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## Contents

- 6 Letters & News**
- 8 Mauser muse**  
The forefather of the modern bolt action rifle
- 10 Rifle review**  
Mauser M25
- 14 Politics in Focus**  
**Firearm laws don't prevent terrorism**  
And four rules to remember after the act
- 16 Juniors in Focus**  
**Georgia Rogers**  
Shotgun rising star
- 18 2025 Chisholm Trail**  
Bringing back bygone eras
- 21 Book review**  
Shooting the British Double Rifle
- 22 Five days in the field**  
Pigs, predators and more...
- 26 Hunting's greatest joy**
- 30 Chasing majestic reds with my 'lucky charm'**
- 31 Shane hits 350 donations**
- 32 Rigby's 250th anniversary**  
A night to remember in Portsmouth
- 36 Pulsar demonstration nights**  
Testing out thermals
- 38 Pulsar's new thermal monocular will get your heart pounding**
- 40 Politics in Focus**  
**3D guns not so 'plastic fantastic'**
- 42 Scope tells the digital story**  
Burris Optics - XTR PS riflescope
- 43 Compact wireless alarm offers reassurance**  
Stealthalert by Simtek

- 45 Win**  
Three great prizes this issue!
- 46 A deep dive into the 6.5 Grendel**  
Explore an uncommon modern rifle cartridge with a lot of niche potential
- 50 A journey with the .30-30 Winchester**  
A timeless hunting classic
- 54 Firearm review**  
Savage Revel Classic
- 59 The Kogan**  
Review
- 60 Ten telltale signs of feral pigs**
- 62 When I tried to sell kangaroo leather to America**
- 64 Bushnell R3 Series**  
Affordable excellence for hunters
- 68 Bruce Barnett**  
Renowned Aussie slipjoint maker
- 71 The best infantry rifle – for its time – ever produced**

GREAT AUSTRALIAN OUTDOORS

- 74 K'gari**  
Island of sand and survival
- 78 Coolibah Hills Honey**  
A taste of the Queensland bush
- 79 Fishing with kids**

- 81 Shoot Off! Quiz**
- 82 Eat WILD**  
Venison Tartare

## February 2026



8



16



## Editorial

### Canberra experience and know how

The Australian Shooters Alliance's Rachael Oxborrow and Tim Bannister attended Federal Parliament in the last week of sittings in Canberra last year.

Together they represent Australia's most experienced and professional lobbyists in their fields of expertise. Rachael has worked in multiple industries, both as a journalist and advocate, including agriculture and the shooting sports. She is a keen rifle competitor herself.

Tim has had clearance to walk the inner halls of parliament since 2008 and has been endorsed by Labor, Liberal and Bob Katter. He has represented shooters at the United Nations and sat on various federal government advisory groups as a councillor. He is currently endorsed by the Member for Hunter, Special Envoy for Men's Health and Olympian handgun shooter Dan Repacholi. Tim presented Dan with the complete set of 2025 *The Report* magazines as a Christmas gift. Their visit was prior to the Bondi terrorist attack, which prompted inappropriate calls for legal firearms restrictions; however, Mr Repacholi publicly rejected these calls. See pages 14 and 15 for Tim Bannister's story 'Firearm laws don't prevent terrorism'.



Tim and Rachael were in Canberra in early December continuing to work to protect members and promote the shooting sports.

## THE REPORT

A new magazine for the Australian Shooter and Great Australian Outdoors enthusiast

Volume 2.0

Published by Australian Shooters Alliance (ASA) – a wholly owned subsidiary of Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (QLD).

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Proudly printed in Australia by  
ive Print Web Offset

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Letters

**Kmart's low prices for hunting life**

Reading about the new President's firearms background [December *The Report*] it reminded me of when you could buy a .22 semi-automatic Stirling from Kmart. I keep this ad to show younger people of different days when all you needed was a driver's licence to buy a rifle. I bought my first .22 from Kmart 50 years ago on layby. Ninety dollars was a lot of money back then!

Trevor, Ipswich, Qld



**Register my antique firearms?**

Dear Editor,  
I have several weapons that are 1880-period Martini Henry rifles. As these are about 145 years old and ammunition is not available, do I have to continue to register them or are they classed as antiques?

David

**Editor's Note:**  
Hi David,  
*Weapons Licensing takes the view that if ammunition is commercially available in the world, it is commercially available in Australia. This interpretation relies on the Marrakesh Free Trade Agreement that Australia is a signatory to.*

Answer from Steven Kitchiner,  
Secretary, SSAA Historical Arms Collectors Branch Inc.

**Story suggestion**

In the December *The Report* was an article on safe ammo storage, which was informative. A good add-on would be powder storage requirements.

Regards

John, via email

**The Report crossing state lines**

Dear SSAA Qld,

We took *The Report* to hand out at the two-day Hunter Valley Arms Fair in September of 2025. Thank you very much for the opportunity to promote our industry.

Ross Wood, Hunter Valley Arms Fair

**From the Editors:**

*Thank you, Ross. Support such as yours helps us promote and grow our industry. We're proud to represent Australia's shooting, hunting, and outdoor industry - sharing the stories, achievements and passions that define our community. It's exciting to see *The Report* now reaching readers across New South Wales, helping connect clubs, businesses and outdoor enthusiasts nationwide.*



**On the front cover**

Hi SSAA,

I was wondering how I would go about submitting this amazing photo of me deer hunting recently in Moonie, QLD. I also have had a play around with ChatGPT and I think it looks amazing on the front cover!! (Just sayin\*\*) LOL!

Kind regards,

Suzie, QLD

**Editor's Note:**

*Thanks, Suzie for submitting your AI-generated version of *The Report*! We think it looks pretty good, too!*

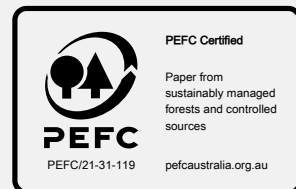


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We want to know your thoughts on shooting, hunting and the great Australian outdoors so put pen to paper or hit the keyboard. Letters may appear in any of our electronic and printed media including our e-newsletter, websites and *The Report* magazine. Last names optional but please include your first name and town for publishing and SSAA Queensland membership number for verification purposes only.

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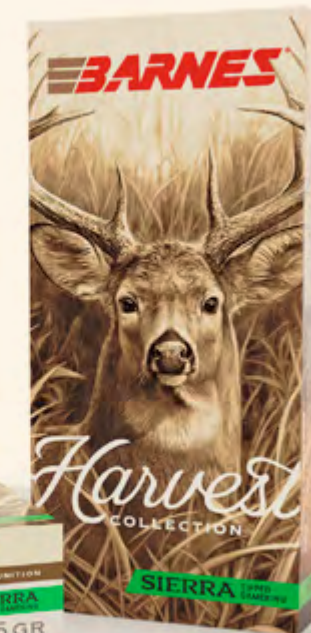


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# MAUSER MUSE

## The forefather of the modern bolt action rifle

By Liz Rymill

Growing up on the remote, sand-swept west coast of South Australia near the Great Australian Bight, my grandfather had a reputation with the rifle, even as a young boy. The wheatfields reach the rugged limestone cliffs that hold back the pounding Southern Ocean in this untouched part of the country. It's a long way from Oberndorf am Neckar, at the eastern edge of the Black Forest in Germany: 15,300 kilometres as the crow flies. But my grandfather and his single shot, open sight, Mauser-Werke AG Oberndorf AN Patrone .22 Long Rifle were a tidy combination on everything from pre-war target competitions to rabbiting and vermin control. The rifle was inherited by my brother, not me, 85 years later, but I managed to track one down for myself a couple of years ago, such was the impression the little German long arm made on me.

### HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

The 19th century was an exciting era for firearm designs, from Sam Colt's single-action revolver to Winchester's iconic cowboy-favoured lever-action rifles, but perhaps the most consequential innovation came from Germany. It is the story of how Nicholas Dreyse recognised and applied the push-and-turn-down principle of the common door-securing bolt to lock a cartridge in the firing chamber of a rifle. So secure was this 'new' lock mechanism, that a landmark military rifle evolved that changed the face of war.



Mauser's influence is primarily in the design of the bolt-action rifle, particularly the Mauser 'three-lug locking lug' system found in the iconic Gewehr 98 and its descendants, which became the foundation for many modern sporting rifles. (Image: Warfare history network)

The construction of the Gewehr 98 rifle was personally praised by Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1898. Mauser lost his left eye in 1901 because of a cartridge explosion during a test firing of the self-loading C98. Image supplied by Armémuseum (The Swedish Army Museum)

### THE MAUSER BROTHERS

Two unknown German gunsmiths, Paul and Wilhelm Mauser, recognised and perfected Dreyse's concept and used it in conjunction with a newly developed metallic cartridge to produce the first truly successful German rifle.

As a young man, Paul Mauser showed a natural gift for improving existing mechanisms and developing new ones, as well as for designing new and more efficient gunsmithing tools. Paul was assigned to duty as an artilleryman at Ludwigsburg, where he closely studied models of breechloading guns. By 1859, Paul had left the army and returned to work at the Royal Firearms Factory in Oberndorf. Along with his brother Wilhelm, he devoted his free time to the development of new types of firearms. Wilhelm handled the business aspects of this venture, while Paul handled technical work.

*"The first Mauser rifle was adopted by the German Empire in 1872 as the Infantry Rifle Model 1871."*

From his first crude design, Paul Mauser evolved the bolt action magazine rifle. Mauser's first successful design was a single-shot, 11mm bolt-action rifle, which became the basis for later designs. The first Mauser rifle was adopted by the German



Gunsmith Paul Mauser (27 June 1838 – 29 May 1914) was a German weapon designer, manufacturer, industrialist and, later, politician. (Photograph by Francis Flinch)

Empire in 1872 as the Infantry Rifle Model 1871. This is popularly known among firearms collectors world-wide as the 'Howth Rifle' - a very long, very heavy weapon. By 1880, Mauser had developed a tubular magazine, and the resulting rifle was adopted by the Prussian government in 1884.



The Mauser factory, Oberndorf am Neckar, Germany circa 1910. (Photograph by Francis Flinch)

### MILITARY AND GLOBAL INFLUENCE

In 1898, the Mauser Model 98 was introduced, becoming a standard military arm for Germany through two World Wars and influencing military and sporting rifles globally. Among the Model 98's many improvements over previous Mauser designs are the addition of a third locking lug, a large gas shield for safety and an improved firing pin, which, even if broken, cannot travel forward unless the bolt is fully closed. The Model 98's strength, simplicity, and ease of manufacture made it the workhorse of the German army.

Mauser patents have also served as a platform for other bolt-action rifles, including the U.S Springfield Model 1903 military rifle. The Model 98 is still manufactured today, and the company's website will tell you it has produced more than 100 million Mauser 98s since its inception. In addition to his rifle designs, Paul Mauser is also known for the famous Model 1896 'Broomhandle' semi-automatic pistol and pistol-carbine, the HSc semi-automatic pistol and various pocket pistols. During the Second World War, Waffenfabrik Mauser also produced the P-08 Luger pistol for Germany's armed forces.

Peter Paul Mauser died in May 1914, the youngest of 13 children to master gunsmith Andreas Mauser, who had worked in a government firearms factory. The Mauser name continues today as Mauser-Werke Oberndorf Waffensysteme GmbH, a manufacturer of bolt-action sporting rifles - a forefather of the modern bolt action rifle and a living history steeped in excellence, precision and "embarrassingly good accuracy," as my grandfather used to say. 🍷



The Mauser M25 is all about hunting! It is short and light enough to be easily carried and fast to bring to the shoulder for quick shots.

RIFLE REVIEW

MAUSER M25

By Neil Schultz

Since brothers Paul and Wilhelm Mauser introduced their single shot bolt action rifle in 1871, the brand has been associated with innovative and outstandingly robust firearms. In 1884 their tubular magazine-fed version (model 1880) was adopted by the Prussian army as its primary infantry rifle. Improving on the design, internal box magazine repeating rifles, including models 93 and 94, were adopted by numerous countries in the northern and southern hemispheres for military use. It was, however, the M98 that became synonymous with the Mauser name following its military use by several nations for more than five decades - spanning both world wars. Unrivalled strength saw the M98 action being used (and copied) in the manufacture of sporting rifles for game species ranging from boar, bear and deer to buffalo, big cat and elephant.



The M25 Max is a handsome firearm that is as functional as well. Note the bolt handle positioned where the hand is naturally placed in the firing position. The unobtrusive magazine is unlikely to be accidentally ejected due to two release tabs, seen on the leading sides.

Fast forward from the 19th to the 21st century and Mauser is still delivering superbly designed and manufactured sporting rifles. Most commonly seen in Australian hunting camps of the modern era, Mausers are the M12 and M18 models. Both are traditionally styled turn-bolt rifles available in a wide range of stock styles and commonly chambered in cartridges from the ever-popular .223 to whopper stoppers like .300 and .338 Magnums. Even some of the newer hot-rods like 6.5PRC are available.

For those with an unlimited budget, one can even find the M98 Diplomat chambered in .416 Rigby. Most recently introduced to the Mauser lineup is its state-of-the-art M25. In a departure from its heritage, turn-bolt rifles, the M25 is a straight-pull design. Apart from looking cool, the M25 is a functional firearm designed from the ground up to live up to Mauser's reputation of strength and reliability. At the heart of the M25 is its receiver/chassis machined from

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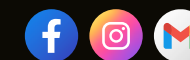


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## RIFLE REVIEW

solid bar stock. Rails milled into upper chassis provide a smooth bearing surface for the bolt carrier. So slick is the interaction between carrier and rails, that only fingertip pressure is required to manipulate the bolt. Only 13mm (1/2 inch) of rearward travel of the bolt handle unlocks the lugs to allow the action to be opened. This sees the process of ejecting a spent round and chambering another from the magazine being quite quick indeed.

Lockup of the bolt into battery is achieved by a very intelligent design utilising two huge radial lugs. The bolt doesn't turn to lock, as is the case in many pump-action rifles; instead, the lugs flare outwards, pushed by a wedge inside the bolt assembly. This is an extremely strong system, giving even more bearing surface than the notably robust old Mauser 98 action. The bolt face encloses the head of the case with a small extractor claw on the right-hand side. Ejection is achieved using two springs in the bolt face. This functioned flawlessly during testing, with fired cases propelled clear of the receiver without hitting the scope or picatinny rail.

Due to the nature of straight-pull rifles, a cantilever picatinny rail is required to allow correct eye relief to be attained. This configuration

allows the bolt carrier assembly unimpeded rearward travel. Mauser currently has three optic mounting bases in production. The rear of the carrier assembly is enshrouded in a polymer cover enhancing the M25's clean lines. As it comes from the manufacturer, the M25 carries a three-round, single-stack polymer magazine. A five-round magazine will be available as an accessory. Release tabs on the forward sides of the magazine are easy to operate and well placed for thumb and forefinger to detach the mag.

Mauser is chambering its model 25 for six common cartridges: .243 Win, 6.5 Creedmoor, .308 Win, .30-06 Springfield, 7mm Rem Mag and .300 Win Mag. Barrels on standard chamberings are 51cm in length with a diameter of 17mm. All are cold hammer forged and threaded with a 15x1mm metric muzzle thread for easy fitting of brakes or blast diverters. Rather than blueing or cera-coating, Mauser is using plasma oxidising to treat its barrels' external surfaces. This surface treatment process creates a hard oxide coating on metals by using a high-voltage plasma discharge to oxidize the surface.

Supplied to *The Report* for testing was the 'Max' version, fitted with a handsome laminated beech thumb-hole stock featuring an adjustable cheek riser. This is the heavier of the three stock options, weighing 3.4kg. Also available is the 'Extreme', wearing a black synthetic stock for all weather durability and a slightly lighter carry at 2.9kg. My personal choice would be the 'Pure', which, as its name may suggest, is a traditionally styled walnut stock giving the rifle that classic sporter appearance.



The two rails, on which the bolt carrier rides, create very little friction, resulting in a very smooth action. The 5mm thick receiver walls around the bolt when locked into battery give great strength to the system. Those walls increase to around 8mm around the chamber.

### In the field

Enough of the specs...how we all judge a rifle is by its performance in the paddock or on the range. The ergonomics of the M25 stock are spot-on, allowing the rifle to come to the shoulder instinctively - placing the optics at eye level. At exactly 100cm overall length, the rifle swings to follow moving targets easily. The balance is perfect, with a scope fitted, the M25 naturally comes up level when shouldered. Shooting factory ammunition ranging from budget to mid-priced produced a string of sub-moa groups from a sandbag on the tray of the ute. Working the action to chamber a round for shots on fleeing mobs of pigs was fast! I feel that one of the stocks without the thumbhole would be even quicker by eliminating the need to thread the thumb through the hole in the stock: just work the bolt and grab the pistol grip. Chambered in .308, the test rifle excelled in the chosen task of thinning out mobs of feral pigs on a grazing property. Mauser's M25 leaves nothing to be desired in a hunting rifle. Sure, it may not deliver bench-rest accuracy, but one doesn't need one-hole groups for hunting. The M25 was designed for a purpose, and it certainly excels in that task. Well done, Mauser! 🇦🇺

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The true test of any hunting rifle is how it works in real-world situations. The M25 is an ideal tool for Australian hunting targets.

# FIREARM LAWS DON'T PREVENT TERRORISM

## And four rules to remember after the act

By *Tim Bannister*

**Rule 1:** The perpetrators are always the ones responsible for their murderous actions.

**Rule 2:** Rarely does the event happen in isolation. There is almost always a trail of historical indicators leading up to the event and a series of officials' mistakes and maladministration.

**Rule 3:** The officials will always seek to cover up their mistakes as governments attempt to introduce new laws that are a display to the public that 'they are taking urgent action'.

**Rule 4:** Kneejerk reactions always end up with poor public policy decisions and unintended consequences.

Sounds familiar, doesn't it? Not since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 have we seen a more disingenuous, untruthful and dishonest display from government during a national crisis. State Labor Governments closed gun stores, told the media that shooters were hoarding firearms and ammunition, and they feared chaos on the streets. None of it was true and it put on display how dishonest and uninformed a government can be. And now after the December 2025 Bondi terrorist attack on Australian Jews by antisemitic Islamic extremists, the answer is to change the firearms laws? Even former Prime Minister John Howard, who declared after the 1996 gun buyback that 'he hated guns', couldn't bring himself to agree that we needed further firearm laws. He could see that it was being used as a distraction, rather than agreeing to holding a Royal Commission to publicly examine the

government's and other's actions leading up to the crime.

Anyone with the faintest knowledge of firearms licensing knows it is prosperous that the father of his ASIO-investigated son could hold a firearms license. The two perpetrators were fuelled by xenophobic hatred and religious extremism – the same extremism that has seen box cutters, firebombs, rental vans, knives and improvised explosive devices used in terrorist attacks around the world. The tools they used are more often than not irrelevant and rarely happen in a vacuum.

While keeping in mind Rule 1, the perpetrators are always the ones responsible for their murderous actions, it is on the governments of the day to do what they can to ensure public displays of extreme hatred and, in this case, antisemitism, is not tolerated, as it lays down the permission for further violence. Hate speech leads to hateful acts, usually violent in nature. Think of the pro-Palestinian rallies outside the Sydney Opera House after the atrocities of October 7, 2023, where 1,219 people were killed, mainly young Israelis attending a music festival in their homeland. Or the young male neo-Nazis marching in our cities under the auspices of being proud Australians, too stupid to realise their grandfathers or even great grandfathers went to war against the Nazis and all they stood for. The fact that governments allowed these displays of public hatred is astonishing and their urgency to blame the tools the terrorists used to divert attention away from their own failings is repugnant. We deserve better both as Australian citizens and legitimate, legal firearm owners.

Prime Minister Albanese and NSW Premier Minns have shown us their true colours and antipathy towards us. Terrorist acts and the fear of terrorism since the Twin Tower attacks by Al Qaeda on September 11, 2001 in New York have been used as an excuse to try and limit private firearm ownership across the world, including in Australia. I and others could see the ramifications of terrorism on our freedoms being challenged at the United Nations and domestic levels and it is the reason I chose and was supported by the then-SSAA leadership to study Counter Terrorism at university.

I studied at various Australian universities including Monash, Murdoch, Macquarie, Curtin and qualified from Griffith University based in Queensland. I was invited to undertake a doctorate in Counter Terrorism, which I politely declined, as I had already spent the equivalent of five years at university, two of them working fulltime and the idea of studying for another five years while my wife and I juggling a young son, working fulltime and flying to Canberra a dozen times a year and occasionally to the United Nations in New York was not appealing. But the studies helped me understand the legal manoeuvrings of governments and how to best keep our sport and recreation safe from their meddling.

The lone wolf anti-Islamic attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, the murderous religious zealots in Wieambilla and now the lone wolf and dad terrorist attacks at Bondi Beach have all given rise to restrictions on us, the citizens and legal firearm owners. Diminishing of our Western democratic freedoms are exactly what the terrorists want. The reality that governments find it permissible to reduce their citizens' freedoms for short-term political convenience is disgusting and must be fought.

