pulling the trigger when pointing the shotgun at your target. You should see the object you're trying to knock out of the sky perfectly clearly, and the front sight or end of your barrel as



something of a blur in your fore vision - get this back to front and you'll be in all sorts of trouble.

The Figure 8 is simply an aid before you're ready to shoot. For dry-firing at home when practising gun mounts, this can be most beneficial to ensure you have the correct and consistent gun mount to keep your eye perfectly centered down the middle of the barrel. But once you enter the competition arena or even if standing in the middle of a duck swamp, concentrating on obtaining a Figure 8 illusion is going to cause you a lot of pain.

Q Do you believe the Tokyo Olympics will happen and do you feel they should actually be going ahead?

Grant Izard, Vic.

A Yes and yes. With the roll-out of vaccines and knowing the professionalism and dedication of the Japanese people who've been assigned this monumental task, I honestly believe they can pull

it off. For the athletes who've put their lives on hold to take part in what will be for many a once-in-a-lifetime experience, we have to hope and pray they get their chance. It's bad enough their lives have been in limbo for a year after the postponement but to miss out altogether would be unfathomable for most.

Shooters I guess have the ability to extend their careers therefore Paris 2024 is almost around the corner, but for athletes in sports like gymnastics or even swimming where at 21 you're almost considered a veteran, this may be the one and only chance to represent their country at this level. I know there are more important things in life than sport, but for these dedicated athletes it's hard to convince them of that. Let's hope we get back to some form of normality by July and cheer on our team. Go Aussie!



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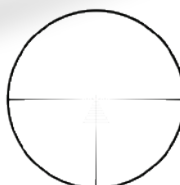
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Got a question - ask our TOP SHOTS ?

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

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Q I've owned two tiny derringer-type antiques for many years and have a vague notion they're circa 1854.

They bear proof marks of a crown and a house and one has the serial number '44'. Several online searches haven't revealed any matches so I'd appreciate any enlightenment you or other SSAA members may be able to provide.

Kevin Drummond, NSW

A Without a clear close-up photo of the proof marks and measurement of calibre it's hard to be precise, but from your photos the two antiques are likely 6mm Flobert saloon pistols, designed for use on indoor ranges during the 19th century and also described as 'muff pistols' designed to be carried by ladies as concealed weapons in purses or muffs.

Your description of the proof marks suggest they were made in Liege, Belgium. An internet search for 'Flobert saloon pistols' will bring up hundreds of photos, many marked 'Made in Germany' but bearing Belgian proof marks. I've seen many of these interesting little pistols at gun shows, on sale for prices in the \$150 range.

Louis Nicolas Flobert invented the rimfire cartridge in 1845 so your estimated date may be correct, although these pistols were still advertised in the 1911 Alfa catalogue from Germany (see photo - your pistols resemble the first two).

Geoff Smith



Q I have a .30/.338WM which is basically a 338 Win Mag necked down to .308 but I've no reloading data on the current powders available to me. I have a 300 Win Mag I load with AR2213SC and would like to use this powder if possible (I intend to use .308 projectiles in 200 and 220gr weight). What cartridge should I use in comparison to develop a load and what steps should I be taking to do this safely?

Paul Conway

A Like you Paul, I found great difficulty locating any loading information for the .30-338 WM cartridge using AR2213SC powder. However, the .308 Norma cartridge uses the same .375 H&H Magnum cartridge case and is almost identical in dimensions to the .30-338 WM cartridge. I therefore suggest you consult the ADI Powders Handloaders' Guide and use the loads shown for both 200 and 220gr projectiles as a guide, starting of course with lower loads than those shown to be on the safe side.

Barry Wilmot

Q What are the advantages of longer barrels on a shotgun and does a longer barrel improve velocity?

Rick, SA

A The length of the average factory shotgun barrel, whether single or double barrel, has very little real effect on velocity. Once the propellant has been burned in a barrel of sufficient length, the maximum velocity is reached. The length of this barrel depends on the speed of the powder being burned and the payload of shot, but it's safe to say the average barrel between 28" and 32" is more than long enough to achieve maximum velocity from any shotgun shell and in fact may even be slowing it down by a few metres per second.

Today we're seeing a trend towards longer barrels on sporting arms for several reasons. When Trap and Skeet disciplines were first shot, much shorter barrels of between 26" and 28" were in vogue as those were seen as clay target games which in some way simulated field shooting, and

often field guns were used to shoot these targets for off-season practice. As both disciplines became more sophisticated, it was found that the longer sighting plane and extra steadiness a longer barrel provides was a distinct advantage and perfect scores of 100 straight were required to win tournaments or at least make the shoot-off!

During the past few years top shots in most disciplines seem to be favouring 32" barrels of differing weights, depending on the speed or steadiness required to give the shooter the greatest chance of hitting every target, these barrels invariably fitted with screw-in chokes and back-bored to be slightly oversize for the 12-gauge chambering. Their forcing cones are lengthened either at the factory or aftermarket and each of these modifications helps slightly in increasing velocity and reducing recoil.

It's a case of every little thing helps. There have been experiments with 34" and 36" under and over barrels but 32" seems to be the optimum right now. Size of shooter and personal expertise also play a part in the best length-of-barrel equation so try the same gun with different barrel lengths and decide what suits you best. Good Luck.

Paul Miller

Q I was interested to read Rod Pascoe's Top Shots answer about the Combined Services Discipline (CSD) (*Shooter*, October 2020). I hadn't heard of this pistol match so looked at the rule book on the SSAA website and was intrigued to find the rules include a minimum PEL or Projectile Energy Level (otherwise known as Power Factor). 'Intrigued' because I'm not sure I, or anyone else, would want to subject their pre-war vintage service firearms to the powerful loads required by the rules. Sure, I understand the concept of a 'level playing field' but specifying a minimum load has scared me off this one. Can Top Shots advise of any other competition where I can fire my old treasures without having to use full-house loads?

Chris R, NSW

A I passed your comments to CSD National Discipline Chairman Steven Knight who points out the ammunition rule states in part: 'The spirit and intent of Service Rifle and Pistol shooting is embodied in the use of standard military specification loads . . .' However, closer examination of the rules reveal shooters are permitted to load their ammunition to at least 75 per cent of the published military load.

A list of loads for various cartridges is listed in the rule book and this should allay any fear of damage to older firearms. As you live in NSW, there's another match starting to find its way into pistol clubs. I wrote an article in *Australian & New Zealand Handgun* 18 magazine about the Classic Service match which is based on pre-1946 military and police pistols and revolvers. This match roughly runs along the lines of the CSD match but with no minimum power factor or PEL specified. This allows very light loads to be used - especially in revolvers - which suits firearms and shooters alike.

Rod Pascoe

Q I've been given several boxes of the ammunition in this photo for which I have an old break action single-shot rifle. It was made in Canada and I wonder if you could tell me when it may have been manufactured or been available in Australia. The cartridges and boxes are in excellent condition, so are they likely to be of interest to collectors?

Bob Young, via email

A From the styling of the packet it looks like your ammunition was made after 1956 and the ammunition therein should have a Dominion headstamp. At one stage there was quite a lot of Dominion ammunition around and I remember buying some just like yours at Mick Smith's Sports Store in Sydney in the late 1960s for an old 1882 Winchester I owned. That said, I haven't seen any in a gunshop for a long time and don't know if it's still imported. While packets show up at cartridge collectors' meetings and auctions from time to time, there doesn't seem to be a great deal of interest, except among those

who collect specific calibres (generally it's regarded as 'shooting ammo').

The Dominion Cartridge Company (DC Co.) was incorporated in 1886 and in 1910 merged with six other companies to form Canadian Explosives Industries (CEL). In 1927, CEL was re-named Canadian Industries Limited (CIL) but unfortunately very little is known about the firm's production numbers and codes, something even collectors' groups such as the International Ammunition Association acknowledges. The Dominion Cartridge Co. headstamp was used on centrefire pistol and rifle cartridges until about 1947 and until 1969 the Dominion headstamp was used, being replaced by Imperial that year.

Post WWII, CIL manufactured a wide range of products including explosives, paints, agricultural and industrial products, plastics, sporting ammunition and manmade textiles. In 1976, Industries Valcartier Incorporated (IVI) bought CIL's ammunition production and rights to the Dominion, Imperial and Canuck brands.

IVI is now known as SNC Technologies based in Quebec, Canada. They are, by their

own admission, a "world class developer and manufacturer of ammunition suited to the needs of the armed forces and law enforcement agencies", though sporting ammunition production isn't mentioned and to the best of my knowledge Dominion ammunition is no longer made.

John Dunn





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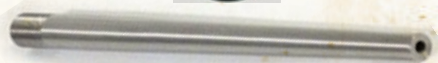
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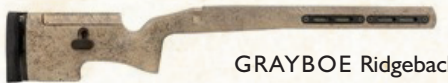
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Sauer 404 Classic XT

the best just keeps getting better

Con Kapralos

It's been six years since J.P. Sauer & Sohn released their successor to the much-loved 202 in the form of the 404 bolt-action rifle. While the 202 model was in production from 1993 to 2015, the 404 brought in a raft of improvements which made the gun even better while maintaining the original design of a compact, take-down, switch-barrel rifle.

Make no bones about it, the Sauer 404 is a premium kit with true modularity, only limited by the owner's desire and budget and some of the higher specification options of the 404 are simply stunning. It's a rifle any shooting sportsman would be proud to own yet the Sauer 404 is still

a serious hunting firearm and one of their most popular models is the Classic XT, a synthetic-stocked rifle at home on a driven European hunt, African safari or pursuing all manner of Australian game species.

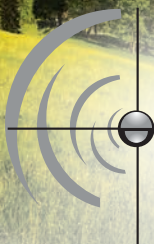
At the 2019 SSAA SHOT Expo in Melbourne, Jim Harding, Marketing Manager for Outdoor Sporting Agencies asked *Australian Shooter* to review the Sauer 404, yet it would be a year later in our COVID-dominated landscape before a demonstration model of the Sauer 404 Classic XT was finally available. In this instance it was a cased, two-barrel set complete with two matching Zeiss V8 riflescopes, specific for each calibre and

application - a 1.8-14x50 for the .308 Winchester barrel and 1-8x30 for the big-bore .375 H&H Magnum tube.

The fitted case also housed the spare bolt head, magazines for both calibres and all accessories including a Sauer leather rifle sling. I immediately deduced this kit as-is wouldn't leave much change from \$20,000 but reviewing the Sauer 404 with .308 Winchester barrel was the priority. Having reviewed the Sauer 202 many years previously, assessing the 404 would be interesting especially as I'd read international reviews, all from Europe, where the Sauer 404 is king in the driven shooting and hunting landscape.

Review rifle as supplied.





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Sauer 404 Classic XT

While many pundits love to compare the 404 with the 202, naturally the 404 has seen many refinements which make it superior. For instance, manual cocking/decocking by pushing the safety catch forward or rearwards makes the rifle completely safe and is simple and effective. Another improvement is the scope-mounting system. Whereas with the 202 most users opted for Warne or Apel mounts, the 404 uses the Sauer Universal Mount (SUM) which is specifically designed to mate up with machined recesses in the top of the action. This saddle-style mount makes it possible for any optic to be removed and reattached with no change in point-of-impact and allows the owner to use iron sights for close-range hunting.

The action

Almost identical externally to the 202, the 404 is based on the switch-barrel concept and uses the same split receiver system to retain the barrel by three transverse bolts. The close-topped receiver is made from aluminium to reduce weight and the ejection port is large enough for single loading. The receiver block also encompasses the integral magazine well along with the triggerguard made from the same aluminium.

The bolt is a multi-piece affair with interchangeable bolt head for changes in calibre (and barrel) as well as the manual cocking/decocking system. Also housed in the receiver block is the 404 trigger system which has the added bonus of being able to be set at one of four pre-determined trigger-pull settings from 0.55 to 1.25kg by simply using the Sauer Universal Key (SUK). The SUK is the tool to which all user adjustments are carried out on the 404 from trigger pull, removal of the barrel set, fore-end and buttstock. This dandy little tool is located in the tip of the fore-end and also serves as the forward sling swivel attachment point. The triggerblade is also adjustable for length and pitch by using a small Allen key supplied and there's also a steel option for the 404 receiver.

Interchangeable barrel system

The review 404 was supplied as a two-barrel set with .308 Winchester and .375 Holland & Holland Magnum barrels respectively. Owners can choose from 16 available calibres from .243 Winchester right up to 10.3x60R and match the barrel with the appropriate bolt head required. Barrel lengths and profiles are also an option for buyers but in the case of the review two-barrel set, both sported iron sights (mid-barrel and muzzle), the .308 Winchester barrel being 560mm long with sporter profile.



Left-hand view of the action.



The manual safety cocking/decocking function.



Looking at the bolt with detachable head.



The barrel removed.

The .375 H&H Magnum barrel was much stouter at 620mm with a heavy profile. The overall rifle weight with the two barrels showed only a difference of 308g (3.397kg for the .308 Win and 3.705kg for the .375 H&H Magnum). The barrels are made with a cold hammer forging process which produces an excellent barrel for hunting accuracy.

Barrel changing is simple as, using the SUK, the fore-end is removed to expose three retaining bolts. With the bolt removed, sequentially loosening each one a couple of turns (from No.1 to 3) then lowering the barrel captive lever to the vertical position allows the barrel to be removed. Repositioning is the reverse process. As always it's a must to read

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Sauer 404 Classic XT

the user manual before attempting barrel change (or any task) on the 404 and I found a barrel could be swapped in about five minutes.

Changing the bolt head is simple. A spring-loaded retaining lug on the bolt body is pushed back and the bolt head slid off the body, the new bolt head then slipped into place and snaps into position. When changing the barrel there's no need to insert the bolt (to engage the locking lugs) before tightening the barrel retaining bolts as the lugs lock directly into the barrel precisely. The barrels are in a matte blue to match the finish of the aluminium receiver block.

Magazine

The magazines supplied are made from pressed steel without a hint of polymer in sight. The .308 Winchester magazine was 3-shot capacity, the .375 H&H Magnum supplied with 3 and 5-shot magazines. All magazines clipped into place faultlessly and provision of a magazine safety feature, in which the release button is clicked forward, blocks it from operating and eliminates accidental loss of the magazine.

Buttstock and fore-end

The 404 was fitted with the Classic XT stock, one of two polymer synthetic stocks offered. There are beautiful walnut options but for a hunting rifle made to be used in the harshest of conditions, the Classic XT is an excellent choice. The stock is a green soft-touch polymer unit with elastomeric panels around the pistol grip and on both sides of the fore-end, a black schnabel tip on the fore-end adding a touch of class but, more importantly, this area houses the Sauer Universal Key (SUK) with the sling swivel loop attached.

The buttstock and fore-end are easily removed by using the SUK where their removal is warranted. With the fore-end, the SUK is inserted into a small hole on the underside and the retaining catch turned 90-degrees, enabling the fore-end to be slid off. For the buttstock the SUK accesses a stock bolt through a small hole in the recoil pad and easing off the stock bolt allows the buttstock to be removed.

At the range

Restrictions meant testing the Sauer 404 was limited, resulting only in a range test using the .308 Winchester barrel and matching Zeiss V8 1.8-14x50 scope. Once the rifle was boresighted in at 25m and 'on paper' at 100m, a selection of hunting loads as well as a handload was assessed, firing five 3-shot groups before a barrel clean between changes in ammunition.



View of the barrel shanks.

Accuracy testing. Sauer 404 - .308 Winchester barrel fitted - 100m

| Ammunition | Best group | Worst group | Average * |
|---|------------|-------------|-----------|
| Remington Core-Lokt 150gr SP | 32mm | 50mm | 40mm |
| Hornady Superformance SST 150gr | 18mm | 32mm | 23mm |
| Federal Powershok 150gr SP | 20mm | 35mm | 28mm |
| Handload - 140gr Tigershark over AR2209 | 10mm | 20mm | 15mm |

*Average taken from five 3-shot groups at 100m

As expected, the Sauer 404 with .308 Winchester barrel attached yielded acceptable accuracy for a hunting outfit, with group averages from 40mm for the Remington Core-Lokt 150gr soft-point to the select handload, consisting of a 140gr Tigershark HT Monolithic projectile over a charge of AR2209. This load has always shot superbly in any .308 Winchester rifle and was best performer with a group average of 15mm for five 3-shot groups. The other factory load tested, offerings from Hornady and Federal, performed well with group averages of 23 and 28mm respectively.

