

THE DEERSTALKER

May 2013



Newsletter of the NSW Deerstalkers Association

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From The Editor.

No doubt members have been wondering why there has been no edition of "Deerstalker" for 8 months. The reasons were beyond my control, but I wish to apologise in any case. Hopefully you will find something of interest in this edition.

Much has happened on the shooting scene in recent months. Probably the most emotive issue has been that of shooting in National Parks. The NSW government did not allow the real facts about how this would be done to be explained by any of its agencies for some time, which resulted in a lot of adverse publicity and outrageous claims by Green groups. Even when it was properly explained by Game Council, the explanation was scarcely reported. As usual the damage has been done. I can only guess that the government was yet again pandering to the greens in return for some favour. It seems politics always over rides truth. In a nut shell, National Parks will control if, when, & how any shooting occurs in the parks. Under OH&S legislation an employer cannot knowingly put any employee in danger, so the flack jacket request by some Parks employees was not only ridiculous, but illegal. When shooting happens in a park the employer has to remove its employees (& the public) from that area to conform with OH&S law, as is done in other States.

Many confused shooters & bush walking friends have contacted me about this issue.

As I understand it, there will be no open slather for shooting in National Parks. If it does come about it will be a select few participating in programs carefully controlled by National Parks. Shooters should be talking this up as a service to conservation, not as another opportunity to hunt. Culling by sport shooters is not a total answer, but it costs the public nothing & specifically targets pests, unlike Park's favourite methods, such as poison, which is cheap but unacceptable, or helicopter shooting which is very expensive.

President's Report.

Dear Members,

Firstly, I apologise for the lateness of our magazine. Unfortunately, I had an illness in the family which took up a lot of my time and, coupled with work commitments since October, meant that life was rather hectic.

The good news is that life is getting back to normal and next week will be the first time I have been able to get out hunting.

Note: Next meeting will be held on Thursday, 23 May 2013 commencing 7:30 pm at the German Austrian Club.

So what's been happening over the last couple of months? Christmas Function held on 3 November 2013. Again, this was held at the Peach Tree Inn at Penrith and is a family day which was a great day.

Many trophies were on display and those members displaying trophies went into a draw for a custom made skinning knife. Congratulations to Josh Raffin who was the winner. The day was fully catered for including drinks and the children were well looked after. Thanks to Nepean Hunters Club for again lending us their display boards for the mounted

heads. Chital Research Scheme We have seven vacancies in the scheme for members, so if you are interested contact Paul

Wilkes for details. SCI Hunting Outdoor and Gun Show SCI held their annual Expo at Tamworth on 16 and 17 February 2013 and many of our members attended.

We were going to have a stand at the Expo to support them, however the Committee had prior commitments which made it difficult to arrange. Next year we will be better organised. Australian Deer Federation (ADF) We had a teleconference meeting on Saturday, 16 February 2013 which I attended. This

was attended by all member clubs with the exception of NEDSA. One of the topics discussed was to build a Deer Workshop with every club participating including scoring etc. One of the objectives being fellowship between the clubs and organise a get together which could lead to hunting opportunities.

Our club was asked to do the Fallow section. More details will be forthcoming and we can discuss this at the next meeting.

South Coast Hunters Club (SCHC)

SCHC are holding their Hunt Fest Expo over the June long weekend at Narooma and need our support. This is a well organised event which received Council approval after much debate with the Greens and Anti's trying to squash it.

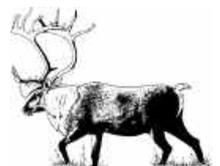
Visit the Hunt Fest website (www.huntfest.com.au)

I encourage you to support this event and make a weekend of it. Camping facilities are available. I am aware that some members have a commitment that weekend with a 25th Annual Shotgun Shoot.

SSAA Silverdale Range

The good news is that the 7.62 NATO limit imposed at the Silverdale Range by the NSW Firearms Registry has now been lifted.

Effective immediately, we can shoot all calibres having no more retained energy at 200 metres than





3,000 ft lbs. Basically, this is pretty much everything except the 338 lapua magnum.

Social Night

Boating, Camping & Fishing

We will be organising a night at the BCF, Blacktown store sometime in August/September as a social get together which will be a pizza night. A date will be advised shortly. Ammo Bill This is now law and when you purchase ammo the dealer records the quantity and type of ammo purchased plus your licence details and address. Membership Notices We will be issuing notices to assist members in keeping track of when their renewals are due, especially for those members who pay for 3 years.

To assist with payments direct, you can do a direct deposit to the following Commonwealth Bank account, Bowral branch.

Name: NSW Deerstalkers Association

BSB: 062-511 (Bowral, NSW)

Account No.: 1004-1600

Good hunting!

Greg Haywood

How Long is the Breeding Season of Fallow Deer?

Dal Birrell.

