

SHOOTERS' JOURNAL

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BATTLE OF TEWKESBURY 2022

NEWS & GOSSIP

BOOK REVIEWS

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ABOUT US

Firearms and explosives controls cover a broad church of professional, sporting and hobby activities undertaken by people who seek to be law-abiding by applying for the documents. Changes to the law over the past 35 years have widened the controls net, with most of those changes aimed at preventing the public continuing to peacefully enjoy their possessions.

As a policy, this comes straight out of 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion' and is as worthwhile as its source.

That policy – described then by the Editor of 'Guns Review' magazine as 'carborundum policing' was the catalyst for the SRA being formed in 1984. What none of us knew in 1984 was why the courts had only reported on four firearms related prosecutions in the 20th century prior to 1969 and dozens more since. The fact was that policing had shifted its

COVER PICTURE

Issue 74 SUMMER 2022 (JIM CROWLEY PHOTO)



Whizz Bangs – Sounds of the Battlefield..

After two years without much to do, this summer has livened up with re-enactors again enjoying the laxative side effects of black powder smoke

Battle of Tewkesbury 2022 – in progress



focus. The reason was kept secret in a restricted 1969 Home Office memorandum of guidance to the police and the unpublished 1972 McKay report.

The memorandum reversed the approach taken toward firearm certificate applications in *Anderson v Neilans* (1940) and *Joy v chief constable of Dumfries and Galloway* (1966) and McKay wanted to end civilian access to military firearms, to which end an administrative tweak resulted in dozens of registered firearms dealers being prosecuted for section 5 offences. And that's where we came in; helping those in trouble to defend prosecutions, helping people who didn't think they had done any wrong understand why the system was biting them and trying to explain to politicians what is wrong with the system. But they're too busy fighting each other to look at what the Home Office is up to. ¹

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Editorial

In putting this edition together, I was reminded of Geoffrey Brown's opening remarks as editor of the first 'Guns Review' magazine.

Launching it in 1960, without ever mentioning his own name, he said that it would be written by its readers.

Interesting bunch they were: in 1960 national service had only just been abolished so just about every male adult had some firearms experience.

It went with the territory: national service 1939-1957 meant every male born 1921-1939 had been in the forces unless exempted for medical or ethical reasons and in 1960, Great War veterans were as old as the hills or as young as 60.

Military service gave a lot of people their fill of guns, uniforms and marching. Boys who 'went up' from the Boy Scout movement to national service rarely came back to the scout uniform.

Some did, and in 1960 there were enough adults who were sufficiently 'into' guns to make 'Guns Review' an instant success with its mixture of discussion about modern designs to 'how I shot my first tiger' type reminiscences – and a lot of interest in antiques.

Pause for a moment upon the word 'gun'. We have a few related words in general use, both in the shooting and re-enactment sides of our interests and these words, used properly, are 'jargon'.

The term 'jargon' explains a form of shorthand between professionals. To those who understand such stuff, the terms 'floppy disc' (probably not now in polite use) and 'hard drive' explain what is being talked about. So it is in shooting clubs and re-enactment groups.

'Gun' enjoys three quite different meanings. On the sporting side of our endeavours, it means a shotgun – a smoothbored gun for firing loads of small pellets at once.

Used correctly, an air 'gun' would be smoothbored, such as the Webley Junior, while an air 'pistol' would have rifling in the barrel.

Rifling, while we are here, is spiral grooves cut into the inside of the barrel to spin the projectile around its own axis.

In military usage, it's a 'gun' if it has wheels on it, whether rifled or not. But the term is also used for rifled fully automatic weapons, as in submachine 'gun'.

Calling something by its name reminds me of the motor pool driver who turned up at the end of our fancy dress competition in a three-ton truck to take the adjudicator home because he did not know how big an adjudicator might be.

The Firearms Act 1968, as the learned judge in Guy Savage's case tasked with summing up to the jury on the matter of whether the imported Australian Arms 'Pistols' were, in fact, 'pistols', or 'rifles' (without shoulder stocks) as the Crown claimed, started by pointing out that neither term appeared in the Act. They were all 'firearms'.

The Act defines a 'firearm' as 'a lethal barrelled weapon from which any shot, bullet or missile can be discharged'.

The complication in Guy's 1995 case was that the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 prohibited self-loading 'rifles' (but not 'pistols') and did not define what it meant beyond a definition of self-loading.

It went on to include an ambiguous phrase 'rifle includes carbine.' That led us even deeper into the dictionaries, because where legislation offers no specific interpretation, the ordinary dictionary definition applies.

In the case of 'rifle', the Collins dictionary described rifling without mentioning a shoulder stock.

'Stock' also enjoys two meanings in our circles. The (traditionally) wooden parts of a firearm or shotgun that you hold it by is the stock, or stocks on a handgun where they are in two bits. It can also be the items list in a firearms dealer's register.

To explain 'carbine' to the jury no lesser person than David Penn was summoned from the Imperial War Museum. He said that the museum only used the term where the original manufacturer had.

Originally a shoulder weapon issued to Carbineers, the term was next ascribed to shorter barrelled variants of military rifles, such as were issued to artillerymen or the cavalry. In more recent times it was used by manufacturers to describe a semiautomatic version of a submachine gun, as in the Sterling Police Carbine.

Robin Pannell formed the British Carbine Club in the 1970s for the competitive use of submachine guns that had been converted to semiautomatic only for sale to firearm certificate holders. That was in the wake of the Home Office closing machine gun clubs down after taking 'control' of club approval from the Ministry of Defence in 1969.

A fourth usage of 'carbine' came in to use to describe a pistol with a shoulder stock and (usually) a longer barrel than the pistol it was based on.

Sussex Armoury used that nomenclature for a long-barrelled air pistol with a wire shoulder stock in the 1970s and in so doing were following the likes of Mauser, who had built their

C96 broomhandle pistol into a carbine with a permanent shoulder stock and a long barrel.

Guy Savage's Australian Arms Pistol came from a Tasmanian company who made three semiautomatic products chambered for 5.56x45mm ammunition: a pistol, a carbine and a rifle built on the same action. The rifle had the longest barrel and a permanent shoulder stock. The carbine had a shorter barrel and a detachable shoulder stock fitted to the receiver by a bracket on the receiver. The pistol had the same barrel length as the carbine, but no shoulder stock nor the bracket for fitting one.

The Crown's case was that building a prohibited carbine without a shoulder stock did not alter its classification. The Imperial War Museum's position was that it was what the manufacturer called it and the Jury took the Crown's position and convicted Mr. Savage.

The Home Office have since adopted the definition of a 'rifle' – in the context of being awkward about long barrelled revolvers - as 'ordinarily held by both hands and fired from the shoulder' with a view to preventing long barrelled revolvers being in the inventory of rifle clubs.

No mention of rifling and what they don't know is that 'their' definition of a *rifle* describes the Weaver position for firing a *pistol*. 'From the shoulder' distinguishes one way of shooting a pistol from others, such as 'from the hip' or 'offhand'.

The 1988 Firearms (Amendment) Act's clear definition of self-loading as

a mechanism in which the chamber is automatically reloaded after a shot is fired excluded a lot of semiautomatic firearms from it, such as open bolt systems; hence the MAC 10 pistol. The discredited and now defunct Forensic Science Service made numerous attempts to get the MAC 10 prohibited, changing their evidence in a bid to find a way of catching a self-cocking pistol with a detachable shoulder stock in legislation that referred to a 'self-loading rifle' and 'rifle includes carbine'.

Their ultimate, partial, success in that endeavour came when they went back to their original hypothesis that in the hands of an expert (or their version of one) he could make it go full chat. Which is true of all semiautomatic firearms.

The gun trade has always served its market by building firearms and shotguns to comply with the law. Firearms legislation in the 1930s moved the goalposts to include shot pistols as firearms by defining shotguns (then exempted from the controls) as having barrels greater than 20 inches.

That barrel length was more typical of American shotguns than British ones at the time. When shotgun cartridges were loaded with black powder, barrel lengths tended to be 30 inches or more to give the slow burning powder time to get the shot load up to speed.

There were exceptions, of course. W W Greener made 'pigeon guns' with 14-inch barrels promoted as giving the shooter a faster swing.

When cartridges went to nitro, barrel lengths came down and Churchill's 25 inch became the benchmark that British cartridges were loaded to.

The Americans went shorter, 20 inches being as much barrel as is needed to match the 8-shot tube magazine beneath it. Extending the magazine past 8 does things for the gun's balance that experienced practical shotgunner have mastered and mere mortals would rather not trouble with.

In passing, I noticed in the early 'Guns Review' magazines that American made repeating shotguns imported for sale in the UK had 25-inch barrels. Shorter ones were imported, but the longer barrels were because British cartridges were loaded for that barrel length.

The balance of powder to barrel length is that the powder should have finished its burn just as the projectile exits the muzzle. Once the projectile is in fresh air it will not speed up and any unburned powder at that point expresses itself as a muzzle flash.

Adolf Hitler complains about this in his book *'Mein Kampf'*. He was a front-line soldier in the Great War in trenches opposite British forces on the Western Front and said that when carbine-armed troops joined them in the trenches the Tommies gave them a hard time; the yellow muzzle flashes caused by firing rifle ammunition in carbines told the Tommies that they were facing cooks, bottle washers and blanket stackers and that made them bolder and more offensively minded.

A private member's bill jumped the minimum barrel length to 24 inches in 1965, so the trade soldered extensions onto shorter guns to keep them legal.

After all the fuss about Australian Arms Pistols and MAC 10 pistols, the trade developed manually operated 'straight pull' rifles and later systems that became known as MARS rifles to be in compliance with the legislation. The Home Office moved the goalposts to have MARS rifle prohibited as 'especially dangerous'.

The whole of this disastrous period, which shattered many certificate holders' lives and left numerous gun trade businesses and gunsmiths' marriages in tatters, was caused by the Forensic Science Service seeking to implement the unpublished 1972 McKay Report, which sought to exclude the public from access to military weapons and the clubs from being Britain's third line of defence after the territorial army.

The model McKay pursued was that of the Channel Islands in 1940 where the police gathered in privately owned firearms to make the islands safe for the Germans to occupy. That way, they could carry on being the police, switching sides as governments change with a reduced risk to themselves from the public.

McKay said that reducing the number of firearms in the hands of the public was a desirable aim in itself and all that has happened since 1988 is that the Home Office fetish for their own job security by making this country safe to invade is that their destructive

intentions have extended to sporting shooting.

Moving on, the word that bugs sporting shooters more than any other is 'weapon'. The dictionary defines it as anything used as such. Our chairman Jan A Stevenson said sand on the beach could be used as a weapon – just fill up a sock with it.

