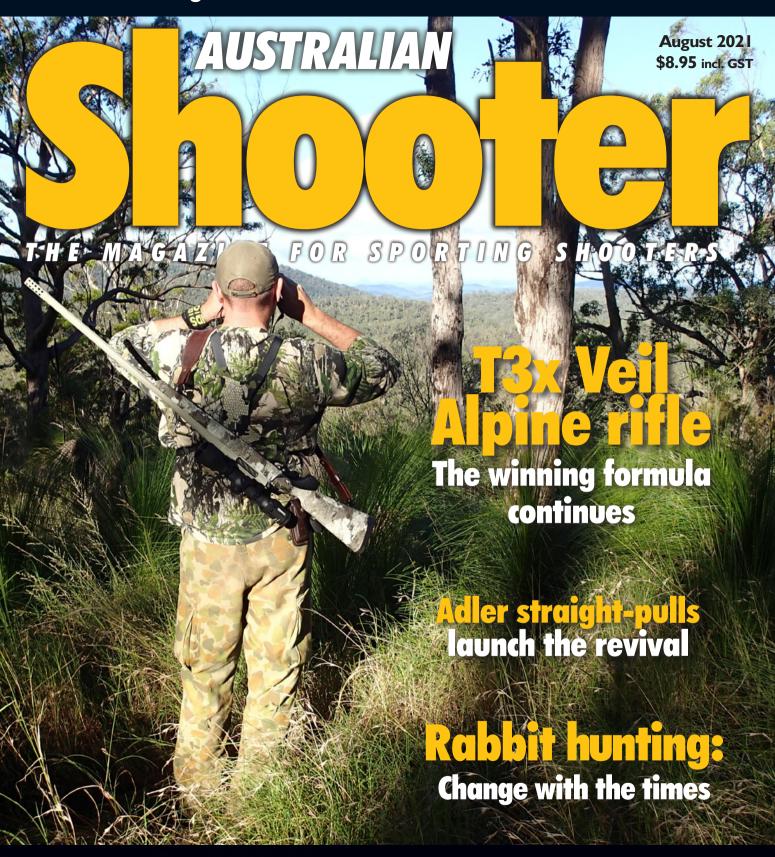
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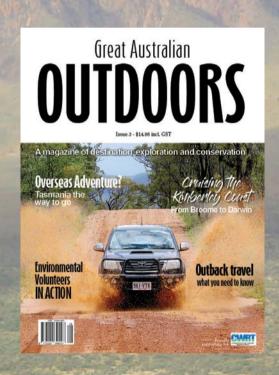




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NEXT ISSUE



Next month heralds the launch of a new mini-series where some of our regular contributors recall their most challenging hunt. In September, senior correspondent John Dunn gets us under way with a gripping tale in pursuit of moose in the mighty Alaska Range, where torturous terrain on the knifeedged spine of a ridge meant your next slip could be your last.



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To create a better environment and community understanding of all forms of hunting and shooting sports.

EDITORIAL INQUIRIES

Prone: 08 8272 7100 Fax: 08 8272 2945 PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061 Email: edit@ssaa.org.au Web: ssaa.org.au ABN 95 050 209 688

206,898 members strong as of June 2021

This magazine is owned and published by the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia Inc. Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy of this Association.

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National News

Increased income protection offers added peace of mind

op-up the existing income protection that comes with SSAA membership and participate in lawful recreational shooting activities knowing your weekly wage is secure. This exclusive SSAA member offer increases the maximum limit of income protection of \$750 a week to \$2000 for just \$15 a year.

Inspired by member feedback on how they conduct their recreational shooting activities and what kind of insurance they need, SSAA General Insurance Brokers (SSAAIB) has been negotiating with insurance companies and agencies to bring about this new product.

SSAAIB National Manager Trevor Jenkin said he's excited to offer the increased protection option to members who love their sport and are looking to reduce the risk of lost income if something unforeseen was to happen in the field. "We want to give SSAA members our backing to get outdoors and enjoy their time knowing they're supported in the event of an accident or injury," he said.

"For many years we've been working towards this increased weekly benefit option and are proud to bring this to you. Both the SSAA and brokerage are always looking at ways to value-add to your membership and we feel that providing this peace of mind for just \$15 a year is definitely going the extra mile."

SSAA National President Lance Miller said this members-only benefit added to the fantastic range of useful insurance options already on offer. "This is an affordable and useful insurance deal to make sure our members can enjoy their chosen pastime and feel secure in the knowledge their income is protected," he said.

"In today's world we know how impor-



tant it is to feel confident about our income while also maintaining the things we enjoy. This is why we've worked towards this exclusive offer and the wider range of SSAAIB products."

The unveiling of the SSAA Income Protection top-up option follows the Members' Firearms Insurance program announced in recent years which offers firearms and fixed accessories cover for just \$35 a year on top of your SSAA membership fee. This alternative has proved extremely popular with members who've covered numerous types of firearms including antiques and collectibles along with accessories such as scopes and slings, all while stored in the home and/or in use. For more on SSAA Income Protection and other insurance options visit www.ssaaib.com.au or call Ali or Megan on 08 8332 0281 or free-call (landlines only) 1800 808 608.

Disclaimer: Information provided by SSAA General Insurance Brokers is of a general nature only and not a substitute for professional personal advice. You should always consider the PDS/Policy wording before making a decision. Coverage may differ based on specific clauses in individual policies. Refer to our the website for further information including PDS/Policy wordings and our FSG.

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Excluded period 7 days
Benefit period 104 weeks

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Excluded period 7 days
Benefit period 104 weeks

* Excludes direct travel to and from activities.

Two for the ages

BEN GREGORY'S INTERESTING article (Black Powder: Old, new and faux, Shooter, April 2021) reignited thoughts of a couple of old tins of powder I've owned for the better part of a century between them but remain unopened to this day. Currently paying more than \$50 a kilo for Wano 3F makes the \$2.45 I paid for a pound of Curtis's and Harvey's in 1966 look like a bargain, though then earning \$3000 a year puts it in perspective.

The old (probably more than 100 years) tin of Curtis's and Harvey's Diamond Grain No.4 is in pristine condition having been in its original brown paper outer wrapper until the past couple of years. I don't know what the difference between my No.4 and Ben's No.6 would be ballistically but being a collector/casual shooter, it's just one of those things saved for later.

A shame to lose its originality but very tempting to shoot something of that age purely for the joy of having done so. Maybe one day. I load 44/40s with the Wano powder and have lots of fun putting them through my old Remington Rolling Block.

Best of all is rapid fire with my 1850s Adams 44 cal. double-action cap and ball revolver. The comparative accuracy of different powders is not a crucial issue - a British officer in the Crimean War reputedly killed five Russians in quick succession

with his private purchase Adams, which he claimed wouldn't have been possible with the Colt single action on issue.

Peter Gillott, NSW



From furball to feral

I WAS PROMPTED to write after revisiting an old Matthew Godson article entitled One Crazy Cat (Shooter, April 2017) which took me back to the 1940s when World War Two had just ended. Our family of seven lived on the outskirts of town on a few acres adjacent a large piece of undeveloped Crown land. We shared our modest holding with a domesticated menagerie comprising two horses, two cows, a lamb, a couple of dogs, pet galah and, of course, the essential house cat - Beryl.

She never left home and certainly didn't stray at night yet my faith and trust were shattered when I arose one morning to find her missing. Buoyed with youthful confidence I was sure Beryl would return and, a few days later, the prodigal puss was back, looking considerably thinner. We fed her and thought that was the end of it but how wrong I was. Next morning, gone again, back the next day for more goodies.

Later that day I saw her slinking away so followed at a discreet distance until I saw her climbing a sawn-off box tree stump. Being considerably more agile in those days, I scaled the stump and looked into the hollow and there she was with four tiny bundles of fur. I carried them home and settled them into a comfortable box along with Bervl.

Next morning they were all gone - Beryl had made four trips in the night to the original stump and after my second day of bringing them home again only to have Beryl return them, I gave up. After about three weeks I returned to check on what were now four considerably larger balls of fur and in my attempts to pick them up they screeched, scratched and bit with razor sharp teeth, drawing blood from both hands.

In those few weeks the tiny balls of fur had turned feral so I had to agree with Matthew Godson's thoughts on how easy it is for ferals to survive and thrive in the wild. While I admit to being a bit of a 'softie' where pets are concerned, I've no qualms when it comes to culling ferals of any description.

Russ Fisher, NSW



Insurance Q&A with Trevor Jenkin

Send questions to: insurance@ssaains.com.au

It may not be directly relevant at this time of year, but we deviate from our usual Q&A format this month to reach out and offer support to communities and particularly our members during bushfire season. Should you experience a bushfire loss and need to make an insurance claim, we're available around the clock to help with claim lodgements as well as offering professional risk management advice. We've prepared this ata-glance bushfire guide offering useful steps to help you, your family and your business:

• Develop a bushfire plan; prepare an

emergency kit; Keep a set of protective clothing on hand; Keep electronic and hard copies of all your important contact numbers including your local insurance broker; Understand your insurance policy in terms of bushfire coverage; keep your policy up-to-date to reflect the value of your property; keep current records of your contents.

· Follow these steps to minimise damage to your property or business: Clear property of dead trees and bushes and ensure you discard them properly; keep gutters, roof and downpipes clean; make sure smoke alarms

are installed and working; have a water source established and working.

• After a bushfire: Return to your property only after emergency services have advised it's safe to do so and immediately contact your local reliance partner.

We understand no one can ever be fully prepared for a bushfire, but hopefully this short guide has provided some useful information and, rest assured, SSAA General Insurance Brokers have you covered. To discuss or for further information, call us on (08) 8332 0281 or visit ssaaib.com.au.

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.

Report keeps pot boiling on Greens' and RSPCA anti-hunting agenda

he Senate's Environment and Communications Reference Committee recently released their Impact of feral deer, pigs and goats on Australia report. It contains a list of recommendations which includes (but is not limited to) developing national priorities for data gathering, long-term funding to support pest management and national pest management coordinators, a review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act), a standalone Key Threatening Process listing for feral (wild) deer under the EPBC Act, for states to make changes to ensure wild deer are treated as pests, commit to eliminating deer populations from World Heritage Areas, supporting commercial harvesting of deer and implementing and updating Model Codes of Practice for humane control of pests.

In Chapter 4 of the report: Effectiveness of control and containment tools and methods is a specific section relating to the role of recreational hunting in managing pest animals. The subheadings for this section outline the usual commentary we're used to hearing from the mouths of The Greens and antis. For interest, the final committee was made up of three Greens (including the chair), four Labor and two Liberal senators. Those subheadings include: Not an effective control measure; Competing interests; Differences between recreational hunters

and professional shooters; Poor behaviour of recreational hunters; Translocation of feral animals; and Contribution of recreational hunting to control programs.

To my mind this section symbolises an unfair down-play of recreational hunters. Why on earth were the RSPCA and Animal Liberation (and other like-minded hunt-hating organisations) able to provide substantially more commentary than those representing actual hunting organisations when discussing recreational hunting? The SSAA submission was fleetingly quoted and we weren't invited to comment at any of the hearings. It seems the invites to hearings were only sent out to those friendly with The Greens or who shared their views.

The general theme throughout the report is that hunters only shot a few animals here and there and that was simply not pest management. What was missed - or should I say ignored - is the fact that recreational hunters have different motivations, something which can provide vastly different results in the context of pest management. They briefly acknowledged this point in one sentence quoted from our submission but, rather than make it a key point, it was instead buried under all the anti-hunting propaganda surrounding it. Hunters with a pest management focus who actually cull pests should have been front and centre in the discussion, not those who hunt to fill the freezer.

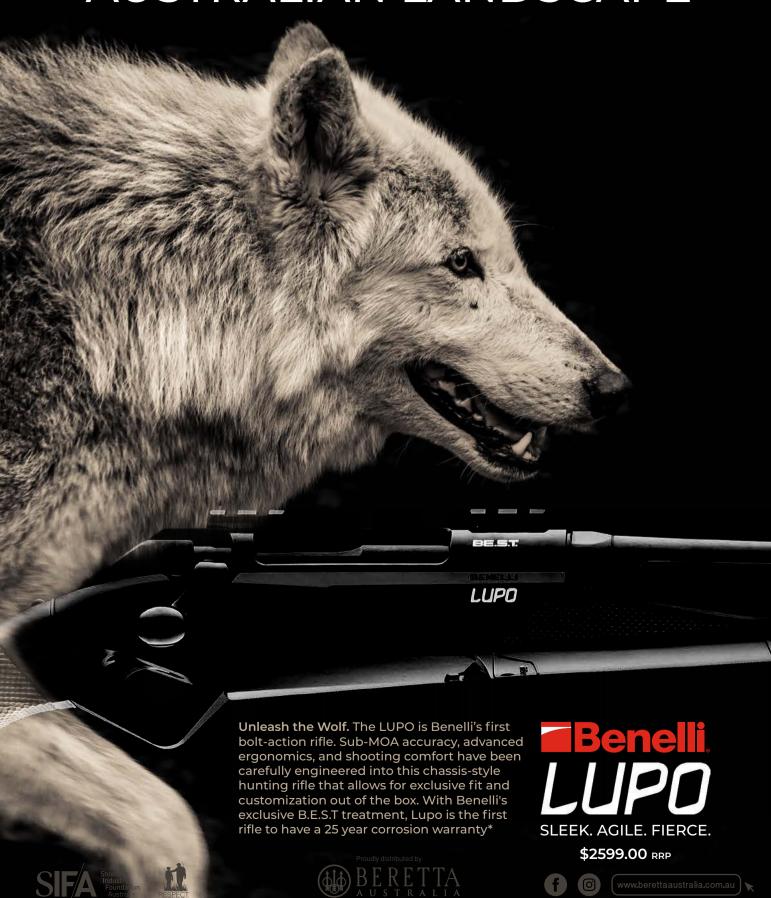
The RSPCA claims "recreational hunting is not effective" and it "does not consider recreational hunting to be justified, effective, sustainable or a humane approach to managing deer" along with other drivel. The RSPCA would also be one of a number of organisations wanting the 'game' status of deer removed, an issue which keeps popping up in submissions and commentary when discussing deer management. Game status isn't about deer protection but the management of hunting and with this management comes harvest data from hunters. In South Australia and Queensland where deer are classified as a pest, there's virtually no data available on how many are being shot by hunters. No data equals no evidence which certainly leads to views that hunting isn't effective.

In Victoria, harvest estimates for 2019 showed hunters shot around 200,000 deer - a 43 per cent increase on the previous year - and I haven't seen a 'professional' deer control program account for that many deer in Australia ever. Although it's not just a numbers game (impact prevention is often the aim) this does suggest to me that if agencies worked with hunters and empowered them to spend more days hunting, then recreational hunting could be easily established as a more effective pest control tool.

Send questions to: wildlife@ssaa.org.au



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A few suggestions in the event of snack attack

egular readers of this column will know I rarely discuss food when considering the necessities for human survival. However, I decided to let you in on what I do for an all-day hunt after reading news reports of how some people had survived in extraordinary circumstances - there were a few instances where availability of a small amount of nourishing and psychologically satisfying food had played a positive part in their survival.

I decided food should be discussed from the perspective of a disoriented or delayed hunter. I guess one reason I've more or less ignored the food segment in survival necessities - which differ from regular necessities of life by the addition of Signals to Water, Warmth, Food and Shelter - is that most events which devolve into a survival situation in Australia rarely last more than two or three days because of our rather exceptional search and rescue organisations. These selfless groups are generally on the spot, assisting police and other responsible groups following first notification of persons being lost or in difficulties.