NSW Labor jumped at the chance to change firearm laws, and their counterparts, the NSW Liberals, were only too quick to say: 'me too'. Federally, the

Opposition Liberals and particularly the Nationals have spoken out against the need to change firearm laws and have instead insisted the government call a Royal Commission. Federal Labor politician and Olympic pistol shooter Dan Repacholi, who sponsors myself to lobby in Federal Parliament, has also spoken out about the futility of increasing firearms laws to prevent a future terrorist attack.

"My position is clear. Australia has strong gun laws and they save lives, but I do not support changes that unfairly target responsible, law-abiding firearm owners. Measures that are blunt, symbolic or simply designed to appease public anger without improving safety are not the answer," Dan said.

In Queensland, Premier Crisafulli has been cautious about endorsing any future changes to firearm laws and said they will be considered in a "proper and considered way". NSW on the other hand recalled its state parliament prior to the Christmas break and rushed in numerous laws including banning 'belt-fed' firearms. They literally banned a 'unicorn' firearm that doesn't exist. Someone advising the NSW Labor Government so misunderstands the technology behind the firearms used in the Bondi terrorist attack, they banned a make-believe rifle. Did they confuse a waist belt that holds ammunition, a bandoleer with a Rats of Tobruk style belt-fed machine gun? Either way, it demonstrates the ludicrous behaviour of that states' politicians and its advisors.

I wonder what the Australian Jewish community would say about restricting civilian firearm ownership? No one, it seems, has actually asked them. In Israel, it is common for the government to advise its citizens to self-arm in public should there be intelligence that an attack at a shopping centre, for instance, was imminent. As one restrained Palestinian terrorist said after being shot by a civilian at a mall in Israel while being treated by an ambulance officer, "No one told me they had guns too!"

# Georgia Rogers

## SHOTGUN RISING STAR



*“Her recent selection for the Australian Ladies Team for the World English Sporting Championships in Canada marked a major milestone.”*

Georgia Rogers prepares for the next clay.

**By Sam Talbot**

**S**SAA Queensland member Georgia Rogers is emerging as one of Australia’s most exciting young shotgun shooters. Fresh out of Year 12 and already carrying multiple national titles, she has rapidly progressed from a curious teenager at a come-and-try day, to a fully-fledged international representative with her sights set firmly on the future.

Four years ago, none of this was part of the plan. Georgia had been focused on tennis, but when her coach retired, her father Charlie suggested she consider a sport with Olympic potential. Shooting was not an obvious choice, but when the pair noticed a come-and-try day at Beaudesert Sporting Clays, they decided to give it a go. Georgia had fired rifles before, but never a shotgun.

Charlie encouraged her to jump straight into a 75-target competition - a ‘trial by fire’ that resulted in single-digit scores and a very sore shoulder. “I was embarrassed and honestly scared to come back,” Georgia admitted. However, with determination and some support from the club it wasn’t long before she did go back. In fact, her grandmother, an experienced rifle shooter, told her to “wear the bruise as a badge of honour”.

From that, she has progressed swiftly. Jumping forward another 12 months or so and Georgia made a breakthrough by winning an English Sporting event. This confirmed for her that shooting was something she genuinely wanted to pursue. Since then, the results have continued to build: Overall Ladies Champion at the Sporting Clays Australia Nationals, Overall Ladies Champion at the Field & Game Nationals, and many other titles. She also competes regularly at SSAA Caboolture and SSAA Fassifern.

Her recent selection for the Australian Ladies Team for the World English Sporting Championships in Canada marked a major milestone.

“It was my first time going overseas. I was very nervous at the competition, but it was amazing to meet everyone and see their ranges. It was amazing to shoot with the team and make so many great friends,” she said.

Georgia describes herself as quietly competitive. “I don’t look at scores during events,” she admits. “I don’t want the pressure. For Nationals I told Mum and Dad I didn’t want to know anything. I just wanted to shoot my own game and be happy with my score. But yes, in my head I really want to win.”

Another recent milestone for Georgia was receiving her Beretta DT11, supplied by Beretta Australia. The sponsorship was a significant moment, not only for the endorsement itself but for the impact the gun had on her shooting. After a professional fitting in Melbourne, she found herself more stable, more comfortable and better equipped to handle long days on the range. “The reduced recoil is a game changer,” she said. “I’m small, and when you shoot a lot, it really adds up. Once I got used to the DT11, it started making a huge difference.”

Georgia flanked by teammates (L) Lyndall McNeil and (R) Janette Densley.



Much of Georgia’s journey has been shared with her father. Charles, a long-time SSAA Brisbane member, has become both chauffeur and training partner, and the two spend most weekends on the range together. “It’s been great,” he said. “I get to spend every weekend with Georgia in the sunshine. Watching her compete overseas has been something special.”

Having now finished school, Georgia plans to dedicate more time to the sport. She has a long list of competitions to shoot, including the 2026 SSAA Queensland and National Shotgun Championships. Her long-term ambitions remain aimed at the Olympics, with the 2032 in Brisbane as her main goal. Skeet was and still is her targeted avenue to get there, but the various other shotgun disciplines are taking up her attention for the time being. “I did get asked about competing in the 2028 Olympics,” she said, “but it’s difficult to juggle multiple disciplines. 2032 is the main goal, and I’ll look at when to begin that training over the next four or five years.”

Georgia is currently looking for a job that won’t interfere with weekend training and is modest about her achievements. What she is certain about, however, is her passion. “I want to continue to shoot. That’s my biggest dream,” she said. “Everything else will fall into place.”



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# 2025 CHISHOLM TRAIL

## BRINGING BACK BYGONE ERAS

*“The event allowed participants to choose from two different shooting style categories, duellist style and gunfighter style, as well as black powder categories.”*



A unique aspect of Single Action is the authentic period or Western-style dress.

By Taylah Campbell May

From the 28th of September through to the 5th of October 2025, the SSAA Millmerran’s Captains Mountain range, in partnership with the Single Action Shooting Society (SASS), hosted one of the largest single action competitions in Australia, the Chisholm Trail. It was the 26th biennial Chisholm Trail, with the first ever event being held in 1993. This competition is all about immersing yourself into the rugged spirit of the Old West, giving competitors the chance to show off their skills with the muzzleloaders and black powder ammunition used in the era.

I had the privilege of attending the event to experience for myself what it was all about. To me it truly seems that at its core, the Chisolm Trail has a deep sense of community and inclusion. With a record high of 170 participants showing up this year to join in on the fun, competition was fierce and carparks were packed. From juniors and newbies just learning the ropes to highly experienced veterans, with nine age categories overall, this event was open to people from all walks of life. It was amazing to see not only a relatively even split of women and men, but to also see a number of competitors using mobility aids taking part. Competitors were able to either camp at the range, stay in the available air-conditioned cabin or stay just a short distance away in the various accommodation options in Millmerran, with a three-course meal and music available one of the nights.

Mean Mongrel Matt seen here with a rifle and a shotgun, which may be originals or replicas.



Cap Single Action participants aim to preserve the ‘spirit of the game’ and don’t look for ways to create advantages from loopholes in the rules.

One of my favourite parts of the event was seeing the competitors dressed in their era-accurate attire despite the sweltering heat. Alongside the extravagant shooting stages, including Boot Hill and Rosies Saloon, I felt as if I had just stepped out of a time machine into 19th century Texas. There were four costume categories participants were able to choose from, including B Western, Ladies B Western, Classic Cowboy and Classic Cowgirl, with the category you chose also determining which firearms and holsters you were able to use. The SASS emphasise the importance of costuming, with all competitors being required to be in costume at all match events, including dinners, award ceremonies and dances to preserve the atmosphere of the game.



The days of the Old West and the Gold Rush Era are alive and well in a Single Action Shooting competition!



A lot of effort goes into the design of the Single Action stages.





For the Classic categories, competitors dressed in a more true-to-life fashion, including chaps, western spurs, scarves, botas, pocket watches and knives for the men and corset, split riding skirts, bustles or hoop skirts and period lace up shoes, hats, handbags, camisoles, feather boas, jewellery, watches and hair ornaments for the women. The B-Western categories are expected to be fancy and flashy, with competitors being required to wear shirts with 'Smiley Pockets', embroidery, fringing, appliques or different coloured yokes, felt hats, embellished boots, scarves or bolo ties, cuffs, gloves or gauntlets, western spurs, belts, chaps and jeans or ranch pants, though women were allowed to wear dresses or skirts.

The event allowed participants to choose from two different shooting style categories, duellist style and gunfighter style, as well as black powder categories. Duellist style is defined as shooting a revolver cocked and fired one-handed unsupported.

The revolver, hand or shooting arm must not be touched by the offhand unless fixing a malfunction or transferring from hand to hand. Duellists may choose to shoot with a revolver in each hand, this is known as 'Double Duellist'. Gunfighter style, however, is defined as shooting with a revolver in each hand; they must be cocked and fired one handed, completely unsupported. All revolvers are holstered.



From left to right: Frank James, Waddy and Slick Dick, all aliases chosen by the shooters. This might sound like fun and games, but the competition can be intense.

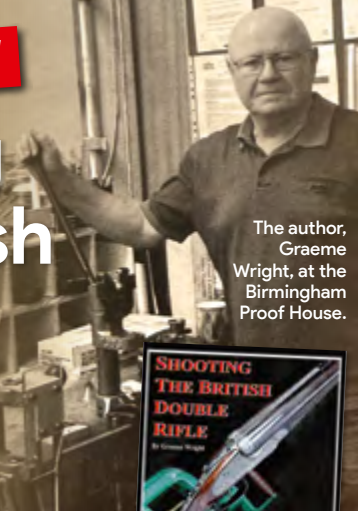
Along with this, the competition allows for further category allocations such as age, gender, costume, Pat Garrett, 1911 match and Plainsman. Interestingly, the allocation to a costume category also determines the rules of firearms you are able to use throughout the event. For example, if you choose to be a part of the 'Classic Cowboy' or 'Classic Cowgirl' category, you must use revolvers in duellist or double duellist style. Rifles must be from 1873 or earlier that are SASS approved manufacturers and revolvers and rifles must be .40 calibre or larger, rimmed cartridges.

It really was a privilege to attend this event and get an insight to the commitment and passion that these competitors have for the sport; the camaraderie was truly amazing to see.

BOOK REVIEW

# Shooting the British Double Rifle

By Ted Springs



The author, Graeme Wright, at the Birmingham Proof House.



*Shooting the British Double Rifle: A Modern Guide for Load Development and Use*  
Fourth Edition  
By Graeme Wright  
Less than \$100

Graeme Wright's *Shooting the British Double Rifle* has long been considered a standard reference for anyone fascinated by these remarkable firearms, and the newly revised fourth edition continues that tradition.

The book's primary audience is those who own and shoot double rifles. But its appeal extends much further to enthusiasts of British sporting arms, handloaders working with large cartridges and even historians of firearms technology.

One of the standout features of this edition is the greatly expanded load data section, now covering most nitro double rifle cartridges. The inclusion of both smokeless and black powder information makes it useful not only for double rifle owners, but also for anyone loading large British cartridges in single-shots or magazine rifles. Complementing this is extensive information covering pressure tests, conducted at both the Birmingham Proof House and Kynamco factory.

The updated chapters on paradox guns and bore rifles add depth to an already comprehensive work, particularly with the practical notes on how these firearms perform when used as shotguns. Supplementary material like dimensional tables, historical cartridge catalogue extracts, powder burn-rate charts and lists of component suppliers cement the book's place as a ready reference.

Wright combines technical rigour with practical guidance in a way that is accessible yet uncompromisingly detailed. For anyone serious about double rifles, or with a broader interest in the history and function of Britain's great sporting cartridges, this book is a must-have.

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# FIVE DAYS

# IN THE FIELD

## Pigs, predators and more...

By SSAA Junior Member Dan Stewart

After harvesting a nanny feral goat to eat during our last trip to this property in 2022, I had dreamt of taking a trophy billy. So, when last-minute wet weather diverted our original trip from our usual stomping ground of Goondiwindi to Dirranbandi, Dad and I were more ready than ever to fulfill that dream.

On the morning of January 13, my father and I headed to the property. We entered the farmhouse and spoke with the owners before taking notes on maps that showed where the landowner had seen pigs during the past few days. That afternoon, we explored one shade line but found no sign of pigs - nor water. We tried another shade line to the east, but it was the same story. Our last effort saw us cruising the side of the third shade line, where I spotted a glimpse of water through the dense brush. We carefully got out of the car, loaded our guns and approached the billabong. It stretched 400 metres long and 50-60 metres wide, with a small accumulation of lignum near the shore that gave off the unmistakable stench of pigs.

Unable to flush any out, we focused back on the billabong. I spotted a group of eight pigs on the other side. They were obviously out of range, so we made plans on how to approach them. Dad and I stalked around the edge of the billabong and stopped at an inlet as we saw them approaching. The pigs were completely unaware of our presence until a small, black pig jolted to the side. I assumed that meant that the pigs had seen us, and Dad and I began firing.

Dan with the trophy billy he'd been dreaming of taking for years, which scored 104 4/8 DS.



*"I once again loaded a round into the chamber, cautiously led a shot from my position and **dropped the rabbit in its tracks...**"*



Dan and his father pose with their first five pigs from day one.

My .44 dropped one pig on the spot, and Dad got two with the shotgun. We saw the remaining swine dart off to our right, at about three o'clock. Dad shot another spotted pig, and I took a smaller red boar. We posed for a photo, using a dead tree as a camera stand, and started making our way back to the house. As we left, we saw one boar darting across the paddock; it ran back near the first shade line, so Dad jumped out of the car and led his shot perfectly, another pig was down. Six porkers were not a bad start.

After a failed spotlighting attempt on day one, day two followed in night one's footsteps, and produced zero ferals. So, heading out on the second night, our crew's spirits weren't exactly through the roof. Dad and I had recruited another

kid, only a couple years older than me, to help us work the thermal camera. Since the entire day had been hot, nothing had cooled down even by 10pm, so the thermal was made ineffective. However, as we passed a small group of fallen timber off to the left of the ute, I noticed a fox. Dad stopped the ute. I then readied the .222 and squeezed off a round. The fox was dispatched instantly with a shot through both lungs and the spine.

Continuing on, the crew in the cabin managed to spot a couple of rabbits darting back and forth across the track in front of us. They had seen us before we'd seen them, however, so my only chance was a running shot. I once again loaded a round into the chamber, cautiously led a shot from my position and dropped the rabbit in its tracks. Our

### FIVE DAYS IN THE FIELD

helper on the thermal exclaimed that the rabbit would make a great piece of an Akubra, but after checking the rabbit out, the .222 had clearly overachieved, meaning the dog would not be having rabbit for dinner. Night two ended as a good night and hopes for day three were especially high.

Day three began same as the last; we woke up about 9am after a long and interesting night of spotlighting. After a chat over breakfast (or morning tea rather), Dad and I outlined an idea to check a trough for pigs trying to cool off during the middle of the day. We set out at about quarter to eleven, borrowing the farmer's ute to assist. I was planning to use the .44 if we were to come across a pig in dense scrub, where the red dot and forgiving cartridge could easily prove their worth, but I also stowed my 6.5x55 in the back seat, which would provide insurance if there was a pig in a paddock or maybe even a trophy billy goat.

Dad made an amazing shot on this boar.



## FIVE DAYS IN THE FIELD

We arrived at the trough, though nothing fled to begin with, so we searched the shade line to the side but still saw nothing. We stopped walking and focussed our attention to the trough from about 20 to 30 metres away. We stayed for 10 minutes or so before deciding to head up another track and scan the paddocks either side of us.

As we approached a shed holding cotton seed, we saw the unmistakable shape of a big billy's horns. We stopped and made sure every action was silent. We both looked through the binoculars and assessed the goat's horns. From our spot in the car, we could see four or five goats scattered under a paper-bark tree. We decided that since we could only take one goat, this would hopefully be my trophy billy. I reached into the back seat of the Land Cruiser and drew my 6.5x55. Dad and I both exited the car and began planning how we would cross the exclusion fence in between our billy and us.

But as we were planning how we would make our way into the shooting position, I heard a very distinct call from a bird perched in the tree just to the left of us.



The beautiful pink cockatoos.

I knew this sound instantly, as I had been hoping to see some of these birds for many years but whenever we were in their territory, they always seemed to evade us. Sure enough, when I glanced to my left, I saw four or five Major Mitchell's (pink cockatoos). I was so dumbfounded that I almost forgot I was holding a rifle and that there was a trophy just a few hundred metres away.

Dad took some photos with his phone, and we continued into the paddock. We delicately pushed through the open plain, hoping the goats wouldn't notice us. We stopped and planned which tree would be the best to shoot from, and when we made it, I glued my eyes to the scope. I saw two billies, but the bigger of them was lying down. Dad and I patiently waited, and I silently chambered a round. Our billy got up and began moving to our left. I steadied my crosshairs in the crease behind his shoulder. He instantly went down kicking – finally, the trophy I'd been hoping for. We approached and took some photos before taking the backstraps and one of the rear legs, along with the rump and the head.

Night three was the last night we would be going spotlighting, as Dad didn't want to be tired on the day of our departure. As we passed a turnoff to a different track, I saw the eyes of a rabbit. Dad saw it as well and I took my shot. This would be one the dog would enjoy, as would be the hare that we shot half an hour later.

After taking the hare, we continued into a paddock with a herd of cattle in it. We stopped for a break and to plan our route home. That was when a fox walked into 60 metres, right in between three heifers - the safest fox in the world. But as we continued, I spotted a pair of big, green eyes; they shined so bright, I originally thought that they were a set of reflectors. But sure enough, they moved to the left. Dad drove up to

about 100 metres from whatever it was. I planted my rifle on a set of rags on the roof, stared through the scope and identified a feral cat. *Bang*, one .222 round found its way through the cat's neck, dispatching it instantly. Our crewmate and I walked out into the paddock, took a photo and returned to the house.

On the last full day, Dad and I decided that our final effort to cull the local pig population would be at a dam close to the northeast of the property. On approach, we identified a string of pools following our track into the paddock where the dams are. Dad and I got off of our quads and began the walk. That was when I saw a mob of pigs off to our left, at 150 metres. We approached them, identified our two pigs to shoot and fired off rounds. I instantly dropped one pig, with a shot placed behind the shoulder. But Dad's shotgun was out of range, meaning that his pig ran off. I ran after the other pigs, before turning attention to Dad's pig that had flanked back around. I put a .44 round into the boar, and Dad helped me stop it after it ducked under a fence and headed back towards Dad. Alas, the day of our departure began, Dad and I made our way home. It was a great trip, with a trophy for a lifetime. 🍷

## Douglas Score Measurement Principles for Goats

The Douglas Score system focuses on symmetry and uses three main measurements for wild goat horns, all taken in inches to the nearest eighth of an inch:

**Length of horn:** Measured from the lowest point in front, following the outer curve to the tip.

**Girth at the base:** Measured at a right angle to the axis of the horn at its base.

**Spread:** The widest distance between the horns.

### How to Score Your Goat Trophy

The key rule of the Douglas Score system is to double the smallest measurement from either the left or right horn for length and girth, ensuring the score reflects the symmetrical size of the animal.

**Measure Length:** Measure the length of the left horn and the right horn. Double the shorter measurement to get the total length score.

**Measure Girth:** Measure the girth at the base of the left horn and the right horn. Double the smaller measurement to get the total girth score.

**Measure Spread:** Measure the widest spread of the horns. This value is added directly to the total.

**Calculate Total Score:** Add the total length score, total girth score, and spread measurement together for the final Douglas Score.

AI generated text.

Dan with the cat he initially mistook for a set of reflectors.



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# HUNTING'S GREATEST JOY

By Dr Ben Allen



The author, as a young boy, with his first rabbit. A memory he can now recreate with his son.

*“Sand flew up into the air, but the rabbit didn't move.”*

**T**here's a lot to love about hunting: the technical skill required to place a shot exactly on target, the pleasure experienced from being outdoors and bathed in nature, or the challenge of remaining undetected while you sneak up on an animal that has spent its whole life trying not to get 'snuck' up on!

But perhaps the greatest joy I get from hunting is passing on these experiences to my kids, creating a multigenerational legacy of connectedness with the land.

I can still remember shooting my first rabbit back in 1986. I was working (or more correctly, skipping school) with my father on a large cattle station in the Strzelecki Desert in Southwest Queensland.

We spent all day reading animal tracks in the sand for a government research project investigating the effects of dingoes on cattle and wildlife. On the way back to our campsite at the end of each day we drove along the edge of a sand dune peppered with rabbit holes like a block of red-sand Swiss cheese. With the rabbit warrens all lined up close to the track on the passenger side of the Toyota Landcruiser, it was the perfect spot to limp along in first gear and stop to have a crack at any rabbit too naïve to hide or too confident in my inability.

After explaining, for what seemed like the one-millionth time, how to handle a rifle safely, when to pull the trigger, and where to correctly shoot the rabbit, Dad finally handed me the CZ .22LR he had bought when he was a teenager and let me try to get one for myself.

We stopped the car by a warren where a large grey rabbit had run into the opening of his hole about 50 yards away but had popped his head back up to check if we were still there. With great anticipation, I breathed out, pulled the trigger and...missed. Sand flew up into the air, but the rabbit didn't move. I worked the bolt and tried again and...missed again. The rabbit still didn't move.