Military personnel use it precisely thus, generically for anything they use as such from a pistol to a JP233. Policing tends to ape military terminology, which is why they misuse it to the extent they do.

'Weapon' appears twice in firearms legislation – in 'lethal barrelled weapon' – amended in 2017 for lethal to mean anything over 1 joule (0.737562 foot pounds) and in 'air weapon' as the generic description for pneumatic rifles, pistols, carbines and guns.

'Lethal' has a long back story; defined in the 19th century as 60-foot pounds (84.3491 joules except they weren't invented until 1882) so when the Gun Licensing Act 1870 came in and everyone had to pay for a ten-shilling licence, Webley designed the .320" cartridge and revolver to fire it in to be less than lethal at 55-foot pounds.

It took a prosecution (Campbell v Hadley, 40 J.P. 756) to 'clarify' that 'a small toy pocket pistol is a firearm' – which brought the .320" into gun licensing (and the later .25" ACP), but they didn't need to be on firearm certificates until Moore v. Gooderham in 1960 (3 All ER 575) redefined 'lethal' to mean more than a trifling injury.

The Inland Revenue were the prosecuting authority for miscreants who did not have gun licenses and I suspect they were hot on it to start with as the relevant page in my 1871 copy of 'Stones' is annotated around the word 'curtilage'. It looks as though the first owner of the book heard a defended case that turned on the meaning of the word. Another case of Parliamentary draftsmen not clarifying what they meant.

All the points raised in this piece were raised by our members and readers in the first instance. Elsewhere in this edition, we have retained their voices, while shielding their identities for their own safety.

I think Geoffrey Brown was right to make 'Guns Review' a magazine written for and by his readers. If more of our readers emulate his, we'd get editions out quicker and with better topicality. ∞

NEWS IN BRIEF

Compiled by Stuart Daniels

The 20 April edition of Countryman's Weekly carried a news report of a case at Carlisle Magistrates Court the week before. Police carried out an unannounced visit – a new idea that first appeared last year in Statutory Guidance to police – on the farm of 57 year old William Rowley. They found everything properly locked away except for one double-barrel shotgun that was under his bed.

He said, "this is for security purposes..."

He was summonsed and admitted failing to comply with the security condition on his certificate. The case

was adjourned to 6 May for the magistrate to consider submissions as to whether he should have his certificates and guns back in the light of the bench having concerns over the 'security' comment made to police.

SRA comment: Huh? It's not an offence to have a gun out of the security for a lawful purpose and self defence is a lawful purpose. In defended cases, nobody we know has been convicted of a security breach while the gun is (a) in the home and (b) the home is occupied. It may be that he was badly advised. The police should know better but are following the latest Home Office wheeze for reducing certificate numbers by tempting fate. An unannounced visit by armed trespassers during the hours of darkness is likely to go wrong sometime.

South West Farmer's April edition headlined a farmer's experience of an unannounced police visit – late at night and during the hours of darkness – by armed officers demanding his guns – ten months after he had handed them in. He managed to shift them off his doorstep by giving them the home telephone number of a Devon & Cornwall police employee he is related to and she confirmed that the guns had been handed in. His shotgun certificate renewal was delayed in April 2021 because of the pandemic & lockdowns and a further complication came in November 2021 when every applicant had to get a medical pro forma signed by his GP. A year on his concerns were protecting his flock during lambing from corvids and keeping grey squirrel

numbers in proportion to protect songbirds' eggs. A police spokesman blanked the newspaper's enquiries because they are still under investigation for the Jake Davison Plymouth shootings last August.

The Daily Post carried two firearms reports in the first week of May: on the 2nd police reportedly seized what appeared to be air rifles from a house in in Connah's Quay after a tip-off and said they were being made 'safe'. A police spokesman said, "Operation Blue (sic) Valor has been created to focus on tackling offenders causing significant harm." No arrest was report in connection with this raid but on the 5th the newspaper reported the arrest of a 57-year-old man at Brymbo in Wrexham after reports that he was in possession of a handgun. Police said it was an isolated incident.

The week before, the newspaper reported a major search for four youths seen entering woodland with an air rifle. A spokesman said, "officers attended the scene and, with aerial support from NPAS, (i.e., a helicopter) a search of the area was conducted." The males involved fled to a nearby address where officers spoke to them and seized two air rifles.

The Daily Mirror reported that actor Adrian Dunbar, who played Ted Hastings in the TV show 'Line of Duty' had booked his Mediterranean holiday in a German resort to avoid being recognised. And to make a change from signing autographs. Of the real police he said that they like show, "they're always giving us a wave."

SRA comment: we thought the show was a comedy. A police force actively investigating its own officers for corruption: you couldn't make it up...

South West Farmer's May edition expressed concerns about the number of firearm and shotgun certificates being revoked in Devon & Cornwall was nine times higher than usual. The force is still under investigation for its involvement in the Plymouth shootings last summer and widespread concerns are that the admin staff are acting disproportionately.

SRA comment: Their knee-jerk reaction was off the Statutory guidance to police last November telling police to check their certificate holders and applicants' addresses against the domestic abuse callout register. They seem to have done it by algorithm and revoked every 'match'. Thames Valley did the same – reported elsewhere in this issue

The Dunblane style spree killing of 19 children and 2 teachers at Uvalde, Texas on 24 May set all sorts of hares running in the media. 376 policemen reportedly attended the incident but first responders backed off for an hour or so. President Joe Biden came out with his usual handwringing 'solutions looking for a problem'; he has an agenda of new gun restrictions to impose on the law-abiding for their own sake, same as the Britain, same as New Zealand, but in the U.S. the gulf between his democrats and the republican party is so great that consensus can never be found on any swing subject. Actor Matthew

McConaughey, who was raised in Uvalde, came out in support of new controls but whether anything useful will come out of it remains to be seen. The ones to watch are the Texans and they seem more concerned with the police response at the moment.

Other celebs got in on it: Andy Murray (pro-controls) took the view that the solution was not more guns. He said he had heard a radio report of schoolchildren being drilled as to what to do when the gunman cometh; "How is it normal that children should have to go through drills, in case someone comes into school with a gun?"

SRA comment: they also do fire drills in schools and in some areas earthquake drills. The Federal Government made schools gun-free zones by law, thus telling every nonentity that there won't be return fire and one of the two factors all spree killers have in common is that they don't do it where return fire is likely.

On 1 June the Daily Mirror reported a plan for sentencing guidelines for retailers who sell knives to persons under 18. The proposals include £1 million fines for businesses with a turnover of £50 million and more down to small retailers getting fined up to 700% of a week's takings. The plan comes after a Channel 4 documentary 'killed by a rich kid' looked at how 17-year-old Yousef Makki was able to buy a flick knife on line and then use it to stab fellow school pupil Joshua Molnar fatally on 2 March 2019 during a row over a cannabis deal that went wrong.

SRA comment: the article was illustrated with expensive fixed blade sheath knives exposed for sale 'in a shop window' while our experience of knives carried by youths is that they are cheapies – kitchen knives and such. But also consider the row was about a cannabis deal: cause and effect – why not tackle the cause?

On 9 June Leslie Jackson was in Mold Crown Court trying to explain falling off his mobility scooter while waving a BB gun about. He said he was so drunk he remembered nothing, but he is likely to remember the 30-weeks in prison handed down, suspended for 18 months, the 25 sessions of rehabilitation activity and the £156 victim surcharge.

SRA comment: we may be picky and it would make no difference in practice but the report refers to the weapon as a 'BB gun' at one point and an 'imitation firearm' at another. It can't be both.

15 June the Mirror reported 63 firearms handed in to Wiltshire police during a week-long amnesty run by the National Ballistics Intelligence Service. The hand-ins included a Walther PPK, shown in an accompanying photograph cocked and locked, 9 other handguns, a WW2 Mauser K98 and 5 other rifles, 12 shotguns, 7 air weapons, 4 BB guns and a crossbow.

At the end of June reports emerged that ex-MP Neil Parish's shotguns had been seized by police, of which action Mr. Parish said he was in agreement. As quoted in Countryman's Weekly (6 July) from his appearance on LBC's Swarbrick on Sunday TV show, he said,

"When you have blown up your Parliamentary career for 12 years, you are not feeling in the best place, and they took them away for my own safety. I did say to them in a moment of black humour, I am a very bad shot, I will probably miss, but they didn't, naturally, see the joke, or nor was it very funny."

SRA Comment: It's a police policy to seize guns at any opportunity. Under the seizure policy the incident should be investigated promptly and a decision made by an assistant chief constable whether to return the guns or whether to revoke the certificate. Jake Davison's guns were seized under this policy last year and returned. We are still waiting to find out where the blame for that one will fall.

On 26 June the Sunday Mirror reported a police corruption investigation over the supply of guns to criminals back in the 1990s. Gangland informant and gun supplier Brynmor Lindop had been arrested by officers probing the 1993 shooting of PC Patrick Dunne and William Danso in the same South London incident. Lindop got a two-year sentence while the other suspect in gun supply – Sydney Wink – committed suicide in 1994. Lindop was shot dead outside his Goodmayes home in 2002. There was a long pause before Gary Nelson came to trial for shooting PC Dunne – originally charged in 1993, he was convicted in 2006. The case in the High Court is brought by Mr. Danso's widow who seeks further investigation.

The newspaper also reported that the big game trophy hunting ban is

back on the agenda. It was promised in the 2019 Conservative Party election manifesto but failed to appear in this year's Queen's Speech. MP Henry Smith (Conservative, Crawley) has introduced a private member's bill, which is said to have ministerial backing.

And in a corner of page 26 the Mirror reported that Joe Biden has signed a gun law that he pledges will save lives. It will toughen checks on young buyers, restrict gun use by domestic violence offenders and give individual States more powers to take guns from those deemed dangerous.

SRA comment: I wonder where he gets his ideas from? The UK version of restricting gun ownership among domestic violence offenders included revoking the certificate of a farmer whose house had been visited for a domestic violence report – and found it empty – a month before he took it over.



DORSAL FINS

Brief comments to the SRA by telephone callers -

“The Metropolitan Police want everyone to keep a sample fired case from each of their guns...”

“Medical forms are becoming a serious security breach. The receptionist at my doctor's surgery shouted across the crowded waiting room to a colleague “do you know what to do about these firearm certificate medical pro forms?”

A caller living in North Yorkshire said his police department were contemplating reducing his ‘acquire and keep quantity’ on his black powder

certificate to what he currently has in hand. He called back a few weeks later to say he was now limited to 15 kilos....