A more personal reason for ignoring the food topic are constant reminders from the person in charge of shopping that I'm carrying an excess of supplies which I've already

consumed and have enough fat reserves to live on for some time! And while that may be so, I do look forward to the colder months as I can smuggle a so-called 'healthy' bar stuffed with chewy nuts and chocolate into the pocket of my hunting jacket, without it becoming a gooey mass that's impossible to conceal from you know who.

Although I'm not allowed to take charge of the shopping card, I occasionally make a clandestine visit to the supermarket where the range of ready-packaged nut and fruit mix bars they carry is astounding. At one time these were made by combining separate ingredients during a surreptitious visit to the kitchen, now there are more of the snack-sized bars of fruit and nut combinations than you can poke a stick at. I've even encountered some snacks in a copy-cat supermarket not known for brands other than its 'in-house' varieties.

The delight of the huge range of these bars is there are plenty that avoid chocolate, which we know is difficult to handle in hot weather. Some bars don't include this ingredient at all while others substitute another sweet treat. Back in the home-made days I used to find all the things I wanted to include in my snacks in the supermarket's 'baking needs' aisle, although Smarties had to be found elsewhere.

These sugar-coated choc bites seem to have morphed into something called M&Ms but, even in their new disguise, still have the benefit of being sugar-coated so in hot weather they don't melt in your scroggin (or 'trail-mix' as the Americans call it). While the bars are conveniently individually wrapped, nut and fruit mixtures come in bags or plastic tubs which need to be re-packaged if you're bound for a stalk where crackling plastic wrappers will disturb your prey.

Except for a handful of teabags, there's only one other item I bother with even for an overnight stay. These slightly more substantial snacks are the 'cup-a-soup' products which can be taken out their boxes and packed flat in a pocket if they don't fit down between your water bottle and its cover. I take them out the regular packaging and put the contents in a Zip-Lok plastic sandwich bag along with a couple of tablespoonfuls of powdered milk. This ready-made concoction needs only the addition of hot water boiled in my tin mug to become a satisfying snack.







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I have a Beretta 680 shotgun in its original condition, handed down from my father who received it from his father along with the original gun case and I'd consider the firearm to be in mint condition. The problem I have is I don't quite look down the centre of the barrel when I mount it to my shoulder and several people have told me it needs some cast added to the stock.

The options I've been given are to shave some wood off the side of the stock so my eve becomes aligned or have an adjustable comb added to the stock and simply push the comb to the right, though I really don't fancy either of those options as I'd like to leave the stock in its original condition. I've now been told the stock could be 'bent' to the right by applying some heat to the wood near the pistol grip. What would your advice be, is the third option viable? Marty Douglas, NSW

I understand your attachment to the family heirloom but a shotgun is useless unless it shoots straight. I'll make the assumption the problem is not in your technique and the gun actually does need cast added. Cast to the right for a right-handed shotgun as you've described is called 'cast off' and cast added for a lefthanded shooter is 'cast-on'.

If it was my gun I'd have an original Beretta adjustable comb added to the stock. It might ruin the classic look you want but will make the firearm far more functional and, if you in turn want to pass the shotgun to another family member in future, the necessary adjustments can be made with the adjustable comb to make the gun shoot perfectly straight.

I suggest an original Beretta adjustable comb as these have the added bonus of not only adjusting the stock up and down and left or right, but also the amount of 'drop' or angle from front to back of the comb can be adjusted (many cheaper aftermarket adjustable combs don't have this important feature).

Option one has some credence only because you need more cast and thinning out the comb by shaving some wood off the side will indeed move your eve to the right and hopefully down the centre of the barrel. Any decent gunsmith with woodworking experience will be able to replicate the original finish on the stock so the appearance won't change. My only concern here would be just how much wood would have to be taken off the side of the comb - if it's too much the comb will appear thin and may even start to recoil on to your face so be careful with this.

Your third option of 'bending' the stock with heat is the worst one. While stocks can indeed be bent by applying heat or hot oil around the pistol grip they can also bend back, break or damage the finish of the stock. Bending a stock accurately to obtain an exact cast measurement at the comb is an art, but it's also changing the cast measurement at the heel which will push the shotgun further out on to your shoulder which may cause other issues. I've seen stocks bent but have never been a big fan of this technique as I like stock dimensions to be far more accurate than this procedure allows.

Family heirloom shotguns are always nice to own and use but at the end of the day if the stock doesn't fit you perfectly, you may not derive the enjoyment you deserve from the firearm. Adding an authentic adjustable comb to me seems the logical solution and it will add value to the gun if you decide to sell it or don't have children to hand it down to. It may not look like a 'classic' after the comb has been added but certainly won't look out of place in any gun rack at a shooting range, as many shotguns today have these combs fitted as standard.

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Got a question - ask our TOP SHOTS

Rod Pascoe

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

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My RCBS R87006 rotary case cleaner which I bought from Cleaver Firearms two years ago has given up the ghost. The driving gear appears to have stripped (see photo). Can you suggest what I should do?

Jan, via email

Your photo does indeed show the driving gear is badly worn down and sadly this part doesn't appear as a 'spare' in US product catalogues. RCBS, however, is an old established company making high quality reloading products and their reputation is second to none. On your behalf I contacted Australian agents Nioa who recommend you return it to Cleavers who will forward it to them for warranty assessment. From previous experience, RCBS should see you right.

Geoff Smith

I own a Remington Model 7 heavy barrel in 223 Rem which has a 20" barrel (I use the rifle on foxes while spotlighting from a vehicle). I also own a Remington 700 VLS in 223 Rem with a 26" barrel which I'm considering having shortened to 20" to make for easier handling in the cabin of my vehicle.

I've never felt handicapped by the 20" barrel on my Model 7 with 300-yard shots easily achieved, so would very much appreciate your views and thoughts on the shortening of the barrel of my Remington 700, bearing in mind 99 per cent of its use would be spotlighting from a vehicle. If you think 20" is too short, what length do you feel would be appropriate? Thank you and congratulations on a fine and informative magazine.

Ian Cameron, via email

When you look at the numbers in the.223 ballistic tables, most are based on a test barrel length of 24". That said, the original 5.6x45mm NATO cartridge was designed to be used in a 20" barrel, notably in the AR15 platform which first saw military use during the Vietnam War in the 1960s. By chopping 6" off the barrel of your Remington 700 you could expect a reduction in velocity of around 25fps per inch. In a cartridge like the .223 that's not going to change the trajectory too much or affect terminal performance on animals such as foxes, provided you're using good quality projectiles matched to the barrel twist to start with.

Similarly, shortening is unlikely to affect accuracy and in fact may well improve given a shorter, stiffer barrel generally produces more consistent harmonics when the rifle is fired. Point of impact will change but the nodal point for the barrel will be easier to find, assuming you're handloading your own cartridges.

A shorter barrel will require a faster powder and, once again, good quality projectiles are essential to obtain the best from the cartridge, especially at ranges beyond 200m where the structure of the bullet is critical to performance. Premium bullets

such as all-copper Outer Edge projectiles are a good choice. At the end of the day it's your rifle and cutting the barrel back to suit your perceived needs is unlikely to change the way it performs.

John Dunn

I was wondering if it's possible to exceed the maximum loads shown in several reloading manuals for the 6.5 x 55 cartridge? It looks like the loads given are to accommodate a Mauser 96 action and I was wondering if a modern action would be stronger and tolerate a heavier load. Of course, there may be other factors I haven't considered.

Ken Kliese, via email

You're quite right in assuming that because the 6.5 x 55 cartridge was originally designed for the Mauser 1896 rifle in Sweden and the Krag-Jorgensen M1894 rifle in Norway, that heavier loads could be used in later-model, stronger bolt-action firearms. Figures shown in the ADI Handloaders' Guide specifies loads for the 6.5 x 55 developing about a maximum of 45,000psi of breech pressure whereas most modern, strong bolt-actions can handle about 60,000psi.

Barry Wilmot

Several of my friends and I would like to try mental rehearsal with our clay target Skeet shooting. Is this a worthwhile exercise and can it really improve your scores?

Michael, Qld

Great question. You guys must have been looking online or reading about mental rehearsal, a pretty sophisticated technique which allows you to practise by imagining shooting clay targets as opposed to actually shooting them.

Some years ago a study was carried out in the US with three pro basketball teams around shooting goals. The first group was asked to double their physical practice time in shooting hoops for a week, the second to triple their time and the third group told not to shoot hoops but rather spend time on the goal line imagining they were doing so. At week's end they were all given a test to see who was best. Now you'd assume the best average was achieved by the team which practised longest but in fact the guys who spent the week mentally rehearsing actually had the highest average.

To achieve this happy state in our sport you must learn to imagine all the actions which make up shooting - in your case Skeet - and mentally rehearse the sight pictures of targets, lead required and seeing them all being hit right in the middle. It's a bit like re-running a movie in your head and you can even make it part of your preshot routine in a matter of seconds at each shooting station. It's a powerful tool indeed and people keen to improve their scores and who practise mentally as well as physically invariably do improve. Well done to you and your mates for having the passion and determination to improve your scores and look into the psychology surrounding clay target shooting and mental rehearsal.

Paul Miller

I recently acquired a cannon from my stepfather's estate and am going through the process of having it registered to me. It's a Jukar 70 cal. made in Spain and I'd like to know the history and value of these cannons. Also, what would be the best way to clean it and prevent surface

Andrew, via email

What you have is about a one-sixth scale model of a Civil War-era cannon made, as you say, by Jukar. This company specialised in faithful reproductions of period firearms for collectors and enthusiasts and they were made to be fully functional, allowing for target shooting and historical re-enactments.

I say Civil War-era, however this style of cannon was also widely used over almost a 40-year period from about the 1850s and in Europe is also referred to as being of Napoleonic era. Your model was made in the 1970s or '80s and is unfortunately missing many of the accoutrements such as ram-rod and cleaning brushes, rope, wheel chock and water bucket. Your photo depicts where such accessories along with a metal name plate was once attached.

Thousands were made, many have survived and I'd suggest their biggest market was probably in the US where they'd have been used in Civil War celebrations and reenactments, firing both live and blank loads. In Australia, I believe they cost around the \$800 mark in the 1970s and in good order might bring between \$700 to \$1000 today at auction. Nothing too abrasive for cleaning is recommended. Some fine wire/steel wool and a squirt of G96 is good for the rusty parts and try fine wire wool with thinned linseed for the wooden bits.

Rod Pascoe







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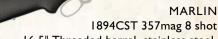


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hen rabbits on a property are in numbers and hardly disturbed, they tend to feed into open spaces further from their burrows or place of sanctuary which makes bagging a few a relatively easy task. But when subjected to constant shooting and they appear absent from the area altogether - even though signs of their presence suggests otherwise - taking the odd one or two can become quite a mission.

Nature can also play a hand in their numbers when considering the breeding cycle, and duration of animals and birds is often determined by good rain and subsequent abundant growth. In dry or drought conditions propagation is delayed with numbers diminishing under the adverse conditions. Then there are times when rabbit numbers rapidly decrease or perish overnight as a result of man's eradication measures and hunters with an appreciation of these occurrences will understand and adjust their expectations accordingly.

On being invited to a property where rabbits were supposedly 'shot out' I still welcomed the opportunity, as past experience has taught me that what you're told or



hear in such situations may not always be entirely as perceived. Some shooters can become complacent and lose interest when rabbits aren't sighted as soon as the farm gate opens or it involves negotiating tricky terrain, but to others the challenge and opportunity to come home with even one or two is worth the effort.

Knowing where to look, how and when to hunt and putting in those extra yards such as walking to more remote sections of a property, hunting the upper regions of hilly slopes, making the effort to crest one more hill just when you thought there couldn't be anything there and other similar examples can surprisingly yield results when you least expect them.

Game adaptation

When pressured, creatures and game such as wild pigs, deer and the like (including the humble rabbit) will be driven by survival instincts to retreat to safer, more remote and inaccessible areas to avoid capture. This may include altering feeding habits to after daylight hours and returning to their resting place before first light.

Where an area is also constantly frequented by shooters, rabbits can become super-sensitive to human presence and activity. The sight of a person, sound of a vehicle engine or blast of a firearm will often send them scurrying for cover from afar and, in such instances, parking the vehicle a suitable distance



from the hunting area and avoiding any unnecessary talking or noise while on foot is best. In some cases, providing the owner is agreeable, spotlighting at night may prove a favourable option.

Likely rabbit haunts

The rabbit, a distant cousin of the rodent family, will pretty well establish itself anywhere it has access to feed, shelter from the elements and protection from predators. Likely places can range from heaped logs or brush, rocky outcrops, sections of dense fern bracken and tangled bushes to stacked hav bales and disused farm buildings. Familiarising yourself with the property hunted and location of such features should reveal their whereabouts - fresh droppings, diggings or scraps, used burrows, tracks in the grass and fur caught on low strands of barbed wire being some of the indicators.

Concentrated activity

On one particular property, clusters of active burrows were concentrated along the outskirts of a line of high blackberry bushes which flourished tall and green

near a rippling creek at the base of a stretch of hills and shallow depressions. The spiky, tangled growth through which the furry critters could easily manoeuvre and exit provided the ideal habitat and protection from predators.

Local knowledge is invaluable. The property owner had observed rabbit activity at the former old homestead under a large overhanging pine tree, now essentially a pile of collapsed timber boards. While the ground beneath was riddled with





Rabbit hunting: Change with the times



warrens, the signs were old and it was only when the area was walked over it was found rabbits were all emerging from adjacent blackberry thickets.

When to hunt

Something I learned early in my hunting vears is rabbits, similar to other creatures. have an inbuilt sense of timing linked to their feeding habits. On one particular summer afternoon hunt with my father, when the heat would have deterred most and the yellow grass was knee high, we climbed a fairly steep hill to reach a plateau strewn with patches of bracken fern, in the past a proven rabbit haven.

Yet on this occasion, despite extensive stalking among bracken ferns and kicking the tangled bushes to flush out any potential rabbits, not one was sighted. Then as we started back to the car empty-handed and dejected with an hour or two of daylight remaining, one rabbit unexpectedly appeared in close then another and, before long, as if on cue the rest started to pop out of the burrows like mushrooms. I looked on in disbelief and in less than an hour had accounted for 13 fully grown rabbits - all we could carry.

Another time in a different location, two hunters and their dog were returning from a hunt in the hills about 4pm with two rabbits for their efforts as I was heading into roughly the same area. In an hour or so, on my own, I bagged five to prove timing can be everything.

Stalking approach

Having consideration for the skittish nature of rabbits in the area, on my next trip I ventured out around 5pm and with the slight breeze in my favour I slowly and quietly stalked around the tall stands of blackberry bushes, pausing periodically and taking time to scan the open clearances through Steiner 8x32 binoculars. A couple of half-grown rabbits I hadn't spotted in the tall yellow grass scattered within feet of my approach and, knowing they were out and about, I took even greater care, sticking close to the blackberry bushes and looking for the slightest movement or shape that appeared out of place.

Soon after I was rewarded by the sight of rabbits, some young and others more mature, either resting under the shade of overhanging branches or sitting on the edge of their burrows. The camera came out to take some great snaps in the idyllic





Rabbit hunting: Change with the times

surroundings before moving on to bag a few. Part of my overall hunting enjoyment has always been to photograph game and wildlife, not just for my own appreciation and reflection but to demonstrate that as hunters we value and respect the animals we harvest and wildlife we encounter.

Successful outcome

That afternoon session ended with five head-shot rabbits using my trusty Brno 2 .22LR rifle. The last one taken was only visible by its protruding head outside one of several burrows on a slight mound and I almost lost it when it fell in, the slightest puff of dust from its kicking feet giving its position away. For all my experience I also frustratingly missed three or four easy shots for lack of a handy rest like a fence post or tree limb and hurried shots from excitement, the latter being one which never seems to diminish. A 12-gauge shotgun with 6 or even 7-shot at such close quarters would have done the job admirably but the quieter 22LR is preferred for better meat retrieval.