Those hunters who hunt Fallow deer know that the prime time is the rut which takes place in October in the Northern hemisphere & April in the Southern hemisphere. The Fallow rut is short compared with the Red deer's, which generally begins well before, and lasts until well after the fallow's. During the rut, bucks join the does, set up a lek or breeding territory and advertise it by thrashing and marking bushes and trees with their scent. They generally make a number of scrapes around their territory by pawing the earth and urinate in it. Ultimately a buck usually retreats to just a few scrapes close to the middle of his territory. Unlike Red stags, does are attracted to the buck in his territory by sight, scent and sound. They may choose to mate with one or more bucks when in oestrous. Most hunters assume that this short couple of weeks is the extent of the breeding season. In fact the season extends for about six months, for although the vast majority of does do mate and become pregnant in the rut, small numbers continue to fall pregnant over the next six months. This also shows that the bucks are capable of impregnating does for this long, and not just the few weeks of the rut. I have personally heard fallow bucks rutting furiously in late June, evidently responding to the presence of an oestrous doe. A fallow doe which does not become pregnant in her first oestrous, will cycle again about every 28 to 29 days thereafter, for about 6 months or until she falls pregnant. There is a great benefit for a fawn to be born from an early mating as it enters the cold hard winter season older, larger and stronger than fawns conceived later. As they survive better, one would expect that evolution would have favoured early conceivers. Not only that, bucks cannot hold their territories throughout the breeding season because the rut is so exhausting. For most of them it is just a matter of days before they are replaced by a fresher, stronger male. It follows (and observation confirms) that the dominant bucks mostly mate first, whereas later matings are made by progressively smaller and or younger males. From an evolutionary viewpoint, the best fathers are the early breeders.



Neil Brown's Sambar.

After numerous unsuccessful hunts for a Sambar stag over the years, I was recently lucky enough to take my first stag. I came across him just after sun up, still out feeding on the edge of some farm land with another smaller stag. They were onto me straight away and made a dash for the scrub, as the big bloke slowed to go through the fence at a range of about 200metes, I hit him with a Texas heart shot



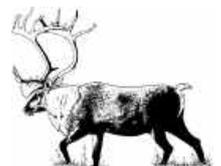
from my 338 RUM. This knocked him down but he got up and made it into the scrub. A good blood trail made the tracking easy and in about 15 minutes I court up to him has he tried to climb a small hill, a shot to the shoulder brought him crashing back down the hill and into a creek. After a few minutes of celebrating I then realised I had a problem, the sambar stag laid near submerged in a freezing cold creek lined with blackberry bushes. A call on the CB radio had 3 mates and some rope in no time and after some real hard work we had

the stag on dry ground. These are big critters and I would not of been able by myself to get this stag out of the water. This stag is the result of lots of trips and day spent hunting many different areas, Sambar are certainly Australia's most hardest deer to hunt, but with persistence and lots of luck, they can be taken. This bloke is a long way from a record stag, but to me, knowing what I have done over the



years hunting sambar, is now one of my most cherished trophies.

ThanksNeil Brown



Who's Killing Bambi?

Dal Birrell

My observations on wild fallow deer on the Black Fallow Scheme over the past several years have shown a very constant proportion of does with young fawns during the rut. Almost 80% of does have young fawns at foot at this time. How many fawns have died prior to this time for whatever reasons we can't tell.

A large study of Roe deer from Norway in 2005, might give some insight into mortality in young fallow. In this study, 299 animals covering a range of ages were radio collared then regularly radio tracked by researchers who found the deer by triangulation using two or more receivers. These days gps technology takes the labour out of this kind of research, & keeps better track of the animals. During the year, 241 of these collared deer died. Of these, foxes were the major killers of deer under one year of age, while for animals over this age, hunters & road kills accounted for the majority of deaths. Overall, 20% were killed by foxes, about 50% by road accidents & 25 % by hunters. The study was at pains to point out that merely finding the remains of an animal in a fox scat does not mean the fox actually killed it. Researchers verified kills using other evidence, such as tracks. The survival rate of roe less than one year in this study was just 30%. Roe deer are around half the weight & height of fallow of the same age. In Scandinavia they have to cope with winter snow, which makes them more vulnerable to predators. Roe frequently have twins & triplets, whereas fallow typically have single fawns.

In both species the new fawns have virtually no smell. Their dams leave them to lie quiet & still for the first week or two while they wander off to feed. It is during this time that fawns are most vulnerable to predators like the fox & lynx. This study primarily looked at the lynx – roe deer relationship. Lynx are medium sized cats, with adults weighing up to 23 kg. They are simply fantastic roe deer hunters who can find their prey even when the roe are in densities as low as 1 in 10 square km. In fact, they are so good they can cause roe to become locally extinct in areas where the roe are in such low densities. Lynx have come back from the brink of extinction themselves in western Europe since the second World War, causing some concerns among roe deer hunters. In this study, a lynx even killed a young sick moose weighing 150 kg.

