

**NEW ZEROTECH
RED DOT**

ZERO TECH

A SIGHT TO BEHOLD

AUSTRALIAN Shooter

April 2026
\$9.95 incl. GST

AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST-SELLING SHOOTING MAGAZINE

LOOK SHARP!

HIGH COUNTRY HUNTERS
LEARNING ON THE HOOF



ISSN 1442-7354

04



9 771442 735003

The African Queen: A rifle find for the ages

The official publication of the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia

Proudly printed in Australia





Additional Family Member
SSAA Membership for \$80 per person.
membership.ssaa.org.au



**SHARE
YOUR
PASSION**



***SIGN UP
YOUR
FAMILY***



IN REVIEW

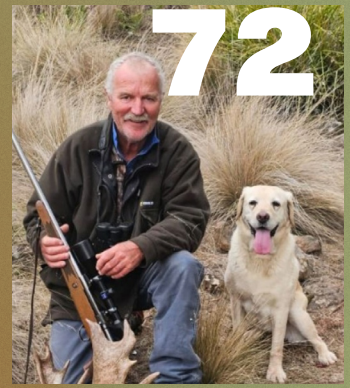
- 38 **Second sight**
- 42 **At home . . . on the range**
Rod Pascoe trials a superb training aid
- 44 **Take it as red**
This reflex sight had Dick Eussen bang on target
- 46 **Can-do attitude!**
- 50 **Reflex action**
Swampfox optics impressed Senior Correspondent Rod Pascoe

SPOTLIGHT

- 16 **Politics: it's always more complicated than it looks**
- 22 **Wieambilla three 'operated within delusional framework'**
- 28 **Expand your library**
- 58 **The African Queen**
- 63 **Basic instinct**
- 66 **Horses for courses**

OPINION

- 8 **Open Season**
- 10 **Bushcraft & Survival**
- 12 **Shotgun Forum**
- 14 **Top Shots**
- 90 **An Outdoor Life**



FIREARMS

- 32 **Reliability as standard**
Ivo Dimitrov charts an iconic Beretta pistol
- 52 **Rifle No.28442**
Leon Wright recalls his father's war heroics at Tarakan

HUNTING

- 72 **Random thoughts from the duck hide**
- 76 **Queensland trio strike out on Alpine debut**
Despite best efforts, Simon Frederiksen discovers you can't win 'em all



REGULARS

- 6 **National News**
- 85 **Letters**
- 86 **Competition News**
- 88 **SSAA Shop**
- 89 **Competitions**

AUSTRALIAN Shooter

OUR POLICY

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

EDITORIAL

Allan Blane
edit@ssaa.org.au

ADVERTISING

Travis Allen
0448 413 618
advertising@ssaa.org.au

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
CHIEF OF STAFF
MANAGING EDITOR
ASSOCIATE EDITOR
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR
& SENIOR DESIGNER
SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGNER
SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER
ADVERTISING & PROMOTIONS
WEBMASTER
MEDIA AND POLITICS OFFICER
SENIOR CORRESPONDENT
SENIOR CORRESPONDENT

Tom Kenyon
Julian Nuske
Allan Blane
Thomas Cook

Elizabeth Tyson
Alex Heptinstall
Tammy Michalski
Travis Allen
Mark Fieldhouse
Charlotte Fox
John Dunn
Rod Pascoe



CONTRIBUTORS
THIS ISSUE

Scott Heiman, Laetisha Scanlan, Mark van den Boogaart, Charlotte Fox, Julian Nuske, Chas Harding, Leon Wright, Derek Nugent, Terry Beach, John Maxwell, Sam Garro, Simon Frederiksen, Ivo Dimitrov, Dick Eussen, Ben Unten, Chris Redlich, Rod Pascoe

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.



B5·25



Keeping all the specific features of the original B525 Sporter, commercialised in 2014, this Australian model has perfected its design even more at no extra cost.

Besides its Back-Bored Vector Pro barrels, its 10mm battue rib and the oil-rubbed finish of its grade 2 walnut elements, it now possesses 4 Invector+ chokes and the Auto Safety system.

Just as efficient for sporting clays as for hunting, the B525 Sporter does not lose in aesthetics everything it has gained in reliability: the magnificent autumn scene engraving that adorns its metal surfaces just goes to prove it.

Features:

- Back-bored™ Barrel
- Invector + Choke™ System
- American Grade 2 Walnut
- Action Frame made of indestructible Forged Steel
- Wide Flat Bolt which guarantees locking surfaces which are three times greater than other systems
- Chromed Barrels and Chambers that don't rust for easy maintenance

RRP **\$2,850**



SHIFTING SANDS OF FIREARMS LEGISLATION: YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

WORDS:
TOM KENYON
SSAA CEO



In the wake of last December's Bondi tragedy, much confusion has arisen around Australia's firearms legislation. SSAA CEO **Tom Kenyon** has been extremely active in keeping members informed of changes as they happen via our social media channels but, for those who choose not to use social media or are unfamiliar with it, we've address the top 10 most-asked question here in print.

Firearm ownership limits and how they impact farmers and shooters

Proposed caps on firearm ownership, such as limiting licensed shooters to a fixed number, may sound simple in theory but carry practical consequences for everyday users. For farmers and pest controllers, firearms are essential tools of the trade. Different tasks require different firearms and many rural properties involve multiple licensed family members sharing equipment. A strict ownership limit can force difficult choices between maintaining tools needed for farm work and participating in recreational or sporting shooting.

Competitive shooters are also affected. Different disciplines require specialised firearms, with serious competitors often relying on backup equipment to ensure reliability. Ownership caps may limit their

ability to compete across events and prepare effectively, including at international level. There's also a personal dimension as many shooters own heirloom firearms with sentimental and historical value. Numerical limits risk forcing owners to part with family heritage without clear evidence of added safety benefits.

The key concern is a single fixed cap doesn't reflect how firearms are used in real life. Effective policy must balance public safety with the practical needs of farmers and sports shooters, ensuring regulation remains both fair and workable.

Is there a firearms buyback coming?

There's currently no active compulsory national firearms buyback in place. While federal legislation allows the Home Affairs Minister to approve buyback schemes, any program would need to be implemented by individual states and territories and those jurisdictions are adopting different stances. Some states oppose participation, others are undecided, while a few have already taken independent legislative steps, creating uncertainty on how any future buyback would operate.

Although the Federal Government has allocated funding for a potential scheme, key details including timing, structure and compensation remain unresolved. As it stands, there's no unified national rollout and any future buyback is likely to vary by state. Firearm owners should monitor official updates closely as negotiations between governments continue.

Can shooters still access firearm info online?

Yes. You can still access standard information such as reloading data, ballistic resources and maintenance guides. The recent federal amendments aren't intended to criminalise everyday sporting activities. However the law's wording is broad, creating uncertainty about how it may be interpreted, particularly for unlicensed individuals researching firearms before applying for a licence.

There's also a mismatch between some state and federal rules governing the manufacture or printing

of firearm parts, creating legal grey areas. Given this ambiguity, shooters are advised to proceed cautiously and seek legal advice before undertaking firearm part manufacturing or similar activities. Work is ongoing to clarify and amend the legislation so lawful owners are not unintentionally exposed to legal risk.

Are firearm exports now banned?

The answer is straightforward: There have been no changes to existing export arrangements. Firearms can still be exported under the standard rules and compliance processes.

How is Artificial Intelligence (AI) being used in licensing decisions?

Artificial Intelligence currently plays a very limited role in firearms regulation and is referenced only in federal legislation governing intelligence reviews related to licensing. AI may assist with background research and information filtering during intelligence checks, but doesn't make licensing decisions. Final determinations remain the responsibility of human decision-makers, ensuring accountability and oversight at every stage.

Importantly, no state or territory legislation authorises AI to make or assist in firearms licensing decisions. Its role is confined to supporting federal intelligence processes as a research tool rather than replacing human judgment. The segment emphasises AI is intended to improve information handling efficiency, while preserving full human control over outcomes.

What role do states play from here?

Firearm regulation in Australia is largely a state responsibility. Although the National Firearms Agreement was introduced to create broadly consistent categories and standards nationwide, each state and territory ultimately controls its own legislation. As a result, states can adopt different rules or impose stricter requirements, creating variations across the country. Federal governments can propose reforms or funding schemes, but those changes take effect only if

individual states agree and pass their own laws.

In practice, firearm reform is shaped by state politics. Premiers can advocate for change, though any amendment requires cabinet backing and parliamentary approval. Governors then formally sign the legislation as a procedural step. The result is a system in which national consistency is difficult to achieve, so the direction of firearm policy largely depends on decisions made in each state parliament.

What about genuine reasons for recreational shooters?

Recreational hunting and target shooting remain recognised genuine reasons for firearm ownership in Australia, though rules continue to vary significantly between states. In both New South Wales and Western Australia, hunting is still an accepted reason to hold firearms. However WA imposes stricter administrative requirements, including landholder consent and property registration, which create a more complex approval process. NSW continues to recognise hunting while introducing limits on the number of firearms an individual may hold.

Target shooting, particularly organised club and competition shooting, also remains a legitimate basis for firearm ownership. The broader picture, however, is one of fragmentation. There's no unified

national framework governing these genuine reasons, so future changes are likely to occur on a state-by-state basis. For shooters and hunters, staying informed about local regulations is essential, as compliance requirements are increasingly shaped by individual state policies rather than a single national standard.

What is SSAA pushing back on?

We're actively resisting a wave of proposed firearm restrictions, including straight-pull bans, tighter import controls, buyback terms and ownership caps. The fight is unfolding state by state, with political conditions shaping how hard that resistance will be. Some jurisdictions appear more open to debate, while others present steeper challenges due to their current parliamentary makeup. Upcoming election cycles, particularly in New South Wales, are seen as key moments to revisit and challenge recent legislative changes.

At federal level, opposition to stricter import rules and rushed reforms persists, even amid tight parliamentary timelines. The message from advocates is clear: Firearm policy is moving quickly and unevenly across Australia, so sustained pressure will be needed during the coming year to seek amendments, challenge impractical measures and keep governments accountable.

Are accessories and clothing imports banned?

No. Recent legislative changes don't ban the importation of firearms accessories or shooting clothing. The section of the Bill which would've introduced those restrictions was removed before the legislation passed. While there's been confusion around this issue, import of accessories and clothing remains legal. We'll continue to clarify what has and hasn't changed so shooters remain accurately informed.

Does this affect travelling with firearms, including international competitors?

People travelling with firearms, including Olympic and international competition shooters, can still travel overseas with firearms and return with them, provided all required paperwork is completed in advance. This includes statutory declarations, coordination with Australian Border Force and confirmation of airline transport requirements. Most standard competition firearms, including single-shot and bolt-action rifles, remain unaffected. However in New South Wales, some disciplines which use straight-pull rifles may now require additional permissions. Travellers should check requirements early when planning equipment and upcoming events to avoid complications. ●

SSAA - PROTECTING SHOOTERS SINCE 1948 | 227,947 MEMBERS STRONG AS OF MARCH 2026

MEMBERSHIP AND MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTIONS RENEWALS/CANCELANON AND CHANGE OF ADDRESS

membership.ssaa.org.au
02 8805 3900
membership@ssaa.org.au
PO Box 282, Plumpton, NSW 2761

NATIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

Please mail all correspondence for the SSAA National Executive to ssaa@ssaa.org.au
SSAA, PO Box 282, Plumpton, NSW 2761

STATE CONTACT INFORMATION

For SSAA inquiries please contact your state office

SSAA INC ACCOUNTS OFFICE

PO Box 282, Plumpton, NSW 2761
02 8805 3900
accounts@ssaa.org.au

SSAA GENERAL INSURANCE BROKERS

08 8332 0281
Freecall: 1800 808 608
insurance@ssaains.com.au

WILDLIFE PROGRAMS

Matthew Godson
PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061

ACT	0400 138 955
NSW	02 7900 1555
NT	0402 013 918
QHS	0401 808 718
SA	0419 849 452
TAS	0418 734 008
VIC	03 8892 2777
WA	08 9497 7919

SKIP THE QUEUE

UPDATE YOUR DETAILS ONLINE



OPEN SEASON

WHAT REALLY DETERMINES EFFECTIVE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT?

WORDS:
MATTHEW GODSON



Debate around wildlife management in Australia often becomes focused on *who* is doing the work rather than *how* the work is done. Too frequently, discussions by various groups descend into false divisions: Commercial vs non-commercial, professional vs volunteer, paid vs unpaid. The simple fact is, effective wildlife management isn't determined by whether a hunter receives payment, it's determined by four practical factors which apply universally across all pest and wildlife control programs.

1: FREQUENCY OF CONTROL

One-off control activities rarely deliver lasting outcomes. Wildlife populations respond quickly to reduced pressure, particularly highly mobile or fast-breeding species. Effective management requires regular intervention. Whether the goal is reducing pest impacts or maintaining a population at sustainable levels, repeated control activities are essential. Gaps in effort allow populations to recover, often undoing previous work. This is why landholders often report limited success from isolated or short-term programs, regardless of who undertakes them.

2: INTENSITY OF EFFORT

Frequency alone isn't enough. Control activities must also apply sufficient intensity to influence population dynamics. Low-level efforts spread thinly across a landscape may create activity but not outcomes. Effective control requires enough pressure, applied over the right area and timeframe, to exceed the species' capacity to

recover through reproduction or immigration. Intensity is a function of planning, coordination and scale, not payment status.

3: CONSISTENCY OVER TIME

Wildlife management isn't a single event, it's an ongoing process. Landscapes, seasons and populations change and management must adapt accordingly. Consistency ensures control pressure is maintained through breeding cycles, seasonal movements and environmental fluctuations. Programs which stop and start or rely on short-term engagement, often fail to deliver durable results. Consistent effort is achievable through both commercial operations and organised non-commercial participation when properly coordinated.

4: APPLICATION OF BEST-PRACTICE STANDARDS

The effectiveness of wildlife management also depends on how activities are conducted. Best-practice standards including humane methods, species-specific techniques, adherence to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and compliance with legislation are critical. These standards protect animal welfare, ensure safety and improve efficiency of control activities. Professionalism is defined by competence, planning and accountability, not by whether or not money changes hands.

PAID OR UNPAID ISN'T THE METRIC THAT MATTERS

The idea that only paid professionals can deliver effective wildlife management, or unpaid hunters can't contribute meaningfully, is not supported by ecological principles

or on-ground experience. What matters is how predators, human or otherwise, are applied within a management framework. Governments, landholders and natural resource managers achieve best outcomes when they focus on frequency, intensity, consistency and standards rather than labels. Both commercial and non-commercial hunters can:

- Deliver real conservation and pest-management outcomes, or
- Achieve very little if poorly coordinated or inconsistently applied. The difference lies in systems, planning and oversight, again not payment status.

A MORE PRODUCTIVE WAY FORWARD

Effective wildlife management requires moving beyond ideological divisions and focusing on outcomes. When all contributors are recognised as part of the same ecological toolset, management programs gain scale, resilience and long-term effectiveness. If the goal is healthier ecosystems, reduced pest impacts and better outcomes for landholders, the question should never be 'who is paid'. The question should always be: Is the effort frequent enough, intense enough, consistent enough and conducted to best-practice standards?

The SSAA and its members have a role to play and don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Keep sharpening your skills, keep learning and use every tool available to lift your game. The new SSAA Activity Log website ssaaactivitylog.com.au lets you record your activities and clearly track the frequency and intensity of your control efforts over time.

Data collection also provides clear evidence of our positive impacts, including reduced pest pressure on farms, protection of native species and support for landholders' management goals. These measurable results build trust and community confidence, while strengthening our social licence to operate.

SEND QUESTIONS TO:
wildlife@ssaa.org.au



SX-2 ALPINE HD GEN 2 SPOTTING SCOPE

The SX™-2 Alpine® HD spotting scope is a must have for all serious hunters or shooters who are looking to add HD performance to their optics kit. Clear glass combined with an oversized eyepiece and a rugged design will help you tag out season after season.



**BUILT TO
TAKE ON THE
HARSHEST
CONDITIONS**

- HIGH-DEFINITION CLARITY**
- EXTREME CLIMATE EXPOSURE**
- WATERPROOF + FOGPROOF**
- GUARANTEED FOR LIFE**



**FIND YOUR
LOCAL DEALER**



SIFA Shooting Industry Foundation Australia

PROUDLY DISTRIBUTED BY **NIOA**

sporting.nioa.com.au
www.leupold.com

IN THE POT YOU PUT THE CHICKEN

WORDS:
SCOTT HEIMAN



Who among us enjoys the sound and smell of a T-bone or rib-eye on the bone sizzling on the barbecue? Truth be told, we've been enjoying this type of experience for at least the past 170,000 years. It was around this time the early Homo sapiens and Neanderthals were using fire to cook meat and vegetables, while some studies suggest early hominins started cooking their food as far back as one million years ago.

If we consider traditional ways of cooking meat, we probably think of skewering and rotating critters over glowing coals. But if you're wondering about how to maximise nutritional value of meat, shish kebab doesn't top the list and not by a long way.

Indeed roasting or grilling can be the most wasteful method of cooking meat, as vitamin B and other water-soluble vitamins like C are lost. They simply leach out and drip into the firepit along with water, proteins and fats, all the things your body needs. Direct flame-grilling is more effective. This method is part of the country's Aboriginal tradition and involves placing a whole animal, in its skin, directly over an open flame or hot coals, with the skin itself helping keep the nutrients and moisture contained within the animal.

Frying can be effective depending on how you go about it. If you simply place your meat on top of a piece of metal (or rock), the fats and juices will run off the cooking

surface into the fire. A metal pan or pot is better, providing you mop up the left-over juices (gravy or broth). Baking can be a good option in a survival situation and can involve using an 'earth oven', burying the meat with hot stones or coals in a pit (you can even make an oven from a gouged-out termite mound). Either way, wrap the meat in fresh leaves to stop the nutritious juices from leaching into the earth or cook the animal whole with skin on.

If you have a cooking receptacle then you've lots of great options. If you're without a pot, consider using things like coconut shell, bamboo or metal components you can scrounge from around you. For my part I always carry an 'old-school' army water bottle and kidney cup (instead of a modern bladder) as they can be used over flames.

If you can rustle up a lid, steaming is one of the best ways to retain nutrients in your food and is particularly useful for cooking plant matter. Boiling or stewing in water works well too as you don't need a lid and, like steaming, nutrients are retained in the broth. Better still, you can extract nutrients from both the meat and the bones. Once the

meat's ready to eat, simply leave the bones behind in the fluid and continue simmering.

Bone broth is more than just a cozy comfort food, it's packed with nutrients which offer a range of health benefits. The jello fluid created when you boil bones is crammed with collagen, gelatin, amino acids (all good for gut health), minerals like calcium, magnesium, phosphorus and potassium. These are all vital for bone and muscle function and provide protein which contributes to muscle repair and immune function.

At home, I make broth from the bones of any roast meat I prepare and use it as the base for a spag-bol the next day and soup or pasta-bake the day after. And I do the same on the road. The roast chook I buy to make wraps on the way to a hunting property turns into bone broth around the campfire at night.

All of which makes me think: Am I the only one who remembers the chaotic cooking demonstrations by the Muppet Show's Swedish chef as he cheerfully exclaimed: "In the pot you put the chicken." I reckon he was on to something!



DON'T DISCARD THOSE CHICKEN BONES JUST YET.

PIXFRA™

Price • Precision • Performance



NEW

PIXFRA CETUS

THERMAL MODULAR RIFLESCOPE

Thought a thermal rifle scope was out of reach?
Not anymore. Meet the new Pixfra Cetus range.

From an amazing **\$1,190 (SRP)**

WiFi

MODEL	SENSOR	NETD	FOCAL LENGTH	MAGNIFICATION	FOV (@100m)	DETECTION RANGE	PIPS 3.0	DISPLAY	PRICE (SRP)
C225	256 x 192	18mK	25mm	3.5x-28x [8x]	12.3 x 9.2m	1300m		800 x 600 0.32" OLED	\$1,190
C335	384 x 288		35mm	4.1x-32.8x [8x]	13.2 x 9.9m		✓		\$1,890
C635	640 x 512	15mK		2.5x-20x [8x]	21.9 x 17.6m	1800m		1600 x 1200 0.5" OLED	\$2,690
C650	640 x 512		50mm	3.6x-28.8x [8x]	15.4 x 12.3m				\$3,890

 **HuntingDepot**
powered by C.B. Kennedy

Contact hunting depot for more information
sales@huntingdepot.com.au | 03 9823 1555

Available to order through any
major gun store Australia wide.

DISCOVER THE PIXFRA RANGE
AT HUNTINGDEPOT.COM.AU





THE ‘COACH’ THAT WON’T LIE TO YOU

WORDS: LAETISHA SCANLAN



Q What’s your opinion of the ShotKam and is it worth investing in one as a training aid?

Robert G., Qld

A If you’re thinking about a ShotKam it’s a bit like adding a very honest training partner to your sessions. It won’t replace good coaching or solid fundamentals, though it can give you clear, objective feedback that’s hard to obtain any other way.

One of the biggest advantages is clarity. The latest ShotKam models produce sharp, high-definition footage which shows precisely where your barrel was in relation to the target at the moment you pulled the trigger. Instead of replaying the shot in your head or relying on someone standing behind you, it actually lets you see what happened. When you don’t have access to a professional coach or someone particularly technical, that kind of visual feedback is extremely valuable.

It’s also really user-friendly. Installation and removal takes only a few minutes and calibration through the mobile phone app is straightforward. You align it to your gun barrel, shoot your round and within minutes you can review everything on your phone. That instant feedback makes it especially useful during practice sessions, where small adjustments can be made immediately rather than guessed at later.

Reviewing footage can highlight subtle elements of gun fit and mount consistency. Watching how the gun recoils and moves may



THE SHOTKAM CAN BE BENEFICIAL IF USED APPROPRIATELY.

reveal issues with pitch or positioning you wouldn’t otherwise notice. It’s not a full replacement for a professional gun fitting, though it can certainly point you in the right direction. And, perhaps just as importantly, it removes the post-round speculation about where you missed, as the video analysis tends to settle those debates quickly.

The newer models are also relatively lightweight, which helps minimise impact on the gun’s handling. That said, adding anything to the barrel can slightly affect balance and swing. Some shooters won’t notice it at all, while others who are particularly sensitive to feel may detect a slight difference.

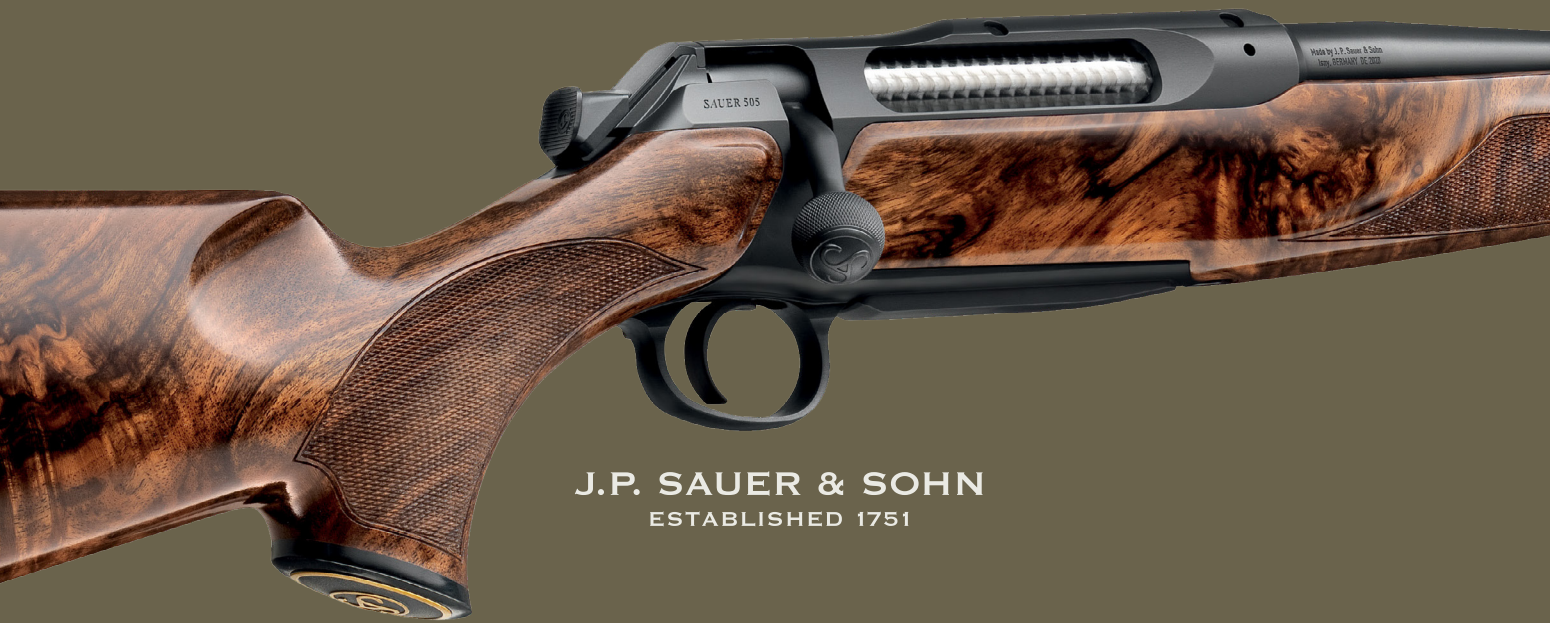
Another important consideration is competition use. Devices like ShotKam aren’t permitted in certain regulated competitions, including those governed by the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF). So it should be used purely as a training tool rather than something you’ll rely on in competition.

The biggest ‘con’ though is between your ears. A ShotKam gives you a lot of information and sometimes, in shooting, less is more. It’s easy to fall into the trap of frame-by-frame analysis, which can force you to start overcomplicating what should be a smooth, instinctive process. Shooting often improves when we simplify, not when we dissect every millisecond.

So is it worth it? Used thoughtfully and in moderation, it can accelerate progress. Used obsessively it can add unnecessary complexity. So, like most tools in shooting, its value depends on how you choose to put it to work.

• Next month: We put the ShotKam Gen 4 to the test

SEND QUESTIONS TO: L.scanlan@live.com.au



J.P. SAUER & SOHN
ESTABLISHED 1751

THE SAUER 505. FULLY MODULAR PLATFORM

The Sauer 505 redefines versatility for the Australian shooter. Built around a revolutionary interchangeable barrel system, you can seamlessly swap calibres and profiles on a single, masterful platform. True modularity extends beyond the barrel. Interchangeable stocks and fore-ends adapt your rifle for any discipline. At its core lies a redesigned steel-to-steel action for legendary smoothness, paired with the newly engineered magazine release for absolute reliability in any condition.



10 YEAR
WARRANTY

ONE PLATFORM. INFINITE POSSIBILITIES. MASTER EVERY DOMAIN.
DISCOVER THE ULTIMATE MODULAR HUNTING RIFLE AT YOUR LOCAL DEALER.