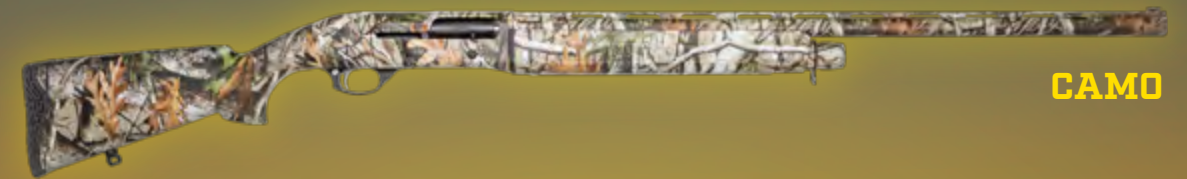
It just sat there, taunting me, I thought, getting more complacent with every passing minute. I repeated the task a third time and missed again.

I turned around for some instruction and Dad had a wry smile on his face that silently said, 'it's not that easy, is it?'. By this time the rabbit had crept fully out of his hole, still taunting me. With some words of parental encouragement and the full side of the rabbit exposed to my sights, I tried a fourth time and... I got him!

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## HUNTING'S GREATEST JOY

In that moment of elation, all the extensive safety training I had received literally went out the window. I dropped the gun, flung open the door and raced over to claim my prize. I had aimed for center mass but achieved a perfect head shot.

Whatever – I took the win.

Fast forward 40 years and the scene repeats. A large Southwest Queensland cattle station, a father working on a dingo research project, a son skipping school, a Toyota Landcruiser and that same CZ .22LR rifle. Only this time, I am the father, repeating to my son the same safety instructions my father gave to me.

I had hoped for my son's sake that we would find a rabbit and be successful, but the local rabbits must have passed on the tale of great grandpa rabbit that didn't survive the young blonde boy of 1986, because the rabbits were nowhere to be seen.

Demoralised, we spent the day doing what conservation hunters do most of the time – walking around and seeing nothing, stopping occasionally to sight in the rifle (or more correctly, to shoot and hit *something*). Some nice, tight groupings on an old cow skull were enough to reclaim the day.

Sometime later we were in Southeast Queensland trapping foxes on a conservation reserve along the Great Dividing Range. After putting in a big day setting traps along the bumpy bush tracks, we had returned in the early morning to check them all. Trapping was another skill I had learned from my father, and now my son was learning from me.

This time we had more luck and caught a fox nicely across the front foot, as intended. The time came to euthanise it and my son asked if he could do it. A different .22 this time, capable of only a single shot, borrowed from a friend.

After explaining the safety instructions for the millionth time, I handed my son the rifle and asked him to pose for a photo; not for me, but because I wanted the memory captured for him so he could reflect on the experience with fondness the same way I had done (and still do) for my first successful hunt.

With the job done, we returned to checking traps. He was content with his ability to place the shot exactly on target, content with the pleasure of being outdoors helping to conserve nature and content with his ability to best a clever fox.

But the greatest joy was mine – spending outdoor time with my son perpetuating a conservation hunting legacy that I hope will continue for many generations to come. 🍷



An old cow skull proved to be a perfect target to add interest to a slow day of hunting.

Some days see conservation hunters do what we do most of the time – walking around and seeing nothing.



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# CHASING MAJESTIC REDS

*with my 'lucky charm'*



The author with his daughter showing off their impressive trophies.

By Jeremy Herbst

Like most deer hunters, we all look forward to that time of the year when the weather starts to cool off and the stags start rounding up their girls. Standing on top of a gully just on daylight, nice cool breeze in your face and listening to the stags torment each other with moans and grunts sends my pulse racing and brings a smile to my face that lasts all day.

On one particular hunt, I took my daughter, Katelyn, out with me. I wasn't expecting to get anything, but I wanted to show her how to call up these majestic animals and to experience the adrenalin that I felt many years ago on my first hunt.

We arrived at the property just before daylight and instead of loading up the rifle, I just drove off through the paddock, which proved to be a mistake. While heading up the hill only 100m from the gate, we noticed about 10 hinds walking alongside the track; stopping the car and switching the lights off, I told Katelyn the stag must be there somewhere.

Looking further up the hill, I could just make out a silhouette of a stag standing in the middle of the track. With the .270 unloaded and no bolt in it, I was fumbling around, unlocking the box, putting the bolt in and loading up while keeping an eye on the stag. Luckily, he continued to stand there, allowing me enough time to get a steady rest on the car's mirror and place the crosshairs on his chest. I thought to myself 'wow, this is too easy' as I touched off the shot and he dropped on the spot. After a few photos and the back-breaking task of caping my 12-point stag out, we jumped in the car to head home. Katelyn said to me, "I'm your lucky charm, Dad!" To which I replied, "Yes, yes you are."

It's been a great feeling taking my two sons up to that property, watching them shoot and process animals and realising they learned those skills from watching me throughout the years. But it's been really special to take my own daughter out and share a memory that will last forever.

**Happy hunting.** ☺



That initial outing has led to regular hunting trips for this father and daughter.

Katelyn with the red stag back from the taxidermist.



Shane donates every fortnight in Toowoomba without fail.

S SAA member and blood donor-superstar Shane Stevens made his 350th blood donation late last year. It's a milestone representing years and years of work as well as about 1,050 lives saved.

Shane first donated blood at age 19, but life took him out west for many years, making regular donations difficult. When he returned closer to Toowoomba again though, he fully committed himself. He started donating plasma once a month, then once a fortnight and he now donates both plasma and whole blood.

"The donations don't leave me feeling fatigued or anything; it actually makes me feel great since it's such a good cause," Shane said. "There are so many people in need, and not enough donating."

As an A-negative donor, his blood is particularly valuable. "I can give to four blood groups: A-, A+, AB- and AB+," he explained. "So, it's nice knowing it goes a long way."

Outside the donor chair, Shane is a keen shooter who mostly shoots Service Pistol and Pistol Metallic Silhouette at Millmerran. He's been shooting pistols for around 10 years, and it was a hobby he took up almost by accident.

"I was out lining up my rifle one day and I saw the pistol shooters. I thought I'd give it a go," he said. And the rest is history.

Despite reaching 350 donations, Shane has no plans of slowing down. His next goal is 500 donations, and he's even considering participating in Australia's Anti-D program, which helps protect newborn babies from haemolytic disease. "I'll keep donating as long as I can," he said.

Shane is proudly registered with the SSAA Lifeblood Team, helping contribute to our association's overall tally.

And you can join him. If you're a donor or have been thinking about starting, simply register with the SSAA Lifeblood Team and your donations will count towards the total. Together, we can boost our numbers and support an essential cause that saves lives every single day. ☺

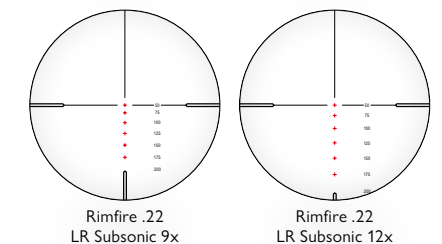
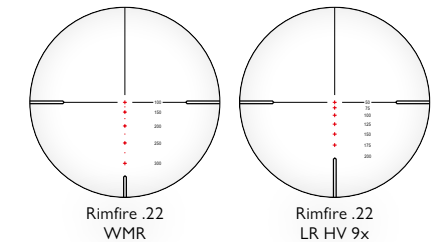


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# Rigby's 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

A night to remember in Portsmouth

By Tom Auger, Managing Director, Backcountry Outfitters

In the storied world of British gunmaking, there are evenings that transcend the ordinary — and being part of Rigby's 250th anniversary celebration was one of those unforgettable moments. As Managing Director of Backcountry Outfitters, the Australian agents for Rigby, I was honoured to be among the 250 invited guests for this once-in-a-lifetime event held aboard HMS *Victory* and HMS *Warrior* at Portsmouth's Historic Dockyard in England.

The evening of 16 May 2025 brought together a remarkable cross-section of the international hunting and shooting community. Beneath clear skies and a gentle sea breeze, we mingled among notable public figures such as Donald Trump Jr., MP Nigel Farage and several Middle Eastern dignitaries. Industry leaders, renowned journalists, and representatives from top gunmaking houses across Britain and Europe all gathered to honour the legacy of John Rigby & Co.



Close up of one of the new *Victory Edition* rifles, each inlaid with a 'V' from oak reclaimed from HMS *Victory* herself.

The event opened with a warm welcome from Rigby's Managing Director Marc Newton, standing in the historic shadow of HMS *Victory*, Lord Nelson's famed flagship which was famously used in the Battle of Trafalgar and is the world's oldest naval vessel still in commission. Coincidentally, HMS *Victory*, Lord Nelson himself, and founder John Rigby were all born in 1758 — a striking historical echo and a poignant starting point for the evening's celebrations.



Cannon fire, musket volleys and a dramatic fireworks display over Portsmouth Harbour top off the evening's festivities.



A view of one of the lavish VIP dinners in Nelson's cabin, hosted by Rigby and prepared by game chef Mike Robinson.



"Twelve years ago, Rigby in the UK was nothing more than some ideas in my head and a box of papers in my car," Marc reflected. "To see it now... as one unified Rigby family, is without question the proudest moment of my professional career."

Guests explored the decks of *Victory* by candlelight, watching Rigby craftsmen demonstrate traditional engraving, stock making and action filing in a vivid display of the skills that continue to define the brand. It was a genuine highlight to witness these techniques first-hand, a reminder of the craftsmanship at the core of every Rigby rifle — including those we proudly represent back home in Australia.

As the sun set, Melissa Rigby, a direct descendant of founder John Rigby, led a formal procession bearing the company banner, accompanied by the Waterloo Band and Bugles of the 7th Battalion. The newly composed *John Rigby's Gunmakers March* by Pipe Major

John Calum MacKenzie rang out across the dockyard — a stirring tribute to Rigby's legacy.

We then transitioned to HMS *Warrior*, reflecting Rigby's Victorian-era innovations, including the iconic Rising Bite and the legendary .416 Rigby cartridge. The setting was perfect. As we gathered on deck, two Spitfires roared overhead in a dramatic aerial display — a nod to British engineering excellence and heritage. On board, the Honourable Artillery Company's Pikemen and Musketeers brought the past to life in full regalia.

Dinner was held below decks — a true celebration of British hospitality: English asparagus with Dorset crab, braised wild fallow shank and a prune and Armagnac Bakewell tart, expertly paired with fine wines. During the meal, Marc gave his second address, touching on Britain's role in shaping the modern world during the Victorian period, aligning perfectly with Rigby's own rise during that era.

Earlier in the week, I had the privilege of attending one of the

exclusive VIP dinners in Nelson's cabin, hosted by Rigby and prepared by game chef Mike Robinson. It was here that the new *Victory Edition* rifles were unveiled — masterpieces incorporating oak reclaimed from HMS *Victory* herself. Orders were sealed in true Rigby style: guests signed their name into an official document, commemorating the momentous occasion, followed by shouting "Fire!" through Nelson's window, triggering a live cannon blast from below deck. Let's just say the Royal Navy police weren't quite prepared for the enthusiasm.

Each *Victory Edition* rifle features an inlaid oak 'V' for *Victory* in the forend — timber that once felt the boots of Nelson himself. It's hard to imagine a more meaningful connection between gunmaking, history and tradition.

Proceeds from the *Victory Edition* will support the ongoing restoration of HMS *Victory*, with five per cent of each sale going directly toward preserving this national treasure. As Donald Trump Jr., one of the first to place an order, put it: "What Rigby has accomplished this week isn't just about celebrating history — it's about making history."

Friday's gala finale was a fitting close to a remarkable week. Throughout the evening, Rigby's commitment to conservation stood shoulder to

*"This celebration marks not just our past, but the beginning of our next chapter." – Marc Newton*

shoulder with its craft. Over the past decade, Rigby has contributed more than one million dollars to conservation efforts. That ethos was reflected in the gifts presented to guests: 250 bracelets made from melted snares recovered from the African bush, created in partnership with Blood Origins to support anti-poaching work.

Rigby's Managing Director Marc Newton stands proudly atop the HMS *Victory*.



Donald Trump Jr. was one of the many distinguished guests to attend Rigby's 250th anniversary.

Many guests also left with copies of *Rigby Resurrection*, the newly released 350-page volume by Marc Newton and firearms historian Diggory Hadoke, documenting the brand's revival. Limited to just 1,000 numbered copies, it's a must-have for any Rigby enthusiast.

As a final highlight, guests gathered topside for a stirring performance from the Pipes and Drums of the London Scottish Regiment, complete with cannon fire, musket volleys, and a dramatic fireworks display over Portsmouth Harbour. A fitting tribute to a brand that continues to define excellence in the modern world.

Throughout the event, guests were given an exclusive look at Rigby's 250th Anniversary Special Edition rifles — a commemorative release limited to only 250 rifles, offered in both .275 Rigby and .416 Rigby. These rifles embody Rigby's timeless design and craftsmanship, created to honour the anniversary with both historical significance and modern excellence. A rare opportunity for collectors and hunters alike to be a part of this landmark moment by owning their very own piece of Rigby history, something that will be treasured for generations to come — very few of which are still available to order at the time of writing this article.

As Marc Newton said in his final remarks: "This celebration marks not just our past, but the beginning of our next chapter."

And from where I stood — surrounded by friends, legends of the industry and the unmistakable pride of British gunmaking — it was clear that Rigby's best chapters are still being written. ☺

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# PULSAR DEMONSTRATION NIGHTS

## TESTING OUT THERMALS

By Neil Schultz

The name Pulsar has been synonymous with thermal rifle scopes since civilian use first became affordable in Australia. TSA Outdoors (Tasco Sales Australia), the national distributors for Pulsar, recently staged information/demonstration nights for dealers and customers in Southeast Queensland.

The venue for these events was the SSAA Ipswich Branch's shooting complex at South Ripley, about an hour driving time from Brisbane airport. The dealers' night was attended by representatives from gun stores as far north as Rockhampton, south to the border and west to Oakey.

All of the 50 attendees were treated to an information session, running through technical terminology and some of the specs of current Pulsar units.

After being brought up to date with current models, it was over to the rifle range for practical, hands-on demonstrations. Every representative was given the opportunity to shoot rifles topped with a range of Pulsar's thermal scopes on both centrefire and rimfire rifles. Heated targets were used, allowing shooters to experience the scopes' thermal detection capabilities in total darkness.

Ballistic calculator data was loaded into LRF (Laser Range Finder) equipped units. Those scopes automatically calculate hold-over required for any target once ranged. Hitting a gong at 300 metres was just a matter of pressing the LRF button and placing the hold-over crosshair on the target for the shot. It was too easy!

Also on deck for hands-on testing was the complete range of thermal monoculars, from Pulsar's compact Axion units to the newest in the lineup, the Oryx LRF, which features all one could wish for in a hand-held device. The Merger range finding thermal binocular also attracted a lot of interest.



Dealers' representatives attending the information segment of the evening before heading over to the range.

### PULSAR DEMONSTRATION NIGHTS

On the following evening, a similar event was staged for members of the public. Unfortunately, tickets for that event sold out very quickly. Eighty lucky ticket holders were treated to much the same type of evening as the dealers, with attendees coming from as far afield as Norfolk Island. Public attendees were given opportunities to shoot the thermal-equipped rifles and to test the hand-held units.

If you missed out, you could check out the range of Pulsar devices online at [tsaoutdoors.com.au/pulsar-thermal/](http://tsaoutdoors.com.au/pulsar-thermal/)



The gents from TSA who helped make the night possible

(L to R): James Head, Daniel Johnson, Clint Lavendar, Matthew Cirson, Tim Clark, Tim Luitjens and Chris Woodrow.



TSA Pulsar Technical Support Officer, Tim Luentjens, acting as a spotter for a dealer's rep shooting a Lithgow LA105 wearing a Pulsar Thermion 2 LRF unit.



TSA Queensland Account Manager Tim Clark talking through the operation of the Pulsar Thermion 2 LRF XP60, mounted on a Lithgow LA102 Outback.

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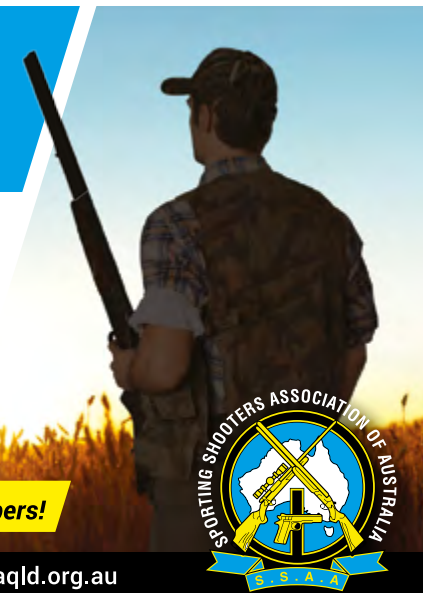
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# PULSAR'S NEW THERMAL MONOCULAR WILL GET YOUR HEART POUNDING



By Nick Rositano

New from Pulsar is the LRF XG35 Oryx monocular compact enough to be held for one handed use and built to withstand the harshest elements. Many keen thermal enthusiasts know that Pulsar is on the high end of the market being made over in Europe with its head office based in Lithuania.

Pulsar's history first started back in 1991 when a group of friends driven by passion saw themselves assembling wooden observation tubes in the basement of an unfinished building. From there,

some three decades later, Pulsar is at the forefront and top of the worldwide thermal, digital day and night vision imaging devices. Pulsar offers a wide range of thermal imaging devices from the entry level to some of the most regarded high-end thermal devices catering for a massive selection to suit everyone's needs.

The Pulsar Oryx LRF XG35 was engineered for those onerous hunting and outdoor enthusiasts who require a compact yet advanced thermal monocular. Unboxing the Pulsar Oryx Monocular, I was impressed with the easy grip

in one hand and Pulsar's stylish casing, which most of its models feature. The Oryx LRF XG35 is equipped with a power built-in laser rangefinder, which can give accurate measurements up to 1500 metres, impressive to say the least, as my standard rangefinder tops out at around 1300 metres!

Another impressive feature of the Pulsar Oryx LRF XG35 is its dual battery operating system, which features an external and internal battery operating systems that can give the user up to 12 hours of operating time. Turning on the unit for the first time you can see both

the internal and external battery life, as the charge indicator is shown separately, this comes in extremely handy as you can gauge roughly the operating time and not be caught out in the field unprepared. The external battery is easy to be removed with a twist top case and can be replaced in a matter of seconds. Both batteries can be charged via a USB-C port, making for fast and seamless charging.

The Oryx LRF XG35 is the first Pulsar device to feature a IP67 protection rating, which allows the unit to be fully submersed in 1 metre of water for 30 minutes. The unit is also fully protected against dust in the harshest conditions. Having used a few different thermal monoculars over time my go to sensor is a 640 x 480, as the imagine quality is crisp and

the game animal can be easily identified; however, these units are on the dearer side. The Pulsar Oryx LRF XG35 features a 640 x 480 sensor that allows for easy identification of targets while out in

*"A thermal monocular is a great tool when it comes to identifying feral animals, especially for culling purposes."*

the field. The unit also features a magnification of 2.5-20 (8x digital zoom).

A thermal monocular is a great tool when it comes to identifying feral animals, especially for culling purposes. I had a call from a farmer friend who was experiencing some of his newly born lambs being victims to foxes. As many would know, foxes can be spotlight shy at times and with their cunning instincts hard to get. I decided to head out the following weekend to give my mate a bit of a hand, hopefully putting a bit of a dent in the local fox population.

I packed the Pulsar Oryx LRF XG35 in my backpack and

decided to bring the .22-250. Not long after dark I began to scan the paddocks with the Pulsar. Identifying a couple foxes at around the 220-metre mark, I was able to come up with a game plan to successfully shoot both foxes in the hopes that no more lambs will be killed. After an hour or so after shooting the foxes, I located a couple fallow deer at around the 300-metre mark, easily identifying them. Scanning the paddocks with the Pulsar Oryx LRF I was

impressed with the clarity and the easy identification, even at the higher zoom levels which in other brands have been average as the picture tends to become distorted and pixilated, making identifying target animals almost impossible. I was thoroughly impressed with the Pulsar Oryx laser range finding capabilities having compared it up against my Leica rangefinder. It was well on par distance-wise to a few different objects. Technology just keeps getting better and Pulsar, with its LRF capabilities, has just proved this!

Battery life is extremely good and at the end of the night the internal battery was sitting on 100 per cent with the external battery at around 70 per cent charge with roughly around a couple hours of use, give or take.

Thermal optics are a game changer and can be readily relied upon day and night to be able to spot and distinguish game that our own human eyes cannot see. The Pulsar Oryx LRF XG35 retails for around the \$3999 mark. Although on the higher price tag of the market you will not be disappointed with its capabilities!



Pulsar Oryx XG35 is a compact, lightweight unit making one-handed operation easy!



Fallow deer spotted at around the 300-metre mark.

