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WELCOME FROM THE EDITOR



Of all the questions I've been asked over the years, how to get permission to hunt has been the enquiry more times than all the others put together. I know from my surveys that over 80% of you hunt, or would like to, and hunting guns are far and away the biggest sellers. Finding somewhere to enjoy our sport is difficult, I'm afraid to say, and I'll tell you why in the form of a question. If a stranger knocked on your door and asked if he could shoot in your garden, what would you say? Would you wonder if he was safe? Would you be concerned that he might steal your lawn mower? You're not going to just say yes, now are you?

When we ask a farmer if we can shoot on his land, his feelings are just the same. He might worry about his buildings, his farming equipment and a careless pellet causing damage. Allowing an armed man to wander around your land isn't something to be

done lightly. By allowing you to be there he could become responsible for your actions. Of course, a hard-working airgunner can offer a valuable service free of charge, but you'll have to gain his trust first.

On page 92, I've offered some thoughts on how you might achieve success in finding a permission by using some lateral thinking, and remember, never give up. Your chance is out there somewhere.

I've been shooting a remarkable

Co2 rifle this month that really is like nothing else I've ever tried. The SIG MPX is a perfect replica of the centrefire, sub-machine gun, offering rapid-fire action, all in a fully UK legal package. I had a blast with it, as did my friends who simply loved it. Turn to page 45 for my full report.

EDITOR

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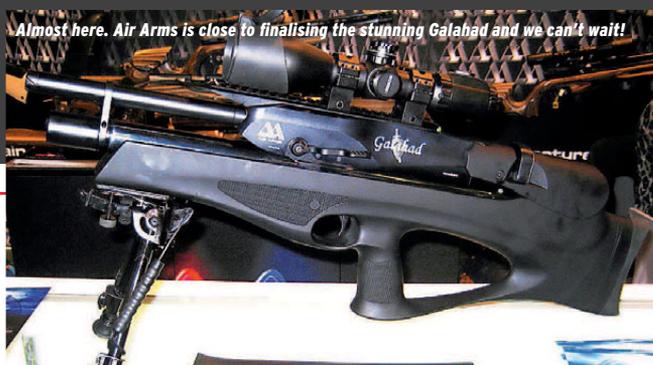


IN THE NEWS

News from the shooting world

GALAHAD NEWS

Many readers have contacted us asking for more news about when the remarkable Air Arms Galahad will be in the shops. For the very latest update we went straight to the top. Air Arms Managing Director, Claire West, told us just before this issue went to print: "The wait is nearly over. We've been working on a few cosmetic changes, but they're done, our field testers have given them the thumbs-up, and we'll be ready to ship the first batch of Galahads by early May. I have to say we're overwhelmed by the sheer interest in the Galahad, shown by the airgunning public, both here and abroad,



Almost here. Air Arms is close to finalising the stunning Galahad and we can't wait!

and everyone connected with the project is feeling really positive, right now. This was a bit of a departure for us, but sometimes you have to take a risk to move forward, and this is what the Galahad has been about from day one. Thanks again for your patience and please keep that feedback coming, because we really do consider it all".

WIDER MOUNTS

Due to increased demand for models to suit the wider than standard BSA dovetails, Sportsmatch Ltd has added a 30mm medium height scope mount to their range. The new TO35C 13mm also fits early Weihrauch HW35s and CZ452 American rimfire rifles. Sportsmatch's Matthew Ford-James "More and more shooters are now realising that standard width air rifle/rimfire scope mounts do not properly fit the wider than standard BSA dovetails. Fitting the incorrect model can lead to accuracy problems, so we are increasing the range of models available for BSA fans". As with all Sportsmatch products they are made in Great Britain and guaranteed for Life. SRP £35.95. Available from all good gun shops. For more details www.sportsmatch-uk.com



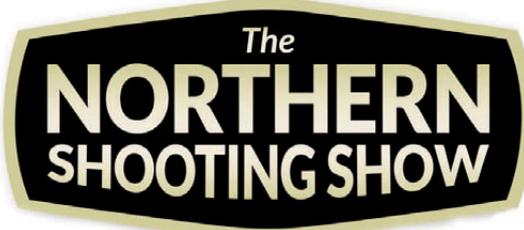
If your rifle's scope rails are wider than standard, Sportsmatch has the mounts you need

NORTHERN SHOOTING SHOW

Readers living in the north will be glad to know that there's a new shooting show just for them. It will be held at the Great Yorkshire Show Ground in Harrogate in the 7th and 8th of May and will feature 'Airgun Central' for us to enjoy. The show has confirmed a huge list of exhibitors including Air Arms, Bladeteck, Brocock, BSA, Clulite, Crossman, Daystate, Evanix, FX Airguns, Gamo, Hatsan, Hawke, Pulsar, Stoeger, Tesro, Traser, Umarex, Walther, Weihrauch, Webley and more. Anybody looking to buy a new gun will have the chance to try them on ranges where many manufacturers will have all their latest models for you to shoot.

Outdoors, the UK Masters HFT series will have a round of their excellent competition so you'll be able to watch top competitors test their skills in this challenging sport. Ticket prices are being kept low and if you take advantage of the 'early bird' offer and buy yours now they're just £9. Visit www.northernshootingshow.co.uk for full details of the show and for special ticket prices.

The 7th and 8th of May will be a big day for Northern-based shooters!



HFT WORLDS 2016

On the 27th and 28th of March the dedicated team of volunteers who give their time, effort and expertise free of charge, ran the 2016 World HFT Championships at the Kelmarsh Game Fair. The first day went well but the weather forecasters were full of gloom and doom about storm Katie, which was racing across the country. With frightening winds and driving rain there was no choice but to cancel day two on safety grounds. Many people were terribly disappointed, not least the international competitors who had spent a lot of money to come, but safety always has to come first, and we at Air Gunner fully support their decision.

Top-class events like this require a huge amount of preparation and hard work and the man who quietly drives this event, Pete Sparks, would like to offer thanks to everyone who helped the Worlds run this year. First of all to those who set both courses, which wasn't just a matter of putting the targets out; there was all the hard work of doing a lot of clearing in both woods. To all course setters, ALPHA Greg Hensman, Kieran Turner,

Simon Howarth, Dave Smith, Matt Furlong, Kevin Gaunt, Andy Dickson and Clive Evans BRAVO Steve Light, Andy Simpson, Gary Morrison, Nigel Buchan, Kevin Hills and Justin Raynor. To the girls who helped Jane Sparks with the booking in; Jean Greatrex, Kathy Thompson and Karen Macfarlane. Special thanks to Pete Dutton calculating the scores and running the website and to Gary Chillingworth who arranged all the marshalling this year.

The winners were: Open - Simon Howarth. Junior - Tom Willingham. Ladies - Theresa Reed. Recoiling - Dale Harris. .22 - Mathew Rawlings. Veterans - Nick Yates. The most popular brand of rifle used was Air Arms and the winning national team was England. Air Arms also won the Manufacturer's Team prize. Even though the competition had to be cut short, the trophies were awarded as usual but based on the results of one day rather than two.

Well done to everybody who made the competition possible, and remember this is an outdoor sport and nobody can be blamed for what the weather does. Here's looking forward to next year!

Meet the new World HFT champion Simon Howarth



IN THE NEWS

For the very latest news visit us at www.airgunshooting.co.uk

The remarkable Brocock Compatto is now in full production



COMPATTO IN FULL FLOW

The new Brocock team employed to produce the fantastic Compatto semi-bullpup is now fully trained and ramping up production to meet increasing demand. Visitors to the Northern Shooting Show will be able to shoot this exciting new gun to see for themselves just how good the performance and handling

really are. Our own Jim Chapman has just released a video on the gun, and it's clear to see he likes it. Follow this link to see what he said. Go to YouTube and enter this code [detailpage&v=KDpJPDPX9t4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDpJPDPX9t4). to see the film where he's out hunting with one.

www.brocock.co.uk

GROUND BREAKING GLASS

MTC will be showing the brand new Viper and Mamba Pro scopes for the first time to the public at the Northern Shooting Show in May. The new Pro range consists of four scopes and was launched to great acclaim at the recent international trade show in Germany. See the ground breaking features on this new scope for the first time and see if MTC's claim that 'All your existing scopes are now obsolete' is true! First deliveries are due in on

15 April.

www.mtcoptics.co.uk

Visitors to the Northern Shooting Show will see these new scopes first



LONG RANGE COMPETITION

Here's a date for your diary. On the weekend of the 18th and 19th of June, this year, 40 lucky shooters will be going shoulder-to-shoulder in a bid to win £1000. We're talking about the Ultimate Airgun Championships, hosted by Braces of Bristol at their airgun range, and there's never been a tournament quite like it in the UK. The format is based on 50 paper targets, 25 per day, set at 60 yards, and shot from a bench rest. We've seen a similar set-up in the Extreme Benchrest matches in Arizona, but nothing quite like this, using 12 ft.lbs. rifles only. The overall prize fund has reached almost £5000, thanks to the

donation of top-of-the-range rifles from Air Arms, Brocock, Hull Cartridge and FX Airguns, so this is going to be an amazing weekend for everyone attending. Obviously, places will be limited and you can register your interest on <http://www.bracesofbristol.com/uac/>, and make sure you include your full contact details. So, paper targets at 60 yards, then? This is going to be some test of marksmanship, even without the added pressure of the prize money. Airgun World will bring you a full report on this groundbreaking event and we can't wait to see how a format so successful in the US translates to these shores.



Will long-range target shooting take off over here? We think it will

CLEAN SWEEP

Team Air Arms has shown dominant form at this year's BFTA Championships at the Tondy airgun club in Wales. Strong winds and heavy rain made for difficult conditions and this, allied to tricky target placement, tested the competitors' skills and equipment to the limit, which is just how it should be for an event of this importance.

With all the scores in, Justin Wood took first place honours, whilst Simon Higgins followed in second place, and their fellow Air Arms team member, David Schofield, came in third. Young Jack Harris took fourth after a tense shoot off giving team Air Arms the top four places. All used the remarkable AA Diablo Field pellets which speaks volumes about its quality and accuracy.

www.air-arms.co.uk



Congratulations to Justin Wood who has become BFTA Champion for 2016



Team Air Arms dominated the BFTA Championships in Wales



This loyalty card is proving to be a run away success

ARMEX LOYALTY CARD

It would appear that the response to the newly-launched Armex Loyalty Card scheme has been nothing short of 'phenomenal', according to the company's Marketing Director, Della Bailey. She told us, 'Armex is, indeed, privileged to have exclusive UK distribution of Umarex brands and when people buy these branded products they expect a certain level of quality and the service we offer, including expert advice, warranty backup, parts and servicing, and the full range of customer services. That's why we will be giving customers a free Privileged Club Membership and we've been wholeheartedly supported by a select group of partners, our dealers and Umarex themselves. Registration cards have been included with all major Umarex products purchased via Armex from 1st March and once we receive the completed card, a welcome pack will be sent out directly. Privileged Members will benefit from Armex and Umarex exclusive offers and news, promotional products and even more offers exclusive to our cardholders. The response has been phenomenal, and it's growing all the time. Check us out next month for more news, OK?' We certainly will, and in the meantime, get those Privilege Club card application forms sent to Armex – and be a part of the phenomenon. www.armex-airgun.co.uk

CAMLITE COMFORT

New Zealand outdoor clothing manufacturer Ridgeline, has some brand new boots that look ideal for the airgun hunter on the move. They're called Camlite, and the name suggests despite their highly technical build, they're very light. The sole is deeply treaded to find grip even in the worst conditions whilst the uppers are waterproof and breathable behind the camouflage outer. Despite being light, they're tough and the Thinsulate insulation will keep your feet warm on those chilly days. The RRP is £129 but there are some bargains deals are out there, so check out your Highland Outdoors stockist. www.highlandoutdoors.co.uk

Hunters on the move will love the light weight of these new Ridgeline boots

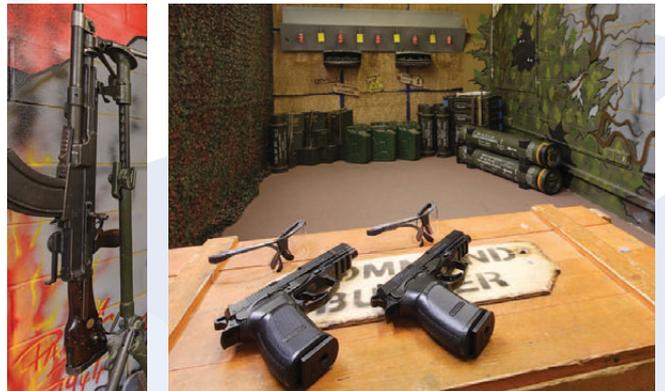


WINNER!

The winner of our March competition to win an Air Arms S410 Carbine is Pete Frost from Essex. He's a busy pest controller so this gun is ideal for his work. See our latest competition on page 48.



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Another convert?

I am a newcomer to air rifles and pistols and had a disgust at the idea of shooting live animals. I have to admit that for some time I skipped over the hunting articles, being eager to move on to the more interesting review ones. However, it occurred to me that I was damning this activity without reading the justification for it, and giving the other side an opportunity to persuade me. I was genuinely surprised when I did read these articles because they provided a clear, reasoned argument for this activity. I must admit that I thought the cooking of what people had shot was admirable, because at least it does not go to waste

and justifies the activity more. This is from someone who eats little meat and loves animals. The articles did not glorify the activity and explain the urgent need for this pest control aspect for our farmers as well, who are no doubt grateful for the work done. Well done for making a believer and a supporter of me. Although, I doubt if I would hunt myself, I can now see the justification and read all the articles, so getting full value for money!

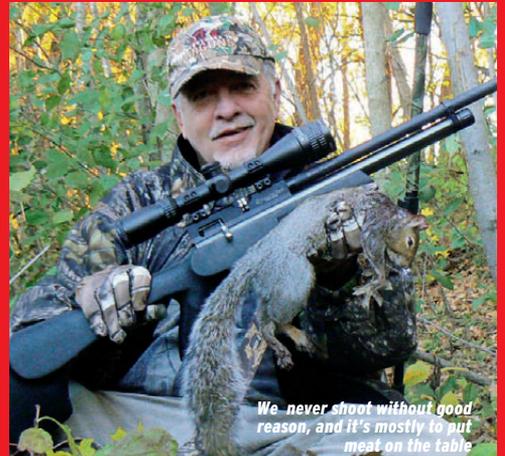
Really, this is the sort of information you need to get out there, because my wife's knee-jerk reaction to me owning an air pistol, and now rifle, was that I was going to

kill all animals indiscriminately, including domestic ones. Well done for putting reasoned arguments and sensibly justifying this necessary activity for farmers and 'wild foodies'.

Jim Armour

Hello Jim

It's good to know that our representation of hunting has given you a useful insight into what we do and why. Hunting is a huge challenge with any gun and even more so with



We never shoot without good reason, and it's mostly to put meat on the table

an airgun. To master it takes years of dedicated practice and learning, all of which is rewarded with a clean kill and some free-range, organic meat on your plate. The death of the animal or bird is just one part of a long process. Ed.

Convincing Cammo

Although the opinion was not based on experience, as I don't (as yet!) hunt, I've never really been convinced of the need or effectiveness of wearing camouflage gear. I've always thought that if I were going hunting, 'normal' green/brown/grey-coloured outdoor wear would be fit for purpose, and I wouldn't run the risk of appearing like a superannuated Rambo to anyone whom I happened across.

However, the main photo (P92 May *Air Gunner*) accompanying your article, 'Any Position That Works', has actually made me not only revise, but also reverse those preconceptions. The photo could have been mistaken for a 'Can You find the Editor?' puzzle, because you merged almost to the point of disappearing, into that woodland background. The effectiveness of that pattern (is it English Oak?) was uncanny and reminded me of how the alien in 'Predator' remained virtually invisible. Surprisingly, the only two small areas that my eye was

drawn to were your boots! Hail Phill Price the (almost!) invisible man!

Stephen

Hello Stephen

The photographer cleared the leaves from my boots so people could see what a strange position I was in. As you correctly guessed, it's a Jack Pyke suit in English Oak pattern that blended in with the winter woodland floor perfectly. I'm not saying you can't hunt in plain green, but I feel that camouflage can offer an edge with tricky quarry. Ed.



Camo really does work as this picture shows

Springer prize?



We do love our springers at Air Gunner, honestly

Firstly, I must praise you on your great magazine that I look forward to receiving every month, and I think that all bases are covered. I prefer to shoot recoiling spring and gas-ram rifles; I have tried pre-charged pneumatics and they were not to my liking, but each to his own.

The one thing I enjoy every month is entering your fabulous competition to win a great prize of a complete rifle and scope set-up, but I have noticed that nearly every month the prize is a PCP. Sadly this is starting to put me off entering, so could I put

forward to you and fellow readers an alternate monthly prize of PCP and then a springer/gas-ram, to please airgunners of all tastes? What do other readers think?

Michael

Hello Michael

The reason we most often have pre-charged pneumatic rifles as our prize is that development of new guns is mostly in this area. We have had springers now and then, but as you point out not very often. I wonder what other readers think about this subject. Ed.

Back in the game

It has been a long time since I used my air rifle, which my brother bought me for Christmas when I was 14 and used for shooting cans in the back garden of my mum and dad's house. I am 58 now and still have that rifle. It is a Haenel 303 springer sporter, and I have always maintained it and kept it stored for when I could use it again. Fortunately, I am now retired and so is my brother, so it seemed the perfect time to start shooting again. However, times have changed and shooting in the back garden is not the readily accepted hobby that it used to be. I know I can do it and stay within the law, but I also know that people can jump to the wrong conclusions when you are overlooked by so many, so we needed another outlet.

Fortunately for us, an air rifle and pistol indoor shooting range with a shop and cafe has opened just a few miles away on an industrial estate, so off we went. What brilliant fun!

At first, my antique rifle had difficulty being accurate up to 25 yards, but with a new scope and some help, from all you airgunners, I am hitting the bull's eye quite frequently now. I have also purchased two pistols, one for my brother's birthday, one for me, of course, and a new PCP rifle. So a whole new world has opened up for us with new friends and a joint venture I can take part in with my brother. Great! The only problem now is convincing my wife that having multiple airguns is necessary, which of course it is. Now where is that credit card?

Happy shooting to you all!
Steve

*Hello Steve
I'm glad you're back in the fold and having fun. I'm intrigued by the sound of a café with a shooting range. Please send me some details, which I'll publicise so that other shooters in the area can visit it and have some fun. Ed.*

Falcon help

I start with a massive thank you for doing what you guys do every month; it brings me great joy to read through your magazines.

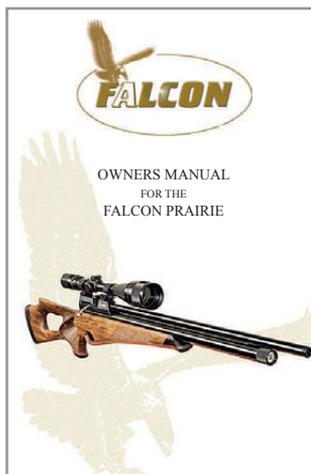
My reason for contacting you is regarding my all-time favourite rifle that I have recently purchased, and that is the Falcon T-Bird Ti25.

I was wondering if you guys had ever written an article on this particular model. I have recently contacted Air Arms to see if they could help with a manual or any information at all, but they could not help with the matter, so I have come to a dead end.

Gary Booth

Hello Gary

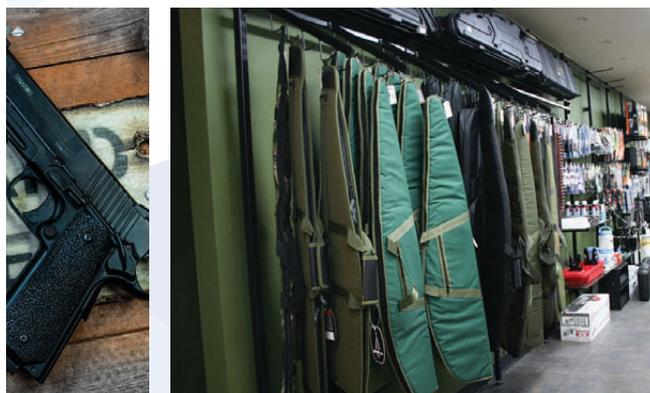
Can anybody help Gary with the right Falcon manual for his new gun?



I'm sorry, but I cannot help. I wonder if a reader might have the manual for this gun and would photocopy it for you. Can anybody help? Ed



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phill.price@archant.co.uk

Horse paddocks are often plagued by rabbits



Getting permission

I'm well impressed with Russel Webb's articles recently. He's done really well in getting permissions and I applaud him for that. I know how hard it can be to get one and for years I've

had no luck at all, but last year I was talking to my wife's friend who loves her horses. She told me that a horse at her yard had been injured by putting its leg down a rabbit hole, and that the

owner had paid a fortune to the vet to get it better.

I offered to help fence off the area that had the most burrows and reduce the numbers after that. It's now my regular shoot and I've had lots of bunnies to eat since then. You never know

If you have a top tip, something you'd like to get off your chest, or an interesting anecdote, then why not shoot us a line? **We print the best letters and emails each month and one will be awarded a top prize. It's over £60 and you could win it simply by getting in touch and sharing your views**

when a bit of good luck might help you out.

Dan

Hello Dan

That's great news that you've found a permission of your own. I know only too well how frustrating it can be, and the true pleasure of having a place you can go to get away from everyday life whilst enjoying your hunting. Ed.

Top class service

Dear Mr D Craze, I would like to share my experience of my first visit to your Berkhamstead shop. I had a problem with my gun and found your shop online.

Every gun shop I have ever been to in the past, I have always left feeling that the staff almost spoke down to me and made me feel uncomfortable. I used to sell cars and have a lot of experience in customer service, so I am very aware of good and bad customer care. As soon as I set foot in your shop, a staff member welcomed me in, and to be honest I was shocked - it was a very pleasant surprise.

The staff member, a young chap, helped me and booked my

gun in for repair. He was really efficient and it was a seamless, easy process. I then had a walk about the shop, which is very well laid out, clean, and a pleasure to walk around. I noticed a friend of mine in the shop, out of pure coincidence, who was being helped by Mike Randell. I stood and spoke to Mike for 10 minutes, or so, about the equipment and guns that you stock. I was stunned, because not only was he very friendly, but he also made me feel like a friend, being helpful and professional. His product knowledge was exceptional. This was hands-down the best customer service experience I have ever had, so I will be using



your shop again soon and will be purchasing another gun to add to my collection. I will be sharing my experience with all my bushcraft and shooting friends and I can't thank your staff enough, especially Mike for the fantastic visit.

Tom Coles

Ronnie Sunshines, who were moved by the kind words when they received this letter, copied me in on this letter. It's good to know that proper old-fashioned service still exists today and knowing the shop as I do, I'm not surprised at Tom's reaction. Ed.

AIRGUN GURU

GET IN TOUCH

Post your letters to: Letters, Air Gunner, 2-6 Easthampstead Road, Wokingham, RG40 2EG

phill.price@archant.co.uk

GURU TIP: To improve your rangefinding abilities, try estimating everyday objects such as litter bins and parked cars, then pacing out the ranges. The more you do this the more you'll improve - and you can do it anywhere!



Borrowing a laser rangefinder can help you learn to judge range by eye

XXXX

Q These days, we have laser rangefinders, and I keep reading that everyone who hunts should own and use one, but I have been wondering; how did airgun hunters estimate range in the days before laser rangefinders?