Next outing

To further improve my chances of scoring rabbits among blackberry bushes and dense growth I decided to invest in a couple of hunting aids, one being a ghillie

suit for camouflage to conceal and break up the human bodyline and face and, importantly, the eyes as far as possible because creatures small or large can become acutely aware and perceive a threat by a human or predator's gaze.

Also from Xhunter, an Atac Pro Shooting Hunting Trigger Tripod Stick, among other similar shooting stick brands considered, mainly for its practical and versatile handling. The convenient hand-pull trigger allows for quick extension and adjustment of the legs for setting up in a kneeling, sitting or standing position and also provides greater rifle rest stability compared to the monopods and bipods I've used previously. These additional aids along with the knowledge and experience gained from the previous two outings proved effective and rewarding.

Summary

Any chance to hunt the humble rabbit on a property is a privilege despite how the game prospects may present or are perceived. Modifying your hunting approach as the scene dictates through observation, making the extra effort and adapting can improve your chances. Walk the land, make your own assessment and plan the hunt accordingly. •



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Adler straight-pulls launch the revival

Daniel O'Dea

ne of the travesties of the 1996 buyback was the loss of pump-action shotguns to all but those who qualified for a Category C (or higher) licence. At the time the whole push of the paid confiscation was supposed to be about removal of self-loading firearms from the community, so what gives? A pump-action shotgun is not self-loading. The banning of the pumpaction shotgun was a complete anomaly as it was the only firearm type outlawed that wasn't self-loading.

Basically their removal prohibited sporting shooters, in 99 per cent of cases, from owning any form of repeating shotgun because at the time, lever-action shotguns in circulation amounted to a handful of old original Winchester 1887s still kicking around. In recent years thankfully there have been several new options with the advent of more modern lever-action

shotguns and a welcome trend has been development of the straight-pull shotgun. It would seem some industry folk have in effect reverse engineered certain designs to make them legally compliant.

Let me explain. All repeating firearm designs are by virtue 'bolt-action' in that they have a bolt. In what we call a traditional

bolt-action format the bolt is operated by hand, lever-action by a lever, pumpaction with a pump or slide and finally in a self-loading firearm the bolt is deployed by either gas or inertia. So if you built a shotgun which used many of the features of a self-loader but didn't include any of the key elements which would make it a self-loading



Adler B-220 series shotguns come boxed, broken down with manual and two spare choke tubes (three in total).





firearm (no gas or inertia system), you'll have a manually operated bolt-action firearm. It would appear this is the case with the Adler 220/230 shotgun options.

Australian distributor Nioa sent Australian Shooter a couple of new Adler B-220s for review and at time of writing they have five model variants of the Adler straight-pull available - the B-220 All Weather, B-220 Pistol Grip, B-220 Rifled Pistol Grip, B-230 Tactical and B-230 Tactical FDE. For review we have a B-220 All Weather and B-220 Pistol Grip.

The B-220 comes with an owner's manual, yellow plastic safety flag, ambidextrous bolt handle and a small plastic box containing spare chokes and choke removal tool, the three screw-in choke tubes provided being Full, Modified and

Improved Cylinder. When you open the box you'll note the vellow flag in the receiver which serves to retain the bolt when the bolt handle is not installed. To assemble the Adler B-220 you remove the magazine tube cap and slide off the fore-end then draw back on the action bar, remove the flag and line up the bolt handle slot on either side to insert the bolt handle. Once the bolt handle's installed nothing can come out.

Next step is to place the fore-end in position on the barrel and insert the chamber end into the receiver while lining up the fore-end channel over the magazine tube. Lastly, screw the magazine cap back on to hold everything in place. The magazine is loaded via a gate on the bottom of the receiver directly below the ejection port - simply place a cartridge on the loading

gate (cartridge lifter/carrier) and shove the cartridge forward into the magazine tube until caught by the cartridge stop, then repeat until the magazine is full.

To have the Adler B-220 running, place the gun on 'safe' by pushing the cross bolt safety at the rear of the triggerguard housing from left to right. To charge, drop the first cartridge through the ejection port on to the lifter and press the bolt release on the right of the receiver which allows the bolt to fly forward, picking up the cartridge and loading it into the chamber. You then top off the magazine and you're ready to go.

One difference I noted from other shotguns I've used with tubular magazines is with the B-220 the cartridge stop (the catch which holds cartridges in the magazine) is

Adler straight-pulls launch the revival

not released when the bolt is charged or cycled, but rather is activated by the fall of the hammer when the trigger is depressed. This means you can cycle the bolt to eject a loaded round from the chamber without the next round in the magazine releasing on to the cartridge lifter, which could be handy in the field if, for example, you decide you need a slug when the chamber and mag are full of buckshot. Simply pull the bolt handle back to eject the loaded round, drop your slug in and let the bolt go.

Likewise the bolt won't lock to the rear unless the trigger is pulled and bolt cycled on an empty magazine. My immediate thought was how do I unload the magazine without firing? Interestingly the manual doesn't cover operation - only safety, disassembly, choke tube usage and warranty - you have to work the rest out yourself, which I did.

To unload and clear the gun with the safety on, work the bolt to eject the loaded cartridge and let the bolt run fully forward on an empty chamber then roll the gun over and, while pushing the lifter up through the loading port, press the bolt release. In this position it also releases the cartridge stop, allowing loaded shells back out the magazine the same way they went in.

I also discovered how to lock the bolt open without pressing the trigger once the gun is completely empty. At the back of the cartridge lifter where it hinges just forward of the triggerguard is another small catch or plunger. With bolt forward and hammer cocked the cartridge lifter sits up about 8mm into the receiver. If you press this plunger the lifter springs down and when you pull the bolt back it will lock open. Likewise if there are rounds







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- Silver (steel) receiver with Black PRO 12 Motif
- Supplied in a take-down case
- 5-year warranty



Adler straight-pulls launch the revival



in the magazine this will release the next cartridge on to the lifter, so technically you could also unload the Adler by cycling rounds out this way.

One question that came to mind was which side should I mount the bolt handle on? I came up with my own method which varied between the two models. In the All Weather version with its conventional stock I ran the bolt handle on the right. For this I had my left hand on the fore-end to hold the gun in position and my right hand operating bolt and trigger. On the Pistol Grip I ran the bolt on the left and with a strong hand grip found I could keep the gun on point while operating the bolt with my left hand for rapid follow-up shots. The beauty is the bolt handle can be swapped from one side to another so users can experiment as to what works best.

Both guns felt light and easy to handle, carry and bring to point but with 12-gauge shotguns the lighter they are the more recoil you'll feel. Both guns produce stout recoil when using heavy loads and while an effective soft rubber recoil pad as standard on all models dampens recoil, you know about it when you drop the hammer on hot and heavy shells. I ran both with a variety of shells from No.6 shot all the way up to solid slugs with both high and low brass hulls and all seemed to feed, fire and eject without issue.

Using the All Weather with its raisedrib fixed-notch rear and fibre optic front ramped sight post, I fired some solid slugs offhand at 25m and, grouping true to windage, they impacted on average about 3-4" high on the GlowShot 8" target which should land in the vitals out to just past 100m on a pig or similar-sized game.

Other features on both guns tested were front and rear sling loops, the front rotating around the magazine tube so the gun can sit flat to either side when slung across your back. There's about 75mm of tactical rail on the front edge of the fore-end for mounting a light or laser and the top of the receiver also incorporates a 3/8" dovetail, common on rimfire rifles for optics fitting.

All up the Adler B-220 series seems a versatile package in either model. I liked the finish and ramped three-dot sights pattern of the All Weather but also the controllability and ergonomics of the Pistol Grip and one of the most impressive things about a straightpull is the price - an online search showing them selling well below \$700. For a working shotgun with good capacity, at that price how could you go wrong? And did I mention they have a five-year warranty? •



Specifications:

Firearm: Adler B-220 All Weather and Pistol Grip

Action: Straight-pull

Calibre: 12-gauge with 76mm (3") chamber

Capacity: Five-round tubular magazines (as tested)

Barrel: 20" (510mm)

Barrel spec: Hard chrome bore and chamber with screw-in chokes (x3)

Front sight: Ramped fibre optic (AW) Gold bead (PG)

Rear sight: Ramped notched (AW) Vent rib (PG) Rear sight Alt: 3/8" dovetail for optics mounting Finish: Nickel Cerakote (AW), Matte black (PG)

Stock: Black polymer

Weight: 2.95kg as tested, 20" barrel

Length OA: 1050mm









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Nikko Stirling Panamax Precision looks the part

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Turrets are easily switched by removing a small screw on each with the Allen key.

o the new generation of shooters and hunters the name Nikko Stirling Sport Optics may not be familiar, but ask any seasoned campaigner and they'll tell you its roots traced back to the Fuller Firearms Group and founder Malcolm John Fuller. In 2016, Nikko Sport Optics celebrated its 60th birthday and continue to manufacture top-quality products for the worldwide market.

Malcolm knew back then what Australian

hunters and shooters expected in sport optics and to this day delivers the goods. I've been fortunate during my 30 years of hunting and shooting to use Nikko Stirling Sport Optics and accessories and have found them excellent.

Riflescopes have become much more refined during the past decade. Plain duplex-style reticles and standard turrets

have taken a back seat to Ballistic Drop Compensating (BDC) versions, which allow the user to take into account the ballistic profile of the cartridge being used and in effect enable much more accurate and longer distance shooting than ever before.

The sport optics marketplace is awash with riflescopes to cover all applications and requirements embracing BDC technology - and Nikko Stirling have their share. One new addition to their line is the Precision 4-12x40 riflescope with a half mil-dot (HMD) reticle and five different

Australian Shooter was sent the Precision for review and it was eagerly received. It arrived in the customary black Nikko Stirling carton with 'lifetime warranty' clearly stamped on the box, something most sport optics manufacturers subscribe to these days. If you can't have faith and offer such a warranty,

calibrated turrets for most rimfire loads.

Up close

you just won't last.

Opening the box yielded the Panamax Precision 4-12x40 along with rubber



The ocular with adjustable eyepiece focus and power magnification ring.

The 40mm objective lens in the bell gives excellent light-transmitting qualities.



bikini-style lens covers, cleaning cloth and user manual. The scope arrived with the standard elevation and windage exposed turrets fitted (1/10 MIL per click) and with an additional five calibrated elevation turrets for popular rimfire calibres: .22LR Subsonic (40-grain/1085fps), .22LR High Velocity (40-grain/1300fps), .22LR Extreme High Velocity (33-grain/1500fps), .22 WMR (40-grain/1910fps) and 17 HMR (17-grain/2550 fps). Also included was a turret with a blank section for a customised drop profile and, to top it off, there was also a calibrated turret for the .223 Remington (55-grain/3240fps) and a small Allen key for removal/installation of the turrets.

Externally the scope is finished in matte black and made from aircraft-grade aluminium. It measures 314mm, weighs 405g and the main tube is 1" (25.4mm) in diameter, a multi-piece construction with the turret housing at mid-ships and ocular housing and objective bell at opposite ends.

The turret housing contains the elevation and windage dials which are of the exposed (non-capped) design and resettable to a zero point but with no zero-stop. The clicks on both turrets are easy to adjust with a positive feel, click values in milliradians (MIL) with 1/10 MIL per click - equating to 7mm at 100m. As stated, turrets are easily interchanged using the supplied Allen key and both the elevation and windage turrets have 60 MOA adjustment range.

Moving to the rear of the scope, the ocular housing contains the ocular lenses, eyepiece focus adjustment and magnification adjustment dial. The eyepiece ring has a travel

range of 10mm and permits fine focusing of the reticle image with no effort whatsoever.

The magnification adjustment dial on the front edge of the ocular housing is made from aluminium and has adjustment from 4x to 12x. It has a series of surface grooves which give a positive grip without the need for a rubber sleeve and moved through the magnification range smoothly. Eye relief is 80mm, ample for most hunting calibres.

Internally the Panamax Precision won't let vou down. Multicoated lenses throughout result in clear images out to all hunting ranges be that for rimfire, centrefire or airgun. The wide field-ofview is much appreciated, especially if plinking with the .22LR at closer range or deciding to increase the distance with the .22 WMR or .17 HMR (centrefire calibres will also benefit).

The glass-etched reticle is of the half mil-dot design (HMD) and is a common profile, the sub-tensions allowing the user to accurately hold off for wind and over for drop if required. While many shooters and hunters enjoy the benefits of mil-dot reticles, I'm a fan of the old duplex style but that's just personal preference. The scope uses quality seals in its construction and is nitrogen filled, making it waterproof and shockproof.

At the range

The scope was fitted to a serious rimfire rifle in the form of a Lithgow LA 101 Crossover in .22LR coupled to



Nikko Stirling Panamax Precision looks the part



the new Southern Arms TSP X Chassis. Riflescope testing initially was carried out at the standard 50m distance for the .22LR cartridge and ammunition included both standard and high-velocity hunting and target options. For the initial accuracy test the standard factory-fitted turrets were used as there was no need at this stage for a calibrated turret.

Accuracy testing aside, the scope performed exceptionally well, shooting targets at 50m set on 12x with images clear, no doubt attributed to the multicoated optics. I then chose two of the calibrated turrets which matched the designated bullet weight/velocity (etched on the turret cap) with two of the test loads I had on

hand. With a 50m zero it was easy to dial into targets out to 150m with a turn of the calibrated turret and while I'd never recommend hunting beyond 75m with the .22LR cartridge, shooting at inanimate targets at extended ranges with the use of the calibrated turrets was easily achievable.

Finally I conducted a tracking test with a pair of shots at an aiming point then moving the point-of-impact around the target, shooting two shots after each adjustment. Upon returning to the original aiming point, a final pair of shots were fired. As expected, the first and last two shots were on top of each other, proving the internal windage and elevation adjustments are not only accurate but repeatable.

Conclusion

The Nikko Stirling Panamax brand may be marketed as a no-frills entry level riflescope, but the advent of the Precision model in 4-12x40 tailored to rimfire calibres with the five calibrated turrets makes this a great choice for the range shooter or hunter after a value-for-money optic for their rimfire. It's also well suited to centrefire calibres and airguns.

The lifetime warranty offered by Nikko Stirling (original owner only) gives the user peace of mind that if something does go amiss you're duly covered. Retail price is \$249 and the scope's available through all Outdoor Sporting Agencies dealers in Australia.



Specifications: Model: Panamax Precision 4-12x40 Magnification: 4-12x Objective diameter: 40mm Field of view (mm at 100m): High power: 3.6 Low power: 11 Click value (mm at 100m): 7 Elevation/windage range (MOA): Up/down - 60 Left/right - 60 Eye relief (mm): 80 Tube diameter: I" (25.4 mm) Length (mm): 314-324 Weight (grams): 405 Parallax (m): 50 Reticle: HMD (half mil-dot) Distributor: Outdoor Sporting Agencies RRP: \$249



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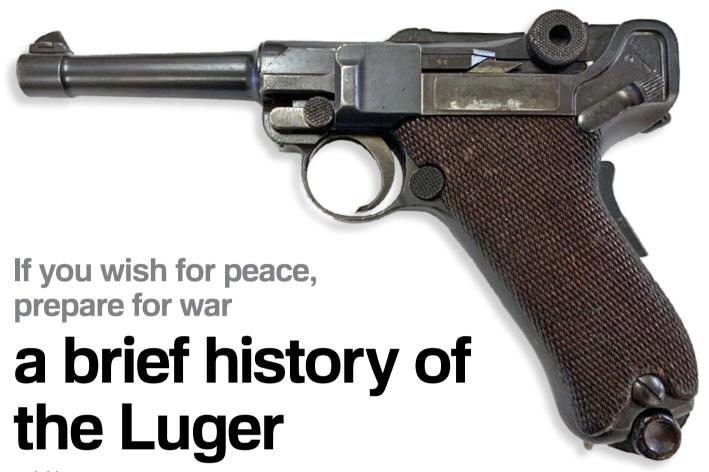




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Kalebh Pearson

he vast majority of the international quality collection of handguns and sidearms in the Lithgow Small Arms Factory Museum have been provided by one man - Ron Hayes. For most of his life Ron was fascinated by firearms, particularly handguns, with Lugers and the Colt Huntsman being personal favourites. He was born in Sydney in 1924 to Jesse May and Edward Douglas Hayes, who served in World War One as a prisoner of war guard and later enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF).