# 3D GUNS NOT SO 'PLASTIC FANTASTIC'

By David Henty

**A**BC Radio interviewed the Australian Shooters Alliance's Tim Bannister recently on the 'threat' of 3D printed firearms. Since its inception, the media has been fascinated with 3D printed firearms and sensationalised their prevalence.

ABC Radio

"The reality is the ammunition still needs to be bought and can't be manufactured by a 3D printer bought at Officeworks", Tim said. "As the firearms community knows, you need a firearms licence to buy ammunition. You can't just pick it up at the local gun store and if you are in possession of ammunition without a licence, you are already breaking the law before you illegally manufacture a firearm."

"While the topic is interesting, it does distract from real steps that can be made to both make the community safer and benefit law-abiding shooters. For instance, it has been recorded that regional Australia and farmers, in particular, are targeted by firearms thieves more than their

city counterparts. These people aren't members of shooting organisations and can be less vigilant in firearm security and storage. The thieves know that and take advantage of the situation. The firearms end up in the wrong hands and can potentially be used in further criminal activities. Governments need to educate the farmers in firearm security, just as we do for our members rather than get distracted by sensationalist concepts like 3D printing just to appear to be doing something about public safety."

The Australian Shooters Alliance will continue to promote firearm facts to the media and government across the nation. 📍

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# SCOPE TELLS THE DIGITAL STORY

RRP: \$2,999



The onboard timer could be a game-changer for competition shooting.

## Burris Optics - XTR PS riflescope

By Ted Springs

The Burris XTR PS scope introduces a range of new features designed for precision, tactical and long-range shooting. Available in 3.3–18x50mm and 5.5–30x56mm, the XTR PS combines high-quality optics with smart technology and some clever new twists to support shooters in different environments.

The most notable feature of the XTR PS is the Programmable Elevation Knob - a click-less, micro-adjustable turret with a tiny 1/30 MIL amount of precision. One full rotation provides over 19 MIL of adjustment, giving shooters lots of control at long and short ranges.

Unlike traditional turrets, this one operates without tactile detents, offering smooth, continuous adjustment. While this allows for precise dialling to exact values and decimal places a lot of other scopes can't lock into, it may not suit all shooters, especially those who prefer

the tactile feedback of clicks. When under time pressure it could take some getting used to, but it could also prove to be a game changer. Arguably the coolest part of the XTR PS is the integrated Bluetooth Heads-Up Display (HUD), which projects real-time shooting data directly inside the scope. This includes dial-to-distance, wind hold and direction, angle compensation, digital level, battery status, and even a countdown timer - an especially handy feature for competition shooters. Additionally, there is a bubble level built in to make sure the firearm is level.

Connectivity and control over the HUD are managed through the BurrisConnect app, which lets users upload custom ballistic profiles built around environmental conditions, including more than 20 density altitude curves. These profiles can then be accessed and adjusted via the scope's onboard controls.

Optically, the scope uses extra-low dispersion glass and an illuminated reticle, available in both red and green. The body is constructed from 6061-T6 aluminium, offering durability without excessive weight. Power is supplied by standard batteries, with an automatic shut-off to preserve battery life.

Although it does not include a built-in rangefinder, the XTR PS offers a highly integrated digital shooting solution, combining ballistic computation with high-end optical performance. It represents a significant shift in riflescope design and could be ideal for shooters looking to blend traditional marksmanship with modern digital tools.

# STEALTHALERT

COMPACT WIRELESS ALARM OFFERS REASSURANCE

## BY SIMTEK



The app lets you know when the sensor has picked something up.

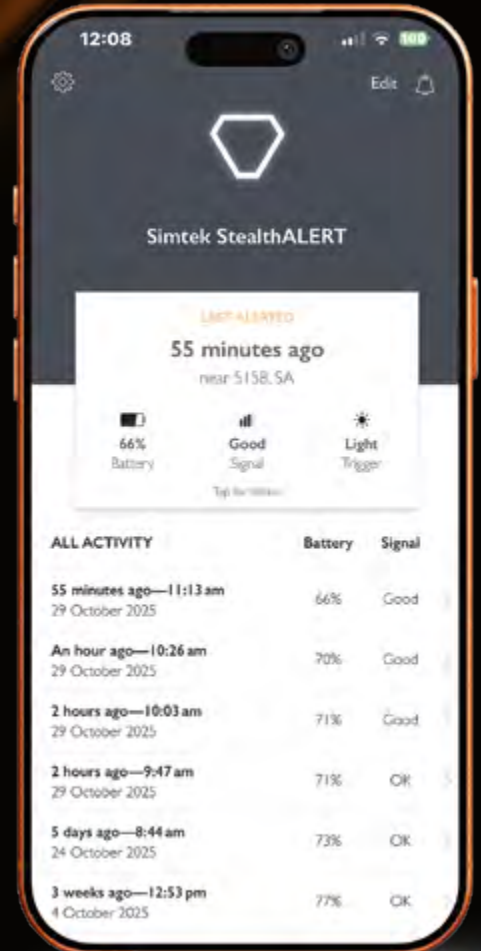
By Tim Bannister

For those of us who want to be reassured about the security of our possessions, be it firearms, trade tools in the aluminium lockable box on the back of the ute or our precious boat or caravan, there is now a portable and reliable way to monitor them.

The Stealthalert wireless alarm operates off grid without the need for Wi-Fi or external power. One of the main alarm restrictions of previous systems like Arlo motion activated cameras or Chipolo location trackers has been battery life. The Stealthalert lithium battery can last up to a year without the need for recharging - even with

up to 10 alerts a month. When not sensing motion, light or vibration, it is in 'passive mode' and is not connected to the 4G telephone network and therefore is saving power. It also reports on humidity and temperature.

About the size of a softball, it is highly portable so can be in your firearms safe one day and your luggage the next. In fact, the options are endless: hotel room, tent, job site, office or storage shed. Even if the space has a fixed alarm or CCTV camera, the portable sensor offers another level of protection that is likely to trick any intruders. Experienced crooks know how to disarm fixed alarms before robbing their targets, but



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**STEALTHALERT BY SIMTEK**

they are unlikely to be expecting a portable alarm that will notify its owner in less than a minute.

If the area has ambient light, the light sensor can be covered up with tape to enable the sensor to arm itself. As the sensor uses 4G through its inbuilt global sim card instead of Wi-Fi, it operates well in a metal box such as a gun safe or tool kit where Wi-Fi cannot penetrate.

A monthly or annual data plan is required for the sensor to notify you of activations via its phone app, which costs about \$75. That might scare off some purchasers, but it is the reason this alarm is superior to Wi-Fi- or Bluetooth-based units and will operate anywhere in the world – perfect for overseas travel. On initial purchase, the Stealthalert comes with a 30-day free trial to activate the 4G. If you change your mind, Simtek offers a 30-day full refund.

The sensor will only arm itself once there is an absence of motion, light and vibration. It comes with

*The Stealthalert lithium battery can last up to a year without the need for recharging...*



Added security: Experienced thieves know how to disable common household alarms, but they won't be expecting this stealth sensor.

two Velcro stickers for semi-permanent placement or for \$50 you can mount it on a portable magnetic base, which is handy for gun safes or metal shed walls. It also has two antennas: an inbuilt one and an external magnetic base with a long chord. The external antenna increases the connectivity; however, if someone pulls it off, the internal antenna will kick in. A tip is to have the external antenna already connected when turning the sensor on so it knows to use that antenna and not the internal one.

Two more tips if you decide to buy the Stealthalert: don't panic when first setting it up, as it can take 10 minutes to first alert you and after that less than a minute; and watch the Simtek 16-minute video on YouTube. It helps explain how it works and goes through its features, however, keep in mind models may change and features may vary.

For the added protection of your valuables, it is well worth the investment. ☺

Available from Queensland Shooters Supplies for about \$300; 07 3202 2111.



The portable sensor inside a camper trailer. It lets you know if anyone is looking through your gear. In this case, the skylight and side vent have been blocked out to allow the light sensor to remain on.

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# A DEEP DIVE INTO THE 6.5 GRENDEL

## Explore an uncommon modern rifle cartridge with a lot of niche potential

By Brendan Jones

**N**amed after a European mythical creature, descended from a Russian cartridge and designed for the US AR-15 platform, what place, if any, does the 6.5 Grendel have in the Australian shooting scene?

### The family tree

The 6.5 Grendel harkens back to the 7.62x39mm, the primogenitor and most well-known of the family, which entered production in 1944 in the former Soviet Union. In the late 50s, the 5.6x39mm was developed by necking down the 7.62x39mm and changing from a large to small rifle primer. In the mid 60s the 5.6x39mm was commercially introduced to the US market under the new name ‘.220

Russian’. If the 7.62x39mm is the Grendel’s grandparent, the .220 Russian is the parent case. The next generation saw the distinctive case taper of the previous ones blown out, leaving the 0.445-inch rimless bolt face as the last remaining family resemblance.

Of the Grendel’s generation, its most notable older siblings are the .22PPC (.22 PPC-USA was a SAAMI spec commercial variant from Sako) and 6mm PPC (never SAAMI standardised). Both of benchrest fame, they were developed in the 1970s. Younger, in vogue siblings are the ‘Advanced Rifle Cartridge’ triplets from Hornady - the 6mm ARC, .22 ARC and .338 ARC - released between 2020 and 2024.

### The 6.5 Grendel

The 6.5 Grendel, like the ARC cartridges it proceeds, was developed to work in the AR-15 platform. The designers, Bill Alexander (of Alexander Arms), Arne Brennan (competitive shooter) and Janne Pohjoispää (Lapua ballisticsian), sought to devise a round that would fit in that platform, but deliver better long-range performance than the 5.56x45mm NATO. The 6.5 Grendel was unveiled in 2003 at the Blackwater Training Centre in North Carolina, revealing the designers had settled on 6.5mm calibre, the same 30 deg shoulder and blown-out taper of the earlier PPC cases, and the 0.445-inch

The 6.5 Grendel (left) could almost pass as a mini Creedmoor (right). While it does lack the case capacity and ability to effectively drive the heaviest 6.5mm projectiles, it is more than capable of hunting medium-sized game.

“The 6.5 Grendel was unveiled in 2003 at the Blackwater Training Centre in North Carolina...”



intermediate bolt face. The case length arrived at was 38.6mm (1.520 inches), with the overall cartridge length of 57.4mm (2.260 inches), matching the 5.56 NATO/.223 Rem. Case capacity was 2.3cm<sup>3</sup>, or 35gr of water. Later SAAMI standardisation listed maximum average pressure listed as 52,000psi, with barrel twist rates of 1:8 and 1:9 being the most appropriate.

The Grendel, with its larger case capacity and heavier projectiles, was shown to stay supersonic for farther, buck the wind better and deliver more downrange energy and penetration with only minimal increase in recoil. This was possible in the same system, only requiring a change of rifle upper, bolt and a reduction in capacity of only four rounds in the standard 30-round magazine. Comparisons were even made to the 7.62x51mm NATO, where in certain loads the Grendel trajectory and penetration were shown to catch up past 1000 yards due to higher BC projectiles, in a smaller lighter platform with half the recoil.

In 2010 Alexander Arms resigned the trademark it held on the 6.5 Grendel name, one Bill had taken from the millennia old English poem in which Grendel is a



Dave with the first test subject for the Grendel’s field testing. Pictured next to the larger rifle (Tikka T3X) chambered in a larger calibre (6.5 Creedmoor). The pig didn’t seem to know the difference.

## A DEEP DIVE INTO THE 6.5 GRENDEL

monster. This unique and creative naming convention (let’s be honest, most cartridge names are pretty boring) wasn’t new to Bill. His .50 Beowulf from a few years earlier was named after the hero and title character of the same piece of literature, ‘Beowulf’. With the trademark released, SAAMI standardisation followed in 2011, allowing for wider commercial popularisation led by Hornady.

### Ballistic comparisons

Hypothetical cartridge and load comparisons could abound *ad nauseum ad infinitum*, but for the sake of time we will keep it brief. To begin is the most obvious, Australia’s most popular centrefire, .223 Rem, in its most popular weight, 55gr. With said weight of the V-max variety leaving the barrel at a factory 3240fps,



6.5 Grendel nestled between two cartridges it is often compared. The .223 Rem (left) it was attempting to replace in the AR15, and the current most popular 6.5mm cartridge, the 6.5 Creedmoor.



The 6.5 Grendel uses a less common 0.445-inch bolt face, which is larger than the 0.378 of the .223 Rem (left), but smaller than the 6.5 Creedmoor at 0.470 inches.

it shoots flatter than the 6.5GREN (123gr SST, 2600fps MV) rising to two inches above line of sight for a 200m zero, dropping 8.9 low by 300m. The Grendel climbs an extra 0.9 higher and dips 2.3 inches lower by 300m. But where the Grendel shines is energy.

At the muzzle the Grendel has 1.4 times more foot-pounds of energy and the gap widens down range with 1.6x at 100m, 1.8x at 200m and 2.2x the retained energy at 300m. Sure, at 600-odd meters the Grendel trajectory takes over and by 1km has 4x the energy and multiple meters less drop. But in the reality of civilian use in Australia, who could care less? At practical ranges it still excels by comparison, with a Grendel at 240m matching the .223 Rem 55gr energy at the muzzle. Swapping to a heavy-for-calibre 75gr match projectile at 2790fps only claws back some of the energy discrepancy (Grendel still 1.5x more at 200m) but gives up most of the

6.5 Grendel has been shown to make short work of dogs, like the calf killer (allegedly), pictured here with Dave.



trajectory advantage the 55gr had. Energy isn't everything, especially when punching holes in paper. But it's an important consideration to weigh up when hunting, as is the larger frontal diameter of a 6.5mm projectile.

Another common comparison is the 6.5 Creedmoor. With the same 6.5mm projectiles and the same 30-degree shoulder angle, the Grendel does look like a mini-Creedmoor. An apples-to-apples comparison with the identical 123gr SST is advantage Creedmoor, with a 300fps boost at the muzzle. This of course translates to less drop and more energy at all ranges from the zero to infinity. With lighter projectiles below 120gr, and heavier in the 130 and 140gr class, the gain is even greater. That's why the mid 120s are considered the Grendel's sweet spot, and the heavier loads aren't even offered in factory ammunition.

So, does that settle it? Well, it depends on what you're looking for. For shooting at 1km? Sure. But at more sensible ranges for hunting, it's not as bad as it seems. With the 123gr load, a 300m impact with the Creed is indistinguishable to the Grendel at 200m, and a 200m shot from the larger cartridge is equal in terms of terminal ballistics to a hit at around 50m from the mini. All being achieved with a smaller cartridge, burning less powder, producing less muzzle blast, less recoil and ability to fit in a shorter lighter action.

And lastly, what about grandpa? The 7.62x39mm's most popular projectile weight of 123gr matches the Grendel, but with a calibre of .310 makes for lower BC figures. Using a muzzle velocity of 2400fps, 50fps over factory numbers,



One of the benefits of a 6.5 Grendel is its ability to fit a mini/micro action. Pictured here is the bolt from a Howa mini action (left) compared to one from a Howa short action (right). This leads to a more compact and lighter rifle.

pushing a 0.310 123gr SST, will see the sleeker Grendel projectile of the same weight travelling faster handily beat the 7.62x39mm. A flatter trajectory, with a 1.5x retained energy advantage by 200m, after which the gap continues to widen. Even bumping it up to 2500fps hot handload territory to placate the most rabid 39 fans, a factory loaded Grendel still wins, and Grendel apologists will argue they can play the handload game, too. The 30-calibre class projectile does possess a larger frontal area though, which many believe counts for something when killing efficiency is of concern. And like its grandchild, the ol' 39 will fit into a mini/micro action.

**Personal experience**

In early 2023, one quiet night while thermal hunting pigs, my Grendel journey began. Dave and I were pontificating over what could replace our usual go-to nocturnal pig killer, the 7.62x39mm. While great on pigs at close ranges, it's trajectory and rapid loss of velocity

left something to be desired on smaller targets like cats at medium distances or those rarer 300m+ dog scenarios. Our self-imposed search rules were mini action compatible, more power than a .223 and not a 'wildcat'. A month later, a text from Dave, "Grendel ordered!", meant the running of endless ballistics calculations and watching of YouTube videos for 'research' could end, and the field testing could begin.

The first test subject was a solid boar in the daylight. A single shot quartering away at 125m saw him anchored to the spot. A good start. Space does not allow for a blow-by-blow recounting of tales from the field. But two years, 100+ pigs, a handful of dogs and a lone cat later, the results are in. It works. No doubt some of those tales will appear in *The Report* in the future.

While the far-away dogs and small cats were part of the rationale for the Grendel swap, make no mistake pigs make up most of this one's (a Howa mini action 22-inch Sporter) diet. Its primary role during the past two-plus years has been thermal hunting for pigs.



**Concluding recommendations**

So, on a continent where the main design brief of AR-15 compatibility is irrelevant (fulltime vertebrate pest controllers excluded), who should get a 6.5 Grendel? Should anyone get one? Well, it's not a go to for buffalo culling or shooting the fabled armour-plated (according to SSAA Victoria members) mythical sambar from distances of half a mile and beyond. Neither is it for the shooter who likes to have multiple loads of factory ammunition available in every small-town gun store they walk into. Nor is it for the hunter who likes to compensate for certain deficiencies by firing shoulder mounted artillery (referring to poor field craft and shot placement of course).

But if shooting efficient cartridges that get the job done with minimum fanfare floats your boat, it could be for you. If you are a recoil sensitive shooter or are helping a youth or new shooter into the sport, the 6.5 Grendel kicks less than 6.5 Creedmoor and .243 Win, with less muzzle blast. It also fits in a smaller/handier rifle (an attractive proposition to anyone), while packing up to double the terminal energy of a .223 at practical ranges. It might also be an avenue to express your individuality. And with no need to import elusive chamber reamers or form your own brass, it says, 'I'm unique', without being painfully obscure. There are even some factory rifle and ammunition options available, albeit limited. Or maybe it's the excuse you have been looking for to bring a new addition to the gun safe, and that's okay, too. Just tell your other half that a guy in *The Report* gave you permission... ☺

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# A JOURNEY WITH THE .30-30 WINCHESTER

## A TIMELESS HUNTING CLASSIC

By Billy Allen

**T**he .30-30 Winchester, a cartridge steeped in history and romance, has long held a special place in the hearts of hunters worldwide. For me, the journey to owning a .30-30 rifle began not with a practical need but with a deep-seated desire to connect with the heritage of traditional-style hunting.

My journey to purchase a .30-30 rifle began long before I stepped into my local gun shop. As a seasoned hunter with several rifles in my collection, justifying another acquisition was no small feat. Yet, the allure of traditional-style hunting—evoking images of the old hunter-trappers and the Wild West—provided the perfect excuse. While bow hunting intrigued me, the time required to master it was a luxury I didn't have. Instead, I turned to the next best thing: a Marlin 336 lever-action .30-30 with open sights, a setup that promised to deliver both authenticity and functionality.



After swapping the factory semi-buckhorn sights on my Marlin 336 for an XS Lever Rail with ghost ring sights, I initially mounted a Leupold 1.5-4 VXR scope. While it performed well, the lack of long eye relief limited its field of view at 4x power. This led me to search for a scope better suited to the lever-action's setup.



The .30-30 Winchester cartridge (middle) stands proudly alongside other popular Australian rounds: .223 Rem, .243 Win, .30-30Win, .270 Win and .375 H&H. A snapshot of versatile firepower.

*“My journey to purchase a .30-30 rifle began long before I stepped into my local gun shop.”*

One fateful day, my mate, a salesman of The Open Range store in Toowoomba, had initially called me to inspect a second-hand Leupold scope, a budget-friendly optic ideal for hunting. Though tempted, I passed on the scope, as it didn't meet any specific needs that I had. However, the conversation shifted to the recent news at the time that Remington was selling the Marlin brand to Ruger, a development that sent ripples through the hunting community. This meant that Marlin 336 rifles in .30-30, long a staple in Australia, might soon become scarce for a few years until Ruger could get the production of Marlin rifles back to its once prestigious and iconic

*“Does hunting with a .30-30 Winchester make me feel like a cowboy or an old-time trapper? Absolutely...”*



Here I am, Billy, rocking a red plaid shirt and Akubra, nervously awaiting my wife's verdict on my bush fashion sense.

reputation. While later-model Marlins made by Remington were decent, they lacked the craftsmanship of earlier versions, making quality second-hand finds particularly appealing.

I found myself drawn to a rack with a few .30-30 rifles after our conversation, so my mate led me to the second-hand gun rack, where two Marlin 336 rifles chambered in .30-30 caught my eye. The first was near-new with a standard timber stock, fitted with a Leupold Rifleman scope, and had fired only a handful of rounds. Its previous owner, facing financial hardship, had sold it back to the shop shortly after purchase. Upon inspection, I was impressed by its pristine condition and exceptionally smooth trigger, the result of a Western Action trigger job performed by a local gunsmith. Priced at \$1,050, including the scope, it was a fair deal. Next to it sat another Marlin 336 with a laminate stock, showing signs of use but not abuse. Without a scope, it felt perfect in my hands, reigniting my passion for primitive hunting.

