

New series: The Hunter's Mancave - Looking back at treasured mementoes

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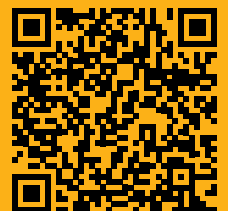


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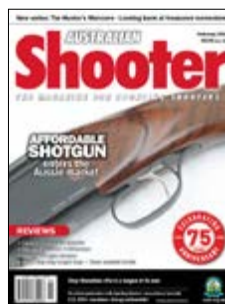
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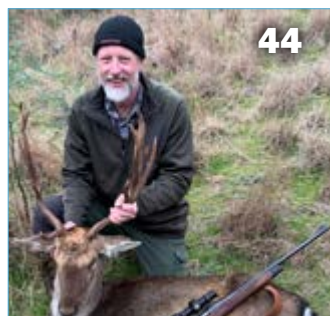
Rifleman Con Kapralos has been out and about with the latest M1 500 Carbon Stalker from Japanese manufacturer Howa and he says the addition of a new carbon-fibre stock brings it in under the 3kg barrier which makes this an ideal firearm for stalking long distances.

The Helia RD-C sight (Red Dot-Compact) so impressed hunter Chris Redlich that he's been forced to change his opinion of red dot sights in general. He reports: "I'm sure other brands make compact sights but Kahles really have produced a class-leading compact unit that's hard to beat."

We continue our Hunter's Mancave series as North American correspondent Thomas Tabor takes us inside his purpose-built trophy room which features spectacular mounts from Australia, Africa and the US including this mountain goat which represents one of his most challenging yet rewarding adventures.



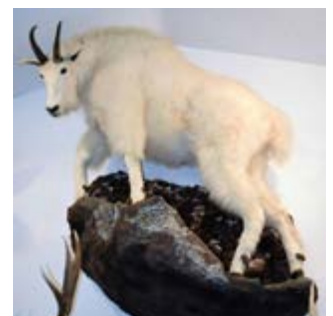
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The year marks 75 years since the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA) was born, the prestigious milestone having come about through the collective work and contributions of countless members past and present. Some 100 shooters initially gathered in 1948 to create what has grown to become 212,000-plus members of the SSAA's state and territory associations, proof if needed that strength grows with numbers.

Over time the SSAA expanded from its New South Wales roots to include Victoria (1951), Queensland (1957), South Australia (1964), Northern Territory (1965-66), the ACT (1965), Western Australia (1967) and Tasmania (1969). During this period the overarching federation of SSAA National was formed with the intention of bringing together the state and territory associations under one banner with representatives from each group being involved.

Queensland's John Bradbury became the inaugural SSAA National President and was keen to see the Association become the well-known and respected group it is today. The modern version of the SSAA is bigger than it has ever been and our state and territory branch members now enjoy a vast range of benefits.

Since Bradbury there have been 17 presidents and SSAA National has expanded to work in the political, conservation, recreational hunting and competitive shooting spaces to become Australia's premier body for firearm owners. The national publications arm of the Association was a natural evolution of the organisation, starting with a quarterly printed newsletter entitled *The Report* in 1959 which developed into the *Australian Shooters' Journal* in 1963 and finally *Australian Shooter* which began in 1999.



Over the years our publications stable has expanded to include *Australian Hunter*, *Australian & New Zealand Handgun*, *Australian Women's Shooter*, *Australian Junior Shooter* and e-newsletters. The SSAA has also created several mainstream publications and vehicles to share concepts of land management and food for the table which fit with our ethos.

To mark the 75th year of the Association we have some exciting things planned, including special merchandise launches via the SSAA Online Shop. Be sure to keep an eye on *Australian Shooter* and sign up to our newsletters via the national website to receive the latest updates. Thank you for being an important part of the 212,000-strong membership of the state and territory branches which make up the SSAA. Happy 75th birthday SSAA - here's to us!

Winchester winner

THANKS FOR ANOTHER excellent 'Reloading' column by Barry Wilmot (*Shooter*, July 2022) regarding Winchester and its origins. What memories it brought back for me on hunting with my Winchester Model 94 lever-action 30.30. I bought it brand new all those years ago and have enjoyed some memorable times with it.

In my opinion although it's an amazing carbine it's far too light for the cartridge it shoots, not so noticeable when hunting in the field but for target practice the recoil is a real bummer which always ends with a sore cheek! Excellent stuff from Barry as usual - loved it.

Garry Gibbons, via email

• I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED reading Barry Wilmot's 'Reloading' column regarding Oliver Winchester. Not only did I learn of the fascinating Winchester history but also the beginning of the Henry rifles. Many thanks Barry for a highly enjoyable and enlightening article. Keep up the good work.

Chris Hodgson, Qld

History repeats

IT'S AMAZING HOW history turns as highlighted in John Maxwell's article on the new M5 rifle (*Shooter*, September 2022). At the time the 5.56mm round was adopted by NATO, the British 'ideal calibre board'

agreed that 7mm was perfect and a Polish engineer working for Lee Enfield designed a bullpup rifle (the EM2), approved in June 1951 and immediately wardrobe by the 5.56mm. Now the US is adopting a 6.81x51 round echoing the EM2 which looks a bit similar to the M5 with the main difference being the magazine and grip are reversed. I owe my information to Ian Hogg's 2003 book *Handguns and Rifles*.

Kerry Wuth, Qld

Cumbungi memories

SAM GARRO'S ARTICLE on the Cumbungi Swamp (*Shooter*, July 2022) brought back fond recollections of the area. I was a jackaroo on Tupra Station in 1966 (my first job) and Tupra also owned Juanbung. It was a drought year and we were trying to muster cattle out of the swamp, 10-year-old bullocks that hadn't seen a human in eight years. I learned to ride a horse there and stay on its back as your life depended on it!

One day I asked Blue the overseer to ride with me to the junction of the Murrumbidgee and Lachlan Rivers. There were only dry channels that year but he told me in wet seasons stockmen carried their lunch on their chest instead of the saddlebag to keep it dry. In July that year we burnt the cumbungi (about 50,000 acres) to bring the cattle out and the last things to emerge were feral pigs, often on fire.



Pioneer: Oliver Winchester

Riding through the surrounding red gum forests there'd be thousands of kangaroos in front of us and a cloud of ducks and one memorable day we returned to Juanbung with six bullocks, not a bad effort for 10 riders. To our dismay the cattle swam into the lake instead of the yards so the overseer of Bunumburt Station swam his horse after them, eventually tiring them out and pushing them to the other side of the lake and into the stockyards. They were all brilliant stockmen. Many a night was spent in the Oxley pub on our way back to Tupra. Like Sam I feel privileged to have spent time in that special place and only hope its new owners can control the numerous ferals to keep it a unique area.

Malcolm Crocker, via email

Insurance Q&A

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Q We're trying to cut costs as we deal with rate rises affecting our mortgage repayments. How can I make some savings with insurance cover as this is a big expense?

A In short, you need to look elsewhere in your budget for savings as insurance is

an important financial tool which acts like a safety net to protect you when the unexpected happens. We all hope we'll never need to use insurance and that's why it's often seen as a big expense but the reality is, if you suffer a loss your financial situation would be much worse if you weren't covered.

There are definitely ways you can be smarter with insurance policy choices and this is where an agent such as SSAA Insurance Brokers can help as we can compare policies, shop around for insurance companies and find the best coverage for your money. Visit ssaib.com.au or call 08 8332 0281 for more information.

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.



Have your say on new National Deer Management Plan

A draft National Deer Management Plan, written in consultation with the National Feral Deer Working Group, hopes to provide a nationally coordinated approach to slow and reduce the growth of wild deer populations in Australia, the plan taking a multifaceted approach to cut the animals' impact by focusing on three key areas:

- Stop the spread of large wild deer populations and reduce their impact;
- Control or eradicate small, isolated populations before they spread;
- Protect significant sites and species from the impact of wild deer.

Some of the draft plan's proposed actions over the next five years include developing a national awareness program, better tools and approaches to control wild deer encroaching into peri-urban areas, establishing a national containment buffer program, developing better ways to detect and respond to new incursions and prioritising areas of national and international importance for conservation and cultural protection from wild deer.

Development of the plan is part of a National Deer Management Coordinator project funded by the Federal Government's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry through the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions (between 2020 and June 2022) and led by the South Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regions. The draft National Feral (Wild) Deer Action Plan is focused on supporting farmers, communities, organisations, traditional owners and government agencies to stop the spread and reduce the impacts of

the animals. The plan prioritises the need to contain large populations of wild deer and eradicate smaller, isolated populations where feasible. It also prioritises the need for new control tools to augment shooting, trapping and fencing and coordination across land tenures, including protecting significant sites.



Unfortunately the plan uses alarmist language and statements to make wild deer sound like the most significant environmental threat facing modern Australia. The foreword includes a statement saying landholders believe the animals are an emerging threat which could be "Australia's next rabbit plague". That statement is ridiculous when considering the two species' biology. My colleagues from SSAA (Victoria) also picked up on this and pointed out that a breeding pair of rabbits and their offspring can potentially produce 3.75 million rabbits over four years, while a breeding pair of wild deer and their offspring could have 16

deer over four years. That's a significant difference!

The plan also ignores the contribution of the largest interest group as there's no real acknowledgment of the more than 40,000 recreational hunters in Victoria who cull almost 200,000 wild deer annually. It's a real issue that government departments/authorities in states other than Victoria only see a benefit in hunters being part of coordinated control programs. What agencies see and generally term 'ad hoc' hunting does indeed have an impact - it just needs to be managed correctly in terms of access to land for hunting and promoting the activity to empower hunters to ensure more deer are taken. And it's not just about deer being culled as properly managed recreational hunting also provides economic benefits (in Victoria alone, deer hunting contributes \$201 million and more than 1700 jobs to the state economy).

The National Feral Deer Action Plan Working Group wants to hear from you as your feedback is important and will be considered in preparation of the final plan. Find out more by reading the draft plan which can be downloaded at <https://feraldeerplan.org.au/the-plan/> Send your feedback by email to coordinator@feraldeerplan.org.au or via the 'Contact Us' form on the Feral Deer Action Plan website by Monday, March 20, 2023.

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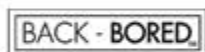


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Humanity is indeed alive and well

Love it or loathe it social media is entrenched in modern society as people enjoy freedom of expression which means you can often find yourself inadvertently trawling through senseless outbursts and meaningless memes from uninformed flibberty gibbets and self-important thugs. But there is a brighter side with plenty of public and private groups of like-minded individuals willing to help each other, share knowledge, learn and collaborate. Quite recently I was tagged by an old mate on one such group and, trusting his judgment and knowledge of my interests, I followed the link to see what was being discussed. It was a bladesmithing page where the owner of the forge was asking his followers if any of them knew a hunter.

As a novice blacksmith-cum-bladesmith who was new to the art, he wanted to make a knife in collaboration with someone with experience of skinning and butchering. Specifically he wanted to share ideas and knowledge from a user viewpoint so he could grow his own skills and understanding of knife design. The quid pro quo was he'd gift the final product to his collaborator so he could be confident the blade would actually be used as intended.

On his Herald Metalwork page Robin describes himself as part knife-maker, scavenger, metalworker, bin-chicken and artist. I could see he was using metal from yester-

year such as farrier rasps, plough blades, rabbit traps and other rescued material and was sourcing these products at swap meets or from gifts. His focus was clearly on the principles 'reduce, reuse, recycle' and my favourite - 'repurpose'. Oh pick me!



After contacting Robin we exchanged several phone calls and emails to discuss design features like blade profiles, spine thickness and gut hooks and also talked about how you might hold a knife to perform various tasks and how working with fat and body fluids can be a slippery task. All of these points and more would influence the blade's overall design, including the incorporation of notches on the spine to assist control during fine work.

Hunting knives must be purpose-designed while also being utilitarian so we discussed the importance of a full tang in hard-working knives as they might end up being used for all kinds of tasks around

camp or in a survival situation. After all this we independently put pen to paper to design knives. I scanned and emailed my thoughts and two days later Robin offered some suggestions which fueled further discussion before our combined ideas were incorporated into the final design.

Meanwhile I remembered buying a box of wood 'scraps' from a specialty wood store when I'd visited Scone in Tasmania a few years earlier. At 50c each I couldn't resist bringing home some Tassie blackwood, myrtle, sassafras and Huon pine so I gathered up some of the pieces I thought might work for handles and put them in the mail with a bunch of old .22 LR casings to be incorporated into the pins to secure the scales.

Some time went by, Robin teased me with a couple of 'sneak peek' progress photos then went quiet until one day Australia Post knocked on the door with a parcel containing not one, not two but four blades! For me there was a skinner with gut hook and a hunter/chopper combo along with a matching pair of camp knives for my wife and daughter, all made from an 80-year-old farrier's rasp that was no longer fit for purpose. It's times like those that put a smile on your face and restore a little faith in humanity.





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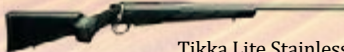
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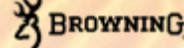
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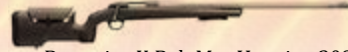
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Browning Clearance



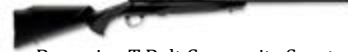
Browning X-Bolt Max Varmint .308 26" heavy fluted stainless barrel with brake. Max stock with adjustable comb, length of pull spacers and vertical pistol grip. Extended bolt handle. Was \$2350, now just \$1695



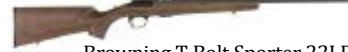
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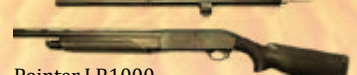
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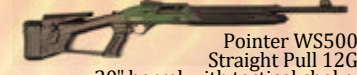
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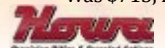
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Q A few years ago I injured my shoulder in a farm accident which stopped me playing most sports at a serious level. I was recently at a range in Queensland and had a few shots at Sporting Clays and loved it. I'm told because of my injury I could apply for a category 'C' licence and use a self-loading shotgun so if I do take up the sport seriously, are there any disadvantages in using this type of firearm?

Ken Wright, Qld

A A good 'gas-operated' self-loading shotgun will significantly reduce the effects of 'felt' recoil which will certainly help you enjoy the Sporting Clay experience so I'm all for this idea. The fact that lighter self-loaders can do this as opposed to heavier-framed under-and-over shotguns is another bonus if you feel the effects of having to mount a shotgun to your injured shoulder all afternoon. Note I use the word 'felt' as opposed to 'actual' recoil but that's a debate we've had many times in this column which I'll avoid for the purposes of this answer.

If you have the required medical approval to gain your 'C' class firearms licence then I absolutely suggest you to do so. Competition grade self-loading shotguns have come a long way down the years but obviously we haven't seen too many in Australia during the past few decades. In the US, numerous

Sporting Clays shooters use them competitively and very successfully and many women and children start off with them because of the lighter weight and their ability to absorb how heavy and faster ammunition feels on their shoulders. In saying that, lots of larger-framed guys also use them simply because they're so well balanced and there's an argument the single and simple sighting plane barrel offered by a self-loader is easier and more accurate to use.

The only disadvantage I've ever seen with a reliable self-loader is its single choke. In Sporting Clays you can be faced with the scenario where a pair of targets are being shot 20 or 30m apart and if this is the case then the same size choke for both is not ideal, though some compensation can be made with the right ammunition choice in shotshells between the two shots.

I enjoyed using a heavyweight Winchester Super X self-loader for a few years in the 1980s for handicap Trap shooting from longer distances where only a full choke is required and had quite a bit of success with it. As long as I kept it clean and well serviced I never had any issues apart from the fact I wanted to transport it in a gun slip, though some shooting associations in Australia forbid a gun inside a gun slip to be carried on their ranges so be aware of that.

Q I bought a new shotgun and am struggling to mount it correctly. I've checked my eye dominance and I'm right-handed and shoot with both eyes open, yet I can't seem to bring it to my shoulder without tilting my head sideways across the comb of the shotgun. Any advice appreciated.

Kim Johanson, SA

A Without seeing you mount the shotgun that's a tough ask but one thing's for certain - if your head's not mounted on the stock with your eyes perfectly straight then you're wasting your time in this sport as I rate that the most important fundamental to master. It could be a couple of simple problems to fix such as the stock is too long or you could be canting or twisting the barrels as you mount the gun to your shoulder, which can cause you to lay your head across the stock. I suggest you put a red dot on your bathroom mirror and try a few different variations of gun mount, pointing it at the dot until you get your head straight. You wouldn't drive a car with your head at an angle as you'll veer off the road so I suggest you don't do this when trying to fire a shotgun.

Questions to:

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Q A few years ago I bought a new Sako 85 chambered in 6.5 x 55 Swedish. I've always liked the cartridge even though it's considered 'old school' compared with the Creedmoor and PRC offerings of modern times and so far I've only used factory-loaded ammunition with 140gr Federal giving good accuracy. Recently I bought components and dies to reload for the Swede and have encountered an issue I haven't run into when reloading for .223, .243 and .308.

Not being restricted by magazine length I set about trying to find the rifling using a fired case and the Hornady 123gr SST projectile I intend using but didn't even come close. Maximum overall length for the cartridge is 80mm, the Hornady manual lists 73.9mm for the 123gr SST and Nosler load data lists just under 77mm for their 123 and 140gr HPBT. At 77mm the SST is nicely in the cartridge neck but miles from the rifling (I understand the original military loading was long so throats are long).

Do I just accept there'll be a large 'jump' as that seems to go against what I've always tried to achieve by having minimal jump. And how much is too much? Do I start at 74mm and work towards 77mm while checking for accuracy or go for a longer 140gr projectile? Your expert advice would be much appreciated.

Jeff Harrison, Vic.

A As you bought the Sako new and haven't used it too much I wouldn't expect the throat to be eroded as you suspect but the only way to really find out if it is eroded, is either you or a gunsmith do a chamber casting of the barrel to ascertain its condition.

As you realise the 6.5 x 55mm Swedish Mauser can handle a wide range of projectile weights from about 90 to 160gr, perhaps Sako has provided a good lead to accommodate this variation in projectile lengths. If you're achieving good accuracy with 140gr projectiles and use the rifle for hunting rather than benchrest, I'd probably settle

with that loading. And yes, if you wanted to experiment you could do as you say and start seating at 74mm and go out to 77mm, testing for accuracy as you go.

Barry Wilmot

Q I've been trying unsuccessfully to import an antique firearm into Australia from the US and have a B709A Import Permit for this gun which is exempt from Australian firearm laws. Yet the supplier claims "this issue is specifically related to customs issues with Australia". Can anyone shed any light on this please?