Overview

The Sauer 404 Classic XT is an excellent option for hunters looking at a switch-barrel rifle system and the sky's the limit as to how many barrels the owner invests in. The synthetic stock is indestructible and impervious to the elements, while the rifle shoots superbly and for the hunter in us who wants the best, the Sauer 404 is well worth a closer look. For pricing, talk to your firearms retailer or visit www.osaaustralia.com.au. ●

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Bear on the beach

Davey Hughes

I've travelled to many remote hunting camps around the globe, often in small planes, yet always find myself falling in love all over again each time I climb aboard a De Havilland Beaver aircraft. They whisper in my ear: "Welcome back - shall we go on an adventure?"

The Andrews Airways Beaver to Uyak Bay is no exception. From Kodiak township it crosses from one side of Kodiak Island (off the south coast of Alaska) to the other, taking in snow-covered mountain passes and long river valleys. Then you descend into Uyak itself, the floatplane making one lazy pass as the pilot gathers bearings on wind and tide before smoothly gliding on to the sea below. That's the plan though sometimes it's more a quick, rough bang followed by a lumpy landing and an 'OMG' moment.

I'd hunted mountain goats there three years earlier and on that trip had seen a good number of huge brown bears. From that moment I began hatching a plan to return and hunt the big 'bruins' - one of the largest predators on the planet in some of the wildest, most inhospitable terrain left on Earth.

I had to book three years out just to land an available spot with Mike Munsey, with whom I'd hunted those goats. Good

outfitters are always in high demand and he and his brother Bob took over the family business from their father, Park Munsey, who opened the Uyak hunting concession way back in 1956. When I was a boy reading crumpled *Outdoor Life* magazines, I recall seeing black and white pictures of hunters standing proudly beside huge Kodiak brown bear skins hanging from a skinning shed with 'Munsey's Brown Bear Camp' carved above the door. I always knew I'd have to go there myself.

With the famous hut now only feet away I spent the first night at the main camp where I sighted in my Rigby .416 rifle and next morning we headed up the bay in a Boston Whaler. These high-sided aluminium boats aren't pretty but are incredibly stable, a fact we were extremely grateful for given the weather we were to encounter. An hour up the bay we pulled into a small cove on Aleut Island. Here, set among the trees were rustic cabins that would be my home for the next two weeks. Generally speaking the weather was typical spring conditions - abysmal. Drowning out a couple of days of sunshine was plenty of heavy rain, some snow and ferocious winds.

As with all hunts where the weather might turn nasty, a good base layer is key.

Unless the cold is extreme I like a micro fleece base along with a mid-layer to trap air and transfer moisture vapour, while an outer layer to protect you from wind and rain is essential on hunts at any time of year on Kodiak Island. For climbing in and out of the boat I wore waterproof overshoes on top of my hunting boots - they came up to my waist and made disembarking and launching the boat a relatively dry affair.

As a non-resident alien you must employ a registered guide for any big game hunting in Alaska. My guide on this trip was Curtis Boyd with whom I'd hunted on previous treks and had known for a number of years. Each morning we'd travel off the island and head for various vantage points where we'd climb above the treeline and glass for bears. You have to enjoy glassing for this sort of hunting and luckily there's plenty to keep your eyes busy from sea life (whales, seals and sea otters) to foxes running along the beaches and the sitka blacktail deer which inhabit the valleys, up to the mountain goats in their high abodes in cloud-covered lofty peaks. Crucially, we also saw five or six bears every day.

In spring, brown bears are coming out of hibernation and the males (boars) are looking for females (sows) to mate with. If



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YEAR
WARRANTY

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- 5 extended chokes
- Single selective, inertia trigger
- Take-down case

Akkar Churchill XM12
20" Ejector



Bear on the beach



Davey glasses from higher ground.

you see a sow acting apprehensively you can assume there's a male nearby who has her location dialled down. The females will often have cubs in tow which is why they're always on guard as the boars, in an attempt to pass on their own DNA, will kill young cubs to shift the females back into reproduction mode. Almost a third of young cubs will die during the mating season.

Each time we spotted a large boar we assessed his suitability to hunt, taking into consideration his size, whether his fur was even (at this time of year it can often be rubbed off over the body) and how fast he was travelling. If everything added up we'd plan a stalk to move into range for a closer evaluation.

We'd spotted the particular bear I hunted over a three-day period. On the first two days he foiled us and on the third I was sitting on a high spot above the bay, glassing both an open hill behind me and down towards the far shoreline below (Curtis had gone to secure the whaler as the tide changed). Through my binos I spotted movement across the other side of the bay so I zoomed in with my spotting scope. Nothing. Then just behind a small grove of alders I saw a flash of brown. It had to be a bear - but which one? He stepped out and I had my answer.

I took off for the boat, bumping into Curtis along the way, grinning: "Bear on



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Bear on the beach

the beach, bro!” Quietly we made our way the two kilometres across the bay to a point roughly 800m up the beach from where I’d last seen the bear. Once on the shore we began edging slowly down the bay, using cover of the brush as we peered around each rocky outcrop until we were at the large meadow where the bear had been. What to do now - enter the meadow? Go into the back of the tall grass and work our way through the alders and willows? Certainly the wind was right.

The vastness of the Alaskan surrounds is breath-taking.



The bear stepped out from a small hollow and walked upright to stand by a large tree about 150m away, where he began rubbing. Ducking low, I made my way to a fallen log. I slowly lay down behind it and pulled out my Leica 10x42 Geovids to range 68m. It was still a relatively long shot on a dangerous animal, in my opinion, but there wasn’t an inch of cover between me and the bear.

He looked huge - damn it, he was huge. I inched along the log, slid my Rigby over it and found him in the scope. He stood tall, reached up behind himself and pulled down the tree - now that was impressive. As he scratched his back I waited until finally he released the tree, looked around and plonked all four legs on the ground to be a perfect broadside. I squeezed off my shot. He took it and spun, moving to his left behind the tree and blocking me from shooting again. Immediately I heard a shot from Curtis’ .375 then the bear was out of sight. We’d discussed follow-up shots at the beginning, my view being if my shot connects then out of respect for the animal we’ll despatch it quickly and efficiently. I

have no qualms with my guide joining the fray.

We walked forward slowly with rifles ready and had taken only a dozen steps when we saw him down, the 340gr Woodleigh doing its job yet again.

Back at camp and with the famous skinning hut of my boyhood dreams being put to good use, I realised I’m never sad to leave a hunting ground. I guess that’s because I’m either already planning my return or thoughts of another hunt in a different location are foremost in my mind. ●

Kit box

Rifle: Rigby Big Game .416

Ammunition: 340gr Woodleigh soft-nose

Riflescope: Leica Magnus 1-6.3x24

Binoculars: Leica 10 x 42 Geovid HD-B

Spotting scope: Leica APO Televid 65



Davey, left, and Curtis are dwarfed by the hefty bear.



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Layout of a drying rack.

The fun of reloading vintage cartridges

Paul Heiser

Being secretary of the Q60 Historical Arms Collectors' branch I often receive enquiries from people who have obtained a vintage firearm and would like information on firing it on the local range. Generally, if it's a common calibre there's no issue and the questioner can be pointed in the right direction. But there are times when the enquirer is advised that reloading is the only practicable solution as loaded ammunition isn't available. If you've acquired a French 8x50mm Lebel from the First World War, cases made by Prvi Partizan are available and the Lebel uses standard 8mm projectiles.

If you have grandad's Snider or Martini Henry you'll need to not only reload cases which are now commercially available but also cast your own projectiles. The Snider works best with projectiles from .585" to .590" or even a .60 round ball, while the Martini requires projectiles anywhere between .465" and .470" so specific moulds are involved. Luckily, .458 cast projectiles can be paper-patched to a suitable diameter if you wish to shoot the Martini Henry. After explaining this, some people are ready to throw in the towel and want to know what the rifle will sell for.

A selection of reloading dies are essential

if you hope to shoot vintage centrefire firearms. Dies for large capacity cartridges will be found in 1¼"x12 thread (Lee) or 1x14 thread (CH4D) and this can deter people. Large cases necessitate the more ample-sized dies as these can put undue stresses on 7/8"x14 dies and may crack the die. Many modern reloading presses have a removable collet and will accept dies larger than the standard 7/8"x14 versions.

If you wish to reload .43 Mauser, 8mm Kropatschek or something equally exotic then you're most likely going to have the dies ordered for you. Fortunately, local company Simplex make a large number



CONQUER THE NIGHT

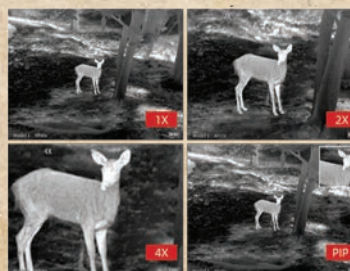


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The fun of reloading vintage cartridges

of the less commonly encountered calibres and are of excellent quality and what Simplex doesn't make may be produced by CH4D in the US. Lee will often do a limited run of uncommon calibres for a short period of time and it pays to keep an eye out for them as they're reasonably priced.

Some cases such as the 30.40 for Krag rifles can easily be formed by passing a .303 British case through a full length 30.40 Krag die and 303-25 can be smoothly converted to 6.5 Dutch Mannlicher using the same method through an appropriate die. Unfortunately, other cartridge cases such as the 8mm Kropatschek need rims of the parent case (in this instance the .348 Winchester) to be modified in a lathe along with forming in an RCBS die and then final forming in an 8x50mm Lebel die, definitely not one to embark on as your first project in case forming. The .348 is the parent case for several conversions including 8x50mm Lebel and it's worth having some to hand just on the off chance you have to form some older European cartridges.

Next task is to check the length of the cartridge case with either a gauge or set of callipers as more often than not the parent case entails being trimmed and this must be approached cautiously (you can always remove brass but it's not easy to put it back). And when a cartridge case starts to stretch with use, it will eventually not chamber which results in a wasted trip to the range.

My digital callipers cost around \$25 and have given years of service. In the past 10 years I've had only two pairs after the first on giving years of service didn't survive a fall to the concrete floor of my shed. Lee make a small hand-held trimmer while Lyman, RCBS and Hornady offer bench-mounted units which can either be turned by hand or with an accessory driven by an electric screwdriver or drill.

You'll need to consult a reloading manual for recommended case lengths, bearing in mind many older rifles had chambers with only nominal dimensions so variances will be encountered - Sniders and Martini Henrys particularly come to mind. It's essential you make a dummy cartridge to ensure it functions seamlessly in the intended firearm's action as nothing's more frustrating than arriving at the range to find the cartridges you spent hours forming and loading don't chamber (this happened to me twice and probably will again).

If you've been industrious and have resized case necks and pushed back case shoulders the brass may become work-hardened, as it turns hard and brittle when worked and needs to be softened



A comparison of dies.



Kropatschek case and tools



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OPTIKA5 4-20X50 RD

The fun of reloading vintage cartridges

by applying heat (annealed) to avoid cracking. The neck should be evenly heated for between five and 10 seconds with a gas torch, then the case dropped into a container of water at room temperature (this may give the neck a slightly blueish tinge). Don't forget protective gear and to keep the flame in a safe direction. I use flat timber with doweling inserted to make a drying rack for cases after being dipped in water, the cases placed upside down on the dowels to quickly dry in the sun.

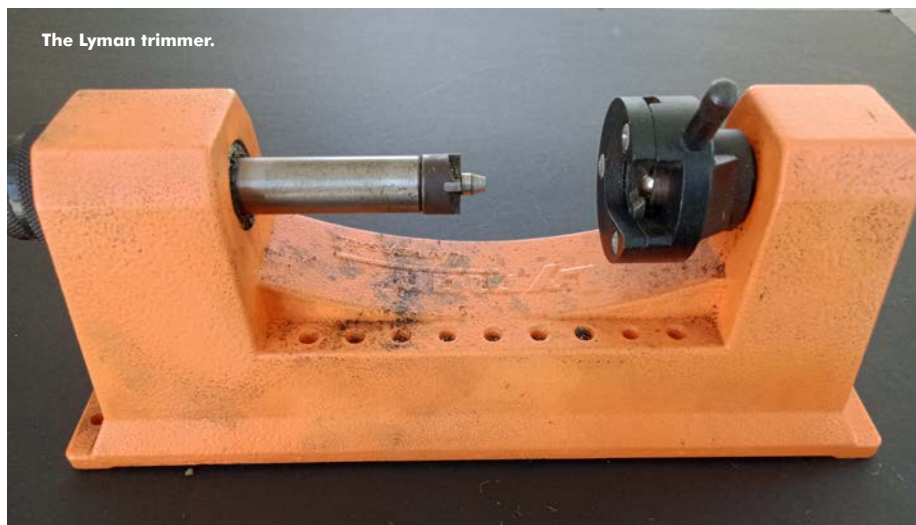
An alternate method of annealing is to stand the cases up in an old baking dish filled with water up to the neck and then heat the neck with a gas torch. As each case neck is annealed with the torch you tip it over into the water. I recommend annealing case necks after every fourth firing and it's only necessary to anneal the neck and top of the shoulder as you don't want to soften the base of the case. And remember:

- Clean the case including the primer pocket,
- Trim the case and chamfer the case mouth (if necessary),
- Either full length resize or neck size the case,
- Anneal if and when necessary.

Following the above procedures will go a long way to saving cases you worked long and hard to buy and possibly have modified. It's also advisable to invest in at least one reloading manual and there are several good ones available including those published by Lyman, Sierra, ADI and Hornady. The manuals run in a logical manner starting with the smallest of calibres and working their way up to the big boys.

One drawback with imported reloading manuals is not all powders quoted are available in Australia, although this is not an issue with the ADI manual which gives loadings for its own locally-made powders. *The Lyman Cast Bullet Handbook* and *Black Powder Handbook* are excellent sources of information for muzzleloaders and reloaders of black powder cartridges. Read the manuals carefully - especially the hints - and don't go under the minimum or over the maximum loads given and keep in mind that springs, firing pins and extractors may become weakened with age and usage and should be inspected prior to use.

You may have an issue trying to find a load for an old or obscure cartridge. Many older versions of reloading manuals may have this information but if that fails an online search may prove useful, though use reliable sites and do lots of research as there's no way to verify what may be claimed as a safe load. Some people will put forward opinions not based on experience,



The Lyman trimmer.

whereas loads quoted in reloading manuals published by reputable firms have been thoroughly researched and tested before being released. There are several dependable reloading websites so don't dismiss this option - and it never hurts to ask an experienced reloader for help and advice.

Once you find a load which appeals and suits your purpose, make sure you can source the powder. For those of us on a budget it's often possible to find a powder which can be used across several bullet weights and calibres and if you intend to load ex-military calibres between 6.5 and 8mm, you should be able to get away with

just two or three powders depending on how flexible you want to be.

I remember the old saying 'measure twice, think three times and cut once' and the message behind this applies to reloading. Read and re-read the manual and never commit anything to memory - always make a note of components used, the date and ensure each ammunition container has a sticker showing these details. My hope is this article may encourage you to experience the fun and occasional frustration in reloading older firearms rather than relegating them to curios which languish in a safe. ●



Martini Henry moulds.

B.C. MIROKU

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JAPANESE
TECHNOLOGY

The red light on the Z Vision torch proved entirely adequate when taking running rabbits on foot with a shotgun.

Vital to get the light RIGHT

Leon Wright

My brother and I were out on one of our rabbit hunting jaunts and while chasing them after dark, we were finding bunnies difficult to hold in the light. They were more nervous than usual when the spotlight hit them and were off before I could line them up in the scope-sighted 17HMR. We'd already been around the paddocks in late afternoon and given them a bit of a tickle-up, the pile of rabbits in the back of the ute indicating we were off to flier.