NEW

LAPUA

UP YOUR GAME with new
Lapua TRX hunting Bullets and Ammunition



TrueRange Expanding

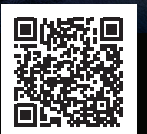
TRX

**PROUDLY
DISTRIBUTED
THROUGH**

OSA
OUTDOOR SPORTING AGENCIES

YOUR TRUSTED PARTNER IN HUNTING &
SPORT SHOOTING *FOR OVER 75 YEARS.*
www.osaaustralia.com.au

Join the
OSA Circle.
SCAN & STAY
INFORMED



TOP SHOTS

FIND ANSWERS FROM THE BEST THERE IS. FROM WHAT TO USE TO WHAT IS THIS, OUR TOP SHOTS ARE HERE TO HELP.

Q My father left me what I thought was a Lee-Enfield .303 rifle he brought from England some time in the 1950s. On closer examination the bore diameter is .31" and it's been re-chambered to some other cartridge that's about two inches long and wider than the standard .303 British chamber. Could one of your Top Shots possibly help me work out which ammunition this rifle takes?

Eric G., Vic.

A Your rifle has been adapted to take the 8x50R Mannlicher cartridge and would've been made between the World Wars. It was produced at a time when firearms which used military ammunition such as the .303 British, weren't allowed to be used by civilians. This was the case in India which is where I believe your rifle was probably intended for target shooting. A similar thing happened in Australia where .303 SMLEs were



THE 8X50R MANNLICHER (LEFT) AND .303 BRITISH CARTRIDGE.

converted to take the 7.7x54 cartridge for civilian use. I understand BSA also made Lee-Enfield hunting rifles in 8x50R for commercial sales.

The cartridge dates back to 1888 when it was produced for the Austro-Hungarian Mannlicher military rifle Models 1888 and 1895. I'm not sure any ammunition is being produced these days, though examples of the cartridge can be found in many collections. I'm sure someone out there will tell us if ammunition supplies still exist.

Rod Pascoe

Q I'm thinking of buying a top of the line scope with a custom dial system on the turret and wondered if one of your Top Shots could confirm whether or not they actually work or are just a very expensive gimmick?

D. McDonald, Qld.

A Riflescope technology has advanced in leaps and bounds during the past 20 years. In the good old days we were impressed by scopes in the 3-9 and 4-12 range and, depending on the brand, they were anything from cheap as chips and unreliable to very pricey but highly dependable. Today's top of the line brands from Europe and the US, some of which are actually made or assembled in China or Japan, are entirely reliable.

The quality of some scopes must be seen to be believed. Super-high quality lenses made in the US, Japan and Germany are used in these scopes with much greater magnification ranges than the old 3x multiplication, with illuminated options now readily available. The best of these offer what Leupold calls a 'Custom Dial System' and Swarovski a 'Ballistic Turret Flex' or their proprietary 'Personalized Ballistic Turret'.

Custom dials require precise inputs from the operator, including bullet and cartridge ballistics as well as height above bore measurement and various

climatic condition information. These are used to burn a dial for your specific scope model and ballistic details provided. In my experience with Leupold and Swarovski they're super accurate and, in fact, a game-changer.

The optics of these highly expensive scopes and accuracy the turrets offer make them worth every cent in terms of enjoyment and efficiency of use. Yes they're expensive but, in my opinion, worthwhile if price is no object.

Paul Miller

Q Rod Pascoe's article and diagram regarding proof marks in your August edition helped me somewhat in learning about my late grandfather's Martin, Fitt & Sneath shotgun. All I know is the gun was made in Grantham but can't find anything about the maker. I was in Purdey's a few years ago, where the sales assistant kindly looked them up in some books he had but couldn't find the maker listed anywhere.

My grandfather had a mixed business in Victoria's Mallee region pre- and post-WWII and was an agent for Alcock and Pierce (I have an old catalogue of their shotguns from the 1930s). He bought this gun secondhand from a Cadbury's travelling salesman and used it for bird shooting (duck and quail) as he lived close to Lake Buloke, so it's seen some memorable seasons.

It has 30" barrels (unpitted), weighs 6lb 12oz, needs bluing but is generally in good 'worn' condition. Not sure about the history of the canvas/leather case as it's marked W.J. Jeffery & Co. Ltd., so any information regarding the maker's history, rarity or value would be much appreciated.

Roger Barbetti, via email

A Your gun was proofed in Birmingham and I expect made there too. The firm of Martin, Fitt & Sneath (hereafter MF&S) were English ironmongers based in Grantham, Lincolnshire. I have a record from a local business

directory. John Martin and his wife Mary Ann (nee Sneath) began their firm in the mid-19th century and continued, I suspect, for several generations.

As ironmongers they were merchants and sold all manner of goods including bicycles, sewing machines etc all over the world, including Australia. I'd say your William Jeffery case isn't the original for this old shotgun.

I haven't been able to find any similar guns advertised, therefore a price would only be guesswork, even so it's a valuable family heirloom. MF&S are listed in the current National Firearms Identification project, where one 12-gauge hammer gun is listed with the NFID number F00025792. Yours looks like a nice example so I wouldn't re-bule as this would devalue it.

I've checked the Birmingham gun-making records as well as Douglas Tate's Birmingham Gun-makers and MF&S don't merit a mention anywhere, leading me to think yours is a 'trade gun' made for MF&S ironmongers. I don't believe John Martin or his descendants are related to Scottish gunmaker Alex Martin. Hope this helps.

Geoff Smith



SEND QUESTIONS TO:
edit@ssaa.org.au

When seeking information on old or antique firearms, please include a photo of the proof marks on those guns which have them. Old shotguns typically have markings beneath the breech. Also outline the firearm's known history or provenance where possible.



LIFETIME WARRANTY

meet the family...

PROUDLY AUSTRALIAN OWNED AND OPERATED



THRIVE



VENGEANCE



THRIVE HD



VENGEANCE HD



TRACE ED



1-4 VARIABLE PRISM

THRIVE HD

- ▶ **Illuminated Reticle Options** - Brightness levels for all lighting conditions.
- ▶ **Clear Optics** - Fully multi-coated lenses for bright, sharp images.
- ▶ **Durable Build** - Aircraft grade aluminium tube.
- ▶ **Ready Out of the Box** - Capped turrets, locking diopter, throw lever.
- ▶ **LPVO versatility** - Fast target acquisition, precision at distance.
- ▶ **New FDE options** - Performance that looks as good as it shoots.

find out more →



Scan me



ZERO TECH®

AS DEBATE CONTINUES OVER AUSTRALIA'S 2026 FIREARMS BILL, THE KNIVES ARE OUT FOR ONE MP/SHOOTER IN PARTICULAR. SO WE SAY . . .

POLITICS: IT'S ALWAYS MORE COMPLICATED THAN IT LOOKS

FOREWORD: SSAA CEO TOM KENYON
WORDS: CHARLOTTE FOX

Many members will no doubt be surprised to see an interview with Dan Repacholi in this magazine and have some questions about it - and fair enough. The Bill which passed through Federal Parliament in January was largely a waste of time that'll make life more difficult for shooters but, with the exception of the changes to intelligence sharing, provide no real improvement in public safety.

We all know Dan is a keen shooter with a long history of competition and hunting, so it was difficult to see him vote with the government on this Bill. So why have we interviewed him? Firstly, the interview was conducted before the Bondi tragedy. After Bondi and the changes to legislation in NSW and nationally, we went back to Dan to talk further and have included that in this article.

Secondly, it's because Dan is one of the few loud and proud shooters in Parliament and even fewer Labor shooters, which matters. The more voices we have the better. The Labor Party has strict rules about voting with the Party on legislation and failing to do so means you're kicked out. For many MPs that means losing their job at the next election as they no longer have the support of the Party. So I think it's fair to ask how many of us would throw away our livelihood for a hobby.

Finally, when I was working in Parliament House and trying to prevent these laws going through, or at least having them changed, Dan was right there. He couldn't be public about it but spent a lot of time with the Minister for Home Affairs, Tony Burke, having the Bill amended so it was better than when first tabled.

Does it still have major flaws? Absolutely. Was the process rushed? Yes. Did the government consult with shooting groups before ramming this Bill through parliament? No, they did not. Are we worse off as a result? Definitely. Yet I can assure you that without Dan Repacholi, the Bill would've been a lot worse. During the debate he was our best channel into the Minister's office. I was in and out of that office feeding him information to take to the Minister in an attempt to convince him to make changes. If he'd voted against the Bill he'd have been kicked out of the Labor Party, put his job at risk and the Bill would still have passed Parliament. It would have all been for nothing.

I'm not happy about the process or result, but Dan made a strong contribution in difficult circumstances. That needs to be pointed out. We must support our friends in parliament and, despite the events of January, Dan remains a friend of shooting. He's an interesting person who has something to say, so I hope you enjoy the interview.



Dan Repacholi is often referred to as ‘that tall bloke with the beard who’s a politician and shooter’. You can’t argue with that. A passionate representative for his electorate of Hunter in New South Wales, his story extends from Melton Pistol Club to the Olympic Games, to being a vital voice for shooters and men’s health with the Federal Government. Dan sat with Charlotte Fox to talk about his love of shooting and how he uses his voice to represent our community.

Tell me about your background

I’m Federal member for Hunter and the back-story of how I got here is quite interesting. I grew up in a what a lot of people would consider a ‘normal’ family environment. My mum worked as a nurse and dad would look after my brothers and I on weekends when mum was on nightshift. We’d go clay target shooting with him or to the local pistol club in Melton.

My older brother represented the state and went to national competitions in shooting sports. I was also fortunate enough to have some good coaches and mentors during my time at Melton Pistol Club, who helped me improve as an athlete. I started my working life through members I met at the club. They gave me an opportunity aged 15 to start my apprenticeship as a fitter and turner at D&H Rodwell Tooling, where I worked for 10 years with a small team of dedicated staff.

How did this impact your development as an athlete?

They were very supportive of my shooting career in the 10 years I worked with them, including trying out for Olympic and other national teams along the way. I didn’t make the Australian squad for Sydney but was in the Olympic teams from 2004-2020 in Athens, Beijing, London, Rio and Tokyo. I also represented Australia at the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, Delhi, Glasgow and Gold Coast, all while working full-time. I ended up leaving the team at D&H Rodwell Tooling after I met my now wife and moved to Hunter in 2009.

What did you initially enjoy about shooting?

My brothers and I grew up around the pistol club and just run amok, to be honest! I was lucky enough to have some good coaches and mentors along the way, people who showed an interest in

me when I started out. What I liked most about shooting was I found it interesting, it was different. I’ve always been around sports and played a bit of cricket, AFL and a lot of basketball. I was just much better at pistol shooting, which has enabled me to see the world through the sport I love.

What disciplines did you shoot?

In the Olympics and Commonwealth Games I shot 50m free pistol and 10m air pistol. I didn’t come away with any medals at the Olympics, but won three gold and three bronze at the Commonwealth Games. I can also say I’m the reigning Commonwealth champion in free pistol, as the event was taken off the calendar after the 2018 Games so I’m forever the champion!

What are your most memorable moments?

I have great memories from all the Commonwealth Games where I’ve done well, including the gold medal I won in Glasgow. I’d actually retired from the sport just before that, as my wife had given birth to our daughter, Zoe, and I wanted to be around. When you’re competing you’re often absent and travelling the world, but I wanted to give a bit of that time back to my family. Despite that, I was convinced to come back and have a go and was lucky enough to make the team.

My coach Vladimir rang my wife who convinced me to do it. At that moment I was having a few beers and noticed he’d called me. I actually thought ‘there’s no way I’m answering Vladimir right now’ so he rang my wife instead. Looking back, I’m glad she answered the call.

The other memory I think about most is from the Gold Coast. I was reigning Commonwealth Games champion in 10m air pistol, which was my first event and I shot terribly. I made the final, didn’t shoot well and came fourth - it was horrendous. I went into that event and zoned





the whole crowd out. I did everything I wouldn't normally do as I wanted so badly to be back-to-back champion. I blocked everyone out, blocked all the noise and it didn't work, so I had to regroup and quickly.

The next day we shot the 50m where I made the finals and completely changed my plan. I wanted to listen to every single thing each person in that crowd said, didn't block out anything and chose to roll with the emotions. That helped me find a good rhythm, get in front and ultimately win. In that moment I embraced the whole crowd, which is what I hadn't done the day before.

Retrospectively, I'm surprised doctors weren't called for my wife at that moment from gripping my daughters so hard. It's not often we shoot in front of family and friends, so to be able to win with my beautiful wife and daughters present was one of the most amazing experiences of my life. On top of that my auntie had been unwell at the time and passed away a few months later. And the day I won was my uncle's birthday, so it was an incredibly meaningful moment for so many reasons.

And moving to Hunter has led to a career in politics.

I moved here to work in the mining industry. Initially it was only for a few weeks to help a mate work on navy ships, which turned into nine months. I kept in contact with my now wife and we decided to move here to continue working in and around the mines. Along the way Joel Fitzgibbon, who was a previous member for Hunter, spoke to my wife just before the Tokyo Olympics to discuss my interest in potentially being a candidate.

Once Tokyo finished in 2021, I avoided phone calls for a couple of days to have some time to myself. All returning athletes were in Covid isolation, I'd had nothing to drink except water

from January 1 to August 15 and all I wanted in isolation was a couple of nice reds and a beer. In the quarantine facility, everyone was asked what they wanted in their room. Some asked for Lego, rowing machines and treadmills, while I requested two boxes of beer, a couple of bottles of decent red and watched the Olympics. After that, I spoke to Joel and ultimately went through the process to be the candidate.

What made you say 'yes' to that?

I was a union delegate in mining and most people in those roles are Labor-leaning, though my real reason was I want my two daughters to be equals in the world. They're 10 and 12 now and I want them to be able to walk home every night and not have to look behind them the whole way.

I want them to be able to work in whatever field they choose and not have to worry about being paid less than their male counterparts. I want them to have equal opportunities in job promotion. I'm a firm believer we should be equals in the world and that's one of the main reasons I'm in this role - to try and set that up for them.

How do you see the contemporary view of hunting and shooting in Australia?

If we can have more people into positions at all levels of government whether local, state or federal, who have an understanding and knowledge of how good our sport is, that's a great thing. The main reason for this is because we talk about it in a positive light, where unfortunately most times shooting's discussed in public it's in a poor light. Being able to showcase what we do around pest management, invasive species and the sport in general is wonderful.

Let's not beat around the bush, firearm owners are some of the most trustworthy people in Australia, because we go through the process of acquiring a licence which isn't easy. We've gone through criminal checks and all the other requirements we have to meet. There are people out there not connected with shooting who think we're hillbillies. We're certainly not hillbillies, we're outstanding citizens.

How does your prominence in shooting interact with your role as an MP?

Sometimes it's challenging but there are positives like the National Firearms Register. For example when I moved from Victoria to New South Wales, nobody knew where my guns were. During that time Victoria's authorities thought they were still in Victoria, while New South Wales didn't know about them as I was still going through the process. So having a national database is a good idea.

The Bondi terrorist attack has thrown shooters into a complex debate. How have you seen this unfold?

Bondi was horrific. Like every Australian, it shook me and my thoughts are still with the victims, their families and everyone affected. When something like that happens, governments have to take a breath and get it right. You need calm, careful decisions, not knee-jerk reactions which end up punishing people who've done nothing wrong.

I've been really clear that public safety must be based on evidence and commonsense. Lawful, licensed shooters already operate under some of the toughest rules in the world and any changes need to reflect that. Sports shooters are not the problem. They're people who follow the law, store their firearms properly, train regularly and contribute a lot to their local communities. Considering this, I've been highly critical of how the New South Wales Government handled the situation. The changes were rushed, there was no proper consultation and a lot of responsible people were left frustrated and confused.

At federal level it was a very different experience. I was lucky enough to have a seat at the table early on and that genuinely mattered. This meant I could push back when proposals went too far, working through practical changes which protected public safety without undermining legitimate sporting and recreational shooting. I worked closely with SSAA CEO Tom Kenyon throughout that process and that collaboration was crucial. Having people in the room who actually understand firearms law and how it works in the real world leads to better outcomes.

People in the industry often see negativity around shooting. How do you combat that?

It's about education. Most people have no idea about firearms, their owners or what we do, whether with our sport, hunting or taking photos and stalking deer. It's about educating them and not just having a go at them for saying things you disagree with. It's also vital to reinforce we're licensed firearms owners who've gone through rigorous checks to ensure we do what we do safely.

SSAA is an advocacy group for our members. What's the most productive actions groups like ours can take?

Each politician has a certain level of experience and knowledge, so if you want them to see things from your perspective, you need to help them. I'm someone in federal politics who understands shooters and what we do, but there's another 150 federal MPs. Probably about 130 of those haven't a clue about us, so we need to promote ourselves.

You're the government's Special Envoy for Men's Health. Tell me about that.

It's a unique role where you find some pretty startling statistics and, for men, sadly they're not in our favour. We often top the charts for the wrong reasons. More than 3500 die every year of prostate cancer in this country and 75 per cent of suicides are men, many of which could be prevented.

Further to that, 64 per cent of males wait on average seven days before visiting their GP when something's wrong with them, 30 per cent wait four weeks and 9 per cent wait two years. Men die on average five years younger than their female counterparts in cities and, in rural and regional Australia, that rises to 13 years.

If we can convince 10 per cent more Aussie men to see their GP and have an annual blood test for prostate cancer, we'll save thousands of lives. And it starts to create a conversation that seeing a doctor is normal. Women do an amazing job at this. They visit the GP, have proper conversations and don't just go when something's wrong.

What are some of the messages we can promote to our members in relation to men's health?

First and foremost it's not weakness. Start to have genuine conversations with mates at the shooting range. If you're keen, have a proper discussion about men's health, as I guarantee there's always someone who'll listen. I've spent a lot of time in shooting ranges and predominantly they're full of an older generation of males.

The same goes for sitting around a campfire. Don't be afraid to have honest conversations and, if you're going through something yourself such as prostate cancer, talk about your story. Talk about what it was like having the check-ups done, what you went through and what medication you might be on. By just speaking up you're opening the door for someone else to ask questions and potentially save a life.

What are your goals for 2026?

In my role as Special Envoy for Men's Health I want to travel around and hear what the issues are, then go back and see what we can do to make lasting and generational change. We need to see a change in this space and if we can get the conversation started that's a good thing.

Personally, with shooting I'd love to go out and do a bit more hunting, enjoy myself a little bit maybe up in Darwin and the Northern Territory. Beyond that I also want to spend more time with my family. It's a hectic parliament calendar and I'm busy in my role, so I always make sure I'm having some quality time with my girls. ●



An Australian-made driving light that does not compromise, the Beast 3 Mode LED Driving Light switches from spot (long distance), to flood (wide illumination) to beast (combo) mode with the push of a button from the driver's seat. **Lightforce** put their lights through the wringer (and in the freezer) to ensure they can withstand whatever your version of extreme is. Great lights.

Gol-ly! Does this backpack meet, nay exceed the criteria of a premium product made for hunters. The **Vorn EV45** has a beautifully designed quick rifle release (go watch the promo video [here](#) and come back and tell me your jaw didn't hit the floor), barrel cover, padded shoulder straps, heavy-duty hip belt to take care of your back and is compatible with a hydration system. Oh, and it's height adjustable! RRP \$649.99, dear but perfection doesn't come cheap.



We love maintenance gear. Gear that keeps our other gear in tip-top shape. Or in this case, tip-top sharp. The **Warthog V-sharp Classic II** Knife Sharpener keeps every blade, even serrated, v-sharp.

BUY ONCE, CRY ONCE

WHEN YOU'RE DEEP IN THE BACK COUNTRY, CHEAP GEAR IS THE MOST EXPENSIVE MISTAKE YOU CAN MAKE. IT'S THE PREMIUM PRODUCTS THAT LEAVE YOU UNHINDERED AND ABLE TO MAKE THE MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY. BUY WELL ONCE, REPLACE LESS, PERFORM BETTER.

Swarovski EL Range 10x42 Binoculars deliver premium optics with integrated laser rangefinder, 10x magnification and crystal-clear edge-to-edge clarity. Built for precise distance measurement and confident long-range spotting. The tech savvy can utilise the tracking assistant to narrow down where your last shot landed. Reviewed in our August 2025 issue.



We featured them in our Mega Review issue last October and our hearts and soles have not moved on. Italian handmade **Crispi Summit GTX** boots are a great investment for those who need durable, high performance and supportive footwear in all-terrains.



ALPEX PRO

The New Benchmark

In fading light, trust becomes critical. When an animal steps out from the tree line at dusk or moves slowly across an open field in the dark, the margin for error is small. **This is the moment ALPEX PRO was built for.**

Defining the Next Generation of Digital Hunting

Next-Gen of Low-Light Clarity



Optical-Style Controls. Instant Familiarity



12 Megapixel Resolution

Light Pro Algorithm

- An Equivalent F0.9 Optical Brightness
- Up to 3x Signal-to-noise Ratio Improvement

Built for All-Day Carry

- 889g Lightweight Design



Wieambilla three 'operated within delusional framework'

**JOHN
MAXWELL**

 In the afternoon of December 12, 2022, four Queensland police officers arrived at a country property in the Western Downs region, 255km west of Brisbane, to check on the welfare of one of the residents. They jumped the locked gate and started walking up the long dirt driveway, chatting among themselves.

Lurking in a camouflaged hide, purpose-built to cover the driveway, were brothers Nathaniel and Gareth Train, both armed with scoped rifles, the former holding a Tikka T3 in .30.06 Springfield and his brother a Ruger Model 77 in .308 Winchester. At 4.37pm, less than two minutes later and without warning, Constable Matthew Arnold (26) was shot once in the chest by 46-year-old Nathaniel Train and killed instantly.

At the same moment Constable Rachel McCrow (29) was shot through her left shoulder. Who fired this shot isn't clear as it could've been either man. Two minutes later she was shot twice more in the left and right legs, possibly by both men, all these shots fired at a range of around 70m.

The two other officers fled for their lives, one hiding in bushland for the next two hours, with the Trains lighting fires in a bid to flush him out. Roughly eight minutes after the initial shot, Gareth Train (47) approached the wounded officer who emptied her Glock .22 service pistol of all 15 rounds of .40 Smith & Wesson, all to no effect. She pleaded for her life before Train murdered her with a close range shot to the head, imagery from her body camera clearly showing the men responsible for her death.

Just under an hour later, neighbour Alan Dare (58) stood at the front of the property, seeking to investigate a potential fire hazard in the area. He too was shot dead. Finally, around 10.39pm, six hours after the first shot, it was all over. After a shootout with officers from the Queensland Police Special Emergency Response Team (SERT), the Train brothers were shot and killed, as was Stacey Train (45) wife of Gareth and ex-wife of Nathaniel.

Thus ended the Wieambilla siege, a tragedy which cost six lives and prompted a lengthy inquest before Queensland State Coroner Terry Ryan. Among the matters he considered was what firearms the Trains possessed, where they sourced them and whether they held firearms licences.

An immediate impact on Australia's sizeable number of licensed shooters was a renewed push for a National Firearms Register. Central to that was the question: Would police have gone to the Wieambilla property better prepared and in greater numbers, had they known the residents were armed and intent on the carnage which followed?

A nationwide register was promised in the 1996 National Firearms Agreement, which mandated registration of guns in those jurisdictions where it didn't previously exist. Australia did achieve national firearms registration, though many jurisdictions retained paper records, cumbersome and scarcely amenable to the rapid review we've come to expect in the digital age.

Coroner Ryan concluded no government or other authority had information which would've indicated a risk the Trains would act the way they did. He did make one specific gun con-

PROUD MAJOR
SPONSOR FOR
2026 IPSC
AUSTRALIA
NATIONAL
HANDGUN
CHAMPIONSHIPS



GRYCOL
INTERNATIONAL



GRYCOL.COM.AU
DL: 410650524



SERIOUS
GEAR *for*
SERIOUS
COMPETITORS



Smith & Wesson®

TANFOGLIO®



THE POLICE BEARCAT WAS RIDDLED WITH BULLET HOLES.

trol-related recommendation. Considering the mental delusions of the Trains, the Queensland Government should consider the introduction of mandatory mental health assessments for firearms licence applicants.

He noted Western Australia and NSW both required mental health assessments of firearms licence applicants, though for NSW it's only if the registry identifies potential risk factors, such as a history of mental illness or self-harm. For Queensland that remains a work in progress.

During the hearing there was significant evidence on the Trains' firearms. Considering the magnitude of events, police conducted a highly detailed examination of the site, locating precisely 200 spent cartridge cases, 84 from Queensland police firearms and 116 from non-police firearms. Some of those 84 were actually fired by the Train brothers, who'd helped themselves to the Glock handguns from the two dead constables. In all, police recovered eight firearms, the two Glocks and six others.

Gareth Train previously held a Queensland licence, which had been cancelled in 1998 for what was described as a minor weapons offence. Stacey Train never held any firearms licence. At the time of the shooting, only Nathaniel Train held a current licence issued in NSW. He had five firearms registered in his name: two Tikka T3 rifles both in .30.06, a Marlin 336 in .30.30, a 12-gauge double-barrel coach gun and a CZ 452 ZED ZKM in .22LR.

He also held a Queensland licence which had been suspended in August 2022. That came about after he sought to drive from NSW into Queensland during Covid travel restrictions.

“They were operating within a delusional framework, in which they believed they were defending themselves from demonic, evil state actors...”

Abandoning his longtime partner and job as a school principal at a community college in Walgett, NSW he headed north, apparently to join his brother at the Wieambilla property.

While seeking to cross the border his vehicle became bogged in flood waters. He ditched some of his gear, including three firearms and some ammunition, retaining one of the Tikkas and the CZ 452. Eventually his vehicle was towed out and he continued into Queensland. Subsequently, warrants were issued for his arrest for three offences including abandoning the guns and ammunition.

A man in camouflage gear is shown in profile, looking down at a pair of thermal binoculars he is holding with both hands. The binoculars are black with a red accent and have several control buttons on the side. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees.

 Nocpox

THE NEW

QUEST S50R

ONE STEP AHEAD

QUEST S50R

\$7,499.00 RRP

Advanced thermal clarity and target recognition, delivered in a lightweight 750g binocular for uncompromising field performance.

FIND YOUR LOCAL DEALER | GROUNDFORCE.COM.AU

GROUND FORCE
INTERNATIONAL™

His Queensland firearms licence was suspended and, despite several efforts by Queensland police, he wasn't located before December 12.

The officers' visit to the property that day was actually prompted by a call from NSW police seeking a welfare check on Nathaniel Train, requested by his former longtime partner who'd reported him missing. All eight firearms found at the property were forensically inspected, tested for DNA and fingerprints and test-fired. Police also sought to determine their registration status and provenance.

Both the Tikka rifle, used by Nathaniel Train, and CZ rifles used by Stacey Train were acquired legally and registered to the former. The Ruger M77 used by Gareth Train wasn't registered and was likely acquired by someone pre-1996 and never registered.

Inside a vehicle on the property, police found a scoped Swedish Mauser in 6.5x55, the coroner concluding it had been fired by Gareth Train during the confrontation. It too had never been registered, similarly a sawn-off Norinco .22 rifle and sawn-off Boito double-barrelled shotgun.

A police firearms officer gave evidence there was nothing exceptional about the type and quantity of firearms used by the Trains. He did add they were in pretty poor condition. The Trains weren't handloading any of their ammunition, with all ammo found on the property factory-made in common brands such as Winchester, Remington and Hornady. The quantity wasn't considered excessive.