Warren Fish, via email

A Importing firearms is a very complex business. When I read your message I immediately thought of Daryl Lenkic from Meplat Firearms Services who has helped me several times with similar issues. I contacted him and he said he's willing to assist you if he can. I've forwarded his full message to you separately but his main comment is as follows:

"There are ways to ship firearms into Australia but in the case of this antique you may have to consider using airfreight, which is very expensive for a single firearm. While I use airfreight myself, I generally only ship consignments of items in which costs can be shared among all the items so you might have to wait for a period until I have a large enough consignment. Otherwise, you should seek assistance from the seller in case they have other means of shipping. Depending on country of origin, post may be an option for an antique."

Geoff Smith

Q I'm about to start shooting clay targets and my friends tell me shooting glasses are mandatory and I'll need different coloured lenses to see fluorescent orange clays under certain light conditions. I can have orange or yellow lenses with my medical insurance subsidy so will these be adequate?

Nick W, NSW

A Nick, I've been battling this very issue since turning 40 and it's quite common for people around that age to start having problems seeing orange clays clearly under certain light conditions, especially when they're thrown against green backgrounds or through light and shade where they arrive then tend to disappear and re-appear!

It's great you can have some help from your fund as I've done over the years with mine. Now this is a huge and confusing subject and putting it as simply as I can, you'll need a separate prescription for each eye as they'll almost certainly be slightly different but this gives what my optometrist calls



“perfect vision from five metres to infinity”. As for colour and strength of tint, that’s about what suits your eyes best and you’ll only determine this by looking through various coloured lenses at the range and at targets under different light conditions.

If you’re not colour blind the most likely options are yellow, orange or vermillion which is what many manufacturers put in their three-lens kits and for good reason - they’re a decent compromise. Light yellow is best for lowlight conditions while vermillion and orange tend to highlight the orange clays against green or ‘tree’ backgrounds by blocking the blue-green part of the light spectrum and also shut out harmful UV rays.

Discuss this with your optometrist and also try an online search for something like ‘best lens colour for shooting clay targets’. When you get it right it’s a truly amazing experience wearing them for the first time and definitely worth the effort and expense. Good luck with your shooting - and those infuriating fluorescent orange targets!

Paul Miller

Q I was given these tins of powder a few years ago by my father who has since passed away. They’re two unopened tins of Nobel Rifle Powder No.1 and a tin of Nobel Glasgow Shotgun No.60 powder. Due to lack of availability of some powders over here on the west coast my query is can I safely use them? The shotgun powder I know I can use in my 12-gauge but as for the rifle powder, what calibres were they normally used for, how do I tell if it’s still usable or do you think it’s way too old?

I’d go out and buy shotty powder tomorrow if there was some to buy and I really can’t understand what the problem is in obtaining powder over this way. Most times I go into a store to buy loading components it’s the same old story - ‘sorry not available’. I’ve been a SSAA member for many years and enjoy the magazine so keep up the good work.

Terry Mac, WA

A Taking your last point first the difficulty in obtaining reloading components isn’t confined to the west coast, it’s everywhere, especially where pistol and shotgun powder’s concerned. Nobel Rifle No.1 was a very common and popular powder in Australia until about the 1980s for most medium-sized cartridges including

.243 Winchester, .308 Winchester, .303 British and up to the .30/06 Springfield.

Unless you know exactly how your propellants have been stored my recommendation would be don’t use them. It’s not just about the age of the powder as even unopened tins may have deteriorated if stored in unfavourable conditions. I’m still using powder that’s almost 30 years old but I know it was bought new and stored at a constant temperature range of between 15 and 21 degrees.

After decanting the powder into the reloading hopper I’d ensure it was never left sitting for longer than necessary to prevent moisture being absorbed into the granules and the bottle was never left unsealed and exposed to the air. People living in hot and humid climates need to be more mindful of their powder storage arrangements and as a rule of thumb (actually rule of nose) most propellant manufacturers state that any chemical breakdown of smokeless powder can be detected by carefully smelling the contents of the container. Any deterioration produces an acrid and acidic odour quite different to the sweet-smelling ethanol or ether that’s usually present. Rusting of metal surfaces exposed to powder can also indicate deterioration.

Rod Pascoe





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You're the **ONE** that I want

Monobloc rifle in a league of its own, writes Con Kapralos

Steyr Arms (formerly Steyr Mannlicher) have taken sporting rifle design to a new level. When word came out in 2019 they'd be releasing a revolutionary new rifle at the International Weapons Exhibition, many European and US enthusiasts held their breath, not knowing what to expect. When the new rifle (the Monobloc) arrived it was exactly that, a receiver and barrel made from a single piece of steel using the cold hammer forging process and having the receiver and barrel created in this fashion would ensure 100 per cent alignment of the bore with the receiver and inherent top-flight accuracy as a result.

Yet the Monobloc is still a switch-barrel design with owners able to procure additional barrel/receivers in select calibres. Some require a change in bolthead and magazine, some a change in the magazine only and others no additional change at all (use the same magazine and bolt for several calibres). The stock, which consists of an aluminium bedding chassis nestled in a synthetic polymer frame (in four different colours), is furnished with interchangeable

leather combs/grips/fore-end inserts (again in four colours) as well as a superbly designed adaptable recoil pad. Additionally, a walnut stocked option in three grades with the aluminium bedding chassis is available for those who prefer the conventional look.

Make no bones about it, this rifle is squarely aimed at the traditional switch-barrel designs which seem to be all the rage in Europe and the US, with Australian shooters and hunters gradually warming to the concept. Winchester Australia, the Steyr Arms distributor, eventually received their first Monobloc rifles last year in selected calibres of .308 Win, .30-06 Springfield and .300 Win Mag with other calibres available on a special order basis. *Australian Shooter* was offered one of the first arrivals in .30-06 with a mocha-coloured stock and sand-coloured leather inserts.

At a glance.

The rifle arrived in a black hard-shell plastic transport case which contained the user manual, warranty certificate, set of sling swivels and a Torx take-down T-wrench for

removing the barrel/receiver assembly from the stock. The review rifle has a 558mm sporter-weight barrel with overall length of 1075mm and weight of 3.7kg.

Monobloc

The Monobloc measures 728mm and weighs 1.65kg, the external finish being satin black (termed DLC coating by Steyr) that's touted to have high scratch resistance. More noticeable is the smooth finish of the barrel itself, unlike previous barrels which adorned Steyr Mannlicher rifles with their spiral patterning, attributed to the manufacturing process.

The barrel/receiver unit is steel, made using the cold hammer forging process to impart the rifling to the bore as well as the internal surfaces of the receiver, bolt raceways, lug recesses, ejection port and magazine cut-out. The receiver top, ejection port and bolt handle notch are well finished with only the left side of the receiver having markings with the usual proof, serial number and 'Steyr Arms Austria' alongside their logo lightly inscribed. The calibre is indicated on the left of the knock-form.



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Monobloc rifle in a league of its own



The receiver top is milled to accept a proprietary one-piece Steyr Picatinny scope rail while the underside gives an indication of how the barrel/receiver unit attaches to the stock. A cross-slot is evident forward of the magazine well cut-out, located between two threaded holes which accept the captive screws housed in the stock body, these screws fastened with the supplied Torx wrench.

The rear underside of the receiver houses a series of moving parts with a steel cross-pin mating up to a steel hook arrangement in the stock body, securing the rear part of the receiver to the stock. Behind this steel cross-pin is the arrangement for the bolt-release button which enables the bolt to be cycled when the firing system is blocked. The barrel itself is of a sporter profile with a threaded muzzle for use with accessories and is supplied with a protective cap, the .30-06 calibre having a one-in-10 twist rate with the bore superbly finished.

Removing the barrel/receiver unit is easy. Removing the bolt and front fore-end leather insert, the two captive screws

securing the front part of the receiver are slackened off then the steel hook can be accessed from the rear inside of the magazine well. The barrel/receiver then simply lifts off the stock and reinstalling is the reverse of this.

Stock

The stock unit is an engineering master-class and what makes the Monobloc the rifle it is. Steyr Arms designate it an 'aluminium synthetic stock' but it's simply an aluminium chassis which is nestled into a polymer stock frame, a two-piece affair with the fore-end and main/buttstock segments anchored to the aluminium chassis. This serves as the primary bedding platform for the one-piece barrel/receiver unit and houses a steel recoil lug and two captive receiver fastening screws which mate up with corresponding abutments in the receiver underside.

The front of the chassis insert also contains a push-rod arrangement which secures the fore-end leather insert into its corresponding recess in the polymer stock frame. The chassis also contains the

magazine release system which consists of a sliding button that frees two tabs inside the magazine well, used to secure the detachable magazine box.

Further rearward the chassis also houses the receiver retaining hook as well as the trigger sears and safety system which is of a manual de-cocking nature. The pistol grip and buttstock are made from the same piece of polymer and anchored to an aluminium leg which extends downwards from the chassis. This also accommodates both the detachable trigger blade unit and leather pistol grip insert. The sculptured buttstock is a radical design characterised by an ambidextrous shallow cheekpiece which is accentuated by a removable leather comb insert, retained in a similar manner to the fore-end leather insert.

The release button is located in the comb of the buttstock and accessed by rotating the recoil pad to expose it while the cheekpiece is available in differing heights for perfect alignment of the eye when using a riflescope. The Monobloc stock with leather inserts in place is a striking unit and complemented by two inletted decals, 'Monobloc' on either side of the mid-stock and two circular 'Steyr Arms' motifs either side of the buttstock. The Steyr Arms logo is also inscribed into a silver-finished aluminium pistol grip cap and together with QD sling swivel studs finishes the stock superbly.

Bolt

This is characterised by the scalloped 'butter-knife' bolt handle and is of a three-lug design with a plunger through the recessed bolt-face and small claw extractor inletted into the shoulder of the locking lug adjacent to the plunger. The bolt body has two longitudinal guides which rotate with the bolt head and run along the internal bolt raceways within the receiver, the polished steel bolt body complemented by the satin



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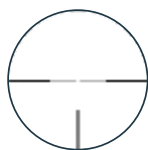


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Monobloc rifle in a league of its own



Disassembled rifle in .30-06 Springfield.



The bolt with its interchangeable three-lug head, full-length guide and bolt handle/shroud work in tandem to create slick travel and flawless case extraction.

black handle and shroud which flow seamlessly with the profile of the receiver once installed. When cycled, the bolt chambered and ejected fired cases without any issues, a small button just behind the notch allowing the bolt to be cycled when the trigger is blocked via the manual de-cocking system.

Safety, trigger and magazine

The sliding safety is a linear unit on the rear tang and is of a manual cocking/de-cocking design popular on many European rifles. The sliding button is easily operated with the thumb and in the uncocked position is fully rearward, exposing a white button on the tang. This results in the bolt handle also being locked down but by pressing the small tab just behind the bolt notch the bolt can be cycled even when the firing mechanism is de-cocked.

Pushing the safety slide forward exposes a red dot which allows the bolt to be cycled and the firing pin cocked. Once the bolt is cycled and cocked the firing pin indicator can be felt sitting proud of the bolt shroud and the rifle can then be fired or de-cocked by simply pressing the small button on the sliding safety and moving it downwards.

The trigger unit is fully adjustable but as supplied was perfect, breaking at roughly 1000 grams. The unit also has a set-function and by pushing the trigger blade forward allows a let-off around 500 grams, something not necessary for a hunting rifle but there for users who demand such a feature. The trigger housing, which comprises the triggerguard and blade, is easily removed for security (rifle must be de-cocked first) and the unit can be stored in the buttstock compartment. The

magazine is beautifully made and consists of an aluminium base with a pressed steel box, the magazine follower being polymer and houses four rounds in .30-06 Springfield. It clicks into position smoothly and is easily removed by sliding the magazine retaining latch rearwards.

At the range

Winchester Australia supplied an assortment of popular hunting ammunition from Winchester and Browning to test accuracy along with one of Meopta's top-tier riflescopes in the MeoStar R2 2-12x50. The rifle was thoroughly cleaned before testing and bore-sighted at 25m, having the optic dialled in at that distance before moving out to 100m for accuracy testing. Five 3-shot groups were fired over a benchrest, slowly to let the barrel cool between shots with quick clean changes in ammo

The Monobloc notched some consistent 3-shot groups and average groups at around 1 MOA or less and for a hunting rifle in .30-06 that sort of accuracy will take any game species out to 300m and beyond. The only minus is its weight and at around 3.7kg bare it's not a lightweight stalking rifle and isn't meant to be - its forte is shooting from blinds or stands where game is driven towards the hunter. Such hunting is the norm in Europe but many deer and large game hunters in Australia do shoot out of ground blinds so rifles need not be carried over the shoulder like traditional stalking on foot.

Summary

The Steyr Arms Monobloc is a revolutionary switch-barrel rifle completely unlike



The rifle with a multitude of stock and leather insert colours available.

its competitors. Its ingenious aluminium synthetic stock, interchangeable leather comb, grip and fore-end inserts as well as the detachable trigger group and one-piece receiver/barrel group make for a classy hunting rifle. Retailing at \$6995 (review rifle) it's a firearm that can be completely customised to the hunter who expects the best. More at winchesteraustralia.com.au ●

Specifications:

Manufacturer: Steyr Arms, Austria.

Model: Monobloc

Action: Push feed bolt-action, one-piece barrel/receiver set with interchangeability between calibres.

Calibres: Australian market .308 Win, .30-06 Sprg (tested), .300 Win Mag other calibres available on special order

Bolt: Three-locking lug, 60-degree lift, interchangeable handle (optional)

Trigger: Adjustable, set-trigger function. Set at 1000 grams from factory. Hand-detachable trigger blade housing (can be stored in buttstock compartment)

Magazine: Pressed steel box with aluminium base, polymer follower, four-round capacity (three for Magnum calibres)

Stock: Aluminium synthetic (available in different colours) with interchangeable leather inserts for comb, pistol grip and fore-end. Walnut option also available.

Length: 1075mm

Weight: 3.7kg

RRP: \$6995 (review rifle), Walnut model \$7695

Distributor: Winchester Australia

Steyr Arms Monobloc .30-06 Springfield - accuracy testing at 100m - groups in mm

Ammunition	Best	Worst	Average*
Winchester Super X 180gr Power-Point	20	32	25
Browning BXC 185gr	24	38	29
Winchester Deer Season XP Copper Impact 150gr	18	30	25
Winchester Ballistic Silvertip 180gr	21	39	29

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

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This is the first in a series on *The Hunter's Mancave* in which some of our regular contributors look back fondly on treasured mementoes

Something of value to hand down

Sam Garro



Trophy room with various mounts and photos attached.

All the items in my den collected during the past 50 years are representative of things I appreciate most and inspire me to continue hunting in the outdoors, my trophy room walls showcasing game mounts with accompanying photographs to capture special moments and places travelled in

their pursuit. The mounts displayed are also a way of demonstrating my respect and appreciation for the animals harvested and while the trophy room appears impressive, it's a culmination of years of dedicated hunting, many a time persisting against the odds to find the game and my efforts to retrieve any trophy for its memory.

What would represent my most valued or treasured hunting-related item in the trophy room I could pass on is hard to say when you have several pieces you hold dear. When I started out my hunting gear was basic and just what I could afford though in time I grew to appreciate more quality items like Puma knives, higher-end

riflescopes and firearms which have stood the test of time and are still valued or sought after today. Understanding their relevance and attachment needs to be appreciated as a hand-me-down doesn't necessarily have to be a material object.

Trophy room and mounts

It was much later in life before my trophy room came into existence but I already knew how it would be designed including the custom-made furniture that followed to display and house various artefacts, books, bronze wildlife statues, mounts, photo albums and associated hunting items. The numerous European mounts of goats, deer, Asiatic water buffaloes and two wild boar shoulder mounts are the main pieces of admiration and hold special attachment as they represent some of my most hard-won trophies and memorable hunts in special places.

This is especially so for deer which for various reasons took some 40 years before I could move on to them and hunt my first red deer in the Brisbane Valley, while an achievement of a lifetime is my one-and-only water buffalo in 2011 with Muckadilla Safaris in Arnhem Land. The first wild boar shoulder mount was from an exceptionally challenging stalk with a Red Wing Hunter 50lb recurve bow in 1976 and the other dropped with one shot from a .35 Whelen rifle in 2009 in remote country south of Pine Creek, NT. Additionally, apart from the two shoulder mounts by separate taxidermists all the European mounts were designed and fashioned by me which adds to the satisfaction and attachment.

Photos and albums

Photos say it better than any words and



From left: Vintage Speer bullet board, archery broadhead collection, photos of noted archers (from top) Fred Bear, John Teitzel and Mark Kimber.

attest or verify a situation. They capture an event or moment and place in time, past and present which may or may not be repeated or encountered again like a rabbit plague or spectacular duck gathering comprising hundreds of birds coming together before departing as one to new water. Those special moments with game harvested, wildlife, scenery and mates around the campfire are everlasting memories to be shared with family and friends.

Some enlarged photos of inspirational hunters admired for their achievements are also displayed on the den walls including one signed by the highly adventurous Keith Adams (1926-2012) the Crocodile Safari Man and movie maker of *Northern Safari* set in 1955 which opened up the wilds of Australia to a greater nationwide



Signed photograph of Keith Adams, the Crocodile Safari Man (1926-2012).

audience and another by Fred Bear the revered American bow hunter and author (1902-1988).

Aboriginal artefacts

I've always admired self-fashioned hunting implements of native tribes used to sustain life in an often challenging landscape, in particular those of the Aboriginal hunters who relied on spears, boomerangs and stone tools for centuries to successfully take game. These rare vintage pieces I've been fortunate to acquire and which were once used with such skill have their own place in the room where they can be admired.

Hunting books

My small library of hunting books has been an invaluable source of information from which I've not only absorbed and learnt so much with respect to firearms, reloading and hunting but also derived great pleasure reading about the big game hunters in Africa like Selous, Baldwin, Hunter, Baker and Newman in the 1800s against all sorts of adversities and at a time when herds



Aboriginal hunting implements.

Hunter's mancave - Sam Garro

of antelopes, wildebeests and other game migrated across the landscape in their thousands, Corbett in India with tigers and our own greats like Syd Kyle-Little (*Whispering Wind*), John Dawkins (*Rogues and Marauders*), Col Allison (*African Trails*) and Bob Penfold (*Life & Times of a Professional Hunting Guide*) to name but a few.