A GURU SAYS: As one of those who hunted in the 'old days', my best option was to concentrate whenever possible on static hunting over a patch of ground with plenty of objects (clumps of grass, sticks etc.) at pre-measured ranges. In fact, I still do this on areas that I know to be productive, and shoot regularly.

Of course, static hunting could be too restrictive if pest species were thinly distributed, and your choice was either to lie-up for

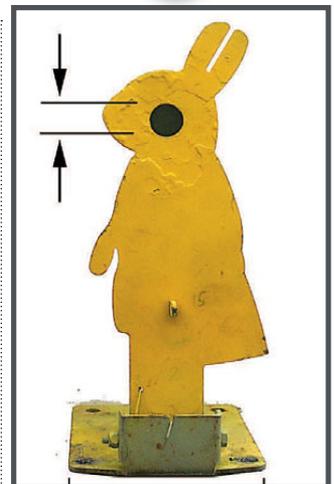
hours with no guarantee of seeing anything, or slowly walk the land and have more potential shots, though you did need to be able to judge range by eye alone. Judging range using the Mk.1 eyeball is a skill that has to be developed through practice, and the more practice you put in, the better you become.

We have the basic hardware in two, forward-pointing eyes which, were our brains trained to process the information they provide, can act as rangefinders by triangulation, as many animals show. The big cat species and members of the dog family know that they need to get within a certain range of a prey species if they are to have any chance of running it down; monkeys up in the canopy have to judge the range to a branch they wish to

launch themselves toward; but we grow up without developing the same skill. Our rangefinding ability tends to extend only as far as necessary for everyday life, and that we learn from a very early age, which is basically whether something is within arm's reach, and to extend that range, we need to practise.

The old way

First, calibrate your natural walking stride. Measure 40 or 50 yards and walk it several times, counting your steps, and average it to find out how much ground you cover with each step. Thereafter, whenever you walk outdoors, try to judge the range of any object you are walking toward that's within airgun hunting range. Don't give it a huge amount of thought,



Unlike field targets, real rabbits don't have known dimensions, so you can't rangefind by bracketing through a scope

just make a snap decision, then pace it out and see how accurate your judgement was. Do this enough, and you will find that your ability to judge range slowly improves.

The modern way

Nowadays, you could walk around your shoot, judge the range to random objects, and then check using a laser rangefinder. Even if you own and use a laser rangefinder, being able to judge ranges by eye is a good skill to have, for those occasions when your rangefinder gets it wrong because you inadvertently point it at a branch rather than the target beyond it. ■



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Keep your skills in shape with this Great all-steel target! Hit the plates on either side of the center plate and they will be held in place out of view till the center plate is hit which will reset the five plates.

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Magnetic 4 Duck Knockdown Target **£29.99**

- Steel target containing 4 ducks
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RANGE RIGHT
 SHOOTERS CUSHION

These rugged shooter's cushions are made from 600 denier waterproof polyester. Features a large zip pocket.

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Guaranteed to keep you warm in even the most rugged of conditions!

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The Grizzly is aptly named, for as soon as you put it on, it feels as if you have stepped into the arms of a bear - minus the arse!

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With the idea of a 'weather bomb' in mind, Ridgeline have designed the Torrent series to be the ultimate in bad weather protection.

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Ridgeline
 JACKETS NEW

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With this new Jacket Ridgeline have gone all out on this new versatile jacket and have developed this jacket to suit whatever you are doing in the countryside.

Ridgeline
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SAVE **£24**

Highland Vest - Olive RRP £39.99 **NOW ONLY £15**

As light as a mid-layer, the Highland Vest is made of fleece with membrane. This means it is windproof and weatherproof.

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Ridgeline is 20 years old and to celebrate this Ridgeline have introduced the Anniversary Hoodie. Made from a warm fleecy fabric and adorned with special embroidery, this hoodie will look great where ever you are and whoever you are with.

Ridgeline
 FLEECES FLEECE

Nowwinter Fleece RRP £99.99 **NOW £34.99**

A truly functional fleece is developed with the sportsman that needs everything at hand and within easy reach.

Ridgeline
 FLEECES FLEECE

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Made with Southern Star fleece with membrane the hooded fleece is weatherproof and windproof so it will keep the chill out wherever you are.

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Stalker Trousers RRP £49.99 **NOW £44.99**

Ridgeline have taken the classic Kiwi fleece trouser to a different level because it can layer on so much more than just a casual pant.

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SAVE **£24**

Mallard Jacket - Blue Camo RRP £99.99 **ONLY £59**

Perfect for stalking or wildfowling, the pack-away Ridgeline Mallard Jacket features Quiet-Tec, a two-layer fabric that is warm, light and waterproof - perfect for impromptu and short notice hunts.

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Parca RRP **NOW** £169.99 **£99**

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Light Polar Fleece 1/2 Zip - Black RRP £44.95 **£31.99**

Comfortable soft and warm microfibre half zip sweater, light and breathable.

Seelana
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Casual basic t-shirts made in soft, washed cotton quality for high comfort.

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HAWKE Vantage IR Riflescopes

NEW

2-7x32	RRP	NOW
3-9x40	from £79.99	£71.99
3-9x50	from £99.99	£80.99
4-12x40	from £109.99	£98.99
4-12x50	from £109.99	£98.99
4-16x50	from £139.99	£125.99
6-24x50	from £149.99	£134.99
3-12x50	from £209.99	£188.99
2.5-10x56	from £229.99	£206.99

HAWKE Airmar Riflescopes

NEW

2-7x32 AO	RRP	NOW
3-9x40 AO	£119.99	£107.99
3-9x50 AO	£129.99	£116.99
4-12x40 AO	£149.99	£134.99
4-12x50 AO	£159.99	£143.99

HAWKE Sidewinder 30 IR Tactical Riflescopes

10x42 IR	RRP	NOW
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8.5-25x42 IR	£379.99	£359.99

HAWKE Sidewinder 30 IR Riflescopes

3-12x50 IR	RRP	NOW
4-16x50 IR	£329.99	£309.99
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BSA ADVANCED RIFlescOPES

NEW

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	£123	£89.99
	£113	£79.99

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NEW

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6-32x56 SWF 30	£133	£99.99
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Nikko Stirling Mountmaster

RRP **NOW**

4x32	£54.99	£23.99
4x40	£60.99	£25.99
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3-9x40	£70.99	£29.99
4-12x40	£84.99	£36.99
4-12x50	£92.99	£39.99

Nikko Stirling Mountmaster AD

RRP **NOW**

4x32 AO	£68.99	£33.99
4x40 AO	£73.99	£36.99
6x40 AO	£81.99	£41.99
3-9x40 AO	£92.99	£46.99
4-12x50 AO	£95.99	£48.99
4-16x50 AO	£100.99	£49.99
4x32 AO IR	£84.99	£41.99
3-9x40 AO IR	£99.99	£48.99
3-9x50 AO IR	£106.99	£51.99
4-12x50 AO IR	£112.99	£54.99
4-16x50 AO IR	£118.99	£59.99

Nikko Stirling PANAMAX

RRP **NOW**

3-9x40 AO	£136.99	£94.99
3-9x50 AO	£145.99	£109.99
4-12x50 AO	£169.99	£119.99
4.5-14x50 AO	£182.99	£129.99
3-9x40 AO IR	£164.99	£119.99
3-9x50 AO IR	£172.99	£129.99
4-12x50 AO IR	£194.99	£139.99
4.5-14x50 AO IR	£206.99	£159.99

Nikko Stirling PANAMAX LONG RANGE

RRP **NOW**

6-18x50 AO IR	£245.99	£179.99
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RRP **NOW**

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2.5-10x42	£278.99	£189.99
4-16x44	£327.99	£219.99
5-20x50	£363.99	£249.99
6-24x50	£369.99	£254.99

Nikko Stirling TARGETMASTER 30mm Series

RRP **NOW**

4-16x44 IR	£294.99	£219.99
5-20x50 IR	£343.99	£259.99
10-50x60 IR	£371.99	£289.99

Nikko Stirling DIAMOND SPORTSMAN

RRP **NOW**

10-50x60 Mil Dot	£898.99	£749.99
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AGS Cobalt Redi-Mount Rifle Scopes

RRP **NOW**

4x40	£43.99	£29.99
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4-16x50 AO IR	£98.99	£69.99
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The laser range finding capability comes to the scope that started it all. The Digsight series of night vision riflescopes will now feature an integrated Laser rangefinder.

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Designed to deliver a variety of highly accurate distance measurements with the press of a button.

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With 6x magnification and a 25mm objective lens, the Rapier 2 offers outstanding performance, but its crowning glory is the OLED display.

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Breathtaking 1080p HD video make this the best choice for the most stunning views. Includes everything in our standard model, plus a host of upgrades plus two close focus lenses (25cm and 40cm focus).

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Featuring 5 Knives including Sharpener, Sheath and Knife Roll.

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BROWNING FOLDING KNIVES

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Minnow Knife	£18	£13.99
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BROWNING FOLDING KNIVES

Ignite Knife - Black / Orange

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Ignite Knife	£34	£26.99
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BUCK BUCKLITE MAX SERIES Fixed Blade Knives

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BUCK OPEN SEASON SKINNER with Gut Hook

Designed to cut easily while ensuring edge retention and corrosion resistance. With a 1 1/2" S30V guthook blade. Rosewood Dymondwood or Thermoplastic handle.

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Magnum Damascus Duke Knife

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Duke Knife	£29.99	
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GERBER BEAR GRILLS SERIES

Scout Black Knife

RRP **NOW**

Scout Knife	£34.99	£29.99
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GERBER BEAR GRILLS SERIES

Ultimate Pro Fixed Blade Knife

RRP **NOW**

Ultimate Pro	£124.99	£99.99
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VICTORINOX POCKET KNIVES

Hunter XS Knife - Orange/Black

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Hunter XS	£39.99	£34.99
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LEATHERMAN FULL SIZE MULTI-TOOLS

Wingman

RRP **NOW**

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LEATHERMAN FULL SIZE MULTI-TOOLS

Rebar - Nylon or Leather Sheath

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Rebar	£69.95	£56.99
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LEATHERMAN FULL SIZE MULTI-TOOLS

Surge

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Surge	£129.95	£99.99
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E-FOE Prices subject to change. Goods subject to availability



THE SOUTHERN HUNTERS

Gary Chillingworth brings us one of **2015-16** the best competitions of the winter

During the winter months, the ardent HFT shooters and lovers of UKAHT do not all hibernate; some of us jet off to sunnier climes, some take to indoor ranges and a few just go to the pub, but most of us want to keep shooting, no matter what the weather. However, we do go our separate ways and compete in our local shooting series. If you are a northern chap, or chapess, you might take part in the Gauntlet series; if you are from the Midlands, then the Midland Hunters is the place for you, but if you're a soft Southerner like me, then the Southern Hunters is the only place to shoot.

"If you're a soft Southerner like me, then the Southern Hunters is the only place to shoot"

The Southern Hunters has been in existence ever since I started shooting, and under the watchful eye of Charles Peal this superb winter series has been going from strength to strength. For 2015-2016, there were 10 events and these covered the length and breadth of the South East. We shot

all the way down on the south coast at Ford Ranges, and then all the way up to Cambridge.

The shoots use the tried, tested and popular UKAHT set of rules and for most of us, it is a perfect place to try new things and hone our skills for the coming summer series. The venues that Charles and the team pick are varied and all provide a true test of shooting. For example, Ford Ranges are set on a runway and the wind will whip around and destroy the weak and unprepared; Maldon will always put on a tough course worthy of a National event; Buxted will set range traps and have targets with odd-sized

kills and plates, and at West London Rangers, you will have to tolerate one of the rudest individuals I have ever met (it's a long story); Iden Ferns will teach you how to shoot over water, and Bisley will serenade you with machine-gun fire as you take your shot.



Above: Even locked in to the carefully fitted stock, standers are still tough

Right: Chris Tyhurst always blows me kisses

Bonus Bunny?

At each event there will be trophies in all classes, a bonus bunny and a goodie bag supplied by Air Arms, as well as banter, bravado and brevity. What I am trying to say is that the Southern Hunters is a wonderful series to shoot. The final round was held at Bisley and the poor booking-in chaps were thrown in at the deep end. On average, the Southern Hunters get between 70 and 90 shooters, but at Bisley there were 125, and with only one session and 30 targets we were snowed under. Terry Aiken and Chris Roberts did a stunning job and every shooter was given a lane, even if some of them had numbers like 25a.

It was one of the best courses that I have shot at Bisley, and targets were what you would expect from the UK's home of shooting. With a breeze that was throwing the pellets around, we found ourselves having to be very creative in the way we shot the course. On many targets, we were having to shoot between lumps of wood and the



“...now it's time to take what we have learned and head back on to the national circuit”

sound of splintering, followed by mild swearing was heard all the way up and down the firing line.

For me it was a good day. I have been working hard on my shooting this winter and it seems to be paying off. The targets that were hard seemed to be dropping, but the close targets are still the bane of my life and after missing two targets under 15 yards, I was kicking myself - and when I found out that I was only a single point off the lead, I kicked myself even harder.

Shoot off

Three shooters, Richard Woods, Lewis Hodges and Stuart Tennant had come in with a 56. There was a tense shoot off that seemed to take an age, but finally, someone knocked a target over and Lewis took the win in the Open class. It's a little known fact; Lewis is the president of the Jedward fan club but he asked me not to mention it.

The series is run over 10 rounds

with the six best scores to count. Charles Peal, our benevolent dictator and impresario, has been leading the series all year and only a 100% from Richard Woods could take the win; the problem is, Richard loves a challenge and Charles was pipped at the post. By the final reckoning, there was less than one target between first and second place, and that is how a series should be. In the other categories, Edward Tandi took the .22, Chris Tyhurst was Top Springer, Abi Maw was Top Junior, and the ever happy Brigitte Vant was Top Lady.

The series was sponsored by Air Arms, who provided goodie bags at every round, but for shooters who had shot at least five rounds, there was a chance to win a lovely TX200, and the lucky swine who took the gun was Dominic Taylor. Air Arms is a truly stunning company and their generosity and support of the shooting world is always appreciated.



Above Left: Brigitte Vant the overall ladies winner (and she will kill me for using this picture)

Above: Dominic Taylor wins his TX200

Left: Richard Woods and Molly the dog, Molly is Richard's secret weapon, she bites the ankles of all those who oppose him

Below: All the winners

The Southern Hunters will return later this year and the organisers have asked me to thank the team that makes it all work, all the shooters who took part, and of course, Air Arms for the continued support, but now it's time to take what we have learned and head back on to the national circuit. As I sit here and write this, we are just 48 hours away from the World Championships, so next month, you never know, I could be a world champion ... but don't hold your breath. Happy shooting, everyone! ■



The legs of this knock down can be set at 90 degrees to sit on a hard surface

TARGET CHOICES

Practice is key to accurate shooting, and fun targets are what we need, as the editor finds out

SPECS

17cm 3mm steel pellet catcher	£16.99
Full-colour targets (pack of 100)	£4.99
HFT practise spinner	£24.99
Crow knockdown	£19.99
Wooden pegs kit	£9.99
www.target-air.co.uk	

"I like a spinner for practice and zero checking, but I've never had one like the HFT practise spinner"

The choice of excellent products they offer is huge



Anybody who wants to be a good shot needs to know that practise is the key. Whether you're a hunter or a competitor, you need to get lead downrange if you want to be a better shot. However, too much repetition can be a turn-off so targets that are realistic or reactive can add some fun to the work. In recent times, the name 'Target Air' has kept cropping up on my radar, and they've been kind enough to send me some samples of their ever-expanding range of targets.

The first that caught my eye was a conical pellet-catcher, which is like none you've seen before. It's built from 3mm steel plate that can take a hit and laugh it off, so it's nothing like the flimsy, tin ones you usually see. It's fully welded and has a square-section lead collector that holds the face vertical so it can stand alone in the field. Even the slots that accept the 17cm target cards are thick and tough. I've hammered mine and it still looks like new.

Target Air offers a huge range of paper targets, in a choice of weights, including some photo-realistic ones, ideal for the hunter to practise on. They're £4.99 for 100, so are good value for money as well.

Perfect zero

I always like a spinner for practise and zero checking, but I've never had one like the HFT practise spinner. It has four, figure-of-eight targets each smaller than the last, so if you're consistently hitting the smallest one, you can be sure your sights are spot on. Like all Target Air's metal products, the spinners are thick and durable.

They also offer some novel targets and one I really liked is the Wooden Pegs kit. This comprises a heavy, thick steel bar drilled to accept wooden dowels that have been died red. Fifteen can be loaded at once to splinter and shatter when hit and, thinking of the back garden plinker, there's little noise as the wood is struck.

The last target I saw was the crow knockdown, which pleased me because the kill zone is the head and not the chest. I was also really impressed that the legs can be made vertical for soft soil, or horizontal for a hard surface, with no tools needed. Target Air have so many well-priced and innovative targets on their website that you really must have a look. ■

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THE BIG TEST

ON THE FIRING LINE THIS MONTH:
WEIHRACH HW110

SYNTHETIC

STUNNER

The Editor is amongst the first to receive his HW110 and is truly impressed

I can think of no more traditional manufacturing nation than Germany, and I associate their engineering with strong metals, used liberally. Picture the massive Weihrauch HW80 or 77 rifles that use kilos of blued steel to achieve the performance we love and enjoy. So imagine my surprise when they told me that their new rifle would have not a synthetic stock, but a synthetic action! I wondered if it was a wind up, but no. The HW110 multi-shot pre-charged pneumatic rifle's action is moulded from a high-tech polymer. As surprised as I was, I felt sure that Weihrauch wouldn't have invested in this technology unless they were totally confident that it was going to perform as well as metal.

At the IWA show in Germany I had the chance to ask directly what the thinking was behind the decision and it was a simple one. They wanted to offer a more affordable pre-charged pneumatic rifle than their ultra-

Above: I avoid hunting off hand but I was pretty accurate with the HW110

"I'm very proud to say that I was one of the first people to be sent an HW110"

successful HW100 range. It wouldn't offer all the features of the top model but it would make a Weihrauch PCP available to more people.

I'm very proud to say that I was one of the first people to be sent an HW110 back in February, when I was asked for my opinion. Having had some time with it now, I have to say that I'm impressed. Only long-term use will tell us how the polymer action holds up, but in terms of measureable performance, this rifle is absolutely first class.

Tactical

The looks are heading towards the fashionable 'tactical' style, but in use it's a proper sporter. The black, soft-touch stock finish is applied to a beech stock, a wood chosen

for its strength and stability. Using walnut would be completely pointless in this application. Although the stock is ambidextrous, it doesn't feel compromised and offers excellent support for the trigger hand and the cheek. The comb is much higher than your average modern stock and is all the better for it. With a scope in medium height Sportsmatch mounts, I found that the HW110 comes very naturally into the shoulder and on to aim. There's no need to readjust your head position to get comfortable, and this is worth everything to me. When I'm hunting I like a gun that points where I'm looking with no effort or fuss.

The action block has a matte, slightly textured finish, that won't cause reflections. On top, the Weaver



standard rail in moulded in, ensuring that it cannot be misaligned or work loose. For me, the jury is still out on the benefits of Weaver over the industry standard 11mm rail that's served us perfectly for all these years. I see no downside, other than I think the Weaver looks a bit bulky and intrusive on a sleek sporter, and it seems that most Weaver mounts have a large knurled thumb wheel fastener, which adds to the military feel. On the positive side, I have a friend who regularly swaps from a day scope to a night-vision unit, and he assures me that he suffers no loss of zero when he does, and in that situation it makes perfect sense.

With the stock removed, I saw another innovation - a long rail that connects the action to the barrel support assembly. This accepts the

"the day I need more than 20 shots in a hurry, I'll eat my hat"

two stock-fixing bolts and I found it simple to align these. This means that stock removal is quick and easy for those days when the gun has been really soaked and needs proper drying. The barrel support is also polymer, but it's a less controversial choice in this role. Weihrauch assured

Above: I always like to see a gauge on any PCP

Below: Smooth sporting lines are right up my street

me that the barrel is the same one found in the HW110 guns, which is well recognised as one of the best you can buy, so we know that's there's been no cost saving in this critical area.

All new

As soon as the rifle was announced, people were asking if there were common parts in the HW100 and 110, and apart from the barrel there are none. The whole action assembly is new, including the side lever, magazine and mag' release mechanism. To load the gun you first cock the side lever than press the mag' release lever down. This frees the magazine, which you push out to the right. It's fair to say that there's something of a knack needed to do this. With the magazine free, loading pellets is a simple as can be because all the indexing parts are inside the action. The mag' is, in effect, an aluminium wheel with a '0' ring around it. After sliding a pellet into each chamber, you depress the mag' lever and slide the mag' back in from the right. I found it best to give it a little wiggle until I heard it click into place before pushing the cocking lever closed.

The mag' holds 10 .177 shots as compared to the HW100's 14, but



"How many do you think? 70 ... 80 ... 90? At 120 the gauge was still just in the green and I was bored"

that's plenty for my needs. The rifle is delivered with a spare, which I load up before setting off hunting, and the day I need more than 20 shots in a hurry, I'll eat my hat. The cocking action is as smooth as you could wish for, as you'd expect from Weihrauch.

One area I was especially keen to try was the trigger. Weihrauch triggers have been the gold standard ever since I was a kid, and I hoped that the 110 would uphold that. I

worried that with costs needing to be saved, this would be an area that suffered, but I need not have worried. My gun's trigger was set to break like an icicle at one pound and was an absolute delight to use. I sensed an over-travel stop that controls unnecessary finger travel, a feature I applaud. I'll add some pull weight because I feel 1lb is too light for a hunting gun, but this unit is a good as any I've tried.

Below: In the field the rifle slipped into my shoulder instinctively on aim



SPECS

Manufacturer Weihrauch
Importer Hull Cartridge
Web www.hullcartridge.co.uk
Tel 01482 342756
Model HW110
Type Pre-charged pneumatic
Action Side lever
Length 38½" (98cm)
Weight 8lbs (3.6kg)
Fill Pressure 200bar
Shots per fill 120
Trigger Two-stage adjustable

RRP £645.00

In front of the cut out for the mag' you'll find an unusual ambidextrous safety. This, like the mag' release lever, is left with a bright metal finish, rather than the blacking elsewhere. The position is unusual and the action was rather stiff on my example, but I expect it will free up with use. The position wasn't obviously suited to either hand and I found my trigger hand best placed to release it. Unlike the convention, it pulls back to disengage and I found that could be done quietly, as I'd hope for a hunting rifle.

I've been told that the UK importer, Hull Cartridge, will offer a service where their gunsmiths will be able to swap the cocking lever to the opposite side, making the rifle left-handed, but I've yet to have this confirmed.

Filling the reservoir is done with a port and probe system at the front of the reservoir just behind the gauge. The port has a plug sealed with an 'O' ring that will keep dirt and dust out. One interesting thing I noticed as I trickled air into the reservoir was that there was no noise at all. Most click as the inlet valve opens and many make a strange noise as the pressure rises. The HW110 however, was totally silent as I pressurised it to its 200bar maximum fill pressure.