During World War Two, Ron's father returned to active duty while Ron served



as a mechanical engineering apprentice at Sydney's Ultimo Technical College, exempting him from military service. But he enlisted in the Volunteer Coastal Patrol and when WWII ended he entered into a business partnership which created Parsons & Hayes, becoming Sydney's largest printing engineering company in the 1950s.

Throughout these years Ron deepened his passion for firearms with the acquisition of a gun dealer's licence and was appointed president of the NSW Pistol Shooting Association. As his interests focused on handguns, he established connections with the famous Smith & Wesson company and eventually earned the appointment of Licenced Service Centre in the fields of warranty and maintenance for their firearms. Ron undoubtedly accrued one of the largest privately-owned handgun collections in Australia, this legacy entrusted to the Lithgow Small Arms Factory Museum.

The museum holds a variety of these examples including a 1913 and 1942 version of German-made Lugers. The Luger saw minimal structural change throughout its manufacturing years with the grip safety perhaps the most apparent. The grip safety began being phased out during German

trials proposed in 1901 by the Gewehr Prufungskommission (GPK), which translates to Rifle Testing Commission.

Looking at a 1913 Dutch-bought Luger.

On November 27 that year, the Ministry of War in Prussia orchestrated another in a series of field tests of self-loading pistols during 1902-03², contenders in that trial including 55 Mauser pistols, 55 Borchardt-Luger and 15 Mannlicher pistols. Of the 55 Borchardt-Lugers which were provided only 15 were equipped with grip safeties. These trials were the last before the final test and subsequent adoption of the Luger for use in the German Army and as a result of those 1902-03 try-outs, the non-grip safety Luger was triumphant and subsequent pistol assessments were unable to unseat it.

The first Lugers used by the Germans in 1907 were New Model Parabellums and included the standard grip safety. These were bestowed on machine gun detachments but the use of these variants saw an abrupt end when the P-08 was introduced in 1909 and the existing New Model Parabellums were converted by removal of the grip safety.³

The 1913 Luger maintained a grip safety but as it wasn't part of an order passed by the German military it was instead sold















If you wish for peace, prepare for war - a brief history of the Luger

to the Dutch, the easiest method of identification of those being the Dutch word RUST (SAFE) on the thumb safety. This is a DWM Model 1906 Luger, determined by the serial number 334 inscribed on the barrel in conjunction with the barrel engraved as 1913.

The Parabellum Pistole - or Luger as it's commonly known - is a self-loading pistol which has been used by numerous countries including Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Chile and Bulgaria among others. The design was patented by Georg Luger in 1898 as he attempted to improve the Borchardt Automatic Pistole and he originally labelled it the Borchardt Luger Pistole in recognition of Hugo Borchardt, inventor of the Borchardt automatic pistol. The 1899/1900 test guns were manufactured by Deutsche Waffen-und Munitionsfabriken Aktiengesellschaft (German Weapons and Munitions public limited company) or DWM for military and commercial sale.

The emphasis was on military contracts particularly with the Swiss who, after judging 40 test Lugers, ordered 5000 units with additional requested alterations which led to the Model 1900 Parabellum in 7.65 calibre. Parabellum is Latin - If you wish for peace, prepare for war4 - and so began the history and iconic legacy of the Luger. First major supplier to the German military



The German military was sceptical of the Luger due to the tiny calibre of early models, being only 7.65mm cartridge, which was deemed too small so DWM adjusted this in 1904 and made Lugers in 9mm using parabellum rounds. Due to this adjustment they were quickly adopted by the German navy the same year and in 1908 the German military crowned it the official sidearm of their armed forces.⁵ When the German Army first placed orders for Lugers in 1908 through to the end of WWI, DWM made more than half the military's P-08 models for this period and in total produced more than one million Lugers, roughly 38 per cent of their entire production history.6



Arsenal turned them out between 1910 and 1918. Erfurt was the national arsenal weapons manufacturer and created 23,000 artillery and 496,000 regular military Lugers. Erfurt delivered approximately 21 per cent of all Lugers but being a nationalised company meant the conditions of the Versailles Treaty compelled the firm to be disbanded and its equipment sold off, thus ending their weapons production.8 With the conclusion of WWI the Luger had participated in its first but not last global conflict.

During the inter-war years German Luger production fell drastically as the Versailles Treaty allowed for only 1000

new weapons to be manufac-

DWM Dutch-bought Luger.

tured annually. The Weimar Yet DWM wasn't the only maker of Republic's police and military Lugers for WWI as the Royal Erfurt force P-08s were exclusively provided to Simson and Co, was DWM who up until 1908 had operating out of Suhl, due to a monopoly on commercial and military production. \$0W Small 1942 DWM Luger (left) and 1913

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If you wish for peace, prepare for war - a brief history of the Luger

mistrust of DWM's role in the Kaiser's military production machine and preventing Germany from re-arming.

As Simson was unable to produce Lugers they were given Erfurt Arsenal's dispossessed machines. Simson and Co Lugers numbered 12,000 between 1922 and 1934 and were quickly removed by the new government when they came to power in 1933.9 By 1936 the Simson family was forced out of Germany along with many Jewish households due to the Nuremburg Laws and being an official collaborator with the Weimar Republic, both of which were unacceptable to the Germanic purity ideology being enforced at the time. With Jewish companies gone German competitors stepped in, taking possession of those amenities.

The DWM company responsible for the majority of Luger production for WWI amalgamated with another firearms manufacturing entity known as Mauser Werke in 1930 and created Lugers with excess DWM parts as well as Mauser's new parts until 1934, when DWM parts were exhausted. Mauser became primary manufacturer of Lugers and main provider to the German Wehrmacht's Heer (Army) until 1942 when the Luger started being phased out by the Walther P.38. ¹⁰ The final order of Mauser Lugers accepted by the Germans was 1000 pistols in November 1943.

In December 1943, 4000 Lugers were sold to Portugal as Germany refused them and these were renamed the Model 943. Post-war production began again using surplus materials to arm the Germans, Soviets and French, Mauser manufacture continuing until 1986 when the Luger was finally retired from Mauser production. 11 During the entire cycle of WWII, Mauser made approximately one million Lugers, around 38 per cent of total output 12 making them the largest producer of Lugers for WW2-era Germany but not the only manufacturer.

While Mauser held the contract for the Heer's Lugers, the Luftwaffe (German Air Force) sought another source and Krieghoff Suhl Company entered production using the machines repossessed from Simson & Co, though it's unknown if these were used for manufacture or as the template for Krieghoff's own machines. Krieghoff began with a relatively small contract for the Luftwaffe, the initial order for 10,000 pistols coming in 1934 with additional parts made for a total of 13,580 in anticipation of additional orders. Between 1938 and 1944 Krieghoff produced an additional 2000 Lugers for the Luftwaffe along with several other alternatives.

The remainder were sold to the private sector from 1937 until the war's conclusion, the total number of Krieghoff Lugers being 13,580 or 0.5 per cent of total production. The small number of Krieghoff Lugers indicates their rarity and unique place in the firearm's history.

Remarkably, examples of all these are present and on display at the Lithgow Small Arms Factory Museum. This vast array, which also includes an entire catalogue of unique local and international historic

firearms, cements the reputation of the venue as a world-class institution. Factory opening hours are Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday from 10am-4pm.

References: 1 The Hayes Handgun Omnibus; 2 Pistole Parabellum, Chapter 11; 3 Pistole Parabellum, Chapter 15; 4 Forgotten Weapons; 5 NRA Museums; 6,8,9,10,12,13 Standard Catalog of Luger; 7 HL Publishing; 11 Warfare History Network.com





Lithgow Small Arms Factory Museum Luger display cabinet.





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Chris Redlich

t would be fair to say there wouldn't be too many hunters around Australia who don't have a Tikka rifle or two in their gun safe. Sales results indicate the T3x model is Australia's most popular rifle and for good reason considering its European pedigree, slick bolt throw, endless model variations and configurations. I speak with experience being the owner of a T3x Super Light in .300 WSM and to say I'm rapt with it would be an understatement, accounting for its fair share of deer and pigs since purchasing in 2017.



The T3x safety catch is the best Chris has used and the cocking piece indicator shows the rifle is ready to fire.

The latest models vary slightly from Tikka's original T3 released here 18 years ago but the Finnish manufacturer continues to produce top-quality rifles, underlining its popularity with shooters worldwide. When the chance came to review the all-new T3x Veil Alpine model, Beretta Australia offered a choice of calibres and I settled on the .300 Win Mag as it was ballistically similar and closest cartridge to my .300 WSM. Accompanying the rifle was a Steiner Ranger 2.5-10x50 scope and assortment of factory ammunition including Sellier & Bellot 180-grain, Sako Gamehead Pro 165-grain and Sako Racehead 175-grain.

Out of the box

Appealing at first glance, the Veil Alpine as the name suggests is Tikka's take on a rifle designed with Alpine and mountain hunters in mind sporting the Veil camouflage, a well-designed blotch-style, disruptive pattern which blends in well with rocky environments and minimal conflict in timbered areas. All stainless steel components are cerakoted in a matte light grey which blends in well with the stock and improves durability in inclement weather.

The top length of the receiver is dovetailed to suit Sako Optilock rings (or similar dovetail mounts of 17mm) and additionally is drilled and tapped to accept mount screws for which Beretta supplied the Burris two-piece base and Steiner

rings. The bolt is spiral fluted and not only looks good but trims the weight, paired with an enlarged bolt handle for a firm grip to aid rapid follow-up shots. As with the full T3x range, the silky-slick action is a push-feed design with twin locking lugs machined to provide a low-profile 70-degree bolt throw, the claw extractor and plunge ejector combining with the T3x widened ejection port to promote clear extraction of fired cases.

A two-position safety is to the rear right of the receiver enabling easy manipulation by the shooter's master thumb, sliding rear for 'safe' and forward for 'fire' marked with a red dot on the receiver. Bolt closure is clearly identified by a cocking piece indicator (red dot) exposed at the rear of the bolt when the trigger sears are engaged and ready for firing, the single-stage blade

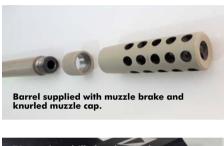




trigger fully adjustable from an approximate 4lb maximum to 2lb minimum. Since this wasn't my rifle, I left the trigger at the factory set pressure of 3lb and although I found it a little heavy for hunting, it was acceptable for testing.

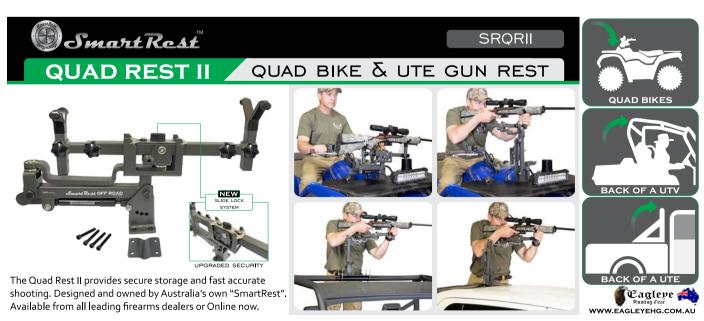
The barrel is the business end of the rifle and Tikka's, made by Sako in Finland, are renowned for outstanding accuracy. The designated D-18 barrel is larger in diameter than my Super Light and classed as semi-heavy profile, specifically designed for increased firing stability in challenging conditions. Certainly not heavy by any means, the full-length fluting helps reduce weight when compared with other straight cut barrels of semi-heavy profile. Tikka barrels are cold hammer forged and claim to be superior to other methods of production, delivering high-quality consistency across the bracket. The rifle chambered for the .300 Win Mag has a rifling twist rate of one in 11" and measures 600mm.

Included for the T3x range is a muzzle brake which adds to overall length but









Veil Alpine enhances T3x reputation



The various cartridge options.

doesn't detract from the appearance. I'm not recoil sensitive and have never had the need for a muzzle brake but Tikka have done a fine job of combining the two. A screw-on knurled end cap matching the barrel profile can be fitted when the muzzle brake isn't required though I decided to fit the muzzle brake and test the complete package.

Front and rear action screws securely fasten the receiver recess on the underside to a steel recoil lug of the synthetic stock, mating the two components precisely. All T3x synthetic stocks are modular and Tikka designed them for personal customisation with replacement parts and additions available on request, including pistol grips which are interchangeable with the simple use of the supplied Torx tool.

I've never felt the need for alterations as the standard arrangement fits me beautifully and this one's no different. The pistol grip is ambidextrous with generous palmswell which instantly feels natural to grasp. The butt has a straight comb with no raised cheekpiece but the overall feel when combined with the fore-end's slight taper and moulded grips promotes positive sighting when shouldered. Standard sling swivel studs are included on fore-end and buttstock.

The one-piece magazine bottom and triggerguard are made from high-strength synthetic polymer contributing to overall weight reduction, three .300 Win Mag rounds held securely and single-stacked in the polymer magazine. The magazine is attached firmly and freed easily from the stock recess by pressing the release catch, additional magazines by Tikka available upon request. Recoil pads are an important part of any rifle chambered in big calibres and the thick, 25mm rubber pad helps substantially.

At the range

After stripping and assembling the rifle for a better understanding of its internals and externals. I couldn't wait to see how the complete package performed. Using the supplied Burris two-piece mounts I positioned the Steiner Ranger scope for correct eye relief and despite the Veil Alpine weighing a combined total of around 4kg (scoped and loaded), it surprised me how balanced it was when shouldering offhand for a sight picture. To be honest, it felt better than my beloved custom .284 rifle of similar weight which proves how important a wellbalanced design is. As expected, the Steiner Ranger provided a clear picture and sightingin at the standard 100m was easy and I didn't take long to achieve acceptable hunting groups using Sellier & Bellot factory ammo firing 180-grain Nosler Partition bullets.



Factory ammo supplied by Beretta, all producing a combined average of 1.074 MOA at 100m.





The .300 Win Mag is no pussycat and I noticed, with muzzle brake fitted, felt recoil and muzzle jump was reduced. I believe the combination of Tikka's D-18 barrel and muzzle brake tamed the big smoker when compared to my standard .300 WSM Super Light. After a few follow-up sessions testing Sellier & Bellot and Sako factory ammo, I settled on the 165-grain Sako Gamehead Pro as my preferred hunting option.

All supplied factory ammo averaged just over 1 MOA, printing similar three-shot groups on paper which I was satisfied with. The 300 Win Mag is known as an accurate flat shooter and I reinforced its reputation at 200m by shooting an improved sub-MOA group. As always, consistency on the range gives me confidence for that all-important kill shot out in the field so I was keen to field test the rifle and put the wheels in motion for a hunt.