Their writings have captured my imagination, transported me to remote and picturesque places I'm unlikely to visit, smell the savannah grasses of the African veldt, partake in arduous hunts under a searing sun in pursuit of elusive game while sharing the hunters' personal experiences including close confrontations with dangerous game. Their adventures furthered my aspirations and inspired me to complete memorable Top End guided wild boar and buffalo hunts.

Bronze statues

From a young age I've been fascinated with all manner of wildlife especially African plains game and pachyderms, chamois and thars in New Zealand as well as mountain goats and bighorns in British Columbia and while they're out of my reach, I can still appreciate them through my collection of beautifully sculptured bronze statues acquired over the years. My first was of a red deer stag from a seller at a gun show in Rutherglen, Victoria which sparked my interest in gathering other favoured animal statues I was able to source from various overseas sellers and it's a collection I don't expect would be seen in too many trophy rooms.

Firearm and recurve bow

Of my firearms the finely built BSA .310 rook rifle once owned by skilled gunsmith D.J. Swann is a favourite as is a beautifully



Finely worked BSA .310 rook rifle once owned by skilled gunsmith D.J. Swann.

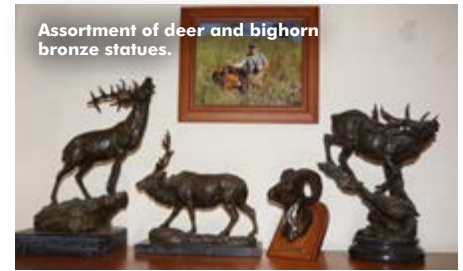
crafted and finely balanced Huntsman 65lb custom recurve bow by Mark Kimber, himself an avid bowhunter. I took up bowhunting a number of years ago for the added challenge in chasing game but it was never used to its full potential so these will definitely pass down the family.

Knives

My first knife was a Puma Hunter's Pal skinning knife bought in 1973 for \$55 which was quite a bit at the time and it skinned many a fox and is still in good condition, while a Puma White Hunter and Puma Bowie together with a couple of Buck knives round out my collection. A few years ago I was fortunate to be gifted by a good friend a vintage Wally Bidgood Loveless drop-point knife which I use exclusively on deer. One or more accompany me on my hunts and I value them greatly for their feel, quality and reliability and one day these will continue to serve in someone else's hands.

Other displays

The Speer bullet board with various calibre projectiles and big game bullet board are impressive displays as is my hand-built cabinet housing several vintage arrow broadheads bought principally from



Assortment of deer and bighorn bronze statues.

America, while Australian Tusker broadheads made by Allen Davies further add to the trophy room's atmosphere. The mounted boar tusks and jaws were taken in outback western NSW and the larger tusks from around floodplains in the NT and billabongs in Cape York, each with a story attached.

The eight-book set *Great Hunters: Their Trophy Rooms and Collections* was attained over time from the US as the volumes were published though the theme within is similar, only the collections are on a much grander and opulent scale showcasing some wonderful and extraordinary trophy mounts with an accompanying array of equally impressive artefacts and pieces. Interestingly, some of these amazingly extensive collections from time to time have been sold off or donated to museums as in the case of W.T. Yoshimoto (1909-2004) of Hawaii, a far-travelled and dedicated hunter.

My articles

The various hunting articles I've written over the years I consider to have the greatest personal value and meaning as I've attempted to pass on my knowledge, expertise and sense of adventure to others for an improved and a more enjoyable hunting experience.

Conclusion

As can be seen I'm well attached to and hold dear all that constitutes my trophy room or is related to hunting, yet the trophy mounts are central as they represent individual game species taken and all the effort that went into securing them. All else revolves around them. Even if my hunting interest and passion is not fully shared by others, my collection of wildlife bronzes can be appreciated for the timeless pieces they are and reflect my regard for wildlife. And while these and other material items hold importance and can be passed down, when it comes to the crux it's my magazine articles and stories with their lifetime accounts of hunting and adventures in the outdoors I consider my greatest legacy. ●



A small library of books on firearms, reloading and big game hunting in Africa and elsewhere.

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Sue-Ann puts the Predator 4 to the test at long range.

A Predator worth watching

New Steiner scope impressed Chris Redlich

Steiner aren't exactly new kids on the Australian riflescope block but have rightly earned their place in the upper echelon of high-quality optics manufacturers, though what's new in the Steiner line-up is their recently-launched Predator 4 riflescope series consisting of the 2.5-10x42, 4-16x50 and a 6-24x50. I accepted an invite from Australian distributor Beretta to review a rifle and scope package comprising a Predator 4 (4-16x50), an ideal 'optics mate' for the test Tikka T3x Varmint Hunter in .223 Rem and, according to Steiner, the all-new Predator 4 series (for 4x zoom) offers shooters a compact and lightweight design while providing military ruggedness and durability.

Out of the box

As is standard with Steiner scopes the Predator 4 came supplied with slip-on lens covers, cleaning cloth and user manual but with overall length of 375mm I'm not so sure this one can be regarded as 'compact', though taking into consideration all the

inclusions I believe it's as compact as it can be. In the hand it feels rugged and strong and while Steiner aren't known for producing lightweight scopes, the 4-16x50 at a total of 672 grams is relatively light for a feature-packed unit built on a 30mm tube. The single piece main tube is made of aircraft-grade aluminium and coated in a durable, non-reflective satin black finish.

Starting at the southern end of the scope is its large ocular lens of 42mm offering a clear sight picture and generous eye relief of 90mm. The overall diameter of the ocular bell measures 48mm and like many other scopes of similar dimension, careful consideration is required when low mounting, particularly to rifles of 90-degree bolt throw (such as Remington 700, Howa 1500 and Mauser-style control round-feed rifles).

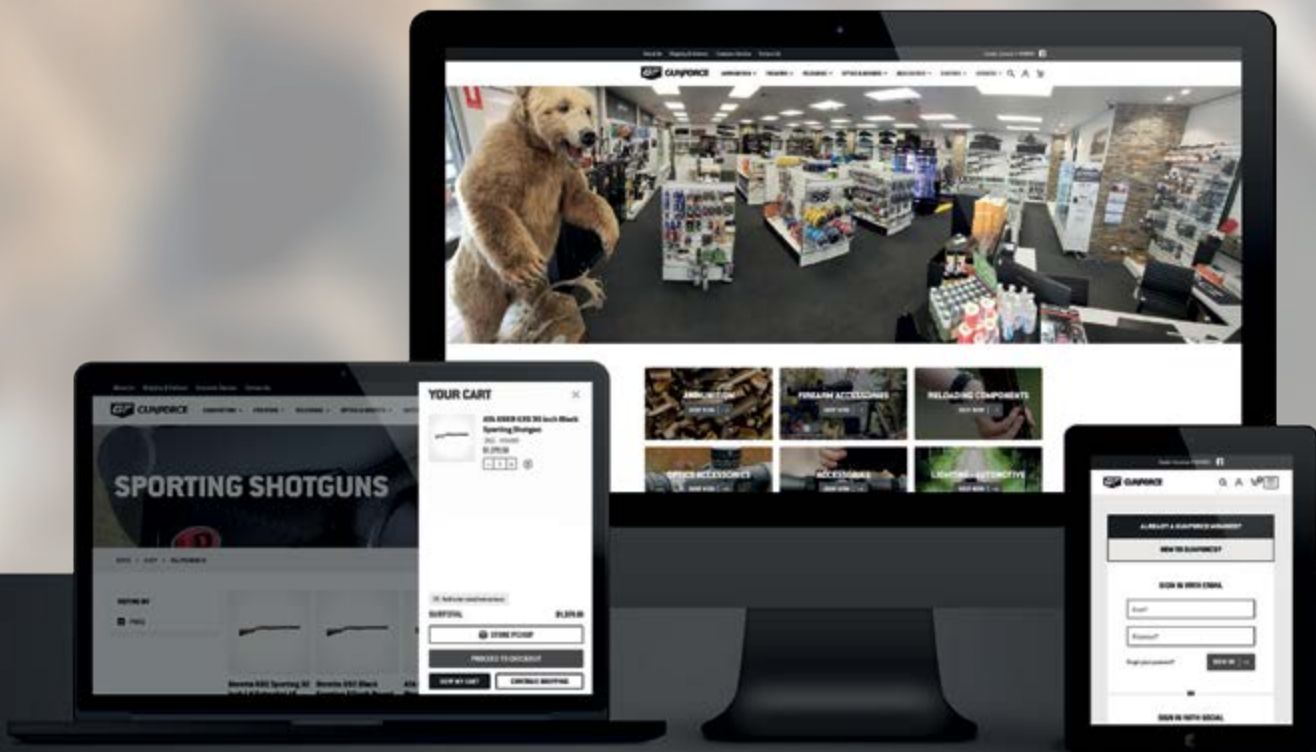
Mounting to the review Tikka with 70-degree bolt throw wasn't a problem and the bolt handle didn't foul with the ocular bell. The rubber dioptre ring is smooth but easily gripped for a clear image and reticle and like other Steiners I've tested the variable magnification dial is a ribbed rubber



Adjusting the illumination dial at night was a simple process.

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A predator worth watching

design that's firm and durable with good grip and easy rotation. From 4x to 16x zoom are clearly marked and the desired magnification is lined up with the small white arrow in the 12 o'clock position behind the variable dial.

Housed within the ocular bell is the Predator 4's E3 reticle positioned in the second focal plane and as I've stated previously I'm generally a 'Plain Jane' reticle man courtesy of my hunting background. I've never seen a reticle like the Predator's E3 before and have to admit that while it's a little busy it's also practical. Sharing similarities with a No.4-style reticle the 12 o'clock posts remains fine while the 3, 6 and 9 o'clock posts start thick at the outers and taper continuously inwards where they break from the reticle centre cross.

This design is brilliant for drawing your eye to the target rapidly and the addition of subtle but practical elevation and windage sub-tensions around the centre cross greatly benefit the long-range hunter, while enhancing the reticle further is its capability of an illuminated centre cross. Importantly, the user manual includes all E3 reticle sub-tension values in MOA relevant at maximum magnification.

Evenly located in the centre of the scope are the elevation and windage turrets occupying 12 and 3 o'clock positions, both hand-click adjustable for $\frac{1}{4}$ MOA with a modest total of ± 25 MOA at 100m. Interestingly the 2.5-10x42 model has a generous total of ± 50 MOA at 100m. Sitting at the 9 o'clock position is the feature-packed turret with the inner dial enabling parallax free adjustment from 20 yards to infinity.

The outer part of the turret is a dial for



Illuminated centre cross showing clear target acquisition on a fox after last light on night setting five.

the illuminated centre cross reticle which allows you to adjust brightness levels of 0-6 for night and 7-11 for daytime, the dial firm to rotate (as it should be) and every click adjustment distinct and precise. A convenient battery-saving 'off' mode between each brightness level is a welcome design inclusion with the battery compartment containing a CR2032 button battery located within the illumination dial and replaced by simply unscrewing the watertight cap.

The business end of the Predator 4 is its 50mm-high contrast objective lens and like most European scopes they're renowned for crystal-clear images and lowlight performance, the Predator 4 fitting the criteria nicely and I'd have been surprised if it

hadn't. An impressive field of view of 10m on 4x and 2.5m at 100m on 16x magnification rounds out the lens capability.

The scope is nitrogen purged and Steiner claim the Predator 4 is waterproof to a depth of 1m, not so deep but then again I've never gone swimming with a rifle scope! An operating temperature of $-25^{\circ}\text{C}/+63^{\circ}\text{C}$ ensures this unit is more than capable of handling the Alpine regions of New Zealand or sweltering heat of the Australian Outback so with the hard stuff behind me I was keen to put it to the test.

Range and field

With our hunter class charity shoot weekend fast approaching we'd little time



Daytime setting of nine on the illuminated centre cross has a rabbit lined up.



Some hares cleanly taken during a brief night spotlighting.



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A predator worth watching



to waste when it came to sighting-in the Predator 4 but coupled with the review Tikka T3x Varmint Hunter fixed in Steiner two-piece mounts, it only took a breezy three shots to zero the scope to the rifle. My wife Sue-Ann would be using the Tikka for the charity shoot and she proceeded to familiarise herself by managing a follow-up group.

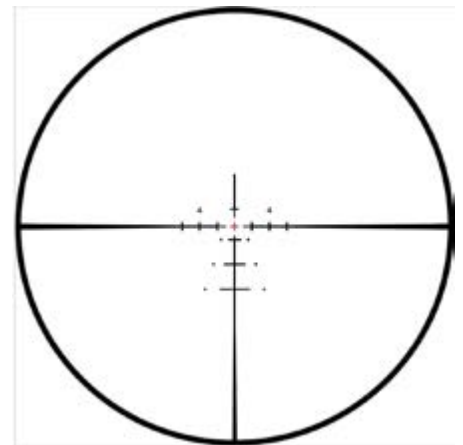
After a handful of rounds her practice confirmed the scope's zero and we were good to go. She remarked on the clarity of the lens to reinforce my own thoughts and we both had confidence in the scope's long-range capabilities at the Muckadilla Charity Pink Shoot. As mentioned the elevation and windage adjustments have ± 25 MOA of travel so this is by no means a long-range target-style scope, but the combination of the E3's practical reticle sub-tensions on 16x zoom enabled Sue-Ann to score numerous 'V bulls' at 500 and 600 yards while aiming off. The complete package of the Predator 4 and Tikka T3x in .223 was impressive to say the least and the overall long-range target performance gave plenty of confidence for upcoming varminting.

Managing to jag a window of opportunity while working away on a property allowed me to take the Tikka and Steiner combo for a spotlighting test drive. Although I managed to shoot three hares in reasonably quick time I found the E3 reticle on its own (compared to a No.4 or fine plex-style option) wasn't as practical as anticipated on small game in the dark. Yet using the Predator 4's illumination feature the bright centre cross of the reticle worked perfectly and with six night-time adjustments at my disposal gave plenty of options to suit the conditions, which underlined the versatility

of the scope and its E3 reticle in an array of shooting situations.

Conclusion

I wasn't surprised the Predator 4 (4-16x50) lived up to the expectations I have of a Steiner-built scope. I'm in the fortunate position of having tested numerous quality optics and the Steiner Predator 4 series is up there with the best of them. Brimming with features in a streamlined unit, Predator 4 riflescopes retail for \$1289 (2.5-10x42); \$1348.99 (4-16x50) and \$1399 (6-24x50) at time of writing and, backed by Steiner Australia's lifetime warranty, are worthy of consideration for mounting to a varminting or long-range hunting rifle. More at berettaaustralia.com.au ●



Steiner E3 reticle, note the inclusion of 4 MOA both left and right for ease of sub-tension calculation.

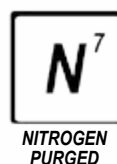


Predator 4 scope boxed with lens covers and cleaning cloth.

EVX Gen II

EVX G2 4-16x44F1 RRP \$ 899,-
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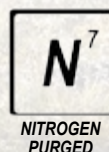
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Ultra HD Glass
Included: Sunshade & scope caps



Clay to go!

Portable thrower won't cost an arm and a leg, writes Daniel O'Dea

Recently we took a look at the Do-All Outdoors Clay Cannon, a spring loaded handheld clay target thrower. A great step up from your average manual hand thrower, the Clay Cannon was an innovative solution to throwing clay targets with ease and when I conducted the review I noted that part of what made it a good option was the comparative outlay of buying an actual clay target trap which can be cost prohibitive and represent a sizable dent in your funds.

I also mentioned that some cheaper and more portable options are becoming available and, as if on cue, we were offered another product from Do-All's local distributor Outdoor Sporting Agencies. This time we're looking at the 'Fowl Play' automatic trap, a portable free-standing clay target trap packed with features but which won't break the bank.

The trap arrived boxed and does require

some assembly using the tool list including 11mm, 13mm, 14mm sockets or spanners and 4mm and 2.5mm Allen keys. Instructions are pretty basic and most people wouldn't have a problem putting it together though if you're the kind who struggles with an Ikea build you may need to call on some help. The kit includes the main head unit with throwing arm, a base, four legs, main spring, hopper tubes and ring, orange safety exclusion ring and brackets, a bag full of nuts, bolts and washers and the foot pedal remote with cable. If you're at all mechanically minded you should be able to throw it together quite quickly - even I managed.

Once together the head unit including the motor, clutch and throwing arm sits in a raised base with four legs and four upright metal tubes connected at the top with a horseshoe-shaped ring form the hopper to hold clay targets. The unit's powered

The Fowl Play set up and ready to go with Heavy Duty battery.

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Clay to go!

by a deep cycle 12V battery (not supplied) connected via a power cord with alligator clips permanently attached to the head unit. The throwing arm pivots off a geared clutch connected to the main spring via a threaded rod which runs from the rear of the throwing arm to the back of the main housing. The connecting rod protrudes through the housing to be held by a 14mm nut and tightening this nut increases tension on the spring for more power to the throwing arm.

In operation the arm begins at 12 o'clock in a fully extended position and when powered up and switched on the motor turns a gear which rotates the arm counterclockwise, loading tension in the spring. At 180 degrees (six o'clock) the arm hits a limiting switch that stops it at this cocked position and coincides with release of a clay target from the hopper to the throwing arm. When the foot pedal remote is depressed the arm continues forward over the centre of the pivot point which releases the spring so the throwing arm flies forward to launch a clay target. This sequence continues each time the remote pedal is activated so long as there are clays in the hopper and the unit's turned on.

A toggle switch on front of the unit has three positions - on, off and disarm. The first makes the unit operate as stated and when finished or if minor adjustments or reloading of the hopper are required the

'disarm' position serves to de-cock the throwing arm and make the unit safe. For transport and storage it's recommended the main spring be removed as when spooled up the swinging throwing arm could present quite a hazard if you were to come into contact with it in any way so safety, care and respect are essential when using such a device.

The trap includes an orange safety exclusion ring which resembles two-thirds of an orange hula-hoop and runs from a stud at the rear of the housing out in an arc through two brackets to a stud on the other side of the housing. This creates a halo if you will, which encloses the 'arc of danger' presented by the throwing arm in motion and serves as an active reminder of where the potential danger lies.

For testing I took the battery from my old tractor which I made sure was fully charged to start with though I note the recommendation is for a deep cycle marine battery so perhaps I should've used one from the Bayliner instead. As it happens the heavy duty tractor battery worked fine though I'm advised if you don't use enough battery you could encounter issues. While on the power source I'd note the power cord isn't any great length, about a metre or so, the idea being the battery sits pretty much directly behind the unit on the ground. If it was mine I'd replace the alligator clips on the power cord for an Anderson plug so I could

simply run an extension from my truck, not an issue of course if you have a spare or buy a dedicated battery to use with the unit.