The only record I can find of a fox killing a fallow deer in Australia is of a kill in the Strzelecki desert; hardly credible. The introduced European or Red fox is the same species as in the Norwegian study. Given all of the above, and the population density of foxes and feral cats in areas where we find fallow (and hog) deer in particular, it seems very likely that foxes and cats would take fawns in their first couple of weeks of life, when they are most vulnerable. After that, the fawns are more likely to be with their mothers, and deer mothers of all species are noted for fearless defence of their young, striking out aggressively with their fore feet. It would be a foolish fox or cat or lone dog that would take on a doe defending its fawn. Foxes do kill small wallabies, so would also take larger fawns if given the chance. While there is as yet no direct evidence, it would be surprising if foxes and feral cats are not taking some fawns, particularly in the first couple of weeks after birth.

Both of these predators are also responsible for at least part of the drastic decline of our native mammals, reptiles and birds in particular and should be killed whenever possible.



Andrew's Blog

Early last Saturday at 5:00am I went out to a local property to replenish venison supplies. The wind was bitterly cold and cutting. On the tree line in the distance, I glassed a herd of twenty Does, and planned my stalk in. Once in a small outcrop of trees I ditched the pack and extended the shooting sticks, gingerly stalked in closer and positioned myself behind a large gum tree; two quick shots from the 7mm-08 had dropped two eaters on the spot. As the property owner had ploughed up the middle paddock for the oaks crew, I couldn't drive out the back to retrieve the meat. Thus everything was lugged back on foot, making several trips in the process; 4 fillets, 4 back straps & 8 legs. All up a few hours later I had trekked 10.4km. No wonder I passed out on the lounge while watching the Olympics opening ceremony that night.

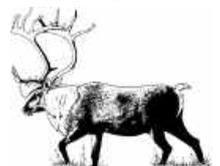
Last Sunday, Rick phoned around 1:30pm saying he was passing through from Canberra and was "kid free", but unfortunately "gun free" too. I suggested we could go on a hunt on a nearby property for a rabbit or a fox, and he could borrow my 12G Breda Vega O/U and I'll take the 22 Hornet. As usual the few bloody rabbits seen were out of shotgun range and quickly to vanish into their burrows.

Although it was an enjoyable 5.3km walk, my the marksmanship was off key. I missed a rabbit in long grass at ~100m. Later a Fox was seen running from a gully and I missed the shot. Then the same Fox appeared again on the other side of the gully sitting on a rock. With the cross-hair on the top his scone I took the shot, and missed again! Afterwards I ranged the two shots, first was at 96m when I took the running shot & second was 217m with the sitting shot. The Hornet is shooting ~13" low at that range.

With my sight picture, the shot should have smacked him in the lower abdomen. I can only think wind was the contributing factor, as it's not the rifle. Fallow fillet wrapped in triple smoked bacon, with smoky BBQ sauce was tender flavour explosion.



cont. next page.





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Gobi Desert hunt **Bob Penfold.**

Before we left Ulan Bator for our Gobi hunt we had a heated exchange between the manager of the hunt operations and ourselves. They had allocated us a remote camp way down the sheep range, a hundred miles away from the prime area that I had booked to hunt. The area that we were allocated was almost out of the main sheep hunting areas in an area that had a very sparse population of sheep. We were ordered to go there or return to Australia without refund. Then when we were introduced to our guides, they advised us that it would indeed be a great adventure for all of us as they had not been to the Gobi desert either. After another heated exchange we were allocated another guide who was an experienced Gobi sheep and Ibex guide. We asked if we needed to take salt with us and were advised by the manager that there was plenty of salt in the camp as he had put it there personally.

Our pilot must have needed landing practice as he landed five times to get us on the ground of the Gobi Desert. The Russian copy of a Fokker Friendship bounced so high after the first touchdown that I could see the shadow of the whole aircraft on the ground at the top of the first attempt bounce. The aircraft shuddered as we crashed into the desert again and again, five times in total before the pilot finally had the wheels firmly grounded. We skidded to a stop and every white faced passenger gripping the back of the seat in front of them gave a unified sigh of relief. We had arrived. All of our baggage was unloaded before the aircraft departed, leaving us sitting on our bags without another soul in sight. We were assured that our Russian Jeeps would arrive shortly and we would be off to camp in due course.

When only one Jeep arrived bouncing across the trackless desert, we learned that a rich Mexican hunter (another of my hunting clients) had kept our second Jeep to extend his hunt. We were only poor and unknown Australian hunters and did not rate an equal opportunity. I unpacked my rifle and loaded it for all Mongolians to see. Then I began waving it around threatening dire consequences if they did not find us another Jeep in a hurry. The new interpreter instructed the wide eyed Jeep driver before he loaded us and our gear into the Jeep and drove us across the hard pebbled surface to a tourist village



where he deposited us before taking off across the desert at high speed. He returned one hour later with our second Jeep and driver. He had borrowed the local mayors private Jeep for our hunt. It was almost dark and we looked like we had wasted yet another full day of our hunt.