Once filled, I settled down in front of the chronograph with the 8.44 grain Weihrauch FT-Exact pellets where it produced an average 770fps for 11.2ft.lbs. just as I like. Many people have asked just how many shots we should expect from this short rifle, so I just kept shooting. How many do you think? 70 ... 80 ... 90? At 120 the gauge was still just in the green and I was bored. That's a huge number of shots and stunningly impressive. Even better, it varied just 14 fps over the whole string and I saw no power curve at all. Seriously, none! Weihrauch told us that the rifle does not have a regulator, but is self-regulating, and whatever that means, it certainly works well.

The firing cycle is smooth and quiet, with no appreciable vibration. It's not as quiet as the HW100, but it's very close. They both come with Weihrauch's excellent screw-on silencer, which is still one of the best you can buy.



Group size

With that done, I did what I really wanted to do which was to shoot some groups. For once the wind

would only show up in a side-by-side comparison, and I have to say that this rifle felt solid and calm to me. More importantly, it felt good in field

“What I learned in the field was that this is a very natural rifle to shoot”

wasn't too bad and I quickly got it zeroed and put some shots down at 25 yards. As long as I did my part, they pretty much all went through the same hole. If the hole enlarged much, I knew it was me, and not the gun. I noted that throughout my test the new magazines worked perfectly and I had no jams or misfeeds at all.

I wondered if the lighter weight would make the HW110 more sensitive to shoot from the bench than an HW110, but I think that

positions that the hunter might find himself using. Bench testing is great to understand the rifle's ultimate ability, but it's only in the field that you see what man and gun can do as a team.

What I learned in the field was that this is a very natural rifle to shoot, complementing my skills, rather than fighting them. Sitting, kneeling, supported or unsupported, I found the HW110 very natural to shoot. This means a very great deal to me and gave me huge confidence that I'd hunt

Above: It's a handsome rifle in its natural environment

Left: Weihrauch's silencer is still considered one of the best

Right: At 8lbs it isn't heavy but I'll be drilling mine to accept a sling

well with it. Perhaps I shouldn't say this, but I actually prefer it to the more expensive HW100 series of guns. The handling is more instinctive and lively, and the weight saving is quickly noticeable when you're in the field. I also prefer the shape and style of the stock, which has a more sporting look. At £645 nobody will call this a cheap gun, but it does keep all the accuracy of the more expensive models in a handling package that, for me, makes it even more available. I'm sure that this will be a big seller for Weihrauch and do you know what? I completely forgot that it has a synthetic action because I don't think it matters. ■





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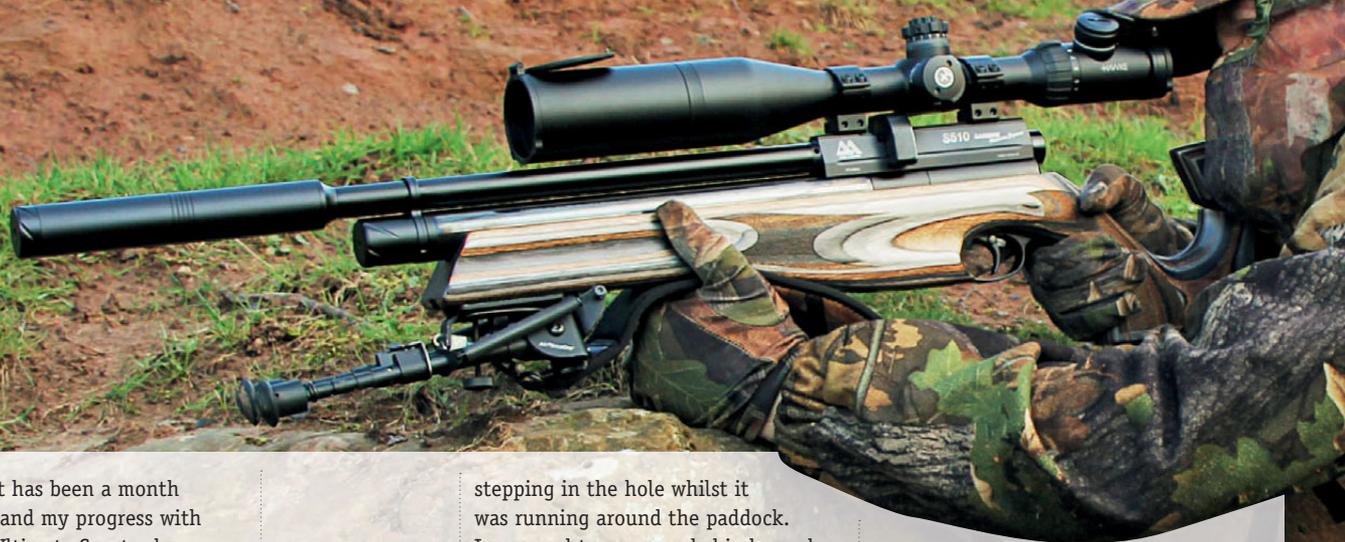
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ULTIMATE FUN

Eddie Jones is getting to grips with his new rifle, and the bag is growing



Well, it has been a month now and my progress with the Ultimate Sporter has been coming on well. I've been busy on the targets and really getting to grips with all the aim points needed for the different type of shots that we encounter over a session. This last session really put that practice into motion when I visited a small permission one afternoon. The weather had been pretty rough for a few days but a break for a couple of hours was forecast, with the wind dropping and only the odd light shower passing through. I had wanted to shoot this ground for a while, so this was certainly the time to have a walk around and see what was about.

It was about 4pm when I got to the first small paddock. I had seen a few woodpigeons feeding and they were just out of range for a comfortable head shot, but just along the fence to my right were a couple of young rabbits. This ground has zero tolerance on rabbits because there has already been a horse put down in the past, due to a rabbit digging out a bolthole in the field. It had gone unnoticed and the horse had broken its leg due to it

Main: This rock made a stable shooting point

stepping in the hole whilst it was running around the paddock. I managed to creep up behind a rock on a bank, and rested the Ultimate for a steady 35-yard shot. The cross was placed just above the normal aim point on its head, and the pellet was sent. The young rabbit did the normal gymnast routine then lay motionless in the short grass. It had been a perfect shot and the other young rabbit ran back to the safety of its warren.

One in the bag

With the rabbit picked, I headed off to a corner of the permission where I usually lie down and wait for a rabbit to come out to feed. When I got there nothing was out, and this was perfect because you usually have to wait that bit longer if you run anything into its warren. If you do have to clear the part of the field where you want to shoot, try to do it from as far away as possible, and walk away from the rabbits. Time and practice have taught me that most of the time the rabbits just hop back to safety rather than bolt if you're walking away. You can then quickly head to your spot and get set up with minimal disturbance.

I had only been lying down waiting for 20 minutes when a rabbit came straight out into the field, no more than 30 yards away. It got straight down to eating and didn't give me a second look. I wasn't fully hidden from its view, but with my face and hands covered, it didn't know I was any threat. You don't need to do this in long grass either - I have lain out in a paddock with one-inch of grass and shot a few in one session. You can also leave them where you shoot them because other rabbits take no notice of their dead brothers or sisters. All I would suggest is that you have any breeze blowing in your face, or away from the warrens, just to eliminate any chance of your scent going to warn the rabbits of your presence. Well, as I am sure you know, the rabbit did drop to the Ultimate's accuracy, and number two soon followed from another area I'd moved to after shooting the first one. I was quite pleased with the results so far. I wasn't working too hard to get something in the bag, and I was helping the farmer's horses in



Above :Because the stock fits so well I was confident shooting off hand



Right: One in the bag

"I have lain out in a paddock with one-inch of grass and shot a few in one session"



Above: Only simple tools are needed

Right: Once you have your bag you need to prepare it



"there has already been a horse put down in the past, due to a rabbit digging out a bolthole in the field"



Left: Cut off the feet

Right: Open up the skin along the spine and pull back



the process.

I decided to have a walk around the rest of the ground. I'd got a few rabbits so it was time to check out which other pests I could get near. I had reached an area that is usually a good place to sit it out for a pigeon, and I knew it was late in the day, but there is always one that likes to come in for any last minute sun before heading off to roost.

I was slowly creeping along the tree line when I just caught sight of a grey tail behind a tree, just in front of me. It was only 20 yards away and I was sure it hadn't seen me. I slowly crept out to see if the squirrel was still on the floor behind the tree, but nothing. I thought it had run further along the floor, but it must have seen me and as I carried on slowly along the trees, the squirrel showed itself again; it was scratching the ground under some bushes. I had no chance for a rest so I took a standing shot as soon as it stopped to have a look around. The squirrel didn't even kick after it was

hit, but another one that I hadn't seen near it, did move. It headed straight up a small oak tree, and there wasn't really anywhere for it to hide. I don't think it knew what had happened. I took a look through the Hawke scope and had a perfect shot through the branches to its head.

I aimed just a little low for the angle of the shot and the pellet knocked the squirrel out of the tree as it looked down at its mate. I was surprised to

"I knew that by aiming an inch low I would hit the mark spot on"

get the squirrels, to be honest; it's not often that I see any on this part of the ground so to get two was a welcome bonus. Time was getting on and the light would soon be fading, so I set off again to see what I could get before arriving back to the car.

Look up

Luck had been on my side; I'd managed to bag another rabbit in a field just next to where the car was, and that was good, but just as I was about to climb the gate a pigeon landed in a tree right above me. I was struggling to move. I knew the pigeon could see me easily, so as slowly as I could I tried to raise the Ultimate in its direction. After what seemed an age, I finally got my eye behind the scope. There were a few branches to weave the pellet through, but I knew that by aiming an inch low I would hit the mark spot on. This was where the practice with the combo was going to show. I wouldn't have had to shoot this low with my old set-up, but having shot this angle whilst practising, I knew I shouldn't miss. I gently squeezed the second stage on the trigger and watched the pigeon's head lift back as the pellet hit it spot on the mark.

It had been an enjoyable walk around and to have a nice mixed bag to finish was certainly a bonus. I know I am going to enjoy every time out with the Ultimate. It already feels like I have had it a lot longer than I have.

Extra content

With the warm weather now approaching, it is always best to gut rabbits as soon as possible. Here's a little step-by-step guide on how I skin and gut my rabbits in under a minute, to minimise contamination from guts going bad inside the rabbits, and also to save weight in the rucksack when having to carry them around after

being shot. All you need is a sharp pair of scissors, a knife, some gloves, and a few bags.

Step 1. Using the scissors, cut all the legs off and the tail.

Step 2. Turn over the rabbit and pinch the fur up on its back so that you can cut a small hole in it for your finger to go in.

Step 3. Put a finger in the hole in its back and pull to open it enough to grip it on both sides, then pull the skin apart. You should be able to rip the back half straight off, and then pull the front end down to its neck. You can then take your scissors and remove the head with front fur on.

Step 4. Using your knife, gently cut up the belly to reveal the internal organs. You can then put two fingers behind the liver and pull everything out in one go. When that has been done, put the carcass in a bag and tidy up the mess. If you have a cool box kept in your car, you can always keep them in that, once you fill up your bag. ■



Left: Keep pulling all the way

Right: Chop the skin off the legs



Left: Carefully open the belly without puncturing the guts

Right: Pull the guts out with your gloved hand



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BIT OF A STING IN THE TAIL!

Jamie Chandler is all worked up by the bad behaviour of airgunners!

OK, I admit it; I'm furious as I write this month, and it's the fault of some members of our very own sporting community who have left me that way. I enjoy shooting in all its many guises, but my two real passions are airgunning and pigeon shooting and, if I'm honest, with airgunning first. In order to enjoy as much access as I can to both, I offer to help around farms, although with my hands, fencing and the like have been a bit cumbersome. That said, I have found a niche on my main permission in offering to keep pigeons from rape crops by turning up at differing times of day, scaring off any that may be there and if necessary putting out strings of pigeon bangers (a kind of fireworks) in order to keep the grey pie-fillers off for the rest of the day. I have become a living scarecrow! A valued by-product of this arrangement for the farmer is that I also act as a visible deterrent and an extra set of eyes. It's whilst doing this I've started to doubt the sanity or intelligence of some within our sport.

Twice this month I have caught people red-handed with airguns, committing what in the eyes of the law would be considered armed trespass, an offence that potentially

carries a prison sentence and hefty fine. In these situations, whether the intruders be ramblers or airgunners, I always approach cautiously and politely because it's better to be safe than sorry. I ask in a neutral, non-aggressive tone whether or not they have permission to be there, and then explain who I am. Most will apologise and leave, pretending to have lost their bearings, or even genuinely having done so, and no more is done, apart from a quick text to the farm manager.

Trespass!

In the case of both of the airgun trespasses, I introduced myself unthreateningly and asked if they had permission to be there. On both occasions they didn't. The first guys slipped the gun, promised not to return without permission, or to try on the neighbouring farms. They were pretty shocked because they hadn't realised the penalties involved. I suggested that they try a local HFT course if they had no permissions to shoot on, and walked with them to their car. I took a sneaky photo of the car's number plate and texted the farm manager who was happy to leave it there; all fine.

On the second occasion, it

was a father and son who were shooting into a tree at pigeons, from a footpath. Again, I was soft, introducing myself and asking them if they had spoken to the landowner to ask if they could be there. The father was immediately indignant and angry at being challenged; after all, they were on a public right of way and not in a field itself. I pressed on, explaining gently that it was an offence to have a firearm uncovered in a public place, because of the potential harm to other path users. He became angrier, quite certain that he and his son were within their rights to be there, especially as it was 'only an airgun'. I explained that I had no option but to phone the landowner who would phone the police, which did the trick. Furious and adamant of his rights, yet finally convinced to move on, the father and poor embarrassed son left.

I'm sure that some may have a different opinion of how I should

Above: It may seem an idea, but if caught, it's not just the offender who is presumed guilty

Background: There's a farmer's livelihood to protect in this green pigeon feed!

Right: Scanning for bunnies as my backside catches frostbite





“Furious and adamant of his rights, yet finally convinced to move on, the father and poor embarrassed son left

Above left: Bangers set to keep the pie fillers at bay

Above middle: Stunning performance from the Scorpion with a wobble from me!

Above: Plenty of signs on the neglected down but the hunting gods were against me

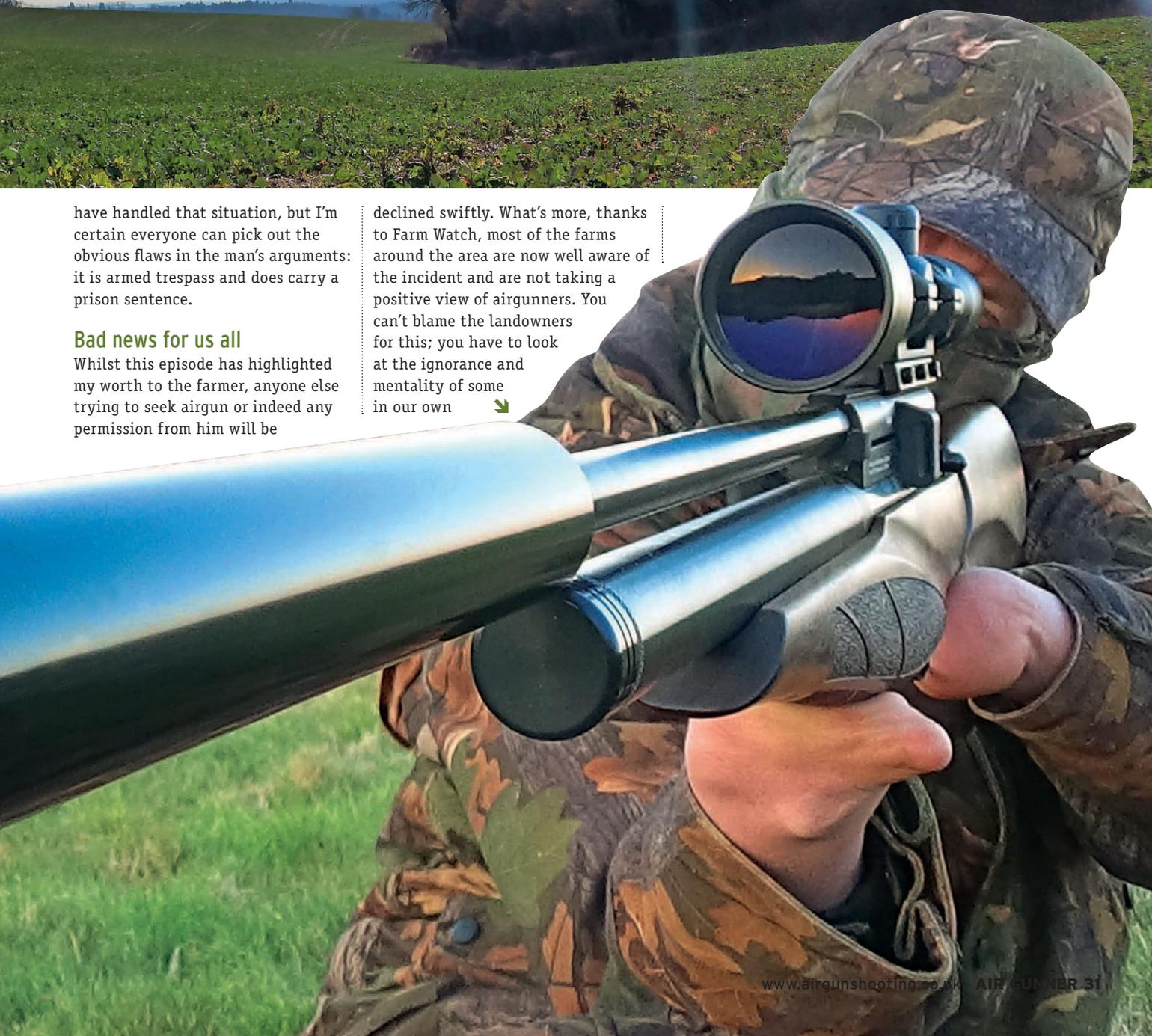


have handled that situation, but I'm certain everyone can pick out the obvious flaws in the man's arguments: it is armed trespass and does carry a prison sentence.

Bad news for us all

Whilst this episode has highlighted my worth to the farmer, anyone else trying to seek airgun or indeed any permission from him will be

declined swiftly. What's more, thanks to Farm Watch, most of the farms around the area are now well aware of the incident and are not taking a positive view of airgunners. You can't blame the landowners for this; you have to look at the ignorance and mentality of some in our own



sporting community and thank them for making the lives of the rest of us - and especially those seeking permission - far more difficult. Two incidents have negatively influenced the opinions of local farmers, and more further afield. It's not right, and it was lucky that the police weren't called; that could have brought further unnecessary negative publicity from a starved 24-hour news culture that would have picked it up. If we need to blame anyone for how we are perceived, we have to start by looking at our sporting counterparts and challenging that stupidity and ignorance.

On a happier and far more positive note, this month I've been loaned a .22 BSA Scorpion SE to try, whilst continuing my quest to find new hunting hotspots on my permission. I know what a strong following the Ultra SE and R10 have, but always felt that this mid-weight hunter suffered from a bit of 'middle child syndrome' and got overlooked. Having tried its flagship competitor cousin, the Gold Star, I was hoping that this wouldn't be a climb down - and how happy I was that the results were far from it.

Having discovered that my 'go to' pellet, Air Arms Fields in 5.52,

Right: Sadly the downs were not to produce that night



Below: Airgun or powder burner, it's a whole heap of free porridge on offer for armed trespass



matched the barrel to the point that at 45 yards the Scorpion SE was happily printing five-shot, 5p size, one-hole groups on paper, I decided to head on out to a new spot on top of an ignored down that had plenty of bunny evidence. Sadly, although the signs were good, the hunting gods were not on my side and having watched, waited, and felt like my backside had frozen to the floor after two hours, I decided to move on.

Pigeon temptation

As the sun dropped behind the down and the last of the sunlight turned

Scorpion's prior performance gave me the confidence to go for it.

I knelt and allowing for a half mil dot holdover, slipped the safety, let the pellet fly with just the click of the mechanism as my R10's moderator tamed the rapport of the Scorpion to nothing, and watched through the scope as the pigeon folded and fell to the ground. I reloaded swiftly and made my way forward to claim my prize. As I entered the tree line, two more of the glorious grey grouse screamed low to the tree canopy and circled in, wings locked for landing. Disguised by the murky light and

"always felt that this mid-weight hunter suffered from a bit of 'middle child syndrome'"

Left: The loud bangs will hopefully cause the grey feathered locusts to choose a different flight plan

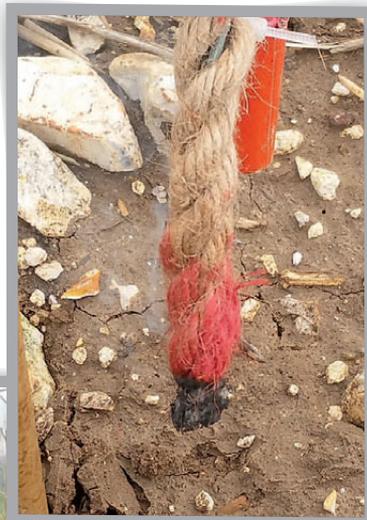
golden, I noticed some late-roosting pigeons heading to a copse on the way back to the car, it was far too tempting to ignore, so I slowed my pace to a crawl and headed toward the copse. My brain switched to blank anything but the moment as I approached the copse, using an outlying tree to hide my approach, and the wet ground to disguise my footfall. I spotted my first target and gestimated the range to be about 35 yards, but the lack of wind and the

branches I followed one with the gun as it flared to land, and again dropping to a knee, I slipped the safety and at 20 yards and 40 degrees up, let the shot go. There was another satisfying thwack, and the pigeon headed to the ground. It's amazing how you can go for three hours with nothing then two opportunities present within three minutes!

I set off home happy with my bag, utterly blown away with BSA's amazing middle child! ■

Bottom left: Don't overlook this rifle, it's a stunner!

Bottom right: A final flurry produces results



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I told you recently that I'd started to believe in shooting permissions being like buses, having spent almost three years unsuccessfully looking for new permissions, three came along together - well, not quite together, but within six months of each other. There has been a lot of very good advice published in Air Gunner and Airgun World about how to obtain a shooting permission, and all I can add to it is 'don't give up'. It is not easy, but it will be worth it in the end.

My latest permission was obtained via by my brother's girlfriend, Katrina. When she moved her horse, Gemini, to new stables, I asked her to introduce me to the owner of the stables. At my initial meeting with the owner, who I will refer to as Mrs B, she explained that her requirement was for a discreet

and professional, vermin control service. The stable specialises in providing riding lessons for children, including those from a local special needs school and I was to do nothing that might upset or distress any of the children. Fortunately having BASA insurance always helps to convince people that I am professional in my approach, and I was able to draw on the experience of a recent grey squirrel cull in a friend's garden to demonstrate that I am capable of discretion. I explained to Mrs B that I would arrive at the stables dressed smartly and then get changed into my camouflage gear, well away from her customers, and that anything I shot would

Background: Using a jump as a rifle rest helped steady my shot

Below left: Making new friends at the stables

be taken away in my back pack. My air rifle would be out of sight in a fastened case and kept unloaded until I reached the land Mrs B had given me permission to shoot on.

Layout

The permission consists of three large paddocks, one of which has a spinney running down the side of it, and the stable buildings, which were at present off limits to me. Several years ago, Mrs B had employed a local firm of professional pest controllers who had used rimfire rifles and night-vision equipment to clear her land of rabbits. This had been very successful with a total of 120 rabbits shot over two nights, but it had also been expensive, and so I now had the opportunity to provide the



JUST LIKE BUSES

Russel Webb has his first trip to permission number four

service free. However, the downside of what might appear to some readers to be a perfect permission is that the stables are located in Dorset, I live in Bedfordshire and it is a 300-mile round trip every time I shoot there. Fortunately, I can combine my visits to this permission with those to the farm permission that I wrote about last time, and my brother will provide me with bed and breakfast accommodation in return for a couple of pints of the local Dorset cider.

