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AUSTRALIAN

November 2022

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REVIEWS

- ATA Pro 12 shotgun
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Starting out with thermal – first of a two-part special

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The image features three Pardini air rifles arranged diagonally from the bottom left towards the top right. The top rifle is a .32 caliber model with a wooden stock. The middle rifle is a .22 L.P. model. The bottom rifle is partially visible. All three have the 'PARDINI' logo on the side of the receiver. In the background, a large, faint target graphic with concentric circles and a crosshair is centered. Overlaid on this target is the text 'PRECISION PERFORMANCE' in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

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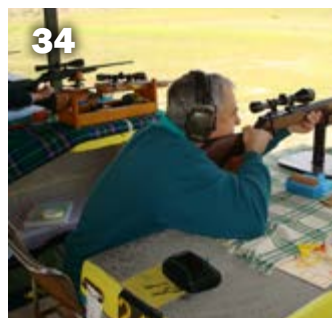
Our November cover - see page 34

NEXT ISSUE

We wrap up our look at starting out with thermal optics as Matthew Godson takes to the field to put theory into practice. He took part in a SSAA Conservation and Wildlife Management pest control exercise in the south-east of South Australia and explains why thermal is a handy tool in that department.

Handloader Chris Redlich is obsessive about maximising accuracy and was suitably impressed by Sellier & Bellot Precision Rifle factory ammo, saying you can depend on it to perform accurately and consistently when every shot counts.

Going bush without being properly prepared is never a good idea and Thomas Tabor has been checking out the latest GPS tracking device from Bushnell, a miniature device that fits in the palm of your hand and might just be a lifesaver one day.



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EDITORIAL POLICY

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

EDITORIAL INQUIRIES

PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061

Email: edit@ssaa.org.au Web: ssaa.org.au

ABN 95 050 209 688

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members strong as of September 2022

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

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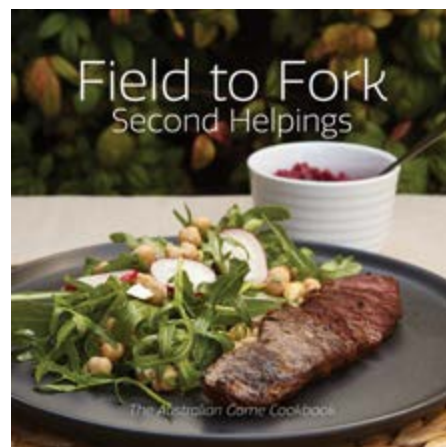
Feather in the cap for two publications

Our highly acclaimed *Great Australian Outdoors* magazine and *Field to Fork - Second Helpings* cookbook have been announced as finalists in the 2021-22 Real Media Awards. The awards, run by industry group Real Media Collective, celebrate effectiveness, craft, creativity and innovation across a wide range of print, marketing and brand publications.

Being recognised as finalists among some of the most recognisable and successful publishers and brands in the country is a true honour yet this is not the first accolade for both *Great Australian Outdoors* and *Field to Fork - Second Helpings*, reinforcing the quality and merit of both publications. In 2019, *Great Australian Outdoors* was named winner of the 10th International Creative Media Awards Print Magazine category and also won an award for outstanding design and concept.

Field to Fork - Second Helpings was celebrated as one of the Best in World Meat Cookbook titles at the 27th Gourmand World Cookbook Awards earlier this year and its predecessor, *Field to Fork - The Australian Game Cookbook*, was recognised in 2012 in the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards as Best First Cookbook in Australia. We hope to be the bearers of good news by the time this magazine arrives in your mailboxes, with winners of the awards due to be announced on October 28.

Increased firearms and accessories protection is now on offer for members thanks



to SSAA General Insurance Brokers, an ideal option for those requiring more than the \$25,000 cover offered through the SSAA Mutual Members Firearm Protection. This new offering will allow you to cover up to \$125,000 of firearms and fixed accessories while at home, on the range, hunting or overseas for up to 28 days and there's also a new personal accident cover option available to firearms professionals. See page 42 for more information on these great insurance products.

As the end of another year and the festive season draws nearer, don't forget the SSAA Online Shop for your gifts this Christmas. The shop offers a wide array of items for camping, clothing, cooking and publications at great prices so that Christmas present for the shooter in your life could be sorted nice and early simply by visiting online-shop.ssaa.org.au to browse your options.

Shooting reinstated for 2026 Victorian Commonwealth Games

On a positive note for our sport, target shooting has been confirmed as part of the Victorian 2026 Commonwealth Games with events to be held in Gippsland. SSAA National congratulates Shooting Australia and the ISSF on their initiative which pushed for its inclusion. Our Association was proud to support the social campaign

for the cause, reaching around 95,000 people online and more than 210,000 via *Australian Shooter*. With confirmation that Clay Target (Trap), 10m Air Pistol, 10m Air Rifle (small-bore) and Para Shooting will all be included, it'll be up to us as the shooting community to support the sport, attend these events and enjoy the buzz of competition.

A load of old billhooks



ABOUT A YEAR ago I came across an old billhook among tools inherited from my late father and decided to give it a new lease of life. I ditched the old jury rigged handle and fitted a new one with a flouro band on the end, not as a wrist strap but to find it when I put it down. Then I put a decent edge on it with my finisher and oiled it up. I use it for clearing heliconia stems and the like.

Before and after use I check the edge which doesn't dull very quickly - this old steel really holds its sharpness. On closer inspection I noticed markings stamped into the blade which made me curious and on researching the 'William Swift guaranteed original' stamp, I found some fascinating reading on the many billhooks, forges, steels and charcoal of the past 150 years.

The lesson here is some of these old steels are well worth reusing, either as their original intent or, if not possible, for another purpose (see John Dunn's article 'From bunny trap to bunny skinner', *Shooter*, February 2022).

Chris Tuke, Qld



Jumbunna on the money

AFTER READING JOHN Dunn's Jumbunna columns for so long, I dropped several not-so-subtle hints to my wife that *The Jumbunna Collection Volume II* would be well received on my birthday and thankfully she delivered. I've just finished reading John's musings, thoroughly enjoyed them and wanted to congratulate him on a wonderful read. I was particularly taken by the clarity of his observations and ability to convey those details to the reader - he certainly sees a lot more detail than I usually do.



John may curse me but I intend to lend the book to my younger brother who I introduced to shooting and hunting at the tender age of 11 after some spirited discussions with our mother who had her doubts. He took to it like a duck to water and now, more than 40 years later, has seen and done more than I have in my 75 years. He's also a long-standing SSAA member who I'm sure will get as much enjoyment from the book as I have. Thanks again John for a terrific read - more power to your pen!

• *The Jumbunna Collection Volume II* (\$35 incl. P&P) is available via email at footsteps5350@gmail.com or the SSAA Online Shop.

Keith M. Falk, via email

Black market woes

GREAT TO SEE a couple of good articles on shooting muzzleloading firearms in our May 2022 edition. But we shooters need supplies of black powder to feed our muzzleloaders as there's been a black powder drought across Australia for about five years. Please can someone re-commence importing and distributing supplies of Swiss or WANO black powder? Albury/Wodonga gunshop staff just laugh when asked for black powder.

Ian Guthrie, via email

Insurance Q&A

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Q I dropped my laptop and broke it while away from home and am considering whether it's worth making a claim on our home and contents insurance. We have extra accidental cover on our home and contents for this reason but by the time I pay my excess I could just buy a new laptop and avoid the risk of our premium going up. Is it worth making a claim at all?

A This is an age-old debate in our business but ask yourself this: Why are you paying for insurance if you're not going to use it? While there's a small risk of your premium being adjusted when you make a claim, this is only one of several reasons an insurer adjusts premiums including claim history, inflation, natural disasters and global events so considering your claim history is just one of many, there's likely a

small risk of you experiencing a premium increase.

Receiving a renewal notice of a higher premium in the future may prompt you to go searching for alternative policies so it's important to regularly review and renew your insurances and SSAA Insurance Brokers are well positioned to guide you through this process. Visit ssaib.com.au or call 08 8332 0281 for more information.

Thumbs-up from me for the new Tasmania Deer Strategy

The Tasmanian Government has delivered on its commitment to modernise management of the fallow deer population with release of the Implementation Strategy for the Tasmanian Wild Fallow Deer Management Plan. This plan unlike others keeps hunters in mind and will allow us to be part of the solution to prevent the spread of wild deer into areas we don't want them to become established.

The Implementation Strategy sets out clear objectives to manage the agricultural, commercial, environmental and public safety impacts associated with deer populations in Tasmania and underpins the Tasmanian Wild Fallow Deer Management Plan released earlier this year. Refusing to be caught up in the 'greenwash' anti-hunting debates of the mainland, the Management Plan and Implementation Strategy both recognise the balance between supporting recreational hunting while giving landholders flexibility to manage deer on their land and minimise the impact of wild deer in the state.

By undertaking extensive stakeholder engagement with key associations and peak bodies, the government developed a Management Plan and Implementation Strategy which ensures a balanced and supported framework. Through a collaborative approach the government believes they're setting this project up for success over the cries of the Bob Brown Foundation's (BBF) anti-hunting stance and Gun Control Australia's Rowland Browne opposition to anything related to positive gun use.

BBF patron Christine Milne has been vocal in the media rejecting the government's proposed role of recreational hunters undertaking volunteer ground shooting in addition to aerial culling programs, while Rowland Browne has his knickers in a knot that such volunteer efforts by hunters in partnership with the government is promoting a gun culture the 1996 National Firearms Agreement was meant to prevent in his opinion.

While delivery of the Implementation Strategy will be overseen by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, there are a range of actions or initiatives where the government envisages industry groups playing a vital role with their input and involvement in delivery of key actions. For farmers this includes identifying strategies and initiatives to support the deer farming industry, property-based game management plans and supporting industry regulation for commercial deer farming. For hunters it offers opportunities to increase the involvement of recreational shooters in control programs on public land, along with the establishment of partnership and project agreements with key stakeholder groups.

The plan establishes clear goals and management objectives for wild deer over the next five years and sets out four contemporary objectives to manage commercial, environmental and public safety impacts associated with wild deer populations. The management objectives are 1: Effectively manage impact of wild deer throughout the

state while maintaining a traditional and sustainable hunting resource. 2: Empower farmers, foresters and other land managers to directly manage deer and work collaboratively with hunters to achieve tailored management objectives. 3: Continue to provide evidence-based deer management. 4: Improve community involvement, education and awareness of deer management.

The government recognises the actions within the Implementation Strategy cannot be achieved alone as working in partnership with various stakeholders is key to better management of wild deer in Tasmania, therefore it's proposed specialist working groups will be established to support delivery of some actions within the Strategy. Membership of these working groups is designed to ensure appropriate skills across government, land managers (private and public), hunters, community and researchers are present.

From what I've seen so far this management plan is one of the better offerings from a state government as it involves all key stakeholders and proposes realistic objectives with monitoring, evaluation and reporting of performance.

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Do the twist . . . the origins of barrel rifling

A part from shotguns, modern fire-arm barrels are rifled but what does the term 'rifled' actually mean? The earliest firearms had smooth barrels and used relatively large diameter and ill-fitting lead projectiles, so when fired the projectile rattled its way down the barrel before exiting with its final direction being highly unpredictable. This was fine when the infantry used mass musket fire to bring down the enemy at close range but as time progressed, aimed discretionary fire by individual soldiers became the more common type of warfare and so more accurate firearms were required.

The origin of 'rifling' or cutting grooves in the barrel is unknown although archers had long known that twisting the tail feathers of an arrow gave greater accuracy so this may have been the starting point for this practice. This rifling imparts a spin on the projectile which serves to gyroscopically stabilise it and in turn improve stability and long-range accuracy.

Although rifling dates from about the mid-15th century the precision machining required to perform this operation was not universally available until much later. It was recorded that in the Napoleonic Wars the British had several experimental units known as 'rifles' and used a Baker flintlock .625" calibre which proved very effective against the enemy during the Peninsular War in Spain and Portugal due to its accuracy and long-range striking ability.

Many other experimental firearm and rifling designs evolved during this time



using different shapes and degrees of spiralling in the barrel, one of them being the Whitworth percussion calibre .451" rifle which was created with a special barrel featuring a twisted polygonal-shaped bore. It also used a specially designed projectile which matched the barrel to impart spin on the projectile, though unfortunately they were very expensive to produce so not many were made and nowadays both the rifles and projectiles are collectors' items.

Today rifled barrels are the norm and there are several systems employed. Firstly there's the original method of cutting one groove at a time using a machine tool, a process called cut rifling which can be time consuming as some barrels have eight or more grooves to be cut. The next is called broached rifling where all the grooves are cut in one pass using a special progressive broaching bit and this is a quicker and more efficient machining method.

Then there's button rifling which involves pushing or pulling a tool called a 'button' down the barrel and this is another method currently in use. Forging the barrel over a mandrel which has a reverse image of the rifling is another method (hammer

forging) and finally we have flow-forming the barrel over a mandrel containing a reverse image of the rifling.

These grooves are the spaces cut out in the bore and the resulting ridges are called lands. Both the grooves and lands can vary in number, depth, shape, direction of twist (clockwise or anti-clockwise) and rate of twist, the latter calculated by measuring the length in inches it takes for the bullet to rotate one full turn (360 degrees) in the barrel. In the original muzzleloading rifles using lead projectiles this was about one turn in 48 inches, designated 1:48, whereas in modern centrefire small diameter firearms like a .223" the twist may be one in eight inches (1:8). When handloading ammunition it's handy to know the twist rate though it's not normally stamped on the barrel by the manufacturer, so consult a reliable reloading manual to find the barrel twist appropriate for any given cartridge being used.





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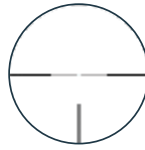


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Q I'm a right-eye dominant shooter who also has right-handiness and my youngest son who's developed a great interest in busting clay targets is also right-handed in every sport he's tried. The issue I have is he's left-eye dominant so I'd appreciate some advice as to whether I let him keep shooting off his right shoulder and just close his left eye or do I buy him a left-handed shotgun and have him learn with both eyes open?

Harold Campbell, Vic.

A This has been a popular question over the years Harold but one worth addressing again though as always, my answer will remain the same. Your son isn't unique as about 28 per cent of the human population are just like him - right-handed yet left-eye dominant. For the vast majority of sports this isn't an issue but for shotgun shooting it most certainly is.

If this was my son and he was entirely new to the sport I'd give him a chance to try shooting from his left shoulder with both eyes open (my father always said "if God gave me three eyes I'd use all three"). The advantages for your son if he can master this issue far outweigh the frustration he may face at the beginning, as there are so many situations in shotgun shooting where two good eyes working together and providing wide use of your peripheral vision will be advantageous. For example holding above the trap house in Trap, starting further down the target flight line in Skeet or on target in Sporting where sharp-angled, quick instinctual fast shots must be taken

or simply in the field when walking behind your dog while shooting quail are all better done with two eyes wide open and working together.

Give your son a few sessions shooting very straightforward targets standing directly behind a clay target thrower (Station 7 on a Skeet range is ideal) and gradually make the targets harder as his confidence grows. It's important to be patient and please don't invite the local club 'experts' or a group of friends to watch him as he tries to make the transition from right shoulder to left. It can be very frustrating and soul-destroying at first but more often than not something will just 'click' and his eyes will all of a sudden move from incorrectly focusing on the end of the barrel to be locked only on the target where they belong. A spectator gallery offering advice after every shot is most definitely not encouraged at this point.

If after a reasonable amount of time your boy finds he just can't master the fundamentals of operating a shotgun from his left shoulder then you'll have no choice but to let him shoot from his right shoulder. Some people are so strongly 'right-handed' that even though their left eye is their master eye they still have no option but to shoot that way. I'm one of those people who can't do anything left-handed - nothing - though luckily I'm also right-eye dominant.

If ultimately he's forced to shoot right-handed then I strongly advise you buy him a pair of shooting glasses with clear lenses but preferably interchangeable ones so he can use darker colours on bright days. Place a small piece of smudged sticky tape over

the optical centre of the left lens to block out the centre of his left eye which will force him to shoot only with his right eye (the optical centre is best found after he's mounted the gun to his shoulder). After ensuring the firearm is unloaded and safe, look down the barrel and cover his left eye lens with a one-centimetre piece of tape as this will allow him to keep both eyes wide open while shooting.

The reason I encourage the use of glasses is not just for safety but to negate the issue that many people who are forced to close one eye squint badly with their 'good' eye and in shotgunning this is one of the worst habits you can develop. The wider you can have your eyes open the better as more light entering your eyes results in greater target acquisition which equates to better scores. If you're already losing the ability to use your master eye then please don't half shut the other one!

In saying all that there have been plenty of great competitors down the years who've found substantial success shooting with the use of just one eye so try your son shooting from the left shoulder first and if that's not possible then try the technique outlined above. All the best to your boy Harold, though unfortunately for you if he can master two eyes open you'll be buying him a left-handed shotgun for Christmas!



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Q I have a .30-06 Mauser carbine inscribed 'Fab. Nat. D'Armes de Guerre, Herstal Belgique' with an inscription on top of the breech and wonder if you can tell me anything about it please?

Ray, via email

A This is a nice example of a Colombian military carbine and if you Google search 'Colombian military rifles' you'll find lots of information. There were two models made. The first in 7mm was later re-barrelled to .30 calibre from what I can gather but I reckon yours is a factory-made FN Model 1950 Colombian short rifle produced originally in .30-06. The bolt handle on your rifle would originally have stuck straight out at 90 degrees but has been bent downwards at some point in keeping with more modern fashions. The inscription 'Colombia Fuerzas Militares' translates to Colombian Military Forces.

Geoff Smith



Q I have a CZ 557 in .243 Winchester and a Brno Fox Model 2 in .22 Hornet, the latter glass bedded. What I'd like to know if possible is the torque weight of the action screws of these two rifles and, if I have this information, can I make the adjustment myself or would you recommend it be done by a gunsmith? I feel it's important to get this right.

Jeff Kinnear, via email

A The standard dictum for tightening actions screws has always been the same - do them up firmly and evenly. With slot-head screws the driver blade must fit the slot closely and the same applies to Phillips-head and Allen-head screws, taking care not to overtighten and damage the heads or even strip the threads. Properly-used Allen keys can provide remarkably consistent pressure but care needs to be taken not to compress the stock wood or perhaps crack the bedding compound. Never fit an extension to the long end of a key to increase leverage.

I spoke to Robert Tobler of RDT products who suggested torque pressure of around 45 inch/pounds was appropriate for wooden-stocked rifles and 55-70 inch/pounds for firearms with aluminium bedding blocks. You obviously understand the importance of tight action screws for consistent accuracy and checking them should be a regular part of your cleaning and rifle maintenance routine, as is checking scope-mount screws. Hope this meets your requirements.

John Dunn

Q Given the ongoing problems surrounding powder supply in Australia, I'm interested to know what alternatives there might be for reloading .310 Cadet rounds. I'd hazard a guess and say they're possibly similar to that for .38 Special or .357 Magnum. I've looked at some suggested alternatives in shooting forums where there are even some people who propose mixing powders for better ignition and performance.

Looking at suitable comparable powders on the ADI comparison chart is one thing but actual availability of these is another matter entirely. Any information in regard to this would be greatly appreciated as I'm trying to help a friend who wants to do more shooting and I'm providing the reloading part of it as I already reload for .308.