Putting that into perspective, the officer told the inquest he'd been involved in one investigation of people described as 'preppers', where more than 350 guns and four tons of ammunition were located, including semi-automatic and fully-automatic firearms.

After murdering the two officers and their neighbour, the Trains must've realised there was no going back. Coroner Ryan devoted much of the inquest to assessing their background and motivations, concluding they were suffering from a shared delusional disorder. "They were operating within a delusional framework, in which they believed they were defending themselves from demonic, evil state actors who, by entering their

Thermal imagery from the helicopters reveal some surprisingly domestic moments. In one image, Gareth and Stacey can be seen sitting at an outdoor table, apparently enjoying a cuppa.

property, were intent on attacking them, such that they had to violently resist in order to reach salvation," he said.

As officers moved in, the Trains were repeatedly called on to lay down their arms and give up. The response was gunfire. Police had a good appreciation of their opposition thanks to a pair of helicopters circling overhead. From around 7pm and for the next 15 minutes, Gareth Train took potshots at one of the aircraft without effect.

Thermal imagery from the helicopters reveal some surprisingly domestic moments. In one image, Gareth and Stacey can be seen sitting at an outdoor table, apparently enjoying a cuppa. They even recorded a 41-second video and uploaded it to YouTube with the title Don't be Afraid, in which they refer to having killed the "devils and demons" who'd entered their property.

From 8.30pm SERT vehicles began to arrive at the property. Images in the coroner's report show a pattern of bullet strikes on the armoured windscreen of a police Bearcat armoured vehicle, forcing it to retreat. Examination of the Bearcat revealed at least 16 points of damage from at least 18 bullets or bullet fragments. Police concluded they were up against people armed with high-powered rifles who knew what they were doing.

The end was inevitable and came quickly. Gareth Train died at 10.31pm from a gunshot wound to the head. He was also struck on his left thigh. Stacey Train died at 10.36pm from a single gunshot wound to the head and Nathaniel three minutes later from gunshot wounds to his head and torso. ●

This article was held over from our February edition due to sensitivities over the Bondi tragedy.



CONSTABLES MATTHEW ARNOLD AND RACHEL MCCROW DIED IN THE SIEGE, AS DID NEIGHBOUR ALAN DARE.



10X42

BX-2 ALPINE HD



**HIGH-DEFINITION
CLARITY**

SCRATCH & SMUDGE
RESISTANT LENS COATINGS



**LIGHTWEIGHT &
COMFORTABLE**

ERGONOMIC OPEN
BRIDGE DESIGN



**INTERCHANGEABLE
FORM-FIT EYECUPS**

EASY TO SWAP & CLEAN



TRIPOD READY

BUILT-IN 1/4-20 TRIPOD
ADAPTOR PORT

RUGGED PERFORMANCE RELENTLESS CLARITY

THE BX-2 ALPINE HD IS AVAILABLE IN FOUR OPTICAL
CONFIGURATIONS: 8x42, 10x42, 10x52 AND 12x52



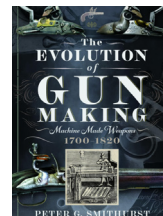
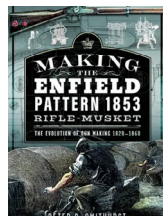
PROUDLY DISTRIBUTED BY NIOA

sporting.nioa.com.au
www.leupold.com



EXPAND YOUR LIBRARY

**WE'VE RUN THE
RULE OVER TWO
OUTSTANDING
BOOKS ON THE
EVOLUTION OF GUN-
MAKING AND THE
REWORKING OF
A 1986 TITLE ON
BAYONETS AND
KNIVES**



There have been countless books published during the past 200 years on the history of firearms development. However, few authors have had the technical knowledge to interpret some of the partial line drawings and inadequate descriptions given in old texts. Until now.

These two comprehensive publications take us on a journey in technology transfer between nations from France, England, Portugal, Russia and America. The technology flowed via a small number of manufacturing institutions and even smaller group of individuals,

eventuating in what was to become the design for the first British mass-produced military rifle, the 1853 Enfield Rifle, with the author tracing its origins back over time and location. It was to prove so successful of course, it led to variations in 1858 for the Naval Pattern and in 1861 for the Cavalry Carbine.

Smithurst brings an extremely detailed perspective to the subject due to his unique work history. He's occupied various roles as Senior Museum Curator at the Royal Armouries in Leeds, to Executive Director at the American Precision Museum in Windsor, Vermont, housed in the famous Robbins & Lawrence factory no less. This has resulted in photographs, examples of firearm parts at various stages of manufacture and descriptions of individual machines which haven't been published previously.

Many of the photographs are from museum collections not on public display, as well as items from

the author's private collection. I was also impressed by the numerous detailed line drawings which accompany the text detailing tools, machines and particularly those not-often-seen manufacturing processes.

This was of course a period of transition in firearms development, which didn't take place at the same rate in different countries. A few gunmakers were able, not always with their government's consent, to migrate to far corners of the world and play significant roles in transferring the latest technology. I found of great interest the information on the Russian manufactories in Tula, quoted from the early work of Gamel, where technology was transferred and installed by John Jones. He and his son migrated from England to Tula in 1817, though sadly the technology was lost a generation later.

We must also consider that technology was developed at a time when there was no universal measurement system in place, with many countries using various examples of the 'inch'. Smithurst presents a table of historical lock hole dimensions, taken with a modern coordinate measuring machine with results which are rather interesting.

I've been a student of the gun for some 70 years and accumulated more than 800 books, covering the historical aspects of firearms from design, manufacture and shooting techniques through the ages. Having also spent 46 years working in engineering, I do have an appreciation of the level of technical detail the author has displayed throughout these publications.

These two books bring together information from numerous known origins, as well as providing research from previously unknown and disparate international sources into one location. I highly recommend them to anyone with a love of the history and technology involved in the manufacture of firearms. Unique publications indeed.

REVIEW: TERRY BEACH

The Evolution of Gun Making: Machine Made Weapons 1700-1820, Making the Enfield Pattern 1853 Rifle-Musket (The Evolution of Gun Making 1820-1860)

Both titles by Peter G. Smithurst



If you're about to embark on the adventure that's antique arms collecting, my advice is stop, turn around and run like hell the other way. Now if that doesn't sit well with you, or worse, you've already jumped right in, my commiserations to your wallet.

For those foolhardy enough to proceed, as you push into the dark and mysterious world of antique arms collecting, one thing you'll soon discover is the information available to you will be of varying quality and accuracy. At one end of the scale (you'll figure out which end soon enough) you have 'word of mouth'. You'll hear all sorts of amazing facts, details and references, mostly about prized collectables ready for immediate sale.

For instance, there's the Waterloo sword. Over the years I've encountered a remarkable number of Waterloo swords, far outweighing the total number of combatants. Similarly, if antique firearms are your favour, you'll soon encounter rifles from Rorke's Drift and, if you collect Australian and Colonial arms, pistols from Glenrowan.

To properly evaluate these many and varied bargains you need hard data and reference material and, just like the collectables you're chasing, you'll realise not all reference material is the same. Let's consider edged weapons. Starting out you'll discover something like a *World of Swords*-style publication at your local book shop. It'll be a nice book and may even give you some information, yet it won't be enough and you'll have to dive a little deeper.

Searching online you'll find something with a title like *Swords of the British Empire*. It'll be written by a recognised expert, will contain lots of information and probably help you realise the British 1908 Pattern Cavalry Trooper's sword you just bought probably wasn't carried by one of Blücher's

men on that fateful day in June 1815. As Ned once said, such is life.

Eventually you'll want more, which brings us into the realm of encyclopaedic references about highly specific topics. I have a few, mostly about English flintlock firearms. Now such books are as rare as the items you're researching, so when one does come along it's a case for celebration.

One such book recently turned up at my place for review. Authored by Ian Skennerton and Brian Labudda, *British Commonwealth Bayonets and Fighting Knives* is in fact a reworking of the original 1986 self-published volume which eventually went out of print in 2012. For the reader, it's important to note I don't have a copy of the original and have reviewed *British Commonwealth Bayonets and Fighting Knives* as a standalone text, rather than a comparison between the 1986 and 2024 editions.

At first glance, *British Commonwealth Bayonets and Fighting Knives* delivers a visually engaging, content-packed experience in A4 format with almost every page featuring diagrams, dates and data tables. Making use of the index, information is presented by nation including Britain, Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand and South Africa which provides an interesting comparison, especially in relation to unique 'national' weapons as well as local interpretations of British designs.

More than a catalogue, this book unites rigorous scholarship with the discerning perspective of a collector. Through extensive archival research, military and civilian documentation and the authors' experiences, it delivers rich historical insight alongside meticulous details, precise measurements, production histories and variant classifications, all with the clarity of a workshop manual. Even the accompanying artworks on the inside front and rear covers provide rich details of the measurements, weights and design features of British fighting bayonet, dirks, swords and scabbards.

The publication is also visually engaging. What I assume are improved high-resolution images showcase weapons from multiple angles, including close-ups of



THE FIGHTING KNIVES SECTION IS HIGHLY INFORMATIVE AND CONTAINS SOME INTERESTING EXAMPLES OF AUSTRALIAN-MADE KNIVES.

markings. Even old sepia images of workshops and factories have been cleaned up, all of which make the book all the more informative and aesthetically appealing.

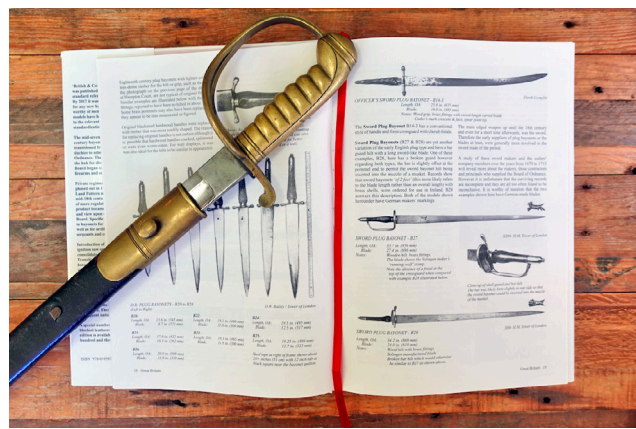
While the material heavily favours historical development of the bayonet in all its many and varied forms, there were three sections I was particularly drawn to, the first being 'Fighting Knives'. There were some truly interesting references like the wicked-looking Australian Billhook, a military version of a cane knife, and the V-44 fighting knife, an Aussie-made version of the American Bowie. The second was 'Fakes and Reproductions', a subject you rarely see or read about in such detail.

Yet for me the standout is the 'In Perspective' section. The true value of well-researched reference material is its ability to connect to other areas through depth of investiga-

tion. By demonstrating how bayonets literally connect with firearms, the authors have made this book and the information it contains invaluable to far more collectors than its title might first suggest.

A Limited Edition of 303 copies (of course 303) is also available. Featuring a gold-blocked leatherette cover, I assume it's aimed squarely at the serious collector and institutions looking for something which reflects the quality of this publication.

With information often only a click away these days, the physicality and detail of the book reflect a tradition of timeless scholarly precision. You could say in the world of antique arms collecting, the reimagining of *British Commonwealth Bayonets and Fighting Knives* is a true departure from the norm, only this time around the new stuff is, in fact, better than the old.



THE BAYONET SECTION, ESPECIALLY THE BRITISH CATEGORY, IS REMARKABLY DETAILED AND CONTAINS SOMETHING FOR EVERY COLLECTOR.

REVIEW: MARK VAN DEN BOOGAART

British Commonwealth Bayonets and Fighting Knives
By Ian Skennerton and Brian Labudda



Precision redefined. Power refined.

The BRK Ghost is the new PCP flagship rifle from BRK, combining cutting-edge performance with a sleek, titanium-coloured chassis. Engineered for both sub-12 ft/lbs and high-power shooting, it features a modular barrel system, adjustable power levels, and ambidextrous ergonomics — making it the ultimate tool for hunters and precision shooters.



*Accessories and optics are sold separately.



Scan Me

WWW.WINCHESTERAUSTRALIA.COM.AU



SIFA





Reliability as standard

IVO DIMITROV CHARTS AN ICONIC BERETTA PISTOL

THE HIGHLY RELIABLE BERETTA M35 WITH 'SA' PROPERTY MARK ON THE FRAME AND BERETTA ADDRESS, CALIBRE, DESIGNATION AND YEAR ON THE SLIDE.

The Beretta Model 1934 is a compact, self-loading pistol which was issued as the service sidearm of the Royal Italian Army in 1934 and, as the standard issue in World War Two, was given to officers, NCOs and machinegun crews. It's chambered for the 9mm Corto or 9mm Short, more commonly known as the .380 ACP.

Fabbrica d'armi Pietro Beretta of Gardone Val Trompia has a history of firearms manufacturing dating back to 1526, when it was established as a barrel maker, making it the oldest surviving gun manufacturing company in the world. The Beretta Model 34 was basically the final iteration of a design by Tullio Marengoni, which began with the Model 1915 during World War One. That pistol was updated in the early 1920s and again in 1931.

The Model 1931 was converted to .380 ACP (9mm Short) as the Model 1932, which became the Model 1934 with the addition of a hammer half-cock notch and steel grip panel backing. Police and military contracts began in 1935, with the Italian Army formally adopting it a year later and buying almost 400,000 by 1940. It would ultimately see service with basically all the armed elements of the Italian military and civil security services, as well as foreign nations including Germany, Romania and Finland.

As a souvenir for Commonwealth or US troops, the Model 1934 was also a prized piece. It's compact, simple, durable and reliable and is an excellent military pistol, easy to carry unobtrusively yet dependable when called upon. After WWII it stayed in production until the late 1980s, despite

HowaTM
Precision Rifles & Barreled Actions



AUSTRALIA'S
MOST TRUSTED
HUNTING RIFLE UNDER

\$1,000



SUB-MOA
ACCURACY GUARANTEE



HOGUE



SELECTED HOGUE SPORTER AND HTI MINI-ACTION MODELS. PRICES VALID AS OF MARCH 2026 AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE.



Nikko Stirling[®]
OPTICS FOR SPORTS · SINCE 1956

LIFETIME WARRANTY, TIMELESS QUALITY



PROUDLY DISTRIBUTED THROUGH **OSA**
OUTDOOR SPORTING AGENCIES

YOUR TRUSTED PARTNER IN HUNTING & SPORT SHOOTING FOR OVER 75 YEARS.



www.osaaustralia.com.au

VIEW **HOWA** RANGE ONLINE





the introduction of many other more modern options by Beretta.

When the Italian military was looking for a new sidearm in the early 1930s, they really liked the pistol submitted by Beretta but were also keen on the Walther PP. During the development process, the military requested Beretta add a Walther-style slide-mounted safety/de-cocking lever to the Model 1934. Beretta opposed this as it added complexity and, as a counter offer, proposed to include a half-cock notch as a safety feature.

Nevertheless, they began producing pistols with the Walther-style safety for an initial military trial contract of 650 guns. Once the Army commission realised the extra safety was redundant and increased the price per unit, they opted

to take the gun as initially proposed by Beretta with the added half-cock safety, which delayed Army adoption by a year.

The Model 34 was followed by the Beretta M35, essentially the M34 but chambered in the .32 ACP (7.65mm Browning) cartridge. Fitted with the characteristic Beretta open-top slide which would be later used on the more famous Model 92, the M34 is a highly reliable simple blowback pistol. It has a seven-round box magazine and is made with relatively few parts and is straightforward to maintain. For all practical purposes Beretta was the sole maker of these pistols, with the only known other manufacturer being Armaguerra, which apparently produced no more than 400 for the German military in 1944.

ABOVE: FINNISH PRIVATES LAINO AND NIEMINEN IN AUGUST, 1944. LEINO, LEFT, HAS A BERETTA M35 IN HIS BELT, WHILE NIEMINEN HAS AN INFANTRY RIFLE M27. BELOW: COMMERCIAL PROOF AND ACCEPTANCE MARKS.





PRECISION OPTICS

Since 1949

Remember When Everything Good Was Made in Japan?
Vixen Does.



Traditional Series

Classic Compact 1" Tube with Fast Eye Bell Focus

- 2-8x32 (PLEX / BDC Reticle) **\$479 SRP**
- 3-12x40 (PLEX / BDC / MIL Reticle) **\$549 SRP**
- 4-16x44 (PLEX / BDC / MIL Reticle) **\$629 SRP**

30mm Illuminated Series

30mm Tube with Illuminated Centre Dot Reticle
Side Focus From 15 Yards to Infinity

- 2.5-15x50 (G4 / BDC Reticle) **\$995 SRP**
- 6-24x58 (G4 / BDC / MIL Reticle) **\$1,490 SRP**



ED Binoculars

Magnesium Alloy Body

- 8x24 Waterproof **\$399 SRP**
- 10x28 Waterproof **\$429 SRP**
- 12x30 Waterproof **\$459 SRP**
- 8x42 Waterproof wide angle **\$749 SRP**
- 10x42 Waterproof wide angle **\$799 SRP**



Available through most gun stores
and at huntingdepot.com.au



All Vixen Japan optics have Limited Lifetime Warranty
against manufacturing defects



FIELD-STRIPPING FOR CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE WAS STRAIGHTFORWARD.

Pistols made during the fascist-era are marked with their year of manufacture in two forms: the conventional Julian date in Arabic numerals and date in the fascist-era in Roman numerals. The fascist calendar started on October 28, 1922 (Benito Mussolini's rise to power), so a pistol from 1937 may carry either 'XV' or 'XVI' as its fascist year.

Pistols accepted by the Italian armed forces usually exhibit acceptance marks stamped into the frame on the left, just above the grip: 'RE' (Regio Esercito) for the Army, 'RM' (Regia Marina) for the Navy or 'RA' (Regia Aeronautica) for the Air Force, in the form of an Eagle wearing a Royal Crown for the Royal Air Force. Police pistols may be marked 'PS' (Pubblica Sicurezza).

The Romanian military, at the time an Axis power, also bought M34 (and M35) pistols. The calibre marking appears as 9mm Scurt ('Short' in Romanian) rather than 9mm Corto. Romanian Army M34s differ from the Italian version in that the former use the Russian sight picture, while the latter have the standard sight picture used by Western armies.

Following Italy's surrender to the Allies in 1943, German forces seized control of Italian arms factories, including Beretta and Arma- guerra, the producing Beretta M35s under German control, with only about 400 made. M34s were also made during this period (1943-45) for German and Italian Socialist Republic use and these, also produced under German control, can be recognised by the '4UT' inspection mark.

An M34 with serial number 606824 was used by Nathuram Godse in the 1948 assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. The pistol, made in 1937, was carried by an officer during the Italian invasion of Abyssinia and subsequently taken by a British officer as a war trophy. It's unclear how it came to India, but Godse was given the unlicensed firearm by a co-conspirator. From 1934 to 1992, about 1,080,000 units were produced.

'SA' PROPERTY-MARKED MAGAZINE.



M34 AND M35 IN FINNISH SERVICE

At the outbreak of the Winter War in November 1939, Finland was desperate for all the small arms it could muster, buying M38 Carcano rifles from Italy as well as Beretta M34s and M35s. During the Winter War only 60 M34s arrived in Finland among miscellaneous materials. The Finnish Civil Guard (Suojeluskuunta) ordered 500 M34s from Italy in July of 1941, though the deal was plagued with problems and pistols weren't delivered until April, 1943, the Civil Guard issuing them to home and front troops almost immediately.

The Finnish Army on the other hand ordered 4000 Beretta M35s in April of 1941 and while the Italians had problems delivering enough, they had sufficient M34s to replace them. The Finns eventually agreed to accept around 900 M34s as their replacements. Considering this, the total number of M34 pistols in use by Finnish armed forces was probably around 1400-1500.

The Finnish Civil Guard was disbanded in 1944 as part of the Armistice with the Soviets, thus their pistols ended up in Finnish Army inventory. In 1951 that inventory included 999 M34s which remained in storage until 1986.

The Finnish Army made two orders of M35 pistols to Italy during WWII, both in 1941, the first containing 1000 pistols which arrived in late 1941. The second order of 4000 proved problematic and only 3092 were delivered by late 1942, the Italians replacing the balance with 900 M34s instead. During the Continuation War, both Finnish frontline and homefront troops used Beretta M34/M35 pistols. In 1951 some 2091 M35s remained in Finnish Army inventory until eventually, in 1986, most of those were sold to the commercial market.

The example featured here is an early-contract M35 made in 1940 and year-dated XVIII according to the fascist calendar, meaning it was produced pre-October 1940. It has commercial Beretta proof marks on the frame and is SA (Suomen Armeija) Finnish Army property marked on both frame and magazine. ●

“We make it easy to get the Trade Insurance you need.”

Megan Spiniello | General Manager SSAA Insurance Brokers



- Public Liability ✓
- Tools of the trade ✓
- Trailers & Vehicles ✓
- Workshop ✓



A SSAA Member Advantage

Before you renew any Trade Insurance policy get an obligation FREE quote from our team.

We put relationships and personalised service first because we're not only Professional Insurance Advisers but SSAA members as well.

We listen to your specific needs then obtain coverage from Australia's leading Insurance companies. We can

arrange all types of Retail and Personal insurance and we make sure everything is correctly covered. Going forward we manage your claims and take care of all the details.

You spend BIG money on Retail Insurance so before you renew any insurance policy get an obligation FREE quote from my team at SSAA Insurance Brokers - A SSAA company set up to help members.

NSW / QLD / ACT

Call: 0455 777 685*

ali@ssaains.com.au

SA / WA / VIC / TAS & NT

Call: 0478 007 614*

amy@ssaains.com.au

All General Insurances



Travel



Farming



Professional



Trade



Business



Retail



SSAA
General
Insurance
Brokers

SECOND SIGHT



CHRIS REDLICH MAKES THE MOST OF THE LATEST ZT RED DOT

A recent influx of review items from TSA Outdoors included the Trace red dot sight, the fourth such product I've assessed in the past two years.

Prior to reviewing a red dot I considered myself a novice, yet having used them more and more I wondered why I hadn't tested them sooner. So I jumped at the chance to review ZeroTech's latest in compact red dot sights, the Trace 1x25.

Trace-branded products by ZT are numerous and cover a broad range of optics including standard riflescopes and red dot sights. To my knowledge they're made in China to a high standard and, after enjoying my recent testing of the little ZT Trace Aspherical reflex sight, I was keen to put this new digital red dot to work.

TECH STUFF

Built solidly from machined, high-strength aluminium and sporting a non-reflective matt black finish, it's designed to be the perfect fit for any

fast-wielding hunting rifle. Measuring 70mm long x 45mm wide, the Trace Digital red dot is a bit chunkier than other brands I've tested and dwarfs the tiny ZT Aspherical. Yet despite this comparison it's still small enough to be classed as compact.

Importantly, it came supplied with clamps for high and low mounting alternatives. Most of us don't have the luxury of owning an AR rifle (restricted to Cat. D licence holders), though high-rise mounts are included for those who require that style of platform for occupational purposes. I trialled these mounts on a .223 bolt-action rifle and found the height affected my cheek weld (or lack of).

The supplied multi-tool has all areas covered for adjustments, including the Torx tip for tightening the four screws of the dovetail clamp to the sight's machined base. Interestingly, the dovetail clamp has two pressure springs which ensure even contact when tightening and conveniently pull the clamp free from the base during removal.



A locating tenon fits precisely to any Weaver-style or Picatinny rail, while the single steel centre screw locks the base in place. A simple thumb tighten of the multi-tool is all that's required to ensure a secure fit, and I'd be confident in mounting it on a hard-kicking pig gun such as a lever rifle chambered in 45/70 Govt.

Purposed for reactive shooting, red dot sights are designed to be used easily and accurately with both eyes open. Unlimited eye relief is also achieved, regardless of mounting it anywhere on the receiver of a bolt or lever-action rifle, shotgun or pistol. I chose to position it forward of the ejection port on a .357 Magnum lever rifle, where it was simply out of the way and favourably placed for rapid sighting. From this position I was able to obtain a perfect sight picture and crystal clear red dot resolution.

Both lenses on this one are 25mm in diameter and give a straight through view of the target, while the 1x magnification (same as the

naked eye) provides ample field of view for fast acquisition of game. Although not boasting the so-called prestigious HD moniker (high definition), the objective lens' anti-reflective coating enhanced my view of most images and remained strong in low light.

The Trace illuminated red dot has a size value of roughly 2MOA on full brightness but appears to diminish when lowered. This is not unusual however, because the red dot can be rapidly adjusted to suit any level of lighting experienced out bush. To turn the sight on, briefly press either rubber-capped brightness button on top of the unit. Brightness intensity adjustment is self-explanatory (+ and - symbols) and I didn't need the user manual to work that one out.

If the sight is left without movement for around three and half minutes it enters sleep mode, though slight movement will automatically turn it on again if the motion's heavy enough to be detected. Honestly, the buttons are ridiculous-



MANY USES FOR THE MULTI-TOOL INCLUDING SCREWDRIVER FOR THE BATTERY CAP; EFFECTIVE AND SOLID BASE MOUNT FOR FIXTURE TO RIFLE.



ly easy to operate and a quick three-second hold on either will turn the unit off.

This one offers 10 brightness settings, though the top three were so bright they were actually distracting, with the lower five settings working well in all situations. A red dot sight won't shine without power and located on the right side is the waterproof compartment for a single CR2032 3V battery. The little button battery is supposed to give years of use without changing, though ZT recommend that when the rifle's stored for long periods the battery's removed. And be careful of the cap's seal when retightening, as the Trace along with all other red dots I've tested have notoriously skinny little O-rings which can misalign (or poke out) if the thread isn't sitting precisely square.

The windage and elevation turrets are protected from snagging and tucked slightly within the confines of the machined aluminium body. The adjustment dials have a slot which turns with the supplied multi-tool or small flat-blade screwdriver. Both are clearly marked with directional arrows (U for elevation and R for windage), and positively click for each adjustment value of half an inch at 100 yards or roughly 13mm at 100m.

SIGHT AND FIELD TEST

A 357 Magnum rifle topped with a 1x25 red dot sight is by no means a long-range outfit. It's intended more for running game at close distance, generally inside 100 metres or so, and I adjusted this one accordingly. For me, sighting-in rifles with a Picatinny rail is a swift process, as the mounts are true to barrel alignment and I was glad to have had one fitted.

After just a handful of shots, my wife Sue-Ann and I locked in the Trace's turrets to a 50m zero in quick time. Once again, the little Rossi Puma shooting Remington 125-grain soft points impressed in the accuracy department, making me confident the MOP (minute of pig) we'd achieved on paper would boost our chances in dropping real-life feral swine.

It wasn't from lack of trying, let me assure you, yet the local pig population had seemingly been

avoiding us every time we pulled the lever rifle from the gun safe. Hares and rabbits weren't so lucky but we were mostly chasing the hairy ferals for photos and, more importantly, experience in close-quarters pest control. It took a western work trip to throw up the opportunity, one I intended to grab with both hands.

Both my son Carl and I were walking towards an area where he'd seen pigs a week earlier, when something unusual caught my eye. At least 400m away by the riverbank was a shape at the base of a tree which appeared to shift. I looked again, confirming it had moved once more, so I was now certain it was one of the pigs from last week. We closed the gap with the wind in our faces and used the tree line for cover to inch within shooting range.

