



ON TARGET

NEWSLETTER OF THE BUFFALO RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA 74 AUGUST 2021

No Match in July

The monthly shoot scheduled for Cooyal on 17/18 July had to be cancelled due to bad weather. The Range had received massive amounts of rain with more forecast so we were asked to cancel as vehicles would have done a lot of damage, if they could move at all.

It is a feature of the Cooyal range that there is a high water table and, after rain, water settles between the topsoil and subsoils. A sort of blister is formed which doesn't really show until you sink straight down to the axles with no wheel spin.

As a result there is nothing to report in this Newsletter. That said you may find the article overleaf by Mike Venturino interesting. Mike is, of course, the author of the must have text 'Shooting Buffalo Rifles of the Old West' and a top shooter in his own right being a previous winner of Quigley USA.

FedEx/TNT Merger

You might ask why it matters to us as shooters if these two companies 'integrate' (their terminology). Well one of the first things they decided to do was stop transporting firearms which will make shipping goods that you buy or sell very difficult.

Their letter says "Effective from 9 August we will cease the transportation of firearms, weaponry and ammunition in both our domestic and international networks".

They also made some threats if people tried to ship goods in disguise.

A number of firearms businesses and shooter organisations are trying to get them to change their mind but so far without success.

BRAA Calendar for the rest of 2021

28-29 August	Nioka
25-26 September	Cooyal Billy Dixon & AGM
23-24 October	Cooyal
27-28 November	Cooyal

It is still intended to hold the August match at Nioka - Covid restrictions allowing. Full details later but meanwhile it would be appreciated if you could advise Secretary Paul if you are planning to attend. Mobile 0448 586 272

The BRAA Billy Dixon Match and the NSW State Championship for Long Range Black Powder Cartridge Rifles will take place at the Nioka Range 25/26 September as scheduled.

This is BRAA's signature match and your Committee hopes that every Member will be there, suitably attired for a Buffalo shoot.

HOW FAR WILL A SHARPS RIFLE SHOOT?

Mike Venturino

In the fall of 1992 the people at Shiloh Sharps were approached by a group of forensic scientists who were going to have a meeting at the Yuma Proving Grounds early in November. They were going to be allowed to use some newly unclassified radar devices to test the performance of various types of ammunition. Shiloh was invited to bring down some rifles and participate in the doings. Especially they wanted was a .50-90 So, Wolfgang Droege, previous Shiloh owner, Kirk Bryan, one of the present Shiloh owners, and Dennis Bardon, Shiloh's custom gunsmith began making plans to attend. They also asked yours truly if he wanted to go, and I said I wouldn't miss it.

However, I must admit to being a bit puzzled as to why they wanted to use such new-fangled radar gadgets to test such old guns. Well, when we got there we found out. It seems that one of the forensic scientists wrote an article in their newsletter saying that the Billy Dixon shot at Adobe Walls in 1874 could not possibly have happened.

Anyway, this particular forensic scientist did some calculations and arrived at the conclusion that a .50-90 Sharps (What Billy Dixon said he used could not have a bullet out that far. When I heard what this was all about thought, "That scientist is going to be embarrassed. He must not have fired Sharps Before. We all know they'll throw a bullet that far."

When we arrived at the Yuma Proving Grounds I was suitably impressed by it all. We had to have badges pinned to our shirts to move about the

place, and I couldn't take my camera out of the vehicle. A picture of the row upon row of Russian T-72 tanks would have been neat, but if I had tried we would have been thrown out. The test facility was a large bunker filled with electronic equipment, and covered with armor plate. I asked why and was told it was also the bunker from which they tested tank guns and the plate was to protect the inhabitants in case something blew up during testing. Since they weren't too worried about our Sharps blowing up and killing the crew, we were free to roam out to the machine rest, which happened to be a modified gun carrier from a Russian T-72 tank.

This whole assembly was not about just testing Sharps. Many of the scientists brought their own weapons to gather data on ranging from .38 Special handguns to 12 gauge shotguns up to even a 20mm cannon. Finally time rolled around to try the Sharps. They elevated the gun carriage to 35 degrees and touched off a round of Dennis Bardon's loads using a 675 grain bullet powered by about 90 grains of FFG. All the scientists running the equipment started stuttering and stammering,

collectively saying, "It couldn't be!" They just couldn't accept that a bullet launched by black powder and starting out at a muzzle velocity of only 1,216 fps landed over 3,600 yards away!

I heard mutters of, "Shoot another one, something must not be working right." So they turned loose another shot. This time the bullet weighed 650 grains and the muzzle velocity was 1,301 fps. Again the muzzle was elevated to 35 degrees. That bullet landed 3,245 yards downrange. The fellow who wrote the article saying Billy Dixon couldn't have hit the Indian got real quiet and very red in the face.

From there on it was all fun. We elevated the muzzle to 45 degrees. The bullet again was 650 grains and started at 1,275 fps. It landed at 3,190 yards, but the most amazing thing was that it went up to a few feet shy of 4,000 feet and was in the air a full 30 seconds!

One of the scientist there had a laptop computer and he did a bunch of tapping with the data accumulated so far and said, "Elevate the muzzle to 4 1/2 to five degrees and you'll get a Billy Dixon shot. That was done with the same load and the bullet landed at 1,517 yards. I'd say that scientist was on the ball. Incidentally, five degrees of muzzle elevation can easily be gotten with only the rear barrel sight on a Shiloh Sharps.

We tried one light bullet in the .50-90. It only weighed 45 grains, and had 100 grains of Fogg under it. It started out at an impressive 1,406 fps but with the muzzle elevated to 35 degrees it landed only 2585 yards away. That extra bullet weight sure makes a difference.