In reply to a member who could not download the medical form. “The Home Office operation 'stretch' to extend medical checks to all applicants started in 2016 and became 'law' via a statutory instrument in November 2021, which is when the attached pro forma dates from. There were numerous other ad hoc forms around before this one, so make sure your GPs reference is on the type of form enclosed with this letter. The Firearms Act 1968 prevents chief constables issuing firearm certificates to people of 'unsound mind'. That phrase carried forwards from the 1920 Firearms Act, when it was drawn from contemporary mental health legislation. It means a person incapable of looking after themselves. Such people were securely incarcerated in Poor Law hospitals or lunatic asylums. The wording in the Firearms Act remained unchanged through the 1937 Act and into current legislation although it has long since been superseded in mental health legislation. Shotgun certificates and dealers' registrations have only ever been (legally) refused or revoked on 'danger to public safety or the peace'. That phrase is qualified by High Court and Court of Appeal judgments which become common law. No such decision refers to mental health at all so the 'stretch' element of the current medical questionnaire is firstly extending the requirement for medical checks to firearm certificate applicants

who are not on section in mental hospitals now and from there to the notion plucked from thin air that a medical condition "might be evidence of danger to public safety or the peace". Statutory instruments are secondary legislation, which can build on or qualify primary legislation but can't invent new laws. Only Parliament can do that and to change the common law new primary legislation has to say that is what it is doing on its face. I think that leaves the whole medical thing open to being struck down by the High Court by a suitable challenge - and the 2019 SI about the definition of antiques likewise.

Email from a club secretary

Dear Richard

Merseyside police are saying that form 201 & 201v now must be done online & will not take any paper forms whatsoever. Is this legal & can I still fill in the forms & request they be treated in normal way."

SRA reply:

The only comment about online applications in the current statutory guidance to police says:

10.5 The 1998 Rules, as provided for in section 26(2) of the 1968 Act, require an application for the grant or renewal of a firearm certificate to be accompanied by one photograph. Ordinary passport style photographs (sized 45mm x 35mm) are suitable for this purpose. A digital photograph must be used for online applications.

So clearly, paper applications are acceptable and proper. There have been a lot of arbitrary 'rules' generated

in police departments during the Covid 19 lockdowns - such as not accepting applications for new certificates or for variations - despite the Home Office making such applications necessary when they revised the antique firearms list to exclude from it those 1873 designed revolvers that hit the market when the Rollin White patent expired.

What we don't yet have is an instance of an application being returned as unacceptable. It has been a requirement that an applicant be registered with a GP since 2016. Home Office guidance in this respect is that an applicant who is not registered with a GP cannot 'complete' the application form - so in that instance it should be returned to the applicant.

Essex police, however, sat on their hands ignoring repeated requests from an applicant wanting to know why he needed a GP until a week before his existing certificate expired. Then they landed on him with a revocation letter and seized his firearms under section 12 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 on the grounds that not having registered with the GP made him a danger to public safety or the peace.

That case was resolved by him eventually getting a new certificate after registering with a GP and re-applying, but he was without his flintlock pistols for the whole of one re-enactment season. We did wonder at the time whether the police attitude had anything to do with his re-enactment role in which he dressed as Napoleon....."

In answer to a query about a chap being prosecuted for possessing an 1896-manufactured Colt .32 during the transition period in 2021.

The two problems with Colt revolvers made during the transition period from black powder to nitro are firstly that Colt tended to stamp the barrels with the brand name of the proprietary cartridge the customer ordered it for and secondly, all the various .32 rimmed options tend to fit in all the cylinders. The exception to this is .320" which is skinnier. .320" revolver cylinders will not chamber .32" revolver rounds, nor the short 32" blanks.

Both .320" and .380" came in short and long versions. Long chambers would take short cartridges but not vice-versa.

The definition of an antique firearm in the UK was decided by the Court of Appeal in *Richards v Curwen* (1977 3 All ER 426). The court specifically rejected the availability of ammunition argument from the Crown – who were trying to import part of the definition of an antique from the (repealed in 1920) Pistols Act 1903. The decision articulated that the test for antique status stood on two legs: the first leg is 'possession solely as a curiosity or ornament' and if that is satisfied, the second leg is the age of the exhibit. This and other cases around that same time, reported and otherwise, all concur that the question of antique status is one of fact and degree for the court hearing the case.

In 1977, the court was considering two revolvers made in the 1890s and

they also said that they could not envisage firearms made in this (the 20th) century as being antiques. Other cases toyed with a hundred years as a cut-off but none of the distinguished law lords hearing these cases wanted a hard rule. The problem in all cases with 'age' as a determinant is that civilian firearms are not marked with dates of manufacture. British and European firearms have proof marks, (which serve to provide some help as to when the gun was proofed,) while American firearms do not.

The Winchester 1897 shotgun, for example, remained in production until 1957, so a 100-year rule would give some of the production run antique status – if possessed solely as curiosities or ornaments, while later production would not be regarded as antiques until their year of production passed its centenary.

Some firearms can be dated in other ways and many manufacturers' records are publicly accessible. I watched Ma Parker date the conversion of a Tippins-made Long Lee Enfield rifle from .303" to .22"LR to between 1928 and 1932 by reference to the type of target sights her grandfather Alf J Parker fitted to it and the date spread when he put his name on his products as shown earlier in this sentence. On the rifle in question, it was around the mouth of the muzzle.

In 1994, Lord Butler-Sloss heard an appeal against conviction (*R. v. Brown*) in which the defendant had possessed a War office pattern .22"LR rifle dated 1906. Firearms made for the military are usually dated. The conviction was

based on the false flag “availability of ammunition” argument, which Butler-Sloss rejected as had all the other courts hearing similar appeals. Of the 20th century date upon the rifle, she said time had moved on and so must the definition, which adds dignity to the rolling cut-off date should the subject come up again.

Richards v Curwen gave us a 78-year-old cut-off date which Butler-Sloss set rolling, so by 2017 it had reached 1939 and sparked panic at the Home Office, where the ‘availability of ammunition’ bad idea has never been shed. In the UK, ammunition is only available to certificate holders who can show, in the case of firearms, a variation on the certificate for the specific ammunition they want to buy and in the case of shotgun cartridges, a gun on the certificate through which they can be fired. Certificates also must be produced for the acquisition of the active ingredients for reloading – propellant powders and primers. Ammunition is thus not ‘available’ to anyone who is not authorized to acquire it.

The statutory instrument hardening up the antique calibre list does not seem to exclude anyone running a defence of curiosity or ornament as per Richards v Curwen. What it does do, in my opinion, is to prevent the police prosecuting owners of antique firearms that are on the list.

That said, the problem you raised – being prosecuted for possession of two revolvers that came off the antiques list last year *before* the cut-off date last September has nothing to do with that

statutory instrument. You said that you bought one and sold it the same day and the other was found in your possession to be loaded with live ammunition.

Non-statutory guidance to the police has, for many years, suggested that the presence of ammunition might be evidence that the firearm is not possessed solely as a curiosity or ornament – so that is your battleground for defending the charge. You said that you thought they were dummy rounds – good job you didn’t pull the trigger – but in court it will be a question of whether the jury believe you or not and since the Firearms Act creates ‘absolute offences’ you would not have a defence to a possession of the ammunition without a certificate charge if one were put against you.

This whole business of ending antique status for the 1873 revolver designs started because of a rogue firearms dealer acquiring them in the USA and then selling them to scrotes in this country with a small ammunition supply. If your ammunition can be tracked to that source, it would complicate your defence.

The other revolver – bought and sold on the same day – without seeing the police papers I do not know why you are charged with it, since you ceased possessing it months before the deadline. What I would mention, however, is that the exemption for possessing an antique firearm is solely as a curiosity or ornament.

Buying it and selling it on the same day smacks of trade or business and one must be registered as a firearms

dealer to carry out any such transaction – even one. That might be the issue.

Q&A about a dealership issue:

I work in a Gun shop and we have recently had our Gunsmith pass away. He had a separate RFD to the shop and I am servant on both. When the gunsmith was in and out of hospital and bedridden, his home was raided by the police and they found several section 2 items that were omitted from his register which they seized. They asked my employer to absorb the guns onto the shop register which has been done and they revoked the gunsmith even though his RFD expired a couple of weeks after the raid. He was never charged or prosecuted only revoked.

Now that he has passed and his estate is being valued, the police have told one of the executors (another RFD) that they will come to our premises collect the guns and have them destroyed.

The guns have a value of perhaps 5-6k and the estate and its recipients will be denied their value if the police carry out their threat.

I have told the executor that I will refuse them access to the guns as they are now held legally, at least until my boss returns from his holiday. Is it lawful for police to seize and destroy property (of some value and somewhat after the fact) of a deceased's persons estate when they are now legally lodged?

SRA: Police have no power to revoke an RFD. The law only permits them to give an RFD 21 days' notice of their

intention to remove him from the register, which they can then do if he does not enter an appeal. If he appealed, the police can't remove his name from the register until 21 days after the appeal is abandoned or dismissed. His dying kinda trumps procedure. The police can remove his name from the register on the grounds that he has ceased trading – if he was a sole trader. In the case of a limited company, the death of one director would make no difference as all the directors would have to be registered as servants of the company.

RFD's registers have a long back story. Wiltshire Smallarms (Adrian Bull) got prosecuted in the 1990s for possession of ammunition without a certificate. He had 147 pallets of ex-Israel small arms ammunition in a secure farm building about three miles from his premises and the basis of the prosecution was that his RFD did not cover him to possess that which was not on his premises. The House of Lords agreed with the prosecution (and the jury) on appeal (R. v. Bull 1994). I contacted the Home Office (I was first defence expert in that case) after the judgment as what Adrian did - use a warehouse - was what most of the gun trade did and if R. v. Bull were to be enforced, I would have to register every premises at which I conducted business, such as auction houses, other RFD premises, Bisley camp etc. as the judgment gave no consideration to dealers buying and transporting their stock.

The Home Office quite quickly issued a circular to all chief officers of

police advising them not to rely on *R. v. Bull* and that they would clarify the law in primary legislation at the next available legislative opportunity. They did that in section 42 (1) of the first Firearms (Amendment) Act 1997, which added a new clause to section 8 of the Firearms Act 1968, which says: ***“(1A) Subsection (1) above applies to the possession, purchase or acquisition of a firearm or ammunition in the ordinary course of the business of a firearms dealer notwithstanding that the firearm or ammunition is in the possession of, or purchased or acquired by, the dealer or his servant at a place which is not a place of business of the dealer or which he has not registered as a place of business under section 33 or 37 of this Act.”*** And thus makes it clear that the activities which must be conducted on the registered premises are keeping the register, selling and exposing for sale. All the other activities that a dealer might engage in from manufacture to repairs to storage to buying do not have to take place on his registered premises. While there's a lot about *R. v. Bull* in the lawyer's guidebook 'Archbold' – they published section 33 as amended by section 13(1) of the 1988 Act and section 42(2) of the first 1997 Act to apparently clarify what the Bull judgment said, (Archbold section 24.44), that the special exemption from the need to hold a certificate in section 8 of the Firearms Act 1968 applies to;

- (i) A person carrying on the business of a firearms dealer

- (ii) Who is registered as such under s.33(see 24-103)
- (iii) Who in order to be registered under s.33 has furnished the chief officer of police with the prescribed particulars including particulars of *every place of business* at which he proposes to carry on business in the area as a firearms dealer);
- (iv) Who has in his possession or purchases or acquires a firearm or ammunition in the ordinary course of *that* business.