Last light seems to linger on those far-west Queensland properties, though if we were going to make a move it had to be quick. The pigs had lingered not far from first sight as both Carl and I managed to drop a few before a hasty retreat to the riverbank. Fortunately for us, a chance at the same location presented with similar success just a few days later. We noted brightness level four had been our setting on the reticle from day one and, combined with the 25mm lens, there was no doubting target acquisition in low light at close range and, despite hours of constant use, the battery never faltered.

ALL UP

The Trace 1x25 ticked all the boxes we've come to expect from a red dot sight and, while being marginally bigger than some of its competitors, came with a price tag that's hard to ignore. I noticed they varied from dealer to dealer but averaged about \$300 at time of writing. The Trace red dot functioned well at close quarters in low light during late hunts, never shifting point of aim. And should it succumb to an 'injury' while doing the hard yards, ZeroTech's rock-solid warranty (as with all their products) ensures peace of mind.

More at tsaoutdoors.com.au



GOOD LOW-LIGHT PERFORMANCE WAS NOTED DURING LATE HUNTS ON FERAL PIGS. SMALLER TARGETS SUCH AS HARES ALSO FELL TO THE LEVER RIFLE AND RED DOT COMBINATION.



PULSAR

IMAGE.QUALITY

MULTISPECTRAL IMAGING

Multispectral Binoculars

SYMBION LRF

Multispectral binoculars with built-in laser rangefinder.

Features

- Multispectral image – digital and thermal
- 24/7 use - day night twilight
- Combined multispectral Picture-in-Picture modes
- 4K Digital full-color sensor
- HD 1280×1024/12µm premium thermal imaging sensor (For XT50 model)
- Built-in powerful laser rangefinder
- Focusable infrared illuminator
- Photo/video recording with sound
- Image stabilization
- Optimized for one-hand use



TSA OUTDOORS

SIFA Shooting Industry Foundation Australia

At home . . . on the range

ROD PASCOE TRIALS A SUPERB TRAINING AID

Using the latest virtual reality technology, Virtual Shot have come up with an electronic aid to make dry-fire practice for rifles and pistols available to everyone, anywhere, even at home. The device involves a simulator app and mobile phone mounted directly on to a firearm. Australian designed and manufactured, Virtual Shot displays shooting ranges, targets and backgrounds which closely represent the environments shooters experience in real life, then records and analyses shot timing and accuracy. Virtual Shot gave *Australian Shooter* the chance to put the device to the test.

WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

Virtual-Shot is a system incorporating mounting hardware, a mobile phone (not provided), and a mobile phone app which includes full instructions for mounting and operating the system. You'll need a modern smartphone made from 2019 onwards. Apple users will need an iPhone 6 or later and, for android, the best way to check is visit the Google Play store.

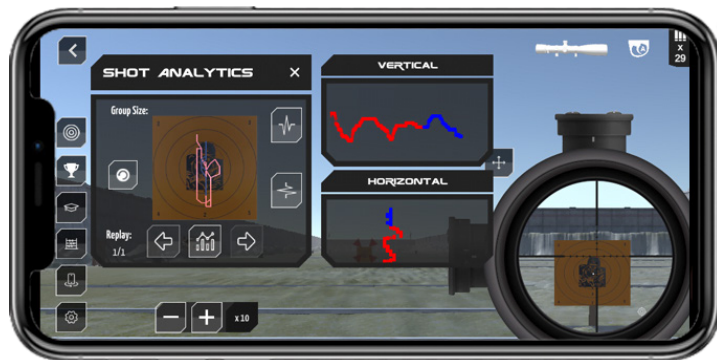
The hardware attaches to the firearm - rifle or pistol - and holds the phone in position to line-up the sights and targets displayed on the phone screen. Sights can be a choice of red dot, a number of scope reticles or conventional open or iron sights. The mounts are modular and allow swapping from rifle to pistol, most using the Picatinny rail as the attachment point or accessory rail in the case of pistols.

The magnification lens is used for mounting on a riflescope to bring the image into focus, while there's a downloadable instruction video to

help in setting up the various mounts. The clever part of the system is the app downloadable from the QR code on the box. There are three basic set-ups (one for pistol and two for rifles) and all the hardware for each rig is included in the box. Full instructions and video guidance is supplied and I was able to complete the task without my grandson's help!

Included in the app is a video shooting course, conducted by a veteran sniper and former Special Forces Operator. Your phone easily fits within the jaws of the mount and is held in place securely. Next step is to explore all the settings and adjustments provided by the app, then look at the range and target options as well as the level of shooting task. Some of the initial set-up is best done with the phone detached from the mount, while there's plenty of help available on the Virtual Shot website.

YOU CAN VIEW THE SCREEN AS IT WOULD BE SEEN THROUGH THE SCOPE AS WELL AS THE BIGGER PICTURE OF THE TARGET'S ACTUAL POSITION ON THE RANGE; SHOTS ARE ANALYSED TO SHOW MOVEMENT PRIOR TO AND AFTER RELEASE AND WHERE THE SHOT LANDED ON THE TARGET; A VAST RANGE OF MATCHES AND TARGET OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE, AS WELL AS VARYING THE LEVEL OF SHOOTING TASK.



ATTACHING HARDWARE

As stated, the modular hardware can be adapted to rifles and pistols. The system is intended for rifles with a scope and/or scope rail and pistols with an accessory rail under the muzzle. Telescopic sights can remain attached to the rifle where the Virtual Shot hardware attaches to the scope body, and your phone fits between your eye and the scope.

Alternatively, if you want to remove the scope altogether, you can attach the rig directly to the rail with a couple of changes to the hardware. A soft rubber magnifying eyepiece compensates for the short distance your eye is from the phone. On the pistol set-up this isn't necessary, as the phone image is at about the same distance as the foresight. Again, the QR code points you to instructions (with images) on setting up and changing hardware to different configurations.

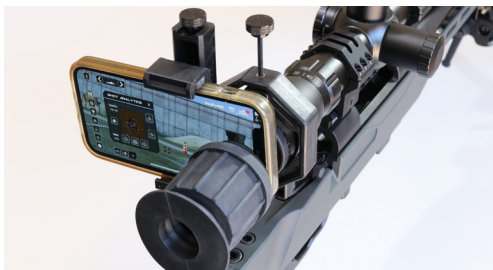
HOW IT WORKS

The Virtual Shot app uses movement sensors to detect changes in the phone's orientation, as in virtual reality goggles. By combining data from these sensors and camera input, the phone's able to accurately track all movement of both firearm and shooter along with changes in orientation. On multiple targets, a shooter cannot only swing the rifle from left to right across the range, but also step from side to side to align square-on to the target being engaged.

The app uses real-time sound analysis technology to detect when your firearm's dry-firing to trigger a virtual shot round. This allows you to practice shooting skills using your own pistol, to gather feedback of your performance without using live ammunition, making it a safe and convenient training tool for all levels of enthusiast.

Different menu options and settings have been well thought through. They offer realistic bullet drop and wind effects at all distances which can be dialled in, as well as different ranges with various target types, distances and movement, not just of the firearm but the shooter. You can even adjust your dominant hand preference in the game settings.

As with similar training devices, accelerometers provide shooting analytics for reviewing barrel movement before and after a shot. There's also a built-in shot timer for analysing split times between shots, though all settings and menu choices are too numerous to describe in detail here.



THE PHONE IS SECURELY HELD BETWEEN YOUR EYE AND THE SCOPE.



THE WRAP-UP

No doubt some will see this device as simply a virtual reality game and fair enough, as it has everything you could want in a 'shoot-em-up' scenario. Yet the training value is truly realistic and shouldn't be overlooked. There are similar systems which use sensors to respond to firing a shot and analysing how the firearm moved prior to, and after, the shot's released. But by adding dynamic images the shooter can react to realistic scenarios as well.

You can always improve your shooting skills with 100+ levels, mini-games and scenarios which are closer to gaming than competition shooting. The more you explore the options available, the more beneficial the system becomes, as the level of training can be varied to suit your desired skills. I give this system 10 out of 10 for being a valuable training aid as well as fun to use.

Remember real firearms are required to use Virtual Shot, so be aware of the normal safety rules which apply any time guns are deployed. In fact, there's a full safety checklist which must be followed and acknowledged before the app can be accessed. I spent time talking to the Aussie inventors to understand some background on how the system came about. As former serving military men, they wanted to come up with something resembling the types of drills and scenarios they'd trained with, then make it an accessible and cost-effective device. I believe they've done just that. ●

THERE'S A VIDEO SHOOTING COURSE CONDUCTED BY A VETERAN SNIPER AND FORMER SPECIAL FORCES OPERATOR.



A NICE 20M, EIGHT-SHOT GROUP ON A STANDARD PISTOL TARGET.

Take it as *red*

**THIS REFLEX SIGHT HAD
DICK EUSSEN BANG ON TARGET**

Canik launched their new Chinese-made MeCanik MO3 reflex sight at the US SHOT Show in 2024. It quickly sold out as demand was beyond expectations, though is now available in Australia with good things said about them by overseas shooters. The MO3 is aimed (pardon the pun) at steel target shooters who need a large viewing window for rapid target acquisition, something Canik recognised when they engineered the sight.

Red dots have a reputation of breaking down, with many brands not robust enough to withstand recoil from powerful centerfire cartridges. Subsequently, shooters are demanding sights which can handle it, something Canik has worked on as they claim theirs meets the demands of everyday users and competitive shooters. Time, of course, will tell as it takes at least 12 months of hard use to prove its worth. The MO3 is made from 6061-T6 aluminium and has an IPX7 waterproof rating, so its outer toughness credentials are impressive.

A single long-lasting CR2032 battery is loaded from the top and will give up to 60,000 hours' use at the lowest setting. Higher settings mean more power usages, though this one has both motion activation and automatic shutdown



THE HYSKORE PISTOL REST MAKES SIGHTING-IN RED DOTS SIGHTS EASY, ESPECIALLY WHEN USED WITH A COLLIMATOR.

when idle. Tilt the butt down a little and a window displaying the red dot becomes visible, to indicate if it's on or off.

My Canik SRK Rival 5 9mm pistol came with six different base plates, including the RMR one used to seamlessly mount the MO3 (the rear sight must be removed to install the plate). The sight comes with a set of Torx screws for fitting it to the base plate so, after mounting the MO3 to my Canik, I headed to Mareeba Pistol Club range to sight it in.

I secured the Canik in a Hyskore pistol rest and used an ancient Stirling Sight Master collimator to place the bright red dot on the grid line, using the elevation and windage adjustment on the sight. Next, I moved the gun to a Caldwell pistol rest and fired one shot before placing it back in the Hyskore and moving the dot to the bullet hole. The next shot was spot-on, so I moved the target to 25m to finish the job and fired 60 rounds of factory Sellier & Bellier 9mm Luger ammo, which gave some impressive groups.

In use the MeCanik sight has a slightly wider and larger window than most other dots. The windage and elevation adjustment dials differ too, though retain the familiar click values of one MOA per click. A Torx screwdriver is supplied with the kit for mounting and sight adjustments. The 'U' sight adjustment screw is on top of the base and the elevation screw on the right, click settings being audible and positive using the supplied Allen screwdriver.

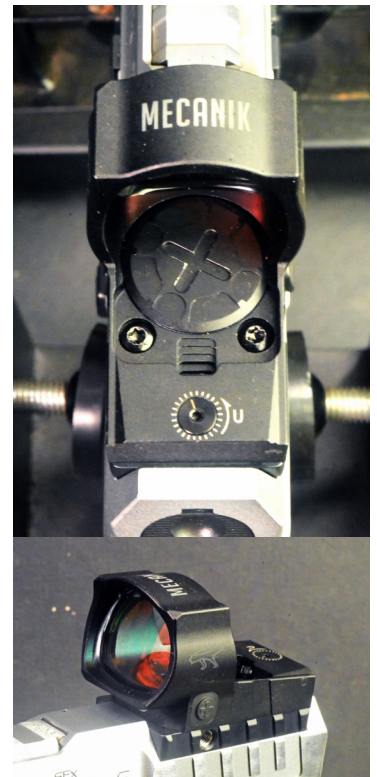
Once fitted, the sturdy tactical concave face housing of the sight makes it easy to rack the pistol slide. The generous window does give an advantage over smaller ones, having a wider field of view, important when shooting in timed and rapid-fire competitions. I shoot with my head

held high and the dot came up instantly in the large window. As the reflex housing has a flared design, like viewing through a set of ears, that makes rapid target gain faster, coupled with the help of the bright 6-MOA red dot.

The unit has 10 brightness settings, eight for daylight and two for night use. A rubber button on both sides under the turret (marked - and +) are used for brightness control. When switched on the red dot is crisp and bright, just right for close-up steel targets or similar. I'd no problem using it on 25m targets and was able to keep 10 shots inside the standard 20cm black ring from the Caldwell rest. The only complaint I have is the large window picks up a little sun glare when shooting towards it, but that's the cost of having a wide view and, while rarely an issue, be aware of it.

In use there's little or no distortion when swept from side to side. The sight is clearer than many others I've used having a blue hue, which is more visible at the top but clears from the centre down. Canik states their reflex sights are parallax free, a problem with many red dots, with some having a noticeable shift at ranges beyond 15m. Yet the MO3 faithfully stays on target all the way out to 50m and, thanks to its large window and clarity of glass, has excellent tracking ability.

The 6-MOA dot is generous and proved excellent at hitting the standard target at 50m, with most shots in the black from the Caldwell rest using factory ammo. So far it's been great to use and has performed without fault since I fitted it to my Canik 9mm. A match made in heaven, as they say. So what more can I add apart from it has a counter price of around \$580 at time of writing, which is great value, delivering excellent mid-range performance for a quality, open-transmitter red dot sight. ●



THE MO3 OPERATES ON A TOP-LOADING CR2032 BATTERY WITH EASY-ACCESS COMPARTMENT; THE HOUSING IS SOLID, UNOBTRUSIVE AND STRONG ENOUGH TO RACK THE SLIDE WITH.

Can-do attitude!



BEN UNTEN REVELS IN THE IMPRESSIVE CAN-AM DEFENDER

With the demise of the quad bike in Australia, hunters are left with two main options for motorised transport in the field: Trail bikes or side-by-sides (SXS). Having gone bush with both, the conclusion was reached that when hunting on a motorbike, you spend lots of time watching where you're going and a little bit of time looking for game. Yet with a side-by-side, you spend a little time watching where you're going and a lot more looking for game. So I was excited when invited by *Australian Shooter* to attend the launch of the new Can-Am Defender HD11.

The first Can-Am Defender was released 10 years ago and although it was popular, its spec sheet didn't make for great reading. It came with four-ply tyres (still the industry standard), no full cab options and no heavy bullbars. There was zero air conditioning in side-by-sides (it was unheard of), no max platforms or six-seaters and very limited access to accessories, as they were a new product.

Fast-forward to 2026 where the newly-released models include the XU, XT, Limited, XMR and a bunch of max platforms. Regarded as an industry leader, the new Can-Ams are at the higher end of the price range and for good reason.

LET'S HIT THE (OFF) ROAD

First up was a warm-up lap as co-driver on a custom-built, off-road course which featured some genuine challenges from short, sharp hill climbs, to mud crossings and tight corners. There were even times when nearby trees looked desperate to see how well the roof was actually attached to the vehicle. This was no graded, dirt road track and now it was my turn behind the wheel.

It took a moment to work out when the centrifugal clutch was going to engage but, once we were

under way, it was clear this was an outstanding off-road vehicle. We maintained high-range 4WD for the bulk of the course and the turning circle was impressive. The ability to lock both front and rear diff-lockers while in motion took some getting used to (I was habitually bringing the vehicle to a halt to engage the locks).

Dauntingly deep wheel ruts were the result of the course being used all week, to the point where low-range 4WD was required for the climb. Ground clearance on the HD11 was astonishing to the point where my co-driver and I had to winch out an HD10 which was hung up in the same ruts we'd just driven through! This not only demonstrated effectiveness of the winch for recovery, but also the superior ground clearance of the HD11 over previous models.

It was at this point that Dave, my Can-Am representative and co-driver asked me: "Do you hear that?" My heart sank a little, as for some reason I immediately thought of potentially shot bearings, leaking tyres or the million-and-one other things which can go wrong with offroad vehicles. Yet I couldn't hear any of that and told him: "I don't." Dave's reply? "Exactly."

It was only then I realised the HD11 is so quiet, that not only were we able to have a effortless conversation without having to shout like town-criers, it was possible despite both of us wearing helmets. Suddenly all the talk of rubberised floor mats, insulated exhaust and sound-suppressed airboxes etc became real. I felt confident a hands-free kit would be a genuinely useful tool in this vehicle, rather than just part of the sales pitch. I drove the course multiple times, each time gaining more insight into the outstanding abilities and handling of the vehicle.







BUILT FOR THE MOST RUGGED OF CONDITIONS.

ACCESSORIES

Designed with the hunter in mind, the HD11 features a multitude of accessories. There are LinQ connected gun boots available for the tray, as well as bolt-on racks which allow you to keep two firearms in the cabin. This is even more practical with the HD11 Limited, which features side doors and windows (as opposed to just mesh), and a gas strut-assisted windscreen that folds up and out of the way with single-handed operation from inside the cab.

This means not only are your firearms kept clean and dry, they're readily available should you need them in a hurry. There's also generous under-seat storage on the passenger side which, in addition to being dust and moisture resistant, would be ideal for ammunition storage along with countless other items I can think of.

IN SUMMARY

The Can-Am Defender HD11 is a seriously good piece of kit. In the time I spent behind the wheel, it was almost impossible to find fault and even harder not to reach 'feature/benefit' overload, as each new improvement seemed more outstanding than the last. It's abundantly clear Can-Am isn't an organisation just happy to rest on previous successes. It's genuinely working its backside off to listen to and address any and all feedback from the end users.

Having hunted from any number of motorised vehicles for more than two decades, I can't think of a vehicle that could go blow-for-blow with this one. The Can-Am Defender HD11 gives the impression no expense has been spared in an effort to design and build the best SXS on the market. For price and availability, contact your local Can-Am dealer or visit can-am.brp.com ●



LARGE-SCREEN INFOTAINMENT SYSTEM.

STORAGE SPACE IN ABUNDANCE;
LOADS OF CLEARANCE AND
SUPERB WINCHING POWER.

FEATURES

CAN-AM DEFENDER HD11

More comfortable ride and significantly quieter

Super fuel-efficient redesigned three-cylinder Rotox 1000cc engine

Large 45-litre fuel tank

25 per cent increase in driveline strength

200 hours between services

Claimed to be 41 per cent cheaper to run than closest competitor

LED headlights 50 per cent brighter

Tail-lights and reverse lights added

HD11 comes standard with 2000kg winch

12v outlet at the back and in the cab along with USB-A and USB-C

Two pre-filters before the main air filter for increased efficiency

Airbox 50 per cent bigger with noise suppressors on both sides

Seat backrests taller and support rails angled

Air conditioning

Hands-free kit as standard

'Flip-up' steering wheel for easier access

Infotainment system with 260mm touch-monitor

Slated top speed more than 110k/h

Reflex action

SWAMPFOX OPTICS IMPRESSED SENIOR CORRESPONDENT ROD PASCOE

Reflex optical sights are becoming widely accepted as small and convenient systems for all types of firearms. While mostly seen on pistols, more and more of these sights are ending up on rifles and shotguns, especially with the addition of adapters which interface with Weaver-style and Picatinny accessory rails.

US firm Swampfox Optics is one of the newer players on the scene and local distributor, Ground Force International, sent *Australian Shooter* a couple from their reflex dot range. With so many new offerings in this growing segment of the firearms market, I was keen to see what attributes the Sentinel II and Liberty II models offered, which might separate them from the rest of the pack.

The Sentinel II is the smaller yet more expensive of the two. It's a 1x20mm compact micro reflex dot sight, specially designed for that other growing segment of the firearms industry, small concealed carry pistols. It has a 3 Minute of Angle (MOA) red dot in a 20mm window, surrounded by an aluminium anti-glare hood. It takes a CR2032 button battery inserted into the bottom of the optic, while a plastic waterproof film fits between battery and firearm.

As well as up and down buttons to turn the dot on and off and adjust the brightness settings, the Sentinel II features a 'Shake 'n Wake' system

which allows the dot to come alive after simply picking up or handling the firearm, provided the dot hasn't been turned off manually. The RMR mounting footprint also accommodates an optional adapter to fit slotted scope rails.

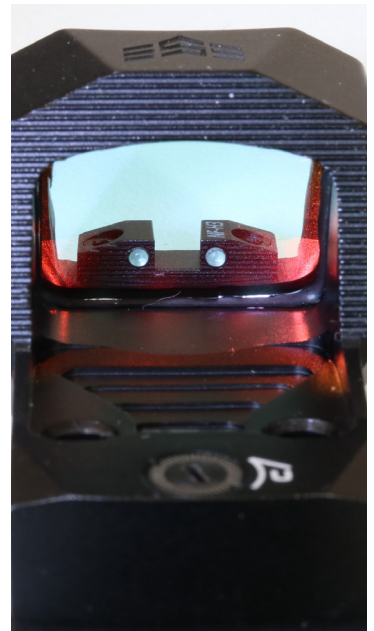
One feature which differentiates this one from most others is the detachable open rear sight. Referred to as a 'guide' rather than sight as such, it can be attached with the supplied Torx wrench in front of the sight window. It gives the shooter a fallback option, similar to a co-witnessed rear sight that would otherwise be present on the rear of a pistol slide, but may have been removed to accommodate fitting the optic (depending on make and model of pistol).

The guide comes with a note stating it's a general guidance tool only and may not align exactly with the front sight. However after using it at close range, I found its point-of-aim was pretty close to where the bullets were landing, though I wouldn't like to rely on it in competition. Easily adjustable windage and elevation changes can be made with the supplied screwdriver.

Another welcome feature is the four packets of screws in common thread sizes for a variety of handgun brands. Setting up on two pistol and one rifle platforms was straightforward, while I found the dot adequate and brightness and windage/elevation adjustments easy to perform.

The Swampfox Liberty II is offered as a 1x24 multi-reticle sight (reviewed) as well as in single red or green-dot versions. The size of this one is similar to those produced by most other reflex sight manufacturers. Yet the main point of difference is the multi-reticle option, which gives a choice of either a single 3 MOA centre dot, a 14 MOA circle or crosshair and finally a combination of all three.

Call me old fashioned but I found the reticles, other than the single dot, distracting for target work, while neither the circle or crosshair neatly



THE SIGHTING GUIDE CAN BE FITTED TO ACT AS A BACK-UP.



SENTINEL II WITH MOUNTING AND ADJUSTING ACCESSORIES.

‘fitted’ any of the competition targets I’m currently using. But on the plus side, the multi-reticle options are big, bright, clear and quickly acquired. Despite being a slightly larger optic, the Liberty II takes the smaller CR1632 battery, housed in a screw-top compartment accessed on the upper side of the body. It also has the Shake ‘n Wake feature and a larger universal RMR footprint.

To aid mounting, the unit comes with a quantity of varying size screws which cover the majority of optics-ready firearms. The 24mm window is surrounded by a durable hood containing anti-glare serrations. As with the Sentinel II, the Liberty has 10 brightness settings adjustable with up and down buttons, one either side of the sight body. These same buttons are used for turning the unit on and off, as well as switching between the different reticles. Windage and elevation controls are readily accessible and provide 1 MOA per click adjustment increments.

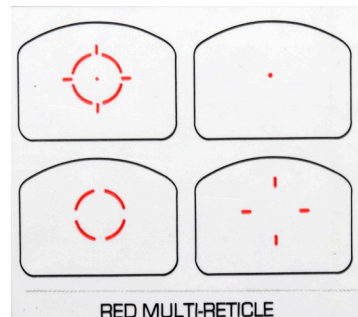
IN SUMMARY

Both Swampfox models tested lived up to expectations. Reflex sight manufacturers do their best, with varying success, to design hoods and lens

coatings to cope with the starburst or blooming image caused by sunlight hitting the front or back of the screen. Unfortunately these two experienced the same thing. Yet with correct brightness settings for the conditions, reticles were nevertheless easy to pick up.

By carefully zeroing the device, placing the dot in the centre of the screen provided the least parallax error, especially at longer ranges. Swampfox claim both sights are parallax-free out to 33 yards but also state some error may be noticeable beyond 100. I liked the supplied screws and tools and fitting both sights was straightforward with the help of a handy user manual. I preferred the enclosed battery compartment of the Liberty II as it allows for a battery change without removing the sight from the firearm.

Both reviewed sights are value for money and provided a couple of extras some other brands haven’t picked up yet. At time of writing, the Swampfox Sentinel II 1x20 Micro Red Dot 3MOA retails for around \$790 and the optional Picatinny base is \$50. The Liberty II 1x24 Multi Reticle is a little cheaper at a recommend retail price of \$760. ●



LIBERTY II HAS A CHOICE OF FOUR RETICLES.

RIFLEMAN



LEON WRIGHT RECALLS HIS FATHER'S WAR HEROICS AT TARAKAN

It's often said war never leaves those who participated in it and sadly that often rings true for their families too. I for one can bear witness to the validity of that statement. After waging a successful guerilla campaign against the Japanese on Timor Island during World War Two, the 2nd and 2/4th Independent Companies were returned to Australia and consequently disbanded, then quickly reformed when a Japanese invasion of our country looked imminent.

My father, Trooper Leslie Thomas Wright VX123028, volunteered for the 2/4th Indepen-

dent Company, later to be renamed 2/4th Commando Squadron. The reformed Independent Companies trained heavily in jungle warfare, as they were originally going to be deployed across northern Australia to fight a guerilla campaign against the Japanese if they landed on our shores. As it turned out they were stopped in New Guinea, so the Independent Companies were posted there to join the fight.

On September 3, 1943 dad, along with the other 2/4th commandos, were attacked by Japanese torpedo dive-bombers off Red Beach just east of

O.28442



Lae, New Guinea. The convoy of LSTs (landing ship tanks) were part of the first opposed amphibious operations by Australian troops since the landing of our forces at Anzac Cove during the Great War. Dad said they could see the torpedos heading straight for them and all on board winced, readying themselves for inevitable impact. Luckily for the LST he was on, the torpedo narrowly missed but sadly was a direct hit on LST471, killing 34 of the 2/4th commandos and wounding many others.

The horrors of this incident surfaced many times down the years and I can vividly recall as a teenager, being woken in the middle of the night by dad screaming in his sleep. Poor mum bore the brunt of it, including the time he had her by the throat thinking the Japanese had wire around his neck. She had to forcibly kick him off, not something a woman in her advanced years should have to do. Then came the time he'd a bad

reaction to anaesthetic. In the morning the doctor asked how he was, to which dad replied "Okay." "Thank goodness," said the doctor, "you had us all dodging bullets last night!"

Such incidents were numerous but we laughed them off as what else could you do? Of course there were some we couldn't laugh off, like the death of his good mate George Marchant. George was Section 9 forward scout and numerous times dad got him out of dangerous situations. Yet the one time he wasn't there to back him up George was killed in an ambush and the news hit dad like a mallet.