During the past couple of years we've noticed rabbits becoming spotlight shy and our Lightforce option was being used less and less. We toyed with the idea of buying clip-on filters for it but found they limited the field drastically, so we've been reducing its use to finding rabbits then turning it off and relying on the Nightcore MT40 on the 17HMR.

We found out early on that just enough light to see rabbits was perfect and didn't overly alert them to our presence before we started shooting. The old cut-down Holden which Dave and I used for rabbit hunting had floodlights mounted on the roof-rack

which lit up about 40m. The Nightcore MT40 came with all the gear - mounting fixture to join the light to the scope, battery charger and a couple of batteries. We've managed to eke a full night's hunting out of the MT40 but be warned, there's no fading of the light when batteries are going flat - one minute you have light, the next you're in total darkness, it's that quick. Once, my brother and I were wandering a large paddock using the MT40 when the batteries died, leaving us with stupid looks on our faces as neither of us had a back-up headlamp. We had to follow the stars to the car and retrieve fresh batteries.

This time we used the Lightforce to find rabbits then switched it off and reverted to the MT40 mounted on the Savage 17HMR. It was spring and rabbits were in breeding mode, paired off and chasing each other all over the place and as soon as the white light highlighted them, they were off with the doe leading and the buck following. I toyed with the idea of stepping up a notch and investing in an ATN scope as Blake and I had attended a seminar where the presenter painted a rosy picture, so we

both bought a 5x20 ATN. The idea of the one-shot zero was a real selling point, especially as I intended mounting mine on my .300 Winchester Magnum and Blake on a 22-250. Upon closer inspection of our purchases I was far from impressed by the scope's mounting arrangement - it looked too fragile for my liking.

To be fair, sighting-in the 22-250 went without a hitch and it did indeed take one shot after the original sighting, it was only when we tried my ATN 5x20 on the .300 Winchester Magnum we hit trouble - we just couldn't make it hold zero and it was printing holes all over. Following our vain attempts and the exhaustion of 50 rounds of ammunition, I conceded I must be doing something wrong. When speaking to a gun salesman friend I found other hunters were also having trouble, especially with the heavy calibres (some had muzzle brakes fitted to their rifles in an attempt to rectify the problem).

On calling the distributor, he said with bigger calibre rifles it was best to start at 25m and work up to the 100m mark. We did but it proved only partially successful and

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Vital to get the light right



by now I was becoming disillusioned with the night vision and even more so when we tried the IR light. There's no way I'd fire at anything past 75m and apparently a stronger IR light was recommended by the distributor. I'd paid close to \$2000 for the ATN so had no intention of laying out another \$500 on an IR light so I sold the ATN for a loss and bought a better quality scope.

That meant I was back to finding rabbits with the Lightforce spotlight then switching to the MT40 Nitecore for taking the shot. Still I yearned for something better as this method was time-consuming and occasionally cost me a rabbit and it was then I came across the Z Vision which seemed to be just what I was after. The company selling Z Vision claimed it could pick up an animal's eyes at 900m and the whole animal at 450m - it sounded excellent.

Most of my shots would be no further than 150m and if the Z Vision worked well out to there I'd be happy, so I bought the JP-303 with the colours white, red and green, switching from one colour to another as simple as turning the dial. I planned on alternating the Z Vision between my 17HMR for rabbit hunting then attaching it to my 22-250 for longer shots on foxes.

I fixed it to my Savage heavy-barrelled 17HMR and while it was heavy, that didn't



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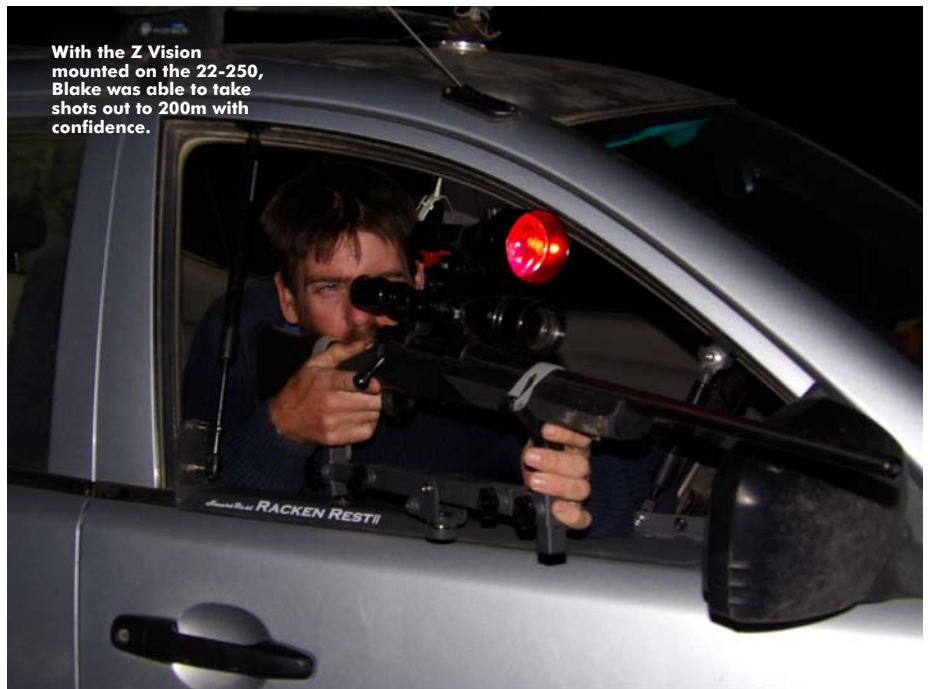
Vital to get the light right

faze me as it would be mostly used on a padded rest. One thing quickly apparent was I couldn't have the centre of the beam aligned with the barrel of the rifle, which meant the target game wasn't in the focus of the beam. I tried it on three different rifles with the same result and am of the opinion the mount which comes with the Z Vision is inadequate, so anyone buying this light would be better off with the other mounting system. Why it's not included in the package I've no idea and would be keen to hear if anyone else has encountered this problem.

The TWM-LP mount allows precise adjustment of the light beam to your point of impact which solves the problem I had, but this mount in turn requires a Picatinny rail system to attach it to your scope and adds a further \$150 to the \$350 already paid for the outfit. But with my gripe over it's only fair I mention the positives and the three-colour quick-change dial is a brilliant idea - the ability to change from one colour to the next with a simple click of the dial takes some beating.

I found the red light best for rabbit hunting and using the 17HMR I'm able to take them out to 150m in calm conditions, so the maker's claim the red light is good for shooting out to 450m will cater to all my needs and more. In truth, shots at rabbits that I take, especially after dark, would be hard pressed to make 100m but I intend using the light for fox and kangaroo control work on my daughter's property so that extra distance will be much appreciated, though I won't attempt much beyond 200m.

Being able to charge a flat battery while driving around is another excellent idea



With the Z Vision mounted on the 22-250, Blake was able to take shots out to 200m with confidence.

which will be handy. On a recent rabbit hunt I planned on giving the light a good workout but we found ourselves handicapped by high grass due to regular rain in the preceding months, so were limited in our assessment. The red light was best for rabbit work and I'd no trouble safely identifying them out to 50m which was as far as we could see. I had my Leopold variable scope set on six-power and could comfortably see the cross-hairs in both red and green, though I'd mostly choose red.

On this trip I was using the mounting system supplied with the outfit and found

the rabbit or hare I was shooting at wasn't in the centre of the beam. My brother reckoned for one shot I was taking at a hare, the centre of the beam was a lot higher with the target highlighted in the lower corner of the beam. I was able to counter this to a degree by opening up the beam, which helped a lot. I've since bought the alternative mounting system and during control work on my daughter's property found it solved my problem, so I'm sure the Z Vision will become a permanent fixture on my 17HMR for future rabbit hunting. ●



Leon found the light was not centring properly when using the mount supplied with the kit.



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The KP-31

Finland's WWII submachine gun

Ivo Dimitrov

From the late 13th century, Finland gradually became an integral part of the Kingdom of Sweden as a consequence of the Northern Crusades which saw Christian colonisation of the last pagan people in Europe. In 1809 as a result of the Finnish War, Finland was lost by Sweden to the Russian Empire and transformed into a semi-autonomous principality (Grand Duchy of Finland) within the Russian sphere.

The Russian Tsar assumed the title of Grand Duke and Nicholas II, the last Tsar of Russia, tried to Russify Finland and terminate its political autonomy, but after the 1917 Russian Revolution, Finland declared itself fully independent. In 1918 Finland descended into a brief but bloody Civil War between pro-communist Red and conservative White factions, along similar lines to the Russian Civil War, the Whites triumphing with the assistance of Imperial Germany.

The period after the Finnish Civil War proved politically unstable until the early 1930s due to continued friction and rivalry between the conservative and socialist

parties. Then in the 1930s Finland enjoyed a period of economic growth, prosperity and healing of the wounds of the Civil War. After the Soviet involvement in that war no formal peace treaty was signed as Joseph Stalin regarded it a disappointment that the USSR could not halt the Finnish Whites.

In 1938 the USSR changed its attitude towards Finland and began to pursue a policy of re-conquest of the former provinces of the Tsarist Empire lost in the chaos of the Russian Revolution, the Soviet leadership believing the old imperial provinces served as ideal buffer states against the West. Furthermore, Leningrad was only 32km from the Finnish border and they wanted that situation rectified.

Following the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe in September 1939 and the Soviet invasion of eastern Poland, the Baltic States (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, formerly also parts of Tsarist Russia) were forced to accept treaties allowing the USSR to establish military bases on their soil.

A year later in 1940 the Baltic States 'spontaneously' joined the Soviet Union.

It was then Finland's turn as, in October 1939, the Soviets had demanded the border between the USSR and Finland on the Karelian Isthmus be moved westwards to a point only 30km east of Finland's second-largest city, Viipuri, and that Finland destroy all existing fortifications on the Karelian Isthmus.

Likewise came the cession of islands in the Gulf of Finland as well as the Rybachy Peninsula, and the Finns would have to lease the Hanko Peninsula (which had a strategic location to the entrance of the Gulf) and allow the Soviets to establish a military base there. In exchange the Soviet Union would cede Rapola and Porajarvi municipalities in Eastern Karelia.

After Finland rejected these terms the Soviet Union invaded on November 30, 1939 in what would be referred to as the Winter War which lasted 14 weeks. The war became a true David versus Goliath affair. Despite an overwhelming military superiority in tanks, planes and manpower, the Soviet Union suffered appalling losses in the face of stubborn Finnish resistance and made little headway until the conclusion

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The KP-31 - Finland's WWII submachine gun



Air vents on the end cap (unscrewed).



How the barrel looks disassembled.

of hostilities in March 1940. The war was fought mostly in temperatures of around -40C and in limited hours of daylight.

In an effort to compensate for Finland's serious lack of anti-tank weapons the Finnish Liquor Board produced an incendiary petrol fire bomb (to be used against tanks' air vents), which the troops nicknamed the Molotov cocktail after Stalin's foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov. It came in response to Molotov claiming in the foreign press that the Soviet air force was only dropping food parcels over Helsinki rather than bombs, Finnish soldiers exclaiming they were returning the gift with a refreshing cocktail for their Soviet counterparts.

Following the conclusion of the Winter War, Finland lost the territory demanded by the Soviet Union but crucially it remained independent. As a consequence, when Germany launched its invasion of the USSR in June 1941, Finland joined the war against the Soviet Union in a bid to recover its lost territory, as a co-belligerent of Germany in what would become the Continuation War.

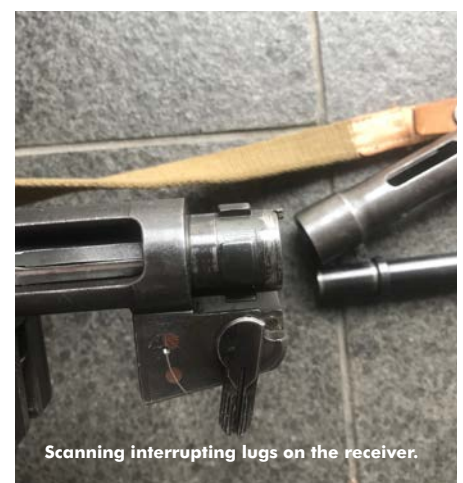
The KP-31

The Suomi KP-31 (Suomi-konepistooli or 'Submachine gun Finland') was the brainchild of the country's most prolific firearms designer Aimo Lahti, who was responsible for among other things the Lahti L-35 pistol, Lahti-Saloranta M-26 light machine gun and Lahti L-39 20mm anti-tank rifle. However, the KP-31 is arguably his best and most important work.

The Suomi KP-31 was a 9mm Parabellum blowback design submachine gun regarded by many as one of the most successful submachine guns of World War Two. It also had a profound effect on the Soviet doctrine and military authorities who'd been dismissive of submachine guns until they found themselves on the receiving end during the Winter War.



Assessing interrupting lugs on the barrel shroud.



Scanning interrupting lugs on the receiver.



So neat - the bolt.

The 71-round Suomi drum magazine was later copied and adopted by the Soviets for their PPD-40 and PPSH-41 submachine guns and, later in the war against Germany, the USSR would equip wholesale units with PPSH-41 submachine guns, especially in urban combat.

The accuracy of the Suomi is unrivalled by submachine guns of the era, thanks in part to a noticeably longer and thicker barrel, its high rate of fire at 900 rounds a minute being controllable due to the fact the gun was quite heavy at 4.6kg unloaded. The KP-31 also incorporated new features

including an arrangement whereby the recoil spring was mounted inside the bolt to make the gun shorter. The cocking handle was placed at the back (similar in style to the AR-15) so the receiver tube was completely enclosed to prevent snow and dirt from entering there and into the internal workings.

Because the receiver tube was completely enclosed and the bolt tight-fitting, Lahti incorporated air vents at the end cap of the receiver to blow the air and prevent pneumatic pressure building up during cycling of the bolt, which may slow it

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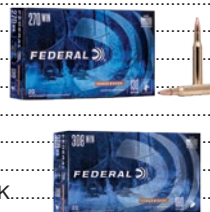


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The KP-31- Finland's WWII submachine gun

down. The KP-31 was also unusual in that it had a replaceable barrel secured with a set of four interrupting lugs between the barrel shroud and receiver as opposed to threads. Changing the barrel was a quick procedure whereby the locking latch was pulled down, the barrel shroud twisted and removed followed by the barrel. Soldiers were issued with at least one spare barrel so they could be swapped during prolonged full-auto fire.

The major disadvantage of the Suomi KP-31 was its high production costs, incorporating top quality steel and being fully machined which later led to the introduction of the KP-44, a close copy of the Soviet PPS-43 stamped submachine gun but accepting the existing magazines and drums for the KP-31.

Lahti designed the KP-31 and set up the company Konepistooli Oy to manufacture it but soon realised their enterprise was too small to meet high production demands. As Lahti was friends with the director of Tikkakoski Oy (known to us as Tikka) he entered an agreement for Tikka to start serial production in 1931 with most of those weapons bought by the Finnish Army.

Finland had about 4000 KP-31s at the outbreak of the Winter War and during the course of the Continuation War in 1942, a muzzle brake was added which increased the gun's overall length by 55mm and weight by 0.22kg. Lahti was unhappy with that addition, believing the muzzle brake reduced muzzle velocity and reliability. The weight of the gun made it very controllable on full-auto fire and he considered it superfluous, nevertheless around half the KP-31s in Finnish military service would incorporate the muzzle brake.

The Finnish military initially issued it with 20-round staggered column magazines and 40-round drum magazines, these magazines' capacity found to be too small for sustained fire. The drum was hard to reload in action as the back plate had to be removed and rounds loaded tip-down in an unstable arrangement. They were

later replaced in the Continuation War by a Swedish-designed 50-round quad stack 'coffin' magazine, while an improved 71-round drum magazine was developed by the gun's co-designer Lieutenant Koskinen as an improvement to the 40-round drum. They had a removable front plate which was quicker to reassemble and was cocked by rotating the mainspring up to four notches, thus allowing partial reloading.