In the field

A few days of continuous rain delayed our trip to the annual roar, the mountainous property laying down a challenge as three winch pulls were needed to take us up the first muddy hill to camp. I was confident the roar would resume after the rain but to our disappointment it had ended, so the next few days saw us in the hills doing the hard yards in search of a now elusive red deer. Sadly our portable fridge was going home empty although the T3x Veil Alpine accompanied me comfortably over many a mountain mile. During this time it proved itself worthy of mountain rifle status and Tikka have produced a wonderfully designed T3x model up to the task, its feel, balance and accuracy providing the ultimate in confidence if a shot arose.

Conclusion

Overall I wasn't surprised to discover how well-designed the T3x Veil Alpine is and happy Tikka haven't changed a winning formula Australian shooters have come to appreciate. There aren't many of our game species which won't drop from a single .300 Win Mag round though there's absolutely no substitute for a well-placed shot to the vitals.

The same applies to other calibres in the Veil Alpine stable including 6.5 Creedmoor, 270 Win, 7mm Rem Mag, 308 Win and 300 WSM, all of which are accurate and capable hunting rounds. Retailing for \$2359 (rifle only) at time of writing is expected for a well-made European rifle of strong reputation. Distributed by Beretta Australia to retailers throughout the country, find more at www.berettaaustralia.com.au

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OPINION John Maxwell in Canberra

wenty five years after the Porth Arthur tragedy Australia's gun laws are 1: A model for the rest of the world especially the US or 2: Teetering on the verge of collapse through undermining by a well-resourced pro-gun lobby. The answer is neither, although there was no stopping members of the anti-gun gang when they gathered for a seminar on the eve of the 25th anniversary to reflect on the national policy response.

Shooters will well remember that time. Despite having done no wrong we were compelled to surrender cherished firearms because of the murderous actions of a madman. Quarter of a century on the National Firearms Agreement (NFA) introduced by former Prime Minister John Howard remains firmly in place. There's no sign we'll ever get our semi-autos back and, despite no state or territory fully implementing the NFA, neither is there any sign of it crumbling.

Curiously coinciding with the 25th anniversary, Australia's gun laws were widely discussed in the US media, though that was more to do with the first tentative steps of the new Biden Administration to impose some gun controls, hence the international interest in the online seminar staged by Sydney University's School of Public Health.

Sydney Uni gives itself a big pat on the back for its role in Australia's gun control journey. It provided the office space from which the Coalition for Gun Control (CGC). now Gun Control Australia (GCA) and its frontperson Rebecca Peters campaigned for national gun laws following Port Arthur. It also hosts gunpolicy.org, the global website run by anti-gun academic Philip Alpers, one of those speaking at the April 27 seminar.

Other speakers were Ms Peters, Federal Labor MP Andrew Leigh (convenor of the parliamentary Friends of Gun Control group) and US academic Professor David Hemenway (professor of public health policy at Harvard School of Public Health). So what did we learn from this? The answer would appear to be not much we didn't already know as, beyond a couple of observations, foreign onlookers wouldn't have gained much to advance their agendas.

One observation worth repeating was the utter shock of Port Arthur. There'd been gun spree killings in Australia previously but the 35 victims - ordinary people visiting a historic site - was at that time the largest mass shooting of its type anywhere in the world. "For American listeners, 35 dead in a country of 18 million people is equivalent to a gun massacre in the US today that claimed 600 lives," said Mr Leigh.

"It had an extraordinary impact on the country and one of the really striking things was the speed with which authorities acted. Even before all the bodies had been laid to rest, just 12 days after the tragedy, police ministers from states and territories were meeting to discuss tightening Australia's gun laws."

Another point is Australia's gun law changes were spearheaded by a conservative prime minister. Would a Labor PM have achieved comparable results in convincing conservative states? Maybe not. That would appear to have relevance in the US where Democrat President Ioe Biden has launched some modest measures. But what if Donald Trump had stood up following the October 2017 Las Vegas massacre (60 dead) to declare: "I know this will be hard for many of you but enough is enough." As if.

Compared to many places, especially the US, Australia's gun laws are regarded as a great success though statistically that's far more ambiguous. Australia's firearms murder rate was falling before Port Arthur and continued afterwards - it's not as though the gun death rate peaked in April 1996 then dropped like a stone. That pre-Port Arthur decline has been attributed to various factors including growing urbanisation and states and territories progressively implementing more rigorous licensing procedures.

Some have argued the NFA accelerated that process which is arguable at best. The anti-firearms crowd are on firmer ground

in pointing to the abrupt decline in mass shootings after '96, an achievement which seems all the more laudable with every new mass shooting in the US. According to a report on the US National Public Radio (NPR) website there were 194 mass shootings there this year up to May 10 - we only hear of the most significant. The US now defines 'mass' as four or more victims killed or injured, excluding the shooter. To allow consistent comparison over 25 years, gunpolicy.org has stuck with a definition of five dead, excluding the perpetrator.

Australia's record as Mr Alpers acknowledged isn't perfect. In May 2018 a man shot dead six members of his family then himself, the worst such incident since '96. Not acknowledged are other mass murders with higher death tolls but no involvement of guns - the Childers backpackers hostel fire (15 dead), arson during the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires (10) and the 2011 Quakers Hill nursing home fire (11).

The latest homicide figures (2018-19) released by the Australian Institute of Criminology under its three-decade homicide monitoring program show 35 incidents of murder by gun, up from 23 (the lowest ever) in 2017-18 but consistent with numbers across the past decade, that's

half the number killed by knives. What the AIC study doesn't reveal is how many of those who committed murder by gun held licences and used registered firearms.

Another AIC study released in 2000 and covering the period 1997-99 found the overwhelming majority - more than 90 per cent of 117 gun homicide offenders were unlicensed and used unregistered firearms. Has that changed in two decades? We just don't know, highlighting an issue agreed on both sides of this debate - the dearth of good data.

The propensity of criminals to use guns to commit crimes isn't at all well acknowledged by those agitating for more gun control. Mr Alpers said police conducting unannounced inspections were discovering high levels of non-compliance on the premises of enthusiasts who called themselves law-abiding gun owners "until they're blue in the face".

"It's the blindness to the fact that lawful gun owners are actually part of the problem. The proportion of particularly mass shooters who are lawful gun owners is very very high," he said. "It's the majority, yet here we still have all these people saving I'm a law-abiding sporting shooter. Shooters are not a distinct species of people who should be treated differently. They're just

like us, they are us. We need to treat people with guns in the same way we treat people with other lethal objects like cars."

Certainly a small number of obsessive collectors and some licensed shooters have committed appalling crimes but it's not licensed shooters conducting drive-by shootings in the suburbs, murdering gang rivals or being busted in possession of commercial quantities of drugs and cash along with illegal handguns.

Mr Alpers did acknowledge the proliferation of police task forces across the country to tackle the problem of illicit firearms and that was having a measurable effect. For a bit of shock and horror, gunpolicy. org released their latest research on gun numbers showing Australian civilians now own more than 3.5 million registered firearms among 868,000 licensed owners (an average of four each).

"It's clear those who already own guns have bought more, while those who don't own guns are becoming more numerous," Mr Alpers said. "Polling confirms this with the proportion of Australian households with a firearm falling by 75 per cent in recent decades." Unstated but implied was more guns equals more death, something simply not borne out by the statistics.



Port Arthur: 25 years on

What seems to bug gun controllers is what Alpers termed "a perverse and unintended consequence" of Howard's gun law reforms. For a large number of shooters, establishing the genuine reason of sports shooting requires membership of a shooting organisation and for most that's the SSAA with its established clubs and ranges in each state and territory. SSAA membership now exceeds 200,000, up from around 40.000 pre-Port Arthur.

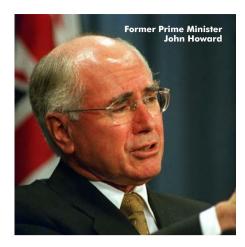
Alpers said the NFA guaranteed the country's pro-gun lobby group an uncapped income in perpetuity from a government tax on shooters. "It's not hard to see warchests like that being used to try and roll back Australia's gun laws," he said.

Ms Peters added: "At least the amount of money going to the gun lobby could be balanced out if similar funds were being provided to people who were concerned to maintain the laws." In other words, the government should hand us money. Again there's an unstated view that shooters should have no voice and meekly accede to whatever restriction government imposes, even when said restriction will produce no public safety benefit whatsoever.

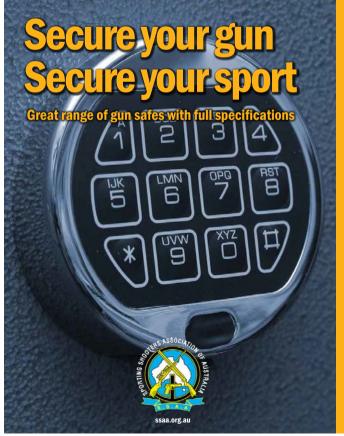
The NFA was handed down by Mr Howard on May 10, 1996 and among guncontrollers has gained status of holy writ, perfect and immutable from the outset. Alpers again: "From day one, no Australian state or territory fully complied with the NFA. All of them ignore the nationally agreed ban on gun ownership by under-18s." That's simply untrue. The initial NFA was the subject of much back-and-forth between the Commonwealth, states and territories to clarify certain elements and nut out the fine detail.

The NFA was initially silent on junior shooters beyond setting a minimum licence age of 18. On June 11, 1996 Federal Cabinet agreed it would propose to the states that: "... the position of under-age shooters under the Police Ministers' resolutions be clarified to indicate that all jurisdictions would allow and continue to allow persons under the age of 18 but above a specified minimum age to use lawful firearms in supervised situations." Not sure how much clearer that could be.

"In summary," said Alpers, "the pillars of the NFA do remain solid but there's never-ending pressure to weaken the public safety provisions that were agreed in 1996. While Australians proudly tell themselves and especially tell those in other countries the country's gun problems have been overcome, complacency will always remain a threat."



In one area the gun-controllers do make a fair point. With the introduction of standardised licensing procedures and firearms registration it was always envisaged state and territory registries would be integrated to create a seamless nationally accessible system. More than two decades on we're still waiting. Further, even within some states and territories their systems are far from perfect - it took a tragedy in NSW for the registry to embark on major reforms after it allowed a man with a long history of domestic abuse to acquire handguns which he used to murder his two children.



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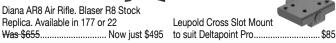
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Sharp thinking on scissor attachment

Con Kapralos

nifemate, Australia's own blade sharpening tool, now has a neat optional attachment which is tailored to the upkeep of scissors. The success that was the original tool is now much more adaptable for the sharpening of scissors, which require a completely different operational angle and process than for knife blades.

Using the Knifemate sharpening tool, users can buy the attachment which is supplied with additional hardware to affix it to the existing body. The top jaw and spring, which is initially removed from the tool, is then retro-fitted to the front of the scissor sharpening attachment and once the tool is assembled it's just a matter of loading the scissor blade and securing it via the adjustable cam clamp system.

As is the case with the Knifemate sharpening tool (with either knife or scissor attachment) you must ascertain the correct angle and adjust this accordingly by setting the jack bar to give the precise slant. There are different ways to set this either via a mobile phone with digital angle finder app or with a texta pen to mark the existing bevel on the scissors/knife blade - pass the blade lightly over the stone and examine the bevel. Adjustment can be made to the angle by tweaking the jack bar

and fastening into place with the lock nut (no need to overtighten).

In practice

Using a medium/fine oil stone, rounding up some candidate scissors was a tough task. While the sharpening attachment works best with scissors which can be taken apart, ones which are permanently joined together can also be sharpened with a little extra manipulation of the tool and stone.

Luckily a neighbour who's a hairdresser managed to find two pairs of barber's scissors needing urgent attention and I also found a small pair of straight-edged pruning shears which wouldn't cut cleanly. Using the scissor sharpening attachment, honing the single bevel on each of the blades was easy, with all three pairs restored to razorsharp edges in quick time.

Ask any barber or hairdresser what a decent pair of scissors costs and you'd be surprised to receive any change from \$500 - quality blades cost money. Having said that, the Knifemate tool can be trusted to touch up even the most basic and cheap utility scissors with a straight cutting edge, though serrated blades are unsuitable. The scissor sharpening attachment retails for \$65 and is available from Knifemate direct or via their authorised distributors. More at www.blademates.com.au





Knifemate tool with scissor sharpening attachment in disassembled form.

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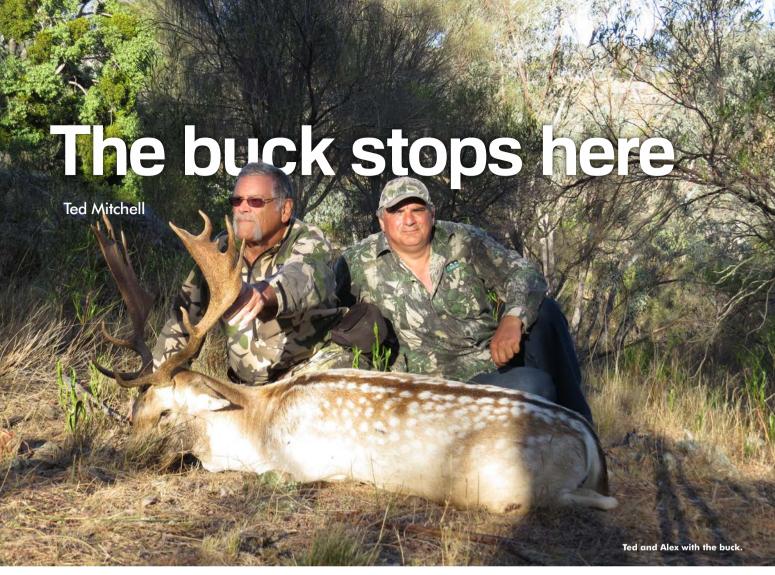


Senator Bridget McKENZIE

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olling up to Alex's in regional Queensland was a relief after a 900km drive and it was nice to be able to shake his hand and meet his daughter Elke again. A lazy afternoon was the go as Alex was just back from a hunt with two mates who'd done well to nail a massive boar and a nice buck. Admiring that big buck's antlers had me primed and ready for the next few days.

It was early next morning when Alex and I hit the trail and, eventually pulling up at the top of a steep incline, the 'croak-croak' of a mature-sounding buck came drifting up the side of the range. Soon we were off again, driving around a rough track to where it would hopefully be possible to walk in fairly close to an area where we thought the buck had been croaking.

Shouldering my .358 Mitchell Express rifle loaded with 200-grain Hornady InterLock projectiles we started the march up the first hill and, peering across the steep mountain gully, halfway up the opposite side deer were immediately spotted, though checking through the Swarovski binos it was only a doe with a yearling fawn and no buck trailing.

A good spot was found in which to sit and scan the surrounding countryside and after a few minutes movement was spied below and to our left, a small spike buck and two does seeming to materialise from thick cover. We waited for a dominant buck to appear but it didn't happen. It was unusually hot for the time of year and the bucks

weren't firing up at all, even the guys who'd shot a nice one the previous day only found him by silent stalking.

We decided to try rattling him in as, from the earlier croaks, were fairly certain there was a decent buck there somewhere. Alex took the antlers from his pack and started rattling them but nothing moved over the



large expanse in front of us. Trying something different I let out a few croaks myself which probably sounded like a buck with larvngitis, so I let Alex take over. Suddenly there was a distant croak . . . then silence, so it was decided to sneak over the next hilltop and check the adjacent gully.

Sitting well below the crest of the hill so as not to be skylined, a few more grunts were uttered and, watching patiently, a doe made her way over the next hillton before a large pair of antlers appeared as a sizeable buck followed her. He had two reasonably large palms and all points seemed to be intact, a beautiful sight as he strutted along behind the doe with antlers rocking to and fro as he moved. My mind was made up - I wanted him.