Mention in Archbold of section 42(1) as to what a place of business is (or is not) was an amendment to section 8 and appears in full at 24-43 in Archbold. The absence of a cross reference may, or may not, be leading many people into error.

Moving on, about ten years ago the Home Office superseded the Firearms Rules 1998 (which provided the format etc for RFD registers) with a statutory instrument that made computer registers compulsory. It was EU inspired, a total disaster and was withdrawn after a while. The result of that is Home Office guidance to police tells them that there is no format for a register - so any 'note' of what a gun is and where it came from would count as registration. In your position, it is quite possible that the police did not find it and, in any event, registration as a dealer exempted the late gunsmith from holding a certificate for the guns

and the amendment of section 8 of the Firearms Act 1968 by section 42(1) of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1997 makes clear that he did not need to hold a certificate to possess the guns at his home.

Dealers only must register 'stock', so guns that are not stock, such as those lodged by an FAC holder for storage or repair would not need to be in the register. Registration is used by dealers to prove their title to the goods and for insurance purposes as we can't insure that in which we don't have a financial interest. Some dealers nevertheless put everything in one book. I used to keep several books; repairs went in the repair book, storage was a separate accounts book and I kept a travel register because guns had to be logged within 24 hours and it was not always possible to get back to either of my registered premises within 24 hours of a transaction.

Once the police released the guns to you, their interest in them came to an end and what happens to them next is none of their business. The outstanding question in my tiny mind is to whom they belong? There's no legal problem with the late dealer having them at home. If the police think otherwise it would be a case of ignorance of the law. A dealer has only to take reasonable steps to secure the artefacts for which he is responsible and the only ground for giving notice of removal from the register is 'danger

to public safety or the peace'. Two cases (Spencer-Stewart v Kent in 1988 and Shepherd v chief constable of Devon and Cornwall in 2002) confirm that none of the apparent indiscretions in the late dealer's conduct amount to 'danger to public safety or the peace' so had he lived, defeating the police obsession with reducing the number of firearms in the hands of the public to an absolute minimum in court would not have been a legal problem, just a financial one.

Possession being nine tenths of the law, you are in a strong position, but you do need to make every effort to establish the provenance of the guns, as when the late dealer received them, did title pass to him or are there other parties with an interest in them? Those are matters for you and the executors to work out without police interference. The police service has a track record of destroying firearms and shotguns without any lawful authority for doing so. Without a court order, they have no business telling the executor his business.

In reply to one member expressing concerns about the lead shot ban we escaped from by leaving the EU following us here anyway.

The whole lead shot ban movement is political cobblers. In the 1970s swans were dying and anglers split lead shot was found in their gizzards. The actual culprit seems to have been unburned leaded petrol and lead dust in petrol

exhaust (now known as 'particulates') from 4-star pleasure boat engines settling on the surface of the water, getting on to waterfowls' feathers and being ingested as they preened: the same as oiled birds died from trying to preen clean. The powers that be restricted the use of lead shot in wetlands.

Lead forms an oxidised coating when exposed to air and that coating can be dissolved by acid rain - or acid in digestive tracts - and excess lead in our bodies can be urinated out via taking a good soak, such as in a swimming pool. BBC2's 'Timewatch' demonstrated this many years ago with personnel borrowed from Sheldon Bush and soaked in the Bath spa. Waterfowl spend a lot of time floating and thus clear any excess lead naturally.

We are a nation with lead water pipes and gutters not to mention over 100 tons of lead exposed to air and acid rain on the dome of St Paul's cathedral. To be serious about 'lead pollution' that would be a good starting point. An exemption for ammunition would neuter the objections since their objective is damage to the shooting sports and not anything to do with the environment. Indoor ranges must have extractor fans, for example, to blow the 'particulates' out into the environment.

Some changes have been made. Tim Bonner (Countryside Alliance) observed in his blog that the people who seem to know the most about the alternatives to lead shot are people who have never used any of the

alternatives, while he managed the whole of the last shooting season without using lead at all. It can be done, at a cost; it's the reason why that is questionable.

Forestry in Scotland banned lead core bullets and insist on solid copper ones, so they have replaced one poisonous heavy metal with another - which also frequents roofs on public buildings - so what difference it makes remains to be opined about: there never will be any empirical evidence. Our informant said that solid copper bullets ricochet like cue balls and my own observation is that copper takes longer to form its Verdigris coating than lead does. My local gun shop has 20-year-old bismuth cartridges on the shelves. Nobody wants something potentially less effective than what is known: we already have that problem with the reduction in available herbicidal sprays. There's nothing left on the open market that can touch Knotweed or ivy.

I have stayed out of the lead shot 'debate' because it's nonsense. At best a few people hope to get gongs out of it, but the government treats all shooters as target criminals and has never decorated anybody from the gun lobby. Those people are turkeys voting for Christmas. ☹️

Battle of Shrewsbury 2022

10 & 11 July

Billed as the largest free event in the living history calendar and not having been held since 2019, we went along to see over a thousand of our members doing what they pay their subs to do. Shrewsbury is an old town and is

geared up to receiving visitors to its famous battleground year round. Some of the buildings might have been there when the original battle took place in 1471, such as the 12th century abbey; others just look old.

A free to enter event, the only actual cost was the £10 a day parking fee. On the Saturday we arrived early afternoon and queued along Gander Lane into the field used for parking – which William Seymour identifies as Margaret's centre on the day, commanded by the 1st Baron Wenlock.

We followed the crowd to see where it went – loosely speaking northeast onto ground where John Courteney, 15th Earl of Devon's command formed Margaret's left battle on the day.

Tewkesbury is re-enacted on that ground, set up as an arena area screened on all sides by living history camps, a separate living history camp between the arena and the car park we were shoe-horned into on the Sunday and between them and the arena, the trade tents.



The 'plastic camp' is partially concealed along the way. 'Plastic' is living history jargon for inauthentic and in this instance refers to nylon tents.

What became known as the Wars of the Roses over three hundred years after it was all over was a series of battles as the descendants of King Edward III fought each other for the Crown while the monarch at the time – Henry VI – lost his marbles.

This is the full plate armour period, then and now, for those who can afford it.



In 1471, Edward IV landed with a small army on the east coast and meandered towards London unopposed. He left it next day to meet Lancastrian forces at Barnet on 14 April whom he defeated on a misty battlefield.

Margaret of Anjou – Henry VI's Queen - landed with a small army at Weymouth on the day of the Barnet battle and on learning of it planned on leading her army into Wales to link up with Jasper Tudor. Joined by fugitives from Barnet, she was denied access to the Severn bridge at Gloucester and marched on to Tewkesbury in search of a crossing.

Tewkesbury is where the river Avon meets the Severn. Margaret's force had

its back to the small Swilgate Brook with the abbey the other side of the brook and the Avon beyond the abbey.

Crossing the brook was achieved by some car parkers as a short cut and is no mean feat unless there is a bridge. All the more so in medieval footwear. The distances these armies covered on foot before shoes had heels is quite something.

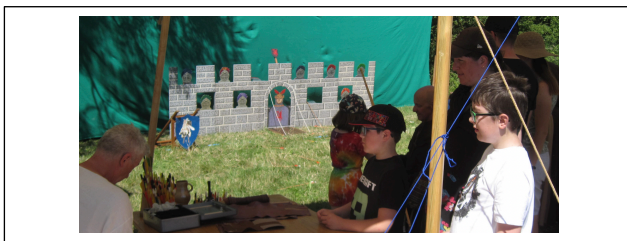
There was a bridge in 1471 when Wenlock's battle was forced back over the brook and into Bloody Meadow by the Abbey. When Devon's battle broke, his men fell back towards the Abbey or filtered through the town in hope of crossing the Avon higher up.

The losing side of any engagement in this period suffers the heaviest casualties, cut down in retreat. Some fugitives sought sanctuary in the abbey in which some fighting or murders took place as it had to be reconsecrated afterwards. On 10 July, the abbey held a compline service at 7.30pm with a discreet notice asking those congregating to leave their weapons at the door.

The re-enactment in the arena takes place far from the audience and this year in bright sunshine in the sun's dress rehearsal for the heatwave a week later.

We haven't seen any figures from the organisers yet, but would say that Saturday was very well attended with a lot of people viewing the re-enactment itself. We thought Sunday's re-enactment less well attended but there were probably more visitors overall. The ice cream vendors' queues

didn't slack off while the engagement was in progress.



The trade stands' attractions ran from authentic-looking dressing up stuff to weapons for re-enactors only to wild boar and venison burgers, a beer tent and have-a-go archery. Living history in the trade area included various goings on so there was plenty to keep the visitor's attention all day.



MORE DORSAL FINS FROM OUR READERS

An RFD writes: Further to our recent correspondence on the subject, the executors have told the police they are not taking the guns and the police have backed down, except for a few guns they still have, which they say will be destroyed. The executors have responded that they will put a value on those guns and sue for their replacement cost should they not be returned.

I see this as a muscle flexing exercise to deliver a punishment without the involvement of the courts. The police have thrown a lot of resources at this which is disheartening considering the wait for renewals and grants. One FEO involved in this told me 'the problem with you lot' (I'm presuming that means the gun trade) 'Is that you know how to make stuff'.

SRA replies: There are a lot of new FEOs out there who have yet to learn how to behave. The 'problem' with the police administering firearms controls is that they are half-trained on a dog's breakfast of guidance notes, police magazine articles and the assumption that a policeman's word is law instead of studying the judicial source documents – The Firearms Acts and the reported court decisions that are the common law.

Home Office guidance to police, statutory and non-statutory, basically seeks to reverse those Parliamentary and judicial decisions that inconvenience Home Office policy. Parliament has repeatedly refused to give the police a statutory right to

inspect domestic security, for example, yet recent 'statutory' guidance says that 'everywhere firearms are stored' must be inspected. A tall order without a statutory power to do so and in any event three quarters of the firearms in the UK are nothing to do with police controls.