Some time around November 1944, Sniper's Rifle No.28442 was issued to Trooper Wright, a conversion from an older NI Mk.III receiver as they produced the most accurate shooting. Going by the photo of dad's rifle it was a high-mount version and, looking at his order book, it was booked out as a telescope. Yet according to Ian Skennerton's book *The Lee Enfield*, the high-

TROOPER WRIGHT'S SERVICE MEDALS AND COLOUR PATCHES; MEMBERS OF THE 2/4TH COMMANDO SQUADRON ON THEIR WAY TO SNAG'S CREEK.

MAIN: TROOPER L.T. WRIGHT CLEANING HIS RIFLE AFTER A RAIN SQUALL PASSED OVER THE LST EN ROUTE TO SADAU ISLAND.

mount scope was marked Pattern 1918 (Aust) and was produced in Melbourne by the Australian Optical Company. It's a pretty average affair by today's standards, though dad reckoned it was good enough to pick off Japanese snipers hiding in the trees. With jungle warfare being what it was, most shots taken were between 50 and 100 yards.

The rifle was presented to dad by an officer who told him he was going to teach him how to kill 'scientifically' with it. Then with a wry smile he added: "There's nothing scientific about it." The whole squadron was sent to Morotai for further training before joining the 26th Brigade for the invasion of Tarakan, Borneo in what was to become Operation Oboe 1.

Twenty-four hours before the landing of the 26th Brigade on Tarakan, the 2/4th Commando Squadron landed on Sadau Island to take out the Japanese big guns and establish a field artillery battery to shell Japanese positions on Tarakan as the Brigade landed. The landing on Sadau went smoothly when it was found the Japanese had abandoned the island, so a couple of days after the landing of the 26th, on May 3, 1945 the Squadron moved on to Tarakan.

For those unfamiliar with Tarakan in Borneo, it'd been in Japanese hands since 1942 after the Dutch battalion there was overwhelmed, the island's rich oil fields being vital to the Japanese war effort. Tarakan Island itself is only 15 miles long and 11 miles across at its widest point, with shores muddy and often covered by mangrove swamps. Further inland, the terrain rose steeply from swampy coastal plains to a tangle of hills and small gullies of dense rainforest, a secondary growth perfect for Japanese snipers to ply their trade. If that doesn't sound daunting enough, add 2000 enemy troops who'd nowhere to go and were prepared to go down fighting.

On landing, the 2/4th Commando Squadron were given the task of taking the 'strategic' Tarakan Hill. With bayonets fixed and the backing of a few Matilda tanks, the Commandos took most of the hill in a day and repelled a Japanese counter-attack the following night.

Dad was sniper of C troop, 9th Section and it was his job to take care of any enemy sniper who had the forward scouts pinned down. With the Japanese having nowhere to retreat, he was called up on numerous occasions and, on one of those, volunteered to be the forward scout on a search and destroy patrol. Ambushed by the enemy and with a bullet through his shirt sleeve and another through his hair, Trooper Wright eventually realised volunteering for the job wasn't the best idea he'd ever had.



While on another patrol moving down a narrow game trail, dad was in front with another trooper covering him with the Bren gun. The deadly stillness erupted in gunfire and dad said he felt the heat of bullets flying past his neck, they were that close. Thinking the Japanese were behind them, dad turned to return fire only to see the trooper holding the smoking Bren gun. He abused his mate for scaring the daylights out of him, only to have him point the Bren at a dead Japanese hanging in the tree. He told him: "I didn't have time to shout you a warning Bluey." Dad told me: "I don't believe I ever did thank him."

TROOPER WRIGHT, CARRYING THE OWEN GUN, WELL REMEMBERS A JAPANESE SNIPER TAKING A SHOT AT HIM FROM THE TREES IN THE TOP RIGHT HAND CORNER OF THE PHOTO.

92
RECORD OF PERSONAL EQUIPMENT ISSUED TO ARMY NO VX 123028

DATE	REGISTERED NUMBER OF RIFLE OR PISTOL	BAYONETS	PISTOLS	RIFLES	<i>The scope Sniper</i>	BOTTLES, OIL	PULLTHROUGHS	RODS, CLEANING	SCABBARDS	ATTACH. BRACE	BELTS, WAIST, W.E.	BOTTLES, WATER	BRACES, W.E., L.	BRACES, W.E., R.	CARRIERS, CART. L.	CARRIERS, CART. R.	CARRIERS, W/B	CASES, BINOCULAR	CASES, PISTOL	FROGS, BAY	HAVERSACKS	LANYARDS, PISTOL	
6-11-45	Rifle 28442	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
6-11-45	Rifle 28442	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
5-12-45																							
5-12-45																							
10/1/46																							
22/3/47																							

TROOPER WRIGHT'S ORDER BOOK SHOWING THE ISSUING OF THE SNIPER'S RIFLE AND SCOPE.

told me: “There’s no way you’d be sitting there like that looking for Japanese snipers,” and was adamant the caption be changed.

So an appointment was made with a curator at the War Memorial, who quite rightly wanted to know how dad knew the caption was wrong. She was taken aback when he told her he was there and the rifle was his, and even more so when he produced his order book with the rifle noted, proving the gun was his. The War Memorial was unable to change the caption as it was a propaganda photo, though the curator assured us a note would be made on the back.

Some years ago I took a phone call from a lady whose father had served with mine in the Commandos. Her dad had passed away and, on sorting through his things, she came across a Japanese flag. She asked if I wanted it as she believed dad was the last surviving member of the 2/4th Commando Squadron.

It duly arrived and turned out to be a flag taken during the Battle of Tarakan. Along with other members of the Squadron dad had signed it, with his signature appearing under No.9 Section in the right-hand top corner. I showed it to dad who recognised it immediately and, as he ran his hand over every signature, smiled and said: “That certainly has come a long way.”

Dad died on October 4, 2021 aged 97, a good innings after what he’d been through. What very few people knew was he carried a small photo in his wallet and had done so since the end of the war. It was a tattered picture of him flanked by two mates, George Marchant and Tony Kayes. He survived the war but sadly George and Tony were killed on Tarakan.

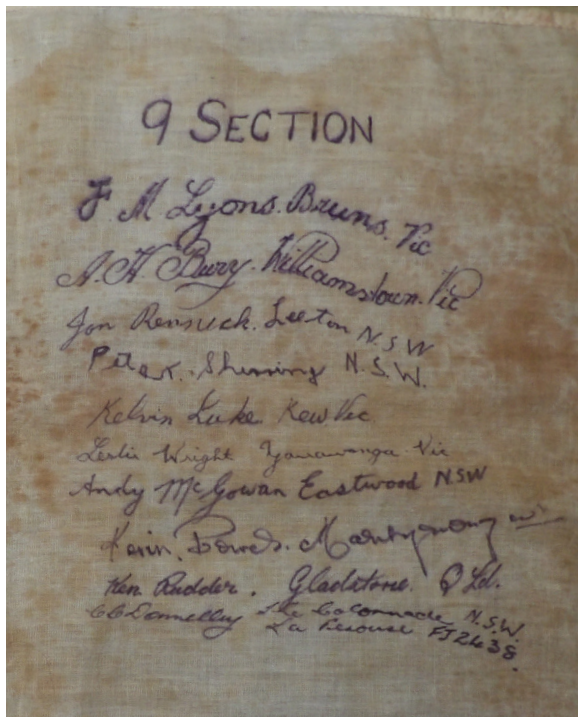
On the day of his funeral I rang the undertakers and asked them not to close dad’s coffin until I’d been down. When I arrived I was greeted by the funeral director and told her what I wanted to do and, if it was against regulations, suggested she looked away. Being a small country town, I knew the lady who just smiled and helped me put that photo in his pocket.

I’d just one more thing to do to keep my word, so sent an email to the War Memorial to ask if they’d be interested in acquiring that Japanese flag. Indeed they were but wanted to check its authenticity and the signatures. I sent a number of photos and eventually they asked if I could bring the flag up or even post it, so my wife and I planned a road trip.

She chose to wait in the car as she knew what I intended to ask in return for the flag. With white-gloved hands and camera at the ready, they happily accepted the flag after I’d signed the relevant paperwork. With pleasantries over I said: “Now it’s time for the argument!” “Oh we love an argument,” said one of the curators. I replied: “You have a photo taken during the Tarakan Campaign. My dad said the caption’s wrong and I’d like it changed.” ●

TROOPER WRIGHT’S GREAT-GRANDDAUGHTER WITH THE FLAG SHE TOOK TO SCHOOL FOR ‘SHOW AND TELL’ ON THEIR ANZAC DAY COMMEMORATION.

TROOPER WRIGHT’S SIGNATURE AND HOME TOWN APPEAR UNDER THE NO.9 SECTION ON THE JAPANESE FLAG.



ADLER AND AKKAR SPECIALS

- ADLER A110 12GA Walnut 20" Lever Action Shotgun 5 chokes, cased\$1095
- ADLER A110 12GA Synthetic 20" Lever Action Shotgun 5 chokes, cased\$1010
- ADLER A110 12GA Synthetic 28" Synthetic Lever Action Shotgun 5 chokes, cased..\$1010
- ADLER A110 12GA All Weather 20" Lever Action Shotgun 5 chokes, cased.....\$1095
- ADLER A110 12GA Bronze Tactical 20" Lever Action Shotgun 5 chokes, cased.....\$1095
- AKKAR CHURCHILL 12GA Trap 30" U/O Shotgun 5 chokes, cased.....\$1295
- AKKAR CHURCHILL 512 12GA Side by Side 20" Extractor Shotgun 5 chokes, cased.....\$1435
- AKKAR CHURCHILL 12GA 20" U/O Sporter Ejector Shotgun 5 chokes, cased.....\$1325
- AKKAR CHURCHILL 12GA 20" U/O Sporter Ejector Black Synthetic Shotgun 5 chokes, cased.....\$1200
- AKKAR CHURCHILL XM12 12GA 20" U/O Sporter Ejector Black Synthetic Shotgun with rails 5 chokes, cased.....\$1325



AKKAR 3 12GA 20" Tri Barrel Extractor Shotgun 5 chokes, cased.....\$2310

OPTICS, AMMUNITION, ACCESSORIES

- REMINGTON 6 1/2 Small Rifle Primers\$185/1000
- REMINGTON 9 1/2 Large Rifle Primers.....\$195/1000
- CCI Large Rifle Primers.....\$205/1000
- FEDERAL Small Pistol Primers.....\$180/1000
- FEDERAL Small Rifle Primers\$180/1000
- FEDERAL Large Rifle Primers\$195/1000
- FEDERAL Large Rifle Magnum Primers\$205/1000
- FEDERAL Gold Medal Match Small Pistol Primers.....\$245/1000
- RCBS PARTNER PRESS 2 Reloading Kit.....\$435

- LEUPOLD 174177 VX-FREEDOM 1.5-4x20 Matte Pig Plex Scope.....\$630
- LEUPOLD VX-FREEDOM 3-9x50 CDS Duplex Scope.....\$650
- BUSHNELL ELITE 4500 2.5-10x40 30mm Multi X Scope\$395
- LEUPOLD 184681 RX-5000 TBR DNA Black/Red Oled Rangefinder...\$1350
- LEUPOLD 172666 BX-4 Pro Guide HD 10x42 Shadow Grey Binoculars\$895
- LEUPOLD 184761 BX-4 Pro Guide HD 10x42 Gen 2 Binoculars.....\$1095
- LEUPOLD 172662 BX-4 Pro Guide HD 8x42 Shadow Grey Binoculars.....\$895



FIREARM SPECIALS



- RUGER AMERICAN Gen 2 Patrol 223 Rifle 16" 10rd Mag.....\$1130
- RUGER AMERICAN Gen 2 Predator 6.5PRC Rifle 22" bbl with brake.....\$1130
- RUGER AMERICAN Gen 2 Predator 6.5cm Rifle 22" bbl with brake.....\$1130
- RUGER AMERICAN Gen 2 Std Grey Synthetic Rifle 20" bbl with brake 6.5CM, 308, 350 legend, 30-06.....\$1160
- RUGER AMERICAN Gen 2 Ranch Rifle 16" bbl with brake 300 blackout, 350 legend, 6.5CM, 308.....\$1160
- RUGER AMERICAN Synthetic Blue Rifle 22" 308, 30-06.....\$820



RUGER AMERICAN Rimfire 22r Walnut Stainless Rifle 10rd mag.....\$1075

- RUGER 77 Gunsite Scout Synthetic Blue Rifle 350 legend 16.5" with brake\$1940
- RUGER AMERICAN Rimfire 22r Blue Synthetic Rifle 10rd mag\$730
- RUGER AMERICAN Rimfire Compact 22r Blue Synthetic Rifle 10rd mag.....\$730
- RUGER AMERICAN Rimfire 22r Walnut Stainless Rifle 10rd mag\$1075
- RUGER AMERICAN Rimfire 22r Target Laminated Stainless Rifle 10rd mag.....\$1055
- REMINGTON 783 223 Blue Synthetic Rifle, Bushnell Trophy XLT 3-9x40 scope and mounts\$995
- SAVAGE MKII TR Tactical 22r Rifle 5rd mag.....\$720
- SAVAGE B22MFV 22 Magnum Varmint Blue Rifle 10rd mag.....\$575



SAVAGE 110 High Country Camo 22" 6.5cm Rifle 4 shot mag...\$2250

- SAVAGE 110 High Country Camo 22" 30-06 Rifle 4 shot mag.....\$2250
- SAVAGE 110 Carbon Tactical 6.5cm 22" Rifle 10 shot mag.....\$3195
- SAVAGE 110 Timberline Camo 308 22" Rifle 4 shot mag\$2275
- SAVAGE 110 CARBON Predator 223 18" Rifle 4 shot mag\$3025
- RUGER MKIV Target Blue 22r Pistol 2 magazines\$1020
- RUGER MKIV Target Stainless Pistol 2 magazines.....\$1320
- RUGER GP100 357 magnum Stainless 6" Revolver\$1520
- SPRINGFIELD XDM Elite 9mm Pistol 2 magazines, case.....\$925
- GLOCK 17A Gen 5 MOS 9mm Pistol 2 magazines, case.....\$1475



*** NO BACKORDERS AT THESE PRICES ***

1848 The Horsley Drive HORSLEY PARK NSW 2175

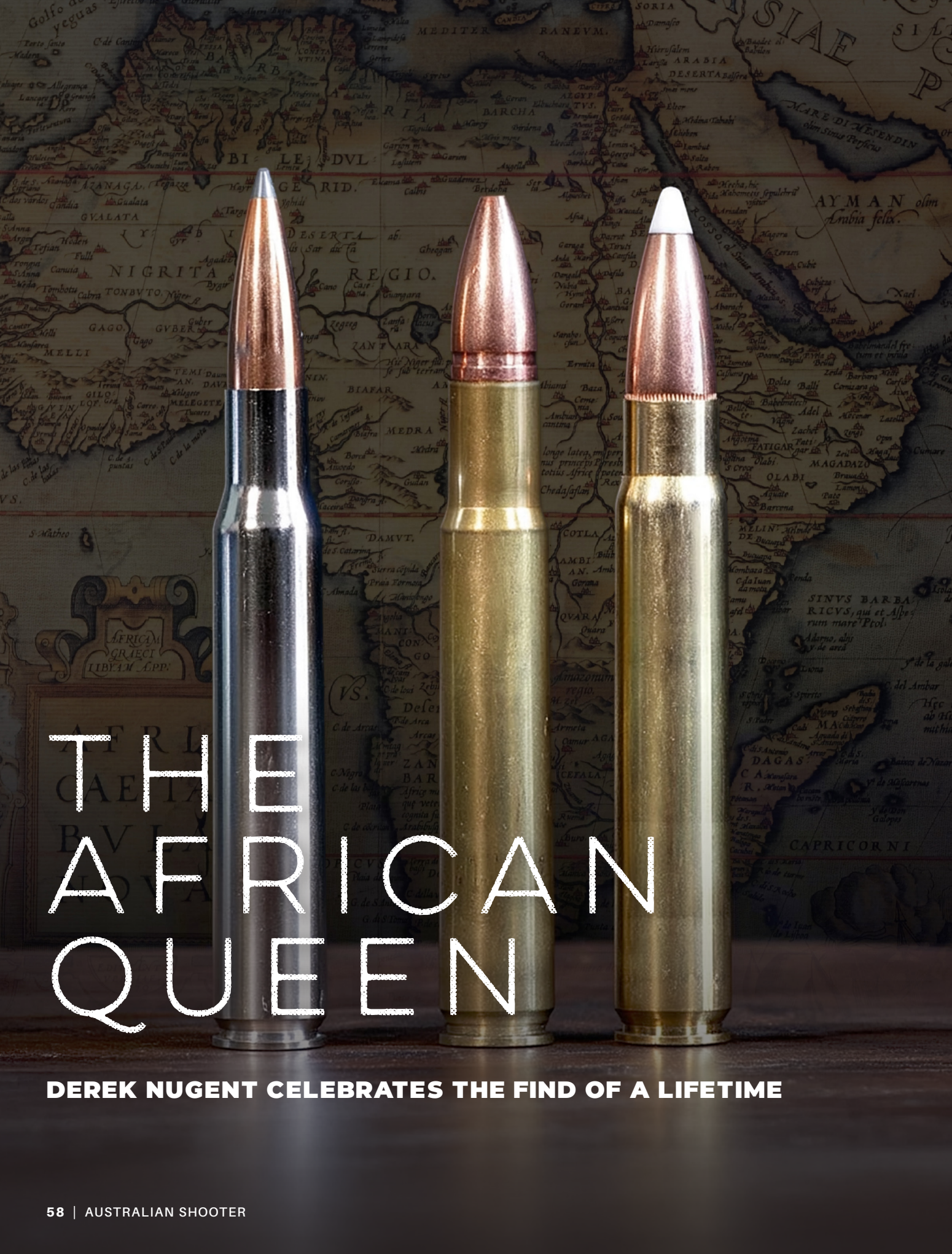
PH: 02 9620 1313

EMAIL: sales@hpgs.biz

WEB: horsleyparkgunshop.com.au

ABN: 85 003 914 850 | DLN: 410 582 683 | ALL PRICES INCLUDE GST AND ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE

Please Note: Some items listed above may sell out before ad is released. While this is unavoidable we will endeavour to keep prices as marked but may change without notice.



THE AFRICAN QUEEN

DEREK NUGENT CELEBRATES THE FIND OF A LIFETIME



THE MAUSER 98 RIFLE (1898-1935).

The year 2025 represented the centennial (Latin for 100th anniversary) of all those weird and wonderful things introduced to the world in 1905. “So what?” I hear you chorus. Well let’s consider a few of the innovations of that year I’m sure we’d rather not be without. The first synthetic plastics were invented, Frenchman Paul de Vivie gave us the rear wheel derailleur for bicycles, while for car enthusiasts, patents for new inventions like windscreen wipers and the turbo charger were registered and the first Hemi-engined automobile was made in Belgium.

The chainsaw also made its debut with an immediate impact on forestry and related industries, and it was also the year which saw the emergence of a true African queen. Not, of course, the 1951 film classic starring Humphrey Bogart and Katherine Hepburn but, more importantly for hunters, the classic 9.3x62 cartridge. Invented in 1905 by German gunsmith Otto Bock, primarily in response to the needs of German settlers and colonists in Africa, the 9.3 would go on to establish an enviable reputation for its performance on African game.

Globally it would be embraced by hunters targeting medium to large game including wild boar, many deer species (particularly moose and elk) as well as bison and bears. While popularity has waned at times the reputation, performance and, dare I say, mystic of the cartridge remains highly attractive to a new generation of hunters, myself included.

THE SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA

History can’t be denied and it’s a fact that from the mid-1800s to early 1900s, European powers vigorously and aggressively competed to acquire and control large swathes of African territory. They ruthlessly established colonies to exploit the



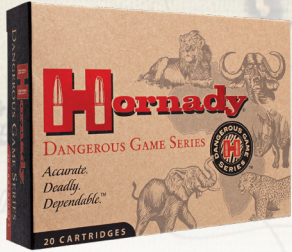
GUNSMITH OTTO BOCK AND HIS FAVORITE GUN DOG.

people and natural resources of this vast continent with Germany, though a late comer, being no different.

Between 1880 to the end of WWI they established the colonies of German South-West Africa (Deutsch Sudwestafrika), German East Africa (Deutsch Ostafrika), Togoland and Cameroon. As well as providing access to raw materials and new markets, these colonies attracted many thousands of German settlers and adventurers looking to establish new and better lives for themselves in the continent.

Between 1884 and 1928, some 20 different 9.3 cartridge offerings were developed but only Bock’s has really stood the test of time. German colonists embraced the round as a practical and

MAIN: COMPARING CASE DESIGN OF THE 30.06, 35 WHELEN AND 9.3X62.



SOME SAMPLES OF FACTORY OPTIONS FOR THE 9.3X62.



economic all-round workhorse, attracted by its power and emphatic performance on the full range of African game. Its affordability, availability and the fact it was designed for the ubiquitous Mauser 98 also made it an attractive proposition.

Furthermore, it circumvented the colonial governments' prohibition on civilians being able to access rifles in military chamberings. Being fearful of the ever-present threat of revolt by native Africans, there were bans on private ownership of military rifles and ammunition. However, the 9.3x62 was never a military cartridge so had instant and long-lasting appeal.

POOR MAN'S .375 H&H
So effective has it been on African game, the round has over time acquired the affectionate moniker of the poor man's .375 H&H. In fact by

way of confirmation, for many years it was exempt from the minimum standards for dangerous game hunting in Africa, though in truth I don't know if this is still the case.

The 9.3x62 is a rimless, bottleneck cartridge which most commonly features a 286-gr projectile with muzzle velocity of about 2400f/s, though other factory-loaded options achieve 230-gr at 2690f/s, 250-gr at 2550 f/s and 300-gr at 2350f/s. Of course handloaders can work up a myriad of other outcomes as is their want. Fortunately most major ammunition manufacturers list 9.3x62 among their offerings, so it's relatively easy to locate.

You may find, however, some brands are harder to source than others, requiring a special order by your dealer which may entail a bit of a wait. Prices vary widely too, from around \$45 (PPU) to \$169 (RWS), depending on what you're after. Retailers are at liberty to price as they see fit, so it pays to shop around. As a general rule though, European brands tend to be more expensive and the average price is around the \$100 mark for a box of 20 cartridges.

Interestingly, an examination of various ballistics tables online and discussions with experienced 9.3 shooters, suggests in general terms with a 100m zero, the 286-gr pill launched at velocities between 2700 and 2400 f/s, shoots very flat between 50 and 100m, drops between 1.5-2" at 150m and between 4-6" at 200m. It's thought Bock used existing cartridges like the 7x57 Mauser and US 30-03 (predecessor to the hallowed 30-06) as inspiration for his design.



AMMUNITION OPTIONS CAN RANGE IN PRICE FROM \$45 TO \$145.



Due to a certain degree of similarity in terms of looks and performance, in the US the .35 Whelen is often referred to as the ‘American 9.3’.

MY INTEREST

I’ve always liked the idea of having something a bit different in the gun safe and for years had admired the 9.3x62, though had also heard lots of horror stories (as you do) about its recoil. Shooting a reputed belter isn’t high on my list of priorities and we all know how heavy recoil can undermine confidence and marksmanship.

Yet after rekindling a somewhat dormant friendship, I found myself able to actually have a bench session with a 9.3. To my great surprise I found the experience thoroughly manageable, as recoil was no more noticeable than the 45/70 I’ve been using for more than a decade. Now everyone notices or tolerates recoil to different degrees and the definition of comfortable is subjective. But I’m confident in using the following to describe recoil of the 9.3. To me it manifests as a solid ‘push’ rather than a sharp ‘kick’.

Perhaps years of experience with the 45/70 or the fact that in the Army I’d regular experience firing the L2A1 LMG (automatic heavy-duty version of the SLR), has upped my tolerance of recoil but honestly it was fine. And let’s face it, as any seasoned hunter will attest, in that moment when you grass your quarry, you don’t notice recoil anyway. Adrenalin kicks in and hopefully a single shot suffices, though sighting-in off the bench can be another matter.

SSAA GUN SALES

After my introductory experience with the 9.3 I determined to buy one and, not being averse to a second-hand option, immediately took to SSAA Gun Sales to try my luck. And I’m glad I did. Quite surprisingly my first search struck paydirt in the form of a left-handed Sauer 202 in 9.3. Unbelievable! A genuine ‘safe queen’ in almost mint condition, it had never been in the field and to the range just three times with about 30 rounds put through it. The rifle was being sold by a Sauer enthusiast who was downsizing his collection and, needless to say, it’s now safely in my possession.

The Sauer name is synonymous with quality as befits Germany’s oldest firearms manufacturer. The company was established in 1751 by Lorenzo Sauer in the city of Suhl. In 1873 it was rebranded as J.P. Sauer & Son with a focus on quality hunting arms. During WWII they produced K98 rifles for the military and were instrumental in development of the STG44 (MP44), grandfather of all modern assault rifles. This was actually the template on which the Soviets developed the AK47.

THE SAUER 9.3 NOW AND THEN, S100 (TOP) AND 202.

At the end of the war, Sauer was re-established in West Germany under the stewardship of Rolf Dietrich Sauer and became the first manufacturer of hunting rifles in post-war Germany (in 1950 he sold the rights to the company to a conglomerate of industrialists). Beginning in 1976 and throughout the '80s Sauer amalgamated with Swiss company Sig, a union which saw development of the 200 series of hunting rifles which enjoyed a highly successful production run from 1993 to 2015. The 202 range was ultimately improved and morphed into the 404 range we see today. J.P. Sauer & Son also currently produce the 100, 101 and 505 series, all of which are available in Australia.

My Sauer is topped with a scope of similar vintage and heritage in a Docter 1-6x42 Classic. It seemed so at home on the rifle I could see no reason to separate the pair. Known for their quality and value, Docter Optics have been popular with German hunters for decades. While not of the standard of a premium brand like a Khales or Schmidt & Bender, I believe they'd comfortably equate to a Swarovski or Steiner. The fact the late Nick Harvey thought so highly of them was also sufficient recommendation for me.

Their 150-year history began in the factory of Carl Zeiss precision optical instruments. In 1991 following German reunification, the then state-owned facility in Eisfeld was taken over by Bernhard Docter and their products rebranded, then in 2018 Docter Optics became Noblex and thus it remains today. I've found the scope provides an impressive level of clarity, particularly in low-light situations and to say I'm happy with this combination is an understatement.

DON'T DREAM IT, BE IT

I'd long dreamt of being the owner of a 9.3 and now I am. The whole process of locating and acquiring the rifle was made extremely simple and effective by my use of SSAA Gun Sales, which I heartily recommend to other potential buyers. I am, however, the first to admit that finding a left-handed, immaculately conditioned rifle in 9.3x62 just waiting to be snapped up was more than good luck. Maybe it was fate.

Anyhow, I've dubbed her 'The African Queen' in homage to her heritage and in this, its 120th year, I'm ever grateful to Otto Bock for the quality of his 9.3 design which has certainly stood the test of time. I also raise a glass to all those long-gone German colonists, adventurers and big game hunters who took a good cartridge and ran with it, in the process helping create and perpetuate a stalwart of the hunting world. The goal now is to put it to good use here in Oz and while certainly over-gunned for fallow, perhaps a little 'safari' to the NT might be in order. ●

THE 9.3 COMPARED TO A SELECTION OF OTHER POPULAR CARTRIDGES.