The Mongolians wanted us to stay overnight at this desert camp while we asked how far the hunting camp was. They agreed that it was at least six hours drive and that they would get us to the camp by the next night. We threw our gear into the two Jeeps and insisted that they take us to the camps tonight so that we could hunt tomorrow. They protested, however Gary and I insisted, so off we went, bouncing across the trackless hard ground into the night. The numerous stops at camel and sheep herders camps to get adequate supplies of alcoholic beverages slowed us down somewhat, however we arrived at the camp before midnight only to find that there was still an American hunter and his wife in residence in what was supposed to be a vacant camp. There were unsalted sheep and ibex capes on the ground in front of the yurt held down to dry with rocks strategically placed around the outer edge of each skin.

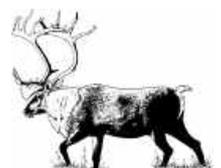
When we entered the yurt we found that the hunter was one of my clients from Las Vegas. He told me that there was no salt in the camp and that he was trying to preserve his skins by drying them in the dry desert air while waiting for a Jeep to take them back to the desert camp where he hoped to find salt enough to preserve his skins. The lies had started the day we arrived in Mongolia and would persevere until we left the country.

Gary and I hunted from one Jeep the first day while the second Jeep took the Americans back to the tourist camp. We explored and found some ibex, however nothing that looked like trophy size to us. The second day was spent hunting from separate Jeeps and both Gary and I scored on nice ibex for that area after taking very long shots and having to deal with completely incompetent guides.

The following morning we again hunted in different directions looking for Gobi Desert Sheep. After an hour drive across the desert in the darkness we parked the Jeep and walked some distance to a rocky ridgel ine just as dawn showed us where we were. I was astonished to see 200 desert sheep feeding in the fields of grass on the slopes running down from the rocky ridge line from which we were making our observations. My guide picked out what looked to me to be a mature ram. We closed the distance to what he told me was 300 yards. After considering that he was an experienced desert hunter I carefully took the shot only to see my bullet land way short of the sheep. The sheep all took off running out into the desert while we walked 540 paces to the spot where the sheep were when I attempted the shot. If we found one spot of blood the hunt was over and I still had to pay the expensive trophy fee.

Fortunately I had made a clean miss, so reluctantly the guides trekked back to the Jeep and set off to find some more sheep. My guide asked me if all Australians were such lousy shots and if they were they did not want to see any more incompetent Australian hunters in Mongolia. The pleasantry was palpable in the Jeep for the next hour. After lunch we found some more sheep bedded down high on a mountainside. I picked out a huge ram that was much bigger than the first ram that they had me shoot at. After instructing the guide and interpreter to sit in the Jeep and to shut up with suitable threats of repercussions if they did not do exactly as I instructed, I set up off the mountain to get above and behind the sheep. After an hour hard climbing I found myself in **position** above the sheep, however I had difficulty in locating the ram that I had come to shoot.

After moving around the mountain to another location on the side of where he lay I found him laying down in the shade of the rocks with only his head visible. After setting up to take the shot I pulled an



old Australian hunting trick, I shouted “Hey stand up”. All of the sheep stood and I shot the big ram with a perfect killing shoulder shot at 300 yards. He collapsed on the spot and did not so much as quiver as I readied myself to take a second shot should it have been necessary.

The guides climbed to the sheep and found me sitting with him in the shade of the rocks. The sheep seemed improbably huge to me, as big as a small horse. We had a really difficult struggle to pull him from the rocks in the gully into a sitting position suitable for photographing him. It was impossible to drag him out into the quickly declining sunshine to get really good photographs, we made the best of the difficult situation to get only poor quality photographs that are my only record of the hunt.

After a frustrating and fruitless hunt for Gobi Desert gazelles I had had enough and agreed with Gary to return to Ulan Bator to salt our sheep skins before they spoiled.

The train trip to Beijing was another story. We survived the harassment at the border between Mongolia and China with a graft payment and arrived in Beijing with all of our guns and trophies. We had our Beijing guide take us to a freight company where we paid a premium price for express airfreight for our trophies with US dollars cash. That was the last time we saw our Mongolian trophies. They were lost forever to the airfreight company. There was never an explanation, no refund or insurance to collect, they simply never got out of China or onto the Qantas aircraft.

Not all hunts are fun and successful. This was Gary’s first and last international hunt. He was so annoyed with our treatment in Mongolia that he decided that he could have more fun with \$20,000 than to give it to someone to treat him badly again. It was unfortunate that Gary experienced such a catastrophically bad hunt at his first outing as Gary was wealthy, a very good hunter and a great companion. I continued my travels alone and never again found a travelling companion with whom to share my future adventures. I put Mongolia behind me and wrote it off as a bad experience to be forgotten as soon as possible.