Next we played with a .45-110 (2 7/8 inch case). Using a 550 grain bullet with about 100 grains of FFG. With the muzzle elevated to 35 degrees it started with a muzzle velocity of 1,322 fps and landed 3,575 yards down-range. Next we dropped the muzzle to five degrees. The small bullet started at 1,361 fps and the bullet went 1,430 yards.

Interestingly, it was still traveling 669 fps when it went into the ground.

The last Sharps we test fired was Dennis Bardon's .40-70 Sharps Straight silhouette rifle. The bullet weighed 403 grains. I don't have the exact powder charge at hand right now but it would have to be in the 58 to 60 grain range. The muzzle was elevated to five degrees and the bullet started out at 1,333 fps. It hit at 1,155 yards and was still traveling 688 fps.

The forensic scientists generally agree that any projectile from BBS on up needs in the area of 300 fps to inflict a fatal wound. The .50 calibre Sharps bullets which started at 35 to 45 degree angles were coming almost straight down out of the sky, but they were still traveling at 350 to 400 fps. In other words they were still deadly even at 3,500 yards!

So maybe Billy Dixon really did make that shot!

Wano v Swiss

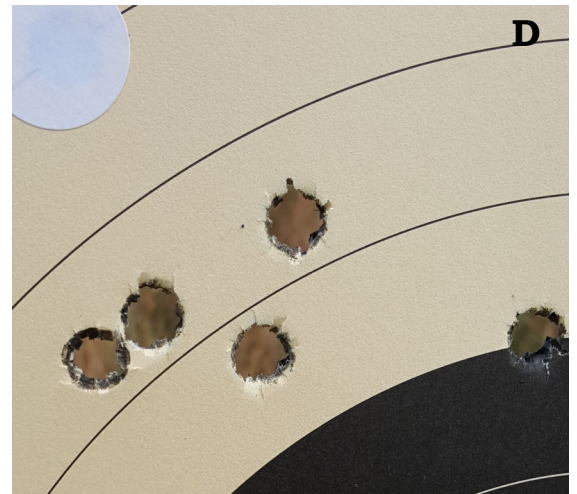
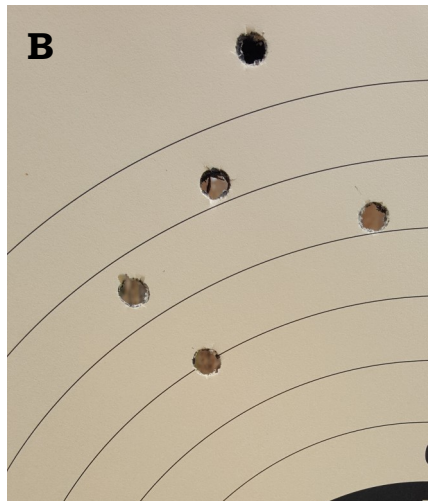
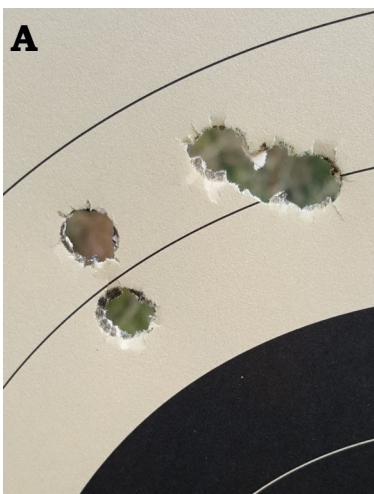
A little experiment that Bill Sherman and Ken Hiley staged at Sackville last month set out to test a number of identical black powder rounds.

The rifle was a 45/90 Shiloh Sharps; the projectile was a Brooks Creedmoor 543gr. It was aimed at the target centre at 50 yards but no attempt was made to adjust the sights as the intent was to compare how each load grouped and where the projectiles landed.

Powder was the same (78gr) for the 'pure' loads and made up to the same weight when nitro was included (replacing 3gr of black with 1gr of nitro).

In summary the 11/2 Fg Swiss (See A below) shot best but had one flyer. The Wano powders did not group well and also shot significantly higher up the target. Pic B shows Wano 3Fg. Wano PP put one shot off the top of the target and three in the 3 ring. A 50/50 load of Swiss 11/2Fg with Swiss 3Fg was all over the place (C) but a load of 8gr 2207 plus 48 gr Swiss 3Fg shot as well as the 11/2 but with a flyer (see Pic D).

It would take a lot more shots to take these results as gospel—the flyers could have been human error—but they seem to confirm that Swiss has an edge over Wano and as such is worth the effort required to get it. Don't muck about with blended loads but a bit of Nitro can help. I believe the NRA allow up to 15% Nitro in their matches. BS



Rankin Springs

Dan Macdonald has advised that, at the time of writing, the Blackpowder shoot at Rankin Springs scheduled for 14/15 August is still a goer.

The match will consist of two days of silhouette (the Creedmore Match has been cancelled) with practice on 13th.

Covid rules/procedures will be followed.

BRAA Members are invited to shoot. You should call Dan on 0408 480 105 if you plan to go.

Watch what you say!

It is reported by the National Shooting Council that a 70 year old Glen Innes local, Peter Martin, got chatting to a friendly employee at his local Norco store who was interested in his hobby of pistol shooting.

Another employee overheard the conversation and complained 1st to Norco and then to the Police. The police interviewed the 2nd man but not Peter who they hit with a licence suspension notice and seizure his fire-arms.

The reason stated was that his having a licence was 'not in the public interest due to not fit and proper'.

Sounds ridiculous but perhaps there is more to it?