Ben Talman, via email

A Yes Ben we really do have a powder problem in Australia at the present time. I wouldn't recommend mixing different powders as a solution but here are a few loads for the .310 cartridge using a 120-grain projectile - ADI AR 2205 powder with 7.0gr start and 9.0gr maximum; Hercules 2400 powder with 6.0gr start and 8.0gr maximum; IMR 4227 powder with 8.5gr start and 10.0 gr maximum. Because powder is in such short supply you'll probably have to ring around to several gun stores to locate any of these.

Barry Wilmot

Q I'm considering buying a .30-06 rifle for general hunting in Queensland. A couple of my mates say this is too much gun for rabbits and foxes or goats and pigs though I think I might also like to go deer hunting. Are my mates on the right track or would this cartridge cover all bases?

Shane, Qld

A The .30-06 Springfield is one of the most famous cartridges in the world and started life as a military round but was soon used for hunting in the US where it was originally developed (30-cal 1906) and is now incredibly popular and as a 'do-all' sporting cartridge it just about covers every base. It's way too powerful for rabbits or foxes and not really enough for the average shooter chasing Top End buffaloes but for everything in between here in Australia, with careful bullet selection it will do a superb job.



There's always been competition between shooters who love the .30-06 Springfield and its offspring the .270 Winchester and both are fine cartridges, yet I've always found the .30-06 more pleasant to shoot though both generate similar recoil. For the game you mention many people have two rifles chambered in something like the .223 Remington and .308 Winchester. The lighter .223 recoils a lot less and is better suited to shooting lighter-framed small game, while the .308 or slightly more powerful .30-06 are ideal for pigs, goats and all species of deer in Australia and with the right choice of bullet construction and weight for larger species right up to sambar deer in Victoria and now New South Wales. The .30-06 would be a great choice for the large-bodied red deer you have in Queensland.

I remember reading an amusing article about the .30-06 where the author said he was aware of a group of shooters in the Orange area of NSW who insisted on all their mates using a 'thirty-ought-six' when spotlighting - no .30-06, no membership of the group! Now they sound like my kind of shooting nuts. I've never used mine under the spotlight but I guess you could make the argument that any practice is good practice so long as you're not putting your shoulder out or creating a trigger flinch on all those rascally rabbits. Good luck if you buy that .30-06 and learn to shoot it well - you won't regret it.

Paul Miller

Q You may have covered this previously but the laws are changing so rapidly. I want to take firearms with me when we begin traveling around Australia and looking to be a lawful gun owner I'd like to know the procedure on from moving state to state and even city to city. And how would I go about staying in a motel with firearms? I don't have cargo drawers or such in my vehicle as it's just a small SUV. Any advice much appreciated.

Stephen M., via email

A It's a good idea to do your homework before you travel as each state and territory has its own Firearms Act and Regulations and, although they differ slightly, they all have a similar underlying theme which is: 'You'll be charged with an offence (breach of the Act) if you allow your firearm to be lost or stolen and/or it comes into the possession of an unlicensed person' or words to that effect. As you haven't specified the jurisdictions you'll be visiting, I'm afraid you'll have to do an online search for the regulations of each state and territory you're visiting.

You'll find some states cover safe storage and transportation of firearms well and have

detailed fact sheets on the subject while others are somewhat vague and open to interpretation. The Northern Territory for example refer to motorhomes and caravans specifically while other states don't cover the transportation of firearms separately from safe storage requirements. I suggest contacting the state or territory firearms branch or registry to seek clarification. Your question of keeping firearms in a motel room is again something about which you need to seek further information.

There are several lawyers who've a good handle on the rules and deal in firearms-related matters, some of whom advertise in this magazine. I've found them to be a good source of information, straight-talking and can cut through the rules and regulations minefield. To cover all eventualities (and for peace of mind) a strong, locked container chained or wired to your SUV is essential and render your firearms temporarily inoperable with a trigger lock or some other recommended means. I'd do this as a minimum and while it may be overkill under your home state's rules, it at least demonstrates you've made an attempt to do the right thing when you hit the road.

Rod Pascoe





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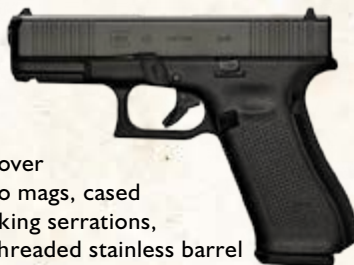
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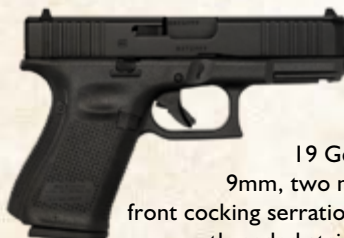
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Long Slide
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GLOCK
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At time of writing the Lithgow rifle is 67 years old.



Lifelong companion



A few Golden City trophies from John's smallbore days, the one in the centre from the Kyneton Smallbore Club.

Almost seven decades on, John Hill still uses his first rifle

For my 18th birthday my older brother gave me a new 10-shot Lithgow Model 12 rimfire rifle and at time of writing that was 67 years ago. I still have it and use it regularly but not as often as when it was my only rifle. The old Lithgow has taken many rabbits and a few foxes but was a dismal failure on feral pigs as back in the mid-1950s there were no telescopic sights to be had in any of the country gunshops I frequented and shooters had little choice than to use the open sights fitted to rifles of that era.

The open sights on my first rifle weren't particularly accurate and resulted in a few misses and misplaced shots at ranges out to about 90m. Back then I'd pin a target to a large gum tree, measure 100 paces, jack-up the back sight a couple of notches on the elevation ladder then fire a 10-shot

group from the prone position. But the target looked as though a shotgun had been patterned on it with bullet holes everywhere and the result couldn't be called a group by any stretch of the imagination.

My father suggested I try a peep sight as he'd used peep or aperture sights and reckoned they were an improvement on open sights. Big bore rifle shooters used aperture sights back then and shot distances measured in hundreds of yards so an aperture sight could be worth trying. When I mentioned it to the guy behind the gunshop counter he produced an optional sight for Lithgow Model 12s and this neat little unit would fit straight on to my rifle which was already drilled and tapped.

The sight came complete with mounting screws and two screw-in apertures, one larger than the other and once firmly

attached to the receiver all that remained was to align it to the existing open sights, remove the back open sight and from then on a different form of sighting was ready for me to experiment with. The rifle was sighted-in to be about 12mm high at 25 paces and my shooting improved dramatically.

The aperture sight could even be used for spotlighting as by removing the screw-in peep the threaded hole it screwed into provided a large enough aperture. I put my new sight to the ultimate test one night at the Golden City Smallbore Rifle Club in Bendigo and surprisingly shot 91 followed by 99 in my first attempt at smallbore shooting. Using the sporting peep sight and standard Lithgow bead fore sight the rifle was aimed at 6 o'clock on the targets, bullets striking a bit below the 10 ring

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though a few clipped the edge which still counts as a maximum. Even so, 91 was an unbeatable score when all new shooters were given a handicap of 25 and in the second round the fore sight was aimed further into the black, resulting in nine out of 10 bullseyes.

It was a memorable occasion, I left with a Golden City badged teaspoon as a trophy and became enthusiastic about smallbore shooting though it was at least six months before another 99 was shot. One interesting aspect of the Golden City Rifle Club in the mid-1950s was almost every member used a Lithgow Model 12 rifle. These Aussie-made guns were fitted with Central number four 'click' adjustable aperture sights but also had Parker-Hale multi-element, target-type tunnel fore sights with interchangeable elements and a selection of rings, posts and beads to choose from.

When I joined the smallbore club, Golden City shot twice weekly at night and the club used ICI 'Civic' high-velocity ammunition in red and black packets. The 10 ring on a standard 25-yard target was five-sixteenths of an inch (about 8mm) in diameter and a gauge in bull on one side to a gauge in bull on the other was about two Minutes of Angle (the original Golden City range at Junortoun went back to 100 yards which sorted out the men from the boys).

Readers may ask: Why did so many target shooters use Lithgow Model 12 rifles? Perhaps the main reason was in those early



A comb insert was fitted to the butt of the stock to bring the eye up to the level of the scope.

post-war years, smallbore target rifles weren't readily available and if so they were expensive. There was only one such target rifle in the club at that time and its owner didn't shoot any better than anyone else. The Lithgows were chosen because of the quality of their barrels which were slightly heavier than most other sporting rifles and they also had a short firing pin movement (short lock time), a desirable asset.

At one point I had two Lithgow Model 12s, my original with the sporting peep

sight (my bush rifle) and another set up for smallbore target shooting. That one had the Central aperture sight and Parker-Hale tunnel fore sight and had lead added to the stock for additional weight. But as time progressed BSA, Anschütz, Sportco and other makes of target rifle gradually became available along with more suitable standard velocity ammunition. From that point the scoring rings on targets were reduced in size (and scored outwards) and Lithgows became less competitive as target rifles so I sold my 'target' rifle and went to live in Melbourne, taking the original peep-sighted Lithgow with me.

One night I visited Northcote Smallbore Rifle Club with that trusty Lithgow and while some suggested one of the club rifles, I wanted to use my own. The club ran four targets at 25 yards and I checked mine through the spotting scope that was set up - one sighting target and 10 scoring targets and I was ready to go. The first sighting shot was a dead centre bull as was the second so, delighted with that result, I went around the card firing nine consecutive bullseyes, many of them centrals. Yet when I fired the 10th and final shot there was no bullet hole in the target until the guy next to me fired and there it was - another central bull. I'd been firing at my target while watching my neighbour shoot his and when I moved the spotting scope to my target . . . let's not go there!

They were right, I should've used a club rifle. The only consolation was all my shots were in the black (it scored in the high 70s) and if the targets had been rabbits' heads they'd all be dead. So I decided to do a few repairs to my old Lithgow and had the



A dovetail was milled into both the receiver and a steel block screwed to the barrel, much better than a side mount.



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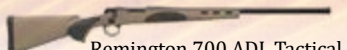
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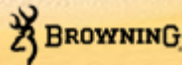
ATN X-Sight LTV 3-9x
Was \$1100, now just **\$885**



ATN X-Sight LTV 5-15x
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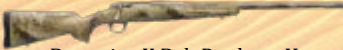
SHS GX-E CS3-1 Compressor
300 Bar PCP compressor,
12V **\$899**
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Browning Clearance



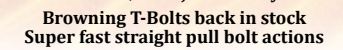
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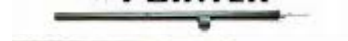
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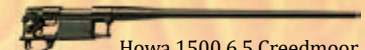
Pointer WS500
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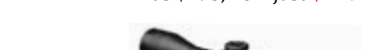
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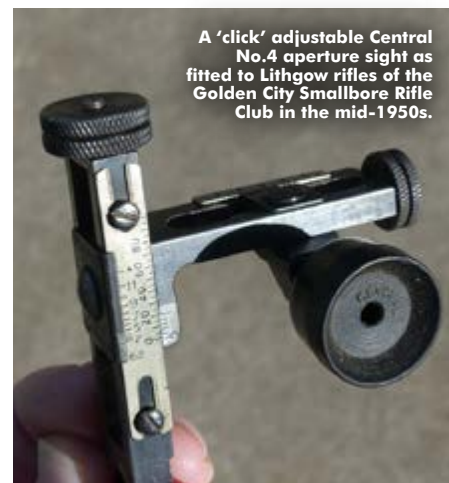
rifle re-blued, bought a new stock, fitted a side mount, invested in a telescopic sight and a full restoration was planned. It was a novelty to have a scope on that Lithgow and I gave the rabbits hell for a while though the side mount was far too high for the comb of the stock which needed to be raised.

About 10 years later the rifle was given a further makeover with the barrel shortened, its third stock prepared complete with comb insert and chequering, an extra bedding screw added to hold down the rear end of the receiver and an attempt made to mount a scope without a side mount. The rifle's excessive headspace was also on the list of improvements and this was achieved by fitting a thin spacing washer between the bolt handle sleeve and main bolt body. All modifications were successful and my Lithgow is almost totally unrecognisable as a 1950s rifle.

A recent test with different brands of high-velocity hunting ammo revealed not all cartridges shoot tight groups but one particular brand really stood out - Eley high-velocity hollow-points. There's a new version of this cartridge which shoots about 10mm higher than my ammunition and this Eley even looks different in that it's all black, contrasting with the old ammo which

has a brass case. High-velocity hollow-point ammunition should be used for any form of small-game hunting.

With compatible ammo my Lithgow still throws its bullets into neat groups at 50m, not bad for a 67-year-old rifle and a half-blind ageing shooter behind the butt. So until it's finally worn out I see no point buying a replacement as for an old bloke like me, the new Lithgow is too heavy to carry around the bush and my lighter original will do just fine. Anyway, it was a present from my late brother and has great sentimental value. I've owned this rifle most of my life and while it has undergone many transformations, it has served me well and continues to do so. ●



A 'click' adjustable Central No.4 aperture sight as fitted to Lithgow rifles of the Golden City Smallbore Rifle Club in the mid-1950s.



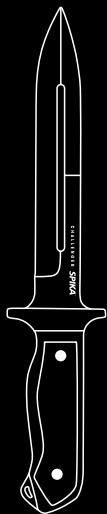
John's aperture sight is now fitted to his sponsored junior's Lithgow Model 12 and is adjustable with a screwdriver.



The Central sight needs a special mounting plate so it can be fitted to a rifle.



A 10-shot group, five with Eley ammo at 50m.



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HRC: 58-60
🔧 AUS-8



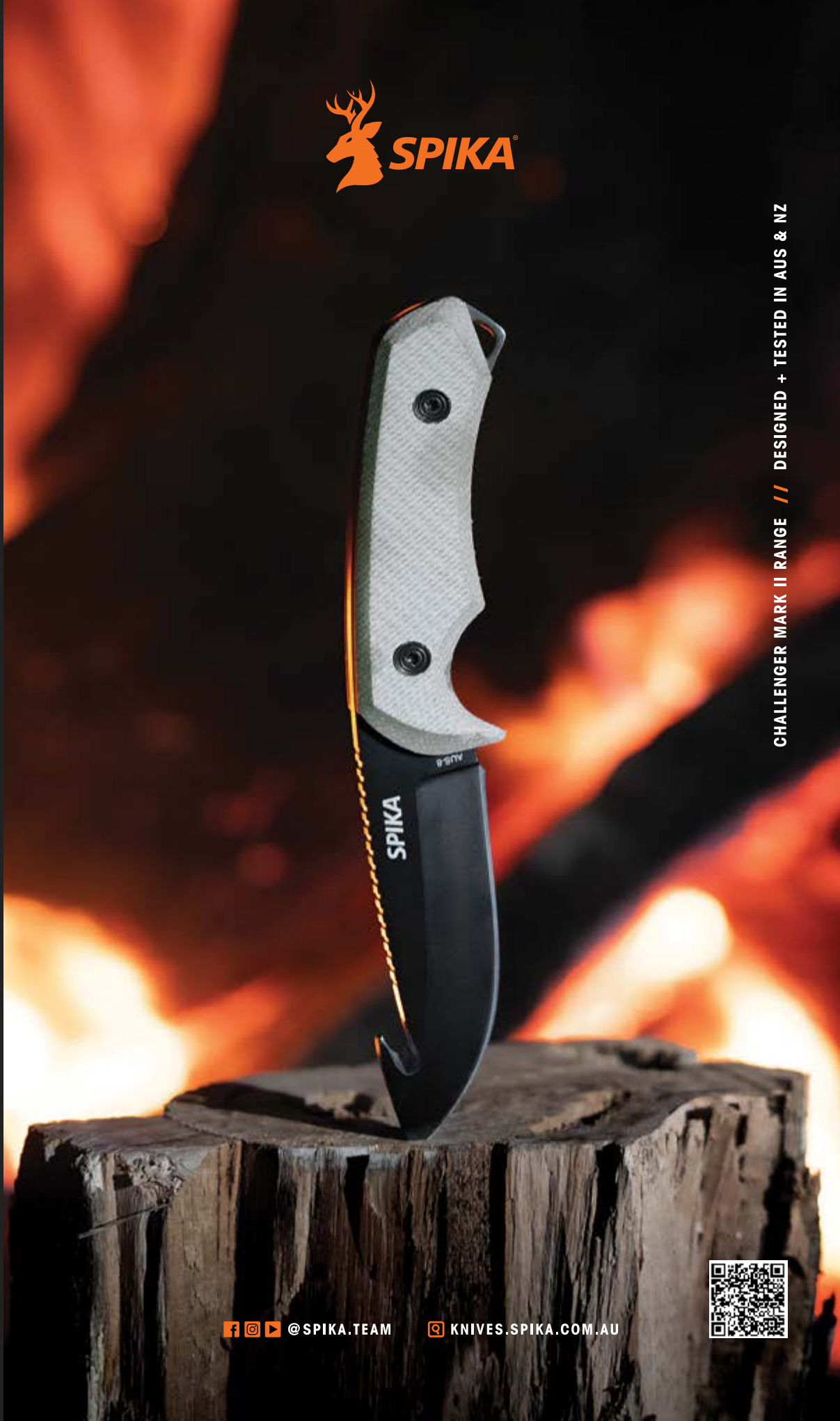
LARGE FOLDER

L: 192mm
W: 34mm
HRC: 58-60
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SMALL FOLDER

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Life's great adventure

John Frankham has shooting memories to warm the soul



Memories are made of this: Three old-timers.

On re-reading an article in the May 2020 edition of *Australian Shooter*, fellow SSAA member Henri Lach lamented the fact that health reasons and other factors had forced him to assess his future hunting needs and ability to contribute to his mates' excursions which led to him selling a Brno Model 2 he was obviously fond of and had great memories of times in the field with.

I pondered how he'd feel parting with it as I also have one of comparable vintage, albeit topped with a suitably powered scope and reading Henri's article gave me a jolt as I'm probably approaching similar circumstances more rapidly than I'd like. My journey began when I was born to a farming family on the far north coast of New South Wales in the late 1940s to a dad who was almost 50 and had farmed all his life. It was from him I learned about firearms and the harsh realities of animal husbandry amid life on the land in general.

He used firearms to put down injured or diseased stock - never pleasant nor financially rewarding - and to control vermin and predators of which there were plenty. But as with many others of our kind, shooting helped put food on the table from the game which seemed abundant including the humble rabbit, pacific black ducks, teal and wood ducks to name just a few.

After World War Two there wasn't the choice of firearms for shooters which abounds on today's market and although restricted in some areas, my dad's collection consisted of a Lithgow 1A 22LR

single-shot along with a Webley & Scott 12-gauge shotgun with which he rarely missed. I vaguely recall he had a neat Model 92 Win in 32-20 but this was seldom used as he considered it 'too much gun' and there were also some ex-surpluses or otherwise 303 and 310s about though they weren't favoured either.

And so it was my mates and I made do with what our dads would let us have and prior to my teens I vividly remember being with several school pals, pressing our noses against the window of a major store and drooling over a Sako Vixen in 222 Rem. It had a price tag in big red letters of £50 which may as well have been £5000 - if only we could've bought three of them back then!