After basic set-up I had some minor issues with the throwing arm stopping prematurely which required adjustment of the limiting switch (this is covered in the manual). It took me a little fiddling to have it just right and, if not perfect, the arm stops short of releasing the next clay to the throwing arm and if too much it doesn't stop at all and will cycle and throw clays continuously. I also found the instructions a tad unclear as to how much tension should be applied to the main spring (nut position) and found a contradiction between the official YouTube assembly video and written instructions but went with the latter and once up and running it worked like a dream.

The height of clays thrown can be adjusted by 5-35 degrees by loosening two of the four bolts holding the head unit in the frame then changing the angle and, once set, the angle thrown is fixed so effectively you get the same clay every time, strong winds notwithstanding. The foot pedal has a generous lead so you can move around within safe parameters to change target presentation or better still have a friend operate the pedal. If you want more variety in thrown targets, Do-All Outdoors have an optional wobbler kit which replaces the base and oscillates the trap up and down, left and right for greater variation.

The hopper holds 50 targets giving you plenty of action between reloading and the remote pedal allows for one-person operation. The unit throws clays out to around 50m-plus and would be great for those on private land with room to legally shoot, farms, acreages and the like. It's compact enough to transport in a ute or trailer but to my mind is probably best suited to a permanent address. Shooting clays is a ton of fun and the Fowl Play offers similar advantages and features of a commercial grade trap at a fraction of the cost. Pricing varies so check with your dealer. More at osaaustralia.com.au ●



The Do-All Fowl Play comes boxed and requires basic assembly.

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Flexible friend

Thomas Tabor makes a case for the 'best cartridge ever'

Flexibility of use was at the heart of my decision 42 years ago when I bought my first .300 Winchester Magnum rifle. At the time money was scarce in our household and that helped foster my desire for a single rifle that could essentially do it all. I was after a hunting rifle which could be used effectively on a variety of game from deer to moose or even buffaloes and my decision to buy a .300 Win Mag turned out to be one of the best life choices I ever made.

Rise of standard-length Magnum

In 1961 Norma broke new ground in the shooting community when the company introduced their new .308 Norma Magnum

(not to be confused with the more recent .300 Norma Magnum). Once the public recognised the advantages in a cartridge capable of magnum-level performance in a form short enough to use in a standard-length action rifle, the .308 Norma's popularity began to grow.

In this case being able to launch a 180-grain bullet at speeds approaching 2900fps was made possible by a larger powder capacity. That additional capability was due to its straighter-walled case which was fatter around a shorter neck and 1.7mm longer overall than that of the .30-06. Competition has always been fierce in the firearms industry and when Winchester saw the tremendous potential in Norma's

.308 they were quick to react and two years later unveiled their own standard-length .30 calibre magnum - the .300 Winchester Magnum.

Outwardly both the Norma and Winchester cartridges appeared similar but the latter came with an even greater powder capacity of 7.6 per cent more than its rival, made possible by making the case 1.5mm longer and neck 13mm shorter than the Norma. When that increase in powder capacity of the .300 Winchester is compared to the standard .30-06 we find its case can hold up to a whopping 35 per cent more powder.

Early on a few ill-informed people took issue with the .300 Winchester's shorter neck, questioning its ability to hold the bullet securely enough but those fears were quickly shown to be unwarranted, something I can attest to myself. After firing thousands of rounds through my own .300 Win Mag rifles, both factory loads along with my own non-crimped handloads, I've never experienced a single problem in this area.

Other than a potential for slightly higher velocities from the .300 Winchester over those of the .308 Norma Mag, the real disadvantage of the Norma came in the form of generally higher ammunition and cartridge case cost and reduced availability, issues which coupled with Winchester's well-orchestrated marketing campaign severely damaged the popularity of the .308 Norma.

The advantage of achieving a magnum level of performance in a standard-length action was, and still is, what makes these



For optimum performance from your .300 Win Mag hunting rifle you need high-quality bullets.



Thomas retrieved all these Nosler Partition 180-grain bullets from one-shot game kills.



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The Huglu Trap Black Edition is the perfect shotgun for competition and recreational shooting.



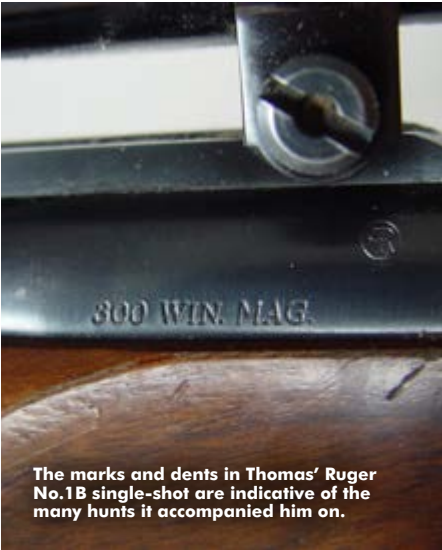
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Flexible friend



The marks and dents in Thomas’ Ruger No.1B single-shot are indicative of the many hunts it accompanied him on.



At one time the .308 Norma Mag (left) was a fierce competitor of the .300 Win Mag but that changed dramatically.



Cartridge neck is shorter and case length longer on the .300 Winchester Magnum (right) compared to the .308 Norma.

cartridges so special. While some shooters favour the shorter bolt stroke of the standard-length actions over the magnum models, possibly even more important to the success of this type of cartridge is the availability of standard-length actions and their cheaper price.

In some cases .30-06 owners could take advantage of the considerably better ballistic performance of these magnum cartridges by simply having those rifles rechambered or rebarrelled to the new specifications. As long as the rifle has the same .308-inch bore diameter, rechambering is a fairly easy conversion as in most cases all that’s needed is to have the chamber recut to the new dimensions and bolt face altered.

Performance comparison

In the chart below I’ve compared the ballistics of the .300 Winchester to the popular hunting calibres of .30-06 and .270. Two bullet weights are shown for the .30-06, both of which clearly pale ballistically when

compared to those of the .300 Winchester and when a similar comparison is made between the .300 and the .270, we find the velocities remarkably similar though retained bullet energy levels substantially favour the .300.

Ballistics will vary to a degree between factory loads and even more with hand-loaded ammunition, some of that variation attributable to the type and style of bullet and the firearm the cartridges are shot in. The chart shows a typical factory-loaded muzzle velocity for the .300 Win Mag with 180-grain bullets of 2960fps, but my own handloads with similar-weight bullets produces muzzle velocities considerably higher at 3160fps. While I feel those handloads are perfectly safe to shoot in my own rifles they may not be in all similarly chambered firearms.

Weird era of short Magnums

At the turn of this century Remington and Winchester must have thought shooters had a preference for even shorter magnums



Of these .308 calibre Magnums (.300 Weatherby, .300 Winchester and .300 H&H) only the Win Mag is short enough to use in a standard-length action.

If you could select only one cartridge, which would it be?

Cartridge ballistic comparison									
Cartridge bullet weight	Muzzle velocity	100 yards velocity	200 yards velocity	300 yards velocity	Muzzle energy	100 yards energy	200 yards energy	300 yards energy	Trajectory 300 yards
300 Win Mag 180-grain	2960fps	2770fps	2580fps	2400fps	3500 ft-lb	3055 ft-lb	2660 ft-lb	2305 ft-lb	-17cm
30-06 Sprg 180-grain	2700fps	2520fps	2350fps	2190fps	2915 ft-lb	2540 ft-lb	2205 ft-lb	1905 ft-lb	-36cm
30-06 Sprg 165-grain	2790fps	2590fps	2400fps	2220fps	2850 ft-lb	2460 ft-lb	2110 ft-lb	1800 ft-lb	-34cm
270 Win 130-grain	3050fps	2810fps	2580fps	2370fps	2685 ft-lb	2280 ft-lb	1925 ft-lb	1620 ft-lb	-28cm

Note: Trajectory drop estimates are based on a 100-yard zero drop.
Reference: Federal ballistic data for factory-loaded cartridges with Fusion bullets.

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and began offering a variety of cartridges which promised magnum velocities. Almost overnight the shooting world was flooded with these shorter versions which were available in virtually every bullet diameter, such cartridges built on non-belted cases about the same length as the .308 Winchester but considerably 'fatter' in diameter.

And if that wasn't bizarre enough, within a year or two Winchester took things even further with a group of cartridges they called Super-Short Magnums (WSSM) but unlike the .300 Win Mag which has endured the test of time, most of these short and super-short magnums failed to attract a following and have largely disappeared. About the only exception is the .300 WSM which has managed to maintain some popularity though in my opinion, other than the ability to be chambered in a short action rifle, I see no advantage in the .300 WSM over the more traditional .300 Win Mag.

Me and my .300s

I previously owned a .308 Norma Magnum which I found to be a good cartridge and effective on game. I used that rifle on many deer and elk hunts and on one occasion it even accompanied me on an African plains game safari. Overall I couldn't find anything wrong with the performance of the cartridge but I bought that rifle with the intention of eventually rebuilding it. The barrel was beginning to show signs of too many bullets travelling down its bore so I was faced with a choice: Replace the barrel with one similarly chambered or have a .300 Winchester barrel installed. Due to cost and availability issues of Norma ammo and cartridge cases I chose the latter and added yet one more .300 Winchester to my collection.

.30 calibre bullet selection

With all the choices available in .308 calibre bullets it can be a challenge to pick the best one for your individual needs though I can allay some of that confusion by saying no bullet weight performs better in the .300 Win Mag than one of 180-grains. As long as the bullet has good aerodynamics that weight will shoot flatter and retain a higher level of energy throughout its flight than any other bullet weight and I seldom deviate from that no matter what I'm hunting.

Due to the increased velocities produced by the .300 Win Mag over that of many other cartridges it makes proper bullet selection crucial. Poorly-made bullets can come apart on impact so my advice is to choose wisely, look for high-quality hunting bullets with a known reputation for holding together, good frontal expansion on impact and an ability to penetrate deep. While good-quality hunting bullets producing these results don't come cheap, they're worth the extra cost and include Nosler Partitions, Norma Oryx, Barnes Triple-Shock X, Trophy Bonded Bear Claw and Swift A-Frame.

The way I see it

Down the years I've used my .300 Winchesters to take small game of 20kg or less all the way up to those tipping the scales at nearly 450kg. Because of the 300's flat-shooting potential I often sight-in my rifles to shoot a few centimetres high at 100m as doing so helps flatten the bullet's trajectory and often allows me to hold steady on my targeted animal without having to adjust for trajectory drop at longer range.

Some will doubtless decry the .300 Winchester Magnum as simply 'too much gun' and ask: "Why do you need so much fire-power?" But if you're after a 'do-it-all

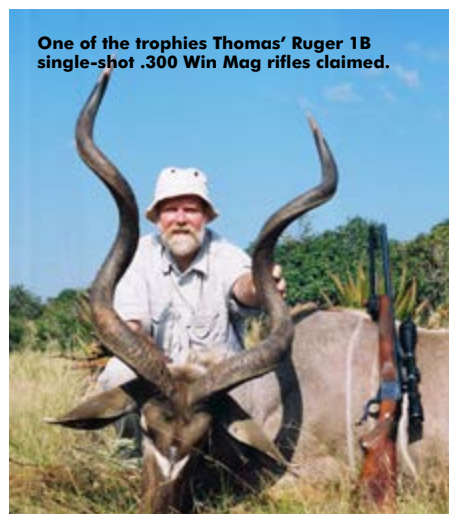


Many makers are offering .300 Win Mag ammo loaded with premium bullets.



Among Thomas' favourite .300 Win Mag hunting rifles are his Ruger No. 1B single-shot and his custom-built model.

cartridge' you can use to successfully hunt 95-plus per cent of the world's game animals I honestly believe you can't go wrong with the .300 Win Mag. ●



One of the trophies Thomas' Ruger 1B single-shot .300 Win Mag rifles claimed.



Thomas' first rifle chambered in .300 Win Mag was a Ruger 1B single-shot which still works perfectly after thousands of rounds. Photo taken by remote means.



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Worth the wait

A 15-year hiatus landed Geoff Porter a double dividend



Tools of the trade.

About a decade and a half ago I was fortunate to have access to a local farmer's property to shoot rabbits and foxes and several successful hunts were completed before a busy period of my life prevented me from hunting. Years passed and as I resumed hunting, new connections were made with different owners though for some reason I never bothered to revisit that original property. Then my mate Gaz told me he had access to a place we were welcome to hunt on and when I asked him the owner's name it turned out to be the same farmer and property from 15 years ago.

We were both fairly busy and the only time we could manage out was a cold and wet winter Sunday. As we'd not hunted the place recently we thought it best to treat the first visit as a scouting trip and knowing

there were sambar deer in the area I took my BSA 9.3x62 and a light day pack. Catching up with the farmer was fantastic, a genuine and welcoming character who gave us a rundown on the property and the access tracks around it.

Carefully adhering to the tracks the farmer had described we soon spotted a fox bolting across the paddock but being in the car we didn't have access to a loaded rifle. We noted the direction it ran and made for where we last saw it which enabled us to stop, load the rifles and continue on foot. Despite carrying heavier calibre rifles we didn't want to pass up the chance of a redcoat but as it turned out he'd scarpered down his den and was safe for now. As we were up-wind by this point our chances of seeing him were next to zero so the decision was made to move on.

We surveyed the area and planned our day's trek based on wind direction and lie of the land. As it was late morning the only breeze was the thermal updraft so we headed for higher ground which would enable us to cut back down into an area likely to hold deer with the breeze in our faces. We made the ascent along a fence line with open paddock on one side and scrubby woodland on the other which we thought would be ideal to find sign of our quarry and possibly deer rubs on the timber.

Spotting where deer had travelled would be easier thanks to the large amount of rain we'd had though this made the paddocks quite spongy. Part way up we started to see sign - skid marks in the grass and hoof prints heading out the paddock indicated a deer had been moving downhill. With our eyes fixed on the ground for sign I spied

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Worth the wait

a fox out the corner of my eye. Gaz and I froze and as I was forward of his position I took the shot but with my heart still pounding after the uphill hike it resulted in a missed offhand effort.

At the moment of the shot I caught sight of the black and white tail of a startled fallow deer fleeing in the adjacent woods. His size matched the prints we'd seen as they were too small for sambar and from the brief glimpse I had we thought it may have been a buck I startled. The wind was now in our favour so the decision was made to find a safe crossing point through the fence to pursue the deer. We found a large gap where the animal had been pushing under the fence so I cleared my gun, handed it to Gaz and crawled through the hole as he followed with the unloaded rifles.

By now we were in dense bush with a game trail ahead of us punctuated by fresh dropping - maybe he'd stopped here prior to crossing the fence - so I slung my pack, loaded the 9.3 and took the lead. We'd stalk a little then stop to look and listen and it didn't take long before I spotted a fox just on the other side of a gully. It was unaware of our presence so I flicked off the safety and from around 30m took an offhand shot and as the 9.3 boomed, the fox folded at the edge of a blackberry bush. The 250gr Woodleigh barely opened up so surprisingly there was minimal pelt damage to what turned out to be a good-sized male with a nice winter coat which I decided to harvest and tan later.

With the pelt rolled and tied to the outside of my pack we headed for higher ground and it wasn't long before we were back on the game trail, this time with droppings still steaming in the cold air. Clearly the deer had passed this way very recently and for some reason the top of the hill was drawing my attention. Often when deer are spooked they head uphill so the decision was made to split up, Gaz opting to follow the contour and head back in the direction of the car. I kept going and with the thermal updraft at my back I committed to reaching the top as quickly as possible.

Once on the top I noticed more deer sign with prints and freshly thrashed wattle saplings confirming my suspicions a fallow buck was in the neighbourhood. It was now mid-afternoon and the thermal updraft was still playing its part though I knew it would soon change so decided to start heading downhill, zig-zagging from one gully to another and stopping to check each one before moving on.

Before long I reached a bunch of wattle saplings and fresh bedding patch which told me I was closing in and as I broke clear of



The fox in his fine winter coat.

the thicket I was greeted by the sight of a fallow buck standing side-on not 40m away. He'd seen me but as the wind was in my face he wasn't spooked and stood rooted to the spot just watching. Slowly raising the rifle I flicked the safety and took a well-aimed offhand shot which struck behind the shoulder for a double lung kill, dropping the deer on the spot. On closer inspection I was delighted to find a buck in excellent condition - a 'triple' trophy animal with a fine skin, impressive antlers and meat for the freezer.

On hearing the shot Gaz called me on the mobile phone and headed for my location. Since we still had a few hours of daylight

we decided to carry the animal downhill to a spot we could access with the car which would enable us to take it home for a thorough butchering. On the way out we let the farmer know we were leaving and thanked him for the privilege. After ageing the meat in the fridge for a week I prepared a backstrap for our host in appreciation for the permission to hunt on his property. I believe in giving back to someone when they've been good enough to allow us access and it's also part of sharing respect for the animals we harvest. ●

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Firearm opponent slams mental health check plan in global forum

Rachael Oxborrow

Passing a mental health check should not be a requirement as part of the extensive tests and balances which form the firearms licensing process in Australia, a view the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA National) has maintained in the face of repeated calls by anti-civilian firearm ownership spokespeople. The current regulations, which assess an applicant to be a 'fit and proper' person, won't be improved by bringing health professionals into the process.

But it seems at least one anti-firearm commentator has joined our chorus and shares similar reasoning. University of Sydney Adjunct Associate Professor Philip Alpers has labelled the concept 'hazardous' and 'inaccurate' and warned the measure would undermine the relationship between general practitioners (GPs) and their patients.

He made the comments while participating in a recent online forum on Gun Control and Firearms Policy for the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. "That (mental health checks) has been discussed right around the world," he said. "There are a bunch of countries that already do it, Austria and Germany have laws which say you must have a mental health check before you qualify to own a firearm."

"Now that is full of hazards because even forensic psychiatrists, who have full-time access to patients for a long time, say the chances of predicting future violence isn't much better than tossing a coin." He went on to stress "the next thing people say is GPs should flag if people are in danger of killing someone with a gun". "But for GPs, their greatest tool is trust of their patients," he said and pointed to this view being shared by medical associations around the world. "GPs don't feel they should be held responsible for any future violence when the art of prediction is so non-existent."

