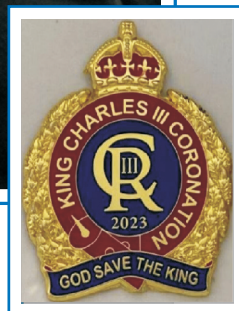


SHOOTERS' JOURNAL

ISSUE 78

ISSN 2398-3310

SUMMER 2023



TWO FIREARMS BILLS BEFORE PARLIAMENT

POLICE HUNT - SABGING FAST DRAW BFs

HOME OFFICE WANT TO BAN MACHETES

BOOK REVIEWS

THE SCIENCE OF GUN POLICY - AIR OF BATTLE

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.....
Back in 1973, or at the re-launch in 1984 if you prefer, just about everyone in the Shooters' Rights Association was a live ammunition shooter. Those who were not were collectors. They and the machine gun clubs were among the first casualties of the schizophrenic approach the Home Office adopted from the unpublished 1972 McKay report.

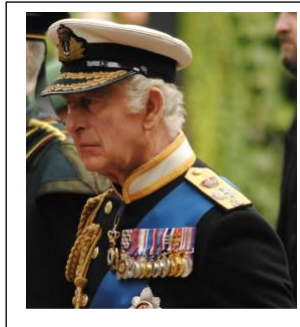
Schizophrenic because on the one hand the McKay policy was that reducing the number of firearms in the hands of the public was a desirable end in itself. McKay did not say why because he did not know why. He was shocked by the 600,000 shot gun certificate applications the police received in 1968 because he was unaware of the size of that iceberg as the two million people using shotguns were not causing policing a problem.

On the other hand, policies have increased the number of firearms that require a certificate under the licensing system and then artificially decreased the availability of certificates by tweaking the definition of 'good reason' thus creating the demand for

COVER PICTURE Issue 78 Summer 2023

(Shutterstock Photograph)

REGINA MORTUA EST: DEUS SALVARE REX



Speculation about the Monarchy and King Charles III ended with his coronation on the 6th of May except in some tiny minds and a growing preference, it seems, for republics elsewhere in the Commonwealth.

The two problems with having an elected head of state like Adolf Hitler, Donald Trump, Robert Mugabi, Vladimir Putin, or Boris Johnson are the same two problems as having a self-appointed or otherwise unelected one like Sani Abacha, Charles Taylor, Idi Amin, or Leopoldo Galtieri. (1) How to get rid of them and (2) what to do with them afterwards.

Neither of these problems currently afflict the Monarchy, which provides the diplomacy above politics that politicians can't aspire to because they are political puppets of their civil service.

unlicensed alternatives. Fast draw is an example of this approach. Fast draw and balloon poppers used real revolvers loaded with blanks until Home Office policy restricted handguns to approved-club target shooting and then banned them altogether. That caused the development of the Stafford-Hill revolver; made as a blank firer, production ended in 2011 when the manufacturing regulations were amended and now police empire building is seeking to...who knows? To bring them back into licensing or to ban them altogether? It's another example of that paranoia which kicked off all these problems in the first place – in 1972.

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EDITORIAL

The powers that be continue to wring disadvantage to **shooters** out of the coroner in Plymouth finding significant fault with the **police**. The Home Office have indicated to Gun Trade News that there will be two new firearms bills in the autumn, the contents of which, they say, we will not like. Combine that with the two firearms bills already in the Parliamentary sausage machine and it's likely to be a winter of discontent.

Not that shooters and re-enactors take to the streets to protest. Not lately anyway: the well-attended pistol protests in the 1990s failed to attract much media attention despite being bigger than the Poll Tax protests of the 1980s. The difference is that the gun lobby didn't draw media attention to their protests by setting light to police vehicles.

French protests that started in Nanterre after Nahel M. was shot by

police at the wheel of a Mercedes car he was too young to drive developed into riots and spread to other cities.

It was reminiscent of Britain in 1981, when riots seemed to spread to up to twenty cities from Brixton to Bristol and L8 (which became known as Toxteth) and then it all fizzled out as the nation settled down to watch Prince Charles marry Lady Diana at the end of July 1981.

The French do not have a royal wedding coming up but do have Bastille Day, which is followed by getaway day when everyone who can leaves the cities for the countryside or coast, leaving the rioters the cities.

Riots in the UK in 1981 and France in 2023 have in common reaction to police racism. Lord Scarman reported after the Brixton riot that it was "*essentially an outburst of anger and resentment by young black people against the police*".

France seems to be the same this year.

The usual Home Office reaction to events is to ban some products. The trade will react by producing new designs that comply with what is not banned. The curved sword ban of 2006 resulted in straight Katanas and the self-loading rifle ban of 1988 resulted in various designs that weren't self-loading – some of which have been banned since as Home Office paranoia swept over the legitimate market, yet again. Such prejudices as are demonstrated against us would be illegal if we were an ethnic group or a religion.