## A JOURNEY WITH THE .30-30 WINCHESTER

Though a scoped Marlin was tempting, the unscoped model's authentic feel won me over. I was drawn to the standard timber stock Marlin and asked if they could sell it without the scope, they offered it for \$850—a bargain, especially with the trigger job already done. In a moment of impulse, I said, “Sold!” A wave of mild panic followed—how would I explain this to my wife? My solution: put it on lay-by and pay it off slowly. She'll never know! With a mix of guilt, excitement, and anticipation, I left the shop, dreaming of the hunting adventures awaiting me with my new .30-30 and its open sights.

Does hunting with a .30-30 Winchester make me feel like a cowboy or an old-time trapper? Absolutely. There's an undeniable old-world charm to wielding a lever-action rifle, its smooth action and classic design evoking a bygone era. As for whether I should pair it with a red plaid shirt and an Akubra, I'll leave that to the fashion police—or perhaps my understanding wife.

After word spread among friends and family about my purchase, I was fortunate to receive a generous gift: a stockpile of surplus .30-30 ammunition, both factory loads and handloads, from those who had moved on to more modern cartridges. This windfall ensured my Marlin 336 would see plenty of action, but it also prompted me to refine the rifle for my hunting needs.

A collection of surplus .30-30 Winchester ammunition, generously gifted by friends and family. It showcases the variety of factory loads still available in Aussie gun shops today.





A goat dropped with my Marlin 336 in .30-30 Winchester, again using the semi-buckhorn sights. This was a great day out hunting with my mate, Frank.

Initially, I reveled in hunting with the factory-installed semi-buckhorn open sights, which delivered a satisfyingly traditional experience and, surprisingly, my hits and kills within 100 yards were pretty high. What I did note was that the 30-30 killed well out of proportion to its anemic reputation, with it quickly becoming a preferred rifle for hunting feral game. Its recoil was super gentle and balanced well on off-hand shots. However, with my ammunition stores overflowing and my love of the cartridge and its killing ability and my now aging eyes, I decided to enhance the rifle's shooting range and versatility by adding optics while preserving its traditional aesthetic. After experimenting with various setups, I replaced the open sights with an XS ghost ring sight and an extended Picatinny rail. I settled on a Leupold Scout 1.5-4x28 scope mounted forward, taking advantage of its long eye relief. This configuration maintained the rifle's balance and sleek profile, allowing me to switch between optics and open sights as desired. For my Marlin 336, I've found that 150-grain loads strike the perfect balance of accuracy and power for local game, blending tradition with modern performance.

The .30-30 Winchester, introduced in 1895 by Winchester Repeating Arms, holds the distinction of being America's first small-bore sporting cartridge designed for smokeless powder. Developed for the Winchester Model 1894 lever-action rifle, designed by

John Browning, it marked a significant advancement over black powder cartridges. The cartridge's name, derived from its .30 calibre and 30 grains of smokeless powder, was quickly adopted by competitors like Marlin.

Initially, hunters were skeptical of the .30-30's smaller bullet compared to heavier rounds like the .45-70. However, its 150-grain (~2,350 fps) and 170-grain (~2,200 fps) loads proved highly effective for medium game within 150 yards. With moderate recoil and reliable performance, it became North America's most popular hunting cartridge for much of the 20th century, reportedly taking more deer than any other round. Its cultural significance was cemented through its use in Hollywood Westerns and historical events like the Mexican Revolution. More than 7 million Winchester Model 94s, alongside Marlin and Savage rifles, were chambered in .30-30, a testament to its enduring popularity.

In Australia, the .30-30 Win remains a relevant and capable hunting cartridge, particularly for the dense bush and scrubland on the eastern coast. Most hunters engage game well within 200 yards, with many of those shots taken inside 100 yards; these distances are well within the .30-30's effective range. Its ability to deliver rapid follow-up shots, thanks to the lever-action design, and its mild recoil make it ideal for pursuing pigs, goats and deer. The cartridge's 150-grain or 170-grain round-nose projectiles, moving at moderate velocities, deliver impressive energy transfer and penetration, ensuring consistent kills with minimal meat spoilage.



My first pig taken with the Marlin 336 in .30-30 Winchester using the original semi-buckhorn open sights. A memorable hunt that proved the rifle's reliability in the field.

In 2025, the .30-30 Winchester remains a versatile and affordable option for hunters. In a 7.5-pound rifle like the Marlin 336, recoil is approximately 10.6 ft-lbs, making it manageable for shooters of all experience levels. Traditional factory loads, such as 150-grain and 170-grain round-nose or flat-nose bullets, are safe for tubular magazines and deliver moderate muzzle velocities from a 20-inch barrel. These generate muzzle energies of around 1,900-2,000 ft-lbs, sufficient for deer, feral pigs and goats.

Modern advancements have further enhanced the .30-30's performance. Hornady's LEVERevolution, introduced in the 2000s, utilises 140-160-grain Flex-Tip bullets, achieving velocities of up to 2,455 fps, which extends the effective range, enhances penetration, and improves expansion for tougher game. Other ammunition manufacturers, including Winchester, Hornady, Federal and Remington, remain widely available on Australian gun shop shelves. The .30-30 Winchester is showing no signs of extinction, considering the modern-day counterparts it is competing against.



The 'Duke' John Wayne with his trusty .30-30.

The .30-30 Winchester is more than just a cartridge; it's a bridge to the past and a tool for the present. Its fast-cycling levered action and capability of holding multiple rounds in the tubular magazine have aided those with a need for a reliable, rapid-firing rifle for



A close-up of the XS Lever Rail and ghost ring aperture sight fitted to my Marlin 336. This setup enhances quick target acquisition while maintaining the rifle's traditional lever-action aesthetic.

well over a century. Today, it remains a favourite for hunters seeking a traditional yet effective option for moderate range hunting.

For Australian hunters, the .30-30 excels, where its moderate velocity and hard-hitting projectiles minimise meat damage while delivering reliable kills. Whether I'm stalking pigs in the scrub or deer in semi-open bush land, my Marlin 336 with its XS ghost ring sights and Leupold Scout scope offers the versatility and nostalgia I craved when I first set out to own a .30-30. It's a rifle that not only performs but also tells a story—one of tradition, adventure and the timeless appeal of hunting with a classic cartridge.

As I continue to explore the Australian bush with my .30-30, I'm reminded that some things never go out of style. The .30-30 Winchester, with its rich history and modern relevance, is proof that a well-designed cartridge can stand the test of time, delivering rewarding hunting experiences for generations to come. 🍷

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# REVEL CLASSIC

Review by Brad Allen

In recent times, there has been a resurgence in the popularity of lever action rifles in general and rimfire lever action rifles in particular, so when NIOA Australia, the importer of Savage firearms, requested SSAA Queensland to review its new Savage Revel Classic rimfire lever action, take down rifle, I was only too happy to oblige.

Look at any of the online firearm sales sites or any gun magazine and you'll be overwhelmed with advertisements for new lever action .22 rifles. To be spoilt for choice isn't a bad problem

to have, but the first time I saw an ad for the Savage Revel, I was impressed. It was a nice-looking lever rifle, but with subtle differences from anything else on the market. Why do they call this model a 'Revel' I hear you ask? I also wondered, but quite simply, Revel is 'Lever' spelt backwards.



The Revel's action was smooth and positive to cycle.



The Revel is easily taken down into its two major component parts by pushing the captured retaining pins through the action.

*"In Savage's own description, the Revel is a sleek, modern take on the classic lever action rimfire rifle..."*

In Savage's own description, the Revel is a sleek, modern take on the classic lever action rimfire rifle, which embodies a fusion of tradition and innovation; I'd have to agree. Fit and finish on the Canadian made test rifle was well executed and the walnut stock with its angular swells in the forearm and butt stock showed unusual figure that was pleasing to the eye. The action, lever, trigger and hammer are all investment alloy castings, very neatly executed. Revels are available in the Classic model (tested) and also the DLX model, with carved stock and curved pistol grip and lever loop, in both .22lr and .22 Magnum.

One of the first things that caught my eye on the test rifle was the satin finished walnut stock and dull black receiver. As a hunter, I don't



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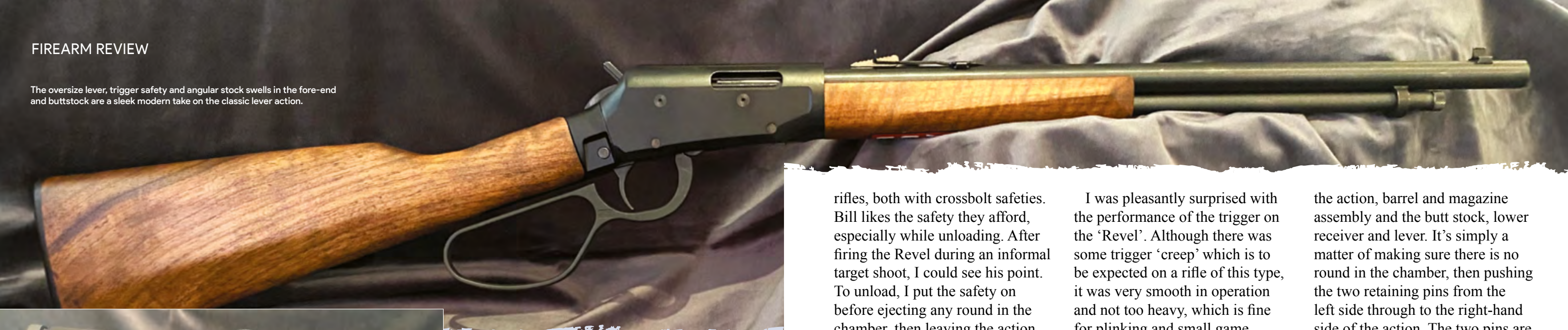
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The oversize lever, trigger safety and angular stock swells in the fore-end and buttstock are a sleek modern take on the classic lever action.



Fit and finish of the Revel was neat and tidy.

*“The oversized lever loop, while not a new idea, is a nice touch, both aesthetically and for practicality.”*

like shiny rifles! Throughout the years, I’ve been ‘pinged’ by game animals on more than one occasion when carrying a rifle with a glossy stock and shiny metal work, which may look nice, but is totally impractical for hunting. The overall satin finish on the Revel looks good and is extremely practical.

The oversized lever loop, while not a new idea, is a nice touch, both aesthetically and for practicality. I owned a lever action .22 rimfire many years ago that had an extremely narrow finger lever that bordered on the uncomfortable.

The Revel’s oversized lever loop reliably cycles the action in a smooth and positive manner and is comfortable to use, without being too large.

With modern metallurgy, design and manufacturing techniques, it’s quite common these days to see many different rifles with alloy receivers. Some of the more upmarket rifles, like Blaser and Merkel, have alloy receivers which in no way detract from their strength, functionality or accuracy. The Revel’s cast aluminium receiver is both solid and functional

with, its dull matt black finish. The top of the receiver is drilled and tapped for scope mounting and the test rifle was supplied with the new Bushnell R3 rimfire scope. Just as well really, as my old eyes struggle these days using iron sights. However, the iron sights on the rifle, although quite rudimentary (drift adjustable for windage and a serrated ramp for elevation adjustment) are more than acceptable for anyone with normal eyesight.

Considering that full ballistics for the .22 are achieved in 16 inches of barrel, the Revel’s medium profile carbon steel barrel is a handy 18 inches in length. It provides good balance and usability, with the rifle holding well in the offhand position. The underbarrel tube magazine holds 12 rounds of .22lr ammunition, which is more than enough firepower for a session of plinking or small game hunting.

The Revel also sports a crossbolt safety catch in the action above the trigger, something that was never seen on lever guns back in the day. I recently had this very conversation with my son Billy, who owns two Marlin lever action

rifles, both with crossbolt safeties. Bill likes the safety they afford, especially while unloading. After firing the Revel during an informal target shoot, I could see his point. To unload, I put the safety on before ejecting any round in the chamber, then leaving the action open, removed the remaining rounds from the tube magazine. It’s then necessary to make sure there are no more rounds left in the rifle by cycling the action, with the safety on, while pointed in a safe direction. The crossbolt safety works well and is a welcome addition to the Revel.

I was pleasantly surprised with the performance of the trigger on the ‘Revel’. Although there was some trigger ‘creep’ which is to be expected on a rifle of this type, it was very smooth in operation and not too heavy, which is fine for plinking and small game hunting. I’ve owned a couple of lever action rimfires over the years that although they shot well, had horrendously heavy trigger pulls, which was the main reason that I no longer own them!

The Revel is a ‘take down’ rifle, which is easily broken down into its two major component parts, being

the action, barrel and magazine assembly and the butt stock, lower receiver and lever. It’s simply a matter of making sure there is no round in the chamber, then pushing the two retaining pins from the left side through to the right-hand side of the action. The two pins are fully ‘captured’ within the frame at this point, so can’t be removed from the action and lost; then, just pull the lower receiver, lever and butt stock assembly free from the upper receiver. Re-assembly is just as simple, but in reverse. Once broken down, the rifle can easily be transported in a backpack.

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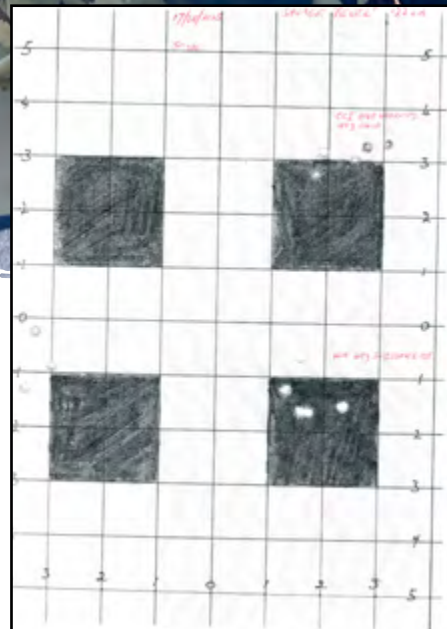
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Accuracy was quite acceptable at 50yds, despite a strong cross wind.

The performance of virtually all .22 rifles will be enhanced with the addition of a telescopic sight, regardless of your eyesight. The problem is, most scopes fitted to .22 rifles are designed for and meant to be mounted on centrefire rifles, with their parallax adjusted for centrefire rifle distances, usually 100 or 150 metres. Consequently, .22 with such a scope will not be performing at its optimal. Owing to the usable distance that a rimfire


Although it has some creep, the trigger of the Revel was quite acceptable.

rifle will invariably be used, any scope on a .22 rifle needs to have parallax set for around 50 metres. Only then will the rifle perform at its best. The 3-9x40 Bushnell R3 Rimfire Scope as supplied with the Revel for testing, has its parallax set appropriately for .22lr distances and has a BDC reticule with three dots under the main cross specific to .22lr hold over. The Bushnell R3 rimfire scope is a very useful addition to the Revel or any other .22lr rifle, as its designed specifically with rimfire shooting distances in mind.

During our shooting session, the Revel shot quite well by .22lr standards. I shot the rifle with both CCI High velocity 40grn solids as supplied with the rifle and Winchester 40grn Subsonic hollow points. At 50 yds, both rounds

grouped around one inch, with some lateral dispersion due to a brisk cross wind. This is more than acceptable accuracy from a rifle meant for plinking and small game hunting.

I found the Revel to be a handsome, well-made and lively little rifle that functioned smoothly and positively with good accuracy. Anyone currently considering the purchase of a new lever action .22, should have a closer look at the Savage Revel. You won't be disappointed.

At the time of writing a check with several distributors revealed that the Revel Classic was generally selling for under \$1000 and the Revel DLX for just above \$1100, so best advice is to shop around. Savage firearms are distributed in Australia by NIOA Australia. 

Oliver, the creator, looking comfortable in full PPE.



REVIEW

# THE KOGAN

By Sam Talbot

Both hearing protection and sun protection are non-negotiable for shooters. Broad-brim hats offer better sun coverage than a standard cap, but they tend to clash with earmuffs which also want the prime real estate above your head. The Kogan, however, has a simple and effective way to fix this – snappable holes on the side of the hat.

I have tried out The Kogan with both earmuffs and over-ear headphones, and in a no-fuss way, it does exactly what it claims to do. The side openings allow ear protection to sit properly against the head without breaking the seal or pushing the hat out of shape.

With earmuffs on, the brim stays clear, and the fit remains comfortable. It is also just a good hat when you do not need hearing protection.

The idea behind the unique hat came from a

practical, real-world observation rather than a design brief. Oliver, the New Zealand-based creator of The Kogan, says the concept was sparked after noticing his foreman arrive at work wearing a surf hat he had modified to fit earmuffs. That improvised solution became the starting point for a purpose-built design aimed squarely at shooters and outdoor workers.

Oliver told us there are customers in New Zealand still using their hats more than a decade after purchase. While the colour may fade, the hats continue to see regular use. Before being sent out, each hat is checked by Oliver and the quality control team.

The cotton fabric is substantial without being heavy, and it feels like it is designed to handle regular outdoor use rather than occasional wear. After use, it still holds its shape well, which is often where softer, floppy hats fall short.

From a practical shooter's perspective, being able to wear a broad brim hat and earmuffs is great. The Kogan is a piece of gear that might quickly earn a place in your kit. Whether you're on the range, in the paddock or just spending long days outdoors, it's a very handy hat to have in your life.

The Kogan costs \$34 and comes in navy or olive and in 59cm or 61cm band size. You can also get a custom quote on orders of more than two.

**They are available at [thekogan.com](http://thekogan.com)** 



Just a simple flap makes all the difference.

# Ten telltale signs of FERAL PIGS

By Ted Springs

Across Australia, feral pigs are continuing to expand their range, pushing into new regions and leaving a trail of damage along the way. They may never be seen, but that doesn't mean they're not there. For farmers, land managers and regional communities, recognising the signs of feral pig activity is the first step toward effective control.



## Digging and rooting

The most reliable indicator of feral pigs is the ground itself. These animals are expert foragers, using their snouts to dig for roots, tubers, insects and even frogs or crustaceans. The result can end up looking like a freshly ploughed paddock, sometimes with holes up to half a metre deep. Even a handful of pigs can tear up large areas overnight, uprooting mature plants, disturbing seedlings and encouraging weeds to take hold.

## Tracks in the mud

Pig tracks can resemble those of sheep, goats or deer, but tend to be more rounded and splayed. The tracks may not be, but sometimes their appearance will be enough to differentiate between species. See the image of different animal footprints to compare for yourself.

## Scat and what it says

Large, pellet-like droppings are another indicator of pigs. The appearance of feral pig scat varies depending on diet and season, but examining it can reveal what the pigs are feeding on. Obviously, this is valuable information when planning baiting or trapping programs.



## Crop and pasture damage

Chewed or trampled crops, as well as torn-up pastures, are classic signs of pig activity. The destruction can sometimes be confused with damage from other wildlife, but pigs often leave a pattern of rooting and wallowing unique to their species. In wetlands and riparian zones, their impact can be particularly severe.

## Rub and tusk marks

After wallowing in mud, pigs often rub themselves on trees, fence posts or other rough surfaces to remove parasites and loose hair. Smooth, muddy patches at pig height, or deep gouges where boars have marked territory with their tusks, are a definite sign.

## Pads and game trails

Like other animals, pigs travel the same routes between feeding and watering sites, creating well-worn trails or 'pads'. These tracks may also be used by kangaroos or livestock, so they're not always conclusive; but when combined with other evidence, they can confirm the presence of pigs.

## Mud and hair on fences

Clumps of long, coarse hair or dried mud along the bottom wire of fences are yet another indicator of pig visitors. This can also be one of the earlier indicators of pig activity.

## Wallowing in the wet

On hot days, pigs cool off by wallowing in damp soil or shallow water. Fresh wallows, complete with tracks or wet mud, can suggest pigs have been in the area recently. These depressions can remain visible for months.

## Livestock losses

Feral pigs are opportunistic omnivores and are known to prey on lambs and calves, especially when other food sources are scarce. Because they often consume entire carcasses, evidence can be minimal, and scavengers may further complicate the diagnosis.

## Actual sightings

Ironically, seeing live pigs is one of the least reliable indicators. They tend to avoid human contact and spend daylight hours hidden in thick cover. By the time they are spotted, it's likely they've been around for some time.

The most effective way to manage feral pigs is through long-term, coordinated action. When landholders, neighbours and regional agencies work together, control programs are far more successful in reducing pig numbers and minimising damage.

For more information and resources, visit [feral pigs.com.au](http://feral pigs.com.au) or the **PestSmart website**, which includes the **Glovebox Guide for Managing Feral Pigs** and state-specific advice. 📍



Pig	Goat	Sheep	Deer	Cow

Courtesy of CISS – Glovebox Guide For Managing Feral Pigs (Moseby et al 2009) (images: Kana Koichi, Jason Wishart and Pip Masters).

# WHEN I TRIED TO SELL KANGAROO LEATHER TO AMERICA

By Robert M. Walkley

Back in the 1970s, I was a young Yank who had made the unlikely decision to settle in Australia after that little party my country threw for us all over in Southeast Asia. I'd come from a place where opportunity was something you went out and made for yourself, and when I arrived here, I was taken by the vastness of the land and the abundance of its wildlife. One animal, in particular, caught my attention - not just for its symbolic value, but for the commercial potential it represented: the kangaroo

At that time, Australia was culling more than a million kangaroos a year. I remember reading that figure - 1.2 million - and thinking, surely there must be a way to make something of that. Kangaroo leather, as I discovered, was extraordinarily strong, lightweight and beautiful to the touch. The stuff was prized by those who knew its properties, but the rest of the world didn't seem to. I thought I might change that.