Anyway, school came and went then like most of my contemporaries it was time to leave our small town for places farther afield in search of fame and fortune. In my case it was Brisbane where I served an apprenticeship as a boilermaker, met a lovely lady and embarked upon married life. The country life and shooting looked gone forever until we ended up settling in a semi-rural area on the northern outskirts which at that time comprised mostly farms. So with the help and guidance of some 'old-timers' the shooting bug bit again which meant I was back into foxes, hares and the odd chestnut teal on the swamps at dusk.

Along with this I found time with those old boys to shoot clay targets DTL, at least until our family came along. I had several pump-action 12-gauge guns pass through my hands before finally a S56E Beretta

ended up becoming more of a field gun due to its stock being shaved. I briefly owned a Grade F Miroku but my wife put her foot down so the clays and Miroku were gone.

As time went by my work in earth-moving maintenance took me to some interesting places where I met kindred souls who remain so to this day. We hunted pigs, foxes, rabbits and ducks around Glen Inness, Tenterfield and Wallangarra in NSW as well as Meandarra, Tara and throughout the Brisbane Valley in Queensland where the guns which came and went included a Model 94 30-30, several Model 70s in 243 Win along with the Anschütz 520 22LR.

Now I find myself still the proud owner of a 1973 S56E over-and-under and 83 Model Brno 2 and while I never did manage to own a Sako Vixen 222 Rem, I did land a rather nice Brno Fox 2 in 222 Rem I found in mint condition and on retirement I picked up myself with a lovely 243 Win Hunter Stainless to tackle wild dogs in South Burnett.

Some will ask: Why am I crowing about them? Well I'd say to them that when I was 10 years old my wildest dreams would never have included two slick Tikkas, a Brno Model 2 and more so I know how Henri must've felt when the time came to part with his firearms. I hold mine, close my eyes and memories come flooding back of better, younger, healthier times in wonderful places with great mates. I've now jumped in and added them along with all their paraphernalia to my will, so with a bit of luck should never have to sell them. ●

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Bravo!

Howa KRG rifle a well-priced option, claims Daniel O'Dea

To achieve consistent accuracy in a rifle, correct and stable mating of a barrelled action to the stock is crucial. If bedding surfaces aren't completely inert (can't be affected by temperature, humidity or other influences) your point of impact can potentially shift between shots. In bygone days when rifles traditionally had wooden stocks with actions bolted directly on to timber this could be quite apparent as such wood can swell or warp with humidity. Likewise, often from the factory the barrel would also press hard against the stock within the barrel channel and as the barrel heated up the tension and harmonics could change. If you wanted your rifle to shoot well you'd generally send it to a gunsmith to have it bedded and floated.

As rifle stocks developed, more inert materials were sought for construction and we ended up with stocks made from fibreglass, laminates and other modern polymers and in unison with this came improved methods of bolting actions into stocks such as pillar bedding. One of the more recent developments has been where

the barrelled action bolts into a completely inert alloy chassis and once torqued provides arguably a solution all but impervious to change.

But there can be downsides such as weight and despite most designs being skeletonised, complete alloy options for the most part are heavier than their modern contemporaries. Then come styling and ergonomics, both completely objective of course, though some simply prefer the look and feel of a more traditional design. Thankfully you can now enjoy the best of both worlds with options such as the Howa KRG rifle which comes standard with a KRG Bravo stock being a fine example.

US-based company Kinetic Research Group (KRG) was formed more than a decade ago by a group of then active-duty special forces soldiers who, as both professional and sporting shooters, were looking to develop improved equipment. They built a successful business with several small arms designs but are known for their tactical-cum-competition bolt-action rifle stocks and accessories. These

stocks appear polymer but still contain a chassis in the form of a solid alloy backbone running from the tang through to the fore-end to which the barrelled action mounts, providing a precision machined bedding surface where it counts most. The rest of the stock is made of lightweight polymer.

Under review the Howa KRG rifle in appearance carries stock lines somewhat reminiscent of the popular A5-type stock design but packed with modular features. Starting from the front everything effectively bolts to the alloy backbone, so although polymer the fore-end for instance has no flex and remains completely rigid. The tip of the fore-end has a recess from which the chassis is visible and machined to accept an optional spigot mount for fitment of a bipod or other accessories forward of the tip. To the sides are M-Lok slots (two per side) for additional accessory or rails fitment options and the fore-end underside comes with a standard sling swivel stud to accept a Harris-type bipod or sling. Another five M-Lok slots and additional hole spacings provide even more options for fitment of barrier stops.

The Howa KRG was equally at home prone on a bipod.



The fore-end is flat and broad to sit well on a bag or rest from the tip to just before the magazine well and from here it steps down about 15mm (this step can be used as a barrier stop in its own right). The top edge of the fore-end also has provision via 10 M4 bolt holes to mount a night vision rail/cap directly to the chassis.

The system is designed to work with AICS pattern magazines and I believe this includes the polymer Magpul (7.62/.308 parent case) PMAGs. I was running a 10-round Accurate-Mag which performed flawlessly in the rifle. A steel magazine release lever sits forward of the trigger-guard and is fitted with a polymer wing (or ears) to provide ambidextrous release with just the tip of your trigger finger. The magazine well is generously bevelled for changes so ergonomically with these features combined it's easy to drop the mag and replace it without coming off the gun which is beneficial in timed competitions.

The near-vertical pistol grip on the stock has plenty of palmswell and fills the hand

nicely, its deep contour providing for the adaptation of various grip styles. The grip includes a hollow base accessible via a catch and removable base-plate on the bottom and there's also an Allen screw for more permanent retention. Bottom of the buttstock is flat but includes a cover plate which, when

removed, provides conversion to a butt hook-type stock with optional replacement cover plate to that style. Between the end of the cover plate and start of the recoil pad you'll find hole spacing providing ease of fitment of a bag rider, short rail or monopod.



KRG Bravo Chassis kit minus magazine and barrelled action.

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Bravo!

The adjustable cheekpiece has a knob to the right for height adjustment while length of pull can be altered via the addition of up to three supplied polymer spacers along with a series of corresponding bolts of appropriate length, the spacers measuring $\frac{3}{8}$ " or just under 10mm each while a soft rubber kick-pad completes the package as standard. Howa KRG's stock also offers Tool-Less adjustable height and length of pull buttstock assemblies if you wish to upgrade. Finally, just to the rear of the cheekpiece is a slot for fitment of a quick detachable sling cup, one of which also comes provided as standard with the stock.

The Howa KRG stock's precision machined inletting includes a radius bedding system for consistent contact between action and chassis, starting with the rifle broken down as a stock and barrelled action it was a simple operation to assemble and once correctly torqued down with the two provided action screws you're basically ready to go. In this case the Howa barrelled action was already scoped and sighted with a Zeiss 5-30x50 V6 so I had only minor adjustments to make.

Once on the range it was quickly evident the Howa KRG rifle with its Bravo stock was well up to the task in the accuracy department. Sub-MOA five-round groups were the norm with three-shot groups often printing much tighter, half-minute groups readily achievable when I played my part. I didn't do any serious load development with the Howa KRG, relying mainly on reloads using mixed once-fired brass combined with ADI AR2209 and either 140gr or 147gr Hornady ELD projectiles. This along with American Gunner 6.5 Creedmoor factory ammo always proves a great performer.

Behind the rifle I found the stock comfortable to use as the design sits well



Right-side profile of buttstock with adjustable comb.



Inletting for the action lug and front screw.

both on a benchrest or bag and as usual I ran it in my Caldwell Lead Sled for accuracy work before fitting a Harris bipod to shoot prone off the mat. I really like the grip, always having preferred a generous palm swell and also found the low contour of the vertical pistol grip combined with a high thumb hold just behind the tang enables you to leverage off the thumb if required, to crack the bolt open in initial extraction in order to work the bolt quickly.



The ambidextrous magazine release is easily accessible with the trigger finger.

The adjustable cheekpiece has a recess on the forward edge which appears to be there for bolt clearance. Perhaps it's different with other action variants fitted to KRG stocks, but with the Howa 1500 the bolt shroud doesn't come back that far during cycling and the recess isn't deep enough to achieve bolt removal for cleaning. To do that you need to pop the cheekpiece off by releasing the adjustment knob/clamp and lifting it away. It has no memory for height setting but the easy fix is to place a couple of simple rubber O-rings on the cheekpiece studs which, after being slid down to the preferred position, can be removed and returned to the same height without issue.

In summary I found the Howa KRG rifle with its Bravo Chassis (stock) a solid, well-featured, well-priced, modular platform which represents a practical and accurate rifle. Priced competitively at time of writing it features a stock with all key requirements for some competition rifle disciplines along with the modularity to build it into perhaps the stock you might wish for but may not currently have the budget for. Paired as it is with the Howa 1500 action you end up with a competitive rifle at a modest price. The Howa KRG Rifle is distributed in Australia by Outdoor Sporting Agencies and visit the KRG website for more information. ●



The Howa KRG's solid platform achieves consistent accuracy with sub-MOA not an issue.



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Consider this ...

Con Kapralos offers five contenders in the .22LR arena

It could be said the .22 Long Rifle (.22LR) cartridge is the most widely available and used worldwide as, being chambered for a myriad of longarm and handgun actions, the humble .22LR is a rimfire cartridge for all manner of applications. Longarms chambered in .22LR are widely accessible in a multitude of designs from single-shot bolt-actions, bolt-action repeaters, pump-action and self-loaders to name just a few. In Australia the bolt-action repeater reigns supreme with the good ol' rabbit gun part of our hunting culture and folklore, instrumental through the Depression years where the plentiful rabbits fed the nation.

For the shooter or hunter looking at a bolt-action either as their first rimfire rifle or to add to their collection, there are many makes and models both on the second-hand market or new from the major Australian importers. Following on from the popularity of our .308 Winchester rifle comparison a few years ago we decided to conduct a similar appraisal, this time turning the spotlight on the .22LR bolt-action repeater.

All major Australian importers were approached with a request for a candidate rifle for the assessment but with supply chain logistics hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, some importers didn't have sufficient stock to put one forward for our requirements. In the end we decided five rifles constituted an ideal sample group for the comparison and these were commissioned as follows:

- Tikka T1x MTR (Multi-Task Rifle) - supplied by Beretta Australia
- CZ 457 Beech Wood - supplied by Winchester Australia
- Lithgow LA101 TSP X Chassis rifle - supplied by Outdoor Sporting Agencies
- Rossi 8122 - supplied by Outdoor Sporting Agencies
- Weihrauch HW66 Production - my own rifle (distributed by Alcock & Pierce)

All rifles are current production models with a retail price span between \$375 for the Rossi to just shy of \$2000 for the Lithgow, the purpose of this exercise being to compare the features of the five side-by-side with a list of pros and cons. Additionally, an ammunition test with three commonly available rimfire loads would see how they stack up. Each rifle would be tested with either a fixed-power 6x scope

	Tikka T1x MTR (Multi-Task Rifle)	Lithgow LA101 TSP X Chassis
Calibre	.22LR	.22LR
Other rimfire calibres	.17HMR	.22WMR / .17HMR
Importer	Beretta Australia	Outdoor Sporting Agencies
RRP	\$1149	\$1995
Overall length	960 mm	985mm
Weight	2.6kg	4.1 kg
Action		
Action	Bolt-action - repeater	Bolt-action - repeater
Receiver material	Steel	High-tensile steel
Finish (barrelled action)	Matte black	Cerakote - matte black
Iron Sights	N/A	N/A
Scope mounting provision	11 mm dovetail rail on receiver, also drilled and tapped for scope mounting	Drilled and Tapped for bases/rings- comes with 2-piece bases fitted as standard
Available in left-hand model	Yes	Yes
Safety mechanism	Two-position, linear travel behind bolt notch	Two-position, linear travel behind bolt notch
Bolt/Bolt handle	Steel bolt body, steel bolt handle, 60° bolt lift	Three-lug, 60° bolt-lift, rear-locking bolt with cocking indicator
Trigger	Single stage, adjustable	Match quality, single stage, adjustable
Trigger pull (grams)	1450g	1510g
Length of pull	340mm - adjustable with additional spacers	350mm - adjustable with additional spacers
Barrel		
Barrel length and profile	510mm semi-heavy contour, cold-hammer forged chrome-moly steel (also available in 410mm length)	530mm medium varmint weight, cold-hammer forged military grade steel, 11° target crown
Barrel attachment to receiver	Three retaining screws attach to front receiver ring	Threaded tenon
Threaded muzzle	Yes - 1/2"x28	Yes- 1/2"x20 UNF or 1/2"x28 UNEF
Rate of twist	One in 16.5" - 6 grooves	One in 16" -6 groove
Barrel finish	Matte black	Matte black
Magazine		
Material	Polymer - detachable clip	Polymer - detachable clip (CZ 452/455 compatible)
Capacity	10-round	5-round or 10-round
Stock		
Material	Injection moulded polymer with 35 per cent fibreglass -accepts interchangeable Tikka grips / fore-ends. (Rifle accepts all synthetic Tikka T3x stocks)	Southern Cross Arms TSP X Aluminium chassis (rifle also available with standard polymer / walnut / laminate stocks)
Recoil pad	Hard polymer buttpad	One-inch rubber pad
Sling swivel studs	Yes- QD	Flush Fitting swivel cups, M-Lok slots provided for compatible accessories
Adjustable comb	No	Yes
Triggerguard	Polymer one-piece integral with magazine port / magazine release button	Integral to aluminium chassis
Bedding	Recoil lug- cross-slot milled into underside of front receiver ring mates up with steel recoil lug affixed to mortise in stock floor. Receiver beds directly onto polymer stock. Barrel free floating	Full-length aluminium chassis

The five candidates side-by-side

CZ 457 Beech Wood	Rossi 8122	Weihrauch HW66 Production
.22LR	.22LR	.22LR
.22WMR / .17HMR	.22WMR (Model 8122M) .17HMR (Model 8117)	.22WMR/.17HMR
Winchester Australia	Outdoor Sporting Agencies	Alcock & Pierce
\$1060	\$375	~\$1700 (advertised price)
975mm	900mm	1040mm
2.6kg	1.8kg	3.0kg
Bolt-action - repeater	Bolt-action - repeater	Bolt-action - repeater
Steel	Steel	Steel
Satin black	Satin black	Gloss blue
N/A	Optional	N/A
11mm Dovetail rail on receiver	11mm Dovetail rail on receiver	11mm Dovetail rail on receiver; also drilled and tapped for scope mounting
No - but select models of the CZ 457 available in LH	No	No
Two-position, linear travel behind bolt notch	Cross-bolt safety	Two-position, linear travel behind bolt notch
Steel bolt body and handle, 60° bolt lift, polymer bolt shroud at rear	Steel bolt body, steel bolt handle, 60° bolt lift	Steel bolt body, steel bolt handle, 60° bolt lift
Single stage adjustable	Single stage	Match trigger, single stage. Adjustable (also available as a Direct Trigger or double-set Hunting Trigger)
1000g	2000g	500g (Match trigger)
358mm	340mm	365mm
Light sporter weight 525mm in length, cold-hammer forged steel	Sporter weight 460mm (also available in 410mm, 540mm, 560mm lengths)	560mm medium weight, button rifled
Interchangeable barrel system - accepts other CZ 455/457 rimfire calibre barrels	Pinned	Threaded tenon
Yes - 1/2" x 20	Yes : 1/2" x 28 UNF or 1/2" x 28 UNEF	Optional - 1/2" UNF
One in 16"	One in 16"	One in 16"
Satin black	Satin black	Gloss blue
Polymer - detachable clip (compatible with CZ 455) - pressed steel versions available	Pressed steel/polymer follower	Pressed steel with steel follower
5-round or 10-round	10-round	5-round (8-round option available)
Beech Wood, classic American stock pattern, oil finished, ornate 'Fleur De Lys' chequering on grip and fore-end	Synthetic polymer - available in black, brown, grey, green olive dark, pink, tan. Shallow ambidextrous cheek-peice	Walnut, classic American pattern, matte oil finish, no chequering
20mm sorbothane recoil pad	Thin rubber	20mm rubber pad
Yes - QD	Yes - QD	Yes - QD
No	No	No
Polymer triggerguard with inletted steel shank incorporating the magazine port	Polymer one-piece block incorporating magazine well, magazine release lever, cross-bolt safety and triggerguard. Houses trigger group. Attached to underside of receiver	Steel - integral part of steel frame which comprises of magazine well, trigger group housing and triggerguard
Steel recoil lug located in head of the stock mates up with milled recess in underside of receiver rear tang. Composite synthetic pillars provide additional support for the receiver. Barrel free floating	Polymer-block housing (containing trigger group, cross-bolt safety, magazine well) attached to receiver underside - beds directly to polymer stock inletting surfaces. Barrel free floating	Steel frame which comprises of magazine well, trigger group housing and triggerguard attached to underside of receiver. Frame beds directly onto inletting of walnut stock with the aid of sleeved pillars. Barrel free floating

Five contenders in the .22LR arena

or variable power set on 6x to keep things consistent and five 5-shot groups with all brands of ammunition in each.

What this exercise won't do is 'score' or 'grade' the rifles as that's not the object. Some readers may ask 'why wasn't this one included?' which is a valid argument but if we could've accessed every popular rimfire on the market with no logistic or supply restrictions the comparison would've been exhaustive to say the least.

The five rifles tested were (top to bottom) Rossi 8122, CZ 457 Beech Wood, Lithgow LA101 TSP X Chassis, Tikka T1x and Weihrauch HW66 Production.

Overall performance at a glance



Tikka T1x MTR

Performed well with the 10-shot polymer magazine feeding loaded rounds without an issue and ejecting fired cases positively. The quality of the trigger was good 'out of the box' and the rifle turned in some respectable groups despite inclement range conditions. For a rifle that will withstand all the environmental conditions on offer and deliver accuracy, the Tikka T1x certainly fits the bill.

Ammunition top performer:

Eley Standard (average group 19mm)

Pros

- Built on the back of the legendary Tikka T3 / T3x centrefire platforms
- Accepts any synthetic Tikka T3x riflestock (drop in fit)
- Two scope mounting options available (dovetail / drilled and tapped)
- Light weight (2.6kg)
- Two barrel lengths available
- Excellent trigger - same as T3x unit

Cons

- No flush fitting magazine available.
- No walnut / laminate models available
- Not available in .22WMR
- Polymer buttplate



The five magazines on our comparison rifles (from left) Tikka T1x, Lithgow LA101, CZ 457, Rossi 8122 and Weihrauch HW66 Production.

Lithgow LA101 TSP X Chassis

This one's suited to shooting prone or off the bench but with one of their conventional stocks would make a great hunting rifle. The trigger was as good as expected but accessing the magazine release lever in the chassis underside was a tad frustrating at times.

Loading of rounds into the chamber and extraction and ejection of fired cases was once again good, the only minus with this outfit being the adjustable comb on the TSP X chassis. With the scope mounted reasonably low over the receiver, the comb in its lowest position wouldn't allow my master eye to line up behind the scope 'eye-box' and had to be removed for proper eye alignment so one small point for OSA to consider.