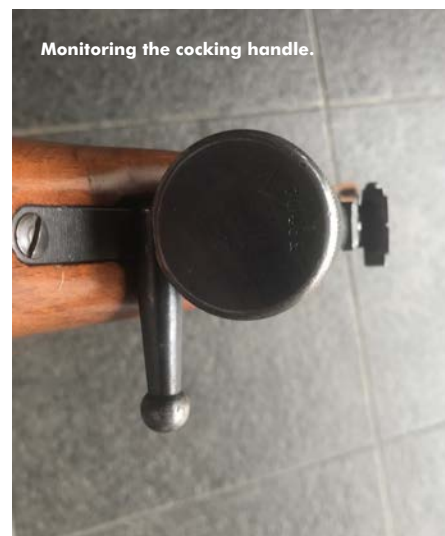
Crucially, the cartridges were laid base-down making for a more stable arrangement and it entered Finnish service in 1936. Initially the KP-31 was issued as a substitute for a light machine gun but proved inadequate in that role, soldiers learning instead by trial and error the best way to use it.

The firearm proved extremely effective as an ambush weapon against Soviet columns where Finnish soldiers would ski in undetected and use it to deadly effect. In all, roughly 80,000 KP-31s were built from 1931 until the 1950s and Finland also sold around 3000 KP-31s to Germany during the war while about 5000 were bought by Bulgaria from 1940-42.

The Suomi KP was manufactured under licence by several countries - in Sweden it was adopted as the Husqvarna Kulsprutepistol M-37 and in Denmark as the Madsen Maskinpistol M-41. The Swiss designated it the Hispano-Suiza Maschinenpistole MP-43 which had a fixed square notch rather than adjustable rear sight. The Suomi KP-31 remained in Finnish military service until the 1980s as testament to the quality and effectiveness of its design. ●



The rear sight markings.



Monitoring the cocking handle.



Checking the Tikka logo.



The rear sight.



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Nicole McKee: "The government went after the wrong people." Picture: Simon Gillice

NZ buyback

Flaws in the new laws

John Maxwell

Two years on from New Zealand's Christchurch massacre and the subsequent buyback of some 60,000 banned guns, the country is experiencing a wave of firearm crime that's the highest in a decade, the problems caused not by the country's licensed shooters but by criminal gangs. New Zealand MP Nicole McKee, former secretary and spokeswoman for the Council of Licensed Firearms Owners (COLFO), NZ's counterpart to the SSAA, says the government gave themselves a pat on the back for removing 60,000 guns from the community.

"Wait a minute mate, you took 60,000 guns from licensed owners who were obeying the law, meanwhile the gangs are having a field day. They're out there shooting themselves and other people and it needs to stop," she told *Australian Shooter*. "The government went after the wrong people and the wrong firearms. They spent \$100 million taking firearms off licensed, approved owners from their police-approved secure locations while gangs are out there shooting on a street corner near you."

Some of this crime wave, maybe much of it, is down to Australia's policy of deporting New Zealand-born criminals - more than

1500 since 2014 - who've simply touched down and continued doing what they do. Among those deported were senior biker gang members who, according to media reports, have set about reshaping New Zealand's crime scene, driving violence to fresh heights in a turf war against established groups, one reason for the frosty relations between NZ Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Australian counterpart Scott Morrison.

In the worst incident - on June 19, 2020 - Constable Mathew Hunt was shot dead and his colleague wounded when they stopped a car suspected of being associated with criminal activity (a 24-year-old man has been charged). This was the first murder of a police officer on duty since 2009 and neither officer was armed at the time, the offender reportedly carrying a long-barrelled firearm.

New Zealand is part-way through a program of changes to its gun laws sparked by the Christchurch terror attack of March 2019 when an Australian right-wing fanatic used legally acquired guns to murder 51 people in two city mosques. The Labour Government, backed by almost every MP in parliament, launched far-reaching changes including an immediate ban on self-loading

and some other types of rifles and shotguns, a buyback scheme, changes to licensing and introduction of a registration system.

The six-month buyback ended in December 2019 with 60,297 guns surrendered and owners compensated around NZ\$102 million. NZ Police estimated the final cost would be about \$120 million and buyback administration cost \$35 million, almost double the initial assessment. No-one has claimed this was a ripping success as nobody knew how many newly-banned guns there were to start with, though estimates put it as high as 200,000. Even the NZ Auditor-General couldn't conclude the buyback delivered value for money for the taxpayer as there was no reliable picture of how many newly-prohibited firearms remained in the community.

Now the government has launched a second buyback aimed at certain types of firearms which police apparently didn't realise should be included until now. They are:

- Centrefire pump-action rifles with detachable magazines;
- Centrefire pump-action rifles with non-detachable (tube) magazines able to hold more than 10 rounds;
- Some specified self-loading pistols and carbine conversion kits.

Centrefire pump-action rifles includes the Remington 7600 series which are available in Australia along with TROY rifles, which resemble an AR-15 and use some AR components but were designed solely as a pump-action. Plans to import these to Australia were rejected on grounds of their military appearance. There appear to be few affected pump-action centrefire rifles though an IMI Timber Wolf may exceed the 10-round limit when loaded with .38 Special rounds.

Quite what NZ Police are after in the third group isn't completely clear as conventional handguns (smaller than 400mm overall length) are fine, subject to appropriate licensing. The lengthy banned list features self-loading rifles (AR, AK, Garands) which clearly aren't pistols however, in a police explanatory video, an officer holds up a short-barrelled AR-15 as an example of what's now banned. It may be some of those remain in the hands of NZ shooters as they'd been treated as pistols and not subject to the first buyback.

Carbine conversion kits are defined as anything which allows a conventional handgun to be fired from the shoulder, including detachable stocks for historic Luger and broomhandle Mauser pistols as well as modern kits in which a handgun such as a Glock is installed in a frame. These aren't banned outright as with the appropriate permits and endorsement they may be retained.

The new buyback started on February 1 and ends this month in a move that will cost an estimated NZ\$15.5 million which Ms McKee says could be better spent on recruiting more police, considering the current crime wave. "The question comes back - you're buying firearms which had nothing to do with the March 15 terrorist attack in order to tidy up or do whatever it is you think you might have missed on the first lot," she said.

So where does this leave Kiwi shooters? As well as the new buyback, New Zealand is rolling out a new firearms licensing system. "It's atrocious. As at December last year we have 9800 people, according to police, waiting to be processed for their licences, including 3000 waiting for renewals," Ms McKee said.

"Those 3000 waiting for renewals have been told because police are behind in their administration, they need to actually have someone else take care of their firearms - it's been more than six months for some people and that's not good enough, not at all. We're finding people are in illegal possession of a firearm because their licence has expired - it's just not fair to

them when they got their renewals in on time."

And there's more. On her travels Ms McKee routinely encounters shooters still in possession of banned firearms. The initial ban was aimed directly at military-pattern self-loading rifles of the type used by the Christchurch killer. However, new magazine capacity restrictions captured many older rifles such as semi-auto rimfires and pump and lever-actions with tube magazines holding more than 10 rounds. Ms McKee said those shooters were gobsmacked to learn they were in possession of banned guns and needed to do something about it. "I think the majority of them are actually people unaware," she said.

Under new laws, gun registration will be rolled out over three years. New Zealand has tried registration but ditched it in 1973 when it was found that fully two-thirds of entries were inaccurate and the cost of a paper-based system outweighed the benefits. This time round it'll be digital though it seems NZ Police will still need to raise their game as, under the previous regime, legally owned military semi-auto rifles were registered but the Auditor-General found police records of the number of such guns ranged from 13,175 to 15,037.

Shooters there are now well represented in parliament and in last year's election the New Zealand ACT Party, for which Ms McKee is an MP, went from one to 10 seats, the same number of MPs as the Greens who picked up two. The Labour Government, led by Ardern, went from 46 to 65 seats in the 120-seat parliament while the traditional conservative party, The Nationals, plummeted from 56 to 33 as New Zealand First went from nine seats to none.

NZ ACT is a libertarian party of the centre right. ACT stands for Association of Consumers and Taxpayers and was founded in 1993 by Roger Douglas, the

former Labour minister who oversaw NZ's radical economic restructuring in the 1980s. Unusually for New Zealand where coalition governments have been the norm, Labour's strong performance in 2020 means it can govern without requiring the support of minor parties such as ACT whose 10 members include seven with firearms licences - it may not hold a balance of power but can make itself heard.

One concern for Ms McKee is with two buybacks under its belt, the government will next turn to handguns which, like Australia, have always been heavily regulated. "Luckily for us we haven't seen a lot of pistols used in organised crime here and I hope we don't," she said, "though my fear is that'll be next."

Ms McKee is developing legislation to repeal some of the more onerous provisions of the firearms legislation such as police powers to ban anything they don't like without going to parliament. Ultimately she'd like to produce a whole new Arms Act which takes all the good bits of the much amended legislation dating back almost 40 years.

In the election Ms McKee stood for an electorate but didn't get in. She became an MP under the mixed member proportional (MMP) electoral system which allocates seats to a party based on how many votes it receives. As what's called a 'list MP' she doesn't have an electorate to oversee. "I still say I have a constituency and that's the firearms owners of New Zealand," she said. "I'm travelling up and down the country talking to clubs, organisations, going to events, militaria shows, auctions, speaking to people and letting them know what we're doing and finding out what's happening in their world." ●





You little beauty!

Beretta 686 Silver Pigeon 1

Paul Miller

I can't believe it's 12 years since we first reviewed the Beretta 686 Silver Pigeon in 12 gauge, finding it an excellent performer and great value for money. Fast-forward all those years and the 686 is still a mainstay of the entry level Beretta range but also offered in lighter gauges like 20, 28 and .410. These smaller gauges are gaining popularity worldwide and in Australia there seems to be growing interest, particularly in the 28 gauge.

Beretta has been producing firearms since the early 1500s in the famous gun-making city of Brescia in northern Italy, meaning that for more than 500 years and with 15 generations of the Beretta family at the helm, there has been a continuous history of firearm design and manufacturing up to the present day. According to Wikipedia the traditional father-to-son dynasty was interrupted when Ugo Gussalli Beretta assumed control - uncles Carlo and Giuseppe Beretta were childless - as Ugo

married into the family and adopted their last name.

Ugo's sons are direct descendants through their mother's side of the family with son Franco now head of the family firm. Beretta today is an enormous industrial conglomerate which has bought many smaller Italian makers over the years and also owns the famous Finnish Sako and Tikka rifle brands, so popular in Australia.

Beretta shotguns have always been popular worldwide and have continuously improved over time with models especially designed for Field, Trap and Skeet shooting and more recently for Sporting Clays. Underpinning all this design and innovation are the field models and the gun under review here is the basic field model 686 Silver Pigeon 1. It would be fair to say this is the base model which leads to the 687 series and on to the 682 series with which we're familiar. Most recently the 692 series has evolved and these are sophisticated yet

affordable shotguns meant for competition clay target shooting.

Mechanically the 686 action is basically the same as the higher grade box-lock 687 guns, having a single selective trigger where barrel selection is determined via a positive combined safety catch and trigger selector on the tang. It appears to replace the Silver Pigeon S and has a new engraving format which covers more of the action, fences, triggerguard and operating lever. This is laser-etched and complements the gun nicely.

With the arguably long-for-gauge 30" barrels on the test gun it's well balanced and is also available with 28" barrels which makes for even faster handling in the field. Laser-cut chequering provides a comfortable non-slip grip and quality walnut stock means perfect edges and diamonds over all panels of chequering on both stock and fore-end. This gun has a left-handed stock with slim and slightly open pistol grip and



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You little beauty! Beretta 686 Silver Pigeon



The Beretta 686 Silver Pigeon 1 may be an entry level model but is a fine gun for hunting or small gauge Sporting Clays events.

fits me perfectly. It has about a quarter-inch of 'cast on' at the heel and almost half an inch at the toe of the stock, meaning it's the opposite of a right-handed stock and so sits comfortably in a left-hander's shoulder pocket. The critical dimensions of drop at comb and heel are 1½" and 2¼" which, when combined with the built-in cast, makes for a gun that's quick and comfortable to mount and provides a nice upright head position.

Even though it's downsized it still has a man-sized 14.75" length of pull, the same as stocks of the proportionately larger 20 and 12 gauge models. When it comes to sporting clays or out in the field, shots are often from the 'gun down' position and more hurried, so a gun which mounts smoothly like this 686 and allows a comfortable upright head position is hugely helpful when it comes to seeing targets and shooting your best.

I patterned the gun at 25yds to check regulation of the barrels. It shot patterns of 50/50 and both barrels were perfectly centred on the aiming mark of the pattern sheets, meaning it throws about 50 per

cent of shot both above and below the aiming mark which makes it a natural for casual Sporting and Skeet and ideal for field shooting. It continues to amaze me there are shotgunners worldwide who don't pattern their guns for fear of finding out where they actually shoot - seriously! Patterning only takes a few minutes and a handful of shells. Take the time to carefully fire both barrels separately at the pattern plate and you'll know exactly where your gun shoots, then it's just a matter of putting the mental part of the game together along with good gun mount and follow through after the shot is taken.

This 686's perfect pattern placement gave me confidence to attack a couple of rounds each of Skeet and 5-Stand so I screwed in the Skeet and Improved Cylinder chokes and got to work. I missed four targets in the first round and put it down to the light weight and speed of the gun (I missed all four in front). For the second round I settled in and dropped three targets which were entirely my fault but still a nice result with an unfamiliar gun and 21g shells. The gun weighs a light 6.5lbs

which makes it quick to mount and move to the target. I then shot a few rounds of 5-Stand which was far more challenging. There were some longer, fast-crossing targets the Silver Pigeon absolutely smashed with ½ and ¾ chokes installed, then I upped the choking to allow for the lighter shot load and longer shots and this worked a treat.

I just had to be more precise in getting the line of the targets right as the lead was no different to my competition Beretta which has 32" barrels and weighs almost 2½lbs more. Ironically I scored better on these tougher, more varied targets with the 'little 28 gauge' than I did on the Skeet layout so was pleasantly surprised.

Beretta are to be complimented on how they've sized the 686 action to specifically suit the 28 gauge. One of my friends has three 686s in 12, 20 and 28 gauge and their actions are all scaled perfectly to suit the cartridge in which they're chambered. This 28 gauge is arguably the sweetest-handling shotgun I've ever used, and that's saying something, but a word of warning - spend too much time with a gun like this and



Beretta 686 Silver Pigeon 28 gauge with scaled-down action compared to DT10L in 12 gauge. The 686 is similar length in the stock but everything about the gun is in smaller scale.



28 gauge in clear case compared to the little 410, 20 gauge and 12 gauge.



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You little beauty! Beretta 686 Silver Pigeon



The 686 Silver Pigeon is an ideal gun for carrying and field shooting with its slim lines and light weight.

it makes your normal 12 gauge feel like the Queen Mary until you get used to its weight and bulk again. I enjoy reviewing and shooting the 20 gauge but never felt it provided such a great performance contrast to my 12 gauge shotguns, apart from weight. As noted though, the 28 gauge is generally chambered in lighter weight scaled-down guns which give a different feel to the heavier 12 and 20 gauge guns, yet with 21g loads they're very capable on Skeet and sensible 5-Stand and Sporting layouts. You can buy 28g loads for the 28 gauge but I think that's missing the point.

The lightness of the guns available in 28 gauge means 28g loads recoil quite severely, whereas the more normal 21g or even 24g loads for second barrel shots are much more enjoyable to shoot in a lighter gun in 28 gauge. Recoil is probably not an issue in the field where you fire relatively few shots with your hunting loads, but you can burn up a lot of shots when clay target shooting and this is where recoil can become an issue.

The wood-to-metal fit and particularly the 'feel' of this so-called entry level shotgun is exceptional, the beautifully blued 30" barrels and light overall weight making it easy to carry. The narrow ventilated rib is 5mm wide and untapered but draws the eye nicely. There's only one silver steel bead up front and, as this is a hunting gun, that works fine though I'd like to see a small mid

bead but that's the Sporting Clay competitor coming out in me. The latest version of the Beretta rounded sporting-style soft rubber recoil pad fits nicely in the shoulder pocket and certainly reduces recoil, a big improvement on the earlier model.