Mr Alpers has ties with the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) and the Pacific Small Arms Action Group

- both organisations which oppose private civilian firearm ownership - making him far from a reliable unaligned academic. Yet he's often quoted as a seemingly non-biased source in the media via his website GunPolicy.org. The website lays claim to being a voice of reason using "evidence-based, country-by-country intelligence from a broad range of official and academic sources" situated in "a sea of websites offering unverified, polarised opinions on gun violence".

Over the years Mr Alpers has made many misinformed or blatantly untrue statements which paint the concept of firearm ownership and shooting sports as being the root of many problems in society. The forum he took part in was convened by Duke University Political Science Professor Kristin Goss and also featured University of Arizona Sociology Government and Public Policy Professor Jennifer Carlson, University of Southern California Law Professor Mugambi Jouet and Uruguay Ministry of the Interior Political Scientist and Focused Police Crime Prevention Strategies Coordinator Diego Sanjurjo.

Its purpose was to explore comparative and international perspectives on firearms policy and gun control with particular focus on the US. Mr Alpers highlighted Australia having "the most comprehensive suite of firearm injury prevention measures" since firearm legislation was brought in post-1996. He also debunked the frequently used anti-firearm catch-cry that firearm laws had been "watered down" in Australia over time by saying that "since 2001 most of the world's countries have tightened gun laws".

His surprisingly reasonable comments didn't continue throughout the entire forum however, as he returned to demonising law-abiding firearm owners who are some of the most heavily policed private citizens in Australia. In answer to the question: "What's one puzzle or conundrum you'd like to solve in your research and what makes doing that difficult?" he said: "I'd love to know what proportion of gun

owners commit crimes and what proportion of crimes are committed by gun owners."

"Many studies have been done outside of the US which show a great majority of victims in mass shootings are killed by licensed gun owners," he said. "Now it's very easy in our country to say whether they were licensed or not licensed but because the US has no licensing, no registration, it's very hard to do but there must be ways to work that out. It would be I think illuminating to a lot of gun owners to realise they're part of the problem."

Now in Australia, thanks to credible research put together through the Australian Institute of Criminology, it can easily be deduced that this narrative is untrue and effectively fear-mongering. AIC study *'The Licensing and Registration Status of Firearms Used in Homicide'* assessed that a "majority of firearms used to commit homicide were not registered and the perpetrators of firearm-related homicide were not licensed firearms owners".

"Those who commit homicide in Australia are individuals who have circumvented legislation and will be least likely to be affected if further restrictions on firearms ownership are introduced," the study said. "Any further restrictions will most likely affect individuals who are the law-abiding shooters in Australia who've already made significant sacrifices in furtherance of public safety."

We only need to look at the 2022 Deakin University study *'I know a guy and he's got guns galore: Accessing guns in Australian Illicit Firearms Market'* to illuminate the real problem this country has with illegal firearms. The study outlines that a cohesive network of career criminals who value trust and secrecy as paramount to conducting their unlawful dealings is running a thriving illicit gun trade. Researchers discovered it was also "surprisingly easy" for criminals to buy firearms through Australia's 'black market' despite the country's strict gun laws. ●

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Straight talking

In the first of a two-part special, Mark van den Boogaart demystifies the rifle stock

I was approached by the editor to put something together about rifle stocks for the uninitiated and thought sure, why not? Then I got to thinking about where to start, where to finish, what to talk about and what to avoid, all in the hope of writing something which informs rather than confuses. Because it's like this. Historically the development of the firearm didn't happen all at once in a well-managed factory with a team of quality assurance people on hand to document the process.

Rather it was messy, often secretive and wholly subject to the environment and norms of society in which it developed. For instance inches, millimetres, gauge and bore are all interchangeable units of measurements used to determine the diameter of a barrel. Unlike the basic 'H' layout of a car's transmission, the agreed height of a kitchen table or the fact that 'Red' means stop and 'Green' for go, no such agreement was reached with regard to firearms. It was an arms race, a technological race, a manufacturing race and the end goal wasn't sharing, it was winning.

To write something close to coherent for the reader about stocks we must first set out some fundamentals to make this a worthwhile exercise, so let's start with some of those fundamentals. Firstly we're discussing stocks associated with modern, sporting longarms and with that in mind stocks take one of two structural forms.

The first is a stock of single structure which incorporates a buttstock including grip, a section that houses the longarm

mechanism and a fore-end. If we think of a modern bolt-action rifle, its stock incorporates each of these parts as an integrated approach. Conversely a stock may have wholly separate components which attach to the long-arm mechanism as in the case of a typical lever-action rifle. Again, we might describe this a component approach.

What these two iterations have in common is there's a part of the stock (the buttstock) that fits into your shoulder and which you grip with your favoured hand and there's another section you cradle, grip or otherwise support with your other hand (the fore-end). So let's look at design.

Buttstock

Now the reason I use the term buttstock to describe the triangular piece you fit to your shoulder is because it's often referred to simply as the stock. But as the word stock can also apply to the whole thing, I want to clearly define the back (or butt end) of the longarm. On the buttstock there are arguably three points of contact with the shooter - the butt where the rifle nestles in your shoulder, the comb upon which your cheek sits or welds to the comb, and the grip where your favoured hand grasps the buttstock and operates the trigger.

The butt

A rifle's performance is determined by 'the nut behind the butt' - that's you or me. Now that butt can take many different forms though all have a heel, top, toe and bottom. This feature has changed dramatically over



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Straight talking



Three hunting rifles. From top: a converted flintlock muzzleloader, cap and ball muzzleloader and cartridge-fed repeating lever-action rifle.

the centuries to the point that today, for the main part, the butt is slightly curved with the toe just behind the heel on the vertical axis. The butt itself can have a smooth or profiled finished end to the buttstock, it may be capped with a plate or might be padded and all variations are in use these days.

The comb

This refers to the top edge of the buttstock where you place or 'weld' your cheek, the difference in placing or welding depending on what you've learned or been taught when sighting or aiming the longarm. Some people advise you to drop or rest your cheek on the comb while others prefer a firmer contact, known as a weld. The comb is about your shooting position and its design means the shooter's head is either raised in a more upright position or dropped down low. To achieve this some longarms have a raised comb, Weatherby rifles being one manufacturer associated with a high-comb rifle stock or a flatter, straight comb. Depending on the declining angle of the buttstock, a longarm may require a considerable comb to bring the shooter's eye into



The Sako 85.

a suitable aiming position, as in traditional lever-action rifles and certain shotguns.

The grip

A dedicated point of contact (the grip) for your favoured hand on some stocks may be very discrete though can also be wide, narrow, vertical, tilted, smooth, chequered or profiled. It may include a thumbhole to create a 'whole-of-hand grip' or may be a fully-formed 'pistol grip', the only limitation on grip being the manufacturer's design department.

The shooter

Overlaying the buttstock, butt, comb and grip is the shooter with the two common variations being handiness and length of

pull. Handiness is easy to understand as it refers to the favoured hand (left or right) you use to grip the buttstock, the shoulder you connect to the butt and cheek you weld to the comb. Both left and right-handed options can be accommodated through modification as buttstocks can be made to slightly curve into the shooter while grips can be shaped to reflect the points of contact of either a left or right-hander. The comb can be enhanced with a cheekpiece, either fixed or mechanically adjustable.

Furthermore, a cheekpiece can be used as a way of positioning your head and in doing so serves two purposes to make the long-arm more tailored to an individual shooter. Length of pull refers to the distance, usually measured in inches,



A Blaser R8 with padded butt, straight comb and well-defined pistol grip.



SABATTI TACTICAL EVO

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6 Creedmoor (8" MRR twist)
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The Sabatti Tactical EVO bolt-action rifle is the quintessential precision shooting rifle, with features that make it perfect for both sporting and professional purposes.

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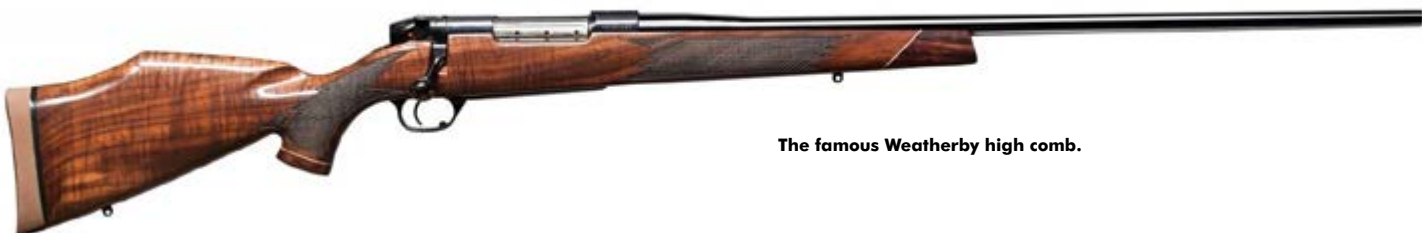
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Straight-talking



A Henry Model 1860 repeating rifle.



The famous Weatherby high comb.

between the very end of the stock and trigger and is illustrated as a horizontal line between these two points. Transposing this measurement to the shooter your height, build and various other factors determine the distance between your shoulder and trigger finger. Consequently it's best to have a stock which reflects your length of pull as too long and it's difficult to shoulder, too short and you may end up with a scope-cut injury above your eye.

Don't forget the finish

When it comes to finish the sky's the limit. From the purely decorative to the protective and of course combining the two, there are any number of finishes and protective coatings which can be applied to your stock. Fine hand-rubbed oil stains, Coyote-coloured Cerakote, hot pink two-pack - go for it!

It's all about use . . . and history

All these considerations reflect two important realities, the first being the intended use of your longarm. Is it a target rifle or a hunter, is it meant to be shot from a set position or on the move, is the shooting position supported or unsupported? And what type of cartridge will the gun be firing as the buttstock has a direct influence on felt recoil.

A case in point are the design interpretations of an original Henry repeating rifle compared to a Sako 85 hunting rifle. The former incorporates a significant curve in the metal-capped butt plate with the heel leading the toe on the vertical axis. It also features a raised though still sloping comb to compensate for the significant downward angle of the buttstock and a straight grip. The Sako's padded butt is only slightly off



An integrated, adjustable cheekpiece allows the shooter to set their head height at the desired level.

vertical with the toe leading the heel while it also makes use of a partly-raised straight comb and pronounced palmswell and pistol grip.

The second consideration is to acknowledge design is like fashion - it exists within a point in time. What we're talking about aren't new ideas or technology, as a whole bunch of things once thought of as 'cutting-edge' are now centuries old, one example being the metal buttplate. Designed to suit the reality of a single-shot muzzle-loader, the metal plate protected the stock when reloading and also made for a useful secondary weapon. But with the advent of cartridge ammunition came the option to fire multiple rounds without reloading while the ability to fix a bayonet meant the metal buttplate became wholly unnecessary, though it hung around for years past its use-by date.

- Next month we'll look at the fore-end and discuss the various materials available in manufacturing the modern, sporting longarm rifle and shotgun stock. ●



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2/27 BATE CLOSE PAKENHAM VICTORIA 3810

Affordable shotgun

ENTERS THE AUSSIE MARKET

Break clays without breaking the bank, says John McDougall



Overall view of the Yildiz Black Sporter.

Yildiz is a Turkish-based company making all grades of shotgun from basic to ornate with the end product reflected in how deep your pockets are, though in reality they're actually affordable guns at a realistic price. The ProStar range, already assessed within these pages (December 2020 *Australian Shooter*), are their premium guns while the Yildiz Black Sporter on review here has been specifically designed for the Australian market and has a lot to offer the beginner, like those discovering the Sporting Clays discipline or maybe considering a venture into Skeet or hunting.

This model has Grade 3 walnut stock wood and an adjustable combpiece well suited to the novice shooter's introduction to the clay target sports and while there's been something of a mystique surrounding the quality of Turkish firearms, I can say from more than 10 years' experience reviewing Yildiz guns that they're made to a high standard. The Turkish Government has really backed the industry as they have the latest in CNC technology and the country has some of the finest walnut groves in the world to supply their stock wood, so let's take a closer look at what the Yildiz Black Sporter has to offer.



Including the two chokes installed, there are seven supplied in total.

Barrels

With silver soldered together for maximum strength and supported by ventilated side ribs and a similarly ventilated top rib, the gun looks well finished in its dark blued colour. Topped by a red fluoro front sight there's no mid-sight which, when provided, can assist novice shooters with correct gun mount until they become completely familiar with the firearm. Once this is done the shooter's eyes should focus solely on the target.

With barrels measuring 760mm (30") the Yildiz Sporter is certainly up to the challenge of some fine shooting. Fitted with fully internal 43mm chokes and supplied with external collared chokes of half and full at 68mm, the Yildiz will handle clay targets, feather or fur as it's also ideal for hunting. At the chamber end it's suited for 76mm (3") shells, far beyond what's demanded from the clay target sports at 70mm and more apt for stiff, semi-magnum hunting loads. Although not covered in depth, the gun is matched for the use of steel shot with a maximum choke constriction of modified or half choke.

The ejectors are well-timed and expel spent cartridges clear of the breech to enable quick reloading, strongly



Close-up of the breech with its bottom bite extending from one side to the other.

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Stay in the black

constructed and fitted tightly to the monobloc as testimony to the excellent tolerances achieved using quality CNC machinery. Forcing cones are standard and the barrel bore measures 0.727" which is also standard for most shotguns throughout the world. The barrels are jointed by means of bifurcated semi-circular slots cut into both sides of the monobloc which give the gun a lower profile than generally possible with an underpinned over-and-under shotgun and I like bifurcated jointing for improved balance and swing.

Receiver

With a matte deep blued finish the receiver is plain yet appealing with brand and model stamped on either side as well as in gold on the underside which contrasts well, and being a bifurcated jointed gun the receiver profile is quite low with standard width for a 12-gauge. The metal-to-metal surfaces are well joined without gaps and absolutely no movement in the barrels when fitted to the receiver in what is another testimony to CNC technology.

Design of the top lever and safety catch-cum-barrel selector are good with barrels dropping from the action with moderate force on the top lever. The safety catch slides forward to engage the firing mechanism and when pushed to the rear of the top tang the gun's in the 'safe' position. I liked the mechanical triggers as these offer the chance of a second shot regardless of a misfire with the first barrel, a delight for hunters and a positive for the Sporting Clays shooter.

Design of the non-adjustable triggerfoot is excellent and comfortable with its broad surface, the triggerguard sufficiently large to accommodate those who prefer shooting gloves. Trigger pulls were measured at 1.35kg (3lb) for the over barrel and 1.2kg (2lb 10oz) for the under, a tad on the light side but quite safe for fast and positive release.



Close-up of the generous fore-end chequering.

Stock and fore-end

Made from Grade 3 walnut with striking character and appealing grain structure, the fore-end and stock are given an oiled finish with chequering around 18 lines/inch and generous for a firm grip. The Yildiz Sporter is fitted with an adjustable combpiece which makes it conveniently adjustable for most shooters, both lateral and vertical tweaks done via the Allen keys provided. The test gun was supplied with a right-hand stock though a left-handed version is also available.

I was pleased to note a substantial recoil pad to soak up the effect of semi-magnum 3" loads used for hunting or shooting hyper-velocity steel shot loads with speeds approaching 1700fps in waterfowling. Apart from its primary function of absorbing recoil from such heavy field loads the secondary job of a recoil pad is to maintain positive gun mount, enabling the stock to remain in precisely the same position on the shoulder while both shots are fired and the pad fitted performed both admirably.

In the field

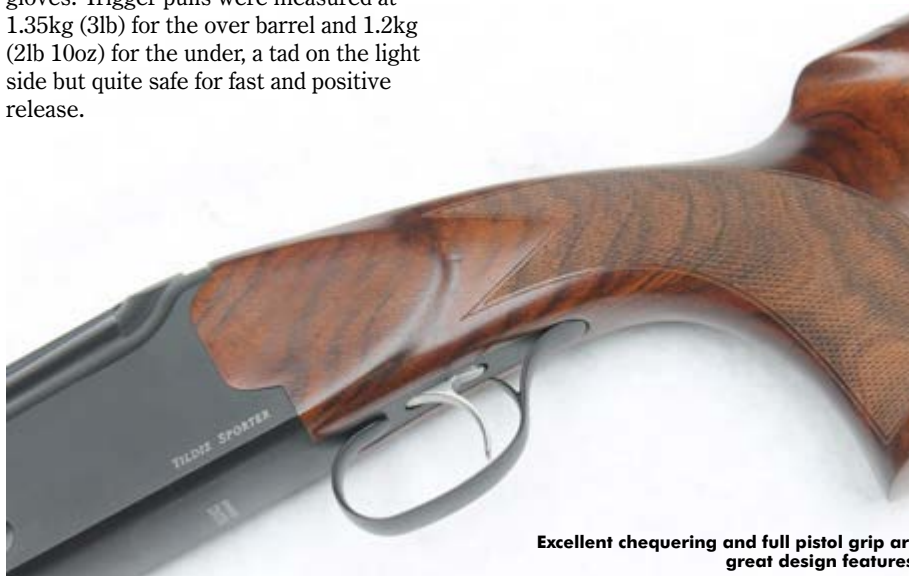
The Australian-designed Yildiz Sporter acquitted itself well as an entry level firearm for either Sporting Clays or hunting and tests at the Frankston Field and Game ground proved challenging in strong winds



Both ejectors are solidly made and push empty cases well free of the breech.

which made targets tricky. Using the supplied Aguila loads was a treat as many targets were turned to dust, the gun swung well and was lively enough and the chokes, although shorter than the present trend, smashed the clays. I didn't manage to use the longer half-choke and full-choke tubes but imagine they'd be ideal on rabbits, hares or foxes.

In conclusion, at \$1495 warranted for three years and supplied with a fitted ABS case along with all accessories and instruction booklet, the Yildiz Sporter probably offers the best value in an entrance level sporting shotgun with the adjustable comb a real bonus. Once again I found a product from a quality Turkish manufacturer is challenging many of the far more established brands from Italy and elsewhere and Yildiz is certainly among the front-runners. ●



Excellent chequering and full pistol grip are great design features.

Specifications:

Manufacturer: Yildiz, Turkey
Distributor: Raytrade www.raytrade.com.au
Overall length: 1200mm/47¼"
Overall weight: 3.65kg/8lb 2oz
Barrel length: 760mm/30"
Barrel weight: 1.56kg/3lb 7oz
Bore size: Under 0.727"; Over 0.727"
Chamber: 12-gauge, 76mm/3"
Chokes: 5x43mm - Cylinder: 0.725", Imp. Cylinder: 0.710", Modified: 0.700", Imp. Modified: 0.690", Full: 0.680", 2x68mm - Modified: 0.690", Full: 0.680"
Trigger pulls: Over 1.35kg/48oz, Under 1.20kg/42oz
Stock dimensions: Length of pull: 370mm/14½", drop at comb adjustable, drop at heel adjustable
RRP: About \$1495
Warranty: Three years



Strike it rich

New product an ideal gun cleaner, discovers Geoff Smith

This product protects all metals. It was developed for use by the US military but is suitable for a wide range of applications in engineering, automotive and other areas where moisture exclusion, rust prevention and lubrication are needed. The cleaner has, according to many testimonials published on their Australian website strikehold.com.au, been well received by shooters.