Easing myself down beside a large tree and cranking up the scope to 9x, I fed a round up the spout and told Alex I'd take the shot as soon as the buck turned sideon. Willing the doe to keep edging closer and watching the buck through the scope, suddenly she turned and trotted back over the hill and out of sight. If the buck followed her there'd be little chance of a shot in the next gully as we knew from past experience it was far too dense.

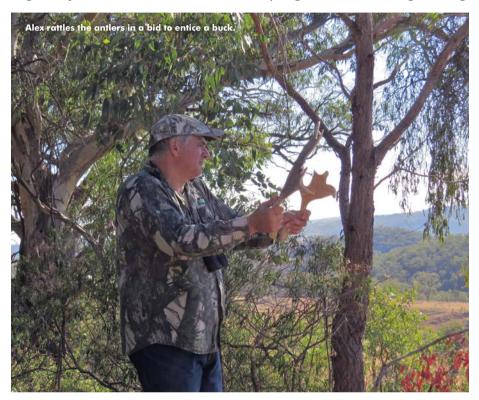
Adopting a steady lean with my hand between tree and rifle, his range was a tad over 250m. The buck turned and slowly sauntered uphill and as I willed him to turn slightly before he reached a spot where a shot would be dangerous, he obliged and slowly moved to his left to follow the doe's course. A slight squeeze on the trigger started a chain of events as the crashing boom of the shot echoed over the hills and a Hornady 200-grain projectile flew straight for the buck's shoulder. While he was moving fast and the bullet struck him a bit further back than I'd have liked, a resounding 'thwack' rang out as he dropped. He managed to lift his head momentarily but was mortally wounded.

Now began the hazardous trek to where he was lying. Walking slowly, it was far too steep to just cut across to him so a longer route was chosen which took us round the hill a bit higher up from where we were able to slip and slide our way down. Sitting quietly beside the buck for a few minutes I was experiencing those feelings which always engulf me when I shoot a majestic animal. There's always a certain amount of sorrow on taking the life of such a beautiful creature but mixed with that was the fact we'd hunted hard to reach a location where a shot was even possible.

Setting the buck up for photos as the sun rose and cast its rays between the trees, Alex and I looked at each other

and smiled as we knew a couple of days' hunting had ended well. This was a mature buck with pedicles right down low on his head and judging by his teeth we reckoned he'd be about eight years old. We took some photos, removed the head for a European mount then proceeded to take the meat before embarking on the arduous slog back up to the vehicle.

That afternoon we set off again, this time armed with a combination Brno 7x57mm over 12-gauge shotgun as a fox was on the agenda, Alex again carrying the antlers as he thought we'd give that a go too. From a decent vantage point he started rattling them and straight away a buck came running in from around 150m behind us, he was young but would still make good eating





The buck stops here





as he had rolling fat, so it was decided if he stopped for a look we'd take him.

Running in pretty fast and jumping the fence we'd just crossed, he stopped in his tracks having detected us on the wind and as he sped past the tree I was standing behind, Alex rattled again and he stopped and looked straight at us. Having the little Brno ready, a quick lift and squeeze of the trigger sent a 173-grain projectile into the



front of his shoulder. Amazingly he took off like he wasn't even hit but within 20m just dropped. After a few photos his meat was taken and tucked into our packs before we headed over a couple of hills and stopped at a foxy-looking corner.

After whistling a few times a redcoat was spotted running towards us and, at the command to stop, he froze as a load of BB shot dropped him instantly. Walking on

a little further a few more whistles were given before a mangy old male came hesitantly towards us then decided he didn't like that whistle and started mooching away up the hill. Opting to have a go at him I snuck through the prickles and long grass to within 25m and let him have a charge of BBs - one more fox off the farmer's worry list before it was time for us to head back to the vehicle and unload our packs.

The past couple of days had been rewarding with some good hunts accomplished and excellent trophies taken. The following day we'd be hunting a different property with a good friend of ours, Chris, a bow hunter so rather than a rifle I'd be carrying a camera and hoping for some photos of Chris with a nice fallow buck. Having been lucky in landing one myself it would be pleasing to watch someone else do well. I might add Chris succeeded in shooting his first-ever buck with a bow and the following day took a large one using his .270 rifle. But that's another story.



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The Three-gun

Chas Harding

he McNab. A Scottish outdoor challenge which involves taking a brace of grouse, a red stag and a salmon - all in one day. Still one of the great pursuits for followers of the gun, rifle and rod and still applauded on completion.

But with no plans to visit Scotland and looking for a McNab-type pursuit for a retirement project, my idea for the 'Three-gun McNab' arose. A real test for those who strive for mastery of the firearm in its three main forms - a rifle, shotgun and pistol challenge the shooting 'all-rounder' could participate in.

In essence it's a shooting 'match' which proves very difficult but not impossible. While any single element may present as easy to some, it's the concept of completing them all in succession which I believe will have the 'all-rounders' grinding their teeth in frustration. And make no mistake, In Succession is the challenge here - fail at any one stage and vou're back at the start line.

I've always gone down the road of 'buy only the guns you need then try to wear them out'. And trust me, if you take on this challenge you will be wearing them out but will have great fun in the process. My all-arounder Three-gun McNab match is conducted as follows.

Shotaun

I like this section as it's arguably the easiest. Completing it involves a round each of Skeet and Trap (DTL) with a perfect 25/25 for each being the standard required, Trap to be single barrel only to keep it in sync with Skeet. Because the 'match' is



One of the benefits of McNab practice.



the gun down position which in itself makes things more difficult (legal in DTL - I checked with the ACTA rules). I suggest No.9 shot for Skeet with cylinder or skeet choking and for Trap, No.7½ or 8 shot with improved modified (3/4) choke. My only other advice would be to watch the bird. keep your head on the stock throughout the whole shooting action and 'follow through' after the shot. On successful completion in succession, pick up the rifle.

Rifle

I feel this is where the 'match' gets difficult with scope sights being your only saviour. It involves completion of the two SSAA Field Rifle courses - rimfire and centrefire,



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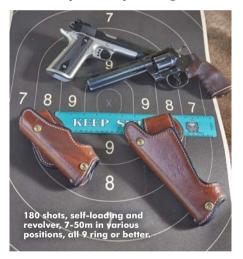
The Three-gun McNab challenge

each comprising rapid fire, offhand, standing supported and sitting supported. Ranges vary from 25m to 200m so this is a real field-based challenge. The rub here is the allocated score as to successfully move on to the pistol, the McNab participant must score in both R/F and C/F a minimum of 360 out of 400 - basically all 2x40 shots in the 9 ring or better. It's do-able by a regular rifle shooter on a good day but for the pistol or shotgun enthusiast having a bad day? Start again mate. Some practices I've found helpful personally are as follows.

Rapid fire: Keep the rifle at the shoulder while cycling the action as this allows more time on target during the 15-second run.

Offhand: You will never hold dead still so squeeze the trigger while the crosshairs 'move' around the bull but do not yank the trigger.

Supported: Against most theory, I hold the rifle hard against the post. It's the only immovable object in your firing platform so use it. If necessary, adjust sights if this position causes point of impact change. At this





stage when the participant realises they have punched out two successive 360s in rifle, the handgun beckons.

Pistol

Now to my mind this is where the really hard work starts with open sight only being the rule. This section of the McNab involves the completion - twice - of the 90-round Centrefire Service Pistol Match with a minimum acceptable score of 800 out of 900 each time. Pistol enthusiasts will scoff at this but when I add that this section must be completed with both revolver and self-loading - ammunition to have a power factor of at least 120 (bullet weight x velocity) and all shooting from the leather -I'm sure a definite focusing of the mind will occur. To rifle and shotgun gurus new to handgun this may seem insurmountable.

So my advice here is: The handgun must be absolutely reliable as time limits are short in some stages and a malfunction will

ruin your day. Practise reloading quickly (but safely) especially with the revolver. In the 'below the shoulder unaimed' sevenvard section, take a quick glimpse down 'over' the pistol to ensure it's lined up on the target, squeeze the first shot and look for the fall of shot. Make small movements of the wrist to adjust.

Other observations which may help overall include picking days with little or no wind and minimum glare. In rifle and pistol, strive for as many 10s where they're most likely to occur, ie, closer targets or longer timed sections as this counters the odd loose shot. In all three disciplines remember that 'follow through' after each shot is vital. In rifle and pistol this means keeping the sights on target during and after the shot and, when done correctly, you'll find you can 'call' each shot. In shotgun it means keeping your head on the stock after the shot with the gun still moving and watching the clay bird break, only then is the shot completed.

Conclusion

If the all-rounder can successfully complete this Three-gun McNab, to my mind they can reasonably claim they've mastered the firearm in its three main forms and should be very proud of their achievement. As I write this and reflect on six years of retirement and my pursuit of the McNab, it's a work in progress. I've come close several times and it remains a marvellous test and great fun. If and when I finally achieve it, I have in mind another challenge - the ultimate in riflery. A matchbox at 500 yards with one shot only on a designated day. I can see the '500 Fly' rifle nuts smiling already. Here we go again - keep wearing them out!



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taxidermist since 1993, transitioning to a craft that's complementary to and integral with his lifelong interest in all things hunting. He's clearly passionate about what he does and that comes through in the way he talks about not just taxidermy but hunting in general. He's happy within himself about what he does, enjoys the work involved and is always looking to improve his skills to ensure his clients receive the best possible results he can achieve.

He frequently collaborates with others in the trade, notably Queensland taxidermist Tony Bianco whose work is widely recognised around the country especially for his buffalo and banteng mounts, examples of which I'm pleased to have in my own trophy room. Like all the dedicated taxidermists I've met. Mick makes his moulds and blows his own forms for the different game species and is happy to cut and glue them to meet individual customers' requirements in terms of how they want the finished mount to look.

been churned out on a production line basis overseas where the care factor is minimal and workmanship shoddy. Mick also organises the export of trophies taken in Australia for overseas hunters.



Putting the final touches to a black wildebeest trophy.

His personal hunting experience includes all the Australian deer species as well as goats, pigs, bantengs, buffaloes and scrub bulls. He's also hunted thar and chamois in New Zealand and by his own admission needs a sika stag for his collection. He's hunted in North America and has made eight trips to Canada, a country he clearly loves. Having a look through his trophy room is something of a revelation, his collection of mounts including a wide array of big game such as elks, bears, bison and covotes as well as smaller game animals and birds from Australia and abroad, a clear indication of his hunting interests and also the variety of work he's capable of producing.

By his own admission he loves working on sheep trophies and is looking forward to being back in the paddock to continue his big game hunting. He has contacts in Australia as well as North America (Alaska and Texas), Africa, New Zealand, Spain, Russia and Kazakhstan in Central Asia.

Given Mick lives in the Illawarra, many of the mounts he does are of rusa deer. The day I visited his studio there was a rusa stag on his work stand which was almost ready for the month-long dryingout process, necessary before the finishing touches can be applied. There were also

mounts of red, fallow and chital deer drying on the wall as well as a feral goat, feral pig, an African bush pig and an impressive Arapawa ram from New Zealand.

At time of writing he has a studio full of new trophies from North America and Africa, all of which will be tended to in due course as he works his way through them in the order they arrived. For enquiries. Mick Formosa and South Coast Taxidermy can be reached at formosa.mick@gmail.com or mick@southcoasttaxidermy.com or by phone on 0407 950 006. •





Mick in his trophy room with mounts reflecting a broad range of hunting experience.





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- when perfection is a must

Paul Miller

ack in 2015 we reviewed the Blaser F3 Supersport, concluding it was one of the finest competion guns anywhere - and that's still my impression. Blaser (pronounced blah-zer) was established in 1975 by Horst Blaser in Germany with the aim of producing highquality hunting rifles and, more recently, there's been a great deal of time and effort put into producing the F3 and lower-cost F16 series of shotguns which we also reviewed favourably.

The gun

The most recent Blaser F3 Vantage is a fixed rib version of the F3 with a high stock and double ventilated rib and when I opened the deluxe Negrini carry case that comes as standard, I thought Australian Blaser agents Outdoor Sporting Agencies

had sent me a Trap gun. The high rib and substantial stock suggested this would be a high-shooting gun designed for fast-rising departing targets.

The reality is this is a sophisticated sporter which shoots 60/40 patterns above and below the point of aim. It's a striking looking firearm with svelte black finish and lack of decoration and engraving save for the F3 logo coloured gold on both sides of the action. The Grade 5 timber is impressive, all the more so as the black action highlights its beauty.

Stock

Unlike the other high-grade Beretta DT11, Krieghoff K80 and Blaser F3 Supersport we've reviewed previously, this gun has a high straight stock with no adjustable comb or Monte Carlo but features an excellent

recoil-absorbing KICK-EEZ pad. Stock drop dimensions are roughly 1.4" to 1.9" (37-48mm) along the gently sloping comb, length of pull 14.8" (375mm) and it has a pitch down measurement of 84 degrees. At extra cost you can order the Supersport Monte Carlo stock with or without adjustable comb from the factory.





The F3 Vantage will interest anyone familiar with standard stock dimensions. It looks like a Trap stock but is actually the perfect height for someone with a normal-to-longer neck and, in combination with the high rib, gives a nice upright head position and considerably improved view of the targets than a conventionally lowerribbed gun.

An upright head position allows you to shoot with maximum vision and reduced recoil effect which of course relies on mounting the gun properly (but comfortably) higher in the shoulder pocket. There's a little 'cast off' of 3mm at heel and 9mm at the toe of the stock for right-handed shooters and my right-handed mates loved it. Left-handed stocks are also available with the same dimensions but 'cast on' for all you lefties out there. Chequering is superb and complements the fine satinfinished walnut on the stock.

The trim, extra-full pistol grip and righthanded palmswell give a comfortable and positive grip and position your trigger finger in perfect alignment with the trigger. which is adjustable backwards and forward from centre position to allow for finger length and comfort. This doesn't change length of pull as adjusting the trigger doesn't lengthen or shorten the stock.

In terms of adjusting length of pull, you can always have a couple of recoil pads in different thicknesses rather than cutting the stock and potentially regretting that in future. Changing length of pull by installing a thinner pad or extending the stock with a thicker pad can make a world of difference to consistency of handling when shooting, especially in hot or cold weather where more or less clothing may be needed.

Barrels

The F3 Vantage is available with 30" or 32" barrels, the test gun equipped with the former. The deluxe Negrini gun case also has a place for another set of barrels and spare fore-end which is handy if you decide on a second set for a different purpose, perhaps 32" Supertrap barrels for Trap shooting or for those who like conventional 32" barrels for Sporting Clays.

The barrels on this gun are an attractive matte black velvet (powder-coated nitride) finish which is said to be hard wearing and rust-resistant. The subtle bells at the end of the barrels accommodate your choice of the five colour-coded Briley extended Spectrum chokes which come supplied, ranging from Skeet to Full with the usual suspects in between.

The barrels are over-bored at 18.7mm with long forcing cones and feature a very shallow 2.5 degree lead into the forcing

cones which minimises disturbance and thus damage to the shot as it enters the barrel, these features contributing to a noticeably lower recoil sensation using high performance Trap or Sporting 28-gram loads. The barrels are steel shot proof and chambered for up to 3" (76mm) shells, half choke the recommended maximum in this gun if shooting steel shot (half equates to full with steel shot compared to lead). The three-quarter and full chokes carry a warning not to use them with steel shot.

Action

The F3 Vantage is a smart-looking shotgun and the low profile matte black action is a big contributor to this. The mechanical triggers are perfection, lock time incredibly fast and trigger pulls are both 1.4kg and break like



Blaser F3 Vantage - when perfection is a must

glass. The barrel firing order is selected by a small lever in the triggerguard in front of the trigger, much like a Krieghoff K80.