Having left Mrs B with a copy of my BASA insurance documents, it was time for an initial reconnaissance of my new permission and I started by slowly sneaking up to the gateway that leads to the paddocks, and peering cautiously through the bars. I was rewarded by the sight of three rabbits

feeding on the grass on the far side of the field. As I began to work out a stalking route, the sky rapidly turned grey and the heavens opened, but much to my surprise the rabbits remained completely unconcerned and continued to feed whilst I made a hasty retreat to the shelter of the stables.

It would have been easy to be disappointed because the downpour had ruined my reconnaissance visit, but I believe that any visit to my permissions will always yield results, even if the game bag stays empty. It is very easy to become obsessed with the size of the game bag, especially if you believe some of the exploits of the 'Internet hunters' who post their videos on the 'net. When out on my permission with the air rifle, I never have had one of those big days that

others boast about; for me, the tally has always been in single figures and sometimes, no matter how hard I try there is nothing to shoot at. On those days it does not matter how much I have practised on the range, or how carefully I have planned my day, the rabbits will not make an appearance. I recently spent three hours in one of the most productive ambush positions on my Cambridgeshire permission, and at the end of the session all I had to show for it was very cold feet and hands, but the pleasure I gained from that hunting trip was derived from being away from the pressures of work and everyday family life, not how many kills I made.

Bottom left: The paddocks promise some good sport

Bottom right: I was asked to be discreet

Pouring down

After about 40 minutes, the rain



"I was rewarded by the sight of three rabbits feeding on the grass on the far side of the field"



"she explained that her requirement was for a discreet and professional, vermin control service"



showed no signs of easing off so I arranged to return to the stables the following afternoon, when the day's riding lessons had finished. When I left my brother's house the next day, the weather was drier and the sky was very overcast, but fortunately, I have a Hawke Sidewinder with an illuminated reticle fitted to my air rifle, which would give me an advantage in the poor light conditions. Having parked in the far corner of the stable car park, I used the cover of a conifer hedge to provide me with a suitably discreet location to change into my camo gear and remove the FX Cyclone from its gun slip.

With a heady mixture of excitement and anticipation I set out on my first hunting session on a new permission.

Repeating my tactics from the previous day, I crept slowly toward the field where I had seen the rabbits, and peered cautiously through the bars of the gate. My reconnaissance work had paid dividends because there were two rabbits feeding on the grass on the opposite side of the field. The closest rabbit was about 40 metres away, with its head down feeding on the lush green grass of the paddock. I planned my stalking route along a hedgerow, which would help me avoid being silhouetted against the skyline. With the exception of foxes, most of the rabbits' predators strike from above, which is why a rabbit will run if it sees



Right: The horse jumps provided cover when stalking

"My reward was a clean kill, and just as importantly the first kill on my new permission"

Background: In this wooded area I was busy looking for tree rats

something approaching against the skyline. My route took me to a horse jump, 20 metres away from the rabbit, which would provide cover and also give me a steady rest for my rifle when I took the shot.

Slowly, slowly

As I very slowly and carefully made my way along the hedgerow, I became aware of the sky darkening and felt the first spots of rain on my face. The jump provided me with a stable shooting position, but I needed to switch on the illuminated reticle of my scope to help compensate for the poor light. I settled the cross hair of the scope on the rabbit's head, flicked the safety catch off and gently squeezed the trigger. My reward was a clean kill, and just as importantly, the first kill on my new permission. I collected the rabbit and headed back to

the farmhouse before the rain became any heavier. It was a relief to get into the warm and dry farmhouse kitchen where Mrs B had just put the kettle on. Over a cup of tea and a packet of bourbon biscuits, Mrs B told me how pleased she was that I'd visited the stables and had a successful hunt in such awful weather. I will tell you more about my visits to the new Dorset permissions in future editions of Air Gunner. ■

Below left: The heavy rain did stop the rabbits feeding

Below right: I only shot one rabbit, but was happy with a clean kill

Bottom: I went back to the farmhouse to report my progress to Mrs B



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THE POWER

OF PLINKING

Charlie Portlock tells us why plinking is good for us and our accuracy



One of my happiest childhood memories is of summer birthdays spent with my father as he taught my friends and I how to shoot his HW35 at distant tins mounted on a pair of ancient ladders. We were utterly fascinated and completely engaged even though the old Weihrauch felt like the heaviest thing we'd ever held. Hours would drift by, drinks and food would come and go and parents would eventually arrive to collect their tired and grinning boys. Finally, the sun would fall and it would be just my father, myself and the rifle, together in the cool of the day.

Above: Competition adds to the fun

Right--: DIY shooting bags (rice, cable ties, tracksuit bottoms)

Below: A shooting bench is a good idea

We love it but why?

Whether it's a casual ten minutes spent felling cans or an hour of smacking spinners, plinking is simple, addictive fun and is one of the cheapest, safest and most accessible forms of shooting. For most air gunners, plinking represents their first point of contact with rifle shooting and it's the perfect way to introduce the novice to the

night, chopping fire-wood or a few overs in the nets. I'm sure that you can think of parallel activities from other contexts and there's a deeply rooted strand that links them all;

"For most airgunners, plinking represents their first point of contact with rifle shooting"

fundamentals of safety and technique whilst providing a solid platform for achievement and challenge. But what do we mean by plinking? I'm sure that we all have our own definition, but I'd like to define it broadly by saying that plinking constitutes any kind of informal target shooting. I use the word target in its broadest sense and this could well be anything from tin cans to life-size silhouettes of hungry velociraptors.

Go with the flow

On the surface, the appeal of plinking is joyously simple; set up your tins just far enough away to be a challenge and then use your skill and intuition to bring them tumbling down. Focus, repetition, cause and effect. However, there's also something deeply meditative about it; like driving at

Flow.

Flow Theory as we know it today was developed by Hungarian psychologist C Mihaly but it has far older parallels in the Eastern religions. Its core concepts are widely acknowledged in the medical world, particularly within psychology and occupational therapy, but we're probably most familiar with it through the idea of 'The Zone'. The Zone is that highly focused, single minded state where we're working at the pinnacle of our cognitive and physical powers. It's the perfect union between mind and body and it arguably represents a cornerstone of human experience. Whether we're recording a classic album in the studio, writing a novel or taking aim at a distant target, if the clock has lost its meaning then you can bet



we're there. So, the next time you lose an hour and 200 pellets you'll have a good excuse for being late for supper; you were in The Zone. Nobody can argue with that!

Engagement and immersion in any activity is heightened by the idea of competition. Whilst plinking may lack the competitive intensity of Field Target, the light bantering and cajoling that accompanies some back garden gunning can fire the same intrinsic desire to win, even in this low pressure environment. When we're shooting alone we're always competing against our own best performance and this desire to continually challenge and better ourselves is probably as much a part of plinking as it is of cooking, writing or selling cars. Humans are hierarchical and by our very nature we thrive on competitive

pursuits because on some level we know that they prepare us for the realities of every day life.

Airgun addict?

Whether you're alone and challenging yourself to shoot tighter groups or with friends trying to hit long-range spinners, informal competition is an essential part of plinking. Although we may not consciously realise it, our brains are stimulated by the constant pleasure of improvement. The human race thrives on the acquisition of a diverse skill-set and from the first antler scraper to the best spring piston rifle, the ability to use a tool effectively has formed an intrinsic part of our development as a species. Our opposable thumbs and large brain mass to body ratio set us far apart from other creatures and plinking

could almost have been designed to encourage the use and stimulation of these characteristics.

Our brains are wired to reward us when we improve ourselves and the chemical dopamine plays an important part in this neurological process. Dopamine has been proven to play a key role in reward based learning and is also thought to be at the root of many human addictions from computer gaming, through to narcotics and yes, you've guessed it; airgunning. When we succeed in completing small but stimulating or challenging tasks our brain releases dopamine and we feel that familiar sense of well being and satisfaction (dopamine is also released when we eat cheese). The research suggests that when completing these tasks, men receive dopamine rewards more often than women and this may explain why there are more male gamers and airgunners. Then again, perhaps it's just that the fairer sex don't need to be bribed in order to get off their back-sides and do something useful!

From tea to targets

Plinking is a versatile pastime and unlike hunting or fishing, it can be enjoyed both in solitude as a form of relaxation or in close company as a social activity. Felling long range cans over open sights is one of my favourite ways to enjoy some time with visiting friends and it provides an easy context for conversation and competition to co-exist, without adverse effect upon either activity. I'd venture that out of all the shooting disciplines, air rifle gatherings are some of the most

Below: Plinking; great fun for breakfast

Bottom left: A white door is a useful backstop

Bottom right: Spinners are the my favourite targets



sociable.

Personally, one of the most enjoyable elements of plinking is how creative you can be with it. Whether you're designing and building your own shooting bench and targets, inventing time trials or re-enacting a last stand against invasion, the possibilities, though framed within the limitations of the hardware, are limitless. In plinking, the session is always evolving and you're continually able to customise the perfect level of challenge; not so easy that you become bored but not so hard that you never succeed.

Preparing for the field

It's all very well setting up paper for some serious competitive shooting at a pre-appointed range but the more random approach of plinking can be perfect when honing your hunting skills. Provided that you have the space and a safe backstop, it's possible to position targets within partial cover and at differing levels of elevation in order to simulate feeding rabbits, squirrels and pigeons. A time limit adds some pressure and excitement to crawling through grass and through simulated cover and this can be a great way to improve your reactions and prepare your mind and body for the demands of hunting. This more kinetic approach is also great fun for youngsters who may still be a tad young for the fields.

If you don't have the space at home it can be worth taking a pack full of targets down to your permission for a session of Field Plinking (not a thing yet but I'm hoping that it will catch on!). This will probably involve the

Below: Is this the ultimate plinking target?



Right: A backstop is a good idea

Below: A variety of targets keeps things interesting

"Field plinking can help to bridge that gap between the range and the woods"

kind of targets used in HFT but you'll be able to fine tune your course by positioning them at challenging angles and distances that will force you to shoot from more realistic shooting positions under something akin to field conditions. After spending a lot of time shooting from kneeling I'm always surprised at how difficult it is to shoot decisively and accurately from standing (a common position when shooting squirrels) and I'm always grateful for the chance to practice on some pine-cones rather than on live quarry. Field Plinking can help to bridge that gap between the range and the woods and can serve as a reminder that when the adrenaline starts pumping, hunters

need to think beyond the limitations of conventional range training alone.

Itching to plink

There are many diverse benefits to be found in plinking and trying to answer why we love it creates almost as many questions as it does answers. It's simply brilliant fun and all I know is that after a few hours spent typing at my desk, I can feel that trigger finger itching and my mind drifting to tin treasures, spinning targets and short-range time trials...yes, that's it, if we set up three tin pyramids at five yard intervals from 10 out to 50 and give maybe 1000 points for every can, I'll bet you can't topple them all in 25 shots ... OK then, 30 ... ■



"Engagement and immersion in any activity is heightened by the idea of competition"



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IT'S NOT LIKE A SIG,

IT IS A SIG

Is this a game changer in the world of Co2 rifles, the editor asks?

I first saw this rifle at a big shooting show and, to be honest, I nearly walked straight past it. The sign above it said 'airguns', but I thought this was a 9mm centrefire. Even when the salesman handed it to me, I had no idea it was an airgun. The weight and feel are exactly like the fullbore version. I was blown away! I'd never handled an airgun like this. He then showed me how the rapid-fire mechanism worked and explained that the belt held 30 shots in the RPM (Rapid Pellet Magazine) and that spare mags' would be available, so you could have multiples of that loaded and ready for a quick change. I simply couldn't wait to get my hands on one. Now I have, and I'm even more impressed. Just handling it pleases me and I have to say that everybody I allowed to try it fell in love immediately.

"I have to say that everybody I allowed to try it fell in love immediately"

Above: In the shoulder this really does feel like the real thing

Right: The 88g Co2 capsule lives in the butt section

SPECS

Manufacturer: SIG Sauer
Importer: Highland Outdoors
Web: www.highlandoutdoors.co.uk
Tel: 0845 099 0252
Model: MPX
Type: Double action, belt fed
Power: 88g Co2
Calibre: .177
Length: 31"
Weight: 6.6lbs

Cost £261.99

To get it ready, you release the butt section and screw in an 88-gramme Co2 capsule. Next, you open a door on the side of the magazine and withdraw the belt. Drop a pellet into each of the chambers and then seat

them with the tool provided. This is important because if a pellet's skirt sits proud of the chamber it might catch and jam the movement. Feed the belt back in, close the door and then push the mag' up into the action. The final step is to pull and release the 'charging handle' at the rear of the action, and the gun is cocked and loaded. The safety is chunky and ambidextrous, so easy to





disengage.

Full-on fun

From here on it's all plain fun. The shots are released with a satisfying, snappy thud, and by using the flip-up military style ring-sight I found the accuracy good. I'd set out some spinners and a knock-down target and I was hitting them immediately. Because my eyesight is getting worse by the week, I asked the importer if I could try the SiG branded red-dot sight that comes on a different version of the MPX, and they packed one in the box. This is a logical accessory for this rifle, making quick yet accurate shots that much easier.

Pushing the boundary of what this rifle is intended for, I shot off-hand at a paper target from 25 yards and was again impressed with the gun. I'd loaded it with the first .177 wadcutter I found in my collection, the H&N Finale Match Rifle, which is a rather exotic pellet for plinking. The groups were around 4", which is great from such a wobbly position with a double-action 'combat' trigger unit. From 10 yards a bank of spinners was easy to keep moving, even shooting quickly, and for me, that's what this gun is all about.

Satisfied that it was an accurate rifle, I chronographed it with my standard test pellet, the Air Arms

Above: Each pellet must be seated in the belt with the tool provided

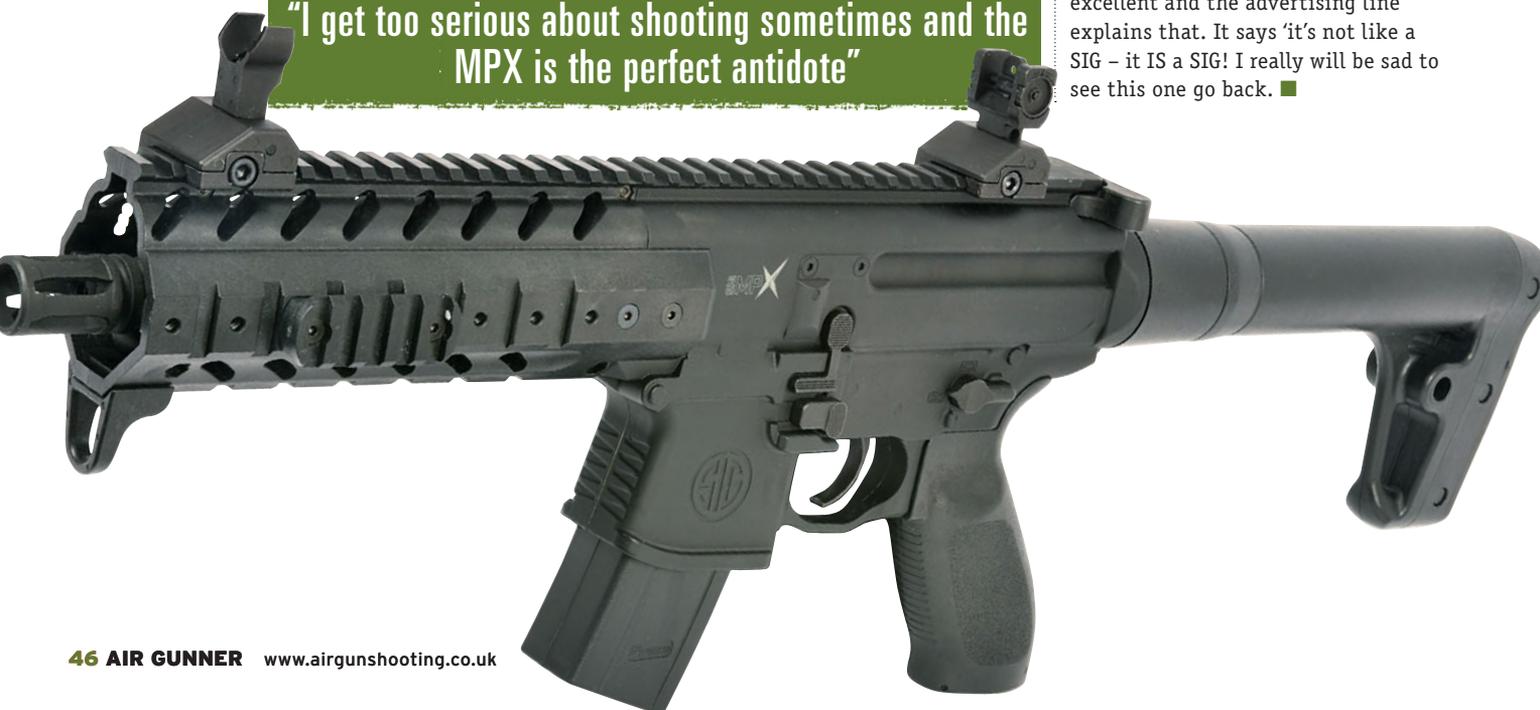
Below: You'd never know that this was an airgun from it's looks

Field, which weighs 8.44 grains in .177. The average velocity was 380fps for a muzzle energy of 2.7ft.lbs. A new 88-gramme capsule gave 140 shots before the velocity started dropping significantly. This is plenty of power for knocking cans over without worrying about dangerous ricochets, and ekes out the energy in the Co2 capsule for a large number of shots, something that's vital for a plinker. I looked around a few shops and found that you can buy the 88-gramme capsules for about £8.50, and a lot less if you buy them in bulk.

The word 'fun' kept coming into my mind as I enjoyed shooting this excellent rifle. Whilst visiting a friend's farm, he came up with the idea of using clay-pigeon targets to make a rapid-fire competition. He knocked up a simple stand that held them in three rows of two, and the test was to break all six in the fastest time. Another friend had five plastic Coke bottles in a row at 10 yards and the quickest time to knock them all over was the winner. Safety glasses are a must with this game in case any pellets bounce back.

We had a blast - literally, and a thought occurred to me. Perhaps I get too serious about shooting sometimes and the MPX is the perfect antidote to that. It's not a hunting gun and it's not about accuracy, as conventional competition rifles are. It's about having fun with your pals and smiling as you do. The build-quality is a head and shoulders above anything else I've tried in its class, and we had not one jam in the whole time we shot it. The handling is excellent and the advertising line explains that. It says 'it's not like a SIG - it IS a SIG! I really will be sad to see this one go back. ■

"I get too serious about shooting sometimes and the MPX is the perfect antidote"



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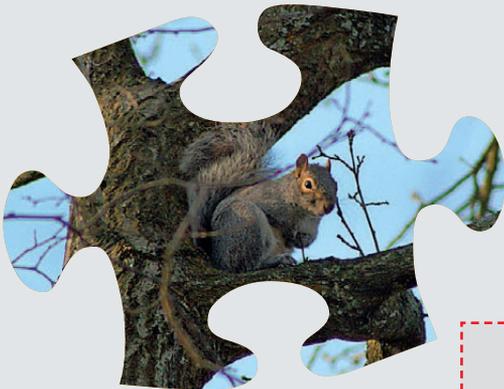
IT'S A WIN DOUBLE!



There has never been a Co2 rifle like the new SIG MPX. It's powered by an 88 gramme Co2 capsule that's cleverly hidden in the butt section to offer over 140 shots per fill. Inside the removeable magazine is the RPM (Rapid Pellet Magazine) that delivers 30 shots just as fast as you can pull the trigger, making this the ultimate plinker for fast-fire fun. The weight, balance and handling are exactly the same as the 9mm live fire gun because this rifle isn't like a SIG, it IS a SIG. It comes with combat-style ring sights that can fold down out of the way if you choose to fit a scope or red dot sight to make the most of the accuracy. This really is an extraordinary gun and you could win two of them!

ENTRY FORM

This is a snippet from a picture printed elsewhere in this issue. Can you spot which page it's on?



I've spotted the shot on page...

Name.....
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Send your answers to: June Jigsaw, Air Gunner, Evolution House, 2-6 Easthampstead Road, Wokingham, RG40 2EG

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HOW TO ENTER

By Post

Check out the jigsaw piece printed on the entry form below and see if you can spot from which main photo elsewhere in this edition it has been taken. When you have found the full picture, write down the page number on which it appears in the answer box below and send your completed entry form to the address at the bottom of the page. Entry costs just £1.50 per go - cheque and postal orders payable to Air Gunner - and you can enter as many times as you like. As a bonus though, for every five entries you submit, you get another one free - i.e. six entries for £7.50

Closing date for entries is Thursday 6th of June one entry free provided the entry form is submitted with a validated 'Free Competition entry' token from their membership pack. Multiple entries allowed. If you do not wish to destroy your copy of the magazine you can send your entry on a separate piece of paper. Photocopies are also allowed. In the event of a tie, all correct entries will be put into a hat and there will be a draw to decide the winner. Prize is supplied on behalf of Air Gunner by the manufacturer. The prize will be sent to the winner's designated gun shop which may levy an administration charge for handling.



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Legends PO8 End of WWII



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CO2 Blowback, Full metal



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CARNIVORE X

The editor asks if this innovative tool is better than the rest

I seem to have a lot of these kinds of machete/hide-making tools sent to me recently, and to be honest, most of them are much of a muchness in terms of performance. Because of this I have to confess that I was very pleased to unpack the Carnivore X. It looks and works like no other machete I've ever used and exudes a confidence I've never seen in a tool like this.

The profile is what you'd describe as a tanto-style, with the cutting edge and the saw back being parallel almost to the tip. This gives a huge cutting area for hacking and slicing through all kinds of brambles and nettles, as well as the ability to cut through some thicker sticks. Most machetes don't do well on any hard wood, but the combination of the quality of the titanium-bonded steel and the grind used make it stand out from the crowd. The lower third of the blade features a hollow grind that helps it to penetrate massively better than the usual deep bevel that you'd find on inferior blades. A hollow grind is usually kept for meat-cutting blades because it makes the impact area thin, and therefore weak, unless the steel quality is good enough.

To honour my role as tester, I ripped into some branches that deserved an axe, with everything thing I had, and the Carnivore X came up smiling. Thick brambles and nettles were sliced though as if they weren't there. As a saw it worked okay, but I don't see that as its main purpose.

Camillus promotes this as a survival tool and includes a neat little drop-point knife in the side of the sheath. It actually makes a great pigeon/rabbit/squirrel preparation knife, as well as being your Bear Grylls survival spear tip. The notches in the sides and barbs in the spine have it ready to become a spear head for catching fish, but back in the real world it's just a good bonus knife.

For me, this is an excellent machete that clears brambles and brush with little effort and has a greater capacity to cut thicker limbs of wood than any others in its class. The textured pattern, anatomical grip is superb; the cutting power is the best I've seen, and at £30 I think it's a bit of a bargain. ■

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NEW MODEL

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In addition, the model features the brand new Clean-Break Trigger (CBT), and two totally new stock designs - one is classic hardwood and the other in sleek synthetic. Top this with a CenterPoint 3-9x40 AO scope and you have a winning package.