A review on US policing journal *Officer.com* says in relation to their involvement in the Middle East: "US troops were experiencing a weapon failure rate of almost 50 per cent due to a sandy desert environment. As a result, several Major Generals requested a solution from Michael Huggard (formerly of the 504th Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division) who engineered a product called StrikeHold and after using this product the failure rate was reduced to nearly zero." (April 30, 2020).

Where oils attract grit and clog up the works of military firearms, StrikeHold apparently doesn't as it dries off yet retains its lubrication properties. Accompanied by other glowing reviews, this liquid is available in a variety of different-sized containers to suit numerous uses with the manufacturer claiming it penetrates the surface of metals and dries out electrical connections without leaving obvious residues or harming rubber, paint or plastic.

To suit shooters in particular, supplied samples are in 2oz (59ml) plastic bottles

fitted with a spray pump and initial tests certainly show the product is effective as a cleaner on several of my handguns and immediately cured some squeaky items which had been annoying me around the house for months.

The instructions suggest it should be sprayed on and as you wipe it off any dirt or residues come with it. Soot on the cylinder faces of several revolvers and within the slides of self-loading handguns showed this works well, and I also sprayed it into the barrels of quite a few handguns after using them and found it gave good results at loosening soot and powder fouling. Similarly when sprayed on and left, it dries and leaves a visibly undetectable film which nevertheless reduces surface friction.

StrikeHold comes with some warnings about contact with the skin and eyes as well as breathing the fumes as it contains perchloroethylene which is widely used as a dry cleaner and solvent, along with petroleum distillates that include the 'nano technology' ingredients providing the lubrication, corrosion inhibition and water repellent properties. Perchloroethylene is a non-flammable liquid that evaporates at 121 degrees C and is heavier than water (specific gravity 1.6).

Apart from its benefits in firearm cleaning it's also of particular use with electrical and automotive equipment, having high dielectric strength and moisture exclusion and can also be handy for everyday

tasks such as squeaky hinges, fishing reels and so on.

Having used the product for several weeks in gun cleaning and around the workshop, its performance is quite impressive. Winter time in the workshop is a nightmare for steel surfaces and my four-jaw lathe chuck, which doesn't enjoy a lot of use these days, had developed a fine red film of surface rust. I sprayed it with StrikeHold and left it for several days after which the rust disappeared.

Other older hand tools which had lain dormant for some time were also treated and results were equally encouraging so, leading on from this, I decided to conduct a couple of simple experiments involving rust and corrosion prevention. I took some scrap steel strips and after finishing them to a bright finish, treated half with a spray of StrikeHold and the remainder left untreated. One pair were suspended in fresh rainwater for a fortnight, another pair left out in the winter weather and a third pair exposed to salt and moisture and hung in the air of my workshop.

The treated strips remained essentially unharmed by the elements while those left untreated showed various levels of rusting, the salt-exposed strips faring worst of all. More information on StrikeHold container sizes and prices is available from their website, but the 59ml (2oz) spray bottle tested here has an RRP of \$9.37. ●

Walk the walk

Budget boots have it all, reckons Derek Nugent

I'm sure many of us are seeing our annual hunting budget slowly shrinking in response to current economic conditions, so now more than ever there's a need to source value for money when gearing up for a trip and replacing or updating equipment. Boots are one of those essential items which wear over time and need replacing and the options available seem to grow exponentially every year, leading to a quite daunting array of choices.

Consequently I'm an avid reader of equipment reviews, including those on boots, but the number of times I've thought to myself 'those sound good' only to discover at the end of the review the RRP is \$300 or \$400-plus is disappointingly frequent. This prompted me to discuss the virtues of hunting boots I've consistently used for decades, not just because of their reliability and durability but also their budget-friendly cost. I'm referring to Terra Combat boots by Redback.

Background

Redback Boots is 100 per cent Australian and one of the largest footwear manufacturers in the nation, proudly proclaiming they 'handle the boots from the hide to the box'. The company started making boots for specific heavy industrial purposes and first responders before extending their range to include general purpose, industrial, hiking, hospitality and casual footwear. They've been making boots for the Australian Defence Force (ADF) since 1998 and also supply the US military's non-combat personnel, the boots being manufactured to Defence specifications and over the years have evolved in response to changes in technology and end-user feedback.

Hence there are five variations available depending on year of manufacture. Terra boots first saw service with the ADF during the International Force East Timor (InterFET) deployment in 1999 and as of today the Redback Terra-style boot (since 2017 known as the Tactic Combat) is still standard issue. But soldiers can (since 2011) elect to either wear Terras or self-equip from a list of approved boots which includes offerings by Altama, Danner, Meindl, Lowa and Garmont.



Brand new Terras.

There are only two ways to lay your hands on Terra Combat boots, either by joining the ADF and having them issued (perhaps a tad extreme) or buying a pair through an Army Disposals outlet and even though I've done a stint in the Australian Army myself, nowadays I source my replacement Terras via the latter option.

Specifications

Terra Combat boots are made of what's promoted as waterproof breathable leather, both kangaroo (side panels and tongue) and full-grain bovine (all structural areas). Termed 'all weather leather' it's had waterproofing agents added during the tanning process which results in low maintenance and high performance. Each boot weighs a modest 1kg and is orthopedically designed to reduce foot fatigue and any resultant leg or back pain, the dual-density nitrile rubber vulcanised sole featuring millions of tiny air bubbles to give enhanced shock absorption and energy return, allowing for comfortable trekking over many hours.

The outsole is aggressive in design for superior grip and durability, being chemical and acid resistant and heat-resistant to 200C degrees. Boots are available in 43 sizes (equivalent to US 3-16 or UK 2-15) but use the Mondopoint sizing system whereby the length and width of your foot is used to determine the most appropriate size, for example mine is 260/94.

Conveniently, most length sizes are coupled with up to three width options for a comfortable 'tuned' fit. Redback itself advertises a host of technological qualities as enhancing the flexibility and durability of its Terra boots including:

- Non-magnetic and corrosion-resistant speed lacing hardware and dual tension locking cleat system as used in premium hiking boots.
- Breather holes for rapid water expulsion.
- Padded collar for comfort and leg seal.
- Padded, removable tongue inserts for



Aggressive tread pattern for a sure grip.

- comfort and fit adjustment.
- Shock absorber footbed with contoured heel cup, arch support and ventilation holes for comfort, support and hygiene.
- Superior heel support for enhanced long-lasting lateral stability.
- Anatomic support via insole and ladder shank giving extra torsion strength and arch/tendon back-up.

Personal experience

As stated Terra Combat boots have been my 'go to' option for many years. There's nothing flashy or trendy about them, they are what they are - a simple, rugged, dependable and durable boot at a budget price. I buy mine new from an online disposal site for \$40 plus \$20 postage though pricing does vary with size and you can pay up to \$110 a pair plus postage for larger sizes. Mine tend to cop a hiding so after about eight years' hard graft in the field, given the price, I roll over to a new pair which means at any given point I've a well-worn pair for the garden, a just-retired still serviceable reserve pair in camp for emergencies and a new pair for hunting.

It's not that the boots are worn out at this point, far from it as they've years left in them, it's just that I've evolved a replacement cycle which suits my needs. Some

may question this approach but remember I could if I wanted have five sets of new boots, equivalent to a minimum of 40 years hunting use, for the cost of a single pair of \$300 'brand name' boots.

They're comfortable to wear in the field, a snug fit with good ankle and calf support and the light weight means you can wear them all day in any terrain and weather conditions without fear of fatigue, injury or failure. I've worn mine from Cape York to the Brisbane Valley, on flood plains, in paperbark swamps and atop timbered ridgelines in all weather without complaint.

They're not so precious you ever have to consciously avoid particular scenarios or usages for fear of causing damage, though having said that I will caution that although highly water resistant they're not totally waterproof, particularly as they age. Over time with regular use and in inclement weather they may eventually allow some water to penetrate but I've seen this happen to those more highly-fancied boots of my hunting companions too.

In my experience this is a minor irritation rather than a deal breaker and to counter it I apply a commercial waterproofing compound to mine and also wear Sealskinz waterproof/breathable socks to help keep my feet dry, though if we're being honest we all know

that during some hunts wet feet inevitably come with both the trophy and the territory.

Parting recommendation

Redback Terras aren't for everyone as like all equipment it comes down to preference and cost benefit analysis yet I can't fault my Terras as hunting boots, particularly at their current price point. Given some of my life choices I've always had an affinity with military gear and reason if it's good enough for the army it's good enough for me. Military kit is by its nature utilitarian with everything superfluous stripped away to leave durable, dependable and capable gear eminently fit for purpose and this is definitely my experience with Redback Terra Combat boots.

There's nothing flashy here but they can be relied on to get you there and back and do it time after time for years on end. Sure there are more highly regarded hunting boots, longer-lasting, better waterproofed and with the latest in materials and design technology but they come at a cost which might make the average recreational hunter gasp in disbelief. Terras are offered at a reasonable and enticing price and represent excellent value for money. I've never regretted this modest investment in the hunting successes they provide and recommend them wholeheartedly. ●

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That's a load off my mind

Joe Norris had his work cut out with a Martini-Henry

I'm lucky enough to own a Martini artillery carbine in 577/450 complete with the correct bayonet, a savage-looking thing almost as long as the rifle. I'm not a black powder fan, preferring to avoid the corrosive stuff probably because of the cleaning process involved in ridding it of the residue. This isn't a problem with my muzzleloader as the barrel comes out with the removal of two wedges and it's no bother to put it in a bucket of hot water and scrub out all the crud after a shooting session.

Yet the Martini's a different proposition as the barrel can only be cleaned from the front. To put it in hot water requires the whole rifle to be stripped so the action, body and chamber can be submerged while the barrel is scrubbed, something I don't do for fun.

I slugged the barrel using a soft-lead .45-calibre projectile left from the days when I took part in IPSC pistol competitions. The barrel was well over the nominated .450" of the calibre so I contacted Cast Bullet Engineering and bought a mould in .468" and 480gr suitable for the Martini-Henry. Using soft lead I cast a load of projectiles, stood them in bees wax in a tray up to the crimp groove then using a cutter I turned on the lathe, I cut each projectile out of the wax once it had all cooled and so ended up with lubed projectiles I'd load as cast to ensure a good fit in the oversized bore of my carbine.

After searching online for 577/450 loading dies it became apparent I either took Lee dies or went overseas and had custom dies made and, not being overly wealthy, I opted for the locally available Lee set. The next problem was cases and this was solved with a phone call to good old Bertram Brass so 40 cases were soon at my door although they were \$11 each which meant I wasn't going to knock them around. I'd use 10 cases only for load development to avoid damaging any more during this process which meant the chronograph would only measure two of each load but since I was loading for signs of pressure it didn't matter too much initially.

The 577/450 cartridge was loaded originally with black powder but also with cordite towards the end of its service life so it can be filled with smokeless powder, I just had to figure out what powder and how much. After consulting all the specialists I could find, as well as all the reloading manuals I had to hand, it became clear this wasn't going to be easy and I was advised by a few people I spoke to that Trail Boss powder would be the way to go.

The first load I tried with Trail Boss was 29gr and filled the case to just below where the bullet base would be as per the advice of Trail Boss users and gunshop contacts. This load was way over pressure and when fired I'd to use the original clearing rod to tap out the fired cases while keeping pressure on the lever. Obviously there was a problem with the suggestions I'd been given about Trail Boss as it can be overloaded in the Martini-Henry cartridge, so I tried a lighter load of 25gr but this caused a lot of soot down the outside of the cases so this powder wasn't going to suit my purpose.

The only loading data I could find in any of my manuals was in the fifth edition of the ADI Powders Handloaders' Guide and this one listed 37gr of 2207 for 1300fps, so I thought I'd load a grain or two under and increase in one-grain increments until I either found difficult extraction/pressure

signs or reached the 1450fps the original cartridges were loaded for. As this load goes nowhere near satisfying the cavernous case of the Martini-Henry I filled the air space with cotton wool and used magnum primers to ensure the powder would ignite reliably.

The cases still weren't sealing up until I reached 36gr of 2207 and 1250fps as evidenced by the amount of soot on the outside of the cases. Extraction was easy and there were no signs of pressure so I continued the one-grain increases until I reached 42gr of 2207 for 1430fps and that's when I stopped load development as I was happy now and the original sights seemed to be fairly well regulated, therefore no need to load any heavier. Please note that while the loads listed were safe in my rifle



Top case showing damage from the full-length sizing die compared to an unfired.



Cast and lubed projectiles.



Joe's 577/450 Martini artillery carbine with correct bayonet.



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That's a load off my mind

I don't recommend them in other firearms without starting well below the 42gr of 2207 I ended up with. And don't opt for Trail Boss as I believe it's unsuitable for the Martini-Henry cartridge and I won't be using it in mine.

When I went to reload the 10 cartridges I was using for development it became apparent there were significant differences between the Lee full-length dies and chamber dimensions in my rifle as the die was damaging the cases down near the web, which would indicate my chamber was oversize and if I kept using the full-length die I'd ruin these expensive cases. There are no neck-sizing dies available that would allow me to load .468" projectiles without overworking the precious cases and even backing out the full-length die was still damaging them.

The only solution was to make my own die so I bought a couple of nuts and 1 1/4" bolts with 12 threads per inch and went to work. First I parted off the head of the bolt then drilled out the centre to half an inch because the 15/32" projectile would still be held sufficiently by a case necked down to a half-inch. Because the cases come well above the top of my Rock Chucker press I'd have to build a die that would be adjustable so the case could enter the die when the press was at its full stroke and then be set so only the neck was sized.

This was achieved by drilling out the body of the die so the case in the shell holder would only just enter the honed section that was sized to .500" and stop at the start of the shoulder giving a full neck



size. Next I needed something that would let me set the correct depth on the die so it could just be spun into the press and used instead of having to be set up each time I needed it. I put one of the nuts in the lathe and parted it off, giving me a locking ring with enough width to drill and tap it to fit a grub screw so the depth could be set. Then I needed a de-capping pin and the recent purchase of a box of old super Simplex dies from the SSAA Gun Sales website provided me with a de-capping pin long enough to do the job (this was once I'd parted the 58/24 thread section off the original die and tapped my new die to take it).

The moment of truth came when I ran the first case into the new die after ensuring it was well lubed. I held my breath as I pushed the handle down on the big press but didn't feel anything untoward as the shell disappeared into the die and the fired primer fell into the catch tray. As the handle was raised I was pleased to see a perfectly neck-sized case appear and what a relief that was.

I used the flaring die in the original Lee set to put just enough flare on the mouth to allow the oversized projectile to start and after repriming the case and charging it with 42gr of 2207 and cotton wool, seated the projectile in the original Lee seating die. The resulting bullet looked the business but would it chamber? I took my rifle out the back and chambered the round with the muzzle pointed down the paddock. Everything worked as it was meant to so I went ahead and loaded the remaining cases and all I need now is the chance to hunt something with the rifle. ●



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The appearance of this young stag out of the blue was a pleasant surprise.

Close encounters

Leon Wright recalls some unusual deer sightings

Now I've taken my share of sambar stags but surprisingly what has stuck with me longest have been close encounters with various deer species and the unexpected places I've come across them. Not so long ago my brother and I were set up in our camo blind in late afternoon, overlooking a bush-lined paddock suffering the night-time ravages of sambar. Rugged up against the impending cold I muttered low curses as I pulled off my gloves and settled the .300 Winchester Magnum on the bamboo shooting sticks as my brother whispered: "There's one heading down the fence line."

Expecting to align the sights on a sambar hind I was taken aback when a fallow stag came trotting into view. It was the last thing I expected to see as during the 15 or so years I hunted these properties I'd never seen a fallow, let alone a stag. "Are you going to shoot it?" asked my brother. "Nah, he'll probably move on," I replied and with that I lifted the bolt on my rifle.

That incident reminded me I've seen deer in places you'd least expect them and on our last pig-hunting trip out from Cobar in Outback New South Wales, the farmer told us there were quite a few pigs about though what interested us more was the news there were also deer and we were

welcome to shoot them. I suppose a grain farmer is less than impressed when a herd of deer moves in on his growing crop and would be pleased to see them removed, so we assured him if we came across any we'd do something about it.



Leon and his Curly, Missy, check out a stand after a reported pig sighting.

Two days later we encountered a couple of does which had just cleared a fence bordering the bush line and his crop and after some quick work with the Tikka T3 in 22.250 we had them both on the ground. It was certainly the last place I expected to find chital deer and then I recalled the farmer saying previous hunters had shot another one which was unusual to him so with curiosity getting the better of us we went looking for its carcass the next day.

We discovered it lying beside a fence line towards the back of the property and were amazed to find it was a sambar stag, an old one a long way from his so-called home range. To have wandered that far without being shot was amazing and at least those who took him had done the right thing and harvested as much meat as possible.

I've personally shot sambar beside the Murray River a long way from their recognised haunts though with National Parks bordering the Murray for much of its length that's not such a shock. One day in late afternoon as my wife and I were driving down the freeway just south of Benalla in Victoria we saw two sambar hinds in a paddock but their usual territory wasn't that far away.

Our last sambar hunt found us once again huddled together trying to keep




warm in a flimsy camo blind as a couple of hinds arriving in the paddock were quick to pick us out and started making a racket with continuous barking as they moved back up the hill. "That's torn it, we may as well head back to camp and warm up by the fire," I said and agreeing with me, my brother packed up and as we walked he pointed up the hill and said: "Do you see that deer?" Sure enough a young stag appeared from nowhere, remarkable considering the ruckus the departing hinds

had made and as he was wandering along without a care in the world I had time for a quick shot after settling in behind the sticks, the stag folding to a fatal chest shot.


The list goes on like the time a mate and I were searching for a sambar stag we knew was living in a particular section of the bush. We set off early and while all the sign was fresh we couldn't find him. I went my own way and a short time later a sunny spot on the hillside proved too much of a temptation and I was soon asleep beside the creek


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Close encounters

with the stag also dozing in the bracken no more than 50m away. Haden had a shot after he'd flushed it from its bed as he came down the hillside hollering for me. Did I cop a mouthful? You bet!