On the property matter, various bits of legislation give the courts powers to forfeit private property, but not the police, who are supposed to hand property back (once it has no evidential value) to the person with the best claim to receive it. The Police Property Act 1897 appears still to be intact for this purpose.

RFD: We have also had a police edict that any accusation of domestic abuse is an instant revocation, without investigation. We can all see how this can and will be abused.

SRA: recent 'statutory' guidance exhorts firearms departments to check applicants' addresses against the domestic abuse register - so Thames Valley did that and revoked a farmer's certificate for a domestic abuse callout to his address a month before he got the keys to it. The abuse callout itself was a non-event. Police attended and found nobody home and nothing to report, so this was a case of a badly trained algorithm. Instead of correcting the defect the police simply deleted the domestic abuse paragraph from the revocation letter and reissued it with just the makeweights as their evidence. Then they engaged in months of ducking and weaving and abuse of process before bottling out of

explaining it all to a judge by putting new certificates in the post.

RFD: We had a customer who naively accepted a caution for assault. He has been revoked and guns removed. His son (under 18) is an SGC holder and a sponsored competitive clay shooter. (Gun lent by manufacturer). The guns have since been passed to another SGC holder. The son has been told by FEO he is restricted to only shooting his own gun in the presence of new holder rather than the usual any certificate holder over 21yrs. That will curtail his competitive ability somewhat.

SRA, we test arbitrary 'rules' from inept administrators by asking "how would you phrase the charge?" A certificate holder over age 15 can be in possession of his own gun without a supervising adult.

RFD: FEO telling FAC holder that once a variation was issued that they had a month to purchase or lose the variation.

SRA: Any variation on a certificate is valid for the life of the certificate.

RFD: FEO telling FAC holder (after losing previous permission) that the land for their new permission was not already on the database FEO refused to visit the new site and revoked the FAC.

SRA: Revocation of a certificate can only happen where there is provable danger to public safety or the peace. Where a good reason ends, the certificate can be partially revoked to remove firearms from it for which the holder has no good reason and put on a section 7 permit to give him time to organise his good reason. Police can

'check' a new piece of land off a map, or by phoning the owner. The function of naming land on the firearm certificate is to enable a police roadside check to assess whether the certificate holder's 'good reason' for having his firearm with him at that time passes muster or not. Certificate holders can be prosecuted under section 19 of the Firearms Act for possessing their firearms (with suitable ammunition) in a public place 'without lawful authority or a reasonable excuse'. Lawful authority refers to what he's doing at the time. A reasonable excuse is just that – such as crossing a public highway from one part of the land to another.

RFD: Referee (non-shooter) complaint of bullying and intimidation by FEO who told them that should FAC holder do anything wrong the referee will be in the dock. Referee felt pressured to removing support for FAC holder.

SRA: There is no come-back in law on referees. The only duty a referee might have to perform is attending an appeal as a character witness if the person he referenced is refused the certificate.

RFD Application by business for an RFD not even being responded to despite several attempts.

SRA. Police must carry out their duties within a reasonable time. Failing to deal with a potential RFD promptly could be construed as unlawfully restraining his trade, which means issuing proceedings in the High Court for what used to be a writ of

Mandamus. The one I drafted last week worked for the client in 24 hours.

RFD: Young game keeper (already a holder of SGC and of DSC1) granted .22 but refused 22/250 by FEO who insists young keeper must be mentored to shoot foxes. Young keeper not able to carry out his job properly and may lose it.

FEO: Which misses the point that he must have the rifle to be trained on it. We seem to have a *bandar-log* of newbies trying on all sorts of powers that don't fit them while the people who are supposed to make the decisions sit it out in their ivory towers. When it goes wrong, it seems to descend upon the lowest ranks. Watch for the Plymouth shooting results. Having seized his guns, the Home Office seizure policy states that the decision to return them must be made by an assistant chief constable. We're waiting to see if the axe lands on him, or the head of firearms 'licensing', some lowly FEO, or on us with another knee-jerk reaction.

RFD FEO arranged for home interview (renewal) at 5:30am as it suits their home life and refused to change it to a more reasonable hour stating that the renewal would be suspended without the interview.

SRA: Statutory guidance to police para 2.17 says "an interview, if required, may be completed over the telephone, videocall or by email rather than by home visit" and para 2.19 says "*Visits in connection with grant and renewal should always be made by prior appointment and take place at*

a mutually convenient time." These FEOs should learn to read.

RFD FEO asking SGC holder proof of need for shotgun and of proof of use.

SRA: 'Need' is the test for a prohibited weapons authority. So far as shotguns go section 28 of the Firearms Act 1968 (as amended) says:

Special provisions about shot gun certificates.

(1) Subject to subsection (1A) below, a shot gun certificate shall be granted or, as the case may be, renewed by the chief officer of police if he is satisfied that the applicant can be permitted to possess a shot gun without danger to the public safety or to the peace.

(1A) No such certificate shall be granted or renewed if the chief officer of police—

(a) has reason to believe that the applicant is prohibited by this Act from possessing a shot gun; or

(b) is satisfied that the applicant does not have a good reason for possessing, purchasing or acquiring one.

(1B) For the purposes of paragraph (b) of subsection (1A) above an applicant shall, in particular, be regarded as having a good reason if the gun is intended to be used for sporting or competition purposes or for shooting vermin; AND AN APPLICATION SHALL NOT BE REFUSED BY VIRTUE OF THAT PARAGRAPH MERELY BECAUSE THE APPLICANT INTENDS NEITHER TO USE THE GUN HIMSELF NOR TO LEND

IT FOR ANYONE ELSE TO USE. (My capitalisation for effect. It's perfectly legal to keep a shotgun on a certificate for reasons other than using it – anticipation, collecting, heirloom, investment, etc.)

RFD FEO insisted on another early hour visit at SGC holder's home (7am) as above only time they could attend. SGC holder forgot to tell his wife who opened the door to FEO in her dressing gown and was understandably a bit short with FEO. FEO then says to SGC holder that obviously the wife has issue with guns and perhaps it would be more appropriate to not renew his license. FEO then returns to the SGC holders home after he has left for work to ask wife if she has concerns about husband and guns in the property.

SRA Visits must be at a *mutually* convenient time – see above. If they can't find one convenient to the FEO, send another FEO. Simples. I can't see how the FEO could discuss a certificate application with the wife without violating the Data Protection Act.

RFD From multiple sources it seems it is now normal practice for an FEO after a renewal visit to wait for the license holder to leave for work, then return to their home and ask partner/spouse for access to gun safe as they need to check a serial number. Obviously to see if they know where the keys are kept.

SRA That was a case by Essex police against their deputy lord lieutenant. He left the keys with his mum to facilitate a police inspection in his absence, so they used the keys to seize the guns. Certificate holders can

delegate access to their guns to third parties in limited circumstances and that is not one of them. The FEO is breaching the Data Protection Act by disclosing information from a confidential application for to a third party.

RFD FEO gleefully telling renewal applicant how they are loving those in the process of renewing, failing (either through their own fault or the firearms dept) going past the deadline without putting the guns in licensed storage and the FEOs getting to join the police in kicking in the door in the early hours of the morning to remove their guns and arrest them for unlawful possession.

SRA provided a renewal application is made in good time – more than 8 weeks before the due date – the certificate's validity is automatically extended by 8 weeks *after* the renewal date to help police catch up. If they haven't done their duty by that deadline, they must issue a section 7 permit to cover continued possession ad nauseum until the certificate is renewed. Certificate holders who fail to apply for renewal at all are likely to find the guns searched for as evidence for the prosecution. It would be a stupid magistrate who would authorise forced entry on a search warrant in such circumstances and in any event all damage must be paid for.

RFD FEO announced in the shop that they thought shooting foxes with shotguns should be illegal The FEO said that they had a meeting with an RSPCA officer who had told them a fox

had taken 3 days to die after being shot.

SRA shooting is a humane method of despatching animals. In the old days RSPCA officers had .455" Webley revolvers for putting wounded animals down. SRA members are insured for carrying out humane despatch with appropriate firearms on public highways at the request of police or RSPCA and elsewhere at request of the owner. Wildlife belongs to the owner of the land it is on so the RSPCA should have called someone to put it down if incapable of doing it themselves. The FEO is entitled to his ignorant opinions and is equally entitled to keep them to himself so that they do not interfere with his work. I'd quite like to see his job description.

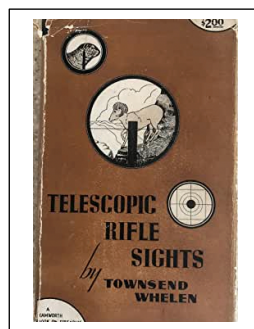
RFD We receive a lot of enquiries from concerned SGC and FAC holders who are too intimidated by the FEOs to even ask them the simplest of questions regarding licensing. It's becoming very toxic because the deliberate fostering of mistrust by FEOs. How they can even begin to 'police' firearms without trust is beyond me. The days of the FEO being part of the shooting community is long gone, and our shop now empties of customers as soon as one arrives.

SRA policing by consent went out the window years ago as it is contrary to Home Office policy.

RFD I had to resort to refusing a telephone request from firearms for information until they responded to my guns left at door NFLMS checks. I had told them there was no need for us to take in any unlicensed guns at all we

just viewed it as a civic responsibility but as one of the requests was outstanding for over 2 years despite constant requests we would no longer do so. They finally cleared the guns so we could destroy them. But not before them letting slip that the gun outstanding for 2 years was taken from an RFD some years before and there was no paper trail as to how it went from an evidence locker into the public domain. It was rather snidely put to me that we get a lot of unlicensed guns left with us and why was that? And the honest response was because they don't trust the police.

SRA Non-statutory guidance to police is that no obstruction should be put in the way of anyone wishing to dispose of firearms or ammunition. Some police forces have put a condition on RFDs to cover them for 30 days or so when prohibited weapons or ammunition are handed in but that didn't stop Surrey taking Brent Slade to court and destroying his business for having taken in a couple of air cartridge revolvers. It is good practice, not a requirement, to notify police of guns surrendered so that they can recover stolen guns and such. ☺



**Telescopic
Rifle Sights
by
Townsend Whelen
Published by
Samworth Small-
Arms Technical
Publishing Co.
Onslow County North Carolina.**

Written in 1936, Col. Townsend Whelen's book is interesting if only to make a contemporary reader appreciate how much things have changed as regards telescopic sights.

The book covers various models and types of sight, breaking them into their own chapters. These include 'target', 'small game and varmint', 'big game' and 'junior', the latter being 'scopes made for .22lr rifles.

The book contains a few drawings and photographs of 'scopes, and mounts as well as a number of ballistic charts and illustrations of reticules. The latter the author categorises as either suitable or unsuitable.