Ammunition top performer:

Eley Standard (average group 19mm)

Pros

- Australian made - and proud!
- Barrel attached to receiver via threaded tenon
- 5 and 10-shot magazine options
- Also available in standard stock configurations (walnut, laminate, polymer)
- Aluminium chassis for superior stability and strength
- Adjustable comb

Cons

- Heavy - but not a stalking outfit, best suited to shooting on a bench or prone.
- Only one scope mounting option (drilled and tapped for scope bases - no dovetail)
- TSP X Chassis adjustable cheek-piece not suited to low-mounted scopes

CZ 457 Beech Wood

Takes the chocolates for the prettiest rifle in the mix here with the ornate 'Fleur-De-Lys' chequering superb while the Beech Wood did have some figure in the grain. The rifle performed faultlessly but with the pedigree of Brno/ CZ-UB behind the 457 you wouldn't expect anything less. Trigger was excellent and provision of a decent recoil pad a nice touch. Two small minuses were the threaded muzzle cap which sat slightly proud of the barrel surface where a flush-fitting cap would give it a seamless appearance, and the composite synthetic bedding pillars where aluminium would have been far more desirable for a few extra dollars.

Ammunition top performer:

Eley Standard (average group 24mm)

Pros

- Classic CZ styling with revered pedigree
- Two magazine options - and easy to find (compatible with CZ 455)
- Superb "Fleur-De-Lys" checkering pattern around grip and fore-end
- Accepts interchangeable rimfire calibre barrels (CZ 455/457)
- Decent sorbothane recoil pad
- Light weight at 2.6kg
- Nice, crisp trigger, adjustable

Cons

- Only dovetail provision for scope mounting - not additionally drilled and tapped
- Threaded muzzle cap sits proud of barrel surface
- Composite synthetic bedding pillars - aluminium would be more desirable

Rossi 8122

For the money the Rossi 8122 is fun and even though the rifle's built to a budget and end-user in mind, it's a great little gun suited to plinking and entry-level hunting. Having two 10-shot magazines supplied is a bonus and being able to choose from an array of stock colour options is another thumbs-up. The compact nature and light weight are its best attributes though the heavy trigger wasn't conducive to shooting the tightest groups possible but at this price it's indeed a great rifle.

Ammunition top performer: Eley Standard (average group 27mm)

Pros

- Slim and compact design • Optional model with iron sight • Pick from a range of stock colours
- Ultra-light weight - ideal for backpack hunting
- Pressed steel magazine with 10-shot capacity

Cons

- Trigger a bit heavy • Bolt a tad sticky - but should bed in with use • No flush fitting magazine
- Cross-bolt safety a bit unusual - but seems to work

Weihrach HW66 Production

Being my own rifle this German-made product is one classy firearm. Everything is quality from the match chamber and trigger, all walnut and blued steel without a hint of polymer it's a purist's rifle. It shot as expected, functioned perfectly and being fitted with the match trigger option came into its own in the accuracy stakes. The only factor to its detriment is the total lack of chequering on the walnut stock though the latest models have this. With all things rimfire and German, quality doesn't come cheap and the same can be said for additional magazines. Ammunition top performer: Eley Standard (average group 15mm)

Pros

- All steel and walnut construction - no synthetics used • Classic styling with German pedigree
- Silky smooth action • Option of three triggers units to choose from • Barrel attached to receiver via threaded tenon

Cons

- Additional magazine's quite expensive • No chequering on rifle stock (current models do have chequered stocks) • Match trigger - probably not the best choice for a hunting rifle

Overview

What's pleasing is that any of the five rifles tested are quite serviceable as a general-purpose hunting rifle (the Lithgow LA101 with traditional stock would be included) and they all functioned and performed without issue. Additionally, all these with the exception of the Rossi would perform well in SSAA disciplines such as Field Rifle, Metallic Silhouette and others where a factory specification firearm is acceptable for competition use.

The purists who enjoy timber-stocked rifles with blued metalwork are well catered to in the current market but make no mistake, the use of synthetic polymer materials is here to stay - it just depends on your budget and intended application with the diminutive .22LR rimfire cartridge. Long may it reign to be enjoyed by all hunters and shooters in Australia. ●



While four of the rifles have a $\frac{3}{8}$ " (11mm) dovetail on the receiver top to accept scope rings, the Lithgow (top) does away with dovetails and supplies two-piece Weaver bases attached to the receiver top (drilled and tapped). The Tikka (bottom) features dovetails for scope ring mounting but also has the dovetail top drilled and tapped to take scope-mounting hardware. The Weihrach and Rossi share these features while the CZ only has dovetails and isn't drilled and tapped.



All rifles tested used either a 6x fixed power (top) or variable power riflescope set at 6x to ensure consistency.

Accuracy testing

Accuracy testing - conducted using three brands of bulk factory ammunition readily available off the shelf at 50-metres off a benchrest.

Results of five 5-shot groups (mm) at 50 metres off a Caldwell Jr Front rest and rear bag.

	Winchester 555 - 36gr Hollow Point 1280fps	Browning BPR - 40gr Round Nose bullet 1255fps	Eley Standard - 40gr Solid 1090fps
Tikka T1x MTR	24,24,37,21,25 Average = 26mm	35,30,30,32,32 Average = 32mm	20,12,21,21,20 Average = 19mm
Lithgow LA101 TSP X	23,27,20,31,29 Average = 26mm	33,34,23,32,30 Average = 30mm	18,21,22,15,20 Average = 19mm
CZ 457 Beech Wood	25,28,31,23,23 Average = 26mm	28,26,24,27,35 Average = 28mm	29,18,16,31,25 Average = 24mm
Rossi 8122	35, 25,32,35,30 Average = 31mm	40,32,35,39,30 Average = 35mm	22,28,29,28,27 Average = 27mm
Weihrach HW66 Production	20,21,24,18,20 Average = 21mm	27,25,28,25,29 Average = 27mm	13,15,14,15,17 Average = 15mm

** Scopes used for accuracy testing included variable and fixed power scopes - all used at 6x magnification.

Say squeeze!



Don't snatch at that all-important shot, advises Sam Garro

It doesn't matter how experienced a shooter may be or how many times you've told yourself to just squeeze the trigger for that one-off opportunity, there are occasions when the game or long-pursued trophy animal unexpectedly presents itself and as excitement and urge to shoot kicks-in before the animal departs, the firearm is quickly shouldered,

cross-hairs lined up and the trigger inadvertently pulled instead of squeezed to result in an off-target shot or dismal miss.

That's when a demoralising self-blame takes over as you search for some consoling explanation but, in the end, resolving yourself there was no real excuse except to learn from the experience is all you can do. It's happened to most of us at one stage

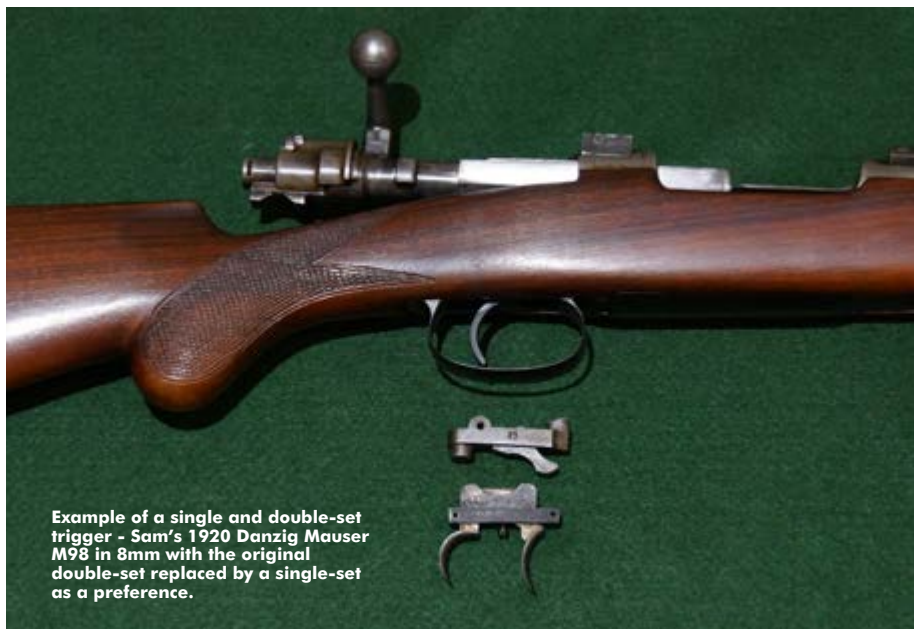
or another, myself included, and apart from adopting a more disciplined approach it should also push us to consider what else could have been done.

Trigger types

When it comes to squeezing the trigger your choice of trigger-type and setting in rifles can make a difference, especially in competition or long-range shooting. To keep it simple and without going into the finer details and intricacies of trigger mechanisms and makes, there's a common single-set trigger with immediate take-up and a double-set trigger where the rear trigger sets the front trigger which then requires a minimal touch to set it off.

Where a hairline trigger is involved requiring the slightest of touch or any trigger adjustment for that matter, for safety reasons a gunsmith or qualified person should be consulted. Some factory rifle triggers can come with a slight take-up before engaging which may or may not be adjustable or can be replaced with a precision aftermarket trigger like the popular Timney, one of several brands on the market.

Triggers themselves come in varying trigger shoe configurations and finger surface area for more comfortable distribution of pressure, some shoe examples being the gator grip - smooth curved, curved and



Example of a single and double-set trigger - Sam's 1920 Danzig Mauser M98 in 8mm with the original double-set replaced by a single-set as a preference.

ribbed, 90-degrees and flat with an insert take-up - the choice is yours. The poundage pull on triggers can also be adjusted to a shooter's preference and the recommended weight pull on a hunting rifle should not be less than 3lb or half the rifle weight if greater (normally a pull weight between 4.5 and 6.5lb is good for most recreational shooting). How to best position your finger on the trigger varies from shooter to shooter so it's about what feels right for you.

Know your firearm

It's important the firearm rests comfortably on your shoulder so the scope comes up in full focus without a shadowy perimeter or the need to unduly shift your head backwards or forwards. To ensure a scope is properly secured to the rifle the screws to the bases and rings should be periodically checked for tightness and the scope itself mounted to provide sufficient eye relief. The firearm should also be balanced and easy to shoulder without being too weighty and/or too powerful to handle smoothly.

Due to the extensive array of firearms and makes it's recommended a gunshop or gunsmith be used as they usually stock the appropriate mounting bases and rings and can also attend to other work such as adjusting or replacing triggers, floating barrels and bedding actions for improved accuracy. Always carry your firearm in a well-padded gun case when travelling to avoid any sudden knock or bump which may affect the scope's accuracy and properly clean after use as internal barrel build-up can adversely affect accuracy.



Sam at the range practising controlled breathing and squeezing the trigger.

Hold steady

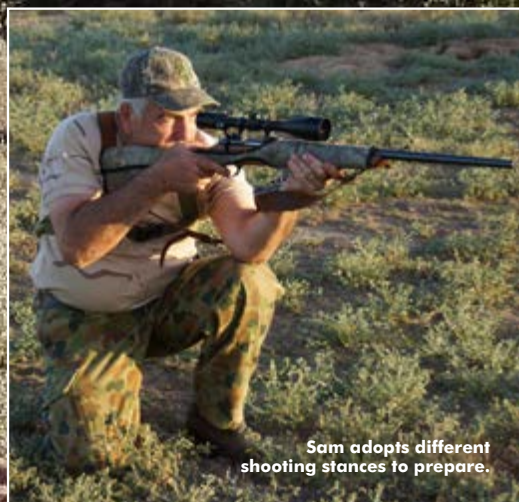
At the range, benchrests are designed to provide shooters with a platform to place a rifle rest on or enable a comfortable and steady posture for accurate shooting. In the field, to improve your chances of bagging game it pays to use any natural aid that'll help steady your shot like a tree-trunk or sapling, fence-post, haystack, termite mound or whatever's available. Lying prone with your backpack acting as an elevated dampener for the rifle is another favoured position but be careful not to rest the barrel on any hard surface as vibration on firing can cause a jolting effect.

On the other hand, so long as you're prepared to carry or shoulder an extra bit of equipment as I often do for longer range or varmint shooting there are bipods, tripods and other rifle-rest aids to help steady you and if all else fails, wrapping the rifle sling around your arm for a firmer hold or adopting a sitting or kneeling position using your elbows and knees will help steady you.

In the Brisbane Valley I was caught in the open with a trophy stag likely to disappear over the ridge at any moment and with no immediate natural rest to help steady my stance I tried a free-standing shot but it was no use. Laboured breathing from the uphill climb coupled with excitement



Using mechanical aids to improve accuracy.



Sam adopts different shooting stances to prepare.

Say squeeze!

made it impossible to hold the cross-hairs steady yet being too good an opportunity to pass up I quickly adopted the sitting position, lined up the cross-hairs on the stag's shoulder and squeezed the trigger for a clean one-shot kill.

Benefit of a rest

As a simple demonstration to prove the merits of using a rest, place two separate targets at 100m and jog or walk briskly back to the firing line so your breathing is elevated. In a free-standing position and as best as possible, shoot three or four rounds at the first target then, with breathing gradually abating, shoot the same number at the second target time using a bench or other rest to steady your shots. Don't be surprised if you spray bullets on the first target with one or two possibly missing altogether while the second batch should more resemble the expected result of a respectable group.

Practice

Squeezing the trigger so the rifle won't jerk in the slightest should be practised on a regular basis until it's second nature. These days centrefire ammo, even reloading, is becoming more expensive so using a 22LR is far cheaper and avoids extra noise and recoil. And even though the target area, for example the chest of a deer side-on is sizeable, to allow for any nervous trigger squeezing try to focus on a smaller spot about the size of an apple behind the shoulder, rather than anywhere on the shoulder.

Practise shooting at a 20c-sized circle on a 25m target with a 22LR and see how tight a group you can achieve by squeezing the trigger as whether head-shooting rabbits or bigger game at distance, it can be pretty satisfying when you hear the bullet thud after squeezing the trigger, knowing each one was a carefully executed shot.

When it counts

When the shot really has to count on game, especially if it's that trophy of a lifetime or one you've been pursuing for a while and excitement or nerves kick-in, try to control any emotions until after the event. Instead, imagine you're target shooting where you take a couple of deep breaths, partly exhale on the third and squeeze the trigger, especially if tired from arduous trekking as heavy breathing must be controlled before taking the shot.

Don't dwell on it, make it a predetermined action as that way you've given it your best and should hopefully be rewarded. And while we extensively practise and drill ourselves



Sam uses a tree to steady his shot on a Brisbane Valley deer.



A red deer stag taken by Sam.

to squeeze the trigger when it counts, even seasoned shooters can be overcome with the excitement and euphoria of sighting a majestic deer so pulling it all together when it counts can still be a challenge.

Calm is key

I've seen experienced shooters miss their first trophy animal within range through a sudden attack of 'buck fever' or over-excitement where the animal was already bagged in their mind before squeezing the trigger. Our guide on one deer hunt was able to console a disappointed hunter by explaining to him that such misses happen to the best of us and, soon after showing

him how to take advantage of a sapling to steady his shot, a red stag across a gully was successfully harvested.

Once a demoralised hunter has controlled those emotions and scored a representative trophy animal, that initial disappointment quickly fades. And if you've been stalking or crawling along the ground for 100m or so, as I once did to edge closer to a mob of goats, it's vital to momentarily pause to catch your breath and calm down before shooting. Provided the firearm being carried performs accurately the rest is up to the shooter to control their emotions, hold steady and squeeze the trigger with that simplistic but all-important little finger action. ●



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The hunt for **Billinghurst**



A Billinghurst field gun in the first stage of construction.

Henri Lach

Somewhere in south-east Queensland in a private hide-away lives a perfect working model of one of the world's rarest military field guns, a faithfully replicated Billinghurst-Requa multiple-barrelled volley artillery gun. The two blokes who made it allowed me to take a good look and it's magnificent but have sworn me to secrecy as to their identities and location of the gun - and I was unable to capture any images. That's despite the fact I know for sure the gun is fully licensed and complies with all Queensland firearms regulations.

I've been trying to convince them not to hide their light under a bushel as their skills and creativity should be the providence of all with an interest in firearms history, though my pleas so far have been rejected but I'm still working on it. When one of the partners in this magnificent reproduction exercise first told me of this item (referred to simply as a Billinghurst), I'm sure I wouldn't have been alone in asking: "What the heck is a Billinghurst?" So a leap into history is in order.

The chronicles of warfare through the centuries are filled with annals of fascinating developments in firearms. Obviously war has been - and still is - a great platform for developing all sorts of innovations, some good, some bad and some just outrageously impractical. On the practical side we've seen the humble flintlock, percussion and black powder pistol morph into a self-loader with 15-shot magazine - firepower that would've enabled Dick Turpin to hold most of London to ransom in his time.

If the Kentucky rifleman of the 1700s could've traded his squirrel gun for an AK-47 he'd have been able to corner the local game meat market with great profit. The list of useful longarms developed down the years is a matter of record, with the occasional stumbling block like attempts to produce a rifle which fires around corners. In the field of big guns names like Big Bertha spring to mind, yet she didn't help Adolf Hitler win his war.

Now let's look at the documented facts on the Billinghurst innovation for which I've leant heavily on *Wikipedia*: In 1861

on the suggestion of a bureaucrat named Albert Mack, a bloke called Dr. Josephus Requa began thinking about the design of a rapid-fire field gun. Requa talked with his friend William Billinghurst whom he'd known for many years and they devised the scale model of a design.

After it was received favourably, Billinghurst and Requa decided to go ahead with a full-scale prototype which cost around \$500 to build, a substantial amount at the time. The gun consisted of 25 heavy .58 calibre rifle barrels, each 2ft (0.61m) long and mounted together in a secure frame which could be elevated for range, the frame then installed on a two-wheeled carriage. Ammunition was loaded as a long magazine of 25 rounds which were fired by a single percussion cap in a single volley. With a crew of three it could be reloaded and fired seven times a minute, giving rate of fire of 175 rounds a minute, the .58 calibre bullets conical and weighing approximately one ounce (it was also possible to adjust the spread of the guns to make them diverge for use at close range).

Requa met General James Wolfe Ripley on April 22, 1862 to propose the idea but Ripley dismissed him, arguing such a firearm would consume expensive ammunition at a rate sure to cause logistical problems. Requa then approached President Abraham Lincoln on May 1, 1862 who listened to his explanation of Ripley's dismissal and gave Requa a note reading: "Gen. Ripley, please see Mr. A. Lincoln, May 1, 1862."

But Ripley wouldn't budge so Requa went back to Lincoln who then ordered Ripley to arrange a display of the weapon with two tests set in May 1862 producing favourable results. Requa and Billinghamurst needed financial backing to proceed with production and organised for a public demonstration as proof to backers, this conducted on August 12, 1862 at Rochester, New York. At the presentation the gun blasted holes in a wooden barrel target 1800ft (550m) away in the Genesee River and with the backers suitably impressed, contracts were drawn up to produce 50 units. A patent numbered 36,448 was issued on September 16, 1862.

The multi-firing invention was never officially accepted into service but records show it saw action at the Siege of Port Hudson, Fort Sumter and Siege of Petersburg as well as the Battle of Cold Harbor. According to records and my own research, a final test was conducted at the Washington Arsenal in August 1864 with a report issued in 1866 indicating the gun was reliable and performed well. As a result, an additional five guns were ordered but advances in firearms technology soon rendered it obsolete and it was consigned to historic oblivion.