Lock up of the action is achieved by a substantial underbolt which engages a space in the barrel lump under the bottom barrel and it's still a surprisingly shallow action, especially when you allow for this under-locking method which secures the gun when closed. The action also features a removable breech plate, a fine piece of engineering designed to give easy access to the direct in-line firing pins and springs.

As noted in the first review, the F3 differs from most shotguns in that it cocks the ejectors on firing - with other guns it can be more difficult closing them as they cock the ejectors on closing - and if you find yourself with a gun which takes a bit of forcing to close, this can cause loss of concentration. I've never experienced this but the F3 Supersport and this Vantage close solidly with a feeling of total precision.

Rib

The rib on this gun is not adjustable and quite high, approximately 14mm at its highest point, tapering down to 10mm at the muzzle. Its width over the action is 10.5mm and tapers to 8.5mm above the muzzle. It consists of two layers of ventilation almost like a rib on a rib, very distinctive looking and lives up to the Vantage name in that it gives an excellent view of any target presentation and has a visual feeling of precision that draws the eye out to the target.

It has one slim red fibre optic Hi-Viz bead at the muzzle though I'd like to see a small metal mid-bead on a competition gun like this and I'm sure it could be supplied with one if specified. The height of this rib in combination with the relatively high stock gives a comfortable head and neck position and yet shoots very flat at about 60/40 as noted. It's the height of the rib at the muzzle that effectively pushes the barrels down to give a flatter shooting gun. Very clever.

Blaser balancing system

Like its sister F3 Supersport, this gun is fitted with the Blaser weight adjustment and balancing system. You can add or subtract four small 42.5g (1.5oz) weights which attach to two panels and are themselves attached between the barrels and covered by the foreend. There's a balancing system in the stock with two weights that move up and down on the threaded rod which holds the stock to the action. I shot without weights and also with all four installed and for me the six ounces made a big difference. Without the weights the gun is neutrally balanced over

the hinge pin and quick to handle, with all four weights installed the balance is slightly ahead of the hinge pin and somewhat slower and smoother to swing. Remember too, a heavier gun exhibits even less felt recoil.

Shooting impressions

This F3 handles perfectly and feels 'alive' in your hands and while it's a sporter, I think it could be shot in any discipline with confidence. It worked perfectly at Skeet and DTL, putting its patterns with suitable chokes installed exactly where I was

looking and destroying targets when I got my act together.

I like a flat-shooting gun for everything so not to confuse myself between disciplines, particularly relevant in the Sporting discipline where a huge variety of target presentations are possible. The clever combination of high rib and complementary high stock makes this Vantage a flatshooting gun with an upright head position for excellent target acquisition and shooter comfort - no more jamming your head down on the stock and having a sore neck.





It's this clever combination of stockwork and barrel technology that makes Blaser guns tame recoil and be so pleasant to shoot. If I was buying this gun, I'd choose a left-handed Monte Carlo Supersport stock matched to the Vantage barrel dimensions as I have a long neck and the dimensions of this stock with more drop at heel would suit me better.

Exceptional engineering and performance come at a price - this gun retails for around \$14,500. Higher grades with even more spectacular timber, nickel silver action and varying degrees of engraving including the option of sideplates to allow more engraving space - will really have your wallet vibrating.

This is a thoroughly modern gun with many innovative and impressive features, beautifully made with the wood-to-metal and metal-to-metal fit just perfect. The Vantage is a fine addition to the F3 lineage and will reward the serious shotgunner looking for that extra target which can make the difference between winning your grade or possibly the High Gun prize. I can't recommend it too highly. More at www.blaser.de (click for preferred language in top corner of home page) or www.blaser-usa.com. •

Specifications:

Manufacturer: Blaser, Germany

Model: F3 Vantage

Gauge: 12-gauge 3" chambers, steel shot proof

Trigger: Single selective mechanical, barrel selector in front of trigger guard

Barrel length: 30"

Barrel weight: 1580 grams without weights attached

Rib: Fixed multi-ventilated, elevated 14mm at highest point, width 10.5mm tapering to

8.5mm

Chokes: Briley Spectrum, five chokes, Skeet through Full, open chokes to half choke are

suitable for steel shot

Safety: Two-position, tang mounted

Sights: Red fibre optic front

Stock and Fore-end: Grade 5 Caucasian walnut, straight stock non-adjustable,

palmswell, slim beavertail fore-end, others available

Weight: Approximately 3.75kg (8lb 5oz) depending on density of walnut in stock and fore-end and weights employed in balancing system. Max weight approx 8lb 11oz

Barrel weights: 2x70 grams for threaded stock bolt, 4x42.5g (1½oz) for attaching under

Accessories: Stock wrench, Briley choke wrench, Allen key to install weights, Briley grease, Blaser protective slips for stock and barrel

Warranty: 10 years

RRP: As tested about \$14,500

Distributor: Outdoor Sporting Agencies





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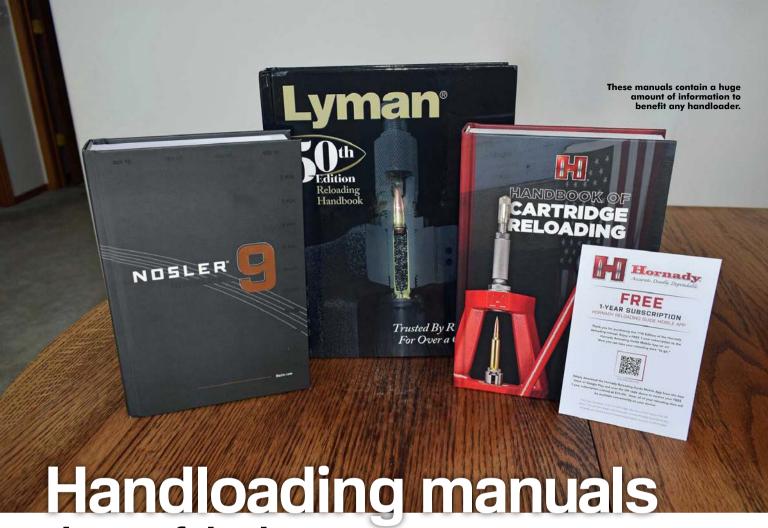
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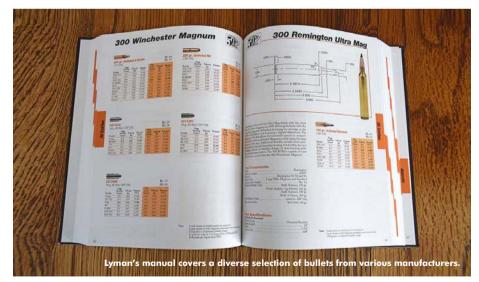
three of the best

Thomas Tabor

roducts dedicated to the art of handloading continue to grow in sheer volume as well as overall quality and with those enhanced developments have come great improvements in our shooting abilities and successes. But as good as those components parts have become they're essentially worthless without reliable data to accompany them.

I admit I'm a collector and some might even call me a bit of a hoarder when it comes to reloading manuals. Some of my guides date back as far as the 1960s and '70s and I still find them useful today, but as product lines are expanded and fresh cartridges developed it's important to stay abreast of those changes - and that usually means I must find room on my bookshelves for those new manuals as they appear.

Two of the latest publications are Hornady's 11th and Nosler's 9th Edition, released earlier this year. But there's one more manual I'd personally recommend even though it's been around for a few years and that's Lyman's latest - the 50th



Edition. Because Lyman doesn't manufacturer bullets, the information in these pages covers a broader array of bullet options to choose from.

Hornady's 11th Edition

This latest offering was released in April and comprises more than 1000 pages of

statistics, techniques and bullet information, a huge publication which tips the scale at an impressive 1½kg. Within these pages are more than 200 cartridge listings and 1500 load combinations including many of the newest offerings like the 6mm ARC, .224 Valkyrie, 350 Legend, .28 Nosler, 6mm Creedmoor, 6.5 PRC and 300 PRC.







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Dynamic Spitfire, Hurricane and Lancaster images







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Handloading manuals - three of the best

Like most reloading manuals published by bullet manufacturers, the Hornady version is tied directly to bullets made by them. But aside from the load recipes many shooters will likely find Hornady's extensive glossary a great reference tool as well as the coverage of factors which influence chamber pressures and velocities.

Load charts are broken down by powder type, charge weights and the muzzle velocities those charges are expected to produce. Of course those generated by the company's testing equipment and, as such your own velocities, could be slightly different. These variations can be due to differences in barrel length and a variety of other contributing characteristics and as a precautionary measure Hornady has chosen to highlight what they consider maximum loads in red, noting those charge levels should be approached with a degree of caution.

I found the chapter entitled 'Accuracy and Reloading Techniques' particularly worthwhile as it provides details on the component parts but also includes information on case forming, adjusting for headspace, annealing, bullet pulling and more. Other than the hard version of this manual you

can also download it as an Apple iBook or receive it on your Kindle, that way you can take the book anywhere and avoid having to lug it around. As a pleasant surprise I found a card inside my own copy granting me one-year free subscription to the Hornady Reloading Guide Mobile App.

Nosler Reloading Guide No.9

This arrived on the scene earlier this year and is packed full of updated material for both rifle and handgun cartridges including many of the newest developed ones. Each listing begins with a one-page summary by an established outdoor writer who provides opinions and experience with that particular calibre (Nosler even invited me to contribute and I penned the intro for the .17 Remington).

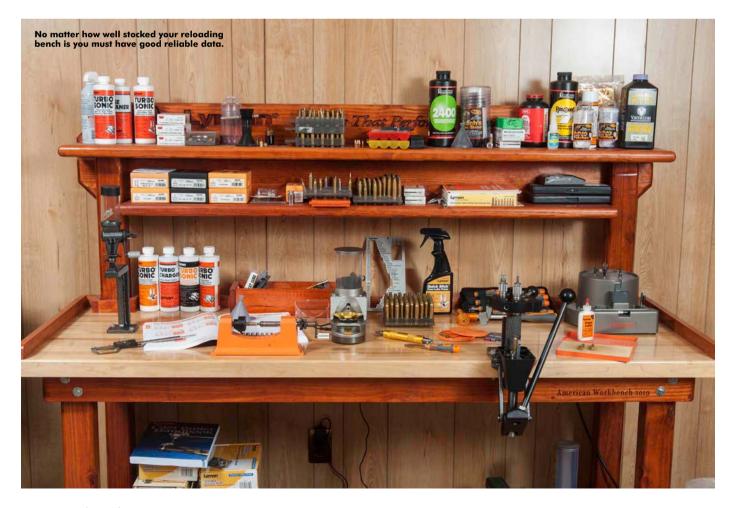
The book covers all the bullets Nosler produces up until last year. The rifle section data begins with the tiny .17 calibre rounds and ends with the huge .458s and spans 9mm up to the .45 calibres in its handgun section. As well as the many old favourites, nine new cartridges have been added including the .20 Nosler, .22 Nosler, .24 Nosler, 6mm Creedmoor, 6mm XC, 6.5

PRC, .27 Nosler, 7.62x39 and .33 Nosler.

The chapter entitled 'Getting Ready to Reload' shouldn't be missed as it covers a wealth of info pertaining to basic reloading precautions as well as looking at component parts, chamber pressures and gear. There are also charts which provide energy levels based on muzzle velocities in vardage increments out to 500 yards for rifle cartridges and 300 yards for handgun. All Nosler's bullet designs are covered including cut-away photos to illustrate the internal variations, always helpful when it comes to matching a particular bullet to a specific shooting activity.



The diversity in the ammunition we shoot makes it necessary to have sound information.



Handloading manuals - three of the best

Load facts for each cartridge include an array of the best-suited powders and matches the listed charge weights to estimated produced muzzle velocities - and those powder charges which produced the most accurate shooting results at the factory have been acknowledged by asterisks. Even though those loads may not always be the most accurate in your particular firearm, the point is certainly worth considering when selecting a load for vour own use.

Powder charges considered by the publisher to produce maximum pressure have also been marked, but those figures should always be viewed with caution. The true maximum powder charge can frequently vary from firearm to firearm and for that reason you should never approach those levels in a cavalier manner. Overall cartridge case length recommendations are also provided but, like maximum powder charges, these too can vary depending upon your firearm and how you prefer to seat your bullets.

Lyman 50th Edition

For more than a century Ideal, followed eventually by Lyman, have provided the core resources of handloading files for those who like to reload their own ammunition. the various Lyman manuals having been a staple for me personally. Even though Lyman creates such products as bullet moulds and bullet-making items they don't actually manufacture or sell bullets. Because of that the company holds no allegiance to any single brand of bullets, the result being a manual that's more diverse in its coverage with a much broader spectrum of bullet choices to select from.

The data portion of the book breaks down into three categories: rifle, handgun and Thompson/Center Contender & Encore. And even though Lyman's 50th Edition has been out for a while it still covers many of the latest cartridges including the .17 Hornet, 6.5 Grendel, 6.5 Creedmoor, 6.5-284, .26 Nosler, .28 Nosler, .300 Blackout, .300 RCM, .338 RCM, .450 Bushmaster, .458 SOCOM and .50 Beowulf. It covers the more traditional and common cartridges as well and even some of those from our historic past like the 40-70 Sharps Straight, 40-65 Winchester, 9.3x74mmR and others.

The Appendix features plenty more useful information, including such things as a shell holder cross reference chart broken down by the various shell holder manufacturers. I also found the maths equations, including how to calculate ft-lb of energy and free recoil energy informative.

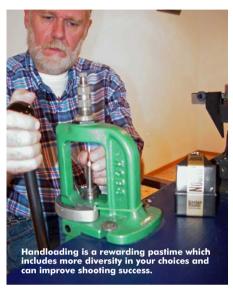
I enjoyed the larger, full-size format of this book which measures 21.6cm x 27.9cm as it seemed easier to read than the smaller ones and I appreciated the way it lies flat in the open position.

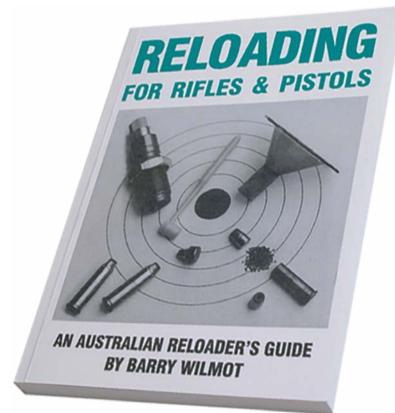
A word of caution

I have faith in the facts contained in these three publications but as with any reloading data I always treat it with a certain degree of caution, particularly when approaching maximum powder charges. A common practice used by some handloaders is to work up a load beginning with a powder charge 10 per cent below what's considered the maximum charge, then increase that gradually until a desired performance level is achieved. In doing so the shooter must be constantly alert to any signs of excessive pressure.

And another note of warning might be in order. When dealing with large capacity cartridge cases you must also be wary of extremely light powder charges, as in some instances a light charge in a large capacity cartridge case could generate elevated pressure levels.

Most reloading manuals include a section on safety and these pages should not be dismissed or glossed over even by experienced handloaders. It's important every handloader reads this and adhere to recommendations the manufacturers have provided. While there's always an element of risk when handloading your own shells, reloading can be a safe and rewarding pastime so long as you use common sense, never make assumptions or cut unnecessary corners that could end up landing you in trouble.





Another great book to consider is by our own correspondent Barry Wilmot. Reloading for Rifles & Pistols: An Australian Reloader's Guide is available from the SSAA online shop for just \$19.70 with free shipping for members. Log on to onlineshop.ssaa.org.au and order your copy today.