So, I did what any optimistic newcomer might do—I set out to export it to America.

After navigating the red tape, securing the necessary permits, and learning far more about hides, curing and packing than I ever expected, I managed to gather about a hundred

kangaroo skins. I bundled them into big bags, tagged and certified, and flew with them as cargo.

As I walked through U.S. Customs, a big black fellow sitting on a high stool called out in a deep, gravelly voice, "What you got there?"

I told him, "You'll never believe me."

He grinned and said, "Man, I've seen everything."

"Okay," I said. "Kangaroo skins."

He blinked. "No shit."

"Want one?" I asked, thinking it might grease the wheels a little.

He paused, looked around guiltily, and said, "Hell, no... well, hell yeah."

I handed one over, and he waved me straight through.

Once back on American soil, I set about knocking on the doors of leather companies up and down the East Coast—Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Washington—probably ten in total. Every one of them knew far more about leather than I did. They talked about tensile strength, stretch, flexibility, stitching properties, and even how a buttonhole would wear. I learned a lot in those few weeks.

But every meeting ended the same way. They admired the leather, praised its quality—and then politely refused.

*"Kangaroo leather, as I discovered, was extraordinarily strong, lightweight and beautiful to the touch."*



Leather companies are well aware of the benefits of kangaroo leather, but they cannot convince their misguided customers.



Despite its many uses and impressive qualities, kangaroo leather can't catch a break in the USA.

"Sorry," they'd say. "We can't touch kangaroo."

When I asked why, they'd all tell me the same story: they'd been told that kangaroos were endangered, that they were cruelly hunted, that the industry was barbaric. No matter what facts I offered—that the animals were culled under strict quotas, that their numbers were in the millions, that the industry was sustainable—it didn't matter. Their customers had already made up their minds, thanks to the campaigns of well-funded pressure groups painting Australia's kangaroo harvesters as villains. "You're killing Skippy," they all said.

One executive actually said, "We know the facts, but our customers don't—and we can't afford to educate them."

So, that was that. My great kangaroo-leather export venture ended before it really began. I left the skins with my sister; a few were given away, the rest eventually went to the dump.

Looking back now, four decades later, it still strikes me as ironic. Here was one of the most abundant, well-managed wildlife resources on earth - humanely harvested under government oversight, producing one of the finest, strongest leathers known to man, and it couldn't find a place in the market because of misinformation and emotional politics.

The same battle, it seems, is still being fought today. I recently read *The Report* (August 2025) article lamenting the struggle to market kangaroo leather because of the same misguided pressure from overseas. It's frustrating, because the truth hasn't changed: the kangaroo harvest remains ethical, sustainable and ecologically sound. Yet, mythology persists.

There are no shortages of kangaroos in Australia, meaning the potential for leather production is sustainable.



*"They admired the leather, praised its quality—and then politely refused."*

For me, that experience back in the '80s was a lesson...not about business, but about perception. In the marketplace of ideas, facts often play second fiddle to feelings. And once people make an emotional connection with an image, no matter how false, it can take generations to undo it.

Still, I remember that customs officer's grin when I handed him that kangaroo skin. "Hell yeah," he said.

At least one American, that day, appreciated what we were offering. 🍷

# Bushnell R3 Series

Affordable excellence for hunters

By Billy Allen

Using the Bushnell R3 6x25 Laser Rangefinder was simple, silent and accurate, making it a breeze in the field.

Bushnell has long been a trusted name in hunting optics, with the new R3 series being a testament to their commitment to delivering quality gear for hunters on a budget. The R3 lineup, comprising the R3 3-9x40 rifle scope, R3 10x42 binoculars and R3 6x25 laser rangefinder, is designed to bring reliable, high-performing optics to entry-level price points without compromising on durability or functionality.

The Report was given the opportunity to test these three products in the Australian bush. From unboxing to field performance, the R3 series impressed me with its thoughtful design, robust construction and value for money. Whether you're a seasoned hunter or a beginner looking to equip your first hunting adventure, the R3 series is worth a serious look.

The gear arrived in sturdy boxes



The Bushnell R3 range, including binoculars, laser rangefinder and rifle scope, displayed in their respective packaging.

adorned with camo tones of green and black, immediately signalling their purpose-built design for hunting and outdoor pursuits. The packaging exudes confidence, giving you the sense that you've invested in tools meant for the rugged Australian landscape. Upon opening each box, I was greeted with the words 'Welcome to Team Bushnell', a sentiment that feels genuine. It's clear that Bushnell has crafted the R3 series to make quality hunting optics accessible to everyone, regardless of budget.

This inclusive approach sets the tone for what's to come: reliable, practical gear that invites hunters of all levels to join the fold.

I took the R3 scope, binoculars and rangefinder into the bush to see how they'd perform under real-world conditions and to give you my unbiased opinion on this gear.



The Bushnell R3 3-9x40 Rifle scope with Multi-X reticle, mounted on my Winchester Featherweight in .243 Win.

## Bushnell R3 3-9x40 Rifle scope

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Straight out of the box, the R3 3-9x40 rifle scope makes a strong statement. The matte black finish is sleek and professional, inspiring confidence in its build quality. A standout feature is the vibrant green ring in the front lens housing—a small but striking detail that adds a pop of character and shows Bushnell's attention to presentation. The scope feels solid in hand, with a compact, lightweight design that promises durability without weighing down your rifle.



Looking through the Bushnell R3 3-9x40 Rifle scope with Multi-X reticle was clear and intuitive, perfectly suited for my hunting rifle.



The Bushnell R3 3-9x40 Rifle scope with Multi-X reticle, unboxed and ready for my initial impressions.

### TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

**Reticle:** Multi-X  
**Field of view @ 100 yards:** 11.6m–4.0m  
**Eye relief:** 3.5 inches  
**Total elevation/Windage:** 65 MOA  
**Turret adjustments:** ¼ MOA graduations  
**Tube size:** 1 inch  
**Weight:** 414g  
**Length:** 316mm

**Features:** HD optical system, multi-coated optics, EXO Barrier lens coating, IPX7 waterproof and fog-proof construction, nitrogen-purged, single-piece shockproof tube, second focal plane design, adjustable objective focus.

The R3 scope is built with Bushnell's HD optical system for maximum light transmission, contrast and resolution. The multi-coated optics enhance brightness,

while the EXO Barrier coating repels water, oil, dust and debris. Its IPX7 waterproof and nitrogen-purged construction ensures reliability in harsh conditions, and the 1-inch aircraft-grade aluminium tube is shockproof for rugged use.

### IN THE FIELD

Mounted on my .243 Winchester, the R3 scope proved its worth. The clarity was exceptional right out of the box, with sharp, edge-to-edge visuals even at the maximum 9x magnification. During testing, it held zero flawlessly and the turrets tracked accurately when adjustments were made, providing confidence in its precision. The EXO Barrier coating kept the lenses clear

## BUSHNELL R3 SERIES

*"Upon opening each box, I was greeted with the words 'Welcome to Team Bushnell', a sentiment that feels genuine."*

in damp conditions. Whether stalking through dense bush or scanning open paddocks, the scope performed reliably, delivering bright, clear images without distortion.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

The R3 3-9x40 rifle scope is a fantastic option for hunters seeking quality optics at an entry-level price. Its lightweight design, durable construction and excellent optical clarity make it a versatile choice for a range of hunting scenarios. The attention to detail and the robust build ensure it can handle the rigours of the Australian bush. For the price, this scope punches well above its weight.



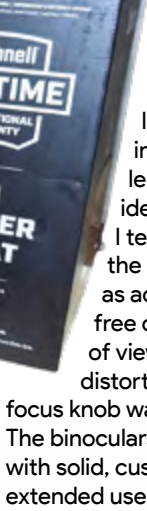
Reviewer and author testing the Bushnell R3 series optics in the Australian bush.

## Bushnell R3 10x42 Binoculars

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The R3 10x42 binoculars immediately feel solid and well-constructed. Weighing just 623.7g, they're lightweight yet robust, with a rugged design that inspires confidence. The rubber armour is professionally finished, providing a secure grip and added durability. The included chest carry harness, which is also used in Bushnell's higher-end R5 series, is a standout addition—adjustable, well-made and an extra thought from the Bushnell Team in providing a quality product that you don't need to go and purchase to aid your field use experience and hunting. A neoprene neck strap is also provided, adding versatility for those who prefer a traditional carry option.

The binocular chest harness made retrieving, using, and storing the R3 binoculars in the field effortless and convenient.



The Bushnell R3 10x42 Binoculars, unboxed and ready for my first impressions.

### TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

**Size (HxW):** 150mm x 125mm

**Weight:** 623.7g

**Interpupillary distance:** 59–74mm

**Eye relief:** 17mm

**Close focus:** 4.87m

**Field of view:** 101.6m

Features: HD optical system, anti-reflective coating, EXO Barrier lens coating, IPX7 waterproof with nitrogen-purged chassis, durable shockproof ergonomic construction with rubber over-mould, tripod-ready (adaptor sold separately).

The binoculars feature Bushnell's HD optical system and anti-reflective coatings for maximum light transmission. The EXO Barrier coating ensures clarity in adverse conditions, and the IPX7 waterproof chassis is built to withstand Australia's unpredictable weather.

### IN THE FIELD

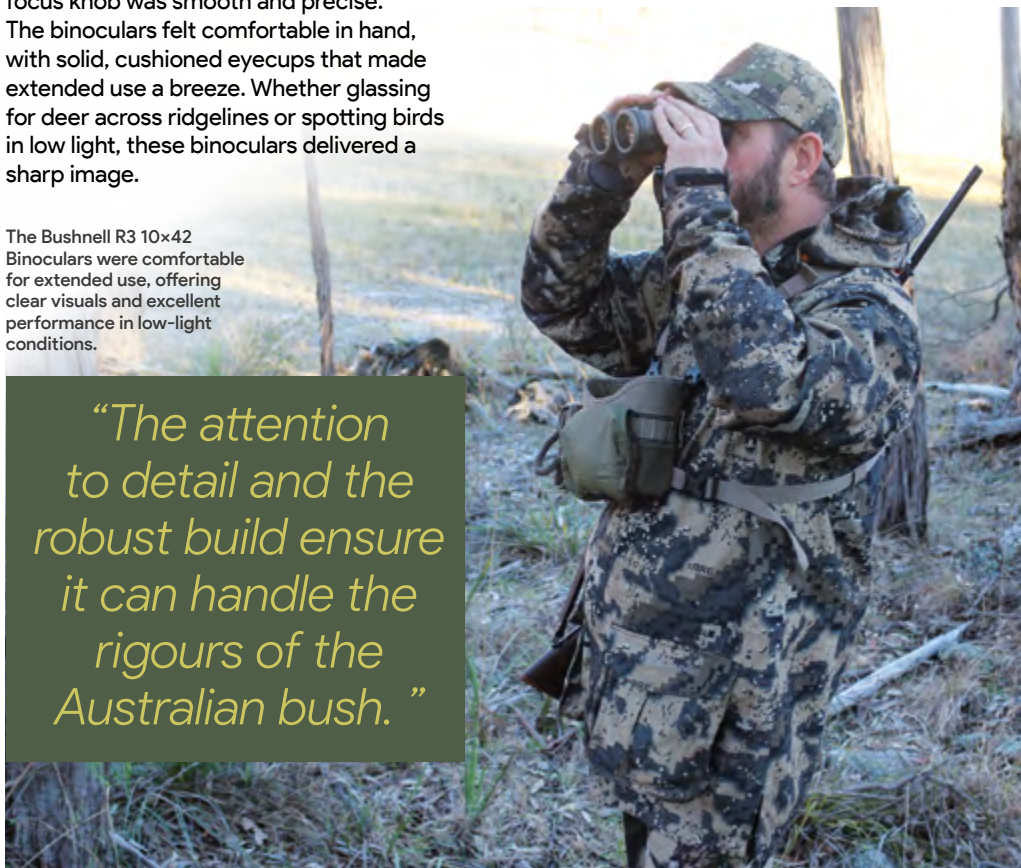
In the bush, the R3 binoculars shone. Their low-light performance was impressive, thanks to the lens coatings, making them ideal for dawn and dusk hunts. I tested them in light rain, and the EXO Barrier coating worked as advertised, keeping the lenses free of water droplets. The field of view was wide with minimal distortion, and the adjustable

focus knob was smooth and precise. The binoculars felt comfortable in hand, with solid, cushioned eyecups that made extended use a breeze. Whether glassing for deer across ridgelines or spotting birds in low light, these binoculars delivered a sharp image.

The Bushnell R3 10x42 Binoculars were comfortable for extended use, offering clear visuals and excellent performance in low-light conditions.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

The R3 10x42 binoculars are a standout in their price range. Their rugged construction, excellent low-light performance and included chest harness make them a fantastic value proposition. Bushnell has created a pair of binoculars that are purpose-built for hunting, offering durability and optical quality that rival more expensive models. For hunters looking for reliable, high-performing binoculars without breaking the bank, the R3 is unmatched in its class.



*"The attention to detail and the robust build ensure it can handle the rigours of the Australian bush."*

## Bushnell R3 6x25 Laser Rangefinder

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The R3 6x25 rangefinder is compact and lightweight, making it easy to carry in the bush. Its robust carry case, finished in a hunting-appropriate khaki colour, is well-made and includes a solid lanyard—a thoughtful addition that enhances its practicality. The rangefinder's glass is crystal clear, and the silent one-button operation is intuitive, making it user-friendly straight out of the box.



The Bushnell R3 6x25 Laser Rangefinder, unboxed and ready for my initial evaluation.

### TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

**Accuracy:** 1 yard accuracy out to 1200 yards

**Max range:** 1200 yards (reflective surfaces), 350 yards (deer)

**Magnification:** 6x

**Features:** Digital reticle, Angle Range Compensation (ARC) for bow mode, EXO Barrier lens coating, high-definition optics, scan mode (up to 4x per second)

The R3 rangefinder is designed for precision, with ARC modes for bow hunters and a fast scan mode for quick ranging. The EXO Barrier coating ensures clarity in tough conditions, and the high-definition optics provide a sharp view.

### IN THE FIELD

The R3 rangefinder's performance was exceptional. Its response time was lightning-fast, outpacing my 15-year-old entry-level rangefinder and even my high-end range finding binoculars. I ranged animals out to 300 yards with 100 per cent reliability and accuracy, and the rangefinder handled close ranges as near as five metres—a win



The Bushnell R3 6x25 Laser Rangefinder's single-button operation and clear digital reticle made it intuitive and user-friendly.

### Conclusion

The Bushnell R3 series—comprising of the 3-9x40 riflescope, 10x42 binoculars and 6x25 laser rangefinder—is a triumph of value and performance. Each product is thoughtfully designed, ruggedly built and tailored for the demands of Australian hunters. The scope's clarity and reliability, the binoculars' low-light performance and included harness, and the rangefinder's speed and accuracy make this lineup a compelling choice for hunters at any stage of their journey.

What sets the R3 series apart is Bushnell's lifetime unconditional warranty, which provides peace of mind that these products are built to last. Whether you're hard on your gear, introducing your kids to hunting or

starting out yourself, the R3 series offers quality optics that won't break the bank. Compared to the gear I started out using 25 years ago, which cost significantly more and were not specifically designed for the hunter, the R3 lineup is a revelation. It delivers exceptional value, performs reliably in the field and ensures you have dependable tools for years to come. Even if you upgrade to higher-end gear in the future, the R3 series will remain a solid backup option.

Bushnell has crafted a lineup that truly welcomes hunters to 'Team Bushnell'. The R3 series is unmatched at its price point (each less than \$500), and I wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone looking to get into the bush with confidence. Go Team Bushnell!🇺🇸

## BUSHNELL R3 SERIES

for bow hunters needing precise short-distance measurements. The ARC mode worked admirably, providing accurate angle-adjusted ranges. The setup was straightforward, and the clear glass and digital reticle made ranging effortless, even in low light. The silent operation ensured I didn't spook game, and the lightweight design made it easy to carry all day with the carry case neatly attaching to the binocular's chest carry harness.



The rangefinder case integrated seamlessly with the binocular chest harness, securely carrying both the R3 binoculars and rangefinder. These thoughtful additions reflect Bushnell's commitment to enhancing the user's experience.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

The R3 6x25 rangefinder is a game-changer for hunters on a budget. Its fast response time, close-range capability and robust construction make it a versatile tool for both rifle and bow hunters. The included carry case and accurate performance add significant value; it's intuitive to use, making it accessible for beginners and experienced hunters alike. Adding this rangefinder to your kit will boost your confidence and reduce margins of error, ensuring ethical shots in the field.



Bruce Barnett.

# BRUCE BARNETT

## Renowned Aussie slipjoint maker *By Rod Hoare*

Arguably the most renowned artisan knifemaker in Australia, Bruce Barnett from Barnett Custom Knives, has played a pivotal role in bringing Australian knifemaking and knifemakers into the everyday lives of thousands of people. As a foundation and life member and current Vice-President of the Australian Knife Art Association (KAA), a non-profit organisation that runs the four largest knife shows across Australia, and a full voting member of the Australian Knifemakers Guild (AKG), Bruce has dedicated countless hours behind the scenes of the knifemaking industry. His efforts have promoted and improved the craft for not only the makers but also for the many end users and collectors of edged tools.

Originally starting as a fixed-blade maker, Bruce has now transitioned to creating traditional slipjoints and lockbacks, a style he particularly enjoys. From the simple single blade shadow pattern to intricate six blade Whittlers, Cattleman and Sowbelly patterns, each knife presents its own unique challenges and rewards. “The details required to ensure that all parts fit perfectly, and the satisfaction of opening and closing each blade with the ideal spring tension, makes the process rewarding”, Bruce says.

If you’ve attended a knife show in Australia, you’ve likely seen or spoken to Bruce. He exhibits at every Australian knife show, unless it conflicts with his regular USA shows. Bruce has won numerous awards at Australian knife shows, sometimes multiple, and a few awards at USA shows. This demonstrates the exceptional build quality of his knives as judged by his peers.

Speaking of the USA, Bruce has exhibited at Blade Show Atlanta every year since 2008 (except for the COVID years). During these visits, he has also refined his skills by attending many knifemaking and damascus courses with numerous American Bladesmith Society (ABS) Master Smiths (MS). In 2011, he achieved his Journeyman Smith (JS) ranking with the ABS, one of only a handful of JS or MS certified bladesmiths in Australia at the time. He has since assisted numerous Aussie makers attain their own JS ranking. Bruce is also the only invited member outside the USA of the Slipjoint Cartel, a group of the best slipjoint makers in the world, started in Texas, USA. He is also a member and award winner of the USA-based The Knifemakers Guild, a membership base of the best knifemakers in the industry.

After making knives and honing his skills for 20 years, Bruce has run hundreds of classes on all

aspects of knifemaking. He has recently focussed on three-day folding knife or damascus classes. These classes have attracted attendees from most states of Australia, who travel to his workshop in Bridgetown, Western Australia. Many students have become fantastic makers in their own right, some even becoming multiple award winners. This is a testament to Bruce’s knowledge, ability, and mentoring. He beams with pride when he says, “Nothing makes me happier than seeing a past student exhibiting and winning awards at a show, especially if they beat me, means I did a good job mentoring them.”

Bruce’s range of slipjoints and lockbacks includes everything from single-blade shadow pattern EDC knives (review/testing follows) to multi-blade folders. All knives are crafted from high-quality blade materials such as Magnacut, CPM154, or his own mosaic damascus steel, combined with

some of the finest handle materials sourced from around the world, including fossil mammoth ivory, mother of pearl and jugged bone, as well as classic Australian hardwood timber and hard-use materials like Micarta.

Bruce’s knives range from EDC through to collectable ‘art’ knives featuring multiple damascus blades, rare handle materials and superb engraving and file work. Each knife from Bruce’s shop is of exceptional quality and always a prized piece to own and use.

Contact Bruce (see end of review for details) to enquire about his knives or a class where you can make your own quality folding knife.



BRUCE BARNETT

Two Shadow Patterns both with MagnaCut blades, one featuring Tufnol and the other hand jugged black paper Micarta.

## REVIEW Shadow pattern ‘Trapper’ slipjoint

The shadow pattern slipjoint is a style of folding knife without metal bolsters, creating a simpler, lighter and sleeker profile folder. This particular version from Bruce features a CPM MagnaCut clip point blade (Trapper style) with a length of 75mm (3”), overall open length of 170mm (6.7”) and closed length of 95mm (3.74”) and a weight of only 66 grams. This makes it an extremely useful size for work, home, camping, hiking or as a small blade for hunting.