If you thought the original Trail was great, you'll be blown away by the **NP2!**



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GALAHAD MEETS THE

While visiting the Pyramid Air booth at the SHOT Show in 2015, the good folks at Air Arms pulled me aside to show me a gun they were working on. It was a bullpup prototype, and they wanted feedback on it. I had some ideas to share, as did many others, but the important point is that Air Arms were asking before going into production, and when I saw the pre-release gun at this year's show, it had evolved - proof that they had been listening.

Named the 'Galahad', this gun leverages the company's technology assets, using some elements from their existing products, but it is an original where it counts. The trigger assembly, the stock design, the cocking mechanism were built to get the best out of a bullpup configuration. Did they realise their objective to build a superior bullpup? What constitutes

the best of breed is difficult to define, because it is very subjective. I will say that, in my opinion, Air Arms did it right; the power is optimal for small to medium game (adjustable power with high-power setting); the accuracy achieved in my range work promised a solid, 50-yard, small game gun; the proven multi-shot magazine works without a hitch; the gun is compact and light; it is quiet, and I found it fitted me well and offered a good sight alignment with low and medium profile mounts. Whilst it had impressed me on the bench, I was really champing at the bit to see how it would perform in the field.

First chance

It wasn't long before an opportunity presented, and I found myself heading south to hunt jackrabbits, predators, and javalina on ranches

in South Texas and North Mexico. We were filming a segment for our television programme, the American Airgunner, and I was hunting with well-known predator hunter, Don Steele, and cameraman, Clay Pruitt. We had a number of airguns ranging from .22 to .40 calibre to use on different game, but I was really excited to try out my new small-game gun, you guessed it, the Galahad!

I'd flown into Dallas, loaded my gear into a rental car, and driven to Abilene where I met up with Clay at Don's house. We transferred our gear to his hunting vehicle, and drove 300 miles south to his 35,000-acre ranch. This was a working ranch for about 100 years and they still run a couple of hundred head of cattle, but since the 1960s it has been managed for wildlife; mule deer, elk, javalina, blue quail, and a large population of

Below: Ears! I get the shot lined up

DESERT HARE!

Jim Chapman brings us his hunting review of the amazing Air Arms sportpup



"I was really excited to try out my new small-game gun, you guessed it, the Galahad"

"the rabbit bolted, but then made the mistake of briefly stopping to look back at me"





“When done properly, a bullpup is a study of form following function”

Above left: The vegetation is getting thick this time of year, and the colours starting to come out

Above: A javalina moving along a fence line, after foraging near the old ranch house

Main background: Even though I didn't have a sling mounted, the gun was quite easy to move about with

Left (top): Everything in this environment is ready to stab you! I walked away from this hunt with an assortment of spines stuck in me

Left (middle): The hare broke for it and then, as they often do, stopped for another look

Left (bottom): I hike back with a couple of the jacks I'd taken on the morning

predators and small game call this desert-scape home.

Once we arrived at the ranch gate, it was an eight-mile drive down a washboard road to reach the old house that would be our base camp. This place is rough, but it keeps most of the vermin out and some of the warmth in, and we all set up our mini-indoor campsites and sacked out after a long day of travel.

Let's go

Awaking early the next morning, Clay and I hiked away from the bunkhouse and headed down one of the dirt roads as morning broke. Within minutes, I spotted a pair of ears sticking up over a squat cactus. Using a clump of mesquite to cover my approach, I carefully laced my way through the thick underbrush, trying not to get skewed by the various cacti, yucca, and thorny plants. When I stepped out from behind a cactus, the rabbit bolted, but then made the mistake of briefly stopping to look back at me. The rifle was mounted and the shot lined up, and as I pulled the trigger there was a soft 'thwack' and the rabbit rolled over without time to regret the bad decision it had made. In the FAC configuration, the .22 calibre Galahad is generating approximately 30 ft.lbs., and makes a decisive impact on game. I hocked and hung the jack on a fence post, and then worked my way deeper into the brush. I heard some movement and got ready for another target, but instead, a roadrunner came out along a sandy wash, searching for his next meal.

Jackrabbits are actually not a rabbit, but a large desert hare that can grow upwards of 12 lbs. On sheep and cattle ranches, they are considered a pest because of the large quantities of the sparse vegetation they consume, and on managed wildlife lands they go after the corn from feeders. For the most part, jacks are left alone on this property, but we needed to take a few to use as bait for predator hunting.

As I moved in deeper, I saw another rabbit take off behind some scrub, but never saw him come out. Following along, moving very slowly, I stalked parallel to the spot where I thought he was hiding and then swung back in on him. Poking around the side of a small tree, I saw the rabbit sitting and listening. I was able to drop

to a knee, and get a clear shooting lane through the undergrowth and high grasses. The rabbit had turned slightly and gave me a clear shot at the back of his head. I squeezed the trigger, the rabbit was knocked forward, literally doing a face plant, and he was DOA.

Looping back, we re-joined the road and started toward the ranch house. By this time, the sun was up and I thought the rabbits would all be bedded down in scrapes under the cacti and creosotes. Even though I didn't yet have a sling mounted on the gun, which is an accessory all my personal guns wear, the Galahad wasn't too much of a burden to carry. As I walked into one of the dilapidated old corrals, I was surprised to stumble right into a small group of javalina feeding, and wrapped up my morning outing with camera rather than gun!

Handy

I liked the Galahad for moving through the thick scrub brush, the compact dimensions let me get into some tight spaces and still have room to shoot when the time came. When I'd tried the gun previously, the cocking arm was in a convenient position, but took so much force to cycle that it was not practical. However, in the released product they have lightened up the cycling of the action, making it very easy to deploy. It is possible for the shooter to cycle the action without lifting their head off the stock, and get a fast follow-up shot if required.

When done properly, a bullpup is a study of form following function; the trigger assembly, cocking mechanism, and stock need to be thoughtfully designed and executed to provide a balanced shooting platform. When this is accomplished, the gun mounts solidly with the weight pulled into the shooter's centre of gravity; it points naturally, and cycles quickly without requiring the cheek-weld to be broken. Both on the bench and under field conditions, the Galahad exhibits the best qualities of the breed, and if you are looking for a high-end bullpup, the Galahad is one worthy of consideration. It did a great job for me on this and several other hunts during my eight days in the border country, and I am looking forward to many more days in the field with this handy bullpup! ■

AN ALL-ROUND MECHANIC

Part 1 Neil Price looks to see if he can improve this top class classic rifle's performance

I was asked to have a look at an Air Arms TX200HC in .177 calibre. Externally, this rifle was in excellent condition, although it was made in 2012. The owner thought that the action was a little 'twangy' and harsh and that the recoil was lifting the muzzle up and to the right.

I warmed it up with a few shots into my pellet trap which showed me that the owner was not exaggerating the current dynamics of the rifle; it was harsh and had a lot of muzzle movement on recoil. I noticed that the trigger had a lot of first travel and had a very 'graunchy' feel to it with considerable creep. I checked with my trigger pull gauge, and the second pressure was breaking at 2.25 lbs. I then did a ten-shot string through my Skan chrono, using unweighed JSB Exacts.

Too much emphasis is placed on muzzle velocity variation with most people being very unhappy if the MV variation goes into two figures. In reality, a variation of +/- 20 ft/second makes a point of impact difference of around 2.5 to 3 mm difference at 45 yards. That is much too small a difference for me to notice anyway.

1 Well, a 22 feet per second variation is not that bad for one of these rifles, but it is very close to the UK absolute limit of 12 ft. lbs, so let us see if we can improve it a little.

2 Take the action out of the stock by removing the two countersunk hexagon drive screws from the fore-end of the stock, the two hexagon head cap screws from the trigger guard, and then lifting the action clear of the stock.

3 With a 10mm across, flat, open-ended spanner, loosen the pillar nut that secures the trigger block into the back of the action, but do not remove yet.

4 Hold the action upright on a solid workbench and exert downward pressure by gripping the barrel.

Remove the previously loosened pillar nut.

The mainspring pre-load can now be let down by hand and the trigger block removed from the action.

5 Let us tackle the trigger first. With a suitable drift and small hammer, drift out both of the trigger housing retaining pins.

6 When dropping the trigger assembly out of the trigger block, hold the safety button in with your finger. If you don't then the button and spring can leap out and be lost forever.

7 With a pin-punch and hammer, drift out the trigger retaining pin and remove the trigger unit.

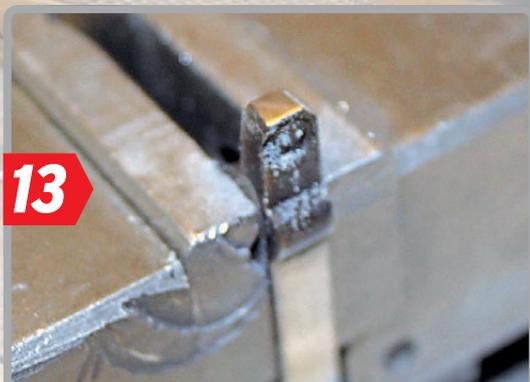
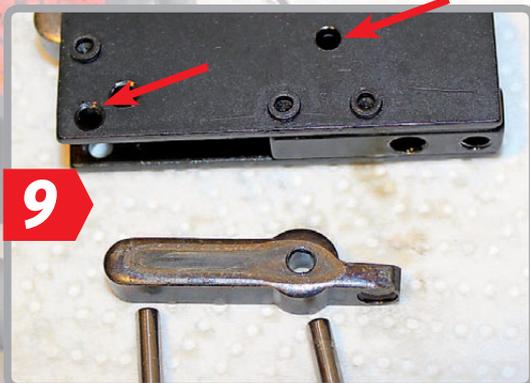
8 With a hexagon drive key, remove the bottom sear tensioning grub-screw and spring.

9 Drift out the two pins and remove the bottom sear from the front of the trigger housing.

10 Drift out the middle sear retaining pin and the compression tube sear hollow retaining pin, and remove both sears, which are joined together with a spring.

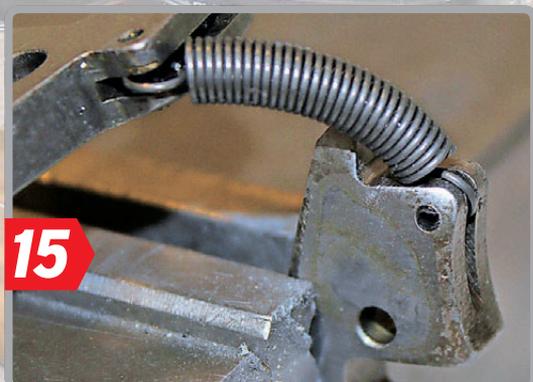
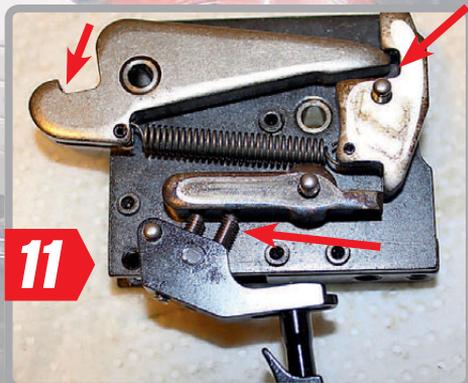
11 This is how all the parts are assembled inside the trigger housing and shows the areas that

Shot No	Velocity (ft/sec)	Muzzle Energy
1	780	11.35
2	795	11.80
3	792	11.70
4	784	11.48
5	800	11.94
6	787	11.57
7	802	12.00
8	800	11.94
9	791	11.66
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need to be smoothed and polished. Remember that we only want to polish the contact areas; we do not want to alter the shape or profile of them.

12 I started with the bottom sear then

13 Bottom sear face 2...

14 Middle sear face...

15 Middle sear face 2...

16 Piston sear face 1...

17 Piston sear face 2...

18 Now all of the contact faces have been polished it is time for reassembly. Before each part is reassembled, I apply a smear of Moly grease on each contact face with the tip of a very small screwdriver.

19 The first thing to go back into the trigger housing is the piston sear/middle sear assembly. The middle sear retaining pin is put in first and then the piston sear is held against its spring tension and the hollow pin fitted.

20 The bottom sear is entered into the trigger housing from the bottom front.

21 The pivot holes for the bottom sear are aligned and the retaining pin fitted.

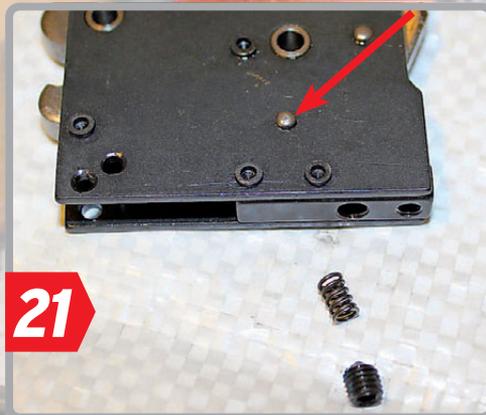
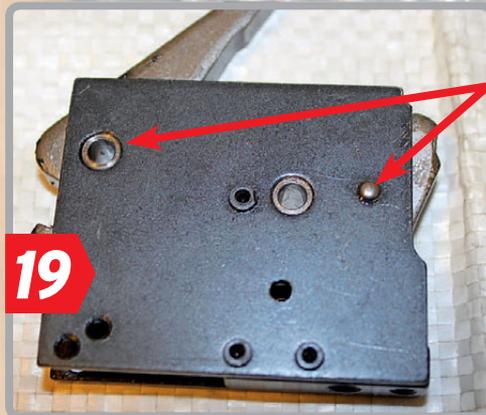
The trigger tension spring and its grub-screw are now fitted. The grub-screw is tightened until the tension can be just felt on the bottom sear.

22 The trigger is now placed into position and the two pins fitted.

23 The trigger is now breaking at 1lb. force and is very smooth with no graunching or creep being felt.

Trigger adjusting, the forward grub-screw where the hex drive key is, controls the amount of sear engagement, and the grub-screw to the rear of that one controls the amount of first travel.

24 Now to strip the rifle action down: Prise one of the 'C' clips from the cocking lever pivot pin out of its locating groove. Do this carefully because they do have a habit of suddenly springing off and travelling at the speed of light into infinity.





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BACK GARDEN PLINKING

Gary Chillingworth brings us some sound advice for shooting at home

As a competition shooter, I spend most of my life thinking about the tournament world, but for every shot I take in a competition, I probably take 50 at home. I admit that I try to instil the virtues of HFT and I blather on about joining a club and getting involved in the shooting community, but I am very aware that the vast majority of shooters are not interested in competition, collecting or even hunting; the vast majority of shooters in the UK are garden plinkers.

On one of my recent trips to the Airgun Centre in Rayleigh, I spoke to the owner, Peter Zamit, and asked him which was the most popular

rifle that he sold. I expected him to say something like the S400 or TX200 from Air Arms, or the HW100 from Weihrauch, but apparently, the most popular guns are rifles from the cheaper end of the market. Those like the Gamo and the Crossmans fly off the shelves and it's these rifles that get people into shooting. It's true that they will rarely see an HFT course, or be used to shoot a rabbit, but what they will do is provide hours of fun for the shooter, and this will often be in a back garden.

Backyard plinking is the mainstay of shooters in the UK and if it's done properly and safely, it can provide hours of fun for everyone. However,

Below: Practice is essential to enable you to dial in the rifle and build muscle memory

Inset: The paddle is half way back and this could cause the pellet to ricochet upwards

before we delve into the world of home targets and ways to shoot without upsetting the neighbours, I think it would be a good idea to look at the law regarding shooting at home. I know I have done this before, but as we are all responsible shooters, it's worth reminding ourselves of the law because it changes so often.

The right side of the law

It's perfectly legal to shoot in your back garden as long as you abide by certain restrictions. The first, and probably the most important of these, is that whenever you shoot, your pellet must not leave your boundary. If it does, you could not

"Rifles like the Gamo and the Crossmans fly off the shelves and it's these rifles that get people into shooting"



only hurt someone, but you could also be liable to prosecution and possible prison time. It is against the law in England and Wales to fire an air rifle or pistol within 50 feet of the centre of a highway, if this could result in someone being injured, interrupted or endangered.

It is also important to think about who owns your property. If where you live belongs to you, or is mortgaged, then there should be no problem, but if you live in a council house, housing association property, or rented accommodation, you will need to get permission from the owner before shooting in a garden. I have heard of people who have been evicted from council properties for shooting in a garden because most councils and housing associations don't allow it.

Basically, wherever you shoot, you need permission. When I was a boy, I could take my gun down to the river and shoot tin cans, but if I tried that today, I could be charged with armed trespass and possibly spend five years in prison. I hate to say it, but gone are the days when you could nip off and bag a few rabbits on the local common. These days, we have to protect ourselves and make sure we are 100% legal at all times. Before shooting in a garden, check out the law; it's available online and your local police will always be happy to help. The laws change all the time, so please don't take what you read here as gospel, and check it out for yourself. Also, check that your home insurance covers you to shoot

in the garden. If it does not, then get a shooting policy from BASA, which costs about £20 a year and will cover you for public liability in case the worst happens and there's an accident.

When you decide to shoot in the garden you need to think about three main things; the first is the target and backstop, the second is the rifle's noise and how it's going to affect the neighbours and finally, how you are going to be viewed by the people who overlook your garden.

A few months ago, I showed you a homemade target that I use; it was essentially a large paint bucket filled with mud. This home target provides not only a nice wide platform for attaching paper, but the mud also provides a built-in backstop. Before you choose a target to shoot at, though, one of the first things you have to ask yourself is how good you are as a shooter. If you know that you can put 10 shots into a group the size of a penny at 25 yards, then you do not really need to worry about having a large target. However, if you are just starting out and you are not sure how good you are, then a target like a pellet trap is perfect for you.

One of the best pellet traps on the market is made by Flopover, and I will express an interest here, because the owner of Flopover is a friend of mine. Richard Woods is one of the finest HFT shooters in the country, and last year he decided to venture out and start making the targets, and practice targets, that the shooting community were clamouring for, and

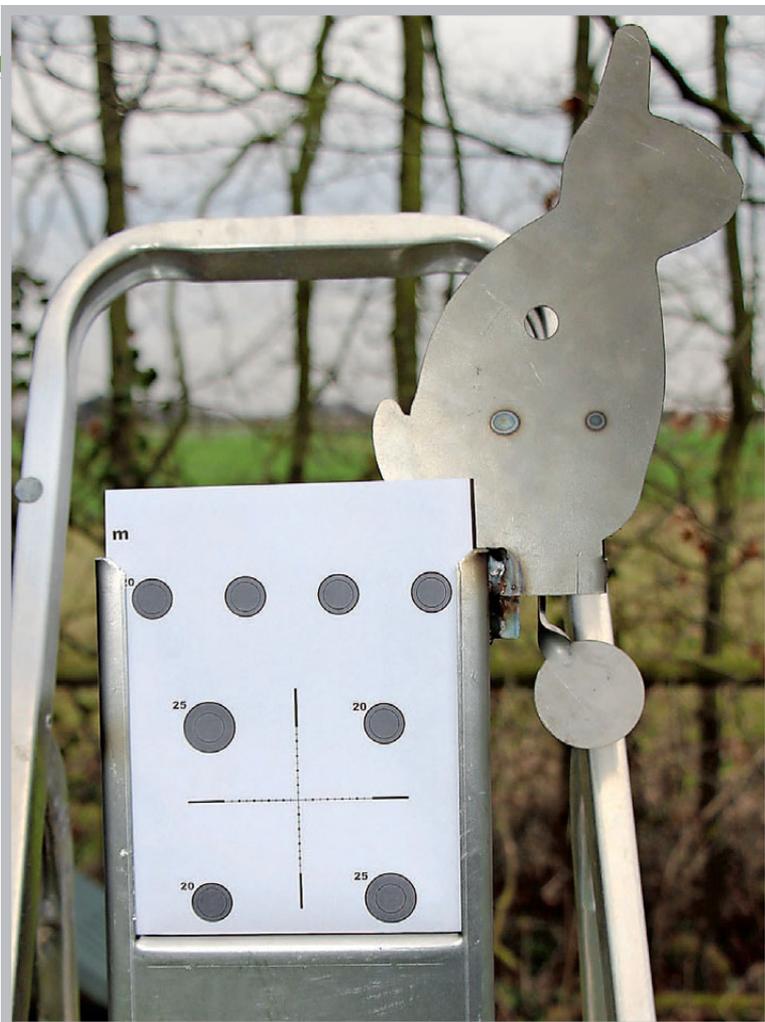


Above: The knock up, knock down rat is a popular garden target

Below: Using a shooting rest helps with control and the Ratcatcher is a perfect garden plinker

the pellet catcher - or FlopBox to give it its full name - is a perfect target for the garden plinker. The basic unit stands 12" tall and 7" wide and will hold a normal 6½" Bisley-style target, although I'm a cheapskate, and prefer to print my own targets, so the ones I use are a series of dots, which I then try to obliterate, and I have found that shooting to this level





Left: The Flopbox retains the pellet and is a perfect garden target and backstop

“a sound moderator will enable a shooter to plink all day and not draw attention to what they are doing”

of accuracy has helped me to improve tremendously. The luxury box comes with a ‘knock-up, knock-down’ target attached and this has a 15mm kill zone, perfect for a bit of extra target practice.

Keep quiet

The one issue with a metal target is

the tink, tink, tink of lead on steel, but shooters often use a piece of carpet on the inside of the box and this is very effective at deadening the sound, but if sound is not an issue, then there is a whole variety of targets on the market, such as the traditional knock-over ones.

These targets fall over when the kill

Below: A good selection of targets can be a huge advantage



zone is hit and are then reset with a string; they come in all shapes and sizes, from the traditional knock-over rabbits and rats, to gunslingers and unicorns from companies like www.knock-back-targets.com, and not to be left out, www.flopover.co.uk has everything from Chieftain tanks to roaring dragons).

If you don't want to clutter your garden with reset strings, then a knock-up, knock-down target is probably the way to go. These targets have the same size kill zones (from 15 to 40mm), but instead of falling over when you hit the paddle behind the kill, the paddle will fall backwards leaving a hole that shows you that you killed the target. You then shoot a 50mm paddle that hangs below the target to reset it. Two words of warning though: Number one, make sure the mechanism is working before you shoot it. If the target is left outdoors and not oiled, the main target paddle can stick and if it sticks halfway back, this can cause a ricochet. Number two, if there is any chance that you could miss the reset paddle, make sure that there is a good backstop behind the target. In fact, no matter what you shoot, always make sure there is a good backstop!

For garden plinking, I would always recommend a sound moderator because this will enable a shooter to plink all day and not draw attention to what they are doing. As I said earlier on, our sport is legal, but if you are in a built-up area with neighbours, there is no point in drawing attention to the fact that you have rifles or pistols in the house, and hearing a constant tink, tink, tink could become a bit annoying.