The main complaint of the 'unsuitable' aiming marks is that they are likely to obscure the target. This may be correct, but the fact that few of the 'scopes have objective lenses greater than 25mm must also be considered.

Since several of the 'scopes have magnifications of more than 8X, one can only surmise that the rifle shooters back then must have been used to relatively dim images.

Aside from the disproportionate, length-to-front lens ratio, of these items, another departure from today's optics is the method of adjustment. Many of the 'scopes featured, particularly the 'target' models had no internal adjustments for windage and elevation, relying on their mounts being adjustable instead.

This was something the late Col. Jeff Cooper regarded as a good idea, and he maintained that 'scopes were evolving the wrong way. In his view, scopes

with internal adjustments would always be more prone to failure.

One drawback of external adjustments is that the distance between the mounts is critical if the amount of adjustment is to correspond with the values on the mounts. The optimum distance for the scopes discussed is 7.2 inches. If the mounts are closer together the adjustment will be greater for each 'click', but less if they are further apart. Given that when the book was published almost no rifle had any form of 'scope rail, you will gather that buying 'scopes guaranteed work for gunsmiths.

Another feature of the target 'scopes is that not only did they adjust via their mounts, but the scopes also moved forward under recoil, requiring resetting after every shot.

The small game scopes were essentially the same in general layout as the target varieties, but these were not expected to shift under recoil. As with the chapter on target 'scopes, the author lists a number of different 'scope manufacturers, models and mounts. The prime difference with these scopes is that they tend to have lower magnifications. Given the restrictive fields of view however, this is hardly surprising.

Several models of big game scopes do have internal adjustments for elevation, but the major difference is in the mounts. The build quality of these mounts is far more substantial than their target equivalents, to prevent the scope moving under recoil. The trade-off is that the sight adjustments are less refined.

The junior 'scopes, are probably the closest in general presentation to the 'entry level' scopes we have today. Most come with their own mounts, some of which still adjust the point of aim, but one or two have internal adjustments.

The final chapter is a general overview of the optics at work within a scope: aspects such parallax and the coating of lenses to aid light gathering.

One unexpected piece of advice in many of the chapters was the promotion of the value in dry-fire practice. The benefit of shooting sans ammo has long been de rigueur among the target shooting fraternity but seeing it in an early work predominately about hunting was most refreshing.

Advice on dry-fire notwithstanding, this work may not be of much practical value to a modern reader. However, it does provide a detailed retrospective view of how far we have progressed.



Penned by the Usual Suspect

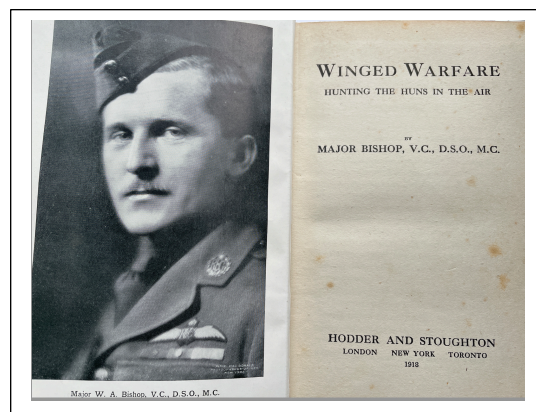
WINGED WARFARE By

Major W. A. Bishop V.C., D.S.O., M.C.

Published by Hodder & Stoughton in 1918

Written, according to Brereton Greenhaus (see below) between September 1917 and January 1918, while Bishop was *"busy (a) getting married and honeymooning, and (b) crisscrossing North America making patriotic speeches and hobnobbing with the high and the mighty, how did he find the time to write a book*

between mid-September 1917 and the end of January 1918? For a



foundation, he had his logbook, possibly copies of his combat reports, and the many letters that he had mailed home to fiancée and family. Both his letters and his combat reports show a simple, unsophisticated facility with words appropriate to a bright young middle-class male. There is no evidence that a ghost writer was employed." The book's last page finds Billy Bishop at Buckingham Palace in 1918 to collect his three decorations: shunted into a group of 150 officers there to receive the D.S.O. medal, *"he told me to go in with the D.S.O.s, as I was the only V.C."* The King *"congratulated me on winning them, and said it was the first time he had been able to give all three to any one person."*

Canadian by birth in 1896, the author volunteered for the Great War as a cavalryman and after three hospital stays -one of which was after a horse sat on him – he got to the war by transferring to the Royal Flying Corps and *"spent four months in France as an observer. How I longed during all that time for a fight in the*

air! But no real chances came, and, finally, I quitted my seat as a passenger without having fired a single combat shot from the tidy little machine-gun that was always near me and seemed to yearn as much as I did to have a go at the enemy."

His observer tour of duty was in 1916, of which he says; ***"You can locate his dugouts, his dumps, his lines of communication, his battery positions, his shelters behind the trees, and, in a general way, keep tab on his "ways that are dark, and tricks that are vain."***

It would be 1917 before he got to be a fighter pilot. His first confirmed victory was 25 March when he shot Gefr Berkling's Albatross Scout down.

Billy Bishop was writing for a reading public whose children were not volunteering in sufficient numbers to fill the gaps caused in Canadian Expeditionary Force formations by German machine guns. They knew next to nothing of the realities of the European war beyond the casualty rates and had never been in an aeroplane and so could not imagine the view from on high until he told them:

"From Arras I could see the Channel, and it resembled more a river of liquid gold than a sea. Across the Channel it was possible to make out England and the Isle of Wight. The chalk cliffs of Dover formed a white frame for one side of the splendid picture. Toward Germany one could see a tremendous wooded country, a stretch of watered lowlands beyond the trees, and the rest indistinct. To the south I could

make out a bit of the River Seine, while to the north lay the Belgian coast. The marvellous beauty of it all made the war seem impossible."

He was too young in the Great War for that part of the human brain which makes risk assessments to have fully formed. That happens to you at about age 25, which is why so few war graves contain the mortal remains of anyone over 24. As the old saying goes, "you can persuade most men to fight but you can't convince old men that war will be fun."

Fun it was for Bishop: a jolly jape throughout. Or so he presents it: he does not play the patriotic card, nor the call of duty. He was competing with his peers. A bearcat for nerve and a lone wolf hunter killer by instinct he went out day after day looking for the enemy.

"It is discouraging work, and very aggravating, to chase machines that will not fight. For my part, I find that I get in a tremendous temper and am very apt to run unnecessary risks when I meet another enemy. It is a case of anything to relieve one's feelings."

"It is great fun to fly very low along the German trenches and give them a burst of machine-gun bullets as a greeting in the morning, or a good-night salute in the evening. They don't like it a bit. But we love it; we love to see the Kaiser's proud Prussians running for cover like so many rats. to direct artillery fire, to photograph, to bomb an ammunition-dump or supply-train, or just to look old Fritz over and see

in a general way what he is up to, your first journey into Hunland is a memorable event in your life."

He glosses over most of his squadron's losses and doesn't name other pilots – but does mourn occasionally, as in this piece, ***"He was only eighteen, and had been in France but three weeks. The British Flying Corps is filled with boys of that age—with spirits of daring beyond all compare, and courage so self-effacing as to be a continual inspiration to their older brothers in the service."***

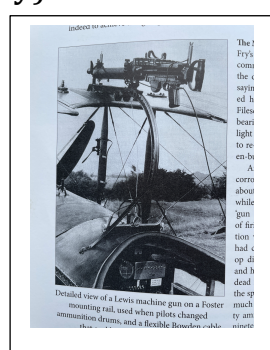
Nor does he mention anything about flying to put others off, such as the biting cold of flying an open cockpit machine several miles high. He sometimes flew without helmet and goggles because he liked the wind in his hair, and as anyone who has worn goggles will tell you, they do restrict one's vision, particularly peripheral vision. Parachutes are not mentioned: he was writing in 1918 and the RAF did not get them until 1924. He does describe one German machine that broke up instead of catching fire and he watched the crew fall to their presumed deaths, neither able nor willing to intervene.

"... 'wind up' is army talk for being scared to death." Doesn't seem to be catching in the RFC though. ***"Archie" it is the old story of familiarity breeding contempt, but of late the German "Archie" family has multiplied to such an extent as almost to make it dangerous to go visiting across the Hun lines."***

There was much debate – after these events – as to why German anti-aircraft fire was called 'archie': of a close encounter with one, Bishop writes of a ***"terrific "bang" close to my ears. I felt the tail of my machine suddenly shoot up into the air, and I fell about 300 feet before I managed completely to recover control. That shot, strange to relate, was the closest I have ever had from anti-aircraft fire. The smoke from the exploding shell enveloped me."*** Therein a clue; flying over some terrain, particularly over water can cause a bump – or a dip – as the air pressure changes and in 1921 Ernest Weekley's *'An Etymological Dictionary of Modern English'* suggested, ***"It was ... noticed at Brooklands that in the vicinity of, or over, water or damp ground, there were disturbances in the air causing bumps or drops to these early pioneers. Some of these 'remous' were found to be permanent, (such as) at the corner of the (Brooklands) aerodrome next to the sewage-farm, which became 'Archibald'.... the effect of having shell bursting near an aeroplane was to produce a 'remous' reminding the Brookland trained pilots of their old friend Archibald, (so) they called being shelled 'being Archied' for short."***



We get to page 194 of this 301-page book before he relates the tale of the dawn attack on a German airfield for which he gained the Victoria Cross. In his words, condensed for brevity, ***“I planned this expedition after much thought, and set it for June 2nd, (2017) as that was to be my day off. Dawn was the hour I considered advisable, as there would be very few machines in the air... as nothing like it had been done before, I knew that I would strike the Huns by surprise, and, considering that, I decided the risk was not nearly so great as it seemed, and that I might be able to get four or five more machines to my credit, (he was on 22 1/2) in one great swoop...on reaching the place, I saw there was nothing on the ground. Everyone must have been either dead asleep or else the station was absolutely deserted ...I decided I would try the same stunt some other day on another aerodrome... ahead, and slightly to one side of me, (meandering back, looking for trouble) I saw the sheds of another aerodrome...pretty far back from the lines. (He was thinking of the complications of escaping as by then he was lost anyway) I was over the***



Photos from Peter Kilduff's book

aerodrome, about 300 feet up. On the ground were seven German machines, and in my first glance I saw that some of them actually had their engines running.—Mechanics were standing about in groups. Then I saw a thing which surprised me very much—six of the machines were single-seaters, and one a two-seater. I was not very anxious for the two-seater to come up to attack me, as in taking off he would have a certain amount of protection from behind, with his observer, while the single-seater could have none. However, in this, luck also favoured me, as the two-seater did not move at all. I pointed my nose towards the ground, and opened fire with my gun, scattering the bullets all around the machines, and coming down to 50 feet in doing so...clearing off to one side, I watched the fun....one machine suddenly began to “taxi” off down the aerodrome. It increased its speed quickly, and I immediately tore down after it. I managed to get close on its tail, when it was just above the ground, and opened fire from dead behind it. There was no chance of missing, and I was as cool as could be. Just fifteen rounds, and it sideslipped to one side, then crashed on the aerodrome underneath. I was now keyed up to the fight, and turning quickly, saw another machine just off the ground. Taking careful aim at it, I fired from longer range than before, as I did not want to waste the time of going up close. The Hun saw I was catching him up, and pushed his nose down; then,

gazing over his shoulder at the moment I was firing at him, he crashed into some trees near the aerodrome. I think I hit him just before he came to the trees, as my tracers were then going in an accurate line. I again turned towards the aerodrome...two machines were taking off at the same time...One of the enemy machines luckily climbed away at some distance, while the other made up straight after me. At 1,000 feet, and only a few hundred yards from the aerodrome, I saw that he was catching me, so turned on him and opened fire. We made about two circuits around each other, neither getting a very good shot, but in the end I managed to get in a short burst of fire, and this machine went crashing to the ground, where it lay in a field, a few hundred yards from the aerodrome. The fourth machine then came up, and I opened fire on him...in the course of a short fight, (I) emptied the whole of my last drum at him...he turned and flew away.