The retrospective bans on private possession introduced in 2019 created the problem of policemen who can't tell the difference, as happened to Luke Jolly last year when police seized what they said were prohibited throwing stars and then disposed of the evidence before letting anyone see what fools they had been.

The main concern we have about any proposal to ban the private possession of anything is that it puts an arbitrary power of seizure into the hands of the police, who have yet to weed out the paranoid, the racists, misogynists and perverts from their ranks.

That is because they are too busy trying to weed anybody they can find fault of any description with out of firearm certificate holder ranks. Cases this month include a chap in whose medical records only go back to 2003 and whose GP put a tick in a yes box on the 2017 *ultra vires* medical questionnaire without an explanation. The 2022 statutory medical pro forma has a tick in the no box, as do the appellant's 2017 and 2022 application forms.

In another case, the certificate holder was prescribed an anti-depressant in 2004 and was asked to leave a holiday resort after a complaint about him by a member of staff in 2006. One hopes that when the police police themselves they will be as thoroughgoing at weeding their ranks as they are ours. ☺

A CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS (LACK OF)

The late John Hurst, 30 years a police officer in London's Metropolitan Police, told us that his research had found significant legislation slipping through the gap between the death of a monarch and the coronation of the next. His examples were the Official Secrets Act and the Parliament Act in 1911 between Edward VII and George V: the Public Order Act 1936 between George V and George VI and the Prevention of Crime Act 1953 between George VI and Elizabeth II.

We took that with a pinch of salt because 'the king is dead long live the king' means to us that there is no gap, while John maintained that interregnum legislation did not receive Royal Assent.

John died before Elizabeth II, so we decided to look at the Parliamentary sausage machine and see what it churned out during the interregnum.

Twenty-six Bills were enacted in the 2022-3 session of Parliament, all but one of them after Queen Elizabeth died. The one she signed into law was the Energy (Oil and Gas) Profits Levy 2022. The next Royal Assent Day after that was the 25th October (remember Agincourt) when the Energy Prices Act 2022 and the Health and Social Care (Repeal) Act 2022 became law.

Six bills received Royal Assent on the 2nd May 2023, three of which were 'constitutional' – the Public Order Act, which both the police and media reacted to, as its provisions were used to kettle disruption to the coronation procession: the Ballot Secrecy Act and the Counsellors of State Act.

Fourteen Acts were treasury type legislation, four related specifically to Northern Ireland and five were none of the above: the Employment (Allocation of Tips) Act, the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act, the Mobile Homes (Pitch Fees) Act, the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Act, and the Trade (Australia and New Zealand) Act.

If you favour the John Hurst conspiracy theory, the Public Order Act joins his list of constitutional legislation that slipped through the cracks, although the Parliamentary website we cribbed these details from says these twenty-six enactments did receive Royal Assent. Apart from the 'clearing the decks' six on 2nd May, the rest were on various dates during the winter months.

We have our doubts about the strength of John's theory. He cited the Public Order Act 1936 as one of his planks, and yes, there was one just before

the recent coronation too. But we also had one in 1988, which prohibited random inanimate objects and regulations that built on it in 2019 to prohibit their possession in private. †

The Original Conwy Pirate Festival

has been running in the town of Conwy, North Wales for over 10 years now, started by two members of the Chamber of Trade to bring trade and tourism to the town of Conwy. They both had personal interests in piracy and weapons: one of these founders being an antiques dealer and the other being proprietor of the famous Knight Shop opposite the castle in what we now call the Medieval Quarter.

Conwy always hosts this event on a weekend that is not a bank holiday; that does not conflict with similar events and must be when the tides are favourable for the purpose of bringing in our pirate ship.



For those that don't know, tides ebb and flow and they do not keep to a 24-hour timetable. The constraints of having a high tide around mid-day limit the number of weekends available for the festival and sometimes conflicts are almost unavoidable. This year we had to host the festival just one week after the Brixham Pirate Festival, who always host on May Bank Holiday, as they don't care about tides. Then we had to move it back one day because King Charles decided to have his coronation on 6 May. We

graciously moved our date so that everyone could enjoy both events.

The festival has gone from strength to strength, bringing in a huge number of visitors to the town and increasing year on year. To entertain our visitors, we have a themed smugglers market featuring local stallholders, including parrot rescue, locally produced rum and many other mainly piratical wares.

Several hand-built specially designed pirate games are always a huge draw. The Skull Shy (coconut shy with skulls), Bash the Rat (catch a bilge rat emerging from a pipe with a cutlass),



The Cannonball Run (Guide a cannon ball along two scaffold poles moved via a ships wheel to reach a target), Spring Loaded Cannons (Full size spring powered cannon that fire a wooden ball at ship targets), Skittles Island (Large size bar skittles aiming a suspended bowling ball at skittles painted as pirates) and archery. These games are kept deliberately cheap at £1 for three goes to allow families inexpensive fun whilst bringing in much need revenue to this free-to-visit event.

During the day we have a (singing) sea shanty group and pirate themed music acts on stage in the marquee, including a blacksmith, dancers and mermaids. The public are encouraged to take part in our barrel and keg racing competition, and the children have a crabbing competition.