Garden plinking is a huge amount of fun. It teaches you great gun control and awareness of what's around you, and as long as we do it safely and with a bit of discretion, then with luck the authorities will continue to allow us to enjoy our hobby at home. I realise that for many of you who have been shooting in your gardens for years, this article is teaching you how to suck eggs, but for a new generation of shooters, it is important to learn about what we can and can't do, and for those, I hope this piece has helped. If you want to drop me a line, please contact me at garychillingworth36@gmail.com. ■



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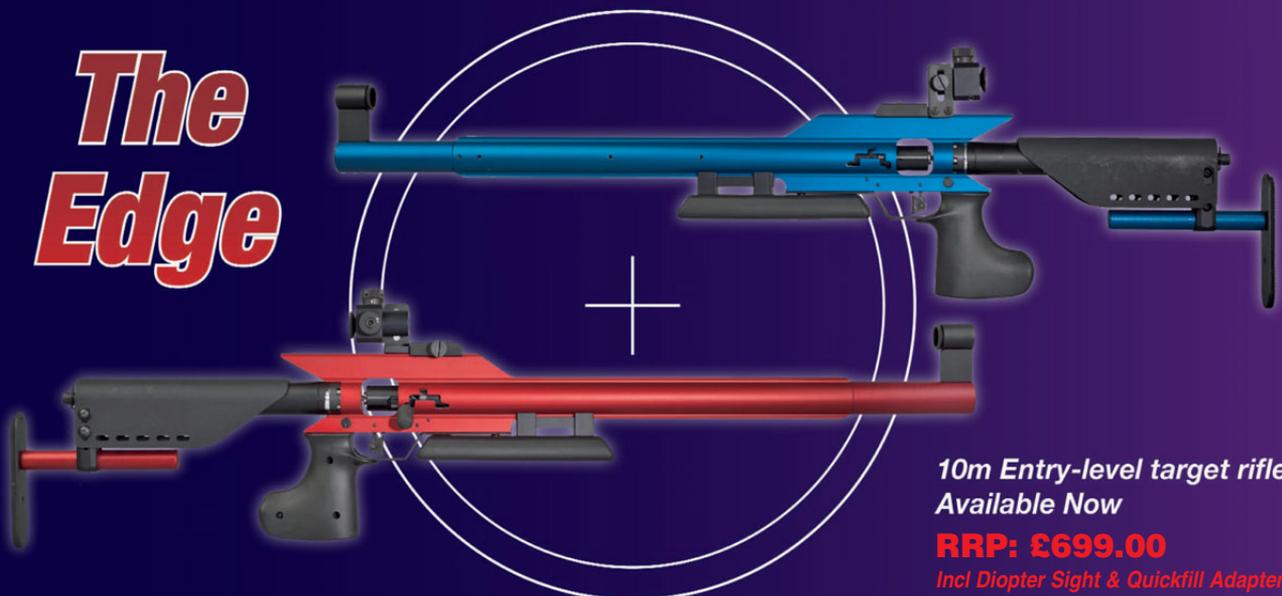
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GOING BACKWARDS TO BISLEY

Keith Warburton asks what causes a competitor's form to vary so much over time

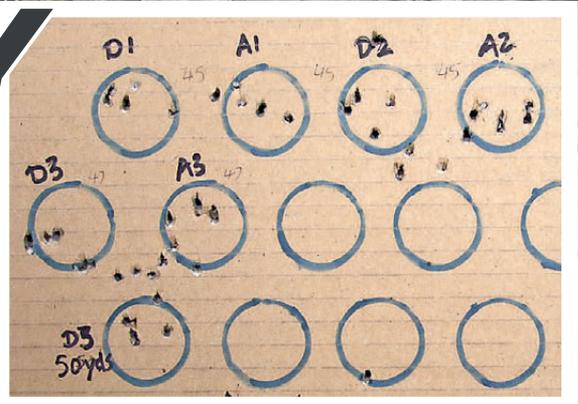
I'm writing this in March, a week before the final shoot at Bisley, of the Southern Hunters series of Hunter Field Target (HFT) competitions and frankly, as far as my shooting is concerned, I feel as if I've been going backwards over the last few months. With a bit of luck I'll be able to stretch the Air Gunner copy deadline so that I can end this piece with my results on the day, but I'm not confident I'll get anywhere near my success of last year. When I say 'success', last year

partner. That was the first time I'd had a DNF - Did Not Finish - against my name and I was miserable. It's true that I've had a few successes over the last year, but they've mostly been with my TX200 springer, but even my springer shooting started to drop off after September. Do you think its maybe fate getting back at me for crowing too loudly? The problem is, I'm really struggling to pinpoint any changes that might account for my poor showing.

"I'm really struggling to pinpoint any changes that might account for my poor showing"

I was beaten in a shoot-off by three other competitors out of a field of over 100, and my score of 57 equalled the best result I've ever had in an HFT competition, but since then I seem to have lost whatever form I had. My lowest point came in December when I walked off a course part way through - my score was abysmal and I didn't want my depression to infect my shooting

Midfield
A couple of years ago, I'd concluded that my rightful place was somewhere in the middle of the field, and then I started to improve fairly steadily. So, as my first attempt at understanding why I haven't been doing so well, it might be a good idea to think back to what had changed to enable the improvement in the first place.



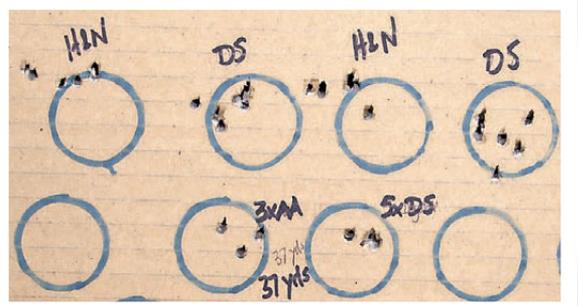
Above: Keith tested various pellets for grouping out as far as 50 yards

Main: The Air Arms HFT500 brought immediate results with Keith's scores

The first obvious thing is that in December 2014 I got the Air Arms HFT 500, and by March 2015 I achieved a PB of 57/60 in a small event at Kingsley HFT. A couple of weeks later, I equalled that score at the much bigger competition at Bisley. There is no doubt that the HFT 500 really is a superb rifle, and in the last 12 months it has become the rifle of choice for an impressive proportion of the shooters on the HFT circuit.

Those two personal best scores coincided with me putting a Nikko

Below: Pellet testing at maximum range is vital to improvement





Stirling Gold Crown Airking scope on the rifle. Although the cheapest scope in my modest collection, it really suited my eyes to the extent that being so pleased with the first, I bought myself a second one, so I could have the same scope on my springer and PCP rifles. Unfortunately, neither of the scopes is still reliable; one the adjustments for the reticle failed completely and the other seems to be going the same way. I'd zero it, shoot well with it, and then when I came back to it a day or two later, I'd find that the zero had shifted.

My improvement last year can't be all down to the HFT 500. My very first win in a competition had occurred some months previously when I was shooting my .22 Phoenix rifle, and I was using the Airking on that as well. I'd been so pleased that I'd bought myself a .177 Phoenix to shoot in the 'open' class; I put the Airking scope on it and scored

a new PB the first time I shot it.

A Welsh day trip

My next really notable score was in the first round of the UKAHT national series at Quarry Hunters. I thought I'd give my Daystate Mk3 an outing because it had never been to Wales, and although a score of 52 was nowhere near my PB, it was still good; on a windy day I finished 13th in a field of 120-plus competitors with 91.23%.

My next good result was the Air Arms Memorial shoot where I shot my TX200 springer and came first in the recoiling class, although it was a small field of just eight other springer shooters, and just as I had with the Quarry shoot I was using the Airking scope again.

People do say that getting a scope that suits you is often more critical than having the 'right' rifle.

Left: Would a trigger shoe help?

Right: Keith isn't short of optic options

Unfortunately, the Airking is no longer manufactured, but obviously I need to find a good replacement for it. I have been using the Nikko Stirling Panamax scope recently. It should be easier to use than its predecessor, because it has half mil-dot divisions rather than just the full mil-dot, and it has a slightly thicker reticle which should suit my poor eyesight, but it doesn't seem to have quite the same depth of field, which was such a great feature of the Airking.

There are a couple of other things that could have impacted my shooting. Firstly, for a variety of reasons I haven't been practising so much over the last few months. Perhaps more importantly, I've been swapping between rifles and optics. I've really enjoyed shooting my springer, but spring-driven rifles shoot differently to PCPs. Yes, a really light hold is necessary to achieve a consistent result, but springer pellets seem to take less wind. It's a claim made by better shooters than me and as time has gone on I find I have to agree. The difference might be just a few millimetres at 45 yards, but it is there. So if you are swapping between rifles

Below: Which rifle will help Keith shoot best?

"the HFT 500 really is a superb rifle, and in the last 12 months it has become the rifle of choice for an impressive proportion of the shooters"





“By now, I was simultaneously testing out to 50 yards and clutching at straws”

the difference in ballistic performance, added to the overall technique, can really mess with your head.

There's another possible reason for my change in form. It is commonly accepted that, all other things being equal, if grouping is fine at 35 yards, but really opens up at 45, then it could be down to pellets. I've been using the same batch of Air Arms Field pellets since September, but now the barrel has been polished by a few thousand of them, could it have microscopically different characteristics? Yes, I know its hard steel and the pellets are soft lead, but ...

I've also noticed that I've been getting occasional flyers, landing 10mm or more to the left-hand side of the main group. That's why I've started pulling through the barrel again, rather than simply shooting through with cleaning felts. I'm also going to try some different pellets, if only on the basis that it's not a bad thing to review one's choices from time to time, but there again, if my hold isn't consistent it may be that sometimes I'm pushing (or pulling) the rifle off aim as I

squeeze the trigger, so should I consider fitting a blade trigger rather than the Air Arms standard button trigger? And perhaps the Sure



Above: The old favourite Daystate can still cut it

Right: Will Keith be getting any more of these?

Below: All the gear and no idea

Shot stock I fitted to the action is not helping my performance as I hoped it would.

So, here's what's been happening over the last couple of weekends. On Saturday 12th I shot at Springfield club and got a 53. It was virtually a windless day and there were plenty of higher scores, but my result was 92.98% of the winning score, and it's the best percentage I've had since November!

The following day at Cambridge HFT there was a bit more wind, but I still scored 53, and although my percentage result wasn't as good, I was now in the top quarter of the much larger field. Further improvement!

Meanwhile, I tested pellets and after thoroughly cleaning the barrel, I decided that the Daystate Sovereign pellets were maybe grouping a little bit better than the Air Arms at long distance. By now, I was simultaneously testing out to 50 yards and clutching at straws.

At the Lea Valley competition on the 20th March my score of 50 on a day with slight wind put me in 15th place, in a field of 42 (top score 57).

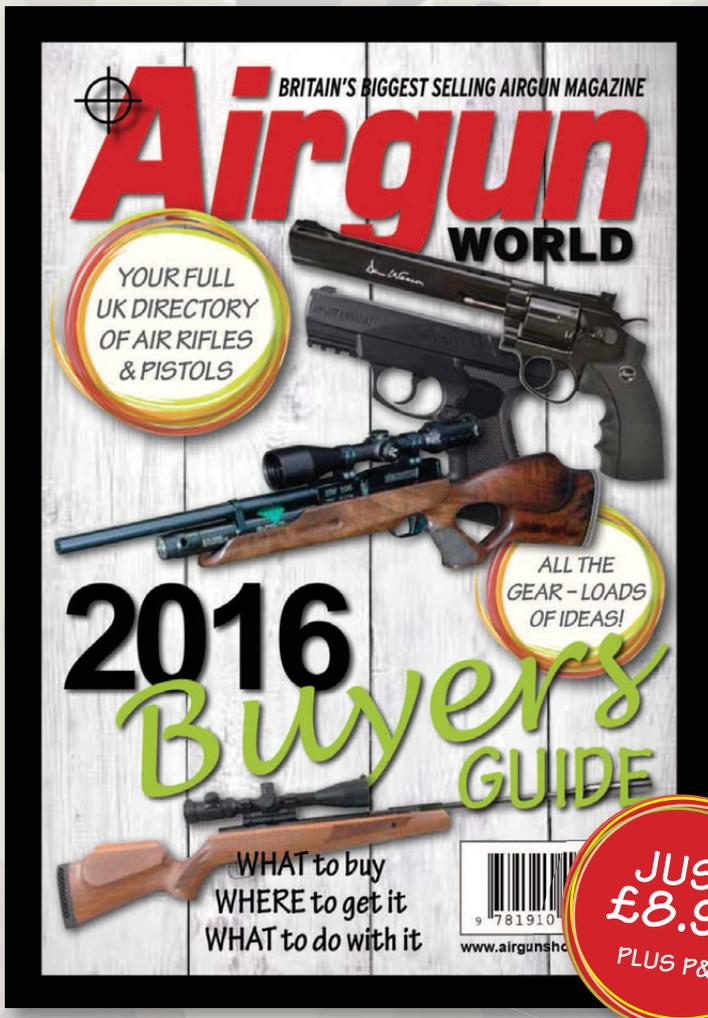
The following day at Bisley, in similar weather, I scored 42, which put me 79th out of 84 shooters. The World Championships are just a week away. HELP! ■

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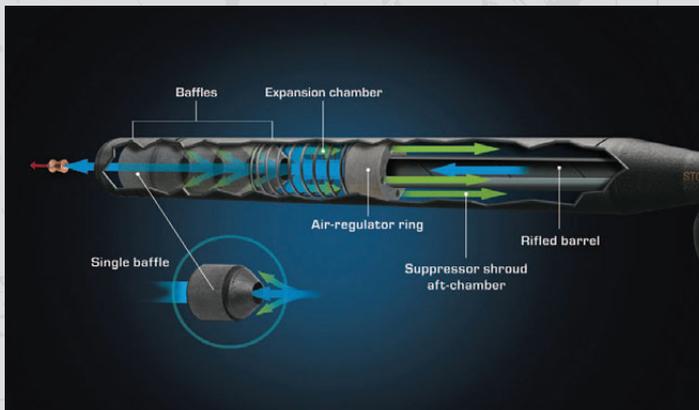
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SQUIRREL JAMBALAYA

Jane Price cooks a Marmite quarry, the grey squirrel

Let's be honest about squirrel. We all know that the grey ones have caused the decline of the native red squirrel in much of England and this makes them unpopular with many people who would like to see the red ones in their gardens again, but, does that mean I want to eat the grey ones? Maybe. When squirrels have been culled, do I want the meat to go to waste? No. If I go to a restaurant and squirrel is on the menu would I eat it? Yes, possibly.

Above: The editor took his and left for the workshop

Below: The ingredients list isn't too long

The meat is tasty, but there's not much to a squirrel and there is some effort required to bring it to the table. For this meal, I assisted the editor in the skinning of two squirrels – something I have never done before. I wouldn't say I'm squeamish, but I'm not a natural at this type of thing. Phill normally takes care of all the 'gubbins' and removes the 'coat' and 'boots' – see, even describing these processes I feel the need to use euphemisms! All Phill asked me to do was to hold on to the legs so that he could cut and pull the skin off, as it's not easy to do that with only two hands. For the amount of meat you get it's quite a lot of effort, but at least I could reward him with a meal made from meat he had hunted and gathered.

When cooking squirrel (and the same applies to rabbit), I have found that the best way to do this is to poach the whole thing first for half an hour, making it easier to remove the meat from the bone. The bones are tiny so you have to be careful to remove them all, and don't be tempted to serve the meat on the

INGREDIENTS

2 grey squirrels, ready to cook

Oil for frying

2 sticks celery, cut into thin slices

1 onion, chopped

100g long-grain rice

Pint of chicken stock

1 green pepper, cut into chunks

4 vine tomatoes

½ tsp dried thyme

½ tsp dried oregano

½ tsp paprika

¼ tsp cayenne pepper

2 cloves garlic, crushed

2 spring onions

Salt and pepper

bone because this would make for a very frustrating meal.

This month I have made a jambalaya, which is a dish consisting of meat, sausage and vegetables, mixed with rice. After browning and sautéing the meat and vegetables, rice, seasonings, and broth are added and the entire dish is cooked together until the rice is done. ■





Below: *Frying the squirrel in the chorizo juice adds flavour*



Above: *Poaching the squirrel is always a good start*



Above: *Leave to cool so that you can take the meat from the bones*



Left: *Peeling the tomatoes means no skins in the dish to spoil it*

METHOD

- 1) Poach the squirrels in water for 30 minutes, then remove from the water and put aside for 10 minutes to cool enough to remove the meat from the bone.
- 2) Fry the sliced chorizo for 5 minutes, until browned on both sides.
- 3) Add the cooked squirrel meat and stir with the chorizo for 5 minutes.
- 4) Remove the meat from the pan.
- 5) Fry the chopped onion, green pepper and celery in the same pan, for 10 minutes.
- 6) Add the skinned and quartered tomatoes, the herbs and spices, and cook for 5 minutes.
- 7) Add the cooked meat to the pan and stir.
- 8) Add the rice and stir in to mix well, and then add the stock and simmer for 10 minutes or until the rice is cooked.
- 9) Remove the bay leaves and serve. Sprinkle with sliced spring onions.

Serves 2



Below: *Simmering in stock lets the flavours meld*

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HIGH POWER PERFORMANCE

The editor walks us through what extra power really means

As regular readers know, I often hunt with a high-power airgun that I have permission for on my firearms certificate (FAC). I'm often asked question about the advantages it brings, most often just how far away I'm able to kill with it, and most people are seriously disappointed by my response. With a 12 ft.lbs. .177 pre-charged pneumatic (PCP) I'll hunt out to 35 yards when the weather conditions allow, but much closer if it's breezy. My high-power rifle sends a 15.9grain Air Arms Field pellet downrange at 900 fps, some 140 fps faster than the .177. The .22 has a higher ballistic coefficient which increases this advantage, because it retains its velocity better than the .177. With it, I hunt out to 50 yards, or perhaps 55 in totally perfect conditions.

Is a 15-yard advantage worth the effort needed to get your FAC, bolt a steel cabinet to your wall and buy a new gun? Well, for me, it is, because

Above: The advantage the high-power rifle offers me in the field is worth the extra effort needed to get one

the extended range is only one part of why I choose to use this rifle. Whichever airgun you're using, you must remember one important fact; only accurately placed shots achieve clean kills. I've seen rabbits hit by a .22 rimfire (90 ft.lbs.) and run away because the shot placement was poor. Please don't think that a few more foot pounds of energy will make up for poor marksmanship.

your personal skills. If you don't like shooting paper targets, get a packet of Extra Strong Mints to shoot at. They're easy to see and explode when hit properly. When you hit them every time, you'll know that's the distance at which you're safe to hunt. If you start missing, cut the distance until you can.

Where the high-power gun really makes a difference to me is in how

"... the extended range is only one part of why I choose to use this rifle"

Maximum distance

My rule on how to judge your maximum hunting range is that you must be able to group all your shots in an area that a one-pound coin could cover. Clearly, you'll need an accurate rifle/scope/pellet combination to begin, followed by lots of regular practice to hone

much more accurate I am with it. It shoots flatter and is less affected by the wind. Let's look at some numbers: My 12 ft.lbs. .177 Air Arms S410 launches the Field pellet at 770 fps and I use a zero distance of 37 yards. Set this way, the pellet is within 1/2" above or below the line of sight from 10 to 41 yards. In other words,



Left: Having a high power rifle means serious security in your home

Below: Even the .22 rimfire at 90 ft.lbs. needs accurate shot placement



Below: As long as you can keep all your shots under a £1 coin that's a safe distance to hunt

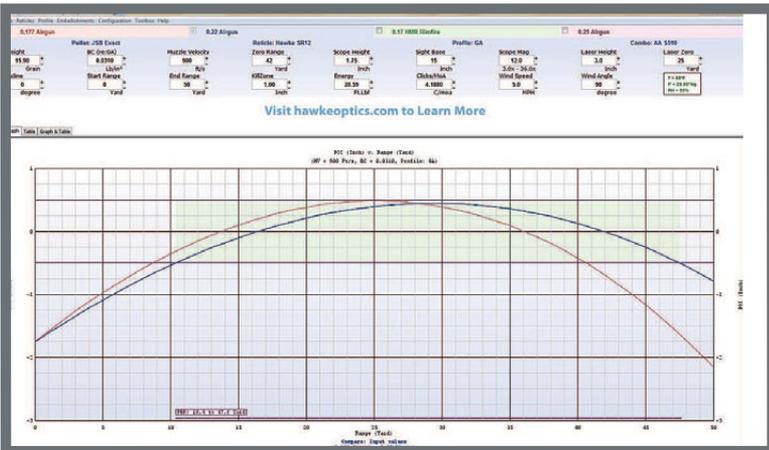
Below left: The Air Arms Field .22 is still accurate at 900fps



ballistic software. Please don't complain that software isn't perfect: nothing is, but it's close enough to what I've experienced in the real world to be useful. When a .177 is fired in a 90 degree, 5mph cross wind, it will be blown some 3" off course at 40 yards, whilst the high-power gun will have moved just over 2". In our sport, 1" really is a big difference. The very first thing I noticed when buying a high-power rifle was that my misses reduced immediately.

Long range

I began to experiment at shooting longer ranges, and although I did much better than with a 12 ft.lbs. gun, the real-world problem of simply shooting straight quickly corrected my thinking. When you're out for a walk one day, place a one-pound coin on the ground, then walk away 75 yards and look back. Small isn't it? Even looking through a high-quality rifle scope, it's still a pretty small target. Do you remember our 5mph breeze? It will blow my high-power pellet off course 7½" which I'd need to allow for. The pellet will have dropped some 6" below the sight line as well.



Left: The blue line represents the high power rifle. Look how much flatter it shoots

Above: I asked for my Huntsman to be set for 900fps

People have told me that with a laser rangefinder and a mil-dot reticle they can correct for the drop, and I know that's true, but what about the wind? It might be 5mph or 6 or 7, or stop completely, and one thing is for sure - it's never consistent. For me, there's just too much guesswork involved, which is why I keep my distances short. Clean kills mean everything to me and even one lost animal or bird weighs on my conscience. Out to 50 yards, me and my Huntsman Regal XL FAC are a good solid bet for a clean kill each and every time on any airgun quarry, and that's just the way I like it. ■

"...what about the wind? It might be 5mph or 6 or 7, or stop completely"

if I aimed at the centre of the mint anywhere within that range, I'd hit it. The high-power gun can do the same from 10.5 to 47.5 yards. This means that if I make a range estimation error and believe that a squirrel was at 40

yards when it was, in fact, at 45, I'll still get a clean kill. Ranging errors are extremely common when hunting, and I should know, I've made lots of them. Next, let's look at how the wind affects our pellets, using Chairgun

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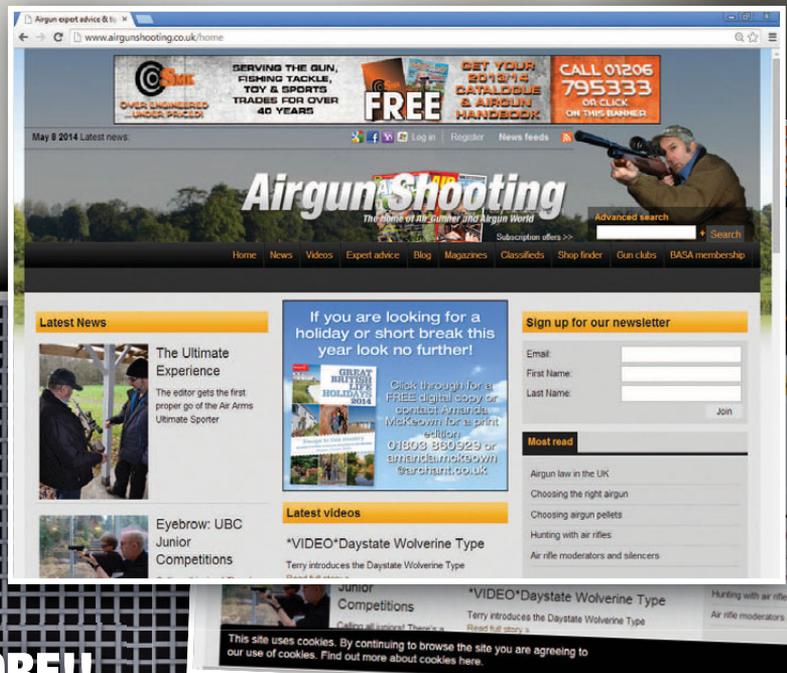
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WOOLLY WONDER

The editor asks if one of our oldest fabrics is the future

Having spent huge amounts of my life outdoors; running, mountain biking, climbing and, of course, shooting, I've been cold and wet more times than I'd like to remember. Because of this, I've had a keen interest in all kinds of high-tech outdoor clothing for some

snow-boarder's lumberjack shirt until you realise it's reversible. The green polyester side is smooth, and designed to slide freely against your jacket offering maximum freedom of movement. Check side out, it looks just like a work shirt to be worn when you're not hunting.