And it's not only sambar we've had strange encounters with as there have been fallow deer too. One day I made an early start and after separating from Haden, moved to a game trail which led to a clearing where fallow were known to feed. Decked out fully in camo gear, gloves and face mask I'd settled down beside the game trail and just as first light started to break, movement further along the trail had me peering intensely into the gloom as a fallow doe came into view. It wasn't until it was a mere 20m from me it realised something was amiss yet instead of fleeing it started advancing cautiously towards me then at just a couple of metres away it stopped, stretched out its neck and took a big sniff of me and bolted.

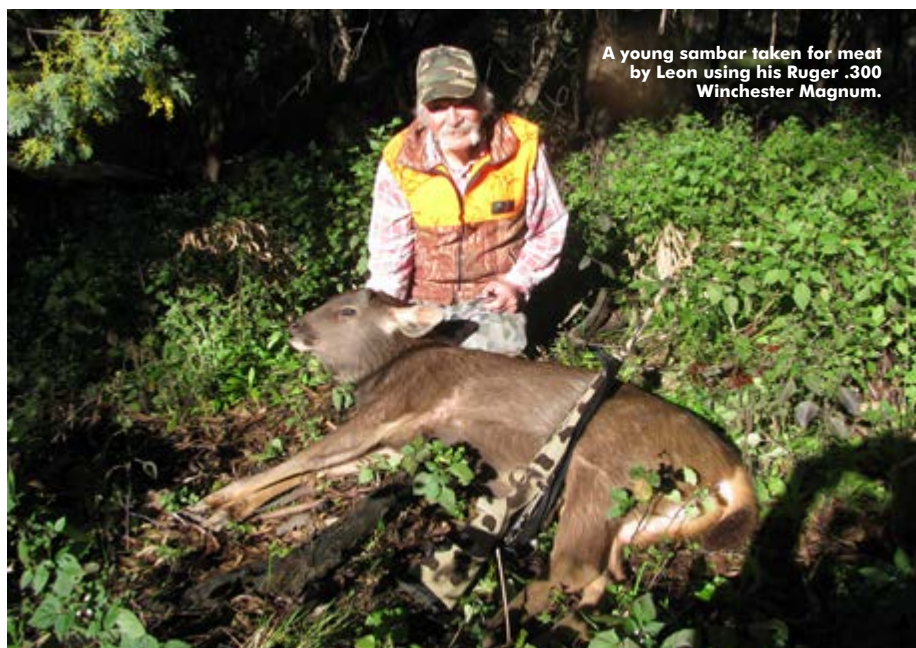
Then there was the time when Haden and I, tired after a long hunt on a hot day, decided to have lunch in the shade of tree ferns bordering a creek. We were munching away at peace with the world when from the corner of my eye I saw a fallow doe appear no more than 15m away. It wandered over to the creek and started drinking and alerting Haden to its presence with a nod of the head, we watched while it quenched its thirst with neither of us even considering reaching for a rifle.

Not so the time we were after sambar in mid-summer. It was late afternoon with the temperature in the high 30s and too

hot to be roaming around the hills. We were sitting in Haden's 4x4 listening to the radio when fate played a part. "Hand me the rifle," I said, which he did with a questioning look. I poked it out the window, quietly loaded, aimed and fired, dropping a sambar hind feeding on blackberry bushes by the creek 20m away. I know it wasn't sporting but it had the desired effect of harvesting the venison we were after.

On a subsequent hunt we were seeking another meat animal and as it was Haden's turn to take the shot I didn't even load my rifle, confident in his ability to finish

the job. We were working our way round the contour of the hill, high enough so we could keep an eye on the clearings below us and, as expected, soon spotted fallow moving just ahead of us. On eyeing the deer Haden lined one up but didn't fire. "What's the hold-up?" I asked. "I can't shoot, he's wearing a green collar," came the reply. These are just a few episodes from a long list and are the reason why I still hunt deer. Sure it's an experience to deck a stag but to me it's these unusual outings that have me reminiscing more. ●



A young sambar taken for meat by Leon using his Ruger .300 Winchester Magnum.

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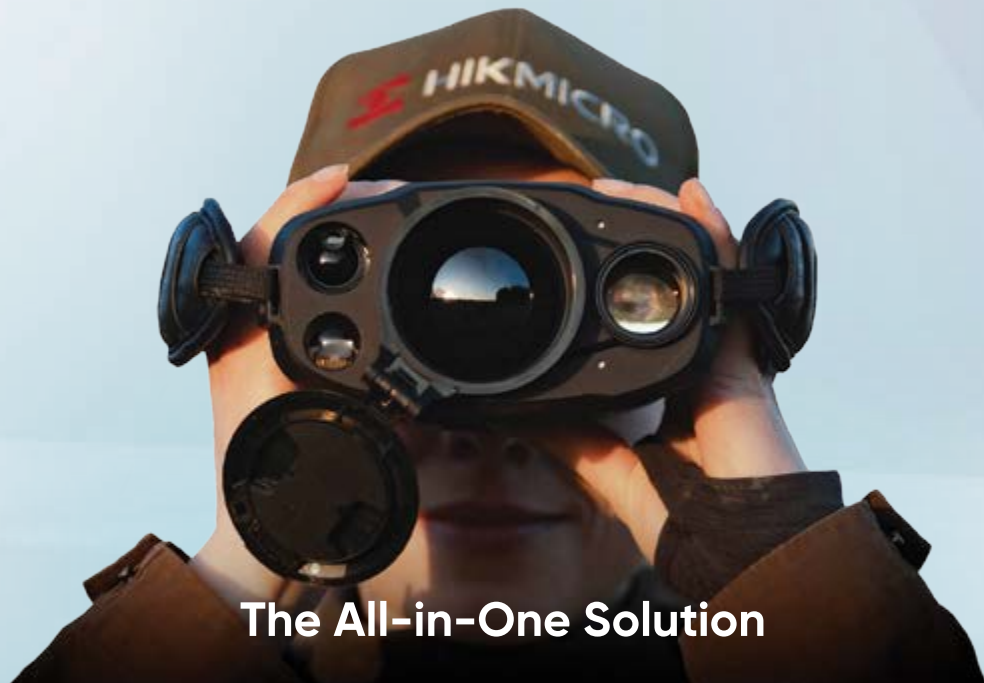
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Adapting to change

Hands-free bino use a boon for hunters, says Chris Redlich

Innovation is often the answer to the need for a practical solution and Spartan Precision are no strangers to responding by design. A few months ago I reviewed their brilliant range of carbon fibre composite bipods (April 2022 *Australian Shooter*) and their answer to the demand for a binocular mount was revealed to me at a recent NIOA products display in the shape of Spartan Precision's new binocular adapter which I was keen to take a closer look at.

So simple by design the adapter is basically a clamp which fits over the end of most binocular lens barrels of 45-65mm diameter, the metallic component of the adapter clamp being CNC machined from high-strength aerospace aluminium and protected by a hard-wearing black anodised finish. The adapter consists of machined rebates which precisely accept the locating lugs of a strap or 'tightening toggle', the strap 12mm wide and made of heavy duty braided nylon and securely stitched at all hinge points.

Attaching the adapter to the lens barrels is a breeze and done by fixing it to the outer and underside of either left or right objectives. This position locates the female spigot recess centrally and the strap toggle externally. To custom fit the adapter, remove any excessive slack from the strap by drawing the loose end through the buckle, noting that overtightening may

crush or damage the binocular armour coating so a snug fit from the strap is all that's needed. The toggle fastens by way of a camming action and tightening to the lens barrel is completed by simply clamping down the strap toggle. At just 98 grams all up the adapter adds negligible weight to the binoculars and its low-profile design means there's no obstruction with most harnesses.

The patented spigot is the beating heart of Spartan Precision's design and within the female recess of the adapter is a steel receiver designed to mate precisely to the magnetic spigot of their new Davros Head, also made from aerospace grade aluminium and weighing a mere 115grams. The base includes a $\frac{3}{8}$ "-16 thread for mounting to Spartan Precision tripods and $\frac{1}{4}$ "-20 thread sleeve for retro mounting to most shooting sticks and standard camera tripods.

The Davros Head magnetic spigot can be angle-adjusted within the body mount by undoing the large locking ring, enabling universal adjustment for correct angle placement and full 360-degree rotation of the binoculars when fully mounted to a tripod. Once the locking ring is tightened the entire mount provides a rock solid platform for movement-free viewing. Additionally, the Davros Head is widely used for steady rifle shooting off support sticks and tripods, adding to its versatility.

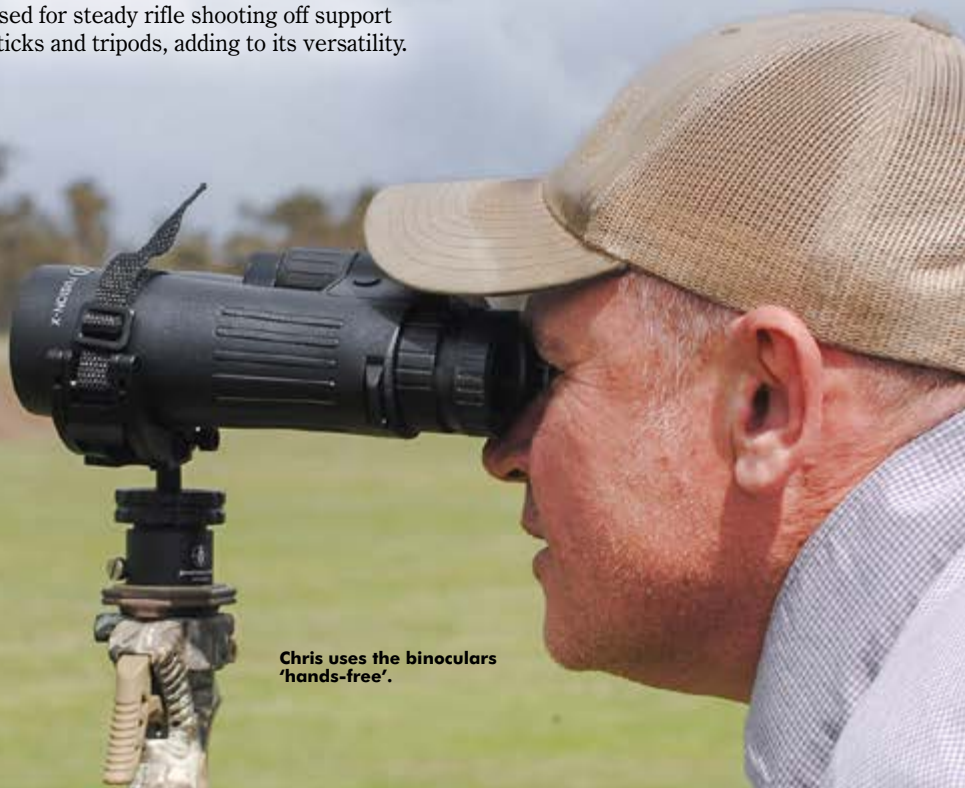
Straight to the point

Like all Spartan Precision products the excellence is in the detail and although their Davros Head and new binocular adapter are basic by design, they're extremely practical and an ideal solution for providing a steady binocular rest. For a quality British-made product that's been designed with hunters in mind the Davros Head and binocular adapter would be a welcome addition to your hunting kit. For stockists, availability and more visit Australian distributors NIOA at www.nioa.com.au. ●

The Davros Head can be retro-fitted to a variety of aftermarket tripods, shooting sticks and Spartan tripods.



The adapter securely fastens the Burris 10x42 RF binoculars to the Davros Head and tripod.



Chris uses the binoculars 'hands-free'.

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This deer was shot using a .270 Winchester from a Ruger rifle.

Hit *and* miss

Not all hunting trips will be good ones, warns John Hill

As had been the case previously, that year's SSAA SHOT Expo in Melbourne was well worth a visit. I didn't spend much money even though many of the exhibitors tried their hardest to sell me something but what those salespeople didn't know was I have great self-control when it comes to not buying things I don't really need. At one site there was a video showing a hunter sneaking up on a rather nasty-looking scrub bull and while watching this I became aware of someone standing next to me and a quick glance immediately identified him as the man on-screen as he was dressed in a similar manner.

I suspected I was about to be given a big sales pitch for a Northern Territory safari but before he could get a word in I turned to him and said: "The video doesn't show the heat, the flies or taipans and death adders." He smiled without replying then stood next to someone else so perhaps I spoilt his day or maybe I saved him some time, who knows?

And it's about hunting in remote northern areas that leads me to my sponsored junior shooter at the time, Kane, who's no longer a junior now he's turned 18. During the past few years I've seen him progress from rifle range target shooting to hunting rabbits and foxes with a small centrefire which he reloads for. Now that he owns a set of wheels and has a full-time job he wants to venture further afield to hunt larger game such as deer, pigs, goats or whatever so in other words he'd like to be the man in the video, sneaking up on a mean old scrub bull.

It's lack of access to suitable properties that prevents Kane from climbing the hunting ladder so you can imagine his interest when I told him of an estate I know of in northern Queensland which is apparently crawling with wild pigs and possibly a few scrub bulls. While on a Queensland holiday I met with Eddie, a distant relative of mine, who worked on a cattle station in his younger days and was telling me he usually bought 200 rounds of centre-fire ammunition every other month in an attempt to reduce the wild pig population.

Eddie wasn't employed as a professional shooter as you may think, he was there to work the cattle and just picked off a few pigs in his spare time. He reckoned there'd be no problem fixing me up on this property if I wanted to check it out but there's one major drawback - both Kane and I live 3500km away in cloudy Victoria. Young Kane owns a non-turbo 4WD ute which has been decked out with a cabin-mounted spotlight and Big Iron rifle rest. The old Toyota has a comfortable cruising speed of about 90kph and using that figure I estimated he'd take the best part of two weeks and countless litres of diesel to drive to pig paradise and back.

Such a trip would make a big hole in any holiday entitlement (not to mention your wallet) and leave little time for hunting. Add up all the costs such as fuel, food, camping gear and everything else involved in a northern safari and the cost per pig (assuming some were shot) makes it a fairly expensive venture. But enough of young Kane and his dream of a northern safari. I had my turn at pig shooting many years ago

and it can be a real hit-and-miss affair as the following tale shows.

My first pig adventure was hastily arranged when a shooting mate invited me on an Easter hunt. He only gave me a few days to prepare and as I had just one rifle at the time (a Lithgow 10-shot repeater) I was reluctant to go but my mate assured me a shot level with the eye and below the ear would drop a pig even with a rimfire so I went along. Stan had a .303/22 and his boss, Arthur, a .303/25 so it was a reasonably armed party with exception of my .22 rimfire. We went to the Oxley area of New South Wales along the Lachlan River and camped on the bank, ready to hit the pigs next morning.

To cut a long story short that .22 rimfire wasn't much of a pig rifle and was used mostly to target a few tiger snakes back in the days when you were allowed to shoot them. There weren't even any rabbits I could shoot and I didn't cull many pigs, in fact I shot none but was impressed by the .303/25's performance more than the .303/22, the former firing an 87-grain bullet while the latter despatched a 45-grain bullet at roughly half the weight. The heavier bullet arrives at its destination with much more authority and I was enthralled to say the least. I watched Arthur drop numerous pigs and the .303/25 seemed to do it well so I was determined to have one of those rifles next time.

Arthur's .303/25 was an unusual rifle, a deluxe model based on an old .303 SMLE action and had a dust cover over the bolt with a safety catch on the bolt cocking

piece. It had a Monte Carlo butt with matching fore-end and also featured a sporting peep sight which appealed to me as I had one on my Lithgow rifle. I've never seen another like it and it struck me as a rifle I'd like to own.

My next assignment was more successful as I'd updated to a .303/25 which proved bad medicine for pigs both large and small and it was on this second outing I took a reasonable-sized boar and some little ones. We took home a few hams which was hardly worth the effort as my father's opinion of roasted wild pork was: "You needn't bother bringing any of those home." He said the same about my mountain duck, hard man to please was my dad.

There were four subsequent pig outings and all were dismal failures as far as I was concerned as while other members of my party managed to down a few porkers I always seemed to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. There was one exception when my mate disturbed a big black boar which dashed across my path offering a running shot at 70m though sadly the bullet lodged in a tree trunk and the big fella hurried on his way unscathed.

On one excursion my two shooting companions and I called into the Oxley pub for some light refreshments, my mates

ordering a beer while I as a non-drinker asked for lemon squash. Such a request in a country pub caught the barman unawares before he said: "I'll be back in a minute." He returned with a glass of water and half a lemon, the juice of which he squeezed into the glass (along with a few seeds) and had the gall to charge me the price of a beer for what amounted to a pot of cloudy water. It wasn't much of a drink but the mosquito wriggler swimming around the glass really took me by surprise, still there's nothing like a drink with a bit of body! The Oxley pub burned down a few years later and wasn't rebuilt so that ended my pig-shooting days and the total score I could count on one hand.

With the impetuosity of youth, Kane will doubtless go through the various aspects of hunting in order to build that array of experiences it has to offer and me telling him the odd pig or goat he may shoot could cost heaps will neither help nor hinder, he has to find out these things for himself and judge them accordingly. The point I'm trying to make from these ramblings is to impress upon new hunting pals that not all trips will be fun or have a happy outcome as bad weather, vehicle breakdowns, illness, sprained ankles, broken bones, even a snake bite or being gored by a pig will ruin any well-planned hunt.

But whether hunting trips are successful or otherwise the expense will be the same and even when shared with a few mates can still be costly. There's also the matter of personal comfort to consider on safari as things like wet sleeping bags, tacky food, sunburn, flies, mosquitoes, ants and ticks can all make life most unpleasant so any hunters contemplating an extended sojourn should be adequately prepared so these nasties don't ruin the experience.

• Footnote: Kane enjoyed some local success when he took a fallow deer in the nearby hills and also organised a pig shoot where he snared a few porkers so is well on the way to becoming a hunter, which pleases me no end. ●



Young Kane with his first deer taken in the Pyrenees ranges that run through Central Victoria.

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Forward-thinking

Introducing newcomers secures the future of our sport, says Derek Nugent

One of the most effective strategies for promoting hunting and shooting as a sport and ensuring its ongoing acceptance in the wider community is to take every opportunity to introduce newcomers to our chosen pursuit, something particularly important in the face of orchestrated woke agendas targeting our choice to own and use firearms.