Basic instinct

SAM GARRO MARVELS AT HOW WILDLIFE JUST SEEMS TO 'KNOW'

Of all our invasive critters, I can't think of a more resilient animal than the wild rabbit. It has survived drought, flood, fire and everything man has thrown at it to eradicate or reduce numbers, adapted and bounced back quickly under favourable conditions. As someone who enjoys hunting them and appreciates the game meat, seeing them in the scrub, paddocks or hills is always a welcome sight.

On our last trip to a western NSW property in early spring, farmers in the region carrying sheep were desperate for rain to help grow feed and plant seasonal crops like barley and wheat. While patches of green still existed from a few light showers in May, the low growth mainly consisted of spiky seed grass, unsuitable fodder for livestock and a nuisance for wool growers. Combined with low water in the billabong restricting usage, along with invasive kangaroos, emus and rabbits availing themselves of what little feed remained, sheep would soon need to be handfed again.



NINETY PER CENT WERE MILKY-DOES ABOUT TO DROP YOUNG.

HELPING HAND

Good friend Michael, who lived in the nearby regional town, took a break from his busy crop harvesting period to join us and try out his newly-restored and sighted-in Brno .222 Rem rifle with double-set trigger, thanks to his mate Alex who offered to do the work. The gun was gifted to him by a farmer friend who hadn't used it for a long time. It had fallen into a poor state of repair with surface rust and minor pitting developing on the barrel, necessitating recrowning at the end.

Yet Michael considered it worth salvaging and couldn't believe how good it turned out. Fully restored and topped with a 4x power scope, he became proficient at sniping rabbits at medium range, along with a couple of good-sized hares on the last evening. Since then he's upgraded the scope to a Redfield VX3-9x40 to reach more distant game and varmint shooting.

BUNNIES IN ABUNDANCE

Rabbits were plentiful enough and thrived in the semi-arid conditions, unlike the reduced numbers from previous years in similar conditions. During the three days of our stay, apart from searching unsuccessfully for pigs in likely places, we harvested 40 rabbits and as much as we could store in the freezer to take home. Thereafter we shot and left them where they lay, purely to assist the owner by reducing their numbers. It was quite a rabbit comeback, considering just 12 months earlier they'd been virtually wiped out by baiting.

INNATE ABILITY

Interestingly, on this occasion 90 per cent were milky-does or 'milks' ready to drop kittens, each averaging five or six. With female rabbits able to reproduce as early as four months of age and have five or more litters a year, you can see how quickly they can reach plague proportion.

During 15 years of frequenting the property and witnessing the various seasonal changes and availability of game, I'd encountered a few milks on hunts but never to such a high degree. This led me to think they might be breeding heavily in anticipation of rain and favourable conditions. Even prolific breeders like rabbits will delay in drought conditions, when feed is insufficient to support young, as seemed the trending conditions.

I mentioned this to the property owner when



ALEX AND MICHAEL WITH HARVESTED RABBITS, MOSTLY MILKY-DOES.

he called into camp to see how we were fairing and have a chat. And while he was politely receptive to the suggestion, through experience and having tolerated the persistent dry conditions for so long, he was somewhat doubtful or reluctant to embrace the idea.

TAKING NOTE

Like lots of things in life it could be no more than an observation. Then again, I've learned not to discard such experiences altogether, rather store them in back of my mind, like a hunter's instinct feeling the presence of game without actually seeing it, yet remaining alert to be rewarded soon after by the sight of your quarry.

As a further example, one duck season opening a few weeks before heavy rain and subsequent flooding, ducks nests were observed much higher in the reeds than normal and, for the first time, the birds had perched high up in gumtrees near waterways. They'd sensed the weather event long before it happened and avoided inundation of their nests.

And consider the way birds migrate long distances to feeding grounds or new water, such as when Lake Eyre floods and hundreds of pelicans arrive to start breeding. The ability of wildlife and their innate senses is remarkable and, as experienced over many years of hunting, if we're observant and take note we can learn and gain an advantage.

PROOF OF RAIN

A month later, wide bands of cloud started to cross the continent from Western Australia to the east coast, initially dropping 20-40mm of rain in central and southern NSW and southern Queensland where it was badly needed. In drought-affected areas of South Australia and Victoria, good rainfall brought on fresh growth. And while welcomed by farmers and graziers, it triggered a rapid resurgence in rabbit numbers, tenfold in some parts, which, if not curbed, will reach plague proportions and wreak havoc on crops and vegetation.

MILKY-DOES

As we collected the head-shot rabbits I made the most of the plentiful resource, gutting them within minutes of shooting and dropping them into a lidded tub to prevent spoilage and keep blowflies at bay. My mates were under the misconception milks weren't good eating, until I explained otherwise. In my experience and as conveyed by other hunters over time, it's actually the reverse, where the meat is more tender with a milder flavour. The milk tenderizes the meat through its



BEFORE AND AFTER REMOVING THE MILK MEMBRANE, LEAVING A CLEANLY DRESSED RABBIT FOR THE POT.

calcium and lactic acid content, breaking down muscle fibres and fat and helping retain moisture.

I've also found them easier to skin, despite their fully grown size. When skinning, the outer layer of milk-line or sack between the skin and belly peels off, leaving a cleanly dressed rabbit. So if you happen to shoot milks, don't discard them as they make for fine eating. It's also in times like these you make the most of a bountiful resource and fill the freezer, especially when considering a pair of rabbits at the butcher or supermarket can cost \$40 or more.

CYCLICAL BATTLE

With favourable conditions, kangaroos and emus also proliferate. For the farmer or property owner it's an ongoing battle. That's where, as responsible shooters always grateful for the opportunity to hunt on the property, we do our bit in reducing invasive or destructive animals like rabbits, feral cats, foxes and pigs and, from time to time, engage in a kangaroo cull under approved conditions.

As we drove through the property it was pleasing to note two new eagle nests a few kilometres apart, and similarly distant from the only long-established and active nest. Large birds of prey like the wedge-tailed eagle, will normally establish themselves where they can build a nest in the safety of high tree limbs or branches, with food sources like carrion from culled animals and rabbits being plentiful.

CONCLUSION

Coming months will tell if my observation has any substance. But here's hoping the trending weather conditions will bring much-needed rain to struggling properties and ease the burden on farmers doing it tough. In the meantime, if in a position to do so, make the most of the bountiful resource and help reduce rabbit numbers. ●



MICHAEL WITH HIS BRNO .222 REM AND HARVEST.

Horses for courses

JULIAN NUSKE COMPLETES HIS NOVICE'S JOURNEY WITH A LOOK AT PROJECTILES

If you own a firearm or are passionate about learning all you can about shooting, the basics of bullets and cartridges is a must with knowledge of the various projectiles, sizes and types on the market being of paramount importance. Selecting the correct ammunition for your firearm guarantees optimal performance and safety, allowing you to understand the terminology surrounding ballistics and making for an informed choice when selecting ammo.

My aim here is to give novices a wide-ranging overview of cartridge and projectile fundamentals, including a definition of some of the key terms, a breakdown of some of the more common calibres and different projectile types. Hopefully by the end, the newcomers out there will have a grasp of projectile proficiency to add to their shooting and hunting repertoire.

PROJECTILE SIZES AND CALIBRES

When we talk about calibre we're effectively referring to the diameter of the projectile, with your firearm barrel designed to match the diameter of projectile you're going to use. Correctly calibrated ammunition guarantees a fitted seal, which allows for the explosive gases produced on firing to propel a bullet through the barrel with the greatest efficiency. The slightest deviation in size of projectile can influence velocity, accuracy, ballistic coefficient and drop.

Understanding the difference between projectile and cartridge when discussing ammunition is also essential. The projectile refers exclusively to the metal bullet that's fired down the barrel of a firearm towards an intended target, while the cartridge is the entire unit of ammo which includes projectile, casing, propellant and primer.



EXPANSIVE CRUMPLED .308 CALIBRE BULLET AND SPENT CARTRIDGE CASE.

Australian Shooter

Beauty...and a beast



In many ways this rifle review has been a long time coming. It all started back in 2008 when I was thinking about buying my first 'nice' rifle and by nice, I mean my first dedicated left-hander in a calibre and model of my choosing. Previously as a lefty I'd compromised but now had almost enough money in my pocket to change that. What caught my eye was the Sauer 202 Elegance, a beautiful thing in every way with its timber, metalwork, overall appeal, calibre

READ YOUR AUSTRALIAN SHOOTER ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Free for SSAA Members.



Now available on phone, tablet or desktop devices.



SCAN TO READ

Australian Shooter

Visit onlineshop.ssaa.org.au to get your Australian Shooter magazine annual print subscription.

Print



Australian Shooter is included as part of the SSAA Membership. Manage your subscriptions or report missing issues by contacting SSAA Membership.



THE POPULAR .22 LR CAN BE FOUND IN MOST SHOOTERS' COLLECTION.

A breakdown of the key components in a cartridge are obviously the projectile, usually made of lead, copper or other metal alloy, sometimes including a synthetic tip. The casing, which is the metal cylinder containing all the other 'ingredients', usually made from brass but can also be steel, copper or aluminium. Then there's propellant, an explosive substance which releases the energy required when ignited to propel the projectile down the barrel. And finally primer, the ignition component which explodes when struck by the firing pin.

RIMFIRE V CENTREFIRE

Primarily there are two main types of firearm cartridges in rimfire and centrefire, the basic difference being location of the primer. Rimfire cartridges have it contained inside the rim of the cartridge casing, such as a .22LR (Long Rifle). The rim on this type of round is indented and once the firing pin strikes, it ignites the primer inside. Their construction makes them fairly cheap rounds, undoubtedly the main reason why the .22LR is by far the most popular calibre in Australia, if not worldwide.



DISASSEMBLED CARTRIDGE ELEMENTS SHOWING BULLET, BRASS CASE, PRIMERS AND SMOKELESS POWDER GRANULES.

If the primer's located in the middle of the casing base you have a centrefire cartridge. A distinctive circular indentation can be seen on this type of casing, so when the firing pin strikes this centrally located primer, the propellant ignites and launches the bullet down and out the barrel. Centrefire ammo is more versatile and reliable than rimfire, however it's far more expensive to produce due to costs associated with manufacturing its primer.

POPULAR AUSSIE CALIBRES

By looking at some of the more widely-used projectile calibres around Australia, we can examine the pros and cons sometimes associated with them. While there are many which could be discussed here (not to mention the 12-gauge shotgun shell which is also very popular), I'm going to focus on four.

The .22LR rimfire cartridge is probably our most popular and is known for its affordability, versatility and accuracy. It's commonly used for target shooting, small game (rabbits and foxes) and as a beginner's round due to its low recoil, noise and cost effectiveness. It has a range of around 150m (depending on projectile type), bullet diameter of 5.6mm and average velocity of around 304.8 meters per second (1000fps). It has lower stopping power compared to larger calibres and while a staple in shooting sports and small game hunting, its smaller bullet size and lower energy typically make it unsuitable for long-range accuracy and larger game.

The next calibre off the rank (pun intended) is the .243. The eagle-eyed among you might say 'what about the .222 or .223' and, while both popular, they're generally used for the same purpose as the .22LR, so I thought I'd go for something with a bit more oomph.

One of the more convincing reasons for shooters and hunters to choose the .243 Winchester is its shooter-friendly nature. It allows for practice without having to concern yourself with shoulder fatigue, making it one of the next logical choices for the novice. You can build on fundamental shooting and hunting skills before moving to a more powerful cartridge. Recoil for the inexperienced shooter can easily throw you off an otherwise great shot, if you haven't trained yourself to avoid recoil anticipation.

The .243 also has a nice flat trajectory compared to some other calibres, making it a good option for hunting varmints such as foxes, feral cats and wild dogs. Its main downside is for the more seasoned hunter who'd probably prefer a bigger calibre, especially when going after pigs, goats or deer.



A 30-calibre bullet was sought by the US Military after the Korean War, as they wanted to mimic the ballistics of the .30-06 but with a shorter case to fit into a shorter action. They were after a more modern service rifle which had the capability of a detachable magazine with a select-fire option, thus .308 Winchester was born. As Winchester were first to produce this new cartridge for the civilian market, quickly adapting their Model 70 rifle to accept the round, it wasn't long before it became a staple for hunters of larger game.

The .308 is also popular with competition shooters due to its long-range accuracy. Recoil is a step up from the .247 and requires the novice to implement everything they've learned in order to manage technique for the larger calibre. As the .308 comes in various bullet weights, it'll handle the bigger game sought by shooters looking to enjoy the next challenge in their firearms journey.

The final calibre which has enjoyed increased growth in popularity over the years is the 6.5 Creedmoor. When comparing recoil of this one to the .308, it's generally felt the Creedmoor has about 30 per cent less, making it popular with competition shooters and hunters alike.

Designed to outperform the .308 over distances beyond 500yds (457m), the 6.5 Creedmoor keeps its supersonic threshold at 1000yds (914.4m), while the .308 is typically becoming subsonic at that type of range. Why does this matter? When a bullet transitions from supersonic to subsonic, it tends to pick up a wobble called transonic destabilisation. This makes it less accurate, which is why the 6.5 Creedmoor has proved so popular.

If it has a disadvantage, it's the time it'll take to wear out a barrel. About 2000 rounds for the 6.5 Creedmoor are typical compared to 5000 rounds for a .308, though this only becomes a serious problem for the competition shooter and not the hunter. So what's the takeout here? Generally speaking, as bullet size increases so does the price, recoil, effective range and stopping power, with magazine capacity and rate of fire decreasing.

LOAD

Everyday shooters don't usually concern themselves with gunpowder as it's a complex subject. The load refers to the specific combination of components and their quantities used to assemble a single cartridge. This is predominantly the bullet, case, propellant (the specific mixture of

THE .308 WINCHESTER IS A POPULAR CHOICE WITH COMPETITION SHOOTERS.

powder) and primer, along with the cartridge's overall dimensions and resulting chamber pressure and velocity which will occur.

Shooters and reloaders use the term both to describe a factory cartridge and handloaded 'recipe' (e.g. 140-grain bullet with X grains of Y powder), with different loads creating different recoil, accuracy and terminal performance. Loads are classified informally as light, standard or hot (higher-pressure) and must stay within published safety limits.

Small changes to the workings or amounts can pointedly change pressure and performance. Because of the apparent risks, load development should only be done by someone who's learned this specialist craft and follows reputable published data and safe reloading practices. Experimenting without proper knowledge, tools or available guidelines can be dangerous.

GRAIN

The mass of a bullet is measured in grains, a 'grain' being a unit of weight equal to 0.00228 of an ounce. So when you buy a box of 55-grain .243 rounds, each bullet (not the entire round) weighs 55 grains or roughly 0.1654 ounces. This is important to know, as a bullet's weight will

significantly affect its speed, penetration and stopping power. Commonly, the heavier the bullet the harder it'll hit and penetrate the target, expanding or fragmenting more substantially on impact.

COMMON PROJECTILES AND DEFINITIONS

In Australian shooting parlance, the **projectile** type is described by its shape and structure, as those features determine performance and intended use. Here are some of the more common varieties.

Full metal jacket (FMJ) are solid bullets with a soft core, completely enclosed by a harder metal jacket. Common for military-style and many target rounds as they feed reliably and deform little on impact.

Lead round-nose (LRN) are simple, un-jacketed bullets with a rounded nose, familiar in older or economical ammo and for some target shooting.

Soft-point (SP) and semi-jacketed bullets have an exposed lead tip with a jacketed body, so they expand on impact which makes them popular for hunting.

Jacketed hollow-points (JHP) and hollow-points (HP) feature a cavity at the nose to reassure controlled expansion and energy transfer on soft targets and are used where this is preferable.

Ballistic-tip or polymer-tipped bullets combine an aerodynamic profile with a tip designed to initiate rapid expansion, favoured in many modern hunting cartridges.

Boat-tail bullets have a tapered base to improve long-range ballistic coefficient and are widely used in precision or competition loads.

Choose a projectile type to suit the lawful purpose (target, hunting, match) and platform you're using. Numerous projectile types are available but those mentioned here are among the most commonly used in Australia.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This article has addressed topics discussing the varying types of projectiles and some common calibres, including the composition, type and use of various ammunition. The most important point is understanding the basics of how ammunition components and specifications influence the effectiveness of shooting activities under normal conditions. By applying your knowledge, responsible purchasing of suitable ammunition to match your needs and continuing to learn, you'll stay safe and have fun while pursuing this fulfilling sport. ●



CROSS-SECTIONAL VIEW OF THREE HANDGUN CARTRIDGES: A FULL METAL JACKET PROJECTILE, HOLLOW-POINT AND FRANGIBLE DESIGN.



ALIEN 2: THE SEQUEL

AUSTRALIAN & NEW ZEALAND

HANDGUN

Canik TTI - Alliance with a champion
Frontier Reflex sight - Simplicity itself

Smith & Wesson - Performance Center Model 929

ISSUE 24

**OUT
NOW**





Random thoughts from the duck hide

CHAS HARDING MOURNS THE LOSS OF A FAITHFUL OFFSIDER

OUR THOUGHTS WERE WITH THE MISSING OFFSIDER.

We sat side-by-side in the hide, the freezing cold and wind of the evening permeating even the heaviest of clothing. For the first time in 13 years we were without our faithful offsider, the waders in the corner providing stark testimony our beloved dog had gone and we were on our own in the retrieving stakes. The cold matched my thoughts as Bill the younger sensed my melancholy. “Dad,” he said, “I think you should write an article about Gunfire. I’m sure readers interested in gun dogs would enjoy it.”

I thought about it for a while then told him it was all too raw at the moment but, maybe down the track, I could put something together. To lighten the mood he added: “Well some of my mates are just getting into guns and shooting and I’m sure they wouldn’t mind a few ‘how to’ articles.”

This set my mind going and between the odd duck rocketing with whistling wings over the decoys, I thought about a ‘how to’ for newcomers to the shooting game. I knew most topics had been done to death over the years, then remembered the editor’s comment when I started writing: “Chas, we like anything a bit different to the norm.”

I decided then a few unrelated random thoughts on rarely-mentioned topics would be the way to go so, taking my mind off the cold, my thoughts wandered. Hopefully some of what follows will be of use to beginners or even the occasional seasoned campaigner.

TELESCOPIC SIGHTS

For years we were shooting hares semi-commercially. They’re a flighty animal in the spotlight and stop for only a moment before moving on.

A: SIGHT MOVEMENT ?
 B: SIGHT RADIUS = 450 mm
 C: GROUP MOVEMENT = 80 mm
 D: RANGE (50M) = 50,000 mm

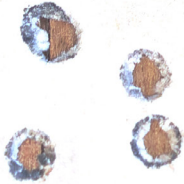
$$\frac{A}{B} = \frac{C}{D}$$

$$A = \frac{C \times B}{D}$$

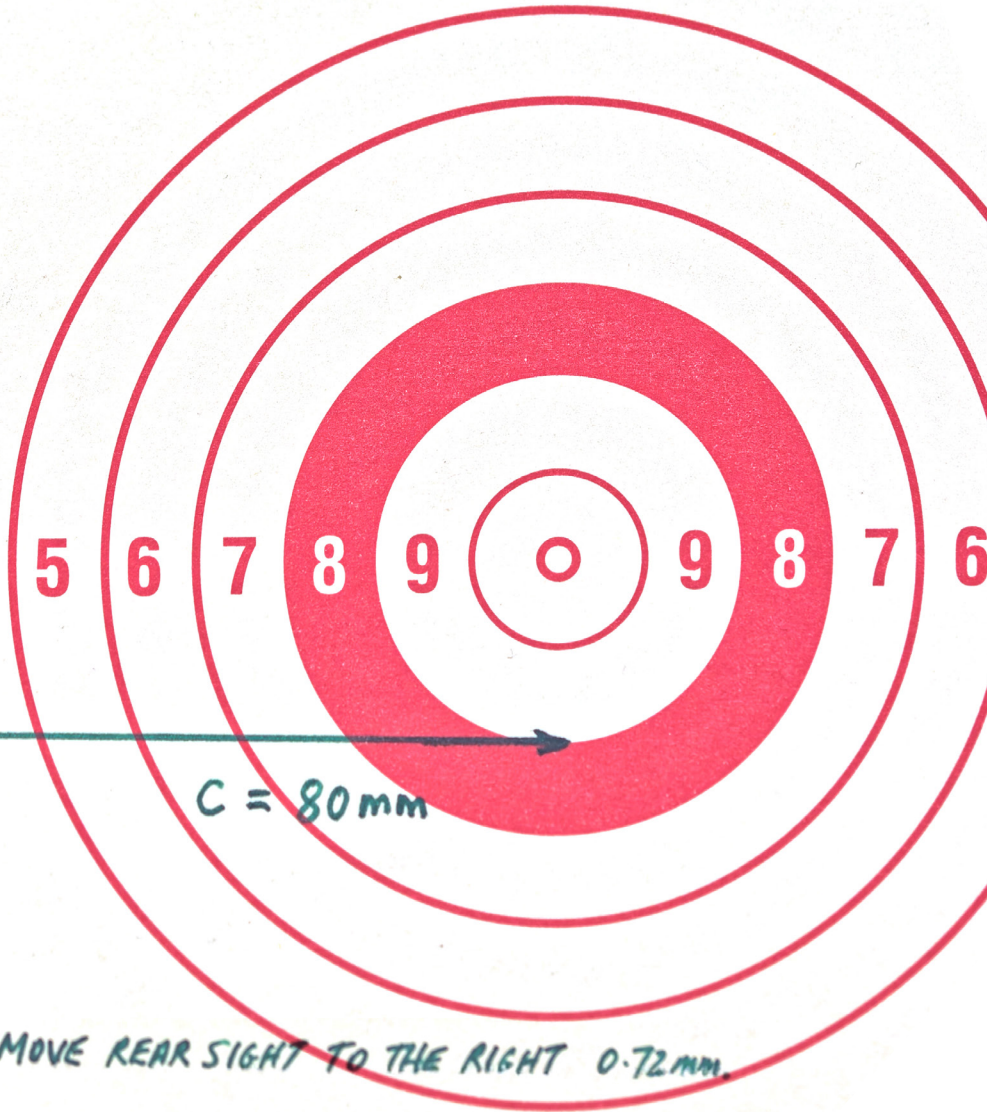
$$A = \frac{80 \times 450}{50,000}$$

$$A = 0.72 \text{ mm.}$$

∴ MOVE REAR SIGHT TO THE RIGHT 0.72 mm.



C = 80 mm



CALCULATIONS FOR SIGHT ADJUSTMENT.

Initially I'd had success behind the .222 rifle but, as the months rolled on, I was conscious of more and more misses. One day while benchresting our .22 rimfires and with my groups not so flash, I asked my bench-guru mate: "Do you look at the target or the crosshairs?"

His answer of 'crosshairs' ultimately had a two-fold effect, with my groups on paper improving along with my success rate on hares. I realised I'd been concentrating on the hares so hard through the scope and anticipating their movement, the crosshairs had become secondary, which had carried over to my target shooting. The moral of this tale is to stare hard at your crosshairs first and foremost, a similar concept to focusing on the front sight in iron sight shooting. Note: We found hares definitely sat for a little longer when held in the 'shadow' of the light.



HARD FOCUS ON CROSSHAIRS RESULTS IN MORE HARES.



FIREARMS SAFETY TAUGHT THROUGH THE GENERATIONS (I STILL HEAR YOU DAD); LEFT THUMB ALREADY NEXT TO THE MAGAZINE RELEASE.



PISTOL MAGAZINE CHANGING

A few of the young blokes round our way were getting into pistol shooting and, quite naturally, were gravitating towards the Practical Shooting target discipline. So I thought a few words wouldn't go amiss on what I consider the safest way to reload a 1911-style pistol. The common method for a right-handed shooter using the universal double-handed grip, is to flick the pistol slightly in the right hand so the right thumb can depress the magazine release, while the left hand is dropping to the spare mag on the belt.

And here's the rub to my mind, especially when some reloads are done with the gun not completely empty. The potential to drop the pistol during this flicking action or have an accidental discharge, while miniscule, is always a possibility. Furthermore, the flick may move the muzzle in an unsafe direction to the left, which can be eliminated by using the following method.

Simply put, with the double-handed grip, the thumb of the left hand sits naturally over/ alongside the magazine release. When it's time to change mags, as the left hand leaves the double grip to go for the spare, the left thumb (already sitting over the release) pushes the release

button. Most importantly, the right hand never slackens its grip on the pistol and the muzzle is always directly controlled during the whole process. Simple, safe and as I've frequently proved, no loss of time at all.

IRON SIGHTS

A topic not often discussed these days is use and adjustment of iron or 'open' sights. In basic terms, to sight the firearm the front sight is placed centrally between the opening in the rear sight with the top of the front sight level with the top of the rear. When the rear is of the aperture or peep type, the top of the front sight is placed in the centre of the circular aperture. The sights are then adjusted so bullet impact on target is at the top of the front sight. Note: In all open sight shooting, the most important element is to have the front in sharp focus.

Adjustment is simple. Move the rear sight in the direction the bullet group on the target needs to go, to bring it to the bullseye or aiming mark. Conversely the front sight is moved in the opposite direction. So if the group is right of the aiming mark, move the rear sight to the left or front sight to the right.

On firearms where horizontal adjustment is by tapping the sight in its dovetail, the following formula is useful for determining the amount of movement required. Sight movement divided by distance between sights, equals point of impact movement required (divided by) target distance. So a rifle with sights 450mm apart shooting 150mm right at 50,000mm (50m), will require rear sight movement of 1.35mm to the left. This formula also applies to vertical adjustment. Readers won't be surprised to learn a surveyor showed me this.

BINOS AS A 'REST'

We've developed a few improvised rests over the years to help steady the rifle and two are worth a mention. Firstly, believe it or not, is the use of binoculars under the fore-end of the rifle, acting just like a bipod. Most binoculars are about eight inches in height and can provide very stable support, when the left hand (for right-handers) holding the rifle fore-end rests on top of the vertical binoculars. This idea was conceived on the vast outback gibber plains of South Australia, when chasing camels on foot with no rest available.

Secondly, as mentioned previously we seriously chased hares at night with the .222. All shooting was from the passenger seat using a door sill-mounted rifle rest to support the left hand and



IMPROVED BIPOD WORKS WELL AS A REST;

forearm. Initially the right elbow was unsupported, yet we found that by placing the right foot high on the gear box channel, the right elbow could be anchored on the raised right knee. The position is highly stable and close to 'bench' standard.

As an aside, it's worth mentioning the benefit of using the rifle sling to aid steadiness, especially for offhand shooting. I dismissed it for years but recently revisited the concept and found it definitely helped. Of course, the foundation of all fine rifle shooting has to be the practiced art of 'squeezing' the trigger.