In his after-action report, he distilled this engagement down to *"I fired on seven machines on the aerodrome some of which had their engines running. One of them took off and I fired 15 rounds at him from close range 60 feet up and he crashed. A second one taking off, I opened fire and fired 30 rounds at 150 yards range, he crashed into a tree. Two more were then taking off together. I climbed and engaged one at 1,000 feet, finishing my drum, and he crashed 300 yards from the aerodrome. I changed drums and*

climbed east. A fourth H.A. came after me and I fired one whole drum into him. He flew away."

Bishop's V.C. was one of only two issued in the Great War for actions that were not independently witnessed. The other went to America's unknown warrior in exchange for Congress having awarded Britain's unknown warrior a Medal of Honor.

Both medals have similar track records; in the 19th century awards reflect successful daring do and, on some occasions, a political perspective, such as keeping the successful defence of Rorke's Drift in January 1879 in the public eye well into 1880 when Assistant Commissary James Langley Dalton's award was announced more than a year after the battle.

The Victoria Cross warrant made the award available to all ranks but rendered dead people ineligible until 1920. Lieutenants Melville and Coghill were gazetted for their attempt to save the Queen's Colours from the Zulu in their 1879 flight from Isandlwana, which indicates that they would have been decorated had they lived. Following a change of policy, they were posthumously granted their V.C.s in 1902 although the medals were not sent to their next of kin until 1907.

In the Great War, a quarter of the V.C.s gazetted were posthumous. The warrant was amended in 1920 to include posthumous awards and 48% of Second World War recipients did not live to receive it. Since then, it's been 50-50.

Billy Bishop was a glory hunter, hinting in a letter to his wife three days

before his ground attack on a German airfield, ***"I have a great plan in mind. A real hair-raising stunt that I am going to try one of these days."***

Bishop knew Albert Ball had twice as many confirmed victories as he, so when he was killed on 6 May that year, catching him up became attainable. Ball's Victoria Cross was not announced until 7 June, so when Bishop wrote of his 'hair-raising stunt' to his wife the Victoria Cross was rocking horse manure in the Royal Flying Corps, having been pinned to just four chests, or five if you include Bell-Davies, who was in the Royal Naval Air Service in the Dardanelles.

Three other airmen had been gazetted; William Rhodes-Moorhouse of 2 Squadron RFC in April 1915 and Thomas Mottershead of 20 Squadron RFC in January 1917 both of whom died of wounds sustained. There was also the Royal Naval Air Service aviator Rex Warneford gazetted for an action on 17 June 1915. He was killed a month later when and aircraft he took off in folded.

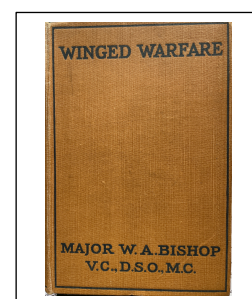
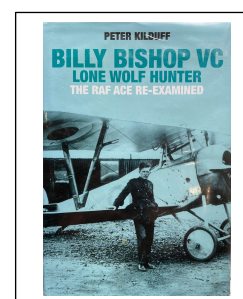
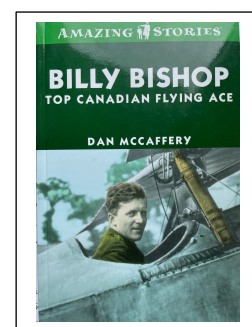
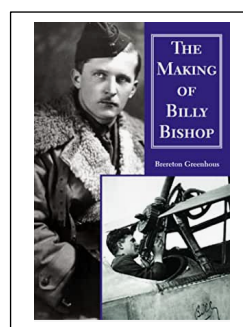
A lot of sources set the date of a medal being awarded as the date of the action, which is not so: there is the time lag between an action, the award being gazetted and the award being presented. Men who died of wounds were officially ineligible for the V.C. until 1920 yet were gazetted during the Great War and the awards eventually passed to their next of kin. Less clear is what happened where the person died of an unrelated matter shortly after the reported action, so I

have assumed that their deaths did not interrupt the process.

The letter to Mrs Bishop quoted from above was dated 31 May 1917 and the V.C. action was on 2 June. Albert Ball was killed on 6 May but his V.C. was not announced until 8 June – the same day as Frank McNamara *and Billy Bishop*.

Clouds have ebbed and flowed over Billy Bishop's V.C. since and several writers have revisited his exploits. We looked at three of them, but only so far as they discuss the V.C. viz:

- The making of Billy Bishop by Brereton Greenhaus (Dundurn Press 2002)
- Billy Bishop – top Canadian flying ace – by Dan McCaffery (James Lorimer & Co 2009)
- Billy Bishop V.C. – lone wolf hunter – by Peter Kilduff (Grub Street 2014)



Brereton Greenhaus is a myth buster with a lot of careful research backing him up. The war in the air features little before 1916 when the

British public became aware of German Zeppelin airships floating over to bomb them. The first half of the war, as Billy Bishop said when he was a flying observer, did not involve him in combat. Both sides also used men in gondolas under balloons as artillery observers so fighting aircraft development was initially for attacking balloons, then for dropping bombs on enemy targets and lastly for intercepting and engaging one another.

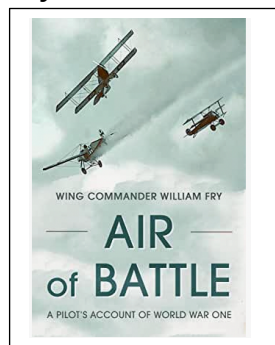
Most air combat took place on the German side of the wire and the German authorities took care to match their pilots claims to wreckage on the ground. The Royal Flying Corps could not do that and accepted pilot's victory claims. Dan McCaffery (see below) took the view that as scores rose, so did the optimism of claimants and he concedes that some two dozen of Billy Bishop's claims were unsupported. I made it 52 by not crediting him with kills that were witnessed but which were not corroborated by German sources with named casualties.

McCaffery also records that three (of the four) surviving 60 Squadron veterans who flew with Bishop refused to sign an RAF Museum first day cover commemorating Bishop's V.C. raid. Men who were there as Bishop claimed his scores. Greenhaus reckons only four of Bishop's victories were corroborated while conceding another twenty that were probable.

Concerning the 2 June 1917 raid, Greenhaus relies heavily on research published by Wing Commander Philip Markham in 1995 – which does not

appear in the bibliography of McCaffery but is cited by Kilduff.

What Markham's research uncovered was nothing and since you can't prove a negative it doesn't take matters forwards in either direction. Greenhaus says that night bombing of enemy airfields was in the RFC's repertoire by 1917 but daylight strafing raids were not. He claims that Billy Bishop approached two comrades about joining him – that is not in my 1918 edition of Bishop's book: Bishop does not mention discussing it with anyone else.



Cover of Willie Fry's book (amazon)



William Fry in 1917 (Wikipedia)

What Greenhaus quotes is from Willie Fry's book 'air of battle'. William Fry was one of the three veterans of 60 Squadron who refused to sign Bishop's V.C. cover. He had his doubts about Bishop's prowess from the start but kept them to himself for many years because printing the legend was the right thing to do. He told Dan McCaffery (for an earlier edition of his Bishop book than the one we have) that Bishop arrived back at the aerodrome at 05.40 firing off red flares. He observed that the Plane's Lewis gun was missing and he saw bullet holes in the tailplane. Other accounts identify more damage – bullet holes and flak - and nobody else

noticed the missing gun. Whatever the damage, Bishop logged using the same aircraft that afternoon for a 100-mile round trip to another airfield. The most suspect bit is that entry. My thinking is he probably did not fill the log in immediately and put the usual aircraft number out of habit.

The last voice we looked at was Peter Kilduff. His appendix tries to match Billy Bishop's claims to German losses. The latter's records are incomplete and are casualty, rather than aircraft lost, based. They do not seem to acknowledge the loss of an aircraft or balloon unless somebody was killed or wounded in action.

That was also the case in the Battle of Britain. The RAF did not include aircraft destroyed on the ground as losses, while admitting true numbers of aircraft lost in the air with mention of pilots who were safe.

In the same period of 1940, the Luftwaffe seem to have admitted half their losses, which may be because they only counted combat losses and that did not include those who ran out of fuel and ditched in *La Manche*.

Back to Kilduff. He identifies 15 of Bishop's claims as supported by named German casualties in the right place and the right time and six possible with named casualties. 52 of Bishop's claimed victories are not supported by German casualty reports, but for half of them Kilduff describes the German records as 'incomplete' or 'inexplicable'. They destroyed a lot of material when retreating in 1918 and were generally obstructive to subsequent researchers.

Greenhaus tells us that the RFC accepted 'out of control' as a probable loss, while the Germans did not. Most German planes claimed as kills by the RFC were attacked behind German lines and Bishop mentions letting his air machine spin down out of control and then recovering it at low level as a means of escaping hostile action. He might well have claimed pilots spinning out of a melee as probable.

As the newspapermen said at the end of the 1962 movie 'the man who shot Liberty Vallance', when the facts disagree with the legend, print the legend.

Billy Bishop's 1918 book is a rattling Biggles-type good read. He was a lone wolf hunter so that he did not have to protect fledglings and thus did not have witnesses to most of his actions. On 2 June 1917, two German casualties are possible matches for his ground attack in which he reported shooting down three machines, so if one pilot escaped unscathed, the German paperwork matches Bishop's after-action report, as they would not count a damaged aircraft as a casualty.