Looking For an Excellent Game Bullet?

Dal Birrell

Normally I don’t do product endorsements. However I’m happy to do this one, limited as it is. When I bought my 6.5 X 55 Tikka a couple of seasons ago I was faced with the usual search for a bullet which would perform reliably on fallow deer, pigs & goats. As this bullet was to be used on game out to 500m, it would need to expand reliably over a large velocity range; a tall order.

After trying a few different offerings from two well known makers which were far too hard, failing to expand & failing to drop the animal, I moved on to Hornady SST 129 grainers (also made in 140 grains). These projectiles perform beautifully for us at all ranges out to over 500m, producing virtually single bullet instant kills for both J.D. & myself. I have also tried 130 gn SSTs in my 270 with similar results, despite the fact that the 270 velocities are around 300 f/s faster. To date J.D. & myself have downed over 100 fallow, 40 goats & a dozen pigs with SSTs. This is a pretty fair test (had to chuckle recently when reading some Yank endorsing a new bullet after three deer kills). To date we have recovered just a few projectiles as we normally get complete penetration from most angles. These spent bullets were perfectly mushroomed down to the cannellure, below which the rest was pristine. One had a complete jacket but had lost its lead. Complete penetration & massive body damage is the norm. I have seen a Rusa stag one-shot killed on the spot at 1007 yds with a 6.5 X 55, locally!



Holland & Holland Dal Birrell

My wife & I visited the London shop of famous gun & rifle maker H&H on a dreary wet afternoon during the UK Autumn. It's no fun trying to get good photographs of deer in the rain, so Holland & Holland was definitely one of the next best options.

This Mayfair shop, located not far from the Rolls - Bentley, Audi & Jaguar showrooms & the famous Ritz hotel, reflects the wealth & prestige of the area & of the English shooting scene in particular. It has quite a small shop front but extend inwards towards the rear. By comparison, there are many gun shops in Australia which are much larger, but probably none better presented.

One needs to remember that unlike a normal gun shop, Holland & Holland sell their own firearms for the most part, & most of these would be custom orders rather than off the shelf. What one can see in the show cases is a representative selection of what the firm makes. One would be somewhat silly not to order a custom, fitted firearm from them given the price tags. A return air fare to be fitted is a very minor added expense.

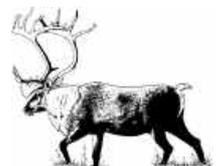
Their best guns are priced well above £100,000, with the bolt rifles in the show cases averaging just £20,000, although their catalogue bolt rifles can cost much more. The rifles I saw were of superb quality, fully engraved with beautiful walnut stocks. Some second hand quality guns are also available & these are listed on their web site.

Speaking of their web site, it is one of the best I have seen & definitely worth a visit, even if you never intend to buy a gun or rifle of this quality.

The UK shooting scene is very different to the Australian one. To appreciate the differences one needs to spend time looking, reading & talking to people. This aspect of UK shooting deserves a book in itself, so I cannot offer too many insights here. What we need to appreciate is just how much money many shooting sportsmen have here. H & H is aimed at the top of the market, which is not just guns & shooting, it's also fashions, cars, money & connections. So it's no surprise then that most of Holland's stock is fashion clothes & accessories.

The magazine "The Field" gives an interesting insight into the bird shooting scene in particular. The October edition had a couple of articles on what clothes are acceptable for a shooting party or a hunt (on horse back). The rules seem extremely strict to a colonial like me & it seems that the fashion industry has really got its hooks into this part of society. It's a long way from my usual stalking getup! There is a wide range of books & DVDs available, all listed on their website. I was somewhat surprised to find so many American authors represented, which might say something about the clientele or perhaps the influence of the Americans on hunting in general. Personally I was somewhat disappointed that many of the classic British authors were not represented. You can disagree, but my opinion is that the British & Europeans have forgotten more about shooting & hunting than Americans have ever known. To a large extent this is because each is aimed at a different market & makes its profits in a different way. Enough said on this topic!

Despite the obvious observation that I was not going to be a big spending customer, the shop staff were extremely polite & helpful. I was certainly not made to feel uncomfortable, let alone unwelcome. Holland's is a gem for any Aussie shooter to discover in London. Even the "little woman" will find things to interest her while you drool over the gun cabinets!



To their great credit, H & H offer shooting schools & coaching aimed primarily at introducing new shooters to the gun sports. Their schools are located close to London & contrary to their sales targets, they are very cheap; run probably below cost. Everything is provided & includes guns, clays, cartridges & coaching.