This gun is still available for almost the same price it was 12 years ago with five cute little chokes (by virtue of the small bore size compared to 12 gauge tubes) with a smart carry case for around \$2700. At this price I'd recommend it to anyone looking for a quality shotgun which feels so much more than entry level.

In our last review I said for all those modest left-handers who love shotgun shooting, this gun with left-handed stock is a blessing and the same applies I'm sure to the right-handed stocked 686. In 28 gauge it's a delight to carry and shoot, the much lighter 21g payload (compared to typical 28g, 12 gauge clay target loads) adding a little challenge to the shooting equation. I've never been so keen to try a new gun and gauge and with intelligent choke, pellet size and payload selection this gun and shotshell combination punches way above its weight. More at berettaaustralia.com.

• Thanks to Angelo Grassi, Beretta dealer from Oxley, Victoria for his help in getting the gun to me in NSW. I actually bought it, so impressed was I with its handling and intriguing 28 gauge. ●

Specifications

Manufacturer: Beretta

Model: 686 Silver Pigeon I

Gauge: 28 gauge

Weight: 6.5lbs (2.95kg)

Distributor: Beretta Australia

Stock length: 14.75" (368mm)

Barrel length: 30" (28" also available)
solid mid rib

Rib width: 5mm ventilated with single round silver steel foresight

Gauge: 28 gauge 2¾" (70mm) chamber

Chokes: Interchangeable C, IC, M, IM, F

Stock: Turkish walnut grade I

Stock dimensions: 1½" drop at comb
2¼" at heel, pitch down 3" with Beretta soft recoil pad

Trigger: Single selective gold plated inertia operated, non-adjustable for comfort

Warranty: Five years

Protective case: ABS Beretta blue fitted case

Price: About \$2700 but shop around



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Varmint rifle DILEMMA

Sam Garro



Mark tries various test loads using BlitzKing BT 50gr and Hornady V-Max 40gr projectiles in Sam's Sako A1 HB .222 Rem rifle.

A few years ago, impressed by my mate's accurate Sako L461 .222 Rem HB rifle on rabbits and varmints in general, I resolved to secure a similar model if and when the opportunity presented itself, although I knew sourcing such a 1970s Sako in good condition wouldn't be easy. After persisting for several months a Sako A1 .222 Rem heavy-barrelled rifle became available at a local dealer (stamp change L461 to A1 in the late 70s but essentially the same rifle).

In all respects it presented as excellent - the stock was unmarked, barrel blueing wholly intact, bolt face clean and free of scouring or pitting and the rifling to the naked eye appeared in top shape. I considered myself fortunate, particularly after having previously passed up others which weren't to standard or met my expectations, though I did have to pay top dollar.

Soon after I had the action bedded and barrel floated for improved accuracy. Optilock rings and bases were fitted and an existing Leupold VX11 3-9x50 scope from a previous rifle mounted to complete the impressive unit. At the range, trialling the recommended handloads I soon had the rifle printing satisfactory on paper, or so I thought, and couldn't wait to take it hunting.

In the field

Initially, head-shot rabbits were the lesser of those unintentionally felled in the chest or body and then there were those 'on the money' misses which had me baffled. From there, on the infrequent trips the .222 Rem was taken along to bump off a few rabbits and the odd fox on the saltbush plains of outback NSW, and more recently in the hills closer to home, the rifle's performance was much the same. Eventually its inconsistent accuracy began to play on my mind to the point I started to doubt my own shooting ability and whether I should invest in a greater magnification scope, which I later did.

Sighting-in

When two of my shooting colleagues planned to sight-in their rifles, a practice adopted on a frequent basis in preparation for club shooting events and/or field shooting, I took the opportunity to join them to sight-in my .222 Rem rifle mounted with a new Swarovski Z3 4-12x50 L 4A scope.

My usual handloads tipped with 50gr Sierra BlitzKing projectiles grouped on paper 1" to 2" apart at 100m and far from satisfactory for long-range varmint shooting

- and at 200m the shots would certainly be even further apart. In the event it seemed the fault was with me and not my equipment so I had Mark, who was with me and an experienced benchrest shooter, try my rifle. The results were disappointingly similar.

After some head-scratching and as an afterthought, Mark gradually relieved the rear action screw and felt slight barrel movement upfront of the stock, indicating an issue with the bedding. But even after relieving the rear downward pressure there was no significant difference, so when he offered to attend to the bedding, check for other possibilities and prepare test loads, I'd no hesitation in entrusting him with the rifle as he was more than competent and had the equipment to carry out the work.

Revelation

In his workshop at home, the borescope revealed that while the rifling initially may have appeared in good condition to the naked eye and I'd properly serviced it since, the bore itself showed signs of use and a degree of pitting which would have been present at time of purchase and possibly accounted for the rifle's inconsistent accuracy.



Chronograph machine used to also gauge velocity of the various test loads fired. Inset shows 3555fps for one shot.

At times, when a firearm is described as a 'safe queen' or is in excellent condition as revealed by its external appearance, if it's not properly maintained on a regular basis, barrel pitting can occur without being apparent. I doubt most would even consider the use of a borescope when buying a firearm, relying more on the seller's integrity and information provided.

Improvements implemented

As it turned out, the action definitely required reb bedding to stabilise, lessen barrel vibration and properly anchor the rear of the action. Mark replaced the existing sparsely applied bedding with high-strength Devcon bedding compound and carefully polished the bore to remove any engrained foreign matter and smooth out any pitting without adversely affecting the rifling.

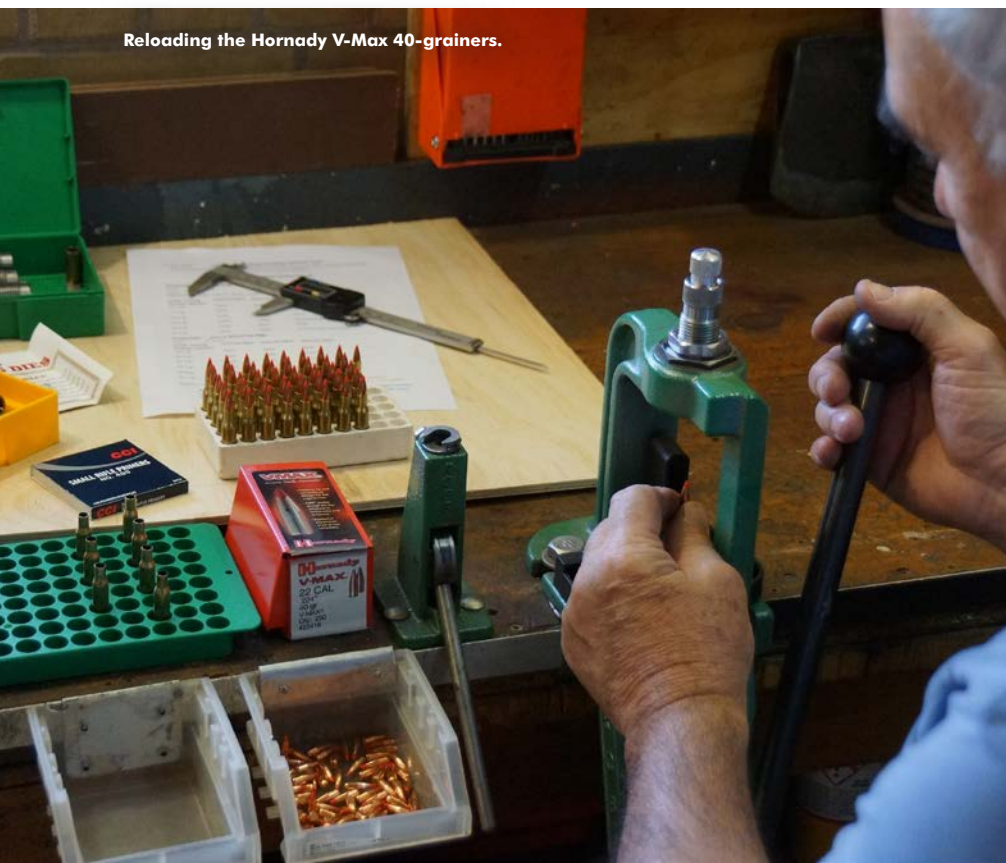
Once the bedding compound properly set, the barrel and action were reinserted into the stock and the front recoil lug screw and rear screw tensioned to 40lb, suitable for wood or fibreglass stocks, the scope base and ring screws also tensioned appropriately to the maker's instructions. It's important to note that over time timber stocks can distort, contract or expand



Sam with the Sako A1 HB .222 Rem rifle and head-shot rabbits in saltbush country.

Varmint rifle dilemma

Reloading the Hornady V-Max 40-grainers.



depending on storage humidity levels and excessive use of lubricants seeping into the timber, necessitating the bedding to be revisited.

Benchrest application

A neck sizing die was used to preserve the perfect fit of fire-formed case to the rifle chamber. The die squeezes the case neck against a precision mandrel for perfect bullet concentricity to the bore with minimum run-out. Neck sizing as opposed to partial or full-length sizing should also increase the brass life provided moderate powder loads are used and, to also minimise bullet jump, the projectiles were seated just kissing the lands. In the past when reloading for larger calibres, partial resizing and seating the projectile a couple thou off the lands has proven adequate, provided the overall bullet length fits comfortably in the magazine and chambers properly.

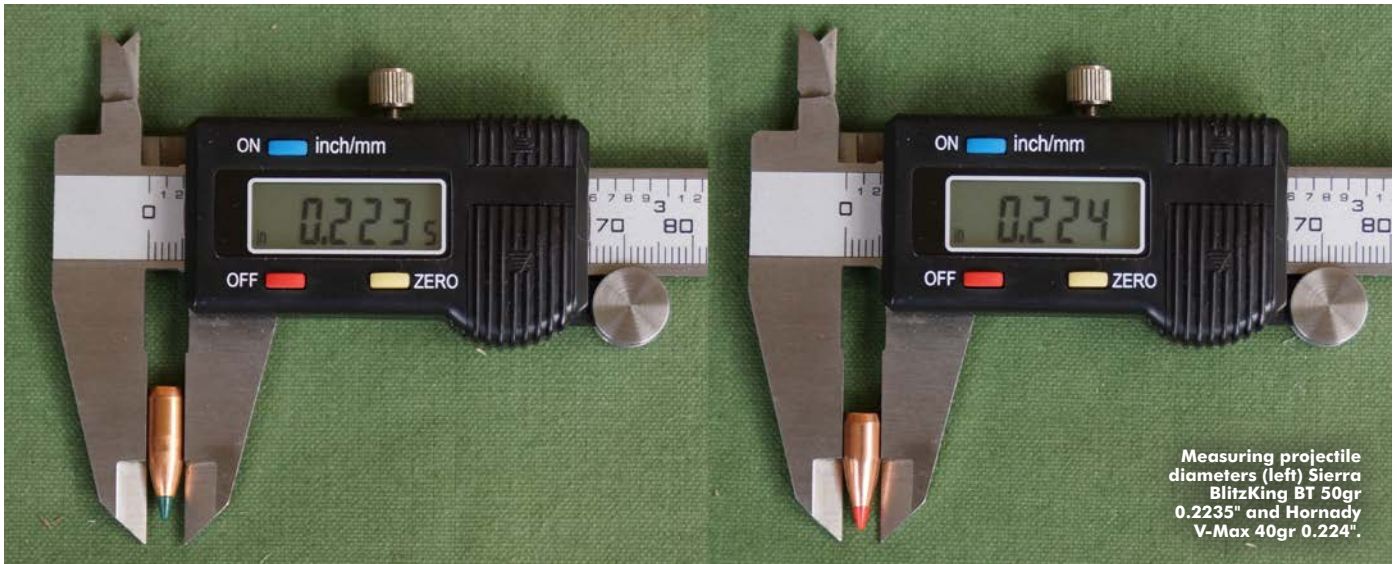
Load development

Among the various reloading component brands on offer - and that's down to individual preference - Winchester cases, Rem 7.5 primers, Sierra BlitzKing 50gr projectiles and ADI AR2207 powder were chosen. Six separate batches of three bullet loadings were prepared starting with a

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Measuring projectile diameters (left) Sierra BlitzKing BT 50gr 0.2235" and Hornady V-Max 40gr 0.224".

powder charge of 20.1gr, from then each incrementally increased by 0.20gr. Similar batches were also prepared using Hornady V-MAX BT 40gr projectiles as an alternative and the same powder with a starting load of 21.5gr.

The incremental increases were less than half what I'd normally apply but when developing accurate loads for precise long-range varmint shooting in calibres such as

the .17HMR, .204 Ruger, .222 Rem and the like, it's more relevant than it is in larger calibres where the powder holding capacity is greater and target area larger.

Rifle and bullet differences

Searching the internet for information on the subject, it was interesting to find the bore diameter of rifles within the same calibre may vary since the cutters which

form the rifling wear. Hence perhaps, even though my Sako A1 and my mate's Sako L416 are similar and originated from the same maker, they can still bear subtle manufacturing differences. In addition the design, engineering, components used and manufacturing processes by different makers will vary.

Depending on the brand or maker, a projectile's diameter may also differ ever

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Varmint rifle dilemma

so slightly wherein its bearing surface may just touch the rifling or extend partly into the rifling itself as it spirals out the barrel. It's often a matter of trialling a packet of different brand factory ammunition to determine which one the firearm prefers or performs best with.

Load testing

With the scope aligned as best as possible with what's referred to as 'sighter shots', a handloaded round from each of the prepared batches of the Sierra BlitzKing BT 50gr was fired at a separate target so we ended up with one bullet in each of the targets numbered 1 to 6. The barrel was then allowed to completely cool before repeating the exercise a further twice to end up with a grouping of three in each of the six targets, the same thing done with the Hornady V-MAX BT 40-grainers.

After all Mark's efforts for which I was genuinely grateful, the 50-grainers to our disbelief were still printing wide apart at 100m, yet the 40-grainers in front of 22.1gr

of powder and travelling at a blistering 3499fps as gauged through the chronograph machine and 400fps faster than the former, had the bullet-holes touching.

After measuring the diameter of the Sierra BlitzKing BT 50gr and Hornady V-MAX 40gr projectile several times with a micrometre calliper, the diameter of the V-Max appeared 0.0005" or half a thou wider than the Sierra and perhaps countering the slight pitting and barrel wear. However, the Sierras remain excellent projectiles and I'll continue to use them in my other calibre rifles as well as trialling other brands.

Conclusion

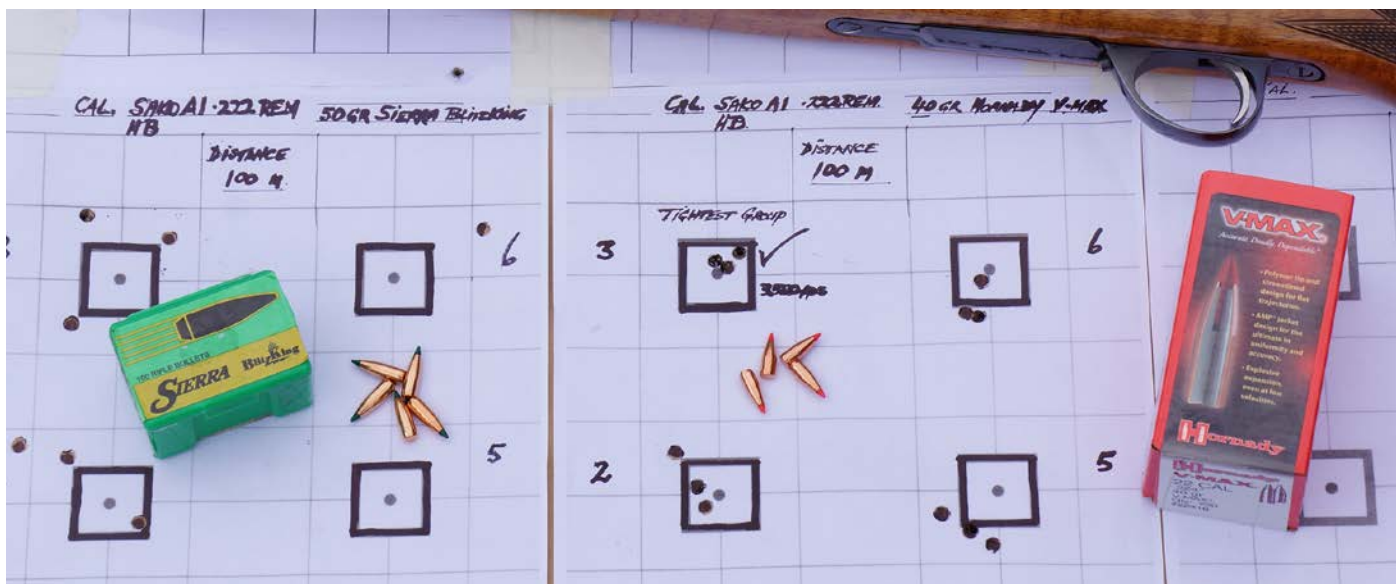
The work performed by Mark on the rifle was necessary and together with the use of a differently designed and weighted projectile, optimum powder load and significantly higher velocity, all culminated in achieving improved accuracy and restoring my confidence. It's important to reiterate that what may work in my Sako A1 HB .222 Rem or



The borescope revealing pitting in the bore of the rifle.

someone else's firearm may not necessarily be appropriate or work as well in yours or someone else's but embracing the challenge to find the right combination can make all the difference. ●

Target results: Sierra BlitzKing BT 50-grainers (left) and Hornady V-Max BT 40-grainers with target 3 showing the best grouping.