So what in this day and age possessed a couple of blokes from Queensland to produce a replica of such a gun and, more to the point, how much time and effort has it required? The joint response is simple: "We loved the challenge." And challenging it has certainly been. They worked off plans



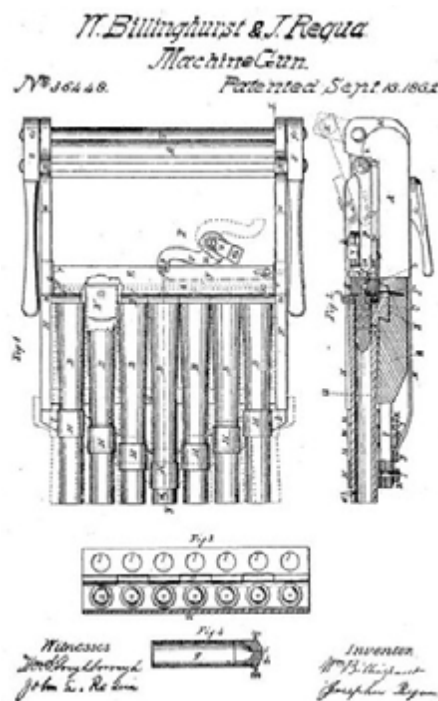
Field-testing a Billinghamurst replica in the US.

from sites they found on the internet and researched the gun as much as possible, the major stumbling block in their endeavours being configuration and design of the barrels.

The internet again came to their rescue and an obliging and sympathetic US manufacturer proved a saviour. "He really came up with the goods when we explained what we were doing. He knew the story of the Billinghamurst and just what sort of barrels we needed," they told me.

Putting it all together was an exercise which required countless man-hours over a total production period of more than two years. Any questions about the cost of this endeavour are met with wry smiles though they admit just importing 25 esoteric gun barrels from the US was an eye-watering fiscal exercise on its own - and of that I have no doubt.

But these two blokes are more than happy with the outcome and pay regular homage to their creation in its little hide-away. So far it has been solely for their eyes only but maybe this Billinghamurst will appear at a future antique firearms exhibition and if it does, you can tell 'em you read about it first in *Australian Shooter*. ●



Original plans which helped create a Billinghamurst field gun in Queensland.

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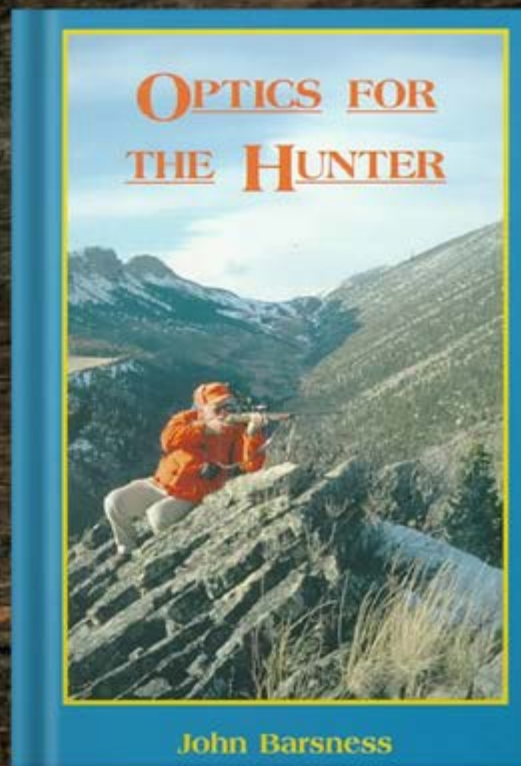
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Optical inclusion

Optics for the Hunter
by John Barsness

Samuel B. Mann



One of my American readers recently alerted me to this book from a few years ago and forwarded me several pages regarding Barsness' thoughts on scope reliability. I've since bought my own copy and found it a pretty good read as it covers most aspects of modern riflescopes, binoculars and spotting scopes and how to use them. His information on rangefinders and night vision is not surprisingly a bit dated with the passage of time but instructive to look back on nevertheless.

The chapter on brightness in scopes is excellent and explains lens coatings particularly well while as a study of eye relief and its reciprocal/rival field of view the third chapter is very good, at least within the blinkered world of modern scopes. I'm not sure how he concluded that few good scope brands used field stops, though I suspect he deduced that an exit pupil corresponding with the objective diameter must mean there is none. If that is indeed how he did it, I'd contend most field stops are near the second focal plane where the stream of light which defines the exit pupil inverts narrowly, well inside the stop diaphragm's cropping.

There are creditable chapters on focus, reticles, parallax and mounting scopes properly and some entertaining hunting yarns illustrating his points. Barsness was certainly clued-up on state of the art and recognised the merits of Burris Signature scope rings and Posi-Lock turrets 20 years before I'd heard of either while his outlook on hunting ethics appeals to me but may not apply so much in Australia where most of the species we hunt are exotic, if not feral.

My favourite chapter is the second one - *Reliable Scopes* - where he asserts: "Recoil causes most scope breakdowns and its effects are cumulative" then goes into various ways this can happen, including with airguns and muzzle-brakes. Barsness gives a certain European brand a real whipping and accuses it of wearing-out its scopes with destructive testing before sale and even claims scopes were more reliable decades earlier but is a tad vague on why that might be (I wonder if the scopes he recalls from those days were made in Europe before it fell foul of US decadence).

He finally mentions reticle-movement scopes on Page 103 but only with derision, associating them with pop song *Yummy yummy* which is a bit weird as by

1968 the only US firm still making them was probably Unertl, the no-nonsense manufacturer of target scopes used by Carlos Hathcock and other US snipers in Vietnam. That bubble-gum song would better describe the seductive newer models with innards that could bob around like a go-go dancer's butt though Barsness does have a soft spot for one US brand and even admits one of the names there had been a hunting companion of his.

These few criticisms aside I rate this an excellent book (one of very few on the subject) and of great application to most modern rifle shooters. I recommend you track it down and while I can't say if it's still in print, Amazon lists new copies at \$74 though there are plenty of used ones online and this reviewer found an excellent copy from a non-Amazon source delivered for \$A25. The A5 hard-cover totals 260 pages, includes monochrome photographs, interesting tables and a 14-page index.

• *Optics for the Hunter* by John Barsness is published by Safari Press (1999). The reviewer is the author of another book on the subject: *Light at the start of the tunnel - Are rifle scopes off the rails?* (Bunduki Books, Australia 2017). ●

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SSAIB General Manager Megan Spiniello said a lot of work had been done to bring the new cover which was created in direct response to feedback from members with high value firearms and collections. "I never want a member to come to us and be told no, we can't help you," said Megan. "I'm proud of the work we've put in with Precision Underwriting to offer flexible options for people's needs. We're

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In addition to the new Top-Up Cover, SSAIB offers personal accident and firearms cover for firearms professionals such as pest controllers and trainers. The existing firearms protection personal accident cover option for members only applies to those participating in lawful recreational

shooting activities. This stipulation had effectively excluded some members who conduct pest control, harvest wild animals for income and operate as firearm trainers from receiving cover.

The new option for professionals is the result of extensive work by Precision Underwriting and SSAIB to ensure cover is tailored to their needs while remaining affordable. Megan said this was again created in response to member demand. "This allows us to offer flexibility in our cover and meet the needs of all shooters," she said. "Our members come from different backgrounds and those who earn an income from shooting need insurance, just like any other small business." For more on these products and all general insurance needs contact us on 08 8332 0281. ●

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CRIME SCENE DO NOT CROSS

CRIME

Get this to the lab!

Senior correspondent Rod Pascoe takes an inside look at forensic 'fingerprints'

We've all seen cop shows on TV where a crime scene is overrun by people in white gowns with 'Forensics' emblazoned across their back, cameras flashing, taking measurements, making notes, rummaging through cupboards and turning out drawers in search of clues. Where a firearm's involved we also hear that familiar line: 'Let's get this down to the lab' as a detective picks up a spent cartridge case from under the sofa and while that's not exactly how a crime scene is managed, it's good enough for TV.

But what exactly happens to that fired case when it goes to the lab and what information could it provide to help solve a crime? In the same way DNA and fingerprints uniquely identify an individual and separate them from the rest of the population, the scratches and impressions left on a spent cartridge case and fired bullet point to the firearm they came from.

When we wander around our local range we may pick up a discarded, fired cartridge case and immediately identify it by its headstamp and might even assume the type of firearm it came from. For example a .30-30 Winchester must have been fired from a lever-action rifle of the Winchester or Marlin variety, right? A 9mm Luger case must surely have been ejected from a self-loading pistol, right? But as it turns out

there are other types of firearms which use these cartridges and in law these assumptions won't and don't stand up to intense scrutiny. So what can be done to remove this ambiguity?

Let's take a hypothetical scenario from our TV show. The pathologist has recovered a projectile from a victim and although fragmented there may be enough of that bullet to examine for clues. The detective found only one spent cartridge case at the crime scene under the sofa. No other bullets, spent cases or live rounds were found nor was a firearm or other firearm part such as a magazine.

At the lab examiners first determine some basic information about the fired case with the naked eye before delving deeper - is it a pistol, rifle or shotgun cartridge case, rimfire or centrefire? Let's say it's a centrefire case from a pistol - what's the cartridge typically called? It's been determined as a 9mm Parabellum (aka 9mm Luger) with the aid of measurements and the stamp clearly displayed on the head and the head stamp usually carries a brand name too.

Let's refine the search a little further to determine if it's a factory load or a home reload and this is where a microscope comes into play. Reloaded cartridges should be self-evident due to a number of clues - incorrectly seated primers, extractor and ejector marks from previous firings,

residues remaining inside the cartridge case and a lack of case or primer sealing lacquer, particularly in military variations.

Sometimes when lead projectiles are used, remnants of lead and lubricating material may still be attached to the case mouth. A reload may also show some signs



Only a few brands of pistol have a distinct step in the chamber which prevents gas from escaping back along the cartridge case on firing. This helps in identifying the firearm as a Walther PPQ.

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Get this to the lab!

not seen on pristine commercial loadings which are usually marks or scratches from dies and other reloading tools. Older reloaded brass may also show signs of stretching or bulging and these features could possibly connect them to similar attributes found on ammunition of a potential suspect. The assumption at this point may well be the spent case was ejected from a self-loading pistol but in a court of law that's not enough to prove a case 'beyond reasonable doubt'.

So what other tests can help determine the make and model of the pistol? This is where the knowledge and experience of the examiner comes in, aided by a substantial reference library and various ballistics data bases. In Australia, federal and state police forces have such a library containing brochures, photographs, technical drawings, advertising material as well as samples of almost every cartridge case and bullet - fired and unfired - along with ammunition for test-firing.

An electronic image storage and identification system called IBIS (Integrated Bullet Identification System) is also widely used by Australian forensic laboratories and it's common for firearms examiners to visit factories and become familiar with production processes and techniques of individual manufacturers. Examiners can now look at additional marks on the case to determine with a high degree of accuracy the brand and model of the pistol.

These 'operational' marks are caused where the cartridge, case and bullet come into contact with the working parts of the firearm during normal chambering, firing, extraction and ejection of the spent case and by studying the rifling engraving on all bullets found. And in the case of a magazine-fed firearm there may be marks left on the case when the magazine was loaded and cartridges held in position by the magazine lips, subjected to recoil then stripped from the magazine as rounds are chambered (the shape and depth of the firing pin strike on the primer is an obvious operational mark).

Another feature of some primer strikes is the teardrop-shaped drag mark typical in pistols using the Browning-type breech locking system where, during recoil, the chamber end of the barrel drops down as the locking lugs disengage from recesses machined in the top of the slide. Orientation of the firing pin drag mark is compared to the position of the extractor on the breech face along with less-obvious marks from the extractor itself, on and under the rim. This information can further eliminate some makes and models of pistols.

Sometimes unexpected marks can be found such as when a component like a

firing pin or extractor has been replaced by a non-standard part. While on one hand the marks created by the different part can complicate the search, this can also be a handy clue to narrow down the identity of an individual firearm. Wear-and-tear marks can result from misalignment of parts such as an out-of-time cylinder on a revolver which will cause scratches to the bullet clipping the side of the barrel throat.

Other pistol makes and models can be eliminated by examining the impression left by the breech face immediately around the firing pin and from the hole it protrudes. If there's a gap around the firing pin, soft and hot metal from the primer can flow back to occupy any space around the pin. There are other features that point to a small number of brands and models of pistol such as the fluted chamber marks left by a Heckler & Koch, polygonal rather than conventional rifling used by some brands left on the bullet, the distinctive rectangular firing pin impression of Glock pistols or those pronounced semi-circular machining marks on the recoil face of many Tokarev pistols.

Other unique case markings include a step that's impressed around a cartridge case when fired, designed to prevent escaping gasses flowing back towards the breech though this is only used by two or three manufacturers. Marks left on the face of the case head from the loaded chamber indicator pin are only found on a handful of pistols and their position on the head is also a way of determining make and model, so after a process of elimination the suspect firearm in our TV drama has been determined as an XYZ brand Model 7, 9mm self-loading pistol.

Meanwhile as the cartridge and firearm identification was progressing, other scientific investigations are looking at samples of the propellant to check against unburnt powder found in the bore of the recovered pistol and on the victim's clothing, while wounds are also examined for gunshot residue as well as at the crime scene to determine where the firearm was discharged. In this scenario we learn a suspect has been arrested and charged based on other evidence and following a search of their home a pistol (an XYZ Model 7 as it turned out) has been found with a magazine still containing ammunition.

As far as our TV show's concerned that's the end of it - 'lock him up and throw away the key'. But again that's not enough to make a watertight case or for the legal process to be fair, especially in a murder. While it may now be reasonable to conclude a brass case found at the crime scene had come from a particular pistol which also happened to be in the

Numerous marks around the rim show this case has been reloaded many times.



The loaded chamber indicator pin leaves an impression adjacent to the W.



Off-centre firing pin strikes common to both samples.



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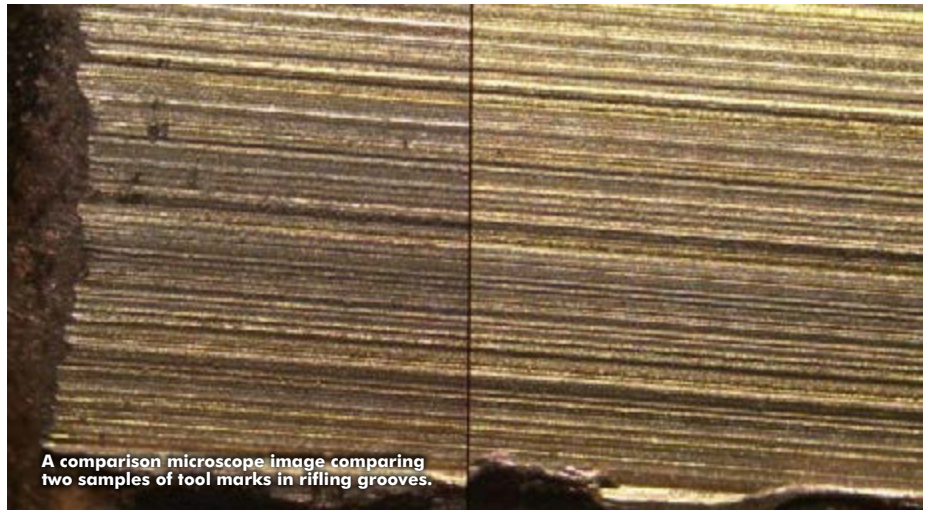
possession of the accused, many questions are still unanswered and attention turns to the bullet recovered from the victim's post-mortem. The forensics team now move to the next stage of investigation known as 'tool mark' examination.

Tool marks are scratches or striations left on a firearm during the manufacturing process and are transferred to bullets and cases on firing and these tool marks along with all other information gleaned during the investigation will hopefully narrow the field to just one firearm. As stated earlier, police forces have a huge amount of reference material available and this also includes hefty firearms reference collections.

Bullets and cartridge cases from similar firearms in the collection are test-fired and compared against crime scene exhibits held in police outstanding crimes files and usually involve firing several different cartridge loadings. The marks picked up by ammunition components often differ from one type of loading to another - a jacketed bullet will behave differently from a plain lead bullet as it travels through the rifling - while differences in the pressures generated during firing and hardness of the cartridge primer will also create different marks.

Firearm examiners will use individual characteristics produced during the manufacturing processes such as changes to cutting surfaces and imperfections caused by wear, as well as changes caused by damage and corrosion during the service life of the firearm. To achieve this the suspect pistol will be fired into a tank of water to recover projectiles for matching with the bullet fragments found in the victim and the same type of ammunition from the suspect firearm will also be test-fired and components collected for comparison.

Images from a high magnification comparison microscope of recovered bullet fragments and test-fired bullets will be placed side-by-side to check for similarities. Apart from individual manufacturers, rifling characteristics such as the number and width of lands and grooves, depth of grooves,



A comparison microscope image comparing two samples of tool marks in rifling grooves.

direction and rate of twist, the actual tools used to drill the bore and cut the rifling are also clues and, armed with this information, experts consult another computer database containing all known rifling characteristics.

Tool marks can often be caused by an uneven rifling tool, impact damage to the crowned muzzle end of the barrel or a particular irregularity in machining of the cone at the end of the chamber. Most tool marks inside a completed rifled barrel are created during the drilling, reaming, rifling and finishing operations while burrs are also left after crowning the muzzle and cutting the chamber cone or throat.

Longitudinal tool marks will be left inside the bore where the rifling process cause removal of metal to create the grooves, but the land areas are left with a circular pattern of tool marks from the initial drilling and reaming processes. The cutting or impacting surfaces of tools contain imperfections that'll be transferred to the machined surface, for example the profile of the cutting face of the tool can change due to wear and alter the pattern of marks made by it. During machining the cutting edge of a tool can heat up due to friction and cause loss of temper requiring the tool to be re-sharpened or replaced.



A good match between a case retrieved from a crime scene with one test-fired from the suspect's firearm.

Bullets passing down the barrel may not always bottom out into the grooves, especially when hard-jacketed bullets are involved. Bore dimensions can vary (within tolerances) and the jacketed bullets of some military 9mm Parabellum (Luger) ammunition for instance can be undersize and fired bullets will make clear impressions of the rifling lands and fewer markings on the bullet from the bottom of the grooves.

This has been a broad overview of what's involved in this interesting and rewarding branch of forensics and due to space restrictions I've only explained about half the known reasons for marks to appear on fired cartridge cases that would be useful to a firearms examiner. Yet it must be said that tool mark comparisons and other forensic examinations involving firearms is not a perfect science and sometimes even after a lot of effort some matches are inconclusive.