With CPM MagnaCut as the blade steel, this knife was a performer in testing, boasting great edge retention and toughness along with superb corrosion resistance. It’s perfect for everyday use, requiring minimal maintenance except for occasional stropping or sharpening and a quick oiling. The very hard

modern super-steel with its fine carbide structure makes sharpening a bit more challenging and time-consuming, but the effort pays off in the edge retention. I recommend using diamond stones or a WorkSharp Ken Onion belt sharpener for modern knife super steels, while oil and water stones will work but take longer. After putting this blade through testing, I put it on a 2000 grit belt on the Worksharp then stropped it and it was back to razor sharp in a matter of minutes.

The Tufnol handle material, a form of Micarta, on this pattern matches the MagnaCut perfectly for hard use. It’s renowned for its toughness and grip on EDC and hard-use knives, *and it looks damn cool!* The all-important spring is made from CPM154 stainless



Performance testing to gauge edge retention, strength, comfort and durability, in order of testing L-R: heavy cardboard cut, sisal rope cut, tip strength bend test, nylon rope cut, shaving hardwood, foam cut, apple/tomato cut.

## BRUCE BARNETT

steel, heat-treated to create what I believe is near the perfect pull strength. The frame (liners) and pins are all 410 stainless steel. The quality, hard-use, low-maintenance materials used in Bruce's knives leave you with no doubt that this folder will outlast you and be passed down through generations.

Handling the knife is a joy. It's comfortable and light, and the 95mm handle allows for a full four-finger grip of an average-sized male hand. During testing, there were no hot spots, and the rounded back of the handle sat comfortably in my palm. Even during hard use and where extra leverage was needed, placing the thumb on the spine was instinctive and comfortable.

This knife, made from high-quality materials, performed exceptionally well in all the tests. It held up to punishment that normally could be too much for a knife of this style. At the end of testing, the blade was still centred both open and closed, everything was still tight, the materials still looked brand new, and importantly, the blade was still cutting.

Bruce offers MagnaCut as standard, or 52100 high carbon steel on special order, and a number of handle options for his shadow patterns, such as Tufnol, vintage



Shadow Pattern "Trapper" with MagnaCut blade and Tufnol scales.

Micarta, G10, hand-jigged paper Micarta, or composite Carbon Fibre. Jigged bone is also available as a special order.

Our review knife is priced at a reasonable A\$550. For a handmade slipjoint made with the best materials here in Australia, by a maker renowned worldwide, plus a folder that will last generations, I would say that's excellent value. Please note that pricing for different blade steel or scale materials may vary, so it's best to contact Bruce directly for pricing.

### Conclusion

This small knife is a true workhorse, performing exceptionally well beyond its intended purpose, while outperforming many larger knives. It has great edge retention that cuts effortlessly. If you're a fan of slipjoints, this is an excellent EDC choice. If you're new to slipjoints, this is a great place to start, as it certainly won't disappoint. 🍷

### Specifications and features:

- **Blade Steel:** CPM MagnaCut belt finish
- **Blade Length:** 75mm
- **Blade Thickness:** 2.5mm
- **Overall Length (Open):** 170mm
- **Closed Length:** 95mm
- **Weight:** 66g
- **Handle Material:** Tufnol (modern Micarta) with 410 stainless steel liners
- **Spring:** CPM154 stainless steel
- **Opening Mechanism:** Manual with nail nick
- **Made in:** Australia

### Our standard tests and results:

BESS (Brubacher Edge Sharpness Scale) tests are performed on an Edge On Up Pro BESS certified professional machine to use a standard test and ease of comparison for edge retention.

**Sharpness out of the box, BESS:** 196g, great for a new knife  
Perform 40 cuts of thick cardboard, 10 cuts of 8mm sisal rope onto timber board, timber shaving, 10 nylon rope cuts onto timber board, tip strength into timber, 10 foam piece cut, apple slice, tomato slice, throwing into hardwood, dropping on hardwood, dirt test: Passed, no damage.

**Sharpness after performing all the above tests (edge retention) BESS:** 315g/335g (2 tests on different parts of blade):  
No damage to blade

**Sharpness after quick 2000grit sharpen and stropping, BESS:** 168g



BESS professional sharpness test performed to gauge edge retention and ease of sharpening: 196g new, 315g after all testing, 168g after quick re-sharpen.

To order a Shadow Pattern slipjoint or any other folder, contact Bruce on 0419 243 855

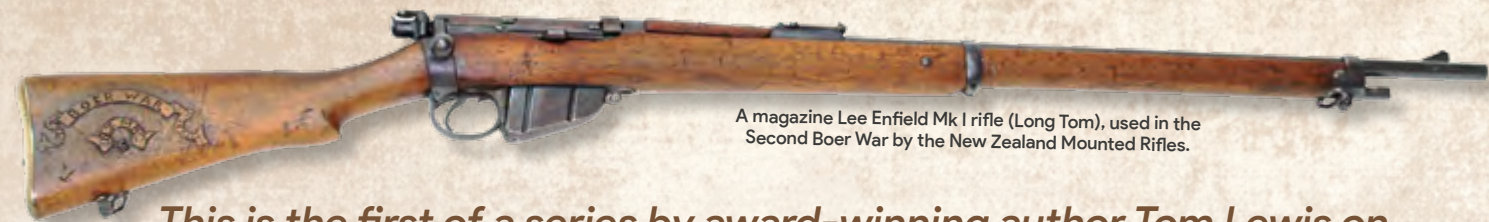
barnettcustomknives@gmail.com  
Facebook.com/bruce.barnettcustomknives  
Instagram: @bruce.barnett.

Don't forget to check out some of his previous works at [knifeimages.art/brucebarnett](http://knifeimages.art/brucebarnett)

The video review and testing for this knife can be viewed on YouTube @AussieKnifeGearReviews.

# THE BEST INFANTRY RIFLE

– FOR ITS TIME – EVER PRODUCED



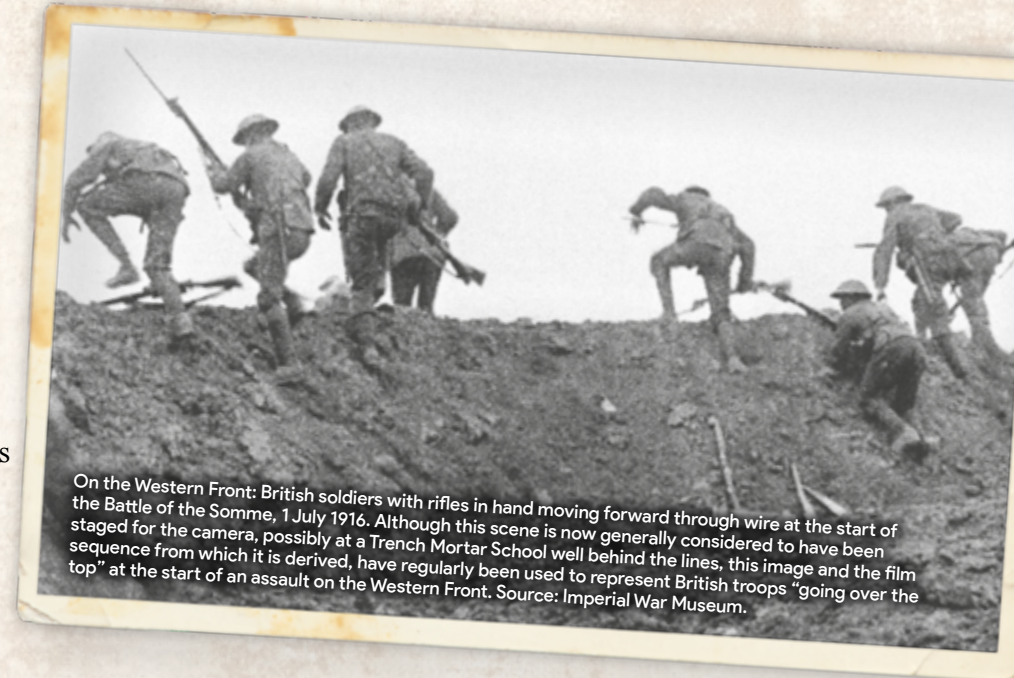
A magazine Lee Enfield Mk I rifle (Long Tom), used in the Second Boer War by the New Zealand Mounted Rifles.

This is the first of a series by award-winning author Tom Lewis on historical firearms that The Report will be running throughout 2026.

Many Australians' most memorable early experiences with military firearms may have been with the venerable Lee Enfield .303 in school cadets. Sometimes sleeved down to .22, these beautifully elegant rifles equipped our troops by the hundreds of thousands in World War II.

Incredibly though, these weapons also equipped Aussie troops in the 1914-1918 Great War – the terms WWI and II were not used until around 1940. Thousands of Australian soldiers trained with the rifles while awaiting the troop transports to Gallipoli in 1914-15. This was then the weapon they fought with in those Turkish trench positions. After the campaign to force a new front failed, the soldiers took their rifles with them across the Mediterranean to join the fight in France. The rifle was so good it was deemed suitable for use 20 years later in another world conflict.

The .303 was a superb weapon, accurate and quick firing, but



On the Western Front: British soldiers with rifles in hand moving forward through wire at the start of the Battle of the Somme, 1 July 1916. Although this scene is now generally considered to have been staged for the camera, possibly at a Trench Mortar School well behind the lines, this image and the film sequence from which it is derived, have regularly been used to represent British troops "going over the top" at the start of an assault on the Western Front. Source: Imperial War Museum.

above all, sturdy and reliable. If the definition of the best infantry rifle is one that can be thrown into liquid mud, pulled out, wiped off in 30 seconds and then loaded and fired, then the .303 was your man.

The full name was the SMLE – Short, Magazine, Lee Enfield .303. The 'short' referred to it being shorter than the weapon it replaced, the 1895 version of a .303 calibre with a 30.2-inch (770 mm) barrel as opposed to a 21.2-inch (540 mm)

one. 'Magazine' referred to the fact it was a magazine-fed rifle, a very desirable feature in the field, for it replaced single-shot weapons and thus offered a higher rate of fire.

This high cyclic rate was in fact one of the battlefield-changing aspects of such magazine weapons. It was a change as dramatic as the long-distance accurate rifle replacing the short-distance musket of the Napoleonic wars. Morale-inspiring colourful uniforms



*The .303 was a superb weapon, accurate and quick firing, but above all, sturdy and reliable.*

aimed shots too. The SMLE can hit a man-sized target at 500 metres. The firepower from such rifles on both sides was enormous and with an additional two machineguns for each battalion fired from the flanks in enfilade, little advance could be made.

Contrary to what many movies would have viewers believe, any necessary attacks on a large scale were well worked out beforehand. Artillery bombardments of the enemy positions would be made, and a ‘creeping barrage’

of artillery bursts would be made in front of the men before they walked forward. Even so, with barbed wire entanglements and the barrage lifting before the enemy trenches were reached, there was enough time for the enemy to emerge from dugouts and begin rifle firing. It took the development of the tank along with aircraft support to break the Western Front in 1918.

The .303 was loaded by placing the full magazine with its staggered ten cartridges in place and then working the bolt on the right-hand side of the weapon to the rear. Moving it forward would push a cartridge into the breech, and with the bolt closed the rifle was ready to fire. An adjustable backsight would be adjusted, and if the weapon was not intended to

be fired immediately a safety catch would prevent both the trigger and bolt being operated.

After a round was fired, the bolt would be operated, and this would eject the smoking cartridge case from the breech. The rifle does have some ‘kick’, which can be lessened by tucking it firmly into the shoulder. Firing would go on until the magazine was empty. It could be reloaded in place by using two ‘stripper clips’ of five rounds each. A well-trained soldier could reload

in fewer than five seconds.

Incidentally, the rifle was not produced for left-handers and nor was there a conversion kit to produce the weapon for southpaws.

The rifle took the Pattern 1907 bayonet, with a length of 550mm, of which 430mm was the blade itself. These bayonets had a double hooked quillon, to engage an opponent’s bayonet and enable his rifle to be twisted out of his grip. The quillon was generally disliked and often unofficially removed by unit armourers.

There are several versions of the SMLE. The most produced model is the Mark III\*.

The ‘\*’ saw the removal of a magazine cut-off mechanism and the volley sight. A future article will outline the further developments far and wide that the SMLE had in its career. ◉



Original hooked quillon of the Pattern 1907 bayonet (British Army).

of those days were perfectly understandable – morale is one third of combat power, something brilliant soldiers like Napoleon and his formidable opponent, the Duke of Wellington, understood well. Carefully manoeuvred, musket-equipped troops could be moved about some 400 yards from the enemy, who could not reach them with his firearms. The rifle’s gradually improving distance changed that, and now a magazine-fed rifle added high rates of fire to the mix.

This was the picture when the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) deployed to France in 1914. They were coming to the aid of the Belgians and the French against the Germans. It would be the first modern war fought between comparatively matched forces – and it was this type of rifle

**It’s thought around 17 million Lee Enfield .303s were produced from the start of production until it ended semi-officially in the 1950s, although that will be discussed further in a future article...**

**The rifle is the second-oldest bolt-action infantry rifle still in use, after the Russian Mosin–Nagant.**

**40 variants of the .303 have been produced.**

which would change the face of battle forever.

The Germans were equipped with the Mauser Gewehr 98, a similar weapon except for its five-round magazine. Two forces facing each other with these weapons produced such a storm of fire that it was impossible to advance against it. Naturally, the troops lay down to fire more safely, and naturally, too, a scrape in the ground was better than nothing. A trench was better still – and so the war quickly became one of a front of trenches hundreds of kilometres in length. The Western Front began in 1914 and lasted until 1918 and much of it was because of the quick-firing modern weapons now in use.

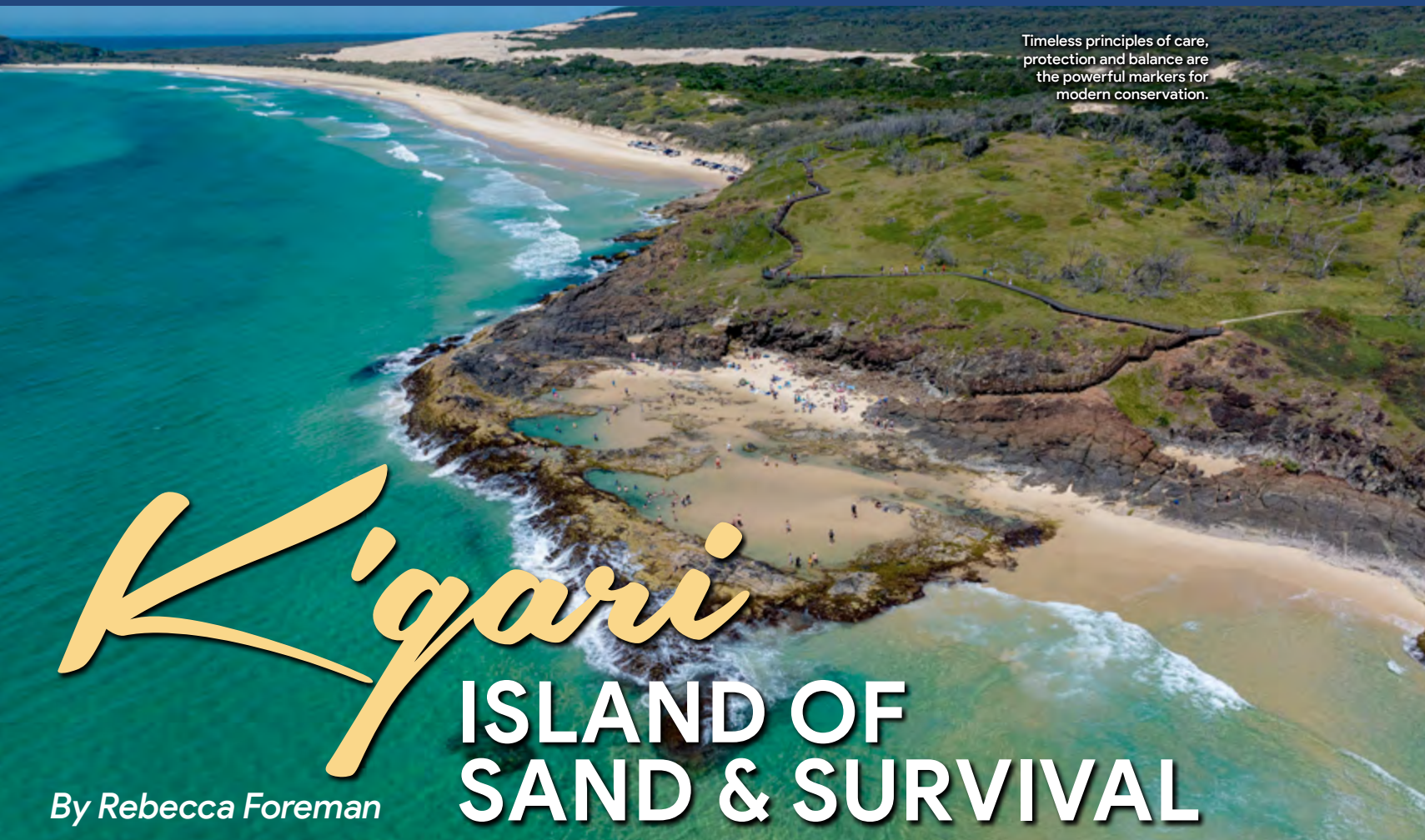
A well-trained British infantryman – and the BEF were superb – was capable of firing 20 shots a minute, and they were well-



**About the author:**

Military historian; public speaker, author of 25 books, and a retired naval officer, Dr Tom Lewis received the Order of Australian Medal (OAM) for services to naval history. He served in the Iraq War in 2006 as an Intelligence Analyst, and also saw Defence work in East Timor. He is an expert on World War II, especially in the Pacific, but has also written in areas including medieval battle, and the reality of battlefield behaviour. He has worked as a divemaster, high school teacher, and journalist. His latest books are *Cyclone*

*Warriors – the Armed Forces in Cyclone Tracy; The Secret Submarine*, revealing the RAAF’s sinking of the Japanese I-178 off Sydney in 1943, and Australia’s Coastal War, which brings together all of the submarine, surface, and air attacks around WWII Australia. *The Sinking of HMAS Sydney* has just won the 2024 Australian Naval Institute’s Commodore Sam Bateman Book Prize.



Timeless principles of care, protection and balance are the powerful markers for modern conservation.

By Rebecca Foreman

# K'gari ISLAND OF SAND & SURVIVAL

Photos: Tourism and Events Queensland

**Off the southern coast of Queensland sits a place so luminous, so layered in story and science, that it resists simple description. K'gari meaning 'paradise' in the Butchulla language, is the world's largest sand island, a UNESCO-listed wonder carved by wind, water and time. It's a landscape where ancient culture, rare ecosystems and raw adventure intersect, inviting travellers to explore gently and look closer.**

## An ancient landscape

Long before four-wheel drives rolled its beaches, K'gari was home to the Butchulla people for millennia. According to their creation story, the spirit K'gari helped shape the land before being transformed into the island itself, her presence still felt in the shifting dunes, lakes and salt spray.

European history arrived abruptly. Captain Cook first sailed past in 1770, but it was Eliza Fraser's

shipwreck and survival in 1836 that imprinted the 'Fraser Island' name across colonial maps. The years that followed brought logging, sand mining and profound disruption for the Butchulla people. By the late 20th century, the tide finally turned: extraction gave way to protection, and in 1992 the island's remarkable 'geomorphological processes' earned UNESCO World Heritage status. In 2023, the reinstatement of its traditional name completed a long-overdue cultural correction and a return to truth and identity.

## A kingdom built from sand

Stretching 123 kilometres and spanning nearly 184,000 hectares, K'gari is an ecological anomaly: a sand island supporting lush rainforests, freshwater lakes and diverse wildlife. Ancient dune systems rise like frozen waves, some more than 200,000 years old. Organic matter binds the sand, allowing towering satinay and brush box forests to grow without the soil most plants demand.

Water is the island's magic trick. More than 100 freshwater lakes sit suspended above the sand, some perched high in elevated basins, others nestled within older dune depressions. Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora) dazzles first-timers with its clear water and pure white silica sands, but Lake Birrabeen, Lake Wabby and the tea-coloured waters of Lake Boomanjin offer equally stunning sights.

A drive along Seventy-Five Mile Beach reveals the island's ever-changing face: the rusting hull of the Maheno shipwreck, the ochre-stained cliffs of the Pinnacles, tidal pools that flash emerald at low tide, and blowouts where dunes fold into themselves like pages of a giant book.

## Arriving the hard way, and loving it

K'gari does not give herself easily. Access is only by 4WD, with barges departing from Hervey Bay and Inskip Point near Rainbow Beach. The adventure begins the moment your tyres hit the sand: steep dunes, tidal creek crossings and soft patches test both nerve and technique. Low tyre pressure, patience and an eye on the tides are essential.

But the reward is intimacy and a kind of slow travel that reconnects you to terrain and weather. The island forces you to adapt, to read conditions rather than rush them, therefore it becomes a rare kind of holiday where the journey is the teacher.

## Where to stay - barefoot to up market

K'gari caters to every style of traveller, but the common thread is immersion.

Bush campsites and park-run beach shelters sit tucked behind the dunes, simple, beautiful and ideal for travellers who measure luxury in sunrises, stars and silence. Many are steps from the beach or shaded by gums, offering a front-row seat to the island's natural rhythms.