For the rest of his claims, I'd regard his as ambitious and optimistic rather than as a liar. Looking at the photo from Kilduff's book of the Lewis gun on its Foster mount, most of us would be lucky to hit anything with it.

But Bishop offers us two clues. He mentions surety of hitting one 'plane from the ammunition's tracer signatures and in a photo in Kilduff's book he is demonstrating pulling the gun down on the Foster mount – into the reloading position – to fire at

enemy aircraft from underneath. That and his repeated mentions of very close actions to my mind lend weight to his claims, while I also accept McCaffery's position that higher scorers were prone to exaggeration.

The interesting voice from that past is William Fry's and we will look at him in a future issue.

OBITUARY

Thomas Arthur Milbourne

15th May 1934-26th April 2022

Born to John (Jack) and Peggy (Margaret), the youngest of their seven children – four of whom survived into adulthood – young Arthur (never Thomas) began his shooting career before he had reached double figures when visiting a farm upon which his older brothers had permission to ferret. The gun used was an ancient Damascus-barrelled hammer gun (with a gaping hole in one of the barrels, was stored in the barn just around the corner from the main door.

Sometime later, while playing on the local tip, he discovered an old muff pistol, which he kept in a jar of used sump oil to free it and prevent further corrosion. This was his pride and joy until his father discovered it and ordered its immediate return to the tip. (Dad had had his fill of guns during the 1914-18 business.) Benefitting from the Butler Education Act of 1944, Arthur passed the Eleven-Plus examination to gain entry to the local grammar school – which he then had to leave aged fifteen due to family financial constraints.

At sixteen and in employment, he acquired a firearm certificate and then, with his father's approval, a .22" rifle. He used that extensively for rabbit shooting on several farms which brought in a welcome income from butchers and game dealers. I was always good to have the jingle of a handful of extra shillings in the pocket.

When he took rabbits home, he would be met at the door by his mother, who would take the rabbits from him with "go and clean your rifle", which he did and by the time he left his bedroom it was to the smell of an excellent and delicious rabbit pie cooking.

His national service was in the R.A.F. which took him to Hong Kong and Malaya, followed by a three-year stint in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers at his local Territorial Army unit – because it had a good rifle team and he was a keen member of it. During the 1960s, he married my mother and started his family after moving to a newly built house on a small estate in Carlisle. He improved the property by adding a garage and a shed before moving to a house on the outskirts of his hometown of Brampton.

During this time, he worked at Spade-Adam, home of the blue streak rocket. After that project, he spent most of the rest of his working life as a surveyor in the building industry.

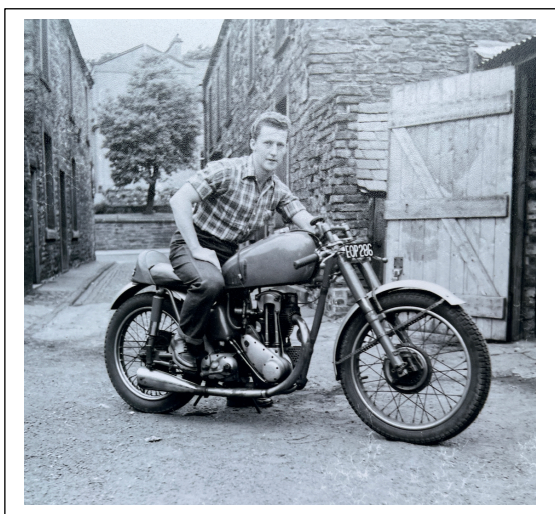


When made redundant at age 59, he worked in a supermarket until retirement and then took a Saturday job in a garage.

There came a time when he sold his trusty BSA Sportsman 15 to buy a Winchester 9422, which he enjoyed. The 1980s saw him (and me) in a local shooting club, where he had an Enfield No2, a Webley MkVI, a Smith & Wesson Model 27 and a Ruger single six revolver – which he thought complimented his Winchester 9422.

He went back to .303” with a Winchester-made P14, although his favourite things were his end-of-trail 9422 and single six. He eventually traded the 9422 in to get a short ~Lee Enfield in .22”. I think he regretted that after, but in the 1990s local police would not let him have two rifles of the same calibre, so to get what he wanted he had to part with what he loved. There were also cheap fun guns – Diana and Webley air rifles and pistols by Webley and Crossman.

As well as shooting, Arthur had other interests in life. He was a keen motorcyclist in the 1950s.



He was well read and a long-time subscriber to ‘The Wide World Magazine’: archaeology, more particularly Egyptology fascinated him, as did wildlife documentaries – particularly about African big cats. He liked films, especially older black and white ones (when such things were well scripted and acted, had compelling protagonists and excellent lines). Not to mention long walks in the countryside.

He gave up shooting in September 2021, selling his rifle and deciding not to go for his F.A.C. renewal after a (late, we think) diagnosis of vascular dementia. He held his F.A.C. for some seventy-one years – something of a record nowadays. He was one of nature’s gentlemen, well-mannered and ready to be a friend to all, always with a ready smile and time to talk.

He had a fall at his home on 12 April and died in hospital of the 26th, a little under three weeks short of his 88th birthday. His loss is immeasurable and he will never be forgotten.

ADM

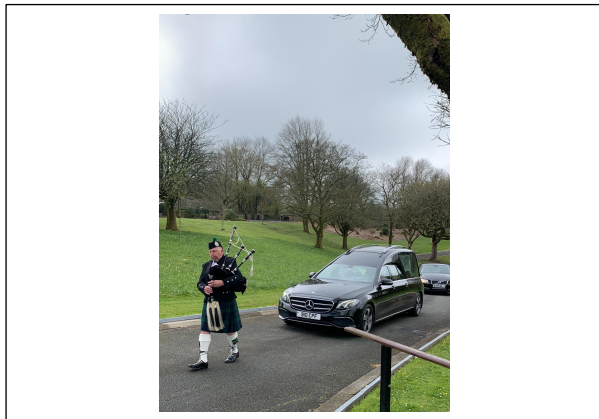
Richard Law writes: Seventy-one years a certificate holder and only one arbitrary disruption from the police not letting him have two .22” rifles at the same time. Petty and ridiculous. Arthur’s way out, giving up and letting go when he was ready to, is the way it should be.

It’s certainly less traumatic than the end to Rex Mort’s shooting career, which he reported to us as two armed trespassers turning up at his house during the hours of darkness to

demand he hand over his firearms and certificate on the spot.

Our spring issue (73) was somewhat disrupted by family matters; mother-in-law died in March aged 89, full of beans until she had a stroke one evening. Such tragedies have a knock-on effect through the family that take our time away from routines. Time to mourn, to regroup and to see to their rites of passage.

In Bonn's case that meant taking her ashes to the Trossachs in Scotland, where her husband's ashes were scattered beneath a rowan tree in 1998 and those of her Downes Syndrome daughter in 2018. We planned on doing that on the 8th May, which would have been her 90th birthday. The disruption caused to our routines by the bereavement had affected us – and then on the 27th April, the day after Mr. Milbourne died, Elizabeth's brother Alex died driving



home from a gardening job, aged 68 after just four weeks and four days as clan chief. The last time we saw him was at Bonn's funeral where he piped her into the crematorium. He was supposed to accompany us to Scotland and pipe the ashes to the wind. And then he was supposed to fit the new

shower in our pink bathroom, help with spring cleaning the range and fit the outside lights.

We weren't the only organisation disrupted by events; War and Peace came – and went. It started as military vehicle collectors and restorers displaying their collections. Add to that the traders and some battle re-enactment and that was what the show was.

Cancelled in 2020 and 2021, the organisers rolled the bookings over each year and this year couldn't make it fly. They said:

It's with regret we have to advise that third party logistical issues and infrastructure supplies which are currently unavailable have resulted in the War and Peace Show not being able to meet the insurance and Health and Safety requirements for an open public event.

As shows go, we thought it had been going downhill in recent years, particularly as the continental exhibitors did not come in the same numbers. Remember the U-Boat crew? Some years since they came. Our particular favourite was a bombed-out French café façade and a display of French Resistance and S.O.E. artifacts. We'd have made them a good offer to take it over if we'd known they were giving up, as it would be the perfect backdrop for promoting the novel we are still writing.

The big difference between the last show in 2019 and this year 2022 is Brexit. In 2019 the National Crime

Agency were creeping about the show scaring dealers off selling battlefield relics – despite Home Office guidance to police approving such sales. All deacs had been declared ‘defectively deactivated’ and could only be sold to persons outside the EU unless ‘upgraded’ to the new EU spec. That problem was solved by Brexit, as we are now all outside the EU.

We suspect that the W&P 2022 launch was met with great indifference from continental exhibitors and traders unwilling to brave the Customs barrier at Dover and the conflict between police, Home Office and NCA attitudes to the militaria market. If there wasn’t a good surge of new money for the show, reserves were probably insufficient to float the show up to the off-the-street gate receipts.

Our problem was getting the Spring Journal out. Preparing it starts at a leisurely pace. We usually write the book reviews first and then move on to matters arising as they arise, while cribbing from the postbag as letters are received and written. Then there’s events – a new statutory instrument, guidance to the police, a knee jerk somewhere, a court case of interest.

We write up news items as they come in – you can see that from the bits we have published about a fatal accident on the ‘Rust’ movie set. The trouble with being allegedly a quarterly is our news is often stale and that is why so much of it is in a commentary style.

As a deadline looms, we pull stuff together, draw in or excise fillers according to space and write the

editorial last. For Journal 73 we planned on posting it in the last week of April so that we could close the office for the 7-14th May and head north. That meant getting the completed pages to Ray the Print by mid April.

Having written the book reviews, we wrote to Pitkin Publishing for permission to reproduce parts of their book ‘wartime recipes’ on 10 February as it was a bought copy – and their permission letter was the last piece of the jigsaw we received. We have a dual database system so having shifted the Journal to Ray on 26th April – at least ten days late – our next task was to check one database against the other, thus to have an audited membership number and a complete set of printed labels to stick on envelopes by the time Ray finished the print run.

At which point things started to go wrong: first was we didn’t notice that the back-up box of C5 envelopes was less than half full until we belatedly wanted them as somewhere to stick labels. Living three miles to the right of the middle of nowhere, we are in our fourth decade of relying on postal and courier services and being at the end of the chain, those services are not fast.

The envelopes arrived in the nick of time, but we ran out of labels, so the last hundred or so envelopes were hand-written.

Postage was 12p per journal when we moved to Pembrokeshire. Now, with the franking discount, they are 51p each....