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Paul holds the Lithgow Model 12 as a youngster, left, with his brother and cousin. Dad (one of two adult supervisors) took the photo.

The Lithgow Model 12 project

Paul Stevens

As a youngster I was introduced to the sport of shooting by my father while holidaying on my cousin's property north-west of Goondiwindi. Dad owned a Lithgow Model 12 .22cal rifle, marketed by Slazenger, which he'd bought secondhand from a work colleague in the 1950s. We participated initially in carefully guided introductions to target shooting then live hunting of rabbits (apparently pre-myxomatosis). Safety instruction was always paramount and single shot, over the empty magazine, was only allowed at first.

From then on I was bitten by the hunting bug and remain active, with larger calibre rifles, to this day, and continue to hunt the same property some 55-plus years later. Research through the Lithgow Small Arms Museum in recent years provided me with a build date for dad's rifle of 1947, based on the serial number. It's a bolt-action repeater with six-shot magazine and in the early days, from memory, it had peep sights as well as a side-mounted four-power scope with a minimal field of view. In later years as a teenager I had it topped with a more useful 4x scope, groove mounted, supplied and fitted by Kingston Brothers of Brisbane. It's registered in my name although my father, aged 95, is still going.

Being retired I decided to try my hand at making a different stock and bedding the action, more as a project than in the hope of improving the already accurate performance of the old rifle, which I remain firmly attached to through sentimentality. I'd never made a stock before and have only basic woodworking tools but did have time

on my hands and a degree of enthusiasm and perseverance.

One bit of reading suggested Tasmanian blackwood as one of the suitable timbers for rifle stocks so I sourced a piece from a timber yard in Brisbane. I looked online at various thumbhole varieties as I'd already decided I'd like to have a go at that style, then settled on my own design and transferred that side view outline on to the piece of timber.

Many hours later, after attacking the rectangular timber piece with various power tools, I had a rough shape of the stock profile so proceeded with more precise tools and hand-rasping. This process took some weeks intermittently and I gradually worked up a form which suited my hand size and so on. I also removed the one screw holding the barrelled action into the original Lithgow stock (which I've kept, of course). My plan was to eventually bed the action into my new stock by drilling and tapping an additional thread into the rear of the action, so I could secure the action and barrel more firmly into the new bedding/stock with the hope of floating the barrel and perhaps improving the rifle's accuracy.

After several setbacks the overall product gradually took shape. I'd bedded one other rifle action before so brought my limited experience to bear and succeeded in setting the Lithgow action and barrel into my new timber thumbhole creation. I'd decided to attempt a form which allowed suitable use as a target rifle, with a view that I could further trim the stock to finer dimensions (particularly fore-end) in future if necessary.

I used two high tensile Allen head bolts

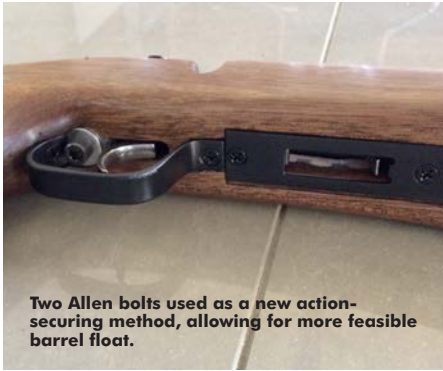
to secure the action into my new stock, taking care with torque settings. I also had to hand-make a new mag plate and triggerguard to fit which, to be honest, are less than perfect. The stock was finished with several hand-rubbed coats of Danish oil, which enhanced the look (there was no chequering at this point). I also manufactured a few packers to increase stock length of pull if required then re-blued the barrel in my amateurish manner, but the outcome was pleasing. The trigger had some adjustment and I lightened it by turning a screw, the effect being almost no creep but a little heavier trigger pull than ideal for target application in my opinion.

For a scope, initially I fitted a Weaver Grand Slam 4-14 power using the existing grooved receiver mounts, which serves the purpose. Because of the little action size the mounts are closer together than ideal. The finished product has been tested at an indoor 50m range and also outdoors, across the bonnet of my vehicle at 50m on a plastic bottle with black felt pen dots drawn on it.

I'm really pleased with my efforts using target grade ammo from various manufacturers, some of which had five-shot groups much tighter than others (the best is about 0.5" with five shots).

I've extracted a real degree of satisfaction and pride from the end result but there are so many variables (better scope and ammo) which may be the real reasons for an enhanced shooting outcome. The barrelled action can easily be returned to the original stock too. Anyway, it was a fruitful experience and one I'm glad I undertook. ●

Stages of gradual stock manufacture.



Above and right:
Bedding the action in the new stock.



**The finished Lithgow
Model 12.**





Information reload

Don't get tangled in the net

Over the past year or so there's been a spike in home-based activity, much of it spending more time on the computer. Reloading our own ammunition has also been a popular pastime with reduced opportunities to visit the range or favourite hunting spot. Many are starting to 'load their own' for the first time as the number of people joining the sport surges. Reloading for some ensures future supply of ammo and, at the same time, provides an enjoyable and relaxing indoor hobby. Gauging from letters received at SSAA National this increased activity has also led to a number of shooters being frustrated with their ammunition not functioning or performing as expected. Senior Correspondent **Rod Pascoe** discovered the route to some of these problems was reliance on information shared on internet forums.

When we started out on our handloading journey we probably gathered information from one of a number of sources, maybe a family member or friend with plenty of experience and wisdom to pass on. Or it may have come from one or more books or reloading manuals, guides or magazine articles and some of us may be self-taught with just a little help from one of these. Today, many paper publications are also replicated online along with hundreds of websites, internet forums and videos. Yet it's not the abundance of information available but how it's used that determines how successfully our home loads are going to perform.

Unlike information found in reference texts or magazine articles, data available on the internet is not regulated for quality or accuracy, therefore it's particularly important for users to evaluate the resource or facts. Bear in mind that almost anyone can publish anything they wish on the web and it's often difficult to determine authorship of some sources - and even if the author is listed they may not always represent themselves honestly or could present opinions as facts.



A shooter approached me at the range (let's call him Peter) and told me that all of a sudden after a year of successful reloading, he was having a problem with his rifle and some of the ammunition he'd reloaded for it. He said while most cartridges were feeding and chambering freely, closing the bolt on about one in every 10 rounds didn't feel right and roughly one in 20 wouldn't chamber at all. I followed up with questions regarding the origin of the ammunition and asked about his reloading routine.

Peter explained that when he bought his rifle he also picked up 60 rounds of Federal .308 Winchester factory ammo, fired it off while setting up the scope and settling in to the rifle, after which he reloaded the empty brass. This in itself didn't seem unreasonable. Further investigation revealed the decision to reload his ammo was influenced by a post he read in an online forum. He said the information was clear and straightforward and, from this, he thought reloading was well within his capability. On the advice of gunshop staff he bought a basic reloading kit including a single-stage O-frame press, powder scales, powder thrower, funnel and loading block along with all the components listed in that online post.

I asked Peter if he full-length sized the cases, to which he said he did and would send me a scan of the post which started the whole thing off 12 months earlier. The following day an email arrived along with a note saying he'd followed the attached information to the letter. The post, by an unnamed contributor, read: "First off I bought about 100 rounds of factory-loaded ammo - the brand doesn't matter too much. I did this as a way of collecting brass at the same time as running in the new barrel.

"Once I'd fired off all the rounds I use a Lee collet die to size the cases and push out the fired primer. This die doesn't require lubricant so eliminating one of the steps in the process. I seated a new CCI primer, weighed out 48 grains of Winchester 748 powder then pushed in a 150gr Sierra Full Metal Jacket Boat-tail (FMJBT) down to where the groove around the bullet just reached the mouth of the case."

While there's no suggestion the contributor had anything other than honourable intentions, a number of things concerned me, particularly knowing this post formed the basis of Peter's reloading knowledge. At the range I asked Peter if he resized his cases and the worry here is he said he did

because of the line in the post: "I use a Lee collet die to size the cases..." However, this particular die is a neck-sizing die and doesn't change the dimensions of the case body or push the shoulder back.

Even so, the brass would have been fire-formed to the chamber in Peter's rifle and neck-sizing alone shouldn't have affected his loads for his rifle. Apart from the ambiguous statement about the die, the post said nothing about case preparation, cleaning, inspection, trimming and so on. From a safety aspect it said nothing about working up to the load, observing pressures on the way, in fact the Winchester 748 powder charge he used is the maximum for the 150gr bullet as recommended in the Sierra reloading manual. The post also fell short of explaining how and why the load was developed in the first place. Is the projectile described appropriate to Peter's needs? Additionally, the method used to seat the bullet is not the recommended way of determining cartridge overall length.

After explaining to Peter the difference between full-length sizing and neck-sizing and the importance of not mixing brass fired in other rifles, the penny dropped. His son shot almost 10 rounds of the same

Information reload: Don't get tangled in the net

Federal factory ammunition alongside his dad at the range about two months earlier using a different rifle and further detective work revealed some of Peter's fire-formed brass had mixed with his son's which, after neck-sizing only, didn't fit his rifle.

This is where Peter's knowledge, or lack of, let him down - taking that online post at face value rather than challenging a seemingly simple set of instructions. While he was aware powder and bullet manufacturers published reloading manuals both on paper and online, and that his local club conducted reloading courses, none of this was necessary as far as he was concerned as all the hard work had been done by someone else, thereby avoiding the need for manuals and courses. Clearly Peter is guilty of not knowing the basics of reloading. On the other hand he doesn't know what he doesn't know or, in other words, not knowing what information he should be seeking and from where.

Loading manuals produced by bullet manufacturers have a wealth of well-written and easily understood information for handloaders. Hornady and Sierra are just two who publish manuals which devote the first 70-odd pages to the reloading process, techniques and ballistics as well as data for the various bullet and powder combinations for different cartridges.

Similarly, powder factories publish information based on their individual products matched to a selection of bullet brands and types. The material these manufacturers produce is to help avoid the predicament Peter found himself in while these companies also have reputations to uphold and can't afford their products to be accused of not performing properly or safely. The last thing



Loading manuals produced by bullet manufacturers have a wealth of well-written and easily understood information for handloaders.

they want is for their items to be misused, not just because of safety concerns but also not wanting to put customers off their merchandise.

Most of this commercial info is published online as well as in paper form. Manuals by Lyman and others introduce the reader to some of their alternative artefacts such as reloading presses, dies and accessories with an array of case preparation equipment, electronic scales, calipers and powder dispensers.

Summary

Online contributors are generally well intended, believing they're providing a valuable service, yet the anonymous poster hides behind and takes no responsibility for any statements or comments made. The question here is: How can an online post of a dozen lines replace all the authoritative, comprehensive information, responsibly published by some of the most knowledgeable people in the ammunition game?

Peter's lack of basic reloading knowledge was the cause of his problems and his willingness to accept another shooter's input without question had the potential to cause angst and frustration. While there's nothing wrong with sharing information on forums such as this, reloading ammunition involves a safety element which requires extra caution.

Next time you visit a forum ask yourself these questions: Does the information appear to be valid and well researched and is there a non-web source to verify it? Knowing the motive behind a forum's creation can help judge its content. Who's the intended audience? Are they people just starting out or experts? If the intention is not stated what do you think is the purpose of the site - is to inform or teach, explain or enlighten, influence or sell a product?

Disclaimer

In this article are mentioned a number of brand names. I must make it absolutely clear that in no way did any product mentioned contribute to the issues encountered or discussed. The problems were all to do with human error and the use or misuse of information. ●

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Firearm museums and collections of the world (past and present)

Lionel Swift



Exterior of the Lithgow firearms museum.

This is by no means an extensive coverage of the world's firearms displays, simply a round-up of some which I visited over several decades and others I wish I had and includes several great collections in Australia, Europe, the US and UK. I'll start geographically in Melbourne, which was once home to one of the finest small arms displays of roughly 500 pieces. Readers are recommended to 'Google' the sub-headings of these locations

as many offer an online tour - but allow plenty of time as they can be addictive.

Australian collections

Melbourne Museum firearm display

From pre-primary school years, that being the late 1930s in my case, I recall being taken often to visit the Museum of Victoria, then an adjunct to the public library on the corner of Swanston and Latrobe Streets in Melbourne. The firearms display included

showcases full of a great variety of long-arms and handguns along with a collection of large punt guns, some mounted high on walls above the showcases in their section.

In later research I learned these massive English guns ranged from 1-gauge (1.669") through to 10-gauge (.775") and some had their early use in the South Melbourne swamps (now the site of up-market Southbank) with their harvest sold in the Melbourne markets.

This market-hunting ceased in 1928 when the guns were made illegal: "The Act forbids the possession or use of a swivel or punt gun". They were defined as "having a barrel exceeding 42" in length; having a single barrel exceeding 8lb or having a double barrel exceeding 14lb in weight; or having a bore greater in size than that now known as 12-bore or gauge".

The Act also prohibited guns weighing more than 16lb, guns having more than two barrels and combinations of guns or fowling pieces temporarily or permanently secured together. This latter provision shows some fear of the ingenuity of the market fowling of those days and the entire Act is typical of the draconian Victorian laws, which sadly continues in many aspects to the present time.

One minor change is that guns greater than 12-gauge can now be owned but are forbidden for duck hunting, this despite that in effect 8-gauge loads are available in the form of 12-gauge Magnums with much greater range than originally. One back-handed advantage of the 1928 Act was that

Spring or Trap Guns

218. (21734) FLINTLOCK SPRING GUN

The blunderbuss-shaped barrel with a muzzle diameter of 1½ inches is set in an oak wood frame and bound round with two strong iron bands. Its full length is 20 inches. It was attached to an iron spike which, when set in a hole in the top of a short post, served to support the gun and allowed it to turn as on a pivot. The spike was also hinged so that the muzzle of the gun could be pointed either up or down hill. The gun was provided with three wires; these were usually smoked by being passed through the flame of a candle or lamp so that they would not shine and thus be seen. They were stretched through the wood or garden, each being affixed to one of the three rings with which the trigger bar is provided.

If a poacher came into contact with any one of the concealed wires the gun at once swung round on its pivot in the direction of the pull, which fired the charge of slug or a bullet; often with fatal results.

These spring guns were used in game coverts, orchards and gardens, and were sometimes set in churchyards to protect newly made graves from body-snatchers. They were deliberately intended to kill or maim any invader who might chance to touch any one of the concealed wires connected with the trigger.

Lent: Dr. Percy A. Loughurst, Toorak, 1942.

219. (21981) PERCUSSION SPRING GUN

The barrel is 12 inches long, slightly belled at the muzzle to 1-inch diameter, and is held by a ring on a shank which is free to turn on its base. The gun was fixed to a tree or other stationary object and a cord leading from the lever underneath the barrel was fastened across the path which the person or animal that it was desired to shoot would probably take. Anything striking against the cord would swing the barrel in the direction of the pull and move the lever, thus releasing the striker and discharging the gun.