The clever technology used also means that it's quite thin beside a comparably warm fleece"

30 years. In recent times, the biggest news has also been the oldest. Wool has made a comeback and is now the king of the hill. Man-made fibres still rule the roost for waterproofing, but insulation and base layers belong to wool, most notably Merino wool. It's warm, wicking, and comfortable, doesn't itch, and won't get all stinky like polypropylene underwear.

I've been using Icebreaker brand clothing for years, so I know just how good it is, and I was recently contacted by their head office, who offered me a Helix shirt for review. At first pass it looks like a baggy

Warm yet thin

Between the two outer layers you'll find MerinoLOFT insulation that makes this a seriously warm layer. The clever technology used also means that it's quite thin beside a comparably warm fleece, meaning less bulk, and more freedom of movement.

The real sign of success of any clothing is when you simply don't notice it. Wearing it throughout the winter I was generally warm enough, without too much overheating and I seldom felt too sweaty, because wool breathes very well indeed. I tried wearing it just as a jacket on milder



Above: Worn as a mid-layer under a coat it was warm and very breathable

Left: Worn as a casual shirt it kept me warm enough on autumn and spring days

days and it did a good job of keeping me warm whilst travelling light.

The best news is that because we're getting close to the end of winter, this shirt is currently down from £169 to £96, making it a bit of a bargain. I've got Icebreaker clothing that's 10 years old and has been washed hundreds of times but still looks like new, so I consider their products an investment. ■

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SOMETHING FOR NEARLY NOTHING

Steve Prime buys a rifle for £15 so it must be junk, right?

In this day and age you get very little for next to nothing, in fact you usually have to hunt high and low for a bargain. Occasionally, we receive a 'hand me down' or may inherit an heirloom once treasured by a member of the family no longer with us. In this circumstance it is our duty to care for our newly-found treasure in the manner that the owner did, so that in some way their memory carries on. I have heard of many cases where an avid collector of airguns and memorabilia has since departed this

tell as many of my close family and friends the value and rarity of my collection - in the hope that someone else will take as much great pleasure in it as I had done.

Pretty pictures

We can spend many an hour looking at glossy magazines packed with lovely photographs of the latest airguns available, reading up on the tech spec and dreaming of the day when we will own one of these beauties. The youngsters of today are

Above: I still think it looks the part

That all said, I do love a bargain and for those who cannot afford a new gun, there are numerous second-hand models on sale through dealers and private sellers. Is it possible to buy a used air rifle for less than 20 quid, that is ready to fire and fully working? If you had asked me that a week ago I would have pulled a funny face and shrugged my shoulders in a bemused style. Ask the same question again, but with a name of quality before the words air rifle - for example, Diana - and I would have just answered 'no, not without something being radically wrong' or with the words 'for spares or repair' somewhere in the sentence or text.

I was invited to look at a fellow collector's collection a few weeks ago and what a collection it was! Not just airguns, but everything to do with shooting, too - including some beautifully decorated, copper powder cases which left me with my mouth and eyes wide open; pellet tins of a bygone era, and some of the most beautiful air rifles from the turn of the century to the present day. This man had a passion for his shooting

"The rifle fires beautifully, is accurate and definitely not lacking in power"

life and his prized collection has been handed over to the authorities to be destroyed. The family member hadn't realised the value and had no interest in the aforementioned collection.

My first thought is 'what a waste', and my second is that while I am well enough to breathe on this earth, to

in a much better position to get their dream sooner with the ever-popular credit facilities on offer. Each to their own, though; I prefer to wait and save until I can afford my dream airgun, knowing that I will respect it more for its worth, having toiled and grafted to get it.



“... there are numerous second-hand models on sale through dealers and private sales”

and his collection, but had decided that a couple of guns had to go. The reason for my invitation was to bid on an old Webley MK1 pistol to add to my ever-increasing collection, and for my friend to purchase an Original Model 50 rifle for vermin control. The deals were done and on leaving, he added, “Do you want that piece of junk in the corner?” Promptly laying his hands on a battered looking old rifle, scoped (although the scope had been put on the rifle the wrong way round!) and demonstrating it still fired, he finished the conversation with, “yours for 15 quid.”



car on the drive for a couple of days because I had totally forgotten about it - only discovering it when I loaded up ready for one of our Monday night club shoots. It was time to take a look at what I had bought for £15.

Cash sale

It is always the case that when a bargain comes along, you never have enough cash in your wallet to close the deal, but a good mate shows his colours when he digs deep and pays the £15 for you, so closing the deal and leaving everyone happy.

The rifle remained in the boot of my

Barely visible were the words Diana G44 .22, just under a period BSA scope mounted on a scope rail, which to say the least had been modified, truth be told - butchered. The wooden stock was in good condition with no major dinks or cracks and the letter ‘S’ still clearly visible denoting the safety switch and safe position. The metalwork was chipped and had seen better days, but the scope was in fair condition and was probably worth the money I had paid on its own. The rifle fires beautifully, is accurate and definitely not lacking in power. A perfect tool for close-range vermin control or hunting and all for £15 - just going to show there are bargains out there and you do not need to spend a fortune to have a bit of fun.

On the range at 15 yards with the



Top left: That's the way scopes used to be

Above left: The funny little caps just press on

Top: How about that for a bodged repair?

Above: On the range it performed much better than I'd hoped

Inset: Not a bad group at 15 yards

scope the correct way round, quality pellets (Daystate Sovereigns), and a little time - my bargain did not let me down; the groups getting better and better as the session went on. The proof of the pudding is always in the eating and this was a little gem of a find, not aesthetically pleasing, but a pleasure to shoot. ■

SWAP SHOP

REMEMBER you DO NOT have to be a registered firearms dealer (RFD) to sell your airgun as part of a private transaction, and this transaction DOES NOT have to be 'face to face' – although you must ensure that the buyer is over 18 years of age.

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DIANA MOD 27 1963 near mint £95, original MOD 35 VGC £100, Haenel MOD 11 1927 VGC £120, BSA Cadet, good condition £70, early Meteor fluted stock no rear sight £60. Tel:01777708504 (Notts).

BSA ULTRA SE .177 walnut stock multi-shot, Nikko Sterling scope and silencer 3-9x40, charge fitting, less than 250 pellets fired, slip not BSA. Tel: 07904680310 (Peterborough).

AIR ARMS .22 TX200 Hunter Carbine, walnut stock, Hawke 16x50 AO IR scope fitted, Beretta sling, Air Arms Diablo pellets, targets, as new cost over £600, selling for £350. Buyer collects. Tel:07926966999 (Edinburgh).

UNDERLEVER air rifles wanted. Pre – 1960 especially BSA, Haenel, Original, BSF, Falke, Webley + any other spring operated items such as Britannia,

Greener, Webley Mark II Service etc. Also Air Pistols and items for use as spares or for restoration. Tel: 01689 852862 (Kent).

HATSAN BREAKER 900 X rifle .177. Almost new, little use, wooden stock, fitted mounts. Reason for selling – down sizing collection, buyer collects hence just £80. Tel: 07890781668 (Leicester).

ORIGINAL 50E underlever air rifle wanted, circa 1950 with small dovetailed rear sight and ramp double dovetailed hooded front sight. Also wanted underlevers by BSA, Webley, Haenal, Falke, Original, BSF etc, plus Britannia's Webley MK11 service, Greener and any other spring operated guns pre 1960. Tel: 01689 852862 (Kent).

THEOBEN EVOLUTION .22 air rifle, double screw scope mounts but no scope. VGC with little use £285 cash buyer collects. Tel: 07742075069 (Newark).

AIR ARMS JACKEL Firepower, good condition but missing open sights £175. Walther LP53 pistol brown grips model £150. Buyer collects. Tel: 01843 603533 (Broadstairs).

BUSHNELL BANNER Dust to Dawn sope 3-9x50 Mil Dot IR, Nikko Stirling 3-9x40 Mil Dot. Various

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AIR ARMS PRO Sport .22 in new condition fitted with Hawke scope £350. Webley Rebel .22 pneumatic multi pump rifle, as new still boxed £60 or both for £400. Tel:01564 826594 (Birmingham).

HW98 AS new.177 £280. Stalker Tiger Ten left hand, beautiful stock .22, very good condition, plus spare magazines £495. Hawke 4-12x50 AO IR scope as new £80. Prices include p+p. Tel:01983 566634 (I of W).

BSA HORNET PCP 10 shot, 3-9x50 scope with charging hose and 12 ltr gas bottle., plus 3 springers all with scopes and gun bags. POA. Tel: 07913303929.

TWO ORIGINAL 75 rifles both in excellent condition and amazingly accurate/consistent. £250 + £180, includes costs and pellets. Tel:075538720290 (Herts).

WEBLEY VISCOUNT .22 sidelever rifle. Reasonable condition, works well. No sights but optional Nikko Sterling 4x40 scope available, £80 ono. BSA Mercury .22 for spares or repair. Reasonable condition, no rear sight £20 ono. Tel: 0788 1637351 (N.Wales).

ORIGINAL .177 single shot target pistol, mint condition with highly polished moulded wooden grip, perfect fit to hand (adjustable), made in west Germany Mod.6 No 229Z8, £350 ono.Tel. 01268 556403 (Basildon).

WEBLEY MARK II service air rifle .22 £250 or sell parts. Air Arms S410 .22 carbine £400. Co2 BB Sport 306 new £70. BSA Cadet Major £130. Earlier Cadet Model .177 £60. Tel: 0749 7247291.

20FT LBS .177 Weihrauch under lever air rifle HW 97K with 3-9x50 AO scope in excellent condition. Buyer must have FAC certificate and buyer collects, also 1000 pellets and bag, £300 no offers £0792 6567845 (Llandudno).

REMINGTON EXPRESS .22 full power £70, SMKD 9-9X50 £40, Silencer £15, Laser Sight £20, Bi-Pod £20, Remington gunbag £15, sell lot £150. Extra's Nikko Stirling 3-9x40 £50, BB handgun Co2 4.5 metal slide and Remington capsules £30. Tel: 07542 738640 (Merthyr Tydfil).

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The editor reserves the right to edit adverts as may be required. Swap Shop is a service offered to readers who wish to undertake private transactions between themselves. There is no need for such transactions to be made face to face (unless an airgun is FAC-rated), but *Air Gunner* requests that all due caution is exercised when buying or selling an airgun. You must adhere to the current airgun laws. You can't buy an airgun if you are under 18 years old. The Swap Shop is not offered to those who sell airguns as part of a business.

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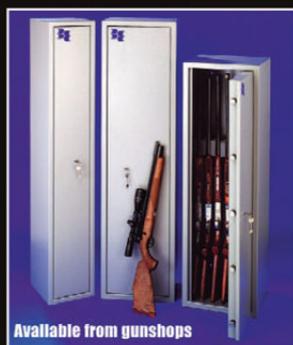
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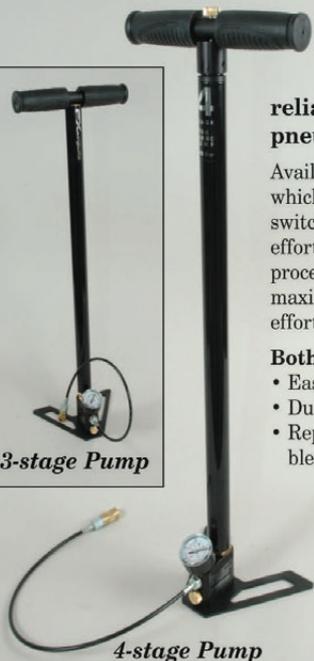
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AIRGUN COLLECTION

Nova Airguns Part 2 by John Atkins

Additional material by John Griffiths Photographs by John Griffiths, Eberhard Groba, Alan Harvey and Richard Robson

With input from fellow collectors, I'm continuing my look at German 'Nova' airguns to complete the account started last month. I feel it's important to include the airguns of some of the smaller German makers - rather than just the big four, namely: Oscar Will's Venuswaffenwerk, Mayer & Grammelspacher's Dianawerk, Friedrich Langenhan and C. G. Haenel. I don't include Moritz & Gerstenberger among these giant makers because their estimated annual output of airguns and air pistols was fairly low in comparison with those of the above organisations.

Juvenile-type airguns produced by most of these firms should not be underestimated because all had an important role to play in the history of shooting and marksmanship. I don't say that every shooter started off with a junior model, spring-powered gun or airgun, but my father, for instance, went on to be a successful medal-winning, miniature rifle shooter. Who knows just how large a part his youthful ownership of a Patent 1914 'Nova' air pistol played in stimulating a long interest in guns and shooting - although he never actually owned many and was a shooter, not a collector. His gardening hobby and the world

FIGURE 1

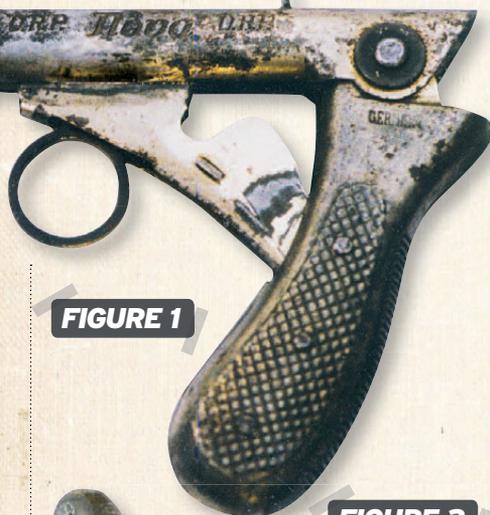


Figure 1: Alan Harvey's 'Nova' air pistol shown fully cocked by breaking down the grip, with shot tube removed for loading. It's not apparent from this photograph, how the short removable 4.5mm brass shot barrel locks in after loading. [Photograph courtesy of Alan Harvey]

FIGURE 2



Figure 2: My own 'Nova' (shown last month), features this detachable, smooth-bored shot tube, with the positive locking disc that latches in behind the protruding inside end of the foresight rivet

Figure 3: Top: Langenhan 'Millita' 'FLZ' .177 break-barrel air pistol, Emile/Jean Marck Belgium 'Gem'-type .22 calibre break-barrel c.1902 or later and a 'Nova' .177 break-action air pistol with defective action

of garden show activities as a judge (and at other times as a competitor) overshadowed and crowded out any others.

The German 'Nova' Trademark with pistol and target No. 104999 shown last month was registered on 10 February 1908 by Firma Gebrüder Sauer, Nürnberg, manufacturer of metal toys, including children's shooting weapons and targets as detailed in Part 1. During our airgun research, the late Tony Williams, found a UK pellet Patent No.17,150 of 20 July 1914 from H. Sauer, Nuremberg for 'Improved projectile for air guns' in the

basement vaults of the British Library, Holborn

Branch. This was to protect 'safety projectiles' - comprising rubber balls with a wooden insert to retain the flights. Whether these were commercially successful, I'm unsure, having never seen examples.

The proprietor of the famous gunmakers J.P. Sauer & Sohn, Suhl, Thüringen around 1900 was Franz Sauer, who had been joined by 1914 by his sons, Hans & Rolf, who were still running the company as co-owners in 1939. Whether these were the same Sauer Brothers also operating from Nuremberg producing junior airguns - or relatives, I can't confirm. After the war, the company became a division of SIG, and well known for the famous SIG-Sauer pistols - to which the humble Nova air pistol might well be a distant relative!

Collector Alan Harvey's German Nova break-action air pistol is shown fully cocked by breaking down the grip, and the shot tube removed, in **Figure 1**. From this view, it's not apparent how the short removable 4.5mm brass shot barrel locks in after loading with slug or dart. I was puzzled by the arrangement. Surely this barrel, having the usual recessed muzzle piece for corks, didn't just push in? There was no sign of any annular locking plate, so my first thought was it had become unsoldered and lost. On contacting Alan, he informed nothing was missing and a bayonet fitting retained the barrel, although his photograph didn't show this.

My Nova shown last month, features a similar detachable smooth-bored shot tube, but with the positive locking disc that latches in behind the protruding inside end of the

FIGURE 3



foresight rivet. **Figure 2** gives a further view of this shot tube so you can see the difference. To engage the locking ring, my foresight is mounted further back than on Alan's 'Nova.' I explained there were three types of brass barrel with muzzle extension



FIGURE 4

Figure 4: Two 'Nova' air pistols conforming to the Gerb. Sauer German patent No. 283554 of March 19, 1914 for a 'child's shooting weapon' covering the Nova pistol and airguns built on the same system. [Photograph courtesy of John Griffiths]

Figure 5: Although working, this 'Nova' pistol from Professor John Griffiths' spring air pistol collection has lost the shot tube barrel and the bottom rib has been crudely re-soldered back on in the past. [Photograph courtesy of John Griffiths]

Figure 6: A close-up view of John Griffiths' two 'Nova' pistols showing the non-operative top one bears the 'GERMANY' stamping at the head of the grip. This doesn't appear on the lower pistol - or on my own example. [Photograph courtesy of John Griffiths]

Figure 7: Two photographs combined, allow different views of the detachable barrel from John Griffiths' 'Nova' and show the bayonet fitting. This engages with a protrusion under the front sight. [Photograph courtesy of John Griffiths]

air pistols seen so far have exactly the same length of 290 mm. (approx. 11.4 inches measured diagonally). From this, the sheer size of the vintage and antique air pistols above it can be judged.

I photographed these pistols at Mike Haddon's house before the auction sale of his items back on 26th November 1996. I recall the Nova failed to cock when I tried it and it

was listed as 'action defective' in Sotheby's auction at Billingshurst, West Sussex when it sold for a not inconsiderable sum of £130 - well above the pre-sale estimate of £60 - £100.

John Griffiths, the author of *The Encyclopedia of Spring Air Pistols* has supplied some interesting photographs of two Nova pistols from his own collection that can be seen in **Figure 4** conforming to the Gebrüder Sauer German patent No. 283554 of March 19, 1914 for a 'child's shooting weapon' covering the Nova pistol and airguns built on the same system. John now owns Mike's Nova and it appears at the top of the photograph. He paid very little for the second, rather tatty Nova below it because it is virtually a relic. The barrel tube is missing, and someone has made a crude attempt to re-solder the strip under the barrel as can be seen in **Figure 5**. Surprisingly it does cock and fire. A close up view of John Griffiths' two 'Nova' pistols appears as **Figure 6** showing the top one bears the 'GERMANY' stamping at the head of the grip. This does not appear on the lower relic pistol (or on my own example). Neither pistol is shown fully closed when the rectangular projection snaps under the pressed gripframe.

Two views of the detachable barrel from John's best Nova are combined to make **Figure 7** and you will see that it does have a bayonet fitting. This engages with a protrusion under the front sight. We would say that the barrel insert from Alan Harvey's gun shown in **Figure 1** almost certainly has an identical bayonet fitting to this. We find it very interesting that my possibly earlier barrel insert is different in design.

Repairing a Nova pistol
John informs me that my

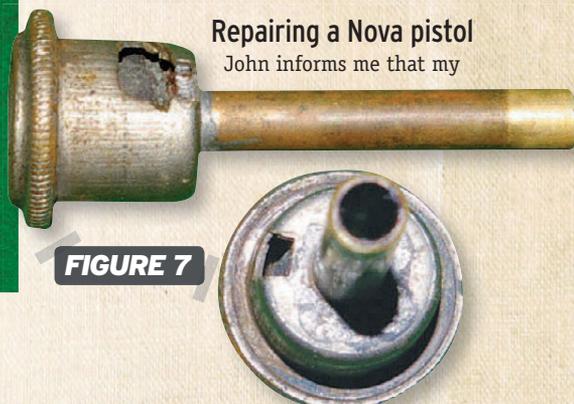


FIGURE 7



found on Nova air pistols and these will not interchange.

While I have suspicions that my own Nova, acquired second-hand by my father (born 1908) as a boy - with

its smaller pressed 'chequering' panels on the lower grip part only, and flatter profile trigger section was the first model, I have no actual proof that it's from the earliest production period. The 1924 selection of Nova spring airguns and toy spring guns firing rubber arrows shown last month, proved that the air pistol shown in its small box was still on sale at that time and for probably a lot later during the inter-wars years, but the actual production periods of the slightly varying Nova air pistol examples remains imprecise because I'm unable to place the pistols I'm showing in these two articles in a definite specific date order. They were advertised for sale in the 1919 catalogue of Frank Clarke and also in *The Scout* magazine around 1922 for the equivalent of 25p.

Figure 3 shows from the top, a Langenhan 'Millita' 'FLZ' .177 break-barrel air pistol; Emile/Jean Marck Belgium 'Gem'-type .22 calibre break-barrel c.1902 or later and a 'Nova' .177 break-action air pistol. All Nova

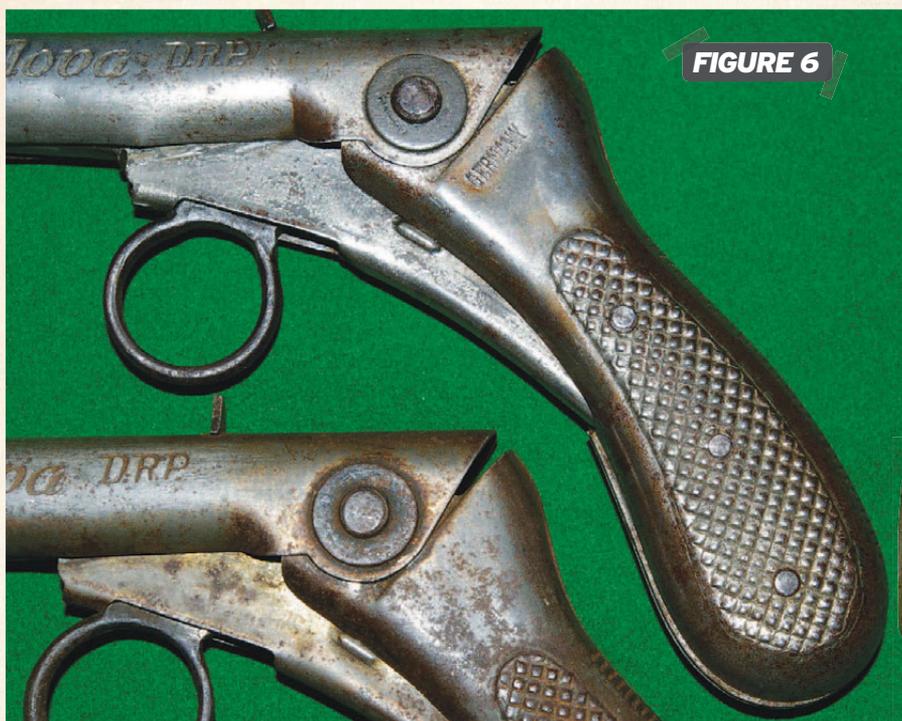


FIGURE 6

FIGURE 8

Figure 8: To repair the 'Nova' that fails to cock, removal of the large pivot rivet allowed separation of the grip/trigger unit from the power unit. The piston with its attached rod and the spring could then be withdrawn, bringing with it a 'slide unit'. [Photograph courtesy of John Griffiths]

Figure 9: The underside of the power unit shows that the slot in which the cocking arm slides, has belled out at one point. This has now been repaired. [Photograph courtesy of John Griffiths]

Figure 10: Two views of the same components of the slide unit shown in different states of assembly. [Photograph courtesy of John Griffiths]

Figure 11: The assembled 'Nova' slide unit. [Photograph courtesy of John Griffiths]

Figure 12: A fine condition 'Nova' air pistol still retaining nearly all the original nickel plate, shown cocked. A third type of shot tube or true barrel can be seen. [Photograph by Richard Robson]

recent article and questions about the Nova pistol piqued his own interest and he decided to have a closer look at his pistol - the good one, not the relic - for two reasons: firstly, his pistol has refused to cock since he acquired it at the sale of Mike Haddon's air pistols (the trigger doesn't catch) and he wanted to remedy it, and secondly, to understand the cocking principle from the original patent discussed in Part 1 last month. The confusion turned out to be due to poor Patent drawings. John has put off trying to fix the pistol because it is a devil to get into, as you can imagine - all rivets and pins and no screws.