Family affair: John, Lachlan and founder Des De Laine.

eer hunting, taxidermy, live deer capture, establishing two deer farms, commercial venison processing and velvet production has been a way of life for Des De Laine since the 1940s. Spotting an opportunity Des took his butchering skills - taught by his father and grandfather - to a new level when he established Hahndorf Venison in the Adelaide Hills in the 1970s, focusing on producing premium field-harvested venison for the Australian restaurant industry.

In those early days Hahndorf Venison processed deer in much the same way today's field harvesters operate but by 1981 deer were officially recognised as livestock, meaning animals destined for commercial venison production for human consumption were required to be presented at registered abattoirs.

From around 2005 the gradual decline in deer farming resulted in a supply shortage of critical numbers to meet efficient production as abattoir operators lost interest in processing deer. Subsequently Hahndorf Venison, now in its third generation, has gone full cycle to return to field-harvest production, the company building and operating a fully government-approved, licenced

and accredited game processing facility to complement its other processing operations.

So what does this mean? For Hahndorf Venison it means further distancing of external influences - the deer are respected and treated humanely, food miles are considerably reduced and it provides support for an ethical approach towards zero waste.

Many years ago an Australian chef stated: "The sweetest venison comes from the deer that didn't even know it was killed". Although long since retired, Des hopes to see what he started so long ago into his 100th year and as a tribute to him, son John and grandson Lachlan have recently released '100 Years Spirit of the Stag', a deer antler velvet extract-infused liquor.

Thoughtfully blended with mead, the ancient drink of Viking warriors, 100 Years presents as a delightful liquor of unique velvet extract aromatics with seasonal floral honey flavours and the 'Spirit of the Stag'.

Revered and sought-after by Tao Masters, deer antler has been used to obtain inner peace and spiritual harmony for thousands of years. The stag casts his antlers annually but that's not the end as new growth begins and, in just 100

days, his new antlers are complete. This phenomenon convinced the Masters that deer antler is the most potent source of Jing, something harnessed in 'Spirit of the Stag'. It's said that to live a healthy, happy life with peace and tranquillity you must start with Jing.

Deer antler is a renewable resource as deer are not harmed in harvesting of their antlers. "We do not take their spirit, we borrow it," said John. "Our deer live a long and peaceful life within the protected environment of Highland Valley which provides support for their charismatic spirit.

"We leave room for nature and splendid places to explore on our Adelaide Hills Highland Valley farm and invite you to join one of our 'Spirit of the Stag' experiences should you find yourself in the area. Our family is honoured to offer this limited release of 100 Years."

Priced at \$180 normally, the *Australian Shooter* limited release series - presented in a signed and numbered gift box - is available for \$139 and, as a bonus offer, the first 100 orders using code SHOOTER will receive a complimentary \$30 Stag Pourer. To order and for serving suggestions and recipe ideas visit www.spiritofthestag.com.au

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Lance Miller

SSAA National

President



Ballistic efficiency and BC: A hunter's perspective

Steve Hurt

This Outer Edge projectile started as a 265gr 375 BBT and still weighed 262 grains when the job was done.

n the February 2021 edition of Australian Shooter we debunked a few myths surrounding the idea of a bullet's static sectional density (SD) and why that advertised figure alone doesn't forecast terminal performance - and why a bullet's material structure is of greater importance. Now we'll address some commonly held views regarding a bullet's ballistic coefficient (BC) and examine its relevance (or otherwise) to your particular hunting conditions.

So let's start with the principles and set the mathematics aside for a moment. We know a sleek, high BC bullet will fly more efficiently through the air with less drag, maintaining a higher velocity over 'distance' and retain more theoretical energy. It will also be less affected by wind deflection. What's commonly misunderstood is this same high BC bullet may be less efficient than an otherwise poor BC bullet when travelling through a target medium - and it all comes down to the elasticity of that medium.

Simply put, elasticity is the capacity of the object or medium to deform and return to its original state. Now on the scale shooters operate, despite its variations in density derived from changes in temperature and elevation, air is the least dense material the bullet will encounter. Despite

all the fuss and noise, air will return to its original state more or less unaffected - and quickly. Air resistance is only of contextual relevance, subject to the range at which the target is engaged. The influence of air resistance on ballistic performance increases with distance but when do we move from irrelevant to important?

Let's consider the following scenario: We're walking through shoulder-high lignum with pig tunnels everywhere. Maximum range? Let's say 50m - the relevance of BC is absolutely nothing. Scenario two: We're sitting on a hill looking down a sheltered 600m gully in a 16km/h crosswind - the importance of a bullet's BC has now escalated exponentially. So what's the tipping point, if one exists? Take a look at the following example.

 A .308 Winchester with 150-grain hunting bullet in a lightweight 22" barrelled hunting rifle. Target: Pig, goat, deer; Vital zone: 200mm or 8"; Muzzle velocity: 2750fps; Minimum energy requirement for humane despatch: 1000 ft-lb; Minimum velocity for expansion: 1800fps; Zero range: 100m; Sight height: 47mm; Wind speed: 16km/h - 90 degrees; Standard atmospherics (Refer to table below).

Now in reality, most hunters stalking their game with a commercial 308 hunting rifle would rarely shoot much past 300m, the vast majority of game taken at 200m or less. The temptation here is to jump to the conclusion that a bullet's BC is irrelevant and that's where the long-range specialists start to turn hot under the collar.

Of course BC becomes critically important with the long shots but depending on the game and cartridge/rifle selection made, this tipping point generally occurs somewhere between 450 and 550m, where strange things start to happen as the bullet comes down from the apex of the likely trajectory curve. This we'll leave to the specialists as it's well outside common hunting and hunting rifle application and this article.

Coming back to an earlier point, the next big challenge for most hunters to wrap their heads around is that a blunter - a theoretically poor BC bullet which holds together - can actually be more aerodynamic in the less elastic medium of flesh, while cutting a straighter wound channel. This appears to be counterintuitive but it's true. Why?

If we assume two different bullets of the same weight and calibre - but different in meplat (bullet tip) and ogive shape - it's also reasonable to assume there will be

Example A) Wind Deflection: Point Blank Range from a 100m zero: 195m	GI BC 0.310	Energy 100/Vel 100 2231/2588 6 mm	Energy 200/Vel 200 I 969/2432 67 mm	Energy 300/Vel 300 1732/2281 156 mm
Example B) Wind Deflection: Point Blank Range (PBR) from a 100m zero: 200m JBM figures	GI BC 0.464	Energy 100/Vel 100 2323/2641 11 mm	Energy 200/Vel 200 2140/2535 44 mm	Energy 300/Vel 300 1968/2431 101 mm

Yes you read that right, the low BC bullet measuring 0.310 on the commonly used G1 scale has a maximum PBR of 195m, and the high BC bullet of 0.464 extended the PBR by just 5m to 200m. Further, the high BC bullet improved wind drift by 55mm or just over 2" at 300m. differences in bullet expansion with the stubby, otherwise poorer BC bullet having the larger frontal area. In flesh, the rule of thumb is that material displacement (temporary wound channel) will be the square of the frontal area. A small frontal area won't displace as much material in inelastic flesh so the material will tend to wrap around the bullet, resulting in a larger surface contact area between bullet and flesh, especially if it breaks up or is turned as so often happens with this type of bullet.

A larger frontal area bullet will create a temporary cavity where the side and rear of the bullet avoids contact with the medium while in motion, with the only surface area in contact being the expanded frontal area of the bullet. This produces a greater and more reliably consistent shock wave with the bullet cutting a straighter path, essential for raking shots to vital organs.

In his book Bullet Penetration - Modelling the Dynamics and Incapacitation Resulting from Wound Trauma, Duncan MacPherson throws out the challenge to ammunition manufacturers that the perfect bullet from a hunting perspective is one which will expand to the maximum, maintain its mass and be aerodynamic in flight, relevant to the distance of application. Now *there's* a challenge! •







SAA national competitions made a welcome return earlier this year when the Muzzleloading and Black Powder Cartridge Championships brought together participants from around the country, the return to a somewhat normal shooting calendar coming 12 months after COVID-19 concerns prompted government restrictions on interstate travel and non-essential gatherings in Australia.

Muzzleloading and Black Powder Cartridge national discipline chairman Kim Atkinson said competitors were glad to be back in business after so many cancelled events in 2020. Around 40 competitors attended four days of shooting at the SSAA Para Range in South Australia from April 2-5 with personal best performances in several events. Kim said after forced cancellations limited even local range visits during 2020, participants enjoyed the social side of the weekend as much as the competitive element.

Some honourable mentions from the weekend include Vlad Potezney breaking the 200m Benchrest Cartridge Rifle national record of 234 with a score of 237, while also equalling the 100m Class 3 Benchrest national record with 100.6. Steve Nicholas broke the Super Grand Aggregate national record with a score of 2972.12 over the previous best 2915.4 while Kerwin Bee equalled the 25m Rifled Firelock Pistol Match national mark when he shot 91.2.

SSAA National Coaching and Discipline Supervisor Denis Moroney said the return to scheduling national competitions was indeed welcome, though organisers were prepared to change plans as new COVID cases and associated restrictions could occur at any time. He said organisers were acting in the best interests of competitors and would remain cautious when deciding to cancel or reschedule any events to ensure the integrity of SSAA competitions.

In the place of interstate competitions during the past year or so, many SSAA disciplines have been holding postal shoots. SSAA National Shooting Sports Manager Rod Spinks said competitor numbers had increased for these as members embraced alternative opportunities to shoot competitively. Rod said while not all disciplines were suited to the postal shoot format, those which were had received some quality entries.



To encourage participation and give members the opportunity to compete regardless of restrictions, Rod said prizes from the SSAA online shop funded by the particular disciplines were being awarded to competitors by a draw from the entries. He said these prizes had previously been score-based to fall in line with medal awards. Find out about postal shoots being staged in your discipline by visiting www.ssaa.org.au/disciplines/

Peter Visinyai (SA).





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Competition News

National

Big Game Rifle National Postal Shoot

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

National Junior Rimfire Field Rifle Postal Championships

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

Combined Services National Postal Shoot

June 1-Sept 19, 2021 All host clubs See National website for event details. Contact: Steve Knight 0428 876 991.

Rifle Metallic Silhouette **National Rimfire Postal** Competition

June 1-November 30, 2021 See National website for event details. Contact: Kathy Tobler toblerkathy@ gmail.com

Muzzle Loading National Postal Match

luly 1-Nov 30, 2021 All participating clubs. See National website for event details.

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

5-Stand National Championships

September 11-12, 2021 Shepparton, Victoria See National website for event details. Contact: Brett Chambellant, 0407 153 300.

Sporting Clays National Championships

September 18-19, 2021 Shepparton, Victoria See National website for event details. Contact: Brett Chambellant 0407 153 300.

Benchrest IRB and Rimfire Group National Championship

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

SSAA Combined Services National Championships

October 1-3, 2021 Central Qld Shooting Complex, Gladstone, Öld See National website for event details. Contact: Shavne 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 Lever Action National Championships

October 2-4, 2021 SSAA Alice Springs See National website for event details. Contact: Brian Knappstein president@ ssaaalicesprings.com.au

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.

Law Enforcement Activities Police Service Match National **Championship**

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

NSW

NSW Combined Services State Championships September 17-19, 2021

Windamere Regional Shooting Complex See National website for event details. Contact: Anthony Gatti info@nswcsd. com.au or 0499 987 899.

Old

Harry Madden Memorial & Barry Edgley Trophy Benchrest Championships

August 13-15, 2021 Madden Range, Belmont, Old See National website for event details. Contact: SSAA Brisbane 07 3395 0911

Queensland Field Rifle and 3 & 4P State Championships

August 21-22, 2021 SSAA Gladstone branch. See National website for event details. Contact: Jennifer Ingram 0418 259 269 or Leanne 0421 017 404 (after 5.30pm)

SA

SSAA (SA) Rifle Metallic Silhouette State **Championships** July 31-August 1, 2021

SSAA Para, Rifle Range Rd. Greenwith, SA See National website for event details. Contact: Russell Asser.

WA

SSAA (WA) Scoped 3P & Field Rifle State Championships

September 25-27, 2021 Wanneroo Shooting Complex, Pinjar, WA See National website for event details. Contact: Matt 0439 092 686.

Tas

SSAA (Tas) Single Action State Championships

November 27-28, 2021 Westbury Shooting Club, Tas See National website for event details. Contact: Steve Collins 0428 63 L 322.

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







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Competitions close August 31, 2021

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Winchester Prize Pack Brian Fuller, NSW

Howard Leight Earmuffs Stan Harper, Vic

Junior Prize - Trigga the Koala Bronson Elliot, WA

> **Best Shots Mug** William Littlechild, Vic

Australian Women's Shooter 11

Howard Leight Impact Sport Electronic Earmuffs Tanya Hutley, Qld

AUSTRALIAN SHOOTER is published monthly and is printed by IVE, 83 Derby St, Silverwater, NSW 2128.

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Rabbit traps a throwback to days long gone

ack in May our youngest grandson Mikah was exploring the creek with the dog when he literally tripped over the rusting remains of a broken rabbit trap partially buried in the sand. Having seen my collection of traps on a wall in the shed, he convinced grandma he ought to take it home - poppy John might be able to fix it. I couldn't and I can't but his find took me back to a time when I wasn't much older than he is now.

My old man taught me the basics of trapping rabbits in the late '50s and in one sense was doing what fathers have always done in passing on some of his skills to the next generation. In another I suspect he was spreading the load - drawing me into his self-sufficient outlook and the process of putting tucker on the table so he could spend more time on the fishing side of the equation he always seemed to prefer. Whatever his motivations, it was a job I took to with a will.

Where the original bundle of traps came from I really don't know but I expect the old fella struck a deal of sorts with someone he knew from the pub. Most of them had the trademark Lane's Ace spade stamped in the plate but I also remember a couple of the larger Bunyip and Platypus brands and a pair of those little wire spring jobs I preferred to use for burrow sets.

What began as a trial and error, learn as you go process eventually became a fairly slick operation and apart from meeting the needs of family, in due course they began to provide me with a source of pocket money my parents could never afford to give me. Excess bunnies were sold to a string of customers which at times included the local butcher if I'd had a really good night. Any carcasses too bruised to sell were fed to the dog and cats and at times they ate pretty well.

Sadly there were also times when the catch included native wildlife such as possums and bandicoots which were always



From another era: A trap setter with half a dozen traps from the author's collection. From left are a Scotsman, Dad's Special, Bunyip, Platypus, Lane's Ace and a small wire spring trap ideal for burrow sets.

released, though looking back I expect not all survived their injuries. With experience we learned to avoid those areas where such catches were likely but all these years later I still regret we caused them any harm.

Sometimes there'd be a quoll. In those days we called them tiger cats and they were always a hissing, snarling, biting problem for a young trapper and his dog to deal with when it came to freeing a pinioned leg. Foxes and feral cats were never given the option of release, despatched with the back of the setter as we knew they stole rabbits from our traps. In retrospect I acknowledge it was a cruel way to make meat for the table or a few dollars in pocket money - we may have helped farmers on a small scale, local basis but I somehow doubt we ever had any long-term impact on their numbers.

When I bought my first rimfire rifle I hung the traps up and haven't used them since. These days they're collectors' items,

rusting reminders of a more pragmatic era when rabbits were a national problem and direct action in any form was accepted as necessary. Those times and attitudes will never be reprised, nor should they be as we now have more humane and effective ways of achieving better results. Shooting is one of them as is the use of modern biological controls which, despite bleeding heart animal welfare concerns, really are exponentially kinder than older norms like trapping.

Mikah's rabbit trap has joined the collection of old ironware and other treasures the various grandkids have brought back from the creek over the years. It's too far gone to be useful for anything else but has sown the seed of an idea - I'm now looking for an old trap with a heavy spring

from which I can forge a small skinning knife as a Christmas gift. I'll let you

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