TRIGGERS AND SAFETY

These two aspects are of essential relevance, not just to new shooters and are worthy of reinforcement. On the adjustment of triggers, I will remember noted Australian gunsmith Bill Hambly-Clark Jr's comments regarding triggers in his book *Centrefire Rifle Accuracy*. At the end of the 30-odd page chapter solely on trigger adjustment, he concluded with something along the lines of: 'the massive undertaking to complete this book will have been worth it if it saves just one life, by reinforcing the idea that any trigger work must only be performed by a qualified gunsmith'.

And on the safety front I can think of no better comment than to repeat my father's stern speech to my brother and I on receipt of our first centre-fires when we were 12 years old. "Boys, always remember no amount of prayer will put the bullet back in the barrel once your gun goes off." Some 60 years on, I still hear you dad.

END OF AN ERA

I was contemplating the next topic of Stance and Footwork when Bill nudged me back to real time. "The light's almost gone, we should pack up and gather the birds while we can still see," he said as he pulled on the waders and ventured out. I'm sure his thoughts were on our missing offsider as he negotiated calf-deep mud and freezing water, as were mine as I walked round the dam to pick up the last bird taken, which had fallen in the paddock. I carried that duck as we walked back to the vehicle in the dark. It'd been Gunfire's ritual to carry the final bird retrieved all the way back to the ute and, as I walked, I realised the sun had set on a treasured chapter of my life and the tears in my eyes were not just from the wind and cold. Vale, my wonderful and faithful companion. ●



VALE GUNFIRE, MY FAITHFUL GUN DOG.

Queensland trio strike out on Alpine debut

**DESPITE BEST EFFORTS,
SIMON FREDERIKSEN
DISCOVERS YOU CAN'T
WIN 'EM ALL**

It was during a break at work that Rob, Damo and I hatched a plan, one that would take three Brisbane-based hunters deep into the wilds of the Victorian Alps in search of Australia's largest deer species. We wanted an epic six-day backpack hunt, an adventure filled with big hills, cold weather and a test of physical endurance. This is our story.

We booked our trip for the first week of September last year, to line up with local guide Zeb from Zebra's Hunting Adventures. Having never hunted the Victorian Alps, we figured some local knowledge couldn't hurt. We'd seen Zeb's YouTube videos, liked his style and it turned out he was a top bloke and seriously experienced.

Meeting at his farm on Monday morning, we loaded our packs and rifles into his tricked-out ute. That's when Zeb mentioned our bags looked a bit heavy. We'd been training for months, hiking local trails and hills, so we shrugged it off but couldn't have been more wrong. The drive from Maffra into the mountains was spectacular and be-

fore long we hit the snow line. Damo jumped out to touch snow for the first time before we dropped into a proper 4x4 track and, after three hours on the road, unloaded and prepped for the hike.

Zeb eyed our packs again, saying we were carrying too much. "We're good, we've trained for this," I replied. Within 30 minutes I knew we were in trouble as the terrain was far steeper and rougher than anything we'd trained on. Three hours later, after a brutal descent which shredded my quads and tore a load-lifter off Damo's pack, we finally reached camp. Zeb, fit as the stags we were chasing, helped haul gear when needed. Dropping our packs felt incredible as we agreed then and there we wouldn't be packing meat out. The goal was a clean shot at a good stag.

After setting up camp and grabbing a quick feed, Zeb led us to a glassing spot for last light. The view over the valley and river, our home for the next five nights, was unreal. Zeb

LOOKING NORTH
FROM CAMP.





quickly spotted two hinds about 400m out, Rob picked up a spiker and, as the light faded, Zeb's sharp eyes caught a stag 1200m away on a distant slope. With 20 years' experience in this valley he knew every rock and tree and that tiny dark speck just looked out of place. A quick check through the binoculars confirmed it was a solid stag.

Day two kicked off at sunrise with a big breakfast to refuel after yesterday's brutal hike. The plan was simple: Pack light with food, water and wet weather gear then glass the valley. Back at the same spot as last night we saw a few hinds but no stags, so Zeb led us deeper into the valley. An

hour's hike through steep, off-camber terrain and thick scrub had our legs burning as we followed the contours, moving through patches of alpine woods and open ground. Deer sign was everywhere and Rob swore he could smell a stag in the damp bush.

Lunch was beside a snow-fed river with crystal clear, pure and icy water. There's something special about drinking straight from the source. After eating and topping up bottles, we climbed to a new glassing point with another epic view of the valley. We spent hours behind the glass, each of us running 10x binos while Zeb used his setup,

ZEB AT LAST LIGHT SQUEEZING THE MOST OUT OF THE DAY.



binoculars mounted on a lightweight tripod, rock steady and hands-free. Rob eventually spotted a stag about 900m across the valley, too far to reach before dark and likely the same one Zeb had seen the first night. With sore legs and fading light, we hoped he'd show again in the morning.

Day three started with fresh energy. We set out for the same glassing point, hoping to find the stag from the day before. Within half an hour Damo spotted him grazing in the morning sun about 900m away. To move within range we'd need to drop 100 vertical metres, wade a waist-deep freezing river, then climb another

150m. Game on. After 90 minutes of struggling through icy water and steep terrain, we hit a ridgeline about 400m from where we'd last seen him. Rob was up.

For the past six months both Rob and Damo had jumped into the world of handloading. They were running .308s loaded with 150-grain Hornady SSTs at 2850 feet per second, ideally suited to sambar inside 300m. Rob and Zeb moved ahead, quietly staking while Damo and I held back and, after a short while, Zeb waved us to join. The stag had vanished and Zeb figured he'd caught wind or sound of our approach, then slipped into the dense scrub between us and the open slope where Damo first saw him.

With a roll of the dice, Zeb moved away from us where Rob was ready for an offhand shot and slowly moved into dense scrub to bump the stag out. Using his UHF as a warning, Zeb approached the scrub and, with a quiet signal over the UHF, movement was confirmed. Rob shouldered his stainless Sako, cycled a round and scanned the tree line. Seconds later the valley echoed. I hadn't seen the stag until the shot was fired, then I caught him running hard until within seconds he disappeared over a knoll.

As the smell of AR2209 hung in the air, we called Zeb back on the radio. He'd moved from the

EASTERN VIEW FROM CAMP AND A GOOD SPOT TO GLASS INTO; ZEB MAKES HIMSELF COMFORTABLE FOR A LONG GLASSING SESSION.



dense scrub and found marks where the stag was engaged. The shot was at 150m, angling away at a fair trot, the second just over 200m as he fled.

Zeb tracked the stag with us following and after a short while reckoned the animal hadn't shown any sign of injury. Bushes he'd smashed through and brushed against during his escape were clean with no sign of blood. We stayed on the trail for a while longer and decided the stag was in perfect health. For the record, Rob's an excellent shot offhand and if anyone in our group could've made that shot it was him. Just wasn't his day. The terrain the stag bolted into was seriously steep and technical so the day ended with a long haul back to camp empty-handed.

The following morning brought the same plan of attack. Move to different glassing points in the valley, try find a good-sized stag then make a move to engage. Sadly the weather took a turn for the worse and we'd no luck finding a target worthy of our attention.

On the fifth day Zeb and I set out to explore a valley further from camp. Rob and Damo stayed closer, glassing and resting up for the hike out the next morning. Zeb set a cracking pace as we moved through some brutally steep terrain, our plan being to reach a glassing point high on a cliff overlooking the valley.

As we neared the top I was about four metres behind Zeb, scrambling over boulders, the 280

Ackley Improved strapped to my pack with a quick-release sling. Zeb stepped up to the cliff edge then froze, quickly turning and signalling me to drop. I crouched instantly as he glanced between me and what I assumed was a stag, then whispered for me to approach. Before I could move, a deep honk shattered the silence and the unseen animal crashed into the scrub. Zeb looked devastated as this was a good-sized beast. Turned out the stag had been standing just 12m below us at the base of the cliff, must've heard us climbing and was already watching when Zeb appeared above him. The one that got away.

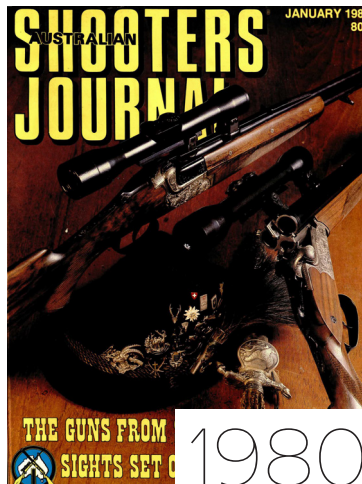
The walk out on the final day was long but spirits were high. We paced it out and took our time, packing our gear differently with the heavier stuff closer to our backs to help reduce the pack levering away from our shoulders. During the final ascent to the car, Zeb pushed ahead to prepare a surprise.

After three hours of climbing we arrived to find ice-cold ginger beer and freshly cooked hamburgers waiting and, let me tell you, they went down a treat. Not every hunt can be successful and even though we didn't take a sambar stag, we learned a lot and enjoyed sharing experiences earned through hard work and sweat. I highly recommend it. ●



THE RIVER CROSSING.

This month we're travelling back to January, 1980 with **John Robinson** tackling the subject of modifying a firearm for the budding rifleman in his family.



FOREWORD:
ALLAN BLANE

WORDS:
JOHN ROBINSON

RIFLES FOR YOUNG SHOOTERS

John Robinson



These Harrington and Richardson single shot centrefire rifles are very safe to use, with their break actions and external hammers. They are available in mild calibres down to .22 Hornet for recoil shy new shooters.

MOST of us grown-ups got our start into a shooting career from a father or a relative, and the further back we go, the less formal was our introduction to our first rifle.

When I was a boy in the 1950's, people were less uptight about firearms than they are now.

Even in a city like Newcastle, we had plenty of bush to roam in and most of us had firearms of one form or another, ranging from shanghais and homemade bows, through air rifles to rimfire rifles.

Much of the bushland is still there, but I have yet to see any kids wandering the area with air rifles these days. There is a grave risk of being run over by a trail bike, so perhaps it indicates that interests have changed in the last generation.

I recall that I was about 14 before I laid my hot little hands on my first cartridge firearm — a BSA Sportsman Five whose stock was covered with spots of white paint, given to me by my uncle.

After five years training with progressively more powerful air rifles, and being built like a flagpole with arms at the time, I found transition to an adult sized rifle no problem.

My eldest boy Adam is now ten — an age when many shooting parents think about letting junior participate in controlled shooting activities.

This led me to start looking around for a suitable rifle that Adam could learn to handle safely and competently.

Unlike the olden days, some gun-makers evidently consider that young shooters don't exist anymore, and it is difficult to buy a rimfire rifle over the counter that will fit a medium sized kid.

Before we rubbish the armsmakers too much, we have to know exactly what we want in a youngster's rifle, that will be suitable for use until adult size is approached.

The type of rimfire rifle is easily defined. It has to be a single shot bolt action or alternatively a lever action oper-

ated single shot, or as a second choice a bolt action box magazine repeater.

These selections are made purely on safety grounds. Inexperienced shooters, like enthusiastic kids, and repeating firearms are not a desirable combination.

Single shot rifles, especially those that need to be deliberately cocked are the safest of all actions to learn on.

Rifles with tubular magazines are something that I have never had much time for, after a couple of bad experiences with this design.

On one such rifle I had, the last round would occasionally hang up just short of the chamber, and working the action would not always remove the last round.

Until I found the rifle with a round in the chamber after expecting it to be empty, I didn't wake up to the problem.

A kid's rifle needs to be SEEN to be unloaded at a glance, and tubular magazine rifles do not fit this description.

In bygone days, classic rifles like the

Most of us grown-ups got our start into a shooting career from a father or relative and, the further back we go, the less formal was the introduction to our first rifle. When I was a boy in the 1950s, people were less uptight about firearms than they are now. Even in a city like Newcastle, we had plenty of bush to roam in and most of us had firearms of one form or another, ranging from shanghais and homemade bows, through air rifles to rimfire rifles.

Much of the bushland is still there, but have yet to see any kids wandering in a spare afternoon with air rifles these days. There is a grave risk of being run over by a truck or bike, so perhaps it

indicates that interests have changed in the last generation. I recall I was about 14 before I laid my hot little hands on my first cartridge firearm, a BSA Sportsman Five whose stock was covered with hundreds of bits of white paint, given to me by an uncle.

After five years training with progressively more powerful air rifles, and being built like a flagpole with arms at the time, I found transition to an adult-sized rifle no problem. My eldest boy Adam is now 10, an age when many shooting parents think about letting junior participate in controlled shooting activities. This led me to start looking around for a suitable rifle which Adam could learn to handle safely and competently.

Unlike the olden days, some gunmakers evidently consider that young shooters don't exist any more, and it's difficult to buy a rimfire rifle over the counter that will fit a medium-sized kid. Before we rubbish the arms maker too much, we have to know exactly what we want in a youngster's rifle, that will be suitable for use until adult size is approached. The type of rimfire rifle is easily defined. It has to be a single shot bolt action, or as a second choice a bolt action box magazine repeater. These selections are made purely on safety grounds. Inexperienced shooters, like enthusiastic kids, and repeating firearms are not a desirable combination.

Single shot rifles, especially those which need to be deliberately cocked, are the safest of all actions to learn on. Rifles with tubular magazines are something I have never had much time for, after a couple of bad experiences with this design. On one such rifle I had, the last round would occasionally hang up just short of the chamber, and working the action would not always remove the last round. Until I found the rifle with a round in the chamber after expecting it to be empty, I didn't wake up to the problem. A kid's rifle needs to be seen to be unloaded at a glance, and tubular magazine rifles do not fit this description.

In bygone days, classic rifles like the great Lithgow Single Shot were perfect for kid's rifles. These safe and accurate little rifles set many a shooter on the right path. They can still be found in well-worn and used condition from time to time.

The quickest way to check out the shortcomings of the current crop of rifles on youngsters is to get them to handle a rifle and see what their problems are and what can be done about them. When my 10-year-old, Adam, first picked up my Brno 22, it was obvious he had problems. The rifle was too long and heavy, both front and back for him. Most adult-sized rifles have stocks with a length of pull (the distance from the trigger to the butt plate) of around 34cm (13½"). Some centrefires run to 35cm but this is about maximum. This dimension is far too long for the small to medium human. The long stock also forces a little person to put his left hand barely in front of the trigger guard. Any rifle with a normal length barrel hangs a heavy load when balanced so far back.

There are several US gunmakers, including Remington and Stevens, who offer 'boys' rifles as part of their rimfire lineup. These guns use standard metalwork but the butt is generally shortened by about 25mm (1"). Perhaps these short-stock rimfires are available in Australia on order, but I've yet to find one in a gunshop. The obvious solution is to modify a standard rimfire to fit junior, and this was the course I took.



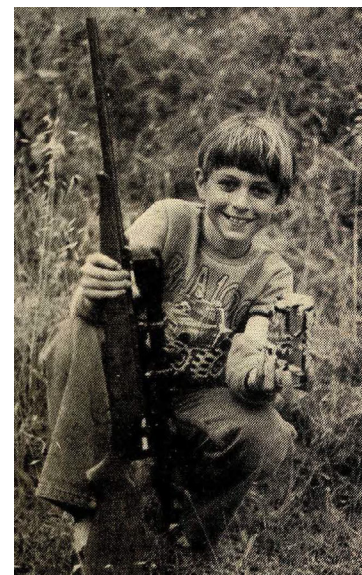
The rifle chosen for sacrifice was a Brno Model 2, which is not a single shot but can be used as such. The rifle had been in the rack for five years and had seen some use, but was still in good condition. Accuracy was acceptable but not good enough for SSAA Field Rifle work.

My motives were not altogether honourable, as some of my SSAA contacts were strong on the theory that Brnos shoot better if the barrel is cut off behind the band that holds the front sight on. The project started with the shortening of the Brno's barrel from the exceptionally long 64cm (25") to a handy 53cm (21"). Long barrels on .22 rimfires are not needed for ballistic reasons, and in fact longer barrels actually slow rimfire bullets down. The 11cm piece of barrel that was cut weighed 150 grams and that much weight at the end of the gun is substantial. After shortening, the barrel was carefully recrowned then the stock was shortened.

I arrived at how much to cut off by measuring the distance from the crook of my son's elbow to the knuckle joint on his trigger finger. This measured 30cm and to give him some growing room we compromised at 31cm for length of pull. Four centimetres (1½") was cut off the stock to achieve this dimension. This job can be done without damaging the original stock finish by taping the stock smoothly with masking tape over the cut, and carefully cutting it through with a fine-toothed tenon saw.

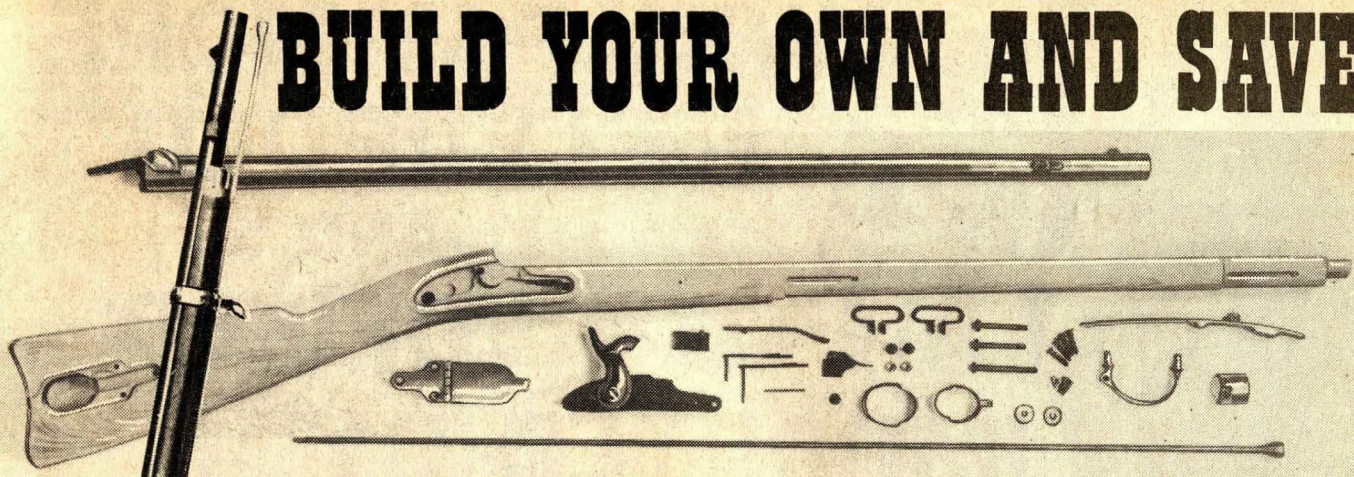
This prevents chipping of the stock on the off-side of the cut and also makes it easy to refit the butt plate. I simply ground down the plastic Brno butt plate on a hard-faced sander until the sander just started touching the masking tape. The removal of 4cm of stock is not an irreversible operation either, as it can be restored to almost original dimension with the fitting of a thick rubber recoil pad.

AUTHOR'S SON ADAM WITH BRNO MODIFIED AS DETAILED IN THE STORY. WHILE SLIGHTLY LONG, THE RIFLE CAN STILL BE HANDLED COMFORTABLY.

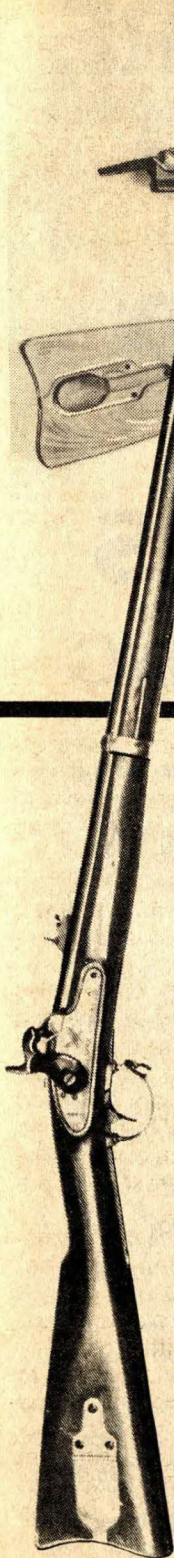


SIGN OF SUCCESS: A BATTERED CAN THAT WAS HIT CONSISTENTLY AT 50 METRES BY ADAM ON HIS FIRST SESSION WITH THE MODIFIED BRNO.

BUILD YOUR OWN AND SAVE



Your chance to make your own ZOUAVE rifle from this top quality kit. Produced in Italy by Antonio Zoli these kits are made from the best materials available, they are 100% inletted ready for finishing. All metal parts need only slight polishing and blueing. NO TECHNICAL EXPERIENCE NEEDED. Kits are proof fired and come with proof certificate. Recommended retail \$299. **Our special price only \$189.** Plus \$5.00 F&H.



POWDER FLASKS

Exact copies of original flasks available for Zouave rifles. Flasks incorporate a copper body with brass fittings. Also available for black powder .36 and .44 cal. revolvers. **Revolvers \$12.00, Rifles \$15.00 plus F&H \$1.00.**



PERCUSSION CAPS

We stock only non-corrosive pistol and musket caps. **\$2.00 per 100.**



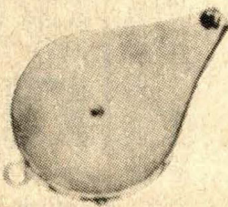
BULLET MOULDS

A replica of the original moulds for Army and Navy revolvers. Cast round and conical bullets. Zouave bullet moulds also available. Moulds have brass body with iron spru cutter. A variety of bullet designs to choose from in the excellent Lee mould for .58 cal. muskets. **.36 and .44 cal revolver \$10.00, Zouave \$18.00, Lee \$23.00 Plus F&H \$1.00.**



CAPPERS

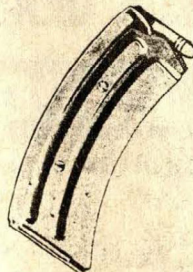
Civil War type cappers, the most convenient way to carry and store musket and pistol caps. Made from solid brass with a simplified feed system to enable you to rapidly cap all percussion muskets and pistols. **.36 and .44 revolvers \$5.00, .58 cal. Musket \$10.00 F&H \$1.00.**



BRNO 10 SHOT MAGS

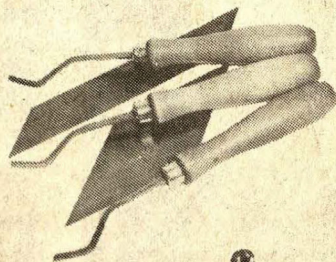
Once again available

Now you can put real fire power in your 22 cal. Brno bolt action repeater. G.S.A. converted magazines are now readily available; they are adapted for Australian ammunition and are **guaranteed trouble free.** Place your order now while stocks last. **1 mag \$13; 2 mags \$25 plus 50c F&H.**



CHECKERING TOOLS

Once again available. Professional checkering can now be done by yourself. Top quality U.S. made. **Only \$16.00 inc. postage.**

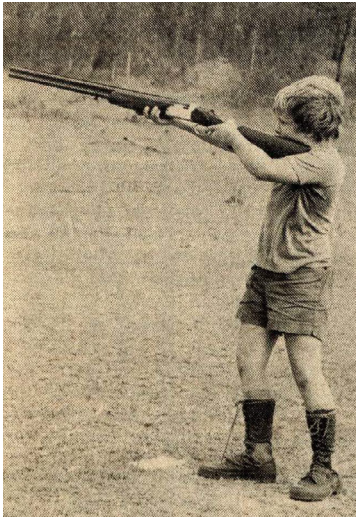


New super B-LITE

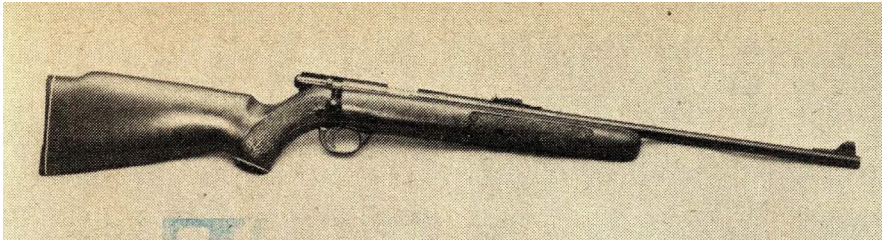
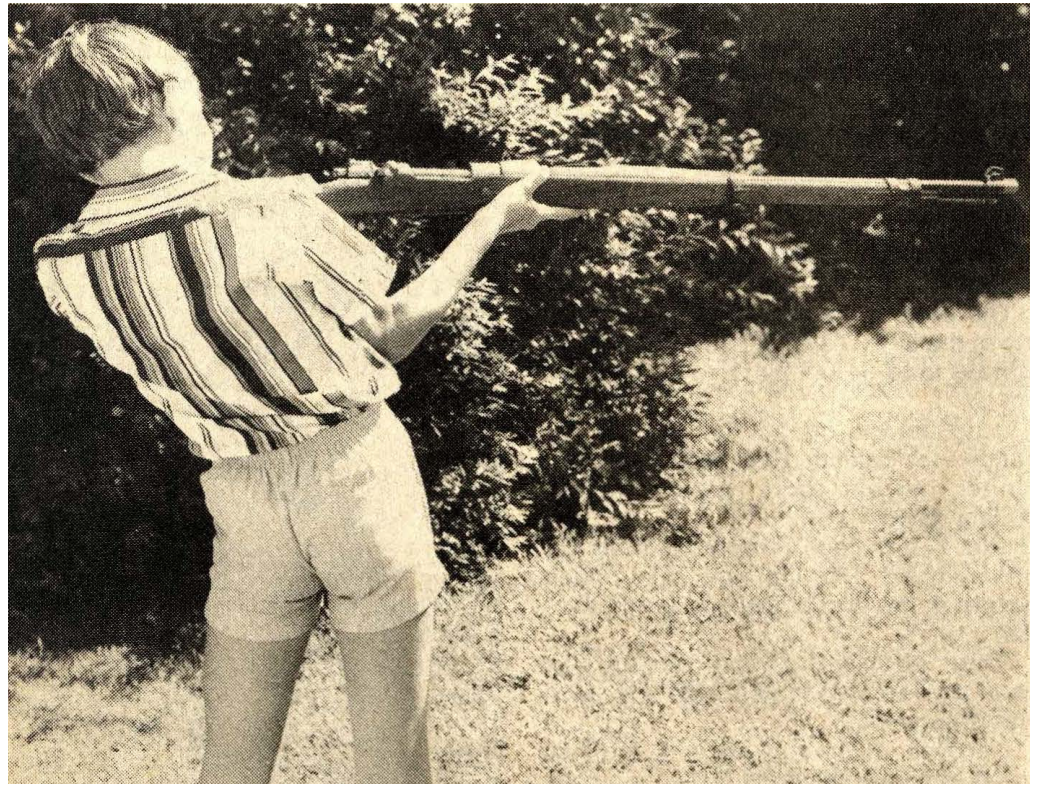
THE WORLD'S FINEST HAND HELD FLASHLIGHT

The new SUPER B-LITE has a precision engineered reflector that is multifaceted and polished to perfection to produce more light than ever before. The increase is dramatic and effective adding range and intensity of light. SUPER B-LITE uses "D" cell batteries and are available in 3 to 7 cell sizes. 2 year warranty. From **\$41.15 for 3 cell to \$46.70 for 7 cell (exc. batteries), plus \$2 F&H.**





BRAVE YOUNG SHOOTER, KYLE MARRIOT FROM NEWCASTLE, CAN HANDLE A MAN-SIZED 12 GAUGE ON CLAY TARGETS WITH A HIGH LEVEL OF SKILL AND ACCURACY UNUSUAL IN YOUNG SHOOTERS.