Firearm examiners are just as important to the process as the science and technology itself and in court the examiner's knowledge, experience and skill will be tested to validate the findings made in the lab. In researching this article I discovered the job of a real forensic firearms examiner is far more interesting than TV shows portray. ●

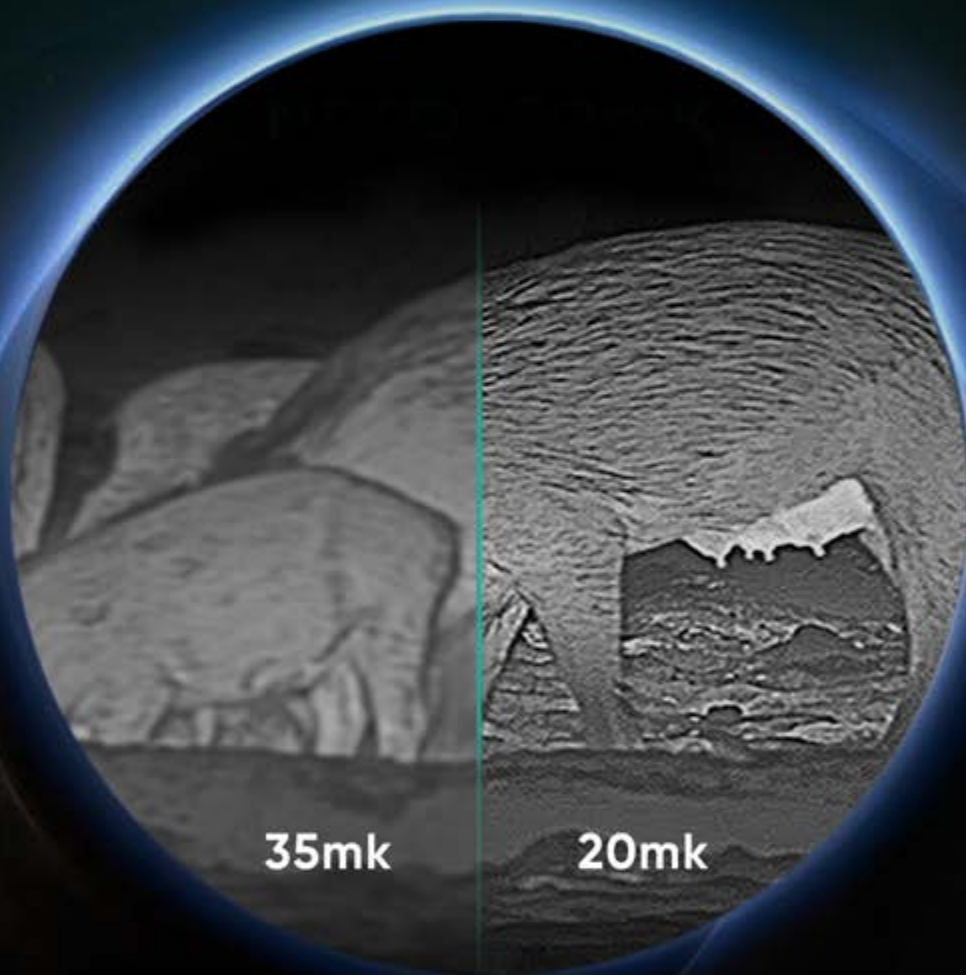


Where a bullet is undersize there'll be clear impressions of the rifling lands markings on one side (left) and fewer on the other (right).

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Art and soul



John Dunn admires some inspirational works of wonder

Hunting and art are quite different fields of human endeavour which, at first glance, would seem incompatible. All too often hunting is portrayed as a destructive force in nature, mostly by those whose interaction with the natural world is limited by the boundaries of their urban existence and exposure to David Attenborough documentaries. Such blinkered thinking ignores the fact hunting can be a practical and functional tool in both wildlife conservation and management, a prime example especially in Australia being pest animal control.

Art on the other hand is seen by many as a celebration of the cerebral, a creative process which allows and encourages exponents to express thoughts and feelings in a benign way through writing and visual mediums, together with music and dance and all the other permutations of self-expression the woke sophisticates in our society are wont to claim as their own. When you look at some of the modern offerings it would seem what constitutes art or not is entirely in the eye of the beholder. I don't have a problem with that as it leaves plenty of room for individuals to see and appreciate whatever they like free from the dogmas of others, a courtesy rarely extended to the hunting and shooting fraternity.

Though I can string a few words together I'm most definitely not an artistic person. That said I know what I like and for years have been collecting hunting-related bits and pieces which appeal, slowly building up a collection that continues to grow and

gives me a great deal of joy. Some pieces would never be generally considered works of art simply because of what they are while others have a much broader appeal, some decorative and some purely practical. All display a level of artistic skill in their construction and design which I could never emulate and that's what makes them art to me and in that respect I doubt I'm alone.

Stone and rock

Perhaps the oldest form of hunting art is petroglyphs - representations of birds, animals and fish chipped into rock while ochre pictures painted on the walls of caves or rock shelters are another still quite common example. This type of art can only be collected as photographs and though I'm not sure anyone really knows what they

mean any more, they hint rather broadly at a hunting heritage going back to the earliest of times.

Stone tools - knives and axes, spear and arrowheads - are other examples of that heritage and as primitive as they may seem by modern standards, their production required a high level of knowledge and practical skill (artistry) reflected in their symmetry and shape despite the most basic of raw materials they had to work with. In their finished state these tools were used for hunting and processing game, my collection including Aboriginal and American First Nation examples and though some of the latter are modern reproductions, all were made according to the old ways and so help keep some very specific traditional skills alive.





Made for the tourist trade this traditionally carved Tlingit salmon is a glorious piece of hunting related, hand-crafted woodwork.

Wooden

This spans the ages from ancient to more modern times and includes indigenous and folk art as well as decorative pieces. Some of my wooden items are a little rough, specifically made for the tourist trade but nice to have anyway and include a number of traditional Tlingit carved wooden parts from America as well as a couple of traditionally made boomerangs from northern Australia and a woomera that's been around for the best part of 40 years. As someone who finds himself flat-out carving a Sunday roast, I appreciate the workmanship that goes into them!

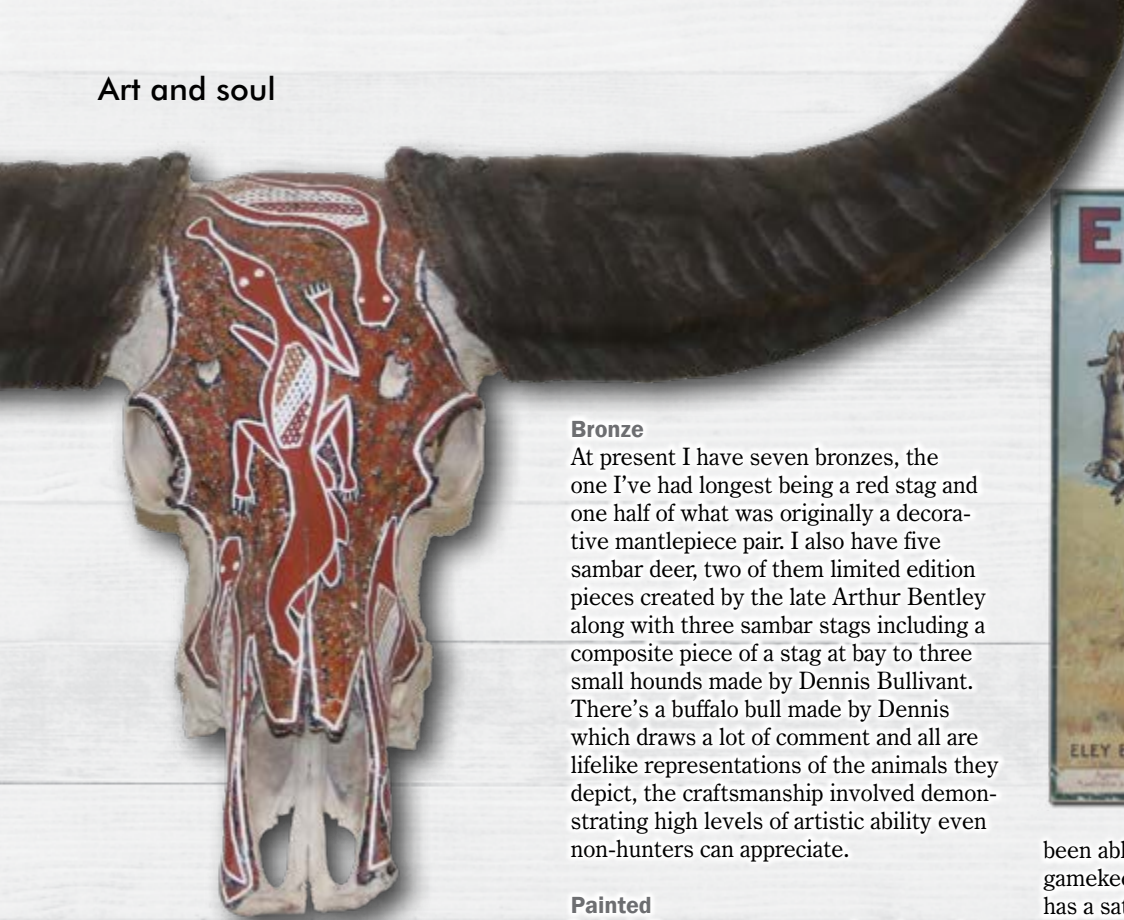
Two of my favourite wooden pieces are hand-carved decoy ducks, one Australian-made and the other from California. They sit quite comfortably among an array of other decorative ducks I've collected down the years and what they lack in sophistication they more than make up for with their rustic, used-a-few-times looks. There's also a brown trout hand-carved by someone

from Big Sky Carvers in Montana and most who see it think it's taxidermy. At the other end of the mundane scale I have a practical, hand-carved wooden hunter's cup I brought from Finland in 2004, a simple object fashioned from a single piece of wood. All the Finnish hunters I met on that trip carried them, so this one brings back lots of good memories.



Folk art - a couple of hand-carved decoy ducks, the one on the right Australian-made, the other American.

Art in advertising - a modern print of an Eley publicity board from around 1900.



Aboriginal hunting art on the skull of a buffalo bull from the Robert Tritton collection.

Bronze

At present I have seven bronzes, the one I've had longest being a red stag and one half of what was originally a decorative mantelpiece pair. I also have five sambar deer, two of them limited edition pieces created by the late Arthur Bentley along with three sambar stags including a composite piece of a stag at bay to three small hounds made by Dennis Bullivant. There's a buffalo bull made by Dennis which draws a lot of comment and all are lifelike representations of the animals they depict, the craftsmanship involved demonstrating high levels of artistic ability even non-hunters can appreciate.

Painted

I admit I've never seen any hunting paintings which appealed to me enough to buy, though that said I've quite a few prints of old advertising material originally created as painted art, one of the nicest being a modern print of an old shop board for Eley shotshell cartridges. I believe the original was produced around 1900 and have never



been able to decide if the old bloke in it's a gamekeeper or poacher but either way he has a satisfied look on his face, no doubt testament to his success with one or other of the Eley cartridges displayed in the bottom corner. For many years Remington produced calendars featuring printed artworks of US gamebirds and animals in natural settings and properly framed the individual prints make fine wall displays in a trophy room or office.

Taxidermy

A collection of artistically mounted game heads and animals are the sort of hunting art all serious hunters aspire to. Good taxidermy is an artform in its own right and like so many other things you only get what you pay for but for that once in a lifetime trophy animal it's worthwhile.



Bronze buffalo bull hand-crafted by Dennis Bullivant.

Firearms and engraving

Quality firearms have long been seen as a natural canvas for the special artistry of metal engravers whose work ranges from traditional, foliate swirls and scrolls through to relief-carved game animals and precious metal inlays. All those variations require extraordinary levels of artistic skill and dedication to produce what's sometimes referred to as 'working art' or 'art that

shoots' and the pride and satisfaction of owning and using finely-engraved firearms is always worth the cost involved.

Custom knives

My old friend and mentor Rob Dewey always said that as simple tools, knives should be of simple construction. That's the way he made his and given their collectability these days there are lots of folk out there who'd agree

with him. Other makers prefer to use exotic materials and produce bespoke knives which are true works of art not only in terms of form and function but overall quality of materials and increasing numbers of knives are now being made and bought as collectables. Others are meant to be used and either way the sheer pleasure of owning such items is good for the soul and that my friends is what hunting art's all about. ●



Taxidermy as art - a corner of John's trophy room.



Though engraving is normally found as an artform on firearms, it can also enhance more mundane objects such as folding knives. Both these were engraved years ago by Lee Davidson.

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Communication vital to our ongoing efforts

Rachael Oxborrow, Media And Politics Officer

Lobbying and advocacy are ever-evolving processes for the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA National) and involve everything from campaigns to phone calls, meetings and the traditional letter. In the lead-up to the Federal Election earlier this year, efforts were focused on contacting all sectors of the political divide to advocate for the reinstatement of a non-funded Commonwealth Firearms Advisory Council (CFAC).

Post-election contact was made with a slew of relevant office holders in the Labor Ministry and Liberal Coalition Shadow Ministry to raise the CFAC reinstatement and other relevant points, which included highlighting the importance of hunting in pest animal management and the uniqueness of target shooting as an all-abilities sport.

Following this correspondence both the Minister for Sport, Anika Wells, and Minister for Agriculture, Murray Watt, responded and continued the conversation and it's these seemingly small interactions which allow SSAA National to ensure we remain in the peripheral vision of government ministers and their departments. This can be useful if they wish to seek expert opinion relevant to our interests or should we need to address more urgent matters, while this type of correspondence also gives insight to their political priorities and their values in areas relevant to our chosen sport and pastime.



SSAA National was part of the successful lobbying campaign to have shooting included in the 2026 Victorian Commonwealth Games.

In our most recent reply to Minister Wells we were able to delve into the topic of increasing participation in sports and promoting inclusive environments. These values were brought to our attention in the Minister's previous correspondence and this is a prime example of how common ground can allow us to highlight important issues. As we welcomed the announcement that shooting will be included in the sporting

line-up at the Victorian 2026 Commonwealth Games, we were again able to remind the Minister of target shooting's appeal as a sport to a large and ever-growing section of the Australian community.

There's a time and a place for making noise in lobbying and advocacy activities but establishing respectful and informed communication channels before issues reach crisis point is always a good first step. ●



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Zoom with a view

Meopta binos put
Thomas Tabor in the picture



The Meopta MeoPro HD Plus 10x42 is compact and armour protected.

If you're not familiar with Meopta the name may sound a bit strange but it's actually a prolific high-quality European optics manufacturer which has been in production for almost 90 years. While the company make high-quality sporting optics they also develop and manufacture a wide variety of other precision products like electro/optical systems which are used in the semi-conductor, medical, aerospace and military industries worldwide.

One of their most recent products is the Gen 2 MeoPro HD Plus binoculars which are currently available in two sizes of 10x42 and 8x56. These upgraded mid-priced binos feature sharper and brighter views through the lens with better contrast than their predecessors offered, making them a great choice for hunting, wildlife watching or close-up viewing of sporting events.

This improved design includes a re-engineered focus wheel for smoother, faster and more precise adjustments while heavy emphasis has been given to making them both rugged and durable, their magnesium alloy body covered with a rubber armour coating to protect from the rigours of outdoor use. Twist-up eyecups are made of metal rather than plastic and come with soft rubber exteriors to make long viewing sessions a bit more comfortable. Game is

often most active during the early morning and evening hours when ambient light is at a premium and Meopta's advanced lens coatings and new optical system both work to draw in light during these times.

Light-gathering

While there are various characteristics which affect how an optical product performs under poor light situations, particularly influencing its light-gathering abilities, the exit pupil value of that device is a key element. In many cases the manufacturer provides that value but it can also be easily determined by taking the objective diameter of the lens (in millimetres) and dividing that number by the magnification of the optic. Once that exit pupil value has been calculated a comparison is made between it and the user's own eye pupil size and the closer these two values are to one another the better the optic's light-gathering ability should be.

A person's pupil size will vary but generally speaking younger people through their teenage years can have larger pupils than some adults. Nevertheless a fair representative of most adults would generally be about 5mm so that size is often used for comparison purposes with the optic value. In this case the MeoPro HD Plus 10x42's

exit pupil would be 4.2mm and while not necessarily a perfect match to that 5mm standard, it's fairly close and as such it's assumed it should perform fairly well when ambient light is starting to wane.

But while theory's always a good place to start when evaluating most products, sometimes you simply have to rely on real-world exposure and experience. In order to do so I headed out to see how the MeoPro Plus would perform during the evening hours around my home where the terrain consists of hillsides, dark canyon bottoms and ridge tops, which I thought would provide a diverse environment for judging their ability to penetrate those dwindling light areas.

Objective lens caps have a rubber hinge so they can't be lost.



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Zoom with a view

From the outset I realised in order to properly evaluate the MeoPro's light-gathering abilities I needed something to compare their performance against so I also took along my Nikon 10x50 and Leupold 10x42 HD binos, the former being about 12 or 13 years old, the Nikons about 25.

Off and on for 45 minutes I compared the three until darkness fell and over that time the MeoPro Plus clearly and unequivocally outperformed both its rivals and even though the Nikon's exit pupil perfectly matched the target value of 5.0, their age likely hampered performance. In recent years great inroads have been made in the area of lens treatments which also improve an optics ability to draw in light. When I bought my Leupold 10x42s they were at or near the top of the Leupold line of binoculars and came highly recommended by company officials but a little over a decade later they too seemed to pale in their light-gathering abilities against the MeoPros. It would be impossible to provide an accurate quantitative comparison assessment for each of these binoculars when it comes to light-gathering abilities but in the test circumstances the MeoPro HD Plus were a clear winner.

Characteristics

Like the vast majority of binoculars today the MeoPro HD Plus come with only one barrel (the right) fitted with a diopter adjustment dial. The focus wheel sits between the barrels and is heavily grooved to be non-slip and quick-focusing. Lens caps are included for all four lenses, the eyepiece/ocular lens cap being a combined single unit which can be attached to the comfortable carrying strap. The flexible rubber objective lens caps are separate and include a band which fits around each



Thomas found the images crisp and clear and the colours radiant.

barrel which means they remain attached to the binos at all times. Sometimes the ability to focus on a close object can be beneficial and that distance can vary considerably from one optic to another and the MeoPro 10x42s gave crystal clear focus as close as 2.5m.

The way I see it

This is the first Meopta product I've reviewed and I came away quite impressed as the MeoPro HD Plus 10x42s performed well in all aspects of testing. Not only did I find them clear and high quality I found their light-gathering ability superb and those same assets should be what everyone looks for in binoculars, particularly hunters.

Weighting 0.65kg (22.9oz) some may consider them a tad heavy but I view an optic with a bit of heft as an indicator of quality, as too light and I start to question the type of material used.

My only concern in the construction of the MeoPro HD Plus is their rubber armour coating which seems to have been wrapped around and bonded to the barrels. Obviously this was done to not only protect the binoculars from potential damage but to provide a soft non-slip surface and in this case I wonder if that bonding will hold up when exposed to heavy usage. I hope it will but only time will tell if this minor concern will prove valid. ●



The MeoPro HD comes with carrying strap, lens caps and case.

Specifications:

Manufacturer: Meopta Sport Optics
Model: MeoPro HD Plus 10x42 (8x56 also available)
Magnification: 10x
Objective lens diameter: 42mm
Field of view at 1000yds: 99m (325ft)
Eye relief: 15mm (0.59")
Close focus: 3m (9.9ft)
Exit pupil diameter: 4.2mm
Dioptic Comp: +/- 4.0
Weight: 0.65kg
Length: 13.8cm (5.42")
Depth: 4.9cm (1.92")
Width: 12.7cm (5")
RRP: About \$965

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Go *with the* Pro

ATA's 12-gauge shotgun made Paul Miller a happy man

Turkish firm ATA builds a huge range of affordable firearms, producing a wide array of shotguns from reasonably basic over-and-under models and self-loaders to quite elaborately engraved side-plated versions. They also make sporting bolt-action rifles including a long-range option as well as an impressive-looking air rifle.