Just as in Australia, shooting sports are under pressure & fighting back. Much of what is a part of British country culture is now illegal or seen to be in poor taste, an inevitable result of an ever increasing ignorant urban population.

To watch Holland's interesting six minute video, visit www.hollandandholland.com

Neolithic People Brought Red Deer to Ireland.

Dal Birrell

An article in "Deer", the magazine of the British Deer Society, entitled "Ireland's Ancient Deer", outlines the research effort to decide whether the Killarney Red deer herd is really an ancient one, the original Irish herd.

DNA analysis of this and many other herds throughout Europe has been done, & enables the origins of various Red deer herds to be discovered. In many cases historical records exist which show importation of deer from various other herds, & the DNA data confirms all of these.

If enough deer are sampled, the DNA analysis shows several sources, & the remaining proportion of each.

It turns out that the Killarney herd has had stock added from several others, but at its heart is DNA which is 4000 years old. This indeed, is the original Irish Red deer herd.

Ireland, like England Scotland & Wales was completely covered by ice during the last ice age, which ended only 5000 years ago. During this time, no recognisable life form lived on these islands.

Eventually, with the ice gone, plants re-established & around 4000 years ago Neolithic people came across the ocean to colonise Ireland. The earliest Red deer remains also date from this period, & as it is a very long swim from anywhere where Reds survived the ice, the inescapable conclusion is that Red deer were brought to Ireland by these first Neolithic people.

The Neolithic period is also known as the New Stone Age. It is characterised by a change in the stone tools they made & used, but perhaps more importantly by the beginnings of settled agriculture & industry. So Ireland's first peoples were farmers who quarried flint nodules from the chalk matrix to make stone tools. They would have also kept domestic animals, hunted & gathered & been much more familiar with the wild creatures & their domestic animals than modern farmers or especially modern urbanites.

All across Europe & Asia where Red deer or their subspecies roamed, there appeared to be a cultural & religious reverence for the Red deer, and although these Neolithic peoples lived among the Red deer they seldom killed & ate them. Remains from settlements show that they ate Roe deer & domestic sheep, goats & pigs, but few Red deer. Like modern pagan cultures, it is very likely that these people



saw themselves as “other animals”, not as something “else”, as most modern peoples do today. Red deer were fertility symbols & a connection with the spirits which lived invisibly all around them. However, the Red deer antlers were extensively used as picks to quarry flint, dig ditches & construct other earthworks. Enormous numbers of these antler picks were needed to construct some well known ancient monuments, because they break & wear out quickly compared with steel tools. These would have been obtained mostly by collecting cast antlers.

Antler picks consisted of the brow tine & main beam with the tops & other tines broken off. They could have been used as we use a pick today, but were more often used by being driven into the ground with a hammer stone, then used to wedge out the material. Antlers of mature stags (over three years old) were used. Unlike skeletal bone, antler is more porous & flexible so is better suited to this technique of digging.

In Mongolia, Red deer are still regarded as a sacred connection to the after world. Modern shamans still communicate with the spirit world through Red deer symbols.

It is interesting to know that our modern introductions of deer to new lands & new locations have such ancient & spiritual origins. It pleases me to think that my own spiritual feelings for deer derive from my hunting ancestors. Although it mystifies non-hunters that we love the deer, yet hunt them, it is the truth. It's built into my genes. What's your excuse?

“Ireland's Ancient Deer” Dr. Allan McDevitt & Dr Ruth Carden, in *Deer*, Autumn 2012.

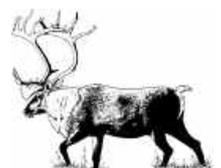
The Internet Revolution & Shooting.

Dal Birrell

What has the internet done to shooting? You well might ask. Recently I came across an article on the net by an American shooter lamenting the demise of the American Rifleman, as it was before the internet. AR was for many years the source of all the latest authoritative and technical articles. Many shooters collected it, catalogued the articles & referred back to it as the shooters' bible.

All this has changed. The internet is now the source of all that technical (&other) shooting information. With the improvement in search engines it is possible to locate virtually all of the articles written on any subject, technical or otherwise. People with good ideas & techniques can publish them on the net quite easily & at virtually no cost. The result is that the richness of shooting information available on the net far outstrips what was available in print form. This is a very good thing.

The down side is that the print magazines are now almost wholly confined to hunting stories, often written by people carried away by a first kill with little knowledge to pass on. With a few exceptions, in my opinion there is little of value in the current crop of magazines for the new hunter, or the old hunter. Those shooters still holding out against the “digital revolution” have been side-lined well & truly, as has anyone who has not not connected to the internet in one way or another (beside computers, smart phones & tablets give the same access). Communication by email is now so easy & simple it has become a chore to have to use snail mail. We might as well just accept it & enjoy the advantages.



Richmond Park

Dal Birrell

Some places hold special significance for us. For me, Richmond Park in South West London is one of those very special places. I have visited it during a couple of ruts to watch & photograph both Red & Fallow.