Barrel bears Birmingham proof marks.

Donor: W. E. J. Cole, Frankston, 1943.

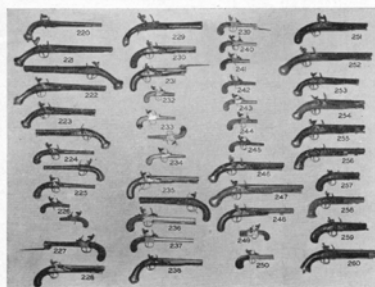
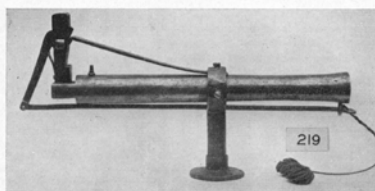
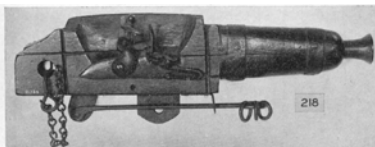


PLATE 12

Information on swivel guns and flintlock pistols (Museum of Melbourne catalogue).

The swivel gun text (Museum of Melbourne catalogue).

Firearm museums and collections of the world (past and present)



all confiscated punt or swivel guns were given to the then-great-now-gone collection at the Museum of Applied Science of Victoria. That gain was short-lived - I wish they were still on display.

There was also an exhibit of 20 pepperbox pistols and another specialty of more than 150 flintlock and percussion pistols which included many pairs, both duelling and general, as well as several pinfires and a number of 'saloon pistols'. The latter included numerous Colt and Remington derringers (so named by both companies) designed by Henry Deringer originally as a flintlock, then a caplock

and finally as a cartridge arm by various manufacturers.

A great number of the pistol exhibits were donated in 1943 by W.E.J. Cole of Frankston who must have been a most enthusiastic private collector. There were also two rare anti-poacher 'spring' or 'trap guns' on display, photographed and described in the catalogue. One was a flintlock with a 1½" bore, the other a caplock with a 1" bore.

In 1949 the museum published for sale an excellent 160-page hard-cover catalogue, of which I still have a copy, detailing its then-famous firearms collection: *Descriptive*

catalogue of the Collection of Firearms in the Museum of Applied Science of Victoria, by Edgar Howard Penrose, CE. This may have embarrassed them in later years when the display was virtually eliminated, as readers of this catalogue could see what they were missing. The foregoing details are taken chiefly from this volume.

Point Cook - RAAF small arms display.

The Williams RAAF base in Victoria was, and still is, an active RAAF location, sharing the aerodrome with light private aircraft and also housing a comprehensive aircraft



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museum and restoration workshop. This was once also home to an important collection of military smallarms.

Sadly, this display was removed soon after the 1996 Port Arthur tragedy and this was particularly unfortunate as the collection contained a number of military firearms which, although also used by the army, were quite rare after World War Two. The reason proffered for the wipe-out was 'security' but if a military establishment can't secure a historic collection of firearms, should we be concerned whether they can secure an entire base? Such is politics.

Lithgow Firearms Museum

Undoubtedly the best firearms museum in Australia is this one in the former administration office building of the old Lithgow Firearms Factory, Government-established during the World War One era and vastly enlarged before and during WWII, the entire modernised production plant, except for the museum, now operated by French company Thales. The museum is run separately and attracts thousands of visitors a year, of which I've been one of on several occasions (my article on this splendid collection appeared in the November 2012 edition of this magazine).

Although concentrating on military items and Australian samples manufactured here in particular, the collection also contains many sporting firearms and a personal history of people in the firearms industry and sporting fields. After WWII the factory turned to manufacture of sporting rifles, the first of which was the Lithgow/Slazenger .22 single-shot Models 1, 1a, 1b and 1c. Then came a .22 five-shot bolt-action repeater followed by a .22 Hornet as well



as a basic .410 shotgun, both built on the SMLE action. The comprehensive display was expanded considerably in 2007 by a large donation of important pieces by Rod Hayes, a retired gun dealer who'd built one of the finest private collections in Australia - it comprised 1500 pieces including 800 handguns. The entire collection resides in the Rod Hayes Room and his book *Hayes Handgun Omnibus* written jointly with Ian Skennerton is available for reference at the display and for sale in the shop. There are many other books for sale too, including the two-volume set written by Tony Griffiths B.Sc. (Tech) *Lithgow's Small Arms Factory and its people Vol.1 1907-1950* and *Vol.2*

1950-1990 for a total of 788 pages.

The first .22 Australian rifles were made there - designed by renowned shooter Lionel Bibby, a Lewis Gunner in WWI - and stamped: 'SAF Lithgow for Slazenger Aust. Pty Ltd'. Bibby must have gone to sleep dreaming of the early Winchester .22 single-shot, as until I learned differently I thought they were made under licence from Winchester. He was also famous as one of Australia's best exhibition shooters and you can see some of his amazing tricks on old movies (Google 'Lionel Bibby'). I won't describe these as they're unbelievable unless seen with your own eyes. ●

• Next month: International collections

SSAA Victoria 2021 AGM Notice



2021 Annual General Meeting and Postal Ballot

The AGM will be held from 2pm to 4pm Sunday, September 26, 2021 at Hotel Bruce County, 445 Blackburn Road, Mount Waverley VIC 3149.

Nominations to fill four Board vacancies will open May 24, 2021 and close June 25, 2021. Nominations to be posted to
Returning Officer SSAA (Victoria), PO Box 336, North Melbourne VIC 3051; or emailed to frank@ybg.com.au

Results of the postal ballot, which opens August 2, 2021 and closes August 27, 2021, will be announced at the 2021 AGM.

Financial accounts for the year ending April 2021 will be available at ssaavic.com.au prior to the meeting or upon written request.

For details contact the State Office by
telephone: 03 8892 2777 or
email: state_office@ssaavic.com.au

By order of the Board, SSAA Victoria



First-aid kit

it might just save your life

Thomas Tabor

Having access to a first-aid kit can sometimes make the difference between life and death in the outback and in less dire situations can also be useful to alleviate discomfort from minor wounds and injuries - or ward off infection. There are a few well-stocked commercially available sets which come with many of the essentials you may need and in my opinion one of the best examples is the US Survival Kit developed by the Henry Arms company.

While Henry is more commonly associated with quality classic firearms, they did an excellent job pulling together the extensive array of survival items in this combination, some of which are even actual military or NATO-issue products. And miraculously Henry was able to store that vast assortment of items, totalling in excess of two dozen, in a waterproof metal tin so small it might fit in a cargo pocket of your trousers.

Building your own kit

As inclusive as the Henry Survival Kit is, some people may prefer to build their own, tailored to match whatever outdoor adventure they'll be facing. So if you decide this is a better approach let's explore a few of the items you may want to include. At the top of most first-aid kits are the medications you take on a routine basis which

would include any prescription medicines as well as possibly a few Ibuprofen (Advil) or Naproxen (Aleve), Imodium AD and certainly some normal aspirin tablets.

I view aspirins as an absolute essential for any first-aid kit as not only can they be used in the normal way to alleviate a minor headache, they're even more important if someone in your party should show symptoms of a heart attack. While you await the arrival of medical services, a few aspirins given to the victim has the ability to thin that person's blood and in some cases may even be instrumental in saving a life.

Other medical items you may want to include would be an assortment of band-aids in various sizes, gauze, medical tape and it would be good to incorporate some type of blood clotting product. A couple of other inclusions could be small bottles of rubbing alcohol and iodine. Rubbing alcohol is a terrific product which can be used as a disinfectant as well as a treatment for bug bites and stings and applied directly to those areas it works great to soothe the itch and irritation. The problem is rubbing alcohol always seems to come in a large bottle but it's a simple matter to transfer some to a smaller container, better suited for carrying and storage.

Iodine has been used for decades to treat minor injuries though in recent years its

popularity seems to have waned in favour of newer pharmaceutical products but I believe iodine is superior and, best of all, it's usually cheaper to buy.

Fire and water

Access to drinking water is essential in most survival situations and while water sources can often be found in the outback, drinking directly from them can have disastrous consequences. What may appear on the surface to be a perfectly clear and pure stream or billabong, that water may carry harmful pathogenic bacteria and viruses which can cause severe diarrhoea and sickness and for that reason you must purify the water you intend to drink. Boiling it is a good way to kill those pathogens and in most instances maintaining the water to a rolling boil for one minute is adequate, but in elevations 2000m above sea level that boil time should be increased to three minutes.

Aside from having to boil water you could include a few purification tablets in your kit as these provide a quicker and easier way to achieve the same results without the need of a fire. As an alternative you could pack a water purification pump and while these are good at alleviating the dangers associated with contaminated water, they're often fairly large and bulky to carry.





The Henry Survival Kit can often fit in a cargo pocket of your trousers.



The Henry Arms Survival Kit includes a variety of useful items.

When facing an unexpected night in the outback or if threatening weather conditions prevail it's likely you'll need some form of shelter, and to make life a little better in this situation you may want to include a few simple items dedicated to those needs. These might include a spiral wire saw which takes up a minimal amount of space and a length of strong cord which would be useful for tying branches together when building a shelter. If needed that same cord could easily double as a tourniquet and, to provide more protection from the elements, a small piece of plastic could be helpful as well as a tiny roll of duct tape.

Being able to produce fire is often at the heart of many survival situations and in this case commercially available magnesium fire starters are a good way to go. They're usually small, making them easy to fit in, and one of my favourites is the Gatco Scepter 2.0 Survival Tool which isn't much bigger than a ballpoint pen. Not only does the Gatco Scepter come with normal fire-building capabilities, it also includes various tungsten carbide sharpening elements which can be used to put an edge on a wide variety of knives or tools.

You might also think about including a couple of disposable cigarette lighters or some waterproofed wooden matches. Making your own waterproof matches is



Commercial fire-starting products are commonly available.

easy - all you do is dip the match heads in a pool of melted candle or paraffin wax. After allowing the heads to dry the matches can be stored in a pill bottle, 35mm film container or similar. Fire tinder is also easy to make by dipping a few cotton balls in that same melted wax.

But if you find yourself in the outback



Rubbing alcohol and iodine are often overlooked but both are important.

looking to build a fire and didn't have the foresight to bring some tinder with you, something as simple as a chewing gum wrapper may suffice. The thin aluminium foil burns quite well and, when combined with a small pile of dry grass or twigs, you can soon have your fire raging. Or if you happen to have some potato chips those will

First-aid kit - it might just save your life

also start a fire due to the high oil content. Your socks can even be used - just take a knife and scrape free some of the fine fuzz.

Keep it small and creative

It's unrealistic to assume you could cover every kind of emergency when developing a first-aid or survival pack for the outback. Any kit must be light enough that it won't be a significant burden to carry and you may only need a small amount of the items you include, so maybe just a few ounces of rubbing alcohol or hydrogen peroxide will do rather than a whole bottle. Things like duct tape have many uses in the outback but do you need a whole roll? Try wrapping a couple of feet of tape around one of the other items in your kit - as long as the surface is slick the tape can easily be peeled free.

A lot of thought needs to go into which articles you want to include and what form those will take so you might want to start with the checklist I've outlined here. From there you can add or remove things as you see fit, as doing so allows you to better match a kit to your specific outback area and include only those items you feel are necessary. ●

Also consider a snakebite kit, insect repellent and small medical aids.



First-aid checklist

Assortment of band-aids, medical gauze, adhesive tape, iodine, blood-clotting crystals, hydrogen peroxide, Neosporin, rubbing alcohol, water purification tablets, collapsible water bag, knife, sewing kit, personal medications, tourniquet cord, insect repellent, aspirins, space survival blanket, Leatherman tool, mini torch, fishing kit, water purification tablets, compass, candles, fire tinder, fire-starting tool, duct tape, survival whistle, head cover, wire for snare construction, waterproof matches, spiral wire saw, signaling

mirror, hydrocortisone ointment, tweezers, scissors, safety pins.

Other useful items
GPS, rain gear, Imodium AD, handwarmers, collapsible water bottle, two-way radios, fishing gear, joint wraps, spare socks, backpackers tent, sunscreen, toilet paper, metal cup for boiling water, bottled water, razor blade, area map, marking (surveyor) ribbon, chap stick, mobile phone.

The new Biarri Drover pack range by Spika

Designed and tested in Australia and New Zealand, Spika have released an indestructible range of Drover packs in their world-first 'Biarri' native concealment camo. Designed by Spika, Biarri camo is a unique camouflage pattern which corrupts your silhouette while imitating the texture, depth, lighting, colour and shadows experienced naturally in the vast Australian and New Zealand wilderness.

Purpose designed to cover every style of hunt, the Drover pack range includes an 80L Pack Hauler-System, 40L Pack Hauler-System, Removable Hauler-Frame with built-in meat shelf, 25L Pro-Pack, Hydro-Pack, Bino-Pack, Waist-Pack and 2L Hydro-Bladder fitting all Drover hunting packs.

Pumping as many features into each pack there was no limitation in the Drover development, creating the most versatile range on the market to date. Spika also committed to using the most tech-advanced and durable materials available while remaining true to their core value of offering premium gear without breaking the bank. More on the Drover range by Spika at drover.spika.com.au





Lyman Pro Drive torque wrench MAKES THE JOB EASY

Chris Redlich

If you don't understand the simple instruction 'tighten to 30in-lb (inch-pound of torque)' then we need to start torquing! Talking about torque, that is. Often overlooked or ignored by shooters are the torque settings, designated by manufactures in firearms and optics user guides for tightening all manner of fasteners including action screws and, most importantly, scope mount screws. A little-known but vital tool to aid the budding home gunsmith is the torque wrench.

Reloading equipment and firearm tooling are Lyman's specialty and new to their latest product range is the Pro Drive torque wrench. The Lyman Pro Drive is an all-mechanical torque wrench designed to deliver accurate torque settings which will allow you to correctly and safely attach action screws, scope bases and scope rings to your firearms.

Importantly, tightening screws to the correct torque setting prevents damage to screw heads, screw threads and minimises the risk of pinching and distortion to scope tubes. Tightening your firearms screws to a consistent torque will also benefit the rifle's accuracy and help maintain consistency.

Generally content with previously using the Allen key or Torx tool supplied with rings and bases, I could never gauge a torque setting correctly and persisted with the 'finger-tight' rule only. While this

proved reasonably effective in minimising scope damage, it wasn't accurate and the Lyman Pro Drive is now my preferred method of all firearm screw tightening.

The Pro Drive comes supplied in a compact, clear top case including an assortment of hex 'bits' compatible with many firearm fasteners including Torx, Inhex and Flat Drive. An additional 1/4" drive socket attachment with the supplied 1/2" socket is also a welcome inclusion.

All attachments are based on the standard 1/4" drive system and can be used with a large variety of externally sourced hex bits sharing the same 1/4 drive dimension. The hex bits are easily attached to the torque wrench drive by inserting into the female recess and held firm by a spring steel retainer clip and ball.

Pro Drive in use

In the hand it feels every bit a good quality item. Weighing a solid 360 grams and approximately 200mm long, the handle (accounting for almost half the overall length) is a perfect fit for my large hands. I can't stand using hand tools which slip through your grasp when tightening screws, but the Pro Drive's tri-side handle has been designed beautifully to afford a comfortable and positive grip under pressure. A firm hold is particularly important when doing up rifle action screws requiring

65in-lb and upwards of torque tightening.

Lyman's Pro Drive is simple to use and following the supplied user instructions will help the new owner familiarise themselves with the product. To adjust the designated torque setting, simply pull down the knurled orange-coloured sleeve and rotate the handle clockwise to increase the torque setting and anti-clockwise to reduce.

The Pro Drive has settings from as little as 10in-lb to a hefty 80in-lb, the shaft clearly marked in 10in-lb increments and the handle having single digit (0-9) markings for precise intermediate settings. The correct torque is set once both numerical markings are aligned with the shaft centre line and the knurled orange sleeve is released and locked in place. When torquing down screws I prefer to start with a lower than specified setting and work my way up in a diagonal tightening pattern (for scope rings in particular) until the desired torque is reached. For instance if the instructions say 'tighten screws to 22in-lb', I'd take them to 15in-lb first and proceed to 22in-lb for the final tighten.