But the shotgun we're looking at here is their 12-gauge competition model and from the outset I must say it performed extremely well and punched above its very reasonable recommended retail price. Some years ago we reviewed an ATA 20-gauge over-and-under which also performed admirably and was lots of fun in that smaller but most capable gauge.

Stock and fore-end

The 32" Pro 12 features a Grade 2 walnut sporting stock with dimensions of 1.5" and 2.4" which is pretty low nowadays and more in line with the dimensions of classic American field stocks. It measures 14.37" (365mm) which is a tad short to my mind but was nevertheless comfortable to shoot. There's minimal cast for right-handers and these are dimensions which suit people with long necks and encourage a comfortable upright head position and for many people are less tiring to shoot.

For those who prefer a higher comb or ability to change the gun's point of impact to higher shooting then this stock can easily be adapted via the adjustable comb installed at the factory, the mechanism pretty basic compared to many others out there but simple to adjust, does the job perfectly and certainly appears robust.

The stock and fore-end are laser engraved with a colour and figure of walnut which is most pleasing. The fore-end has a push-button release under the barrels like the English Anson & Deeley system with disassembly and lock-up being positive, the fairly full semi beavertail/sporting fore-end again reminiscent of the Beretta 686 series and comfortable in the forehand.

The stock is nicely contoured and pistol grip full enough for a competition gun so it aligns the trigger finger with the trigger to ensure consistency of pull. The recoil pad is reminiscent of the excellent US Pachmayer Decelerator sporting pad with a black plastic tip at the heel to avoid hang-ups when mounting the gun, the rubber compound also similar and does an excellent job of absorbing recoil.



Good quality colour-coded chokes can be hand tightened.

The Pro 12 with 32" barrels handled beautifully and was a real pleasure to shoot.

HORIZON

SERIES



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Go with the Pro

Barrels

This gun is available with 30" or 32" chrome-lined barrels and 3" chambers, the one on review here being the 32" model. I'll say up front I'm a real fan of longer barrels for Sporting Clays so long as they're not too heavy or the shooter too short or not strong enough to handle them effectively. I find longer barrels steadier to shoot and for some reason they seem to require less perceived lead on longer targets, which is hard to explain with only a slightly longer sighting radius and essentially the same sight picture as 30" barrelled guns. We'll put it down to one of life's little shotgunning mysteries and get on with the business of looking hard at every target in flight and having the courage to pull the trigger when your brain tells you.

The barrels are nicely blued and the 10mm wide rib ventilated and with a red fore-sight to assist in pointing the gun (the ribs between the barrels are also ventilated). Three colour-coded chokes are supplied with this gun in quarter, half and three-quarter and are more than adequate for 95 per cent of Sporting targets, while the Skeet targets I shot with the two more open chokes were destroyed as you might imagine with my favourite 1250fps 28g of No.8 shot.

Action

This is milled from a solid piece of steel and looks remarkably like the earlier 686 Beretta. There seems to be a suggestion these guns are an exact copy of the Beretta when its patents ran out after 30 years but without becoming too technical there are more than a few subtle differences between this gun and the 686 Beretta we previously reviewed recently - not badge engineered so we'll just say 'similar'.

The silver steel action is smartly adorned with 'Pro 12' in an upward swirl (dare I say) rather like a shortened version of that on the prestigious Beretta DT11 so I'll leave readers to draw their own conclusions as I've heard it said imitation is the most sincere form of flattery. Again, not the same but very similar.

The triggers and selector are pleasant to use, breaking at around 4lb each. The combined safety and barrel selector is tang-mounted as you might expect and worked perfectly, lock-up achieved by two bolts into recesses centered on either side between the barrels. Another nice touch is jewelling on both sides of the chambers, something usually only found on more expensive shotguns and pleasing to the eye.

Shooting impressions

For all the talk of this gun looking like a Beretta I have to say it also felt like a Beretta and handled every bit as well as the 20-gauge we assessed a few years ago. I was pleased to learn I was being sent the 32" version and wasn't disappointed when I put it together and gave it an initial 'living room' swing.

On the Skeet range it handled just the way I like a long-barrelled gun to do, smooth and precise with targets destroyed. COVID complications meant I couldn't try it on Sporting Clays but I've no doubt it would handle these equally as well. My friends thoroughly enjoyed shooting it - one of them owns the 30" Pro 12 and shoots some of the best Skeet and 5-Stand Sporting scores at our club.

The price point of this gun is pretty remarkable considering its features, handling and little extras like jewellery and excellent bluing. It's certainly an economical competition sporting shotgun and would be ideal as a first or second choice that would last a lot longer than an entry level gun. It comes with a smart soft case of industrial foam inner and suede leather outer. I thoroughly enjoyed shooting it and appreciated its feel and balance - highly recommended. ●

Peter Munday is thrilled with his 30" Pro 12 but was intrigued by the 32" model.



Pachmayer-style sporting pad and basic but effective adjustable comb.



High density foam and suede-covered carry case provide good protection.



Specifications:

Manufacturer: ATA Arms Turkey

Model: ATA Pro 32"

Gauge: 12-gauge, 3" chambers

Action: Box-lock inertia cocking

Trigger: Single selective, tang safety

Barrel length: 32" with 3" chambers

Chokes: Three colour-coded extended in quarter, half and three-quarter.

Stock and Fore-end: Walnut (Grade 2) with satin finish, full pistol grip and rounded beavertail fore-end.

Stock dimensions: 38mm at comb and 55mm at heel, cast 3.5mm for right-handers, 14.5" length of pull

Weight: Just under 8lb (3.7kg)

Accessories: Choke wrench, instruction manual

RRP: About \$1850 but shop around

Distributor: NIOA

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Bushmeister BA-X12 Walnut 12ga 28", lever release shotgun, cased 5 chokes \$1010.00
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Akkar 812 12ga 30", U/O Sporter shotgun black action, Turkish walnut stock, 5 chokes, cased \$1220.00
Akkar Trap 12ga 30", Turkish walnut stock, 5 chokes, cased \$1320.00
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THE HEAT IS ON



Thermal monoculars like the Conotech Tracer LRF 25Pro is an affordable option with great features to start you off.

Matthew Godson looks at starting your thermal adventure

Thermal optics are becoming less expensive and more popular as time goes by. These devices offer those involved in pest control a tool to boost effectiveness and efficiency in the absence of others which have been regulated out of the hands of recreational shooters. I've heard stories about the extraordinary costs people previously had paid to obtain equipment that seemed the exclusive domain of the military but that's certainly not the case nowadays.

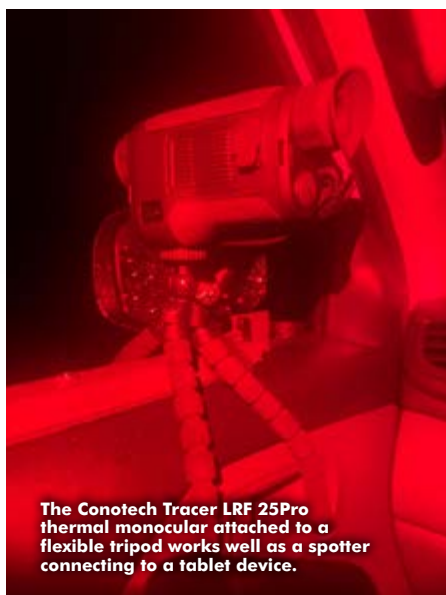
Although the price of thermal optics has fallen dramatically it's still a significant investment and I call it an investment because if you set yourself up right and use the technology properly, it'll be a game-changer to the way you operate. When you make the decision to buy a thermal optic the first question you'll ask yourself is where do I start? What should I buy first? Now that's a very important question and one which could determine how well your thermal journey goes and potentially ends.

The main factor to be considered here is how much you have to spend and, if your budget isn't the biggest, you may need to consider buying in stages in what I'd term the hop, skip and jump approach but if you're lucky to have no financial constraints then research the best available products and buy what you think you'll need. The only advice I'd give is buy a thermal monocular exclusively for spotting and a dedicated thermal scope for your rifle as it's much easier to scan the landscape, be it bush or paddock, with a light handheld or vehicle-mounted monocular. Shouldering and waving your rifle around is not only physically taxing, it's not the safest option and safety must always come first.

For those on a budget the number one rule is buy the best-featured units you can afford and don't be afraid to do this in stages as there are plenty of options to

improve your pest control effectiveness without resorting to cheap subquality gear to get into the game. Buying a quality thermal monocular is the best place to start as this will enable you to see more and do so without alerting the target species which will boost your effectiveness immediately. Increased detection leads to increased targeting to raise your culling numbers.

There are a couple of ways to set up a monocular and improve your detection rates. Most can be attached to a spotlight mount via a screw-in thread in their base or, if you're one of those handy types, you could fashion a bracket to have the monocular running side-by-side with a traditional spotlight. If the monocular you buy has Wi-Fi connectivity this can make scanning paddocks and bush much more comfortable, especially if you can broadcast the image on to a tablet as this provides a 360-degree view of what's around from the comfort of a vehicle. There's nothing wrong with using a monocular in the hand but when mounted it has several benefits beyond just having your hands free.



The Conotech Tracer LRF 25Pro thermal monocular attached to a flexible tripod works well as a spotter connecting to a tablet device.

Using a thermal monocular along with a traditional spotlight or having a high-powered hunting torch attached to your scope is another great improvement and working these in tandem will produce game-changing results. With a monocular to scan areas you'll increase your pest animal detection rate instantly above that of the limited range of a spotlight beam. Bearing in mind the target species may detect your presence if they see a spotlight being waved around, consider using the spotlight only for final acquisition prior to shooting and/or adding red light filters into the mix. This is a good low-cost option to improve effectiveness until you can move to total blackout operations where you have a combination thermal monocular and thermal or night-vision scope in your toolkit. Most animals are less startled by red light so adding red filters should result in reduced flightiness of wary targets than typically seen by white light.

You can use a combination of thermal monocular and red light very effectively until you decide to go to the next level which is stepping up to a night-vision or thermal scope in order to conduct activities in total darkness. Night-vision (NV) scopes are less expensive than thermal so are an

option if a thermal scope is cost prohibitive. Thermal optics have much better detection ranges than night-vision scopes but the latter provide better identification as they enable the user to fully identify the target within most shooting ranges without the need to move closer. Thermal scopes are far more expensive than monoculars because the sensitive sensors inside need to be able to withstand firearm recoil and that's one reason I suggest a thermal monocular is the best place to start. Some also claim a thermal monocular and night-vision scope combination give you the best of both worlds.

What to look for

As with all things you get what you pay for and that's certainly the case with optics. As a rough guide thermal monoculars will set you back \$600-\$4000, thermal scopes \$1500-\$7000 and night-vision scopes \$1000-\$2500 so buying a top-notch dual thermal setup will give you little change from \$10,000. This is extremely pricey for the average shooter and the main reason I suggest researching what's most suitable for your personal circumstances and buying new equipment in stages, so consider going for the best you can afford even if it means saving up a little longer.



The Racken Rest II attached to the window secures the rifle ready for action.

You don't need top-name brands, just look for the best functions you can fit into your budget, remembering there are new brands entering the market with excellent features at a lower price. For example Conotech Australia has recently released two new models of thermal monocular which both include a laser rangefinder and are at least \$1000 cheaper than similar specification units on the market. A laser rangefinder is a fantastic feature to have as it's difficult to determine distance through thermal optics without a known reference

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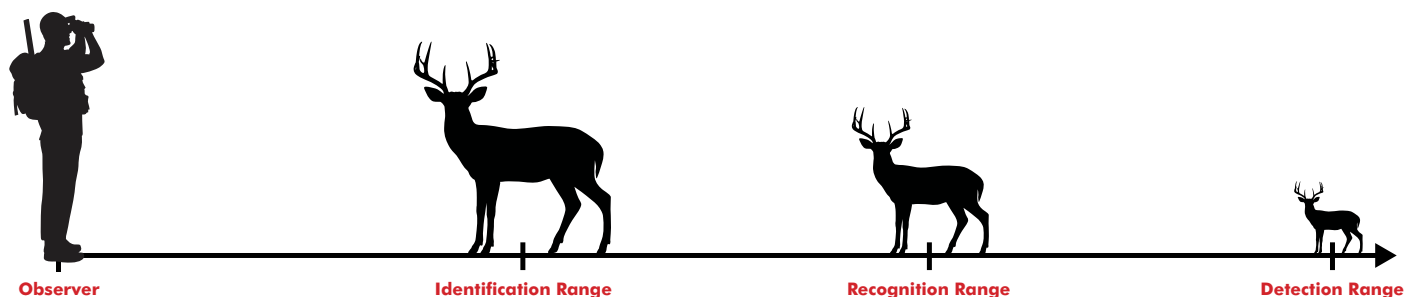


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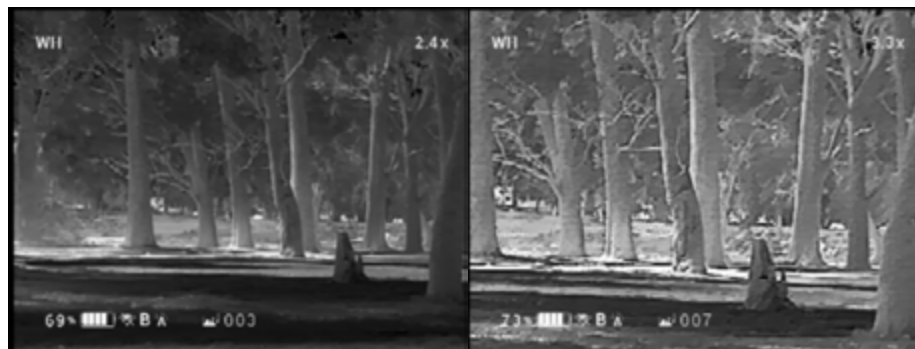
point. What you think is a feral pig at 300m could actually be a cow at 600m so at the very least it could save you a long walk and even more embarrassment.

When choosing a thermal monocular there are a number of important factors to consider. Firstly and most importantly is the quality of the sensor inside (also called the microbolometer) which detects temperature patterns in the landscape. The resolution of the sensor, like a TV, is measured in pixels so the higher the resolution the higher detail of image you see on the monocular screen or Wi-Fi-connected device the unit's linked to.

The refresh rate is also important and this is the frequency at which the image is refreshed on the screen. Refresh rate is expressed in Hertz (Hz) and the more often the image is refreshed the higher the Hz will be (one Hz is equal to one frame per second). Dynamic scenes with a low frame per second rate will show a blurry image with moving objects displaying laggy or jerky characteristics so for hunting scenarios where the unit is used to scan the landscape or quickly change views, consider a higher refresh rate. Most retailers will suggest a refresh rate of 30Hz or more.

One factor which helps define the quality of a thermal device's sensor is the Noise Equivalent Temperature Difference (NET-D) which indicates sensitivity of the device or minimal detectable temperature difference that can be picked up. The lower the NET-D value, measured in millikelvins (mK), the better the sensor quality with the rule of thumb being thermal units with a NET-D value less than 40mK deemed excellent and those less than 50mK being of good quality.

Lens size is another important feature as it plays a crucial role in determining the unit's maximum detection distance. Between different models or types of thermal monoculars, lens sizes cause a variation of detection distances with a general guide being 'bigger is better' for providing longer detection distances. This needs to be considered alongside Field of View (FOV) which refers to the territory you can see through the lens. It will



The difference in Field of View (FOV) of the two Conotech units, the 2.4x base magnification showing a wider view of the tree line (100m from observer) compared to the 3.3x model.

narrow as base magnification and detection distance increases and FOV is usually given in degrees depicting the angular field of view (for example 10.6° x 7.9°) and sometimes as visible metres across at 100m from the device.

All thermal devices have fixed base magnification that leads to a fixed FOV and it's vital you consider where and how you'll be mainly using the optic before buying to ensure you choose the most suitable FOV for your circumstances. For scanning of open plains you'd ideally

choose a monocular with a narrow FOV so you can see and detect further (base magnification of 2.5x and greater would be the go). If you're walking through forest or bushland then consider one with wide FOV and base magnification from sub 1x up to 1.5x as this will enable you to see more immediately in front of you.

- Next month: Testing FOV and detectability of two base magnification monoculars and using a thermal monocular and scope-mounted spotlight for pest control. ●

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Smooth operator

Check-sighting the Spectra 4x. Photo taken by remote means.

Chris Redlich enjoyed GPO's Spectra 4x riflescope

A couple of years ago I reviewed a pair of GPO rangefinding binoculars and up until then I hadn't heard much about German Precision Optics (GPO). Relatively new to a competitive optics market, GPO now appear well established with a solid array of riflescopes and binoculars available, so when Australian distributor Raytrade invited *Australian Shooter* to review a new GPO Spectra 4x scope I was more than happy to accept. There are many models in the Spectra scope catalogue to suit almost any requirement and

the one supplied was the basic yet popular 2.5-10x44 (4x zoom), which I consider one of the best zoom and lens diameter configurations for general hunting.

Out of the box

At first glance the new Spectra 4x displayed all the tell-tale signs of high-quality build. Like all scopes in the GPO Spectra series it came supplied with a lens cleaning cloth, bikini lens protectors and, as per standard, the user manual. What was immediately noticeable was the inclusion of a throw



Spectra's G4 appears to be a practical hybrid of German 4 and Plex-style reticles.

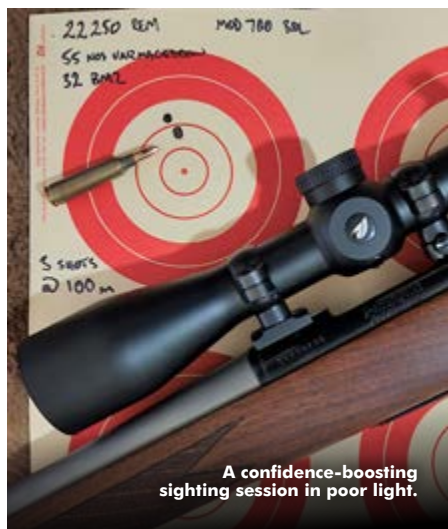
lever attached to the variable magnification dial and by all accounts easily removed if you prefer. In the hand the Spectra 4x at a total length of 335mm wasn't dissimilar to other scopes in the niche hunting category and its weight of 620grams was expected considering it has a 30mm main tube.

In a durable matte black protective coating the tube is made from aircraft-grade aluminium. Starting my investigation south, the Spectra's ocular lens and magnification dials are bucking the trend somewhat by not using rubber as a grip material - both dials are extremely grippy and appear to be made with machined lugs out of aluminium. As mentioned the magnification dial came with a throw lever but honestly the dial is easy to grip without it. As expected, the eyepiece dioptre adjustment ring is rubber and will protect the shooter in the event of a recoil 'kiss' from a hard-kicker.

The ocular housing, like most other scopes of European pedigree, is quite large and this one at 45mm diameter required high rings for mounting to my Remington Model 700. The Remington's 90-degree



Spectra 4x as boxed with inclusions.



A confidence-boosting sighting session in poor light.