However, he took the plunge and used a triangular needle file, with one side smooth so that the surface was not affected, to file the large pivot pin carefully to remove the peening. This enabled him to knock it out and separate the grip/trigger unit from the power unit. See **Figure 8**. The piston with its attached rod and the spring could then be withdrawn, bringing with it what we can only describe as a slide unit.

You can see from the photo **Figure 9** of the underside of the power unit that the slot in which the cocking arm slides that has belled out at one point. This has now been fixed. The slide unit (**Figure 10**) shows two views of the same components in different states of assembly, whilst **Figure 11** shows the unit assembled. John is sure that no one has ever been inside the gun before, and the leather piston was impregnated with very old black grease, with a mashed up slug imbedded in it - as mentioned last month.

John was surprised that the mainspring was crudely cut through at both ends with no attempt to heat-flatten the ends. As a very low cost airgun, which would never be repaired, the manufacturers presumably saw

no point in such refinements as dressing the spring. John hasn't opened up his relic pistol, but he can see that the wire gauge and diameter of its spring is identical, so he doesn't think his better Nova has a cut-down replacement spring.

By increasing the bend in the piston rod by a small amount, John managed to get the gun to cock and fire OK. There was no wear to the rod where it contacted the trigger sear. Now that it works nicely and has been regreased, he is surprised by how much of a punch it packs, as long as the pellet or slug is a nice sliding fit in the barrel.

Although I've correctly referred to these air pistols as 'low-powered', for what they are, the power was surprisingly good! I recall, as small children, my sister and I firing the Nova in competitions with Percy Gaines and his son - our window cleaners - at chalked targets on the dry cement walls of an outhouse, the potato pellets virtually disintegrated making a large wet splotch on the rendering. It was only in later years - as the mainspring weakened that it became possible to pick up the then less-damaged potato slugs and re-fire them. In those days, I was kept ignorant of the fact it would fire a .177 slug for many years, thinking of it merely as a potato pistol.

John thinks he will have a go at making a replacement barrel for his relic Nova, re-soldering and re-nickelling it because there is virtually none of the original finish left. A very worthwhile addition to his project list to get another rare Nova back into better collectable condition and preserved for the future.

Nickelled Nova

My friend, the late Richard Robson enclosed a photograph reproduced here as **Figure 12** in his 2001 Christmas card to me, showing his Nova air pistol still retaining nearly all of its original gleaming nickel plate. In an accompanying letter, he believed the Nova was dear to my heart, having read that I had one, used by all the family. Richard actually found two together and the chap selling them had intended to mount them on a plaque in a sort of pseudo duelling-pistol pose, but had never got round to it.

The only one Richard had ever seen before was in the sale of Mike Haddon's collection at Sotheby's, Summers Place held in November 1996, (i.e. the one John Griffiths has just



FIGURE 9

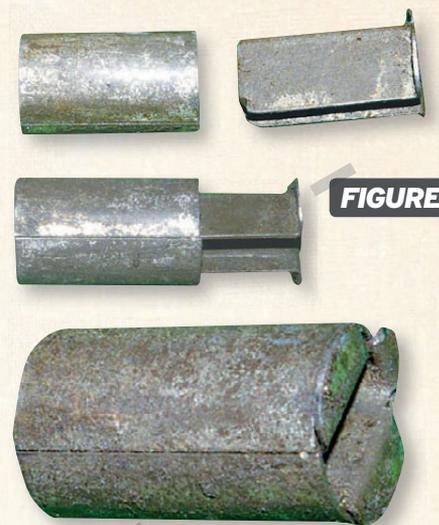


FIGURE 10



FIGURE 11

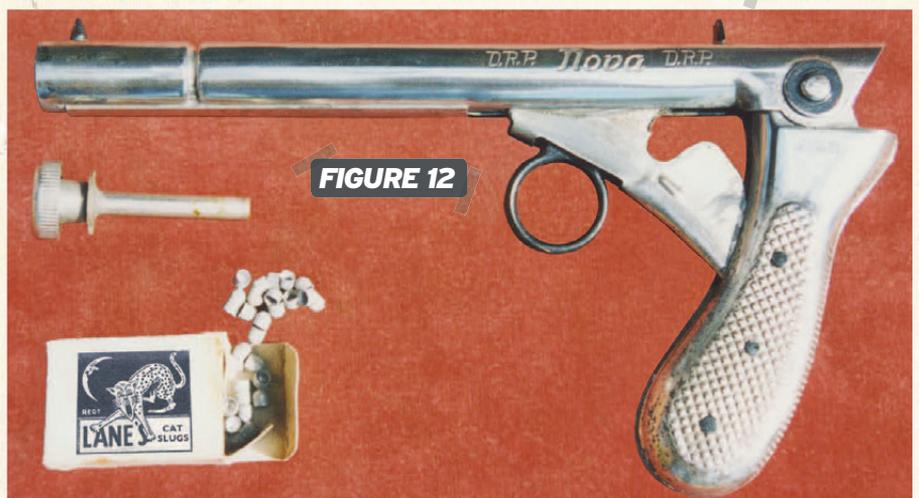


FIGURE 12



FIGURE 13

Figure 13: A typical spring-powered, vintage toy arrow pistol for rubber arrows. [Photograph courtesy of Eberhard Groba]

Figure 14: Hans Sauer, Nürnberg German airgun Patent No. 349244 of 11 June 1920. Another confusing Sauer patent drawing; the uncompressed spring appears to have lost half its coils in the lower drawing

Figure 15: Bolt-style top lever cocking 'Nova' airgun with removable shot tube for loading slugs or darts. [Photograph courtesy of Eberhard Groba]

Figure 16: The top lever pulled back to fully cock this 'Nova' airgun. Quite a long piston stroke allows reasonable power from the cocking method. The shot tube removed for loading is also shown. [Photograph courtesy of Eberhard Groba]

Figure 17: Typical ammo from the days of the 'Nova' airguns, included German pointed slugs and darts and Lane's British BB pellets and 'Cat' cup slugs

very low survival but Eberhard Groba has one with a spurred ring trigger in his collection from one of the many other makers. This can be seen in **Figure 13** complete with its original red rubber arrow.

Another confusing Sauer German patent drawing appears as **Figure 14**. Unfortunately, I have only the first page and these drawings, while the German main text page seems to be missing. Rather than having been taken out by the Sauer brothers, it's taken out under the name of Hans Sauer and this patent, No. 349244 is dated 11 June 1920. It appears to show a 'concentric' design airgun, the breech presumably being sealed by the action of returning the stock to the shooting position. The uncompressed mainspring shown in the lower drawing appears to have not only lost half its coils but also seems drastically reduced in exterior diameter. Maybe a technically-minded reader might make more sense of it than I can!

Further photographs of the bolt-style, top lever-cocking Nova airgun with removable shot tube for loading can now be featured as **Figures 15** and **16** thanks to Eberhard. The model did not appear among the 1924 range of Nova airguns and spring guns from the Bernhard Kneifel & Co., Export List page shown last month. This doesn't mean to say it was no longer in the range at that time as there may simply have not been room to include a drawing of it in the selection shown. The top bolt lever is pulled back to cock this Nova airgun fully, with removed shot tube for loading the dart or slugs. It gives quite a long piston stroke, allowing reasonable power from the direct cocking method.

It's presumed that the mechanism allows the bolt lever to be then pushed forward on discharge. Otherwise, spectacle wearers would

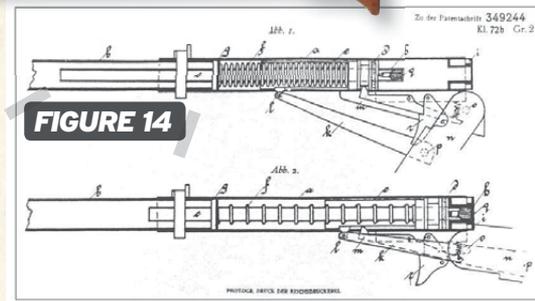


FIGURE 14

need to ensure that the bolt knob didn't become entangled with their glasses prior to squeezing the trigger, to prevent the danger of their spec's hotly pursuing the ammo downrange.

Whilst examples of H. Sauer's flighted rubber ball airgun 'safety projectiles' patented in 1914 are yet to be discovered, **Figure 17** features typical airgun ammunition from the days of the 'Nova' airguns, including German darts and pointed slugs in the circular tin and boxes of Lane's British BB pellets, and very early 'Cat' cup slugs. Whilst it might seem a strange idea to add flights to a ball, the idea of adding a 4-inch nylon or fishline tail to a three-quarter-inch diameter lead ball drilled for a glued dowel retaining plug, improves a round ball's accuracy by eliminating its random spin from a smoothbore shotgun - as proved long ago by American shotgun slug and ball shooting experts. ■

REFERENCES: German Trade Marks Register and British and German Patents.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Thanks to John Griffiths and Alan Harvey for their valuable input. Also to the late Tony Williams for original research and to Eberhard Groba and his German collecting colleagues. Thanks also to the late Richard Robson for his photographs used to help illustrate this account.

taken apart!) So to find two was a real bonus for him. He sold the not-so-good one to collector Malcolm Munslow, and the good one is in the photograph. Richard commented that for such a short barrel, this shoots really well and it's a real joy to use, except for the very sharp-pointed foresight, which is positioned to cause severe injury to the palm of your hand! As we saw last month, this seemed to be the same as fitted to the 300-shot Nova ball repeater. The blade-type foresight was a far safer arrangement. The barrel shown in Richard's photograph might have to be removed for cork firing with the corks pressed directly into the muzzle of the false barrel because this third type of true barrel doesn't appear to be as recessed for corks as are the other two barrel types.

Last month I illustrated the 1924 range of Nova junior shooting outfits and the rival 'Eureka Sport' sets from Mayer & Grammelspacher, Rastatt. Rather than all airguns, many of these included toy spring-powered guns firing an almost harmless, suction-pad-tipped rubber 'arrow'. Ring triggers like those fitted on some of the Nova and Ideal range of airguns often featured. Although sold in vast numbers for many years, these are

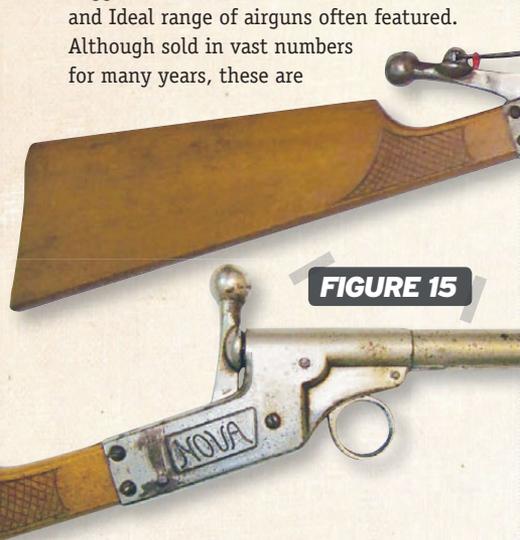


FIGURE 15



FIGURE 17

FIGURE 16



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EVERY PENNY COUNTS

Jerry Moss tells us how we can support his vital work

Red squirrel groups throughout the country need funds to exist, and a major part of the help in running these groups is from people volunteering their own time to help raise cash. With government money drying up,

and there are various levels, so please take a look at our website and join - or get in contact if you think you can help, or point us in the right direction to possible funding.

It can be strange how such things

Above: I set the cameras to watch the feeders 24/7

Below: My new cameras are hard at work already

could point me in the right direction to where I might be able to see some whilst I am here on holiday." We stood chatting with the lady and her husband for a while and I had written down some names of the areas where she would have a good chance to see reds.

"we were only a matter of a 10-minute drive from home and at that time we had a red squirrel orphan kitten in our care"

such as Forestry Commission woodland schemes, the need to find other ways is evermore present. The group I am a trustee for, the Penrith Red Squirrel Group (PRSG), is very active, employing five rangers, but to do so requires a lot of time and effort by the admin team who are constantly seeking out different avenues in an attempt to pull in the much needed funds to carry on. We offer membership to the group for individuals, families and companies,

happen and here is an example: A few years ago, me and my good lady (Sarah) were in a local craft shop that sells red squirrel merchandise and hosts a collection box for PRSG. Whilst we were in there talking to the guy who owns the shop, and re-stocking him with goods, a lady who was visiting the shop came over and said, "I hope you don't mind me asking, but I overheard you talking about red squirrels and was wondering if you



Come and see

As we were only a matter of a 10-minute drive from home, and at that time we had a red squirrel orphan kitten in our care, Sarah asked them if they would perhaps like to come over and see this little one. The kitten was now in our outside enclosure and okay, not in the wild, but the visitors would be able to see this sweet little animal very close up. The couple jumped at the chance and we were soon on our way back home. They spent over an



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hour with us, were totally overwhelmed by the experience and couldn't thank us enough. Email address and phone numbers were exchanged and they went on their way.

A few weeks later we received a phone call from the lady, and a few emails back and forth because she wanted to send a small donation to us. It did not stop at that, though, and over the years she has raised a considerable amount of money in various ways; from selling second-hand books, homemade jams and so on, in one of her local shops (she is in East Sussex, by the way) and they don't even have reds in that area, and haven't for years and years due to the invading grey. So how she has rallied

"she sent me a cheque for £335 and I said I would use the money to buy trail cameras"



the support for red squirrels down there is fantastic, and just shows how it can be done, with passion. At her request, we use the money raised to buy equipment, and we always honour that. I tell her what we could do with; feeders, feed etc., and just recently, she sent me a cheque for £335 and I told her that I would use the money to



Above: It's lovely to see the red squirrels feed and play

Left: Sarah takes great care of the orphans

Below left: This is our outdoor pen where we raise orphaned reds

Below: This little one would soon be released into the wild



INFORMATION



As always, we welcome your thoughts and ideas. Get in touch and tell us about the methods that work for you.

Follow Jerry on Facebook

For more info:



<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Penrith-and-District-Red-Squirrel-Group/487229667979369?ref=ts>

buy trail cameras - she was delighted.

Trail cam

I set about finding a good deal, and after spending some time on the Internet, I found one on Minox trail cameras and purchased two DTC 300s and one DTC 400 model for £330. A couple of days later, they arrived and were promptly taken out to woodlands and left out there, watching feeders. We took some photos, printed them off and sent them to the lady, along with a thank you card, so that she can then display them to show the people who help and donate down in East Sussex, what the money is doing. It's only a small way of showing our appreciation for their help, but an important one.

The Minox trail cameras have been out in use now for several weeks and have captured many pictures. I have had them on both still and video modes and can confirm that they offer good-quality images and are reliable, easy-to-use cameras. I like the fact that the images can be viewed on the on-board screen, and a feature that I really like on the DTC 400 is the screen being on the outside and forward facing. This makes setting up on what you want to see so simple, because you have a 'live view' option, and it's right there on the screen. These are not new models from Minox, but all the same, well worth a look if you are in the market for trail cameras. As rangers, we use a lot of trail cameras and use various brands as a big part of our equipment. They can be out there working for us all day, every day, and that helps to tell us what is going on in and around our feeding areas. ■

www.penrithredsquirrels.org.uk/index.php?page=become-a-member



NO STONE LEFT UNTURNED

The editor suggests we need new thinking to find a permission



I remember well as a very young man dreaming about airgun hunting, when all I had was a low-powered, spring-piston pistol and nowhere to go. I imagined endless scenarios where I'd stalk and kill bags full of rabbits and pigeons. Sadly, I had no mentor to take me along, but through very regular visits to my old-fashioned, local gun shop I was offered a Saturday job that became my gateway into a much bigger world. The two shop owners shot all kinds of disciplines, from clay pigeons to African big game, and I satisfied my ravenous appetite for hunting on the stories they told.

One day, a customer who had a livery was complaining about the damage the rabbits were doing to his land and one of the shop owners said, "Phill will shoot them for you, won't you?"

"Of course," I said, pretending I knew what I was doing.

I was shooting regularly at a gun club so I knew I was accurate and my .22 Webley Vulcan Mk1 had the power to do the job and suddenly, from nowhere, I had my first permission. It was a long, skinny piece of land

Top: Horses and rabbits just seem to go together

Main: Corvids can be a huge problem in these numbers

Below: Feral pigeons can foul buildings and walkways

between a reservoir and a road, with a good number of rabbits and in no way was it like my dreams, but it was mine, and my mum soon had to learn to cook rabbit because I was regularly bringing them home.

A bit rough

To be blunt, the land was scruffy and unloved with loads of rubbish and junk left lying around. It was just on the outskirts of town and under the main flight path from Heathrow airport too, so was really noisy, but lost in my hunter's focus I could have

been anywhere.

The point of this tale is that a productive permission need not be a big farm or a grand estate. Over the years, I've shot on all kinds of land; a water works, golf courses, smallholdings, livery yards, forestry plantations, a rose-breeding company, a herb farm, hotel grounds and yes, farms as well. On some big farms I found that only one small area tended to hold the rabbits and I seldom visited any other area of the ground.

I have friends who farm and they tell me that they get several requests



"As unlikely as this might seem, conservation groups also need pest control services"

The scruffiest piece of land can hold stacks of rabbits

**"Phill will shoot them for you, won't you?"
"Of course," I said, pretending I knew what I was doing"**

a week from shooters who want permission. As well as airgunners, there are the shotgun guys and the fullbore rifle boys, too. The direct approach always gets a polite 'no', so I think that aspiring airgun hunters need a different mindset and to think more widely about where to look.

The best approach is to start asking people you know - anybody who has horses is a good bet. Stable yards and liveries almost always have rabbit problems and sometimes rats and feral pigeons as well. Do you know any gardeners or groundsman? They can be driven mad by rabbit and squirrel damage. Do you know anybody who looks after sports fields? The same goes there. Smallholders trying to grow tender and precious crops despair of damage done by pigeons ... the list goes on, and on.

Going to the zoo

I have a friend who got a permission at a zoo! All the rabbits he shoots are used to feed the carnivores, so he also helps to keep the zoo's feeding costs down. Another pal shoots at a farm that has a huge visitor

attraction, with an animal petting place for children. The rabbits are a real pest there and, unsurprisingly, he has to shoot at night, but he's happy with that.

As unlikely as this might seem, conservation groups also need pest control services. This clearly needs a delicate approach because some conservationists are preservationists. Those who believe that nothing should ever be killed are often countered by people who understand that if you want rare and endangered plants to survive, you might need to cull rabbits to give them a chance. Also, if you want songbirds to thrive you might need to cull non-indigenous grey squirrels. I have just such a permission where I go now and then to shoot the rabbits at night. It's all done very quietly, and most people will never know that I visit. The man who runs this particular conservation group is very pragmatic and understands that sometimes we need to intervene to help nature along. He also enjoys a good rabbit casserole alongside the beautiful vegetables he grows on his allotment.

Below: Squirrels damage trees and eat young birds

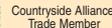
Bottom: Clearing vermin around a yard is an important service

Always keep an ear open for any chance of a permission, no matter how small. Some of the best shooting I've ever had was on tiny scraps of land that everybody else overlooked. ■



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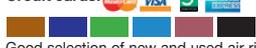
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Fax: 01227 710611

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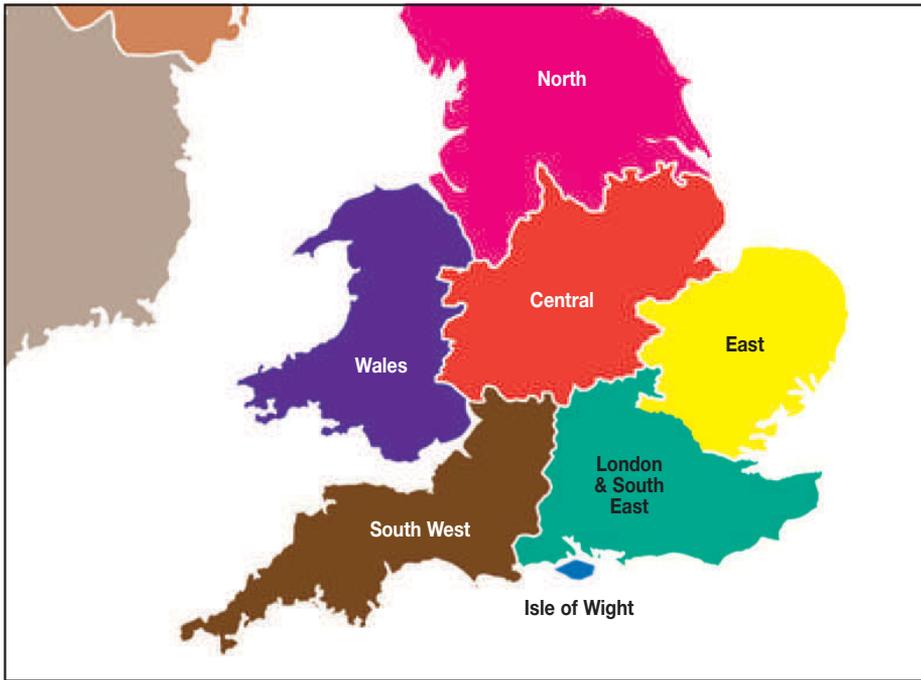


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Fax: 01405 740936

Email: info@mooredges.com

Twitter: @Mooredges_info Web: www.mooredges.com

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GUNPOWER

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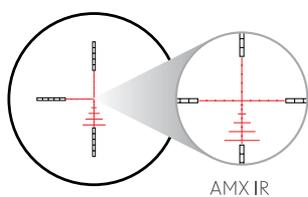


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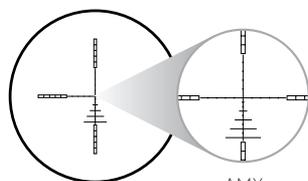
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