The old axiom that 'experience is the best teacher' is indeed true and manifests itself in the passing-on of hunting lore and hard-won knowledge to eager recipients. Not just the natural exchange of practical wisdom from father to son or grandfather to granddaughter, but also that between the experienced hunter and novice friend with a desire to learn the ropes and have a go in the field.

I often muse over the fact that had it not been for the investment of time and energy by a mentor some 35 years ago, I'd never have had the chance to embark on the deer hunting odyssey which is now so much a part of my lifestyle and indeed my son's. So naturally when the opportunity arose to reciprocate and step up to provide another shooter with the same courtesy extended to me all those years ago I eagerly agreed and, at that, Peter and I shook hands and headed out on his first red deer hunt.

Coincidental acquaintances

It's amazing how small the world really is. Unknowingly I'd worked with Peter's brother for about a decade and my wife had worked with his wife for a similar period yet our paths had never crossed. Being a SSAA member and frequent participant in Service Rifle shoots, Peter was already well qualified as a rifleman and pig hunter but nursed a strong, unfulfilled desire to expand into the realms of deer hunting. The penny finally dropped when the connection was made between the Nugent writing articles for *Australian Shooter* and the Nugent on the fringes of his family connections so subsequently an expression of interest was communicated, an invitation extended and a deer hunt planned.

On the drive to my block I quickly formed the opinion that Peter was indeed a 'good bloke' as we seemed to share the same view of the world and a similar set of hunting ethics, an essential basis for any lasting hunting association. Once on site we completed a few mundane tasks around camp and by mid-afternoon embarked on a circuit walk to position some trail cameras and set ourselves up in a couple of hides for the afternoon.

I put Peter in a stand overlooking a track intersection which my trail cams



Peter packs out the venison.

had previously identified as a hot-spot for deer and wild dogs then moved off to a blind perusing a well-frequented wallow. Unfortunately nothing materialised during the few hours we put in, although right on dark a deer did ghost past me and down into the wallow but it was too late to assess its potential and certainly too dark to risk a shot.

A not-so-early start

Back at camp we set up for a meal, a few beers and a chat around the fire and were soon engaged in the relaxed banter which typifies such scenarios. We discussed rifles and calibres, hunting experiences, equipment preferences, safe protocols and most importantly the habits and likely behaviour of red deer and the tactics we'd use during the morning stalk to hopefully outwit

and ground a meat animal. My plan was to locate deer grazing in the open, warm and sunlit faces of several ridgelines and being winter I was confident they'd be out and about until mid-morning, enjoying the growing warmth of the day before bedding down with a bellyful of feed. My firm belief was the deer would be doing exactly what the cattle were so with this in mind we rose somewhat late and weren't afield until 7.30.

It was an ideal winter's morning, calm and clear as we stalked through to the wallow and sure enough there were fresh deer prints surrounding it, possibly from the animal I'd encountered the previous evening. Since a slight breeze had developed we scooted along a dozer track to be under the wind then stalked back through some open country and no sooner had we crested the ridge than we spotted a small mob of cattle and, grazing beyond them in an adjacent paddock at about 250m, a lone yearling doe. She was a perfect freezer-filler and good first animal for Peter. By now we'd been on the go for two hours.

Game, set and match

Our first decision was whether to edge along the ridge just inside the lantana line and close the distance for a shot or retreat to the dozer track and approach the animal from a different angle entirely. Option one would mean moving past the cattle and hoping they didn't spook or give us away, while option two meant losing sight of the deer and hoping she wouldn't graze off. The other complicating factor was the distinct likelihood she may not be alone and other more alert deer could be ranging nearby, so we decided to chance option two and 10 minutes later were climbing back up the ridge in anticipation of having bypassed the cattle and flanked the deer.

As we crested the ridge and knelt in the last belt of lantana I could see we were in a perfect position, luck was with us and a deer was happily grazing about 25m ahead of us blissfully unaware. Whether it was the same animal or confirmation of my hunch that other deer were around was immaterial, our decision had been the right one. We'd been able to move quickly and efficiently to approach the deer undetected and afford Peter a straightforward shot which he duly took.

In a matter of minutes we were field-stripping the carcass of venison that would fill Peter's freezer and he was understandably beaming at having grounded his first red deer. I did caution him on thinking they were always that cooperative but don't you just love it when a plan comes to fruition?



Wild dogs on the track intersection.



As the doe fell.

A willing convert

Having butchered and iced the venison we did a quick clean-up at camp and started the drive back to Toowoomba. Our trip had been a great success, not only from the point of view of harvesting an animal but, more importantly, it had confirmed that Peter would make a solid hunting companion.

He'd shown himself to be enthusiastic without being cocky, safe and steady in his handling of a rifle, keen to learn and able to take advice without resentment. Over time Peter will develop into a fine deer hunter and

in turn will pass his passion on to his own sons as the cycle is perpetuated to the benefit of our sporting community as a whole.

Embracing the opportunity to introduce new shooters to the various and diverse elements of our sport is the only way forward if our pastime is to be sustained into the future. In the interim I'm happy to continue to pay it forward, hunting with Peter and passing on whatever he chooses to draw from my experience, though next time we might make it a bit more of a challenge for him by targeting a trophy stag. ●



Fresh deer prints in the wallow.



Action from the second run in the Intermediate stake.



Sherlock the Clumber Spaniel in full flow during the Test stake.



Participants in action during the inaugural training day.

Gundogs

making their mark in Tassie

The most recent addition to shooting in Tasmania is a Working Gundogs Association of Australia division who've been granted branch status by SSAA (Tas) and held their inaugural training day at Campbell Town about 130km from Hobart.

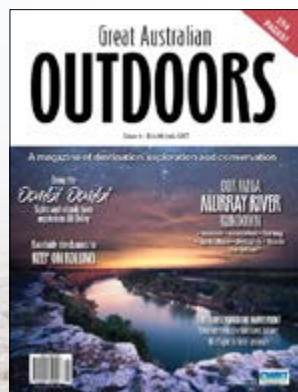
In what was a pleasant surprise for organisers, around 40 people with more than 20 dogs turned up for that first training session with subsequent editions at Test and Intermediate level attracting more and more newcomers keen to become involved retrieving-wise as well as in obedience lessons and generally just enjoying time with their dogs and other participants.

The club held its inaugural trial in the Ross area with the first judges being Paul Littlejohn overseeing the Test stake along with Byron Kendall judging the Intermediate, Advanced and Open stakes. Support from members engendered some real camaraderie which, along with the judges' relaxed attitude, made for an enjoyable event all round.

A total of 31 entrants contested the four stakes with the biggest turnout coming at beginner's level (Test) where 11 dogs started and eight passed the three retrieves, one of which was in water. The success which the event brought then led to a second trial and to witness the

progress being made by both dogs and handlers alike has been extremely encouraging for all concerned.

And with a contingency of Queenslanders making the effort to travel to Tasmania to support the fledgling club, a bit of interstate rivalry has already been established with a State of Origin-type competition developing in the Advanced stakes. All of which means the future of the Working Gundogs discipline in the island state looks assured and an open invitation has been tabled to SSAA members nationwide to become involved. Contact wgaatas@gmail.com ●



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National

SSAA Gallery Rifle National Championships

March 18-19, 2023

SSAA Blue Hills, Copping, Tas. Program: March 17 - Practice; March 18 - 50m Precision, Multi-Target, Time & Precision I, 1500 Match. March 19 - 1020 Match in Classic Class. Facilities: Camping, canteen, Saturday night barbecue (\$15). Contact: Don Robinson 0428 986 070 or Davd Moulton David.M@ssaabluehills.org.au

SSAA Muzzleloading National Championships

April 6-10, 2023

Wanneroo Shooting Complex, Pinjar, WA
Program: Thursday, April 6: Practice day. Extensive program, see National website for full event list. Facilities: Limited catering only, limited camping and caravan sites, showers. Presentation dinner on April 10. Contact: Bob Boyd 0417 953 257 or Robertboyd@bigpond.com

SSAA Benchrest Centrefire National Championships

April 7-10, 2023

Dairyville Range, Coffs Harbour, NSW
Program: April 6: Practice, 7: Unlimited, 8: Light Benchrest, 9: Heavy Benchrest, 10: Sporter Benchrest. Nominations to ianbenchrest@gmail.com. Contact: Ian Thompson ianbenchrest@gmail.com

Rifle Metallic Silhouette National Championships

April 7-11, 2023

Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA
Program - April 7: Practice and scrutineering; April 8: 80-shot Air Rifle Silhouette; April 9: 80-shot Rimfire Silhouette Rifle; April 10: 80-shot Centrefire Silhouette Rifle; April 11: 40-shot Rimfire Hunting Rifle Silhouette, 40-shot Centrefire Hunting Rifle Silhouette. Facilities: Camping, cooking and toilets on-site. Contact: Paul Dunn Paul@compac.com.au or 0407 428 175.

Lever Action Silhouette National Championships

April 13-16, 2023

Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA
Program - April 13: Practice; April 14: Rifle Lever Action Silhouette (80 shots); April 15: Pistol Cartridge Lever Action Silhouette (80 shots); April 16: Rimfire Lever Action Silhouette (80 shots). Facilities: Camping with showers, toilets and barbecue, limited power, barbecue lunch supplied daily. Contact: Warren Goodfield 0407 440 431 laswa@iinet.net.au or David Brougham 0432 748 703 clas@iinet.net.au.

SSAA Benchrest Rimfire National Championships

April 13-16, 2023

Dairyville Range, Coffs Harbour, NSW
Program: April 12: Practice, 13: LRF Group, 14: HRF Group, 15: IRB Day One, 16: IRB Day Two. Nominations to ianbenchrest@gmail.com. Contact: Ian Thompson ianbenchrest@gmail.com.

Qld

Queensland NRA Pistol Metallic Silhouette Postal Shoots

All (SSAA) Qld branches with approval to shoot Postal Metallic Silhouette Program: Shoot 1: February 1-May 31; Shoot 2: April 1-July 31; Shoot 3: May 1-August 31; Shoot 4: August 1-November 30. See National website for full event details. Contact: Hazel Bozic (07)4128 0467 or pms@ssaqlld.org.au

SSAA (Qld) Gallery Rifle State Championships

April 1-2, 2023

SSAA Clermont, Qld
Program: April 1 - 50m Precision, Multi-Target, Timed & Precision I, 1500 Match. April 2 - 1020 Match in Classic and Open Class. Facilities: Camping with showers, canteen, breakfast and lunch both days and dinner on Saturday (meals cost extra). Contact: Don Robinson 0428 986 070 or Lloyd Martene 0429 831 052.

SSAA (Qld) Combined Services Postal Shoot

January 1-April 10, 2023

All SSAA Queensland branches
Program: See National website for full event details. Contact: Stephen Heidrich csd@ssaqlld.org.au

SSAA (Qld) Long Range Precision State Championships

May 26-29, 2023

SSAA Luna, Millmerran, Qld
Program: May 25: Range open for zero-checking; May 26: .22LR 100m on mini-core target, .22LR 200m on mini-core target; May 27: Centrefire 700m on core target, Centrefire 800m on Core target; May 28: Centrefire 900m on Core target, Centrefire 1000m on Core target. Facilities: Cabins and camping at Captains Mountain Range, bunkhouse \$15 a night, single cabin \$40 a night, double \$30 per person, campsite \$12 a night. Contact: Richard White (07) 4652 4270.

SA

SSAA (SA) Field Rifle, 3-P, Scoped Air Rifle and NRA Any Sight State Championships

March 11-12, 2023

Para Range, Greenwith, SA
Program: March 11: Field Rifle Rimfire, Field Rifle Centrefire. March 12: 3-P Rimfire, 3-P Centrefire. Facilities: Canteen, light meals, snacks, tea, coffee, drinks all day. Camping on range with showers, toilets and power. Contact: Paul Rawlings 0403 436 905.

SSAA (SA) Muzzleloading and Black Powder Cartridge Rifle State Championships

March 18-19, 2023

Gorge Road, Castambul, SA
Program: March 18: 200m Class 3 (Open) Benchrest Rifle, 200m Class 3 (Open) Prone Rifle, 50m Open Musket, 50m Lever Action Rapid Fire, 50m Class 1 (Military Rifle) or Class 2 (Traditional Round Ball) Offhand, 50m Class 4 (Flintlock Rifle) Offhand, 50m Any Muzzleloader or Black Powder Cartridge Rifle Shot in any position but benchrest, 50m Class 3 (Open) Offhand (Vetterli) 16:30pm. March 19: 100m Class

1 (Military Rifle) Benchrest, 100m Class 1 (Military Rifle) Prone, 100m Class 2 (Traditional Round Ball) Benchrest, 100m Class 2 (Traditional Round Ball) Cross Sticks, 100m Class 3 (Open Rifle) Benchrest, 100m Class 3 (Open Rifle) Prone (Whitworth), 100m Black Powder Cartridge Rifle Benchrest (ASSRA Target). Facilities: Saturday night barbecue, canteen facilities available. Contact: Tim Rogers 0417 498 684.

Tas

SSAA (Tas) Lever Action Silhouette State Championships

March 11-13, 2023

Westbury Shooting Club, Tas
Program: Saturday, March 11: Big Bore Lever Action Silhouette; March 12: Pistol Cartridge Lever Action Silhouette; March 13: Rimfire Lever Action Silhouette (all 80 shots). Facilities: Basic camping with toilets, tank water, no power. Entrance fee includes daily breakfast and lunch. Contact: Steve Collins 0459 834 885 or email admin@westburys shooting.club

Vic

SSAA (Vic) Single Action State Championships

March 9-13, 2023

Eagle Park Range, Little River, Vic
Program: March 9: R.O.2 Course. March 10: Long Range Rifle: Wild Bunch R.O. Course; R.O.1 Course; Wild Bunch (four stages) and warm-up stages. March 11: Shooters' briefing followed by four main stages; team event and speed events. March 12: Four main stages; side events. March 13: Four main stages followed by Top Gun shoot-out; presentations. Facilities: Free camping at Eagle Park with limited powered sites, toilets and showers. Contact: Tony Diablo 0419 187 980 diablo6@bigpond.com or Buck Silverton 0423 052 942 bucksilverton@outlook.com

WA

SSAA (WA) Lever Action Silhouette State Championships

July 6-10, 2023

Hedland Sporting Shooters, WA
Program: July 6: Practice. 7: Rifle Lever Action. 8: Pistol Cartridge. 9: Small Bore. WA State team selection will be on top 10 positions. Facilities: Canteen food sales, camping, showers, toilets, barbecue area, limited power, Saturday night meal supplied. Contact: David Brougham 0432 748 703 or clas@iinet.net.au.

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Even the biggest shoes have to be filled eventually

The email read “You’re in!” and with that after almost 13 years of freelance writing I was now a monthly columnist and if this isn’t daunting enough, I’d be filling the void left after the retirement of John Dunn of *Jumbunna* fame, a writer whose works I’ve enjoyed for many years. On sharing the news with friends the almost universal response was “those are some big shoes to fill” and they got that right. Honestly, a little too big, too knowledgeable and too experienced to even try.

For a while I was unsure exactly how to approach my new gig until one night while sharing a rum with a mate we got to talking about it and his sage advice was: “You’ll figure it out.” So I went about figuring it out and a quote from Sir Isaac Newton came to mind. I once visited Newton’s childhood home in England, stood in the room where he experimented with light and walked around the progeny of the apple tree.

Newton famously said: “If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants.” Now this quote is often mangled with its meaning and intent changed to suit varying purposes though Newton was very clear, it’s through the efforts of those before us that we’re given the opportunity to see further. Well, John and his work is the giant so it’s up to me to take it from here and try to see further.

Climbing up on those shoulders is its own story. I grew up in Brisbane about a kilometre from King George Square, a city boy who dreamt of the forests of Jack London, travelled with a mate by bus to a suburban cinema to watch *Northern Safari* and eagerly awaited the school holiday

showing of *My Side of the Mountain* on TV. In between books I wandered streets, crawled under abandoned houses and threw rocks at just about everything. I also fished the Brisbane River for monstrous catfish after buying my tackle from Carl Schultz in George Street.

I owned an air rifle though no one in our family was a shooter or hunter and there were no old guns in the house. In truth my mum was a proto-greenie, vegetarian by choice so my sources of inspiration were those books rather than an adventurous parent or relative, which probably explains why I’ve always been more interested in the wilds of North American high country than the African plains.

Firearms came into the mix via the SSAA Belmont shooting complex as my big brother had bought a Kombi and was about to hit the road. As L.P. Hartley said: “The past is a foreign country” and on advice, yes on advice, my brother bought a pump-action shotgun from Kmart to take as a travelling gun and as neither of us had ever owned a rifle or shotgun we headed to the range to make it go boom!

At the counter we explained our situation and received a friendly introduction to the world of guns. Soon after that visit my brother hit the road with his shotgun eventually confiscated in WA and as soon as I had my own wheels I returned to Belmont. I didn’t start with a .22LR as thanks to Jack London, John Wayne and The Magnificent Seven my first real rifle was a Winchester Model 94 in .30-30 calibre, a true friend to the left-hander.

I hunted when I could, where I could and with some success so began buying more guns, turning them over quickly, learning and refining my knowledge a little more each time as I started to put together the beginnings of a functional hunting kit built around army disposal gear. 1996 knocked me around as most of my collection was suddenly forbidden but a few years later I was back at it, starting my second life as a hunter.

Things had moved on, including my earning capacity and this time I could afford left-hand bolt-actions, quality camping gear and English shotguns. Since then I’ve hunted different parts of Australia and the world with rifle and shotgun and spent a good chunk of time writing about it. You could call me a deer hunter but really I’m a frustrated pig hunter. Deer are magnificent but big boars are where it’s at - or so I thought until I hunted NT buffalo.

Then a few years ago began my third life as a hunter, the latest incarnation involving my family. As a family we fish, travel and sometimes with mum staying home the boys and I go hunting. My third life is about sharing, being the catalyst for tradition and growing a hunting culture for my family and the wider shooting community, especially those starting from scratch. So if you’ve stuck with me thus far, welcome to *An Outdoor Life* where suburban views lead to fine rifles, pursuit of game, time under canvas, campfire smoke and what it is to be a hunter in this post-pandemic world.





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Not Covered.

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

Any commentary provided in the advertisement is general information which does not take into account your individual situation and you should consider SSAA Mutual's Financial Services Guide and Statement of Protection (www.ssaib.com.au) before deciding to become a member and to purchase and hold discretionary protection issued by SSAA Mutual Limited. ACN 655 675 862