One day during this last rut I got off the underground, got a morning coffee in the station & walked out into the Richmond high street. Despite having been there just once before three years previously, the street & its shops were immediately familiar. Memory is a curious thing.

The park entrance on top of Richmond Hill is a mile from the station, past shops, hotels & houses. As before, I noted the Bentleys, BMWs, Astons & other equally expensive vehicles parked along the street. Richmond is the domain of the well healed.

But pass through the gates of the park & it is another world. A couple of narrow roads cross it, but most of the place is the domain of walkers & horse riders. And the deer.

Some 350 Red & 250 Fallow call the place home, along with two cows, many horses & I'm sure, Muntjac & Roe. As these last two are largely nocturnal in the face of so much human disturbance, I did not see any.

The Royal Parks Service manage the park, which includes its vegetation, grazing, deer & people.

Given the restrictions of finance, government control & its situation (surrounded by housing), the staff do an excellent job. The deer numbers are controlled by night shooting each November, the aims being to maintain fixed numbers of both major species & the maintenance of the vegetation. I would assume that the introduced Asian deer are treated purely as undesirables. In fact, only the Reds are regarded as indigenous, as Fallow were introduced, probably several times & even Roe had to be re-introduced after they were hunted to extinction some hundreds of years ago. Fallow, or their ancestors, existed in Britain until the last ice age, so their status as "introduced" is resented in some quarters.

While the deer are fed in winter, this is a welfare measure rather than a means of increasing trophy quality as it is in the private parks, so feeding is minimal.

The pasture in the park is managed for diversity of plant species using simple methods. A trial of one cow showed that its grazing increased the numbers of plant species, so now there are two! Bracken fern, an invasive species, is controlled by rolling, using a roller pulled by Shire horses. To further justify the presence of these beautiful giant horses, the park is now using them to pull an excursion cart for walking groups. There are now so few Shires left I hope they are allowed to remain, but they need to earn their keep to justify their continued presence in the park.

It was mid-October with the Red rut in full swing, & hopefully the Fallow also rutting. Earlier that month at Woburn Abbey, the Reds were in full swing but their Fallow bucks were still in bachelor groups & keeping out of the way.

Just a few hundred metres inside the gate I found the first stag, a beautiful 13 pointer probably 12 years old, holding a dozen hinds & facing down a couple of similar sized stags & a big spiker. These master stags exhaust themselves in just a few days before being replaced by another with more energy.

Playing master stag is exhausting. This fellow still had plenty of juice in the tank, so he roared, checked out his hinds regularly & kept a close eye on the three stags who threatened to run off with his ladies. I sat on a log not 50 metres from him for an hour and a half, amused at the human qualities these fellows



showed. The three usurpers tried various strategies, like walking up in a gang, or making a pincer like approach, all the time acting like they were just innocently grazing closer. Each time they got too close the master stag would bellow and charge, scattering them before going back to his girls for just one more check on their readiness to mate. When he got too pushy with a girl she would run away in a little circle then back to the group. Not trying to avoid the issue, just not yet ready. The hinds seemed quite fond of their big fellow, sometimes going up to give him a reassuring rub or lick and usually getting one in return. How often we read about this rutting process as if it was purely mechanical and devoid of fondness which is clearly not the case. The stag wandered about his group occasionally approaching a hind lying in the grass, just to lick her ears or nuzzle her neck before moving on. I liked this bloke. He had style & he was no rapist.

All this time I was recording their behaviour with my camera, using either the log or my tripod to keep the telephoto lens steady, but with limited time I needed to move on to find other stags & hopefully some Fallow.

As on my previous visit I found a group of Fallow in a big grove of giant Oaks. Three bucks were working around their scrapes there trying to drum up interest from a couple of dozen does, but only the odd one showed any interest. The light in this deep shade, made worse by the overcast sky above, was so weak I moved on fairly quickly, hoping to find better photo opportunities in stronger light. This made me walk further into the lower section of the park than I had previously been. Breaking out into the open, the grassy slope was alive with deer; at least two dozen impressive Red stags were spread out over around a hundred acres, some bellowing, some lying down, most looking very tired. Down in the shallowest of gullies stood an excellent old common coloured buck, & walking across to a little group of does just below him was another. This led to the first buck getting up & walking down towards him, which allowed me to get under a tree close to the buck's scrape, just in time to shelter from a shower of rain which was moving in. The confrontation between these two bucks, if it could be called one, consisted of the first just walking the other one around the little pond in the gully & back. There was no noise, no fight, no hurry. It had all been settled some time beforehand evidently. The first buck returned to his scrape, now just metres from where I stood, where he pawed out a little more damp black earth before settling himself down again.