Kingfisher Bay Resort on the western side provides a gentler landing. Think comfortable rooms, restaurants, pools and a suite of guided experiences. Ranger talks, stargazing sessions, birdwatching walks and sustainability programs help visitors understand the island's cultural and ecological significance.

On the eastern surf coast, Eurong Beach Resort offers a relaxed base for day-trippers heading north along Seventy-Five Mile Beach. Its proximity to major natural attractions makes it ideal for families and adventure seekers.

Whether you're rolling out a swag or sipping a cocktail at sunset, the real luxury is the remoteness, the sense that you're on the edge of a world still shaped by nature, not convenience.

## The must-dos

Even a short visit reveals why K'gari inspires lifelong loyalty.

- **Lake McKenzie (Boorangoora):** A swirl of blue over white silica sand. Arrive early or late to dodge the crowds.
- **Eli Creek:** A natural lazy river. Grab a float and follow the flow to the sea.
- **Maheno Shipwreck:** A photographer's dream and a reminder of how wild this coastline can be.
- **Lake Wabby:** A green jewel at the edge of a massive sand blow.
- **Central Station:** A walk through ancient rainforest where crystal-clear Wanggoolba Creek runs over white sand.
- **The K'gari Great Walk:** A 90-kilometre multi-day trek that threads rainforests, lakes and dune systems. Even shorter sections offer a powerful sense of scale.



One of the comfortable rooms at King Fisher Bay Resort.



King Fisher Bay Resort offers guided tours of K'gari.

**Wildlife and the dingo story**

No conversation about K'gari is complete without its most controversial resident: the dingo, or *wongari*.

Among the most genetically pure dingoes in Australia, K'gari's *wongari* are apex predators and a vital part of the ecosystem. Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) focuses on prevention and coexistence rather than eradication: teaching visitors how to behave, securing waste, enforcing food-storage rules and reinforcing that feeding wildlife harms both animals and people.

Incidents historically stem from human behaviour like unsecured food, close approaches or failing to supervise children near camps or beaches.

Maintaining wild behaviour in *wongari* requires strict adherence to 'no feeding, no interaction, no interference.'

For the Butchulla people, the dingo is kin. Treating it with respect isn't just a safety measure, it's cultural continuity.



*Did you know?*

Dingoes on K'gari are believed to be among the most genetically pure in Australia. Their protection is crucial to the island's natural balance.

**A fragile giant: Managing pests, pathogens and pressure**

K'gari's ecosystems are intricate and easily disrupted, making biosecurity and pest management central to conservation. State environmental reporting highlights ongoing pressures from species like feral pigs, foxes and invasive weeds including lantana and Singapore daisy. Visitor movement creates porous borders and cane toads have already been recorded.

One significant breakthrough came in 2024, when DETSI reported no remaining introduced horses after extensive monitoring and removal, a major milestone for vegetation recovery and dune stability.

The island also faces biological threats like myrtle rust, a fungal disease affecting tea-trees, eucalypts and paperbarks. Spread via spores on boots, tyres or clothing, it has already been detected on K'gari. Visitors are encouraged to clean gear thoroughly before arrival.

Operationally, the island is protected through:

- strict waste-disposal systems
- food-storage requirements in camps and accommodation
- staff training and visitor education
- partnerships between QPWS, Butchulla representatives and tour operators
- clear safety signage and mandatory behavioural guidelines.

**The message is clear: preserving K'gari isn't passive, it's a collective effort.**

**Environmental pressures: Loving it too much**

Tourism is both a blessing and burden. Around half a million people visit annually, placing pressure on dunes, lakes and shorelines. Vehicle ruts compact sand; sunscreen and detergents affect freshwater chemistry; campfires leave long-lasting scars.

To manage this, QPWS enforces vehicle permits, campsite quotas and seasonal closures. A Sustainable Visitation Strategy guides visitor flow, ensuring that access doesn't eclipse ecological integrity and ensures the island's health comes first.



The Maheno Shipwreck is a popular destination.

**Driving, safety and respect**

Seventy-Five Mile Beach acts as both highway and airstrip. Tides dictate travel and ignoring them is a shortcut to bogging, flooding or worse. Drivers need:

- tyre pressure around 18–20 psi
- full recovery gear
- travel limited to low/mid tide windows
- caution around creek mouths and coffee-rock shelves.

Open-ocean swimming is hazardous due to rips and sharks, while the inland lakes and western beaches offer safer swims.

**Why K'gari matters**

K'gari isn't just a place to visit; it's a place that teaches. A living classroom where culture, environment and responsibility braid together. Its vast sandscapes insist on humility; its wildlife reminds you that you're the guest; its shifting dunes hold stories far older than we can grasp.

**For the Butchulla people, K'gari is kin. Their three guiding laws form the island's moral compass:**

- What is good for the land must come first.
- Do not take or touch what is not yours.
- If you have plenty, you must share.

Timeless principles of care, protection and balance are the powerful markers for modern conservation.

**Getting there**

**By Road:** Barges operate between River Heads (Hervey Bay) and both Kingfisher Bay and Wanggoolba Creek. [fraserislandferry.com.au](http://fraserislandferry.com.au)

**By Air:** Scenic flights with Air Fraser Island operate from Hervey Bay and the Sunshine Coast.

**Getting around**

A 4WD is essential for sand tracks. Hire options are available from Hervey Bay, Eurong and Kingfisher Bay Resort. 📍

**About the author:**

Rebecca Foreman is a freelance travel and lifestyle writer based in Sydney. Her work appears in *NZ Herald Travel*, *Explore Travel (ACM)*, *SBS Food*, and the *Telegraph UK*. She's a member of the Australian Society of Travel Writers.

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Image courtesy of Ian Rolfe.

# COOLIBAH HILLS HONEY

A taste of the Queensland bush *By Sam Talbot*



Coolibah Hills Honey is about as pure as honey comes. The family-run and proudly local business grew from a few backyard hives maintained by owner Kaye Brown's father, originally just enough to keep family and friends supplied.

While Kaye and her husband are both keen shooters and longtime members of SSAA Queensland (her husband for 25 years), Kaye used to be much less keen on bees. According to her "they sting!"

But eventually when her uncle looked to retire and no one else wanted the hives, she reluctantly stepped in. From there, it didn't take long before her reluctance became fascination.

"Every hive is different," Kaye says.

"They're so industrious. If we ran our society as they run theirs, this world would be a better place."

Today, Coolibah Hills Honey maintains hives across the Darling Downs, from Stanthorpe up to Crows Nest, following the seasons and flowering cycles just like any other livestock farmer chasing feed. The result is honey that is genuinely tied to place: individually batched by location (and sometimes by hive), never blended, heated or processed. What ends up in the jar is very pure Queensland honey, shaped by whatever wildflowers are blooming. The only processing is wax removal, while glass is used for packaging not plastic, because Kaye believes honey tastes better that way.

Pure honey naturally crystallises over time. This is called "candied" honey – the sugars forms fine crystals, giving it a thicker, spreadable texture. Some people prefer it this way because it's no longer runny, which makes it easier to scoop, portion, and cook with. If you'd rather keep your honey liquid, you can simply warm the jar in a bowl of hot water, stirring occasionally, or leave it in the sun for a few hours to dissolve the crystals again without affecting flavour or nutrients.

SSAA Queensland members can enjoy exclusive special pricing for this honey and many other great Exclusive Deals for being a member. Details and ordering information are available now on the SSAA Queensland website: [saaqld.org.au/exclusive-deals](http://saaqld.org.au/exclusive-deals)



Kaye tends to the bees in full PPE.

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# FISHING

## WITH KIDS



I began taking Graham fishing as a 3 yr old. Gear as simple as a worm on a hook is enough to get started. His interest in fishing is still going strong almost 40 years on.



Even when large fish are encountered, fishing rods are in no risk of being wrenched from young hands. Most adults would be proud of a catch like this. (Again, life jackets off for the photo.)



Violet with an average catch for her using her favourite purple Boomerang lure on her purple reel loaded with purple line. (Her life jacket was taken off briefly for the photo). High sided boats are ideal for youngsters.

*By Neil Schultz*

Another year has absolutely flown by and the recent Christmas holidays gave us the bonus of extra opportunities to get the little tackers into the outdoors. My experience taking ankle biters along on fishing trips began half a lifetime ago when my sons were very small. At the time I was fishing from a Canadian canoe and the boys were quite at ease on the water from the start. Along with the safety precaution of having them wear a buoyancy device, the gunwales came nearly up to their shoulders, making a fall overboard unlikely.

Both boys were started off with small, plentiful species, which in our home patch were garfish and spangled perch in the local lakes and Brisbane River. Garfish were caught land based, using a tiny hook baited with dough under a quill float. I would cast the rig out, then hand the rod to a three-year-old to very slowly retrieve, allowing the fish to hook themselves as they grabbed the bait. There were a lot of meals of tasty butterfly-filletted garfish had in our house during those years.

Spangled perch, on the other hand, were taken on small lures cast from light spinning outfits, Christmas presents to each of the boys. Somewhere in the archives there are transparencies of the entire family in the canoe with two kids spinning for perch at Atkinson's Dam on Boxing Day; great memories.

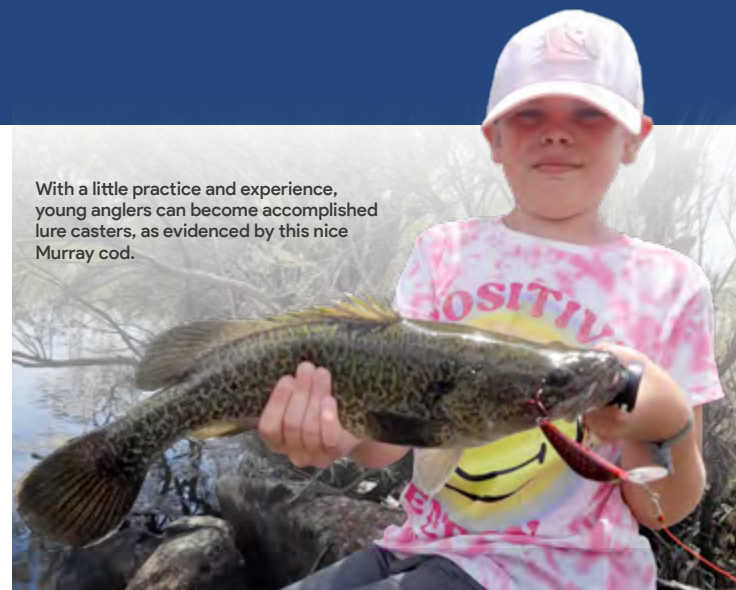
After honing their casting skills on the local perch population, the progression was quickly made to spinning for bass in the streams of Southeast Queensland. This was around the same time that stocking warm-water natives into lakes began to pay dividends, giving the lads the opportunity to put their lures in front of some more sizeable fish in the form of chunky golden perch.

Watching young boys hauling in some impressive captures, including some of the very first Mary River cod to be angled in Lake Somerset, allayed any worries I had about a rod being wrenched from their hands. An excited five-year-old will apply a force exceeding that of the Vulcan death grip to a rod buckled over by a large fish.

Fast forward 30 years and I'm now enjoying outings on those same lakes with my granddaughter. Most of our trips together are close to home on Lake Wivenhoe, where bass and golden perch are our obvious targets with plenty of action from blue catfish on summer days. We troll lures as our chosen method, which gives my granddaughter the entertaining option of watching the sounder screen and bringing the fish shows to my attention. By the time this goes to print, there is a fair chance that I've been on the water with my granddaughter swimming a live bait for a shark in freshwater.

I'm not writing this purely to reminisce about 'the good old days' or family fishing trips, but to give a few pointers to any readers planning to get the kids in their lives into fishing.

When introducing little ones to fishing, don't fish yourself. The kids should be the focus, and you can put all of your efforts into making their first trips as successful as possible. Plan those first outings to be close to home and of short duration. Little ones tend to have short attention spans, and these outings allow them to be taken home if they become bored with proceedings. Choose locations and target species that will provide plenty of action, again to prevent them losing interest. Throughout Queensland, you'll find scores of lakes that are stocked with angling species courtesy of hard-working community fish stocking groups and helped with funding from the government administered Stocked Impoundment Program.

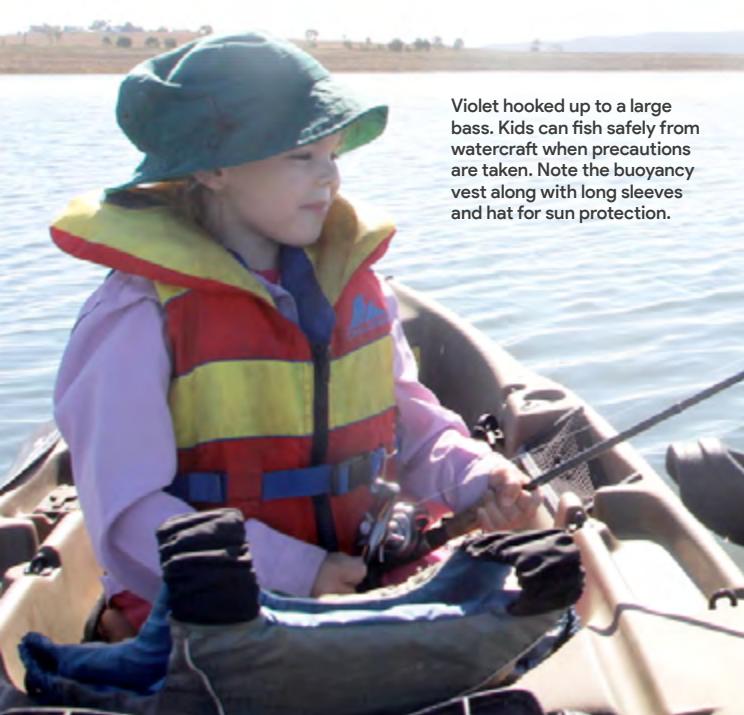


With a little practice and experience, young anglers can become accomplished lure casters, as evidenced by this nice Murray cod.

**Start small:** don't kick their fishing career off with something too big for them to confidently handle on the end of a line. The same goes with the tackle used; ensure that it is suitable for short arms and small hands. All hooks on lures that are taken on outings with kids should have the barbs flattened to avoid any trauma if it ends up in a tiny finger (and it is likely to be your hide they stick with a hook on the back swing; ask me how I know). Select safe locations, as trips and stumbles should be expected, and you don't want to have to fish them out of the drink. If on a vessel or in a spot where a fall into the water is possible, have them wear a buoyancy device. Keep them comfortable; this means providing shade, sunscreen, warm clothing, drinks, insect repellent, etc. Keep them amused; for very small kiddies, taking along a toy of some kind can keep them happily occupied between fish (snacks are good too).

Older children can be stealthily educated to take part in birdwatching, wildlife spotting, sounder reading, rubbish collecting, etc - all of which can make their day enjoyable as well as ingraining some good habits.

**Most importantly, keep it fun. Once they've had enough, call proceedings to a halt and head for home so they are happy to go again next time.** 🎯



Violet hooked up to a large bass. Kids can fish safely from watercraft when precautions are taken. Note the buoyancy vest along with long sleeves and hat for sun protection.

*"When introducing little ones to fishing, don't fish yourself."*

# SHOOT OFF! Quiz

Welcome to another instalment of The Shoot Off! It's a chance to test your knowledge on firearms, hunting and the great outdoors. Whether you're a competitive shooter, or closer to a bushwalker, there's something here for everyone.

We think getting anything over 15 out of 20 makes an AA-grade quizzier. Answers can be found in the Sunset Gallery section on page 83.

**SCORING**  
 20 out of 20: Bullseye!  
 15+: 9 ring  
 12+: 8 ring  
 7 or fewer: Time to re-sight your 'scope'

## QUESTIONS:

- 1 What is the term used to describe the distance between a scope's eyepiece and shooter's eye, which gives a full and clear image?
- 2 A shotgun gauge refers to the number of lead balls in one \_\_\_\_?
- 3 What term describes the weight measurement once used to convey how much black powder was used in shotshells?
- 4 In ISSF 10m Air Rifle, what gas is most commonly used to power the rifle?
- 5 Stopper, Special Snap and Old Bull are all what?
- 6 What is the highest rating on the Australian Fire Danger Rating System?
- 7 Which electrolyte is primarily lost through sweat?
- 8 Is the hottest temperature ever recorded in Australia more or less than 50°C?
- 9 Which state or territory is home to Australia's tallest waterfall?
- 10 What is the approximate speed of sound per m/s: 350, 3500 or 35,000?
- 11 In which state in the USA is the National Rifle Association's headquarters?
- 12 Which has greater recoil: .375 H&H or .308 Win?
- 13 How many stomachs do ants have?
- 14 Which firearm featured in Clint Eastwood's 1971 film 'Dirty Harry'?
- 15 Who is SSAA Queensland's new president?
- 16 What retrieving breed is the world's most popular gundog?
- 17 Are tahr native to New Zealand?
- 18 What is the term used to describe a handheld firearm's muzzle tendency to rise after firing?
- 19 Is the comb on a rifle closer to the muzzle or butt stock?
- 20 On a swing-out cylinder revolver, what part do you push to eject all the spent cases at once?

If you want more quizzing fun, there's a second half to Shoot Off!, with an extra 20 questions, on our website - [ssaaqld.org.au](http://ssaaqld.org.au) Good luck!

Send feedback and your question ideas to [news@ssaaqld.org.au](mailto:news@ssaaqld.org.au).

Eat WILD:

# VENISON

# Tartare

By Harry Foster (Instagram.com/hazfos/)

Prep: 10 min Serves: 4

**Ingredients**

- 200g fresh venison loin, finely diced
- ½ small shallot, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp capers, rinsed and chopped
- 1 tsp seeded mustard
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- ½ tsp lemon zest
- 1 tbsp finely chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tbsp finely chopped fresh chives
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Crispy flatbread, biscuits, potato crisps, betel leaves, sweet potato leaves, etc. for garnish.

**Method**

**Step 1: Prepare the venison**

- Ensure the venison loin is very fresh. For best results, use venison that has been properly aged and stored.
- Trim any excess fat or sinew from the venison loin.
- Dice the venison into small, uniform pieces using a sharp knife. Aim for pieces no larger than ½ cm.

**Step 2: Mix the ingredients**

- In a medium bowl, combine the chopped shallot, capers, mustard, olive oil and lemon juice and zest.
- Add the finely diced venison to the bowl and mix gently to combine.
- Fold in the chopped parsley and chives.
- Season the mixture with salt and pepper to taste.

**Step 3: Plate and serve**

- Garnish with additional chopped chives or parsley, if desired.
- Serve immediately with your choice of flatbread, crackers, potato crisps or fresh leaves.



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 Enter here: [ssaaqld.org.au/category/competitions/](https://ssaaqld.org.au/category/competitions/)

**SHOOT OFF! Quiz ANSWERS**

1. Eye relief	11. Virginia
2. Pound	12. .375 H&H
3. Dram	(36.1 ft-lb vs 15.8)
4. Air	13. Two
5. Events in Big Game Rifle	14. .44 Magnum
6. Catastrophic	15. Jeff Ross
7. Sodium/Salt	16. Labrador
8. More (50.70C)	17. No (native to India)
9. QLD (Wallaman Falls)	18. Muzzle rise
10. 350	19. Butt stock
	20. Ejector rod

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# LEFT OR RIGHT?

**THE ORION™ HUNTER: MADE FOR YOU**

## TECHNOLOGY:

THE ORION IS A STATE-OF-THE-ART BOLT ACTION RIFLE, COMBINING HIGH-TECH MATERIALS, INNOVATIVE BOLT DESIGN AND A PROVEN REMINGTON 700 STYLE TRIGGER. AVAILABLE IN LEFT OR RIGHTHAND CONFIGURATION.

## RELIABILITY:

THE ORION FEATURES A BOLT DESIGN WITH CLASS-LEADING HELICAL PRIMARY EXTRACTION, RESULTING IN SMOOTH AND RELIABLE FUNCTION FOR EVERY SHOT.

## PERFORMANCE:

DESIGNED TO PERFORM. THE ORION IS A HIGH-PERFORMANCE RIFLE WITH A 5 SHOT SUB-MOA ACCURACY GUARANTEE AND LIMITED LIFETIME WARRANTY.

## SPECIFICATIONS:

**MODEL:** ORION HUNTER

**TYPE:** BOLT ACTION REPEATER - CAT B

**MAGAZINE:** PMAG - AICS 10 ROUND

**CALIBER:** .223 REM AND .308 WIN

**OAL:** 1060MM

**BARREL:** 22" COLD HAMMER FORGED, HEAT TREATED, 5/8X24 THREAD

**TWIST RATE:** .308 WIN - 1:11"  
.223 REM - 1:9"

**WEIGHT:** 3.0 KG (APPROX.)

**TRIGGER:** TRIGGERTECH REM700  
3.5LBS

**STOCK:** CARBON FIBRE, ADJUSTABLE LOP VIA SPACERS

**BOTTOM METAL:** ALUMINIUM M5 STYLE



**RRP: \$3290**  
.223 REM

Find Out More

**RRP: \$3390**  
.308 WIN

AVAILABLE IN LEFT AND RIGHT HAND - CAT B ALL STATES LEGAL

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