I soon established it to be in the second plane and situated within the ocular housing is one of my favourite hunting reticles the G4 (German 4). Differing slightly to a standard German 4, the Spectra's G4 reticle has the balance right with heavy 3, 6 and 9 o'clock outer posts which taper sharply at the tips to the fine centre cross-hairs. The G4 actually appears to be a hybrid of German 4 and Plex-styles, the reticle designed with incremental metric values at 100m and the corresponding values can be found in the manual.

Occupying the turret housing is the standard elevation adjustment at 12 o'clock and windage at 3 o'clock, both turret caps generously proportioned and allowing easy grip and removal. The user manual states the Spectra 4x has an ample 235cm (2.35m) at 100m of travel in both directions thanks to the 30mm main tube and click adjustment on the dials are worth 1cm each. The 2.5-10x44 model isn't equipped with parallax correction and is factory set to be parallax free to 100m. Lastly but more importantly at the business end of the scope is its multi-coated 44mm objective lens providing a bright and crisp image enabling 16.2m field of view at 100m on low power (2.5x) and 4.1m on high (10x).



Throw lever gives extra grip for magnification adjustment.

bolt throw can take some of the blame for high mounting but for many European rifles with 60 and 70-degree bolt-actions the scope can be mounted in low rings.

When mounted to my Remington though the extra few millimetres of height made no difference, taking a clear sight picture through the large ocular thanks to the stock's raised cheekpiece.

Although the user manual didn't appear to shed any light on the reticle's focal plane,

On mounting it to the Remington Model 700 in the Accurate Mag stock chassis my first sight picture through the scope was as expected, crystal clear with comfortable eye relief of almost four inches so with much anticipation I had to wait for a break in the bad weather to put it to use.

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Smooth operator

Range and field test

The day finally arrived and I managed to jag a few range sessions with my kitted-up Remington 22-250 and from the outset the Spectra 4x lived up to expectation, providing easy target acquisition in varying light conditions. After testing in the review tactical stock chassis I remounted the Spectra to my Model 700 in its original BDL timber stock for the chance to field test in a hunting environment. Once again continuous rain was hampering my efforts to venture out but eventually my son Carl and I managed a brief night's shooting on a friend's property not too far from home.

Just prior to last light I set up a target at 100m to check-sight the rifle and straight out of the safe I was pleased to land a confidence-boosting 10mm 3-shot group using Nosler 55-grain 'Varmageddons.' Needless to say I was happy with the scope and its ability to provide a clear image of the paper target in poor light. After enjoying a 'billy brew' over a campfire immediately after our

target session, I clamped my Nitecore torch to the scope before an early night of vermin shooting by spotlight though the first hour turned out to be uneventful, as if the local ferals had heard we were coming.

With our stomachs reminding us it was close to dinner time we decided to make our way to the gate and head for home. Nearing the last paddock a couple of hares scurried in and out of a few clumps of grass and I followed them through the scope while Carl pinned them in the spotlight. At about 100m they paused momentarily and I was able to despatch both in quick succession without the aid of the attached torch so our night turned out to be quite eventful after all.

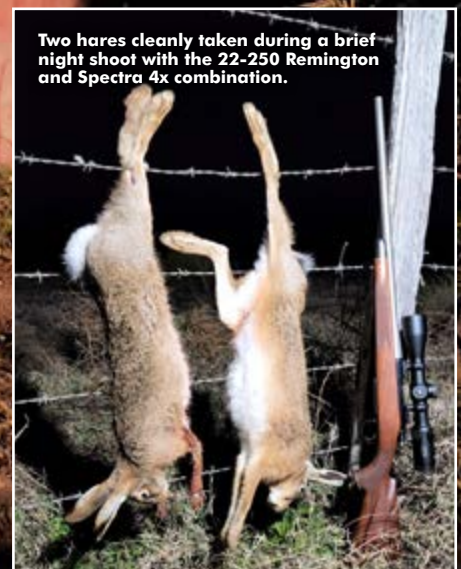
Conclusion

As far as a genuine quality-built hunting scope is concerned, GPO's Spectra 4 2.5-10x44 fits the bill nicely. There's nothing worse than struggling for a clear sight picture when it matters most and shooting those two hares cleanly in grassy cover on our night outing reinforced the lowlight performance of the Spectra lens and enhancing its capability even further, this scope is also available with an illuminated reticle. Very well priced around \$750 at time of writing and backed by a lifetime warranty, the Spectra 4x 2.5-10x44 (non-illuminated) is ideal for the demands of lowlight hunting. For the full range of Spectra scopes visit www.gp-optics.com and find stockists at www.raytrade.com.au ●

A campfire 'billy brew' while waiting for night to fall.



Turret adjustments made with distinct clicks of 1cm at 100m.



Two hares cleanly taken during a brief night shoot with the 22-250 Remington and Spectra 4x combination.

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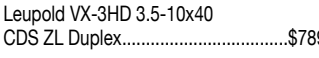


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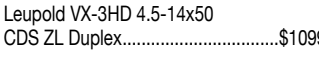
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2 MONTH LAY-BY WITH A 20% DEPOSIT

In at the deer end

A sodden stalk ended with Aaron Carey taking a dip

Worth the wait: Aaron with his trophy stag.



I've only ever shot four red deer in my 16 years of chasing them - a 13-point stag and three hinds - all on the same property in the Upper Hunter region of New South Wales, which I'm extremely happy with and grateful for as I certainly didn't expect to encounter three on one cold and foggy day back in April.

With work commitments and restrictions impacting on my spare time, I didn't think I'd be able to manage a hunt in this year's rut but as luck would have it, the rain which battered the east coast and flooded numerous areas proved a godsend to me - it stopped a lot of people from hunting and allowed me to sneak in a midweek trek.

I had a day with nothing planned and as I'd recently been fishing and had some seafood for the farmers who grant me access to their land, I decided to call and make arrangements to drop it off and say hello. It was worth the call as they'd been rained on for days and the hunter who'd booked the property that week had called off as driving the sodden land wasn't an option.

Now I'd call that lazy as it's a smallish-sized property of roughly 2000 acres and with a little effort you can walk the lot in a day, even in the rain. Anyway, that was all the encouragement required and I hit the road at 2am the next day to be on site before sunrise and give myself time to walk from the front

gate. So it rained and literally didn't stop all day to be honest though I didn't let that faze me as I trekked several kilometres to my favourite spot in the hills to the rear of the property. I approached the long way round so I'd be downwind to sit 50m up a slope above a 300m-wide bench which held a dam and lots of feed surrounded by dense valleys.

Then thick fog descended which meant I had only fleeting views of the dam out to about 30m so I settled in to wait it out under a few big trees which were giving me a little relief from the incessant rain. I love this spot, elevated and secluded and away from any road access with only 300m to thick cover for deer if they need to escape.



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M60 Thermal: 640x512
Lens: 18mm / 25mm
Screen: 0.4 LCOS 1280x960 **From \$2,749**

In at the deer end

I've shot plenty of fallow deer in this spot over the years as well as a few feral pigs and wasn't expecting anything different on this day as it was a little early and the rut hadn't really kicked off yet. There were a few croaks in the distance but nothing trying too hard and certainly nothing close until out of the blue came a distinctive roar. It was a long way off on the next property but encouraging to hear and during the next 10 minutes he continued sporadically then slowly faded out. I settled back in to wait out the fog and hoped for a close-by fallow on my bench.

Then out of nowhere came a massive roar from about 50m below me on the foggy bench next to the dam - it scared the life out of me. Then again and again until I realised two stags were now roaring. The next 40 minutes dragged by as I caught a glimpse here, a bellow then another glimpse, some scraping but still no clear view I could use - and all just 50m below me.

As the fog began lifting I held my breath. No roaring. I was worried they'd winded me as I slowly made my way across the slope on a game trail to the next tree about 10m away. And there they were, a double-three and double-five standing beneath a thicket next to the dam. Trying to contain my excitement I took a rest on the tree and waited for a shot to present itself and as the double-three trotted off I could only hope the larger animal would stay put.

To my complete surprise he turned towards me and presented a great side-on shot at 50m. I didn't need to be asked twice as the .300 Win Mag from my Weatherby Vanguard Sporter did its job with a piercing double lung-shot. I could hardly contain myself until excitement quickly turned to concern as I watched him crumple and stagger towards the dam and while he could have expired anywhere, this guy landed in the water.

Solo hunting in the rain and now facing the prospect of having to haul a 200kg animal over a dam wall. How long? After a short swim it took me almost 90 minutes to move him seven metres and to say it nearly killed me would be an understatement. Yet it was worth every ounce of effort as I finally had myself a symmetrical double-five red stag in his prime.

The day had been eventful - and wet - to say the least as I embarked on the rest of my 14.5km round trip carrying my trophy head and lots of venison and to top off the day I knocked over a feral boar feeding in open ground. All in all a 'roaring' success and one I won't forget in a hurry. ●



Deep end: The stag had to be dragged from the dam.



Fallen feral: A boar taken on the walk back.



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Never have your AirPods bounce out again

Decibullz Custom Moldable AirPods and EarPod Ear Hooks cater to my love of gadgets and my need to be active. The addition of AirPods to my repertoire has saved me many a phone drop and made going for a run that much easier as I'm no longer tethered to my phone by a cord. But my ears don't seem to hold the AirPods in place too well.

Enter Ear Hooks and I'm now enjoying the freedom of AirPods without readjustment every hundred metres or so, while the ability to mould the Ear Hooks using only hot water meant I could work on achieving exactly the right fit. I actually went for my first run and came home early to fix one attachment as it wasn't quite right, so don't shy away from remoulding until you're happy with the fit.

Outdoor activities aside, I find the Ear Hooks useful for everyday wear at home or work and now they're moulded to my ear shape there's no danger of an AirPods falling out again and bouncing on to the road - not my finest moment.

These Ear Hooks easily snap on and off my AirPods to allow for storage in a handy bag which fits both my AirPods case and Ear Hooks for safe storage. The matching white colour also gives a seamless appearance to this clever gadget which fit AirPods 1, AirPods 2 and EarPods. Winchester Australia stocks a wide range of Decibullz mouldable ear accessories with the Custom Molded AirPods and EarPods Ear Hooks retailing for \$49.95 plus postage. Visit winchesteraustralia.com.au for more -

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National

Muzzleloading Postal Shoot

August 1-December 17, 2022

All locations

Program: Categories and details on National website.

Contact: Kim Atkinson at muzzleloading@disciplines.

ssaa.org.au

SSAA 2022 Lever Action Silhouette Smallbore Postal Shoot

October 1-January 31, 2023

All host clubs and branches

Program: 40-shot match, results due no later than

COB on February 17, 2023 to National Awards

Secretary Kathy Tobler, email toblerkathy@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@inet.net.au or David

Brougham 0432 748 703 clas@inet.net.au.

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@ssaaqld.org.au

SA

SSAA (SA) BPCR Silhouette State Championships

November 26-27, 2022

Monarto Silhouette Range, SA

Program: Saturday 9am-noon practice; 12.30 40-shot

BPCR iron sight match; evening barbecue. Sunday

8.30-9am practice; 9.30am 40-shot scoped match.

Contact: Dave McCarthy atm3855@yahoo.com.au

Tas

SSAA (Tas) 5-Stand State Championships

November 4-6, 2022

T11 Huon Combined Shooting Club, Tas

Program: November 4: Side-by-side 50 targets; Sub-

gauge 50 targets. Nov 5-6: State Championships 100

targets each day. Facilities: On-site camping with toilets,

full canteen (cash only). Contact: Dale Foggo 0408 361

638 or dalepest@msn.com (email preferred).

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

SSAA (Tas) Gallery Rifle State Championships

January 27-29, 2023

SSAA Blue Hills, Tas

Program: See National website. Contact: David.M@

ssaabluehills.org.au

ACT

Early Australia Day Rifle Metallic Silhouette State Championships

January 20-22, 2023

SSAA Majura Range, ACT

Program - Friday: Dawn to 8.30am practice, 9am 80

shots air rifle. Saturday: Dawn to 8.30am practice, 9am

80 shots rimfire. Sunday: Dawn to 8.30am practice,

9am 80 shots centerfire. Facilities: Camping on range

with water, power and showers, \$10 per person per

night, juniors free. Canteen available for weekend.

Contact: David 0423 043 663 email dtrue222@gmail.

com, Mark 0401 867 839 email mnl1@live.com.au.

ACT Black Powder Cartridge Rifle Silhouette State Championship

January 23, 2023

SSAA Majura Range, ACT

Program: Dawn to 8am practice and weigh-in, 8.30am

Black Powder Cartridge Rifle Match. 1pm practice

and weigh-in, 2pm 40 shots Black Powder Cartridge

Rifle. Facilities: Camping on range with water, power

and showers, \$10 per person per night, juniors free.

Contact: David 0423 043 663 email dtrue222@gmail.

com, Mark 0401 867 839 email mnl1@live.com.au.

SSAA National Event

Cancellation/Postponement Policy

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

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

SSAA Member Alert

Please be aware that state and territory police firearms registries regularly cross-check firearm licences and your member status. To support your genuine reason and keep your firearms licence and to make sure that SSAA can support you, make sure you renew your SSAA membership.

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ssaa.org.au

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This application is made in full recognition of the Associations' requirement for responsible and ethical behaviour. I undertake to do all in my power to preserve the good image of the sport and the Associations. I understand that members breaking the Code of Conduct and/or Social Media Policies may be subject to suspension or expulsion. Both can be found at ssaa.org.au/code

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DATE:

Refund Policy: Subject to Australian law, membership fees are not refundable, nor can they be transferred.

Members join a SSAA state or territory branch. The information you provide on this form will be disclosed to the state or territory branch of the SSAA to which your membership application relates. A copy of SSAA Inc's privacy policy can be found at ssaa.org.au/privacy. You can obtain access to your personal information by writing to: SSAA, PO Box 2520, Unley SA 5061.

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

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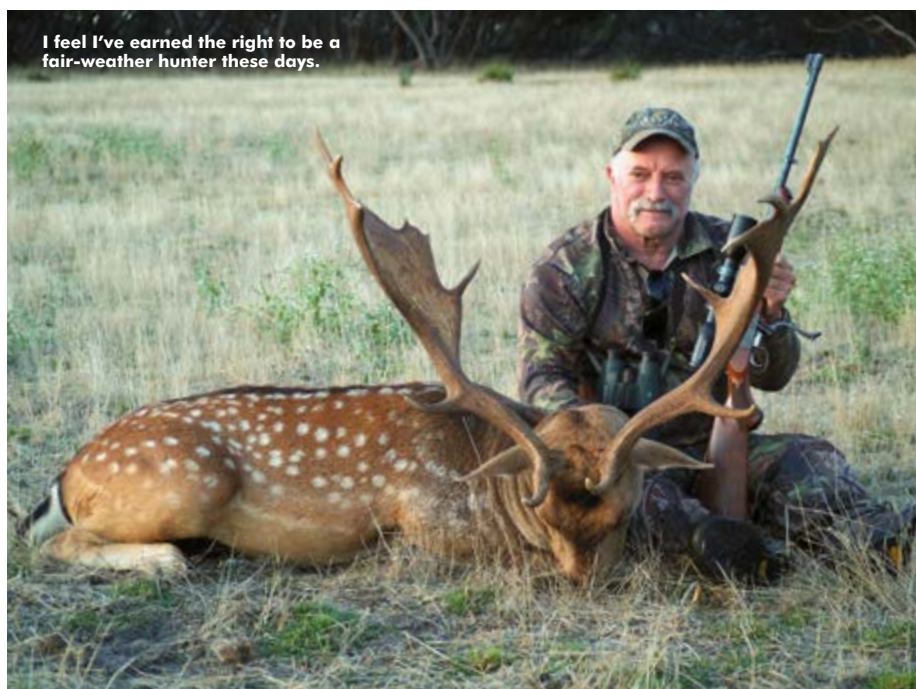
The fair-weather hunter . . . it had to happen

If I include the time spent trapping rabbits for pocket money as a boy I've now been hunting for more than 60 years and much has changed in that time, especially the way I hunt. The boots-and-all efforts of my younger days long ago gave way to a much more measured approach, so much so that these days I expect I could reasonably be regarded as a fair-weather hunter.

One of the first lessons learned when I started hunting sambar deer was that even in good country they're usually mixed up with a lot of trees. Sorting one from the other took time and more patience than I thought I had but I eventually achieved a level of success I was happy with. Needing to know more about the deer I spent quite a few years as a "come down whenever you like" guest with Lu Cervi and his then hound hunting team. I met some terrific people and made some lifelong friends who taught me more about sambar than I could ever have learned anywhere else.

We mostly hunted what Lu called 'mongrel country', thick and steep stuff almost always with wet-to-the-waist river crossings and a long climb out at the end. We earned the few deer we took and carried every single one out which was hard and bloody work no matter how you come at it, even with everyone pitching in to help. I never took a deer over the hounds but I did learn that stalking was a lot easier.

Over the years as hunting the steep stuff became harder I turned my efforts to the farm fringe country where deer couldn't resist coming out to feed on the improved pastures and crops. I watched them at night, learned where they came from and went back to the bush and began to concentrate my hunting around those areas and before long I had tree stands overlooking what I considered the best locations. I also planted in a hay shed in a very productive back corner and for a while there life was good, even if some of the people I knew uncharitably sneered at it as 'old man's hunting'.



The only drawback was climbing down out of the stands in the dark, especially at the end of a wet day. I made a mis-step one evening and only just managed to avoid what would've been a serious fall, something the Good Lady had been gently warning me about for a while. It was close enough to scare me so I changed my approach yet again and began to sit and wait at ground level, wearing camo clothing and backing into any patch of natural cover I could find. That's where I am today and would've finished up anyway as the trees that housed my stands all those years ago have long since succumbed to old age and isolation and fallen over. The hay shed is still there but an electrified boundary fence now keeps most of the deer from coming in as they used to.

I know most of the places deer are likely to show up and rarely do I have to walk more than a few kilometres which suits me fine. My legs and lungs aren't as good as they used to be so big walks have fallen out of fashion. Because I can I refuse to hunt in the rain these days and experience has taught me early morning starts when

there's frost on the deck are largely a waste of time. Perhaps more importantly I no longer have the need to hunt hard as I don't have to prove anything to anyone any more, not even to myself.

As rewarding as it can be, a deer on the ground is just the beginning of a lot of hard work. The hunting ethics I've grown old with dictate I have to use whatever I take and even if the Old Feller isn't around to remind me of that any more, his legacy lives on. Looking back I've done pretty much all I set out to achieve, had more than my share of good times and I'm not as hungry for new experiences as I once was. I know where I am on my happy hunter scale, I like it and if that means I've become a fair-weather hunter then so be it. ●



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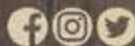
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Take up this offer with your next renewal or new membership.

Are you covered?

Call (02) 8805 3900

Email: megan@ssaains.com.au



MEMBERS FIREARMS PROTECTION

HERE'S WHAT SSAA MEMBERS FIREARMS PROTECTION COVERS:

Claims Settled Promptly

Firearms & Accessories.

All privately owned firearms registered to the member and fixed accessories.

Coverage.

- Accidental loss and damage of the equipment (including whilst in use, excluding chipping and scratching of stock).
- Malicious damage.
- Collision or overturning of the vehicle.
- Fire & extraneous perils.
- Flood
- Theft.

Not Covered.

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

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.