I photographed both animals before walking across to another buck, bedded down with a dozen does & fawns. He seemed totally unconcerned and let me set up my gear fifty metres away & begin to take photos of him, his little mob, & also the several Red stags which were close by. Provided you approach calmly & don't push into their alarm zone, these deer appear unconcerned by humans & even their dogs (which for the most part ignore the deer). Several times while photographing the deer in the park someone else wanting a photo pushed in too close, seemingly oblivious to the alarm they cause, or just uncaring. This is a selfish & unnecessary thing to do, especially when they can see other people standing about patiently photographing the deer & their behaviour. Animals can be more patient, more observant & nicer than people I think.

The light rain now turned into something more serious, fading the light even more. If you haven't experienced the fading light of an English autumn you could not imagine how dull it becomes. Getting sharp pictures becomes nearly impossible so it was time to give up and head for home.

Ten days later I had another opportunity to visit the park. The next round of the rut was only just starting & most of the big Red stags had given up, leaving the field to younger ones. Most hinds were



still with a stag, although only the odd one had the stags' interest. I took the opportunity to explore a lot more of the park, finding several rutting stags. The Fallow however were nowhere to be seen. There are areas of high bracken and others of dense shrubs in which the deer can easily hide. If they were no longer rutting, one should expect that the Fallow would stay out of sight during the day, with so much human disturbance.

In situations like the public deer parks, human disturbance is significant, with research showing that it affects their general health & reduces the fawn drop. During the day the deer are constantly on edge, watching passing people, dogs & horses, moving away from those who try to get too close. They are seldom given an opportunity to relax. There's not much understanding or sympathy shown by some people towards them, which I think is simply due to how divorced from nature most people now are. Leaving the park at the end of the day, I realised that sadly I might never get back to this magic place.

NSWDA Trophy Records.

A couple of years ago, there was an attempt to bring the Association's trophy records up to date.

The reason it did not happen was that there was no one volunteering to collect the material & collate it for publication on the website.

If you are interested in these records, please take a look at the NSWDA website to see if you have anything which you think might fit into a top 20 for any of the deer species listed there.

If then you want to submit a copy of a Douglas score sheet for your head(s) which has been signed by any of our official scorers it can be added to the list.

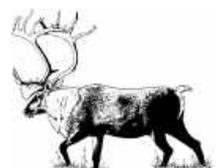
The score sheet can be emailed or posted to the Editor. A photo of the head would be welcomed.

I will pass on any submissions to any member who cares to volunteer to bring the records up to date. If no one volunteers it will not happen.

If YOU want to take on this job, please also contact the Editor; contact details are in this newsletter.



Some Photos of Trophies Exhibited at our 2012 Christmas Party & Exhibition.







Meeting dates for 2013

**Thursday 23 May Thursday 18 July (AGM +
General meeting) Thursday 17 October
Saturday 16 November Xmas function &
trophy presentation**

**NSWDA Hunting Club AHO (for R
licences) is 10111, & the Agent No. is
7185**

Please Note: The N.S.W.D.A. Inc. takes no responsibility for views expressed in "The Deerstalker". All articles submitted are signed by the relevant author. The Editor & Committee do however, take responsibility for views expressed in articles & reports submitted by them!

Guidelines for submissions.

Material which is emailed saves me a lot of work. Writing can be sent as a Word file, or a text file. For those without an expensive word processing program, you can use any writing program included with your operating system, or download "Open Office" free from the internet which is virtually identical to "Microsoft Office" & can exchange files with that famous program.

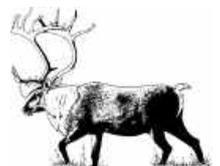
Photographs should NOT be included in the article itself, but sent as separate files (attachments to the email). You can indicate where each photo might be placed by typing its file name in brackets in the text.

Photographs sent by email should be .jpeg files, saved at about 15 cm X 10 cm size at quality 8 (which gives the best quality for the smallest file size).

Photos can also be prints or negatives or slides. These can be returned to you if you include a stamped self addressed envelope. If these photos are valuable, send copies rather than originals.

Printed on paper submissions need to have clear black typed text. Faintly or poorly printed text will not scan & cannot be included. **Very short pieces, such as personal adverts can be hand written.**

Advertisements for hunting related items will be printed at no charge.



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Formed: 7th June 1972

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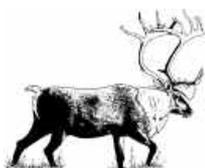
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Dedicated to the Sound Management and Conservation of Deer in NSW.

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DATE OF BIRTH..... SEX: Male/Female

DRIVERS LICENCE NO:..... STATE.....

SHOOTERS LICENCE NO:..... CLASS:.....

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Signature:

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PLEASE NOTE: This form is an application for renewal of membership only and is subject to Committee Approval. An application will only be considered if accompanied by all the necessary Fees, This form must be completed in full and is due for renewal 1st July of Membership expiry.

PLEASE PAY PROMPTLY.

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