STIRLING .22 SINGLE SHOT CAN BE ADAPTED FOR A YOUNG SHOOTER BY SHORTENING THE STOCK. BARREL IS ALREADY SHORT ENOUGH.

TOP RIGHT: DEFINITELY DIFFICULT: THIS PRE-WW1 7X57 MAUSER WITH ITS 75CM BARREL EXAGGERATES THE PROBLEMS YOUNG SHOOTERS HAVE WITH ADULT-SIZED RIFLES.

A problem area that's difficult to fix for a young shooter is the pistol grip. Small hands wrapped around a gently curving pistol grip find it difficult to comfortably reach the trigger. Short of building the pistol grip up with wood putty or some such, there is little to be done about it. With the modified Brno, Adam finds it much easier to handle, although it's still an effort for him to shoot it off-hand. The rifle is fitted with a 4x Bushnell Banner scope (cutting the barrel off removed the option of open sights), and any thoughts on the merits of open versus telescopic sights for new shooters will remain a matter of personal preference.

I personally think open sights are a handicap for both gun and shooter. Even in my formative years with my first rimfire, I replaced the open sights with a decent aperture sight, and shot better for it. There is no reason why a youngster should not learn to shoot with a rifle that is properly set up. This means the trigger pull should be reasonable, not 5kg 'because a heavy trigger is safer'. A 1500 gram trigger, as is on my Brno, is just as safe if the shooter is trained from day one not to touch it until he's ready to shoot. First time

out for some informal practice, Adam handled his modified rifle pretty well and was able to score consistently on beer can-sized targets at 25m or so in gusty wind.

Anyone interested in getting a gun together for his offspring should have a look at some of the single shots currently on the market here. Winchester and Sterling make rifles that are suitable for modification, and Savage-Stevens make an excellent little single shot rifle called the 'Crackshot'. This rolling block rifle is very light and handy, and with its external hammer and exposed breech (with action open) make it one of the safest rifles around for the new shooter. The single specimen I tested some time back shot very well but could not readily accommodate a scope, and it had a very heavy trigger, although the latter could be fixed with little trouble.

Air rifles are a relatively safe tool to teach a youngster shooting skills. The problems of finding places to shoot with cartridge firearms even for casual target practice, are difficult for the city dweller, and the air rifle is a solution to this problem. There are a lot of air rifles on the market that are well proportioned for young shooters, and they also cost little to operate, so are well worth considering as a supplement to that first cartridge rifle. I hope, with the help of suitable firearms, my son's skill will develop to the point where he will take an interest in the more formal shooting sports that have given his old man so much pleasure over the past two decades. ●

DEAR SHOOTER



ALL RISE FOR THE MIGHTY .270

Your November 2025 edition was, I felt, particularly informative with any number of interesting articles and even the ads scored well! The piece on 'Australia's ultimate deer hunting cartridge' by Billy Allen grabbed my immediate attention, as he put the case for the mighty .270 Winchester for all we .270 tragics to savour.

I bought my first .270 in 1972 when, at the age of 25, I handed over the cash to Sydney gunsmith and shop owner Jack Pollard. Jack was a former camel and donkey shooter who swore by that calibre and the tales he told to convince me to buy that Sako still resonate.

I hung on to his every word, almost believing he was in fact the 'other' Jack from America. It was virtually one and the same, except I don't recall the US having any western desert camels which required Mr O'Connors skills with his Winchester .270 back then.

Jack fitted a Pecar 4x scope to that rifle and, along with some Sako ammo and the best advice, sent me out into the world feeling a million bucks. That .270 completed my trio of (still) favourite rifles, along with my Sako .222 and 1964-bought Model 94 .30/30 (I also have a bargain priced .270 in the shape of a Marlin XL7 which shoots like a champion).



Billy's article proved to a certain extent the old adage 'less is more' is absolutely correct. His concluding paragraph 'Why choose this one' where he talked about the legacy the mighty .270 leaves was perfectly put. Dave Burt, NSW

WIDDER-FUL MEMORIES

I read with great interest Derek Nugent's 'A slice of German history' article on the Widder knife (*Shooter*, September 2025) and you know how the mind works when something you recognise says: "I've got one of those!" I bought mine in the early '70s when the hunting bug hit and my first pay packet arrived. Bigger targets demanded a bigger knife and my all-time favourite was next, the 'Old Timer' by Schrade-Walden of the US. Gerber and Puma also had a run but stayed in the cabinet when it was time to go on a trip.

My hunting days are long gone but the interest never fades. Derek's article was a beauty and made me go to the cabinet to look at lots of 'stuff' related to those great times. I'm now 70 and the good mate who got us all started is 82, yet his shooting interests are as strong as ever, though sadly his body fails him these days.

So my old girl has the 'Original Buffalo Skinner' on the blade, the leather rings have dried (but now resoaked to tighten), and it looks like I may have filed the notches on the crown. My knife's sheath has an embossed elk stag on the front and I believe what remains of the Widder 'W' on front of the retaining strap press stud (is that recorded anywhere or just wishful thinking?) Both knives had a wonderful earlier life and came out today still cutting paper when held vertically. Great article.

Renato Spagnolo, via email

UP FOR THE CHALLENGE

In recent years I've read articles in *Australian Shooter* concerning reloading of 577/450 ammunition. I came into possession of a Hollis & Sons rifle and on the right side of the action is the serial number above 'Martini Patent', on the left it has 'I. Hollis & Sons' and on the flat of the barrel is 'I. Hollis & Sons of London'.

When I acquired the rifle it had broken parts in the action so I took it to a gunsmith in the Newcastle

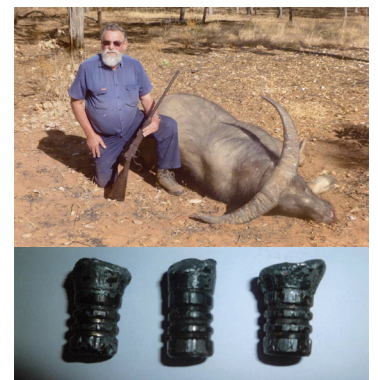
area who rebuilt those parts. His report said that while it was in 'used' condition, the rifle was in excellent shape including the barrel which is devoid of pitting. My next step was to source ammunition and, after much research, I decided the best thing was reload. I sourced brass cases from Bertram Bullet Co. and 405-grain lead projectiles from Hawkesbury River Bullet Co.

The next issue was powder. I emailed ADI for advice who recommended Trail Boss, their advice being to fill the case up to the base of a seated projectile. I achieved this by measuring the projectile up to the seating ring and, with this measurement, was able to fill the case to that depth (this being the maximum load). When I weighed the powder it came to 33.7gr, also the maximum load, so to achieve a minimum load I had to use 70 per cent, which amounted to 23.59gr. After range testing I settled on 26.5gr.

Although I was achieving reasonable groups at 50m, I was shooting high so went back to the gunsmith to lift the front sight. With this done, the 26.5 grains of Trail Boss combined with magnum primers did the job and subsequent groups landed 25mm above the waterline.

I was ready to go hunting and arranged an NT buffalo shoot with a qualified guide. While being told by other shooters the rifle wouldn't be good enough, my response was the British shot elephants in Africa with this calibre, I was only after buffalo. I enclose two photos, one of the first buffalo taken and one of three projectiles, two from under the skin of that animal and the other from a second buffalo.

Ron W. Cranfield, NSW



SEND LETTERS TO:
edit@ssaa.org.au

National

Benchrest Four-Gun National Championships

April 1-6, 2026
Dairyville, Coffs Harbour, NSW
Program: April 1-2: Practice days; 3: Unlimited; 4: Sporter; 5: Light Barrel; 6: Heavy Barrel. Facilities: Camping, toilets, showers, kitchen, barbecue. Full details on National website. Contact: Ian Thompson 0499 212 260.

Field Rifle, 3P, Scoped Air and NRA National Championships

April 2-6, 2026
Southern Districts Rifle Club, WA
Program: Thursday, April 2: Practice. Friday: NRA 3x40, 10m 3P Air Rifle. Saturday: Field Rifle Centrefire, 10m Air Rifle Precision. Sunday: 3P Rimfire, Field Rifle Rimfire. Monday: 3P Centrefire, closing ceremony. Full details on National website. Facilities: Camping \$10 per person for duration of event, hot showers and toilets, full canteen from breakfast daily. WA-compliant firearm storage at club, \$10 per person for duration (interstate competitors only), limited space, no cases or bags, competitors must provide own trigger locks. Contact: info@srdc.com.au

Muzzleloading and Black Powder Cartridge National Championships

April 2-6, 2026
Perth Muzzleloading Club, WA
Program: Thursday, April 2: Practice day; Friday: Black Powder Pistol; Saturday: Black Powder Rifle; Sunday: Black Powder Rifle; Monday: Black Powder Musket, Flintlock and Percussion Shotgun. Prizes: Medals for first three. Facilities: Limited camping and caravan facilities, Saturday night barbecue and fireworks show. See National website for full event details. Contact: Bob Boyd robertjboyd@bigpond.com or 0417 953 257.

Rifle Metallic Silhouette National Championships

April 3-6, 2026
SSAA Majura Range, ACT
Program: April 3: Dawn to 8.30 practice and weigh-in, 9am 40 shots Rimfire Hunting Rifle followed by 40 shots Centerfire Hunting Rifle. April 4: Dawn to 8.30 practice and weigh-in, 9am 80 shots centerfire. April 5: Dawn to 8.30 practice and weigh-in, 9am 80 shots rimfire. April 6: Dawn to 8.30 practice and weigh-in, 9am 80 shots Air Rifle. Prizes: Medals all grades including juniors, two-gun medals and team trophies. Facilities: Camping on range with water and showers, canteen all weekend. Contact: David True 0423 043 663 or dtrue222@gmail.com.

BPCR Silhouette National Championships

June 18-21, 2026
Monarto Silhouette Range, Para, SA
Program: June 18: Set-up and practice. June 19: 40 shots Smallbore iron sights. June 20: 40 shots BPCR iron sights. June 21: 40 shots BPCR any sights.

Facilities: Camping available at range, barbecue Saturday night, limited canteen. Contact: John Visnyai johnvizi@hotmail.com or 0421 117 391.

SSAA 2026 National Junior Challenge

July 9-12, 2026
SSAA Majura, ACT
Program: Thursday, July 9: Practice; Friday: Silhouette Rimfire, Cowboy Lever Action Silhouette, BR30 (time permitting); Saturday: 3P Rimfire, Introduction to Western Action, catered roast dinner and games; Sunday: Field Rifle Rimfire, presentations. See National website. Contact: junior.development@ssaact.org.au

International

NRA Any Sight International Postal Event

December 1, 2025-July 31, 2026
Field Rifle, 3-Positional, Scoped Air Rifle and NRA Any Sight
Program: Competition open to all registered participants who are current financial members of Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA) Inc (or approved full member body) or National Rifle Association (NRA). Awards and certificates for first three in Off-gun (overall scores); Grades: Junior U-18 and Junior U-15. Full details on National website. Contact: Matt Rogaloff fieldrifle@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

NSW

Lever Action State Championships

May 1-3, 2026
Casino Rifle Range, Casino, NSW
Program: Friday, May 1: Practice 9am-3pm; Saturday: Open Lever Action Match; Sunday: Classic Calibre Match. Facilities: Camping permitted with toilets and showers, Saturday dinner included in nomination fee. See National website for full event details. Contact: Don Chesworth 0418 881 078 or drchesworth@inet.net.au

SSAA (NSW) Big Game Rifle State Championships

May 29-31, 2026
Emmaville Shooting Complex, NSW
Program: Friday, May 29: Set-up and practice from 12.30-3pm; Saturday and Sunday: Rifle events. Awards: Medals for first three in all individual events. Facilities: Camping and caravans permitted at range with toilets and hot showers, clubhouse open for indoor camping. Contact: Ben Doherty bfdoherty@bigpond.com or 0409 831 258 (A/H); Gary Beling beling.home@gmail.com or 0409 751 384 or 0458 102 355. Full event details on National website.

SA

Gallery Rifle State Championships

June 12-15, 2026
Para Range, SA
Program: Friday, June 12: Practice from noon-4pm. See National website for full event details. Facilities:

Camping, canteen, barbecue on Saturday night. Contact: Dave McCarthy atm3855@yahoo.com.au

Vic

SSAA (Vic) Junior Scoped Silhouette State Championships

May 17, 2026
Eagle Park Range, Vic.
Program: 8.30am set up, 9-10.15 practice, 10.15 shooters' briefing, 10.30 2x40-shot matches. Nominations on the day. Prizes for first three in each age group. Facilities: Bruno's Café. Contact: Mark Butler 0409 135 740.

SSAA (Vic) Scoped Silhouette State Championships

May 22-24, 2026
Eagle Park Range, Vic
Program: Friday: Practice. Saturday: 80 shots centrefire. Sunday: 80 shots rimfire. Nominations on the day, medals for first three all grades. Facilities: Toilets, showers, Bruno's Café. Contact: Mark Butler 0409 135 740.

SSAA (Vic) Lever Action Silhouette State Championships

September 24-27, 2026
Eagle Park Range, Vic.
Program: Thursday: Set up and practice. Friday: 80 shots rifle calibre. Saturday: 80 shots pistol calibre. Sunday: 80 shots smallbore. Nominations on the day. Medals for first three in each grade. Facilities: Toilets, showers, Bruno's Café. Contact: Mark Butler: 0409 135 740.

WA

Registered Fly Shoot State Championships

April 11-12, 2026
Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA
Program: Saturday, April 11: 500m LG and HG centrefire. April 12: 200yd rimfire. Range open 3pm Friday for practice and CF flag set-up. Facilities: Barbecue lunch and cold drinks included in fee. See National website for comprehensive event details. Email contact: Stuart Pethybridge s_pethybridge@hotmail.com

Precision Rifle State Championships

April 17-19, 2026
Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA
Program: Friday 3-6pm range set-up; Saturday 8.45am Rimfire Precision Rifle match; Sunday 8.45am Stage Centrefire match. Full program on National website. Prizes: Medals for first three in rimfire, centrefire and overall. Facilities: Meal supplied Saturday and Sunday (barbecue lunch), camping with toilets, barbecue facilities, limited power. Contact: Sam Hacking 0424 189 215 or precisionrifle@ssaawa.org.au

Tower Shotgun State Championships

April 19, 2026
Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA
Program: 15 target DB, 15 target SB, 15 target points, score and pairs. Total: 75 targets. Nominations: Adults \$55,

juniors \$30, available on the day from 7.30am, competition starts 8am. Prizes: Sash for overall high gun, medals in accordance with National rule book, 2x \$100 vouchers. Facilities: Hot food and cold drinks on sale, free tea, coffee and biscuits. Contact: Neil Cobb 0404 040 357 or neilcobb@bigpond.com.

Shotgun Skeet State Championships

May 24, 2026
Jarrahdale Sporting Shooters, WA
Program: 100 targets, nominations 9-10am, adults \$65, juniors free. Prizes: Sash for high gun, 2x \$100 vouchers, medals in accordance with National rule book. Facilities: Free tea and coffee, cold drinks and snacks on sale. Contact: Nigel Youens 0466 341 379 or John Graham 0409 084 973.

Lever Action State Championships

May 29-31, 2026
SSAA Narrogin, Dumberning, WA
Program: Friday, May 29: Practice; Saturday-Sunday 9.30am start. Facilities: Camping at range with water and limited power, shower block on site, Saturday night dinner provided. Full details on National website. Contact: Tim Corby 0418 934 666 or leveraction@ssaawa.org.au; Ray Smith 0428 921 249 or narroginshooters@gmail.com

Single Action State Championships

May 30-31, 2026
Bedforddale, WA
Program: Saturday: Stages 1-2, 3-4, 5-6. Sunday: Stages 7-8, 9-10, presentations. Ammo count: 100 pistol, 100 rifle, 40 shotgun. Facilities: Camping available May 29 and 30, \$10 per site, barbecue packs to buy with notice. See National website for full details. Contact: Michael Lapham 0411 069 007 or michaelapham@live.com

Lever Action Silhouette State Championships

August 6-9, 2026
Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA
Program: Thursday, August 6: Practice; Friday: Rifle match; Saturday Pistol Cartridge; Sunday: Small Bore (all 80 shots). WA state team selection will be on top 10 placings. Prizes: Medals in all grades, trophies for two-gun, three-gun, juniors. Facilities: Camping with showers, toilets and barbecue, limited power, meal supplied Saturday night. Full details on National website. Contact: David Brougham 0432 748 703 or laswa2011@gmail.com

PROMOTE YOUR EVENT

Don't let your National or State championship be overlooked. Give it maximum coverage by promoting it in online and in print in *Australian Shooter*, the SSAA's National flagship publication. Visit ssaa.org.au and go to 'Disciplines: Upload Event Notices', fill in the form and we'll do the rest.

SSAA Inc Event Cancellation / Postponement Policy

An event may be postponed or cancelled at any time by SSAA Inc, SSAA State Office or club directive.

SSAA Inc will not be liable for reimbursement to competitors for any costs associated with a postponed or cancelled SSAA Inc championship event for any reason. Competitors planning to attend an event should consider options for free cancellation or refund of travel and accommodation costs where available.

FIREARMS LAWYER

Get help from 4-time Olympic shooter and lawyer, Glenn Kable

Get the right legal advice!
Available Australia-wide.

Having spent a lifetime around the sport, I have an intimate knowledge of the workings of all the bodies affecting the decision-making process, whether it is police or courts, local councils or governments, clubs or associations.

For a no-obligation assessment, phone 0407 962 200 or email glenn@hartmann.net.au mail@hartmann.net.au

TOOWOOMBA GUN, MILITARIA & COLLECTABLES FAIR

300+ TABLES
\$10 ENTRY

16th May & 17th May at Toowoomba Showgrounds
9-4 Sat 9-2 Sun

Always buying militaria & blades | Ph Dan 0407 643 776



RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP ONLINE NOW

SSAA MEMBER ALERT

If you are using membership of the SSAA as your genuine reason for your firearms licence, you must ensure you renew your SSAA membership in time. 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.



True Class 5 Hearing Protection

CENS Digital custom electronic hearing protection. Amplifies the sounds around you and cuts off when sound is detected above 81dB then sound returns when it's clear & safe. Up to 5 different modes for all disciplines of shooting plus wireless communications.



[earmold.com.au](http:// earmold.com.au)

Email: [info@ earmold.com.au](mailto: info@ earmold.com.au)

Agents throughout Australia & New Zealand

True custom made shooters hearing protection. Custom made on the spot & ready the same day. Ultimate in comfort & highest rated protection with up to 40.5dB reduction at 4000Hz. Removes background noise & the crack from the shot while still having situational awareness.



FirstGold



Secure Your Wealth with Gold



onlineshop.ssaa.org.au

Shop now for exclusive SSAA products, including clothing, camping, accessories, knives, books and more.

SHOP NOW
IT'S EASY!



See the complete range of products in our Online Shop

LISTEN UP!



SSAA Earmuffs With Case
\$74.95 each



SSAA Cool-Dri Polo
\$43.00



SSAA Bolt Action Pen
\$44.95 for 1 **\$62.95** for 2



SSAA Shooting Glasses
\$59.95



Rechargeable
Knife Sharpener
\$89.95



Replacement Belts 10 Pack
\$29.95

onlineshop.ssaa.org.au or call 02 8805 3900 for phone orders

Enter to win

Send your full name, email, address and contact number inside an envelope to:

(Name of competition)
SSAA Inc
PO Box 2520
Unley, SA 5061

OR



SCAN TO ENTER

Go to ssaa.org.au/our-media/competition

COMPETITIONS CLOSE
APRIL 30
2026

Beretta Gift Card RRP \$100

Kindly donated by Beretta Australia
berettaaustralia.com.au



Winchester Prize Pack RRP \$164.75

Kindly donated by Winchester Australia
winchesteraustralia.com.au



Dog & Gun Coffee - Roadie Bundle

RRP \$209.85

Kindly donated by Dog & Gun Coffee
winchesteraustralia.com.au



Juniors

Ear Pro Donut Earmuffs - Walkers Razor

RRP \$145

Kindly donated by TSA Outdoors
tsaoutdoors.com.au



WINNERS!

Australian Shooter January, 2026

Hawke Frontier Reflex Sight
Derynn Penola, VIC

Winchester Prize Pack
Glenn Siviz, NSW

Top Shots Mug
Kevin Donnelly, NSW

Juniors – Beretta Gift Voucher
P Rowe, NSW

Australian Hunter 95

RMK Leather Works Pack
Rhy Harper, VIC

Beretta Gift Voucher
Abbas Haddadi, NSW

Game-bar carbon+ bundle
Eugenio Daniele, VIC

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

The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia Inc (SSAA Inc) is subject to the provisions of the National Privacy Act. We collect personal information from members of the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia in the various states and territories. Should you want a copy of the SSAA Inc Privacy Statement or seek further information please write to PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061.

Freelance contributions are welcome. We do, however, recommend that potential authors contact the office prior to story drafting. Manuscripts and digital files may be sent to the address shown above. No responsibility is taken for the loss or damage of manuscripts or photographic material.

While the publishers exercise due care with regard to handling data, no responsibility can be accepted for errors and/or omissions, or any damage suffered as a consequence.

Please note that certain firearm types and accessories advertised in the Australian Shooter may not be legally available in all states and territories. Please check with your local authorities before ordering. Neither the AS nor any of its advertisers accept responsibility in this matter. No text or photographs within the magazine may be republished, either electronically or in print, without the express written permission of the Editor.
Copyright 2026.



A WIN IS A WIN

WORDS:
MARK VAN DEN
BOOGAART



I t's taken some effort to remain positive these past few months. I naturally lean towards a glass half-full view of the world, though have always tried to be a good scout, so temper my 'sunny side of the street' disposition with being prepared. Optimism, after all, works best when grounded in reality and paired with action. I also believe that from little wins, big wins grow and it wasn't long after our return from England one of those little wins came whistling its way along our suburban street.

A good friend and neighbour, Al, had taken care of our yard while we were away. During a typical summer of heat, humidity and sudden rain, grass can grow as high as an elephant's eye as they say, and I'd no desire to come home to something resembling a cane field. When we first spoke about it the plan was simple enough. His son would mow the lawn, with the unspoken understanding Al would handle the heavier work.

A couple of days after our return, I spotted Al and wandered over to say hello. The conversation moved easily enough from our time away to the usual updates about the street, the weather and general state of affairs. Just before leaving Australia we'd experienced a roof tile smashing hailstorm, so it was reassuring indeed to hear it'd been the first and, so far, last for the season. As the conversation wound down, I asked him what his son might want for, you know, the yard work.

To my extremely pleasant surprise the answer was simple: He wanted to go to the range. The boys

living in and around our street, and yes they're all boys*, walk to and from school most days of the week. Sometimes six of them, sometimes more, they meander their way to the local primary and adjacent high school, backpacks slung low and conversations flowing.

It seems my overly talkative eldest, so fond of his black Sako cap, had been happily chatting away about the range, hunting and all manner of related things. Somewhere along the line the bug had bitten and now another young man wanted a turn.

As I write this, our range visit is still a work in progress. The new school year has started and week-end summer sports take priority, as they should. There are also a few logistical hurdles to contend with. For instance, I can't supervise two junior shooters at once, so we've had to work out a roster of sorts. Given that reality, we've invested our time elsewhere for now, talking more generally about firearms, the range and broader ideas which sit around them.

Happily our conversations have proven valuable in their own right. They've helped a new shooter understand what lies ahead, long before anything happens in practice. We started with the basics, like the term 'gun' and understanding the difference between gun and rifle.

A great starting point, it led to more specific conversations about the rifle we'll be using, along with the differences between centrefire and rimfire then to rifle safety. To date we've focused more on the person and not so much the mechanics. We're building habits like being

mindful, staying aware, moving slowly and treating the rifle as something serious. How an individual rifle's safety works will come later.

We've discussed shooting and paper targets and yes, you can bring targets home if it's OK with your mum. Then there's the range itself. Where it is, how long it takes to get there and what to expect when you arrive. We've also touched on the idea there are people at the range whose job it is to make sure everything runs safely, and how important it is to listen carefully and always follow directions.

It hasn't been one-way traffic though. Our conversations have generated some important questions from the audience, like what about being sun-smart? Do I need a hat, what should I wear and what type of shoes? That line of inquiry quickly led to the bigger questions, the ones which really matter. Is there a shop at the range and does it sell lollies, soft drinks, chips? What about lunch: Is there McDonald's nearby?

In the midst of everything swirling around us, a neighbourly favour has quietly turned into a chance to share something with a new generation. The early conversations, explanations and quiet lessons that've taken place have already given the experience shape. For now it's enough to see curiosity turning into understanding, to watch a little win grow into something with its own momentum. We're not there yet but are on our way and the next chapter's already lining itself up. Stay tuned.

*With new neighbours we now have a young girl in the street. Times they are a changin'.



FROM LITTLE THINGS: MARK'S ELDEST ON HIS FIRST WING SHOOTING ADVENTURE.

Australian HUNTER

AUSTRALIA'S FAVOURITE HUNTING MAGAZINE



ISSUE 96 OUT NOW

SAKO 90 VARMINT IN .308 WIN: PERFECTING A LONG-RANGE LEGACY

Australian
HUNTER
AUSTRALIA'S FAVOURITE HUNTING MAGAZINE



FOLLOW THE LEADER

COURMET CURED GAME | MASTERING THE GLASS | BEST-GUN BRILLIANCE
SAMBAR EXTREMES | THE FORGOTTEN TRIPLE-DEUCE | GALE-FORCE FOXES



\$9.95 incl. GST AUS & NZ Edition 96 2026



Four issues delivered to your home for just \$34 SSAA member price only at membership.ssaa.org.au

"It's economical"
 Danny & Maria, NSW

"Great protection"
 Spiro, Melbourne

THOUSANDS OF MEMBERS COVERED

GET \$25,000* COVER

ONLY \$35

Are you covered?



MEMBERS FIREARMS PROTECTION

Call (02) 8805 3900

Email: megan@ssaains.com.au

www.ssaib.com.au

For only \$35 get up to \$25,000 cover for your firearms and fixed accessories.*

- Thousands and thousands of members protected.
- You're covered at home, at the range and hunting.*
- You're covered overseas for up to 28 days.*
- Claims settled for replacement value (up to 5 years) and indemnity value after this.
- Claims assessed by an approved firearms dealer and settled promptly.

*Accessories (to the value of \$5,000) must be fixed to your firearm at the time of loss, damage or theft

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

HERE'S WHAT SSAA MEMBERS FIREARMS PROTECTION CAN COVER:

Claims Settled Promptly

Firearms & Accessories.

*Coverage.

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

• 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 member's premises. Where the member or any person or entity to whom the equipment has been entrusted to fails to comply with any law relating to storage, use or handling of the equipment.
 *Accessories not fixed to the firearm at the time of loss.

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, PDS and TMD (www.ssaib.com.au) before deciding to become a member and to purchase and hold discretionary protection issued by SSAA Mutual Limited. ACN 655 675 862