I believe this helps with even tightening and reduces the risk of damage, particularly to scope tubes. An audible click is heard once the torque has been achieved and the tool will cease to tighten beyond the torque setting. Once the desired torque is set, go back over the screws and check-tighten at

Lyman Pro Drive torque wrench



The Pro Drive torque wrench is designed to accept 1/4" hex bit accessories. Note the orange coloured knurled locking sleeve.



Torque settings easily identifiable on the shaft and handle.

the same final setting again to ensure an even distribution of torque to the surface area.

When finished with the wrench it's recommended you return the Pro Drive to the lowest setting of 10in-lb to reduce stress on the internal calibrated spring, as torque wrenches are precision tools and must be treated with care. Although of steel manufacture, the Pro Drive should not be used for anything other than the torque settings on your firearm. Lyman individually test the Pro Drive for calibration to ASME (American Society of Mechanical Engineers) standard prior to release and a calibration certificate comes supplied, reinforcing its precision tool credentials.

Conclusion

Experience, both good and bad, has taught me a cautious approach to tightening firearm screws and the likely damage when over tightening. A good quality torque wrench is a must for those who tinker around with their firearms and with the volume of review scopes and rifles being tested, I'd be lost without one.



Torx (left), Inhex (right) and Flat Drive (centre, bottom) accessories supplied with the Pro Drive, all based on a 1/4" hex.



Adhering to manufacturers torque settings found in most user manuals makes fitting bases to actions and scopes to rings much easier and accurate without the guesswork. Lyman's Pro Drive torque wrench is the perfect tool for the job and as with all Lyman reloading products I've owned for more than 20 years, they're

made to a high standard and built to last.

The Pro Drive retails for around \$200-\$250 and is exceptional value for money for such a precision tool. For more on Pro Drive and other Lyman reloading equipment visit www.lymanproducts.com and for local retailers check Australian distributors Nioa at nioa.com.au ●



Bollé gear provides perfect protection

Mark van den Boogaart

For a long time I didn't give much thought to eye and hearing protection. Consequently, my perception of sound is not so good and on more than one occasion I've come close to sustaining a vision injury. So thinking I should take more care of myself, last year I bought a pair of electronic ear protectors which I wear at the range and in many hunting situations. I also started looking at eyewear. I've always worn sunglasses though rarely when shooting or hunting, so with that in mind I was happy to accept an offer to review the latest Bollé Tactical range of hunting eyewear.

What arrived was a whole eyewear kit, specifically the Bollé Tactical Combat Ballistic Spectacle gear which is centred around three slightly curved, reinforced 2.95mm thick lenses including a clear ballistic, CSP and tinted Smoke lens. The set also includes instructions, three protective lens drawstring bags, cleaning cloth, strap and soft MOLLE compatible carry case to store it all.

Each lens has a ballistic rating and is STANAG 4296, EN 166, EN 170 and EN 172 certified. Interestingly, they do have different Ballistic Resistance scores with the Smoke rating highest and CSP lowest (while we're at it CSP stands for comfort, sensitivity and perception).

Out of the packet the CSP lens looks clear with a slight yellow hue though in real terms it has been additionally treated to filter blue light, cut down on glare and sharpen the perceived image. The kit provides the option to run different lenses so, completely ignoring the instructions, I started playing around and what I immediately liked about the Bollé Combat was the ease of changeability. Rather than popping a lens in and out of frames, the lens is the base unit - you move the nosepiece and temples (the arms) between lenses, not the other way round. It sounds simple and works well. Also included in the kit is a strap which attaches to the left and right temples, providing more secure fitment of the glasses and there's even an additional

padded foam insert you can buy to turn the Combats into lightweight goggles.

Looking a little closer the Bollé Combat incorporates some proprietary technology which makes them highly functional, the first being PLATINUM, the Bollé anti-fog and anti-scratch coating. According to the manufacturer, lenses are dip-coated on both sides to provide a permanent veneer which results in a high level of scratch resistance and delays fogging. Throughout testing the Combats didn't fog, even when walking up a dry creek bed in mid-30C heat and to date I haven't scratched them, which for me is an achievement.

The second piece of innovation is frame composition. Referred to as B-Flex technology it provides flexible, durable and comfortable points of contact and while I readily admit I don't usually like the fit of wraparound eyewear, I appreciated wearing the Combats over extended periods and found them light and comfortable.

Thing is, the Combats are more than fashion sunglasses so I wanted to test them



Bollé gear provides perfect protection

beyond just wearing them casually and the first opportunity came while fine-tuning the new scope set-up on my .30-06. As I was shooting from a bench in controlled conditions, I chose clear lenses for the safety aspect. During the shoot the Combats did exactly what I wanted of them, didn't distort the sight picture, worked well with my rifle scope, spotting scope and range-finder optics and felt comfortable to wear with hearing protection.

More recently I decided to try my hand at archery and practise at home most days. Due to the position of my range, when I usually shoot it's in shadow and sunlight at the same time so, keen to see how the Combats would perform, I fitted the CSP lens. Now what I really liked was their clarity, the slight muting of glare of the CSP lens helping me see the target more clearly while the Combats' shape didn't interfere with my draw or aim.

The final test came after I had the chance for a hunt - a six-day trek with two days' travel and four full days in pursuit of game. Throughout the trip I stuck with the tinted lens and in almost all situations they performed well, though I did think they were a little too dark at times, for instance when investigating shaded creek beds for pigs and goats. That said, if I was to do it again I'd consider the CSP lens for hunting and tinted lenses for driving.

All told the Bollé Combat kit gives you a variety of eyewear options to suit your needs while providing a level of protection well beyond normal sunnies. If you're in the market for a high-performing, comfortable, light and durable hunting and shooting eyewear option or, like me, you think it might be time to take better care of yourself, the Bollé Combat kit is well worth a look. RRP at time of writing was around \$135 for the kit with accessories extra. ●



The Combat kit contains interchangeable lenses, temples, nose-piece, strap, soft protective lens bags and instructions.

Specifications

Weight: 28 grams

Lens: 2.95mm thick, Ballistic polycarbonate, Platinum anti-scratch, anti-fog coating, 99% UV protection

Wrap-around design

B-Flex temple technology provides unique flexibility and adjustment

Temples can be replaced with strap to convert to goggles

ANSI Z87.1-2010 impact standard

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National

Big Game Rifle National Postal Shoot

Jan 1-Nov 30, 2021
Participating Big Game Rifle clubs
See National website for event details.
Contact shoot captain at your local club.

Handgun Metallic Silhouette National Postal Shoot

March 1 - May 31, 2021
Various locations
Big Bore, Small Bore and Field Pistol.
IHMAS rules. Contact: Russell Mowles
0418 819 945.

National Junior Rimfire Rifle Metallic Silhouette Postal Championships

March 1-July 21, 2021
All clubs and branches.
See National website for full event details. Contact: juniorsports@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

SSAA Benchrest Group National Championships

June 3-7, 2021
Springsure Sporting Shooters Club,
Springsure, Qld. See National website
for event details. Contact: Gavin
Marshal 0438 759 162.

National Junior Rimfire Field Rifle Postal Championships

June 1-October 31, 2021
All clubs and branches.
See National website for full event details. Contact: juniorsports@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

2021 National Junior Challenge

SSAA Brisbane, Madden Range,
Belmont, Qld
July 9-11, 2021
See National website for event details.
Contact: Jon McCarthy 0438 756 622
or jon@bendworx.com.au

Law Enforcement Activities National Championship PPC Matches

June 19, 2021
Belmont Shooting Range, Qld
See National website for
full event details. Contact:
lawenforcementactivities@ssaa.org.au

SSAA Gallery Rifle National Championships

July 17-18, 2021
Para Branch, Greenwith, SA
See National website for event details.
Contact: Don Robinson 0428 986 070
or Dave McCarthy 0414 880 333.

SSAA Gallery Rifle National Championships

July 17-28, 2021
SSAA Para, Rifle Range Rd,
Greenwith, SA
See National website for event details.
Contact: Don Robinson 0428 986 070
or Dave McCarthy 0414 880 333.

Law Enforcement Activities APS 150 Challenge Match National Championship

July 31, 2021
Belmont Shooting Range, Qld
See National website for
full event details. Contact:
lawenforcementactivities@ssaa.org.au

SSAA Fly Shoot National Championships

July 23-26, 2021
SSAA Mackay, Qld
See National website for full event details. Contact: treasurerq17@outlook.com

Benchrest Score National Championships

September 3-7, 2021
Dairyville Range, Coffs Harbour, WA
See National website for event details.
Contact: Ray Munro 0408 649 126 or
email: r.munro@internode.on.net

SSAA Combined Services National Championships

October 1-3, 2021
Central Qld Shooting Complex,
Gladstone, Qld
See National website for event details.
Contact: Shayne Smith: 0418 808 817.

IHMSA National Championships

October 1-8, 2021
Majura Shooting Complex, ACT
See National website for event details. Contact: Russell Mowles
handgunsilhouette@disciplines.ssaa.org.au or Cheyne Fischer ihmsa.act@gmail.com

SSAA National Event Cancellation/Postponement Policy

SSAA National championship events may be subject to border controls and other COVID-19 impacts. In addition to general border closures, many states and territories may prohibit persons from known COVID hotspots. An event may be postponed or cancelled at any time by SSAA National, SSAA State Office or club directive.

It is recommended competitors consider any potential COVID-19 impacts on travel, accommodation plans and insurances etc. SSAA National will not be liable for reimbursement to competitors for any costs associated with a postponed or cancelled SSAA National championship event for any reason, including COVID-19. Competitors planning to attend an event should consider options for free cancellation or refund of travel and accommodation costs where available.

SSAA Lever Action Silhouette National Championships

October 28-31, 2021
SSAA Majura Range, ACT
See National website for event details.
Contact: David 0423 043 663 or Mark
0401 867 839 or email mnl1@live.com.au

Law Enforcement Activities Police Service Match National Championship

October 9-10, 2021
Belmont Shooting Range, Qld
See National website for
full event details. Contact:
lawenforcementactivities@ssaa.org.au

ACT

SSAA (ACT) Rifle Metallic Silhouette State Snowball Shoot

June 12-14, 2021
SSAA Majura Range, ACT
See National website for event details.
Contact: Mark Lovell 0401 867 839 or
email mnl1@live.com.au

NSW

NSW Combined Services Pistol State Championship

May 29-30, 2021
Emmaville Range, Emmaville, NSW
See National website for event details.
Contact: Evan Brown 0428 100 336.

SSAA (NSW) Big Game Rifle State Championship

July 16-18, 2021
Windamere Regional Shooting
Complex
See National website for full event details. Contact: Ben Doherty 0409 831 258.

NSW Combined Services State Championships

September 17-19, 2021
Windamere Regional Shooting
Complex, NSW
See National website for event details.
Contact: Anthony Gatti info@nswcsd.com.au or 0499 987 899.

WA

SSAA (WA) Skeet State Championships

May 30, 2021
Jarrahdale Sporting Shooters, WA
See National website for event details.
Contact: John Graham 0409 084 973
or johnnyg71@bigpond.com

SSAA WA Rifle Metallic Silhouette State Championships

May 15-16, 2021
Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA
See National website for event details.
Contact: Paul Dunn Paul@compac.com.au or 0407 428 175

SSAA (WA) Single Action State Championships

June 5-6, 2021
Jarrahdale Sporting Shooters
See National website for full event details. Contact: Peter Konowalow
0417 186 280 or William Dickson
0407 980 955.

SSAA (WA) NRA & Scoped Air Rifle State Championships

June 12-13, 2021
Port Bouvard Pistol and Small Bore
Rifle Club
See National website for event details.
Contact: Matt fieldrifle@ssaawa.org.au

SSAA (WA) Combined Services State Championships

June 19-20, 2021
Wanneroo Shooting Complex
See National website for event details.
Contact: John Edwards 0418 423 227.

SSAA (WA) Scoped 3-P & Field Rifle State Champs

September 25-27, 2021
Perth Field Rifle Club
See National website for event details.
Contact: Matt - fieldrifle@ssaawa.org.au

SA

SSAA (SA) Rifle Metallic Silhouette State Championship

June 19-20, 2021
Monarto Shooting Complex, SA
See National website for event details.
Contact: mmsrcsecretary@gmail.com

SSAA (SA) Fly Shoot State Championships July 17-18, 2021

Monarto Shooting Complex
Program: See National website for full event details. Contact: Pat Kitschke
whytiger49@hotmail.com or 0455 280 024.

Vic

SSAA (Vic) Single Action Black Powder State Championships

July 10-11, 2021
Little River Raiders Single Action
Shooting Club
See National website for full event details. Contact: Tony Diablo 0419 187 980 or diablo6@bigpond.com

Qld

Qld IRB and Rimfire Benchrest Group National Championships

September 30-October 4, 2021
Springsure Sporting Shooters, Qld
See National website for event details.
Contact: Gavin Marshal
0438 759 162.



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Of Nev and Trev . . . and their feral cousins

In this age of enlightenment there are very few people who aren't aware of the harm feral cats do to our smaller wildlife species. It's not a new problem, just one which seems to receive a lot more airplay these days than it used to - and that can only be a good thing. When we were kids trapping rabbits and selling the catch, we hated feral cats with a passion. Every bunny they stole was 50c off our morning's takings - something of a disaster when you're a budding entrepreneur and a few bucks a day is pretty good pocket money.

We used to lay special sets for them and those we caught thereafter lost their taste for rabbit. Later, when I started to hunt with rifle and shotgun, I always made a point of shooting whatever wild cats I saw and couldn't tell you how many I've suckered into range with a fox whistle. During the 1970s and '80s when fox skins were fetching good dollars, a lot of buyers would also take cat skins - the prices paid were a fraction of those for fox skins but the season's take was always enough to warrant the effort. More importantly, the removal of both species was a positive conservation outcome, a fact of life the anti-fur brigade never could wrap their tiny minds around.

When we lived at the ranger's station on the foreshores of Blowering Dam in southern NSW, I made a mission of cleaning up as many cats as I could. Some were easy, others were not. One night I turned the back veranda light on to see a cat peering at me over the wheel of the wood barrow. I grabbed the little Stevens .22WMRF/.410 Magnum combination gun which was always handy in those days and fired the shotgun barrel. As the cat cartwheeled out on to the lawn, the tyre on the barrow went flat - a Pyrrhic victory by any other name!

Another night I spotlighted a cat under the house with a Big Jim torch and to this day



Even pampered cats pose a threat to urban wildlife.

Denise reckons the cat hitting the underside of the floor made more noise than the .410 going off. Then there was the crippled kitten I tried to collar as it scuttled out of some dead blackberries we were burning. My initial lunge missed but the cat didn't as it bit me on the thumb, driving its fangs in from both sides. The blood poisoning episode that followed is something I'll never forget - the cats' revenge I suppose and one that some would say I probably deserved.

Yet for all of the above I don't hate cats. In point of fact I have a great deal of respect for them as fellow hunters. We still have two which came with us when we moved into town last year, pensioned off to an easy life now their services as early-warning snake detectors are no longer required. Neville, the older of the two, was a companion cat for Dixie when she was a pup. There's only a few months' difference in their ages and they're still good mates. Trevor, the little black and white bloke, came from a storm-water drain in Orange as a tiny kitten, one of several rescued by our middle grandson

Harry. When he rang to ask if I wanted another cat I gave him a firm 'no'. Naturally he then went to grandma who reversed that decision.

Though we feed them twice a day they still wander off as they always have to collect a free-range feed when it suits them - a cat reality reflected by the occasional kill brought home and left at the back door. The rats and mice and English blackbirds don't matter but the native birds do and you have to wonder how many are killed every day around the country. I doubt anyone could put an accurate figure on that.

Like so many other cat owners I'd hate to think anything untoward might happen to my moggies . . . and therein lies the problem. We can cull as many feral cats as we like but until we can control the whole population we're no closer to a real solution which begs the question: How much longer can our wildlife take the strain? ●



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Not Covered.

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

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