We are lucky In Conwy to have an impressive backdrop for the event, a harbour with a convenient quayside below a walled town and King Edward I's castle. This provides the arena for the main attraction of the weekend - the sea battle, which we believe is unique to our event and the storming of the medieval castle.

Each year, we strive to come up with a new choreographed story line, involving hidden treasure, kidnapping, smuggling and other piratical themes. The storyline is usually presented to the public prior to the event in a series of short videos on social media to make them aware of the plot.

We charter a tall ship 'The Vilma' from a local shipyard and fit her out with two cannons and some musketeers, plus some motley scurvy ridden pirate crew: paid-up card-carrying SRA members all. This year, we also used a newly converted pirate long boat equipped with a swivel gun and rowed by members of Conwy Yacht Club Rowing Section disguised as pirates.

At high water these two vessels entered the harbour and announced their presence by hoisting their colours and firing upon the Quay: to the delight of children of all ages.

Upon hearing the cannon shots, strong resistance is provided by several re-enactment groups: The Anglesey Hussars, The Broadside Gunners, The Brunswick's, the 79th Highlanders, HMS Wales and The Royal Welsh Fusiliers, firing a battery of assorted cannons and

muskets from the quayside and the ramparts of the castle. After an extended battle the two pirate vessels land their crews and the pirates storm the castle with a display of swordsmanship on the castle slopes by Raven Forge. The battle is repeated on each of the two days of the event.



Pirates afloat: the audience get quite close to the action.

The re-enactment groups coming to Conwy to form the militia defence contingent will probably sport a variety of artillery and fire locks - all contemporaneous or thereabouts to the period.

The event organisers provide the pirate armaments consisting of the five cannons on the boats. With the use of large quantities of black powder, it is essential to ensure the safety of everyone: players and spectators. We take much consideration into the public's safety, separating them from the cannons with barriers and demonstrating the best way to protect their ears from the noise, whilst also letting them close enough to experience the thrill of the sound, smell, smoke and shock wave you only get from firing a cannon at close quarters.



This year we used 20kgs of black powder with cannon charges varying from 1 to 3 ounces. The whole event provides a spectacular and exciting show, and apart from the re-enactors many of the public like to dress in piratical clothing to enhance the spectacle and their experience of it. Videos and images from this year's spectacular can be found on the event web page www.conwypirates.com or the events face book page <https://www.facebook.com/TheOriginalConwyPiratefestival>

There are many indicators of success at an event such as this. One is the number of people attending: this year we had many thousands. Another is the casualty rate; one lady felt faint from sunstroke. However, for a pirate event it must be considered a measure of success when the tavern posted a sign on the door saying that they have been drunk dry both of beer and wine. So, the only negligence was by the inn keeper and as Jack Sparrow would say "Where has all the Rum Gone?"

Next year's event is scheduled to take place on the weekend of the 8th & 9th of June 2024 in Conwy: where else? ✂

The Ubiquitous Machete

Every culture seems to have a variation of this product and a local name for it: a short single-edged sword, which is not usually sharply pointed and has no handguard. The blade could be anywhere from about 10 inches to more than 24.



They all have the same basic agricultural function – chopping and clearing soft foliage or thin twiggy barked materials.

I bought my first one brand new in 1961 – at Job Stocks in Walthamstow - for three shillings and sixpence. The used condition leather scabbard came separately and later from the same source. Back then I had agricultural duties in the village churchyard, so I used it to cut down cow parsley, brambles and when the horse chestnut trees were pollarded, to reduce the fallen branches to manageable pieces for the bonfire.

It went to every Sea Scout camp with me; every other camp and as I moved from urban to rural living, it came along. More than half a century after I bought it, it's still in use every weekend. To be fair, it wasn't always thus – it had some weekends off; but even so – in nearly sixty years, it hasn't had that much time off. Other machetes have come and gone some are still with me, but none has measured up to this one.

My second purchase was a Martindale Golok from Lawrence Corner in London in the 1980s. One had to produce an MoD 90 back then to make such a purchase and the scabbard belt loop was cut through. I wanted it because I'd done a



Golok & sheath available From Surplusstore.co.uk



That sheath from Lawrence Corner

stint as Assistant Scoutmaster with a bunch of land crabs and they had one in their camp store. The Golok was shorter bladed than my old reliable but had a nice balance and worked well when it counted: at least until I had more to do with brambles. Short machetes will cut through brambles easily, but where they are floating on air like tentacles, they wrap around the blade and slide up it to slash your forearm. Once petrol brush

cutters were invented, that became the first choice for brambles, unless we got ahead of ourselves and sprayed them off the year before working the area. Individual tentacles are better addressed with secateurs.

Machetes are a common enough sight on trade stands and stalls at country shows and game fairs. We bought two long ones for a fiver each at a show (sans scabbards) The blades are too thin to do



550mm blades – 21.6535 inches
Machete blades all tone to rusty brown.

much besides grass and ferns. A short one with a saw by Gerber looked the part in its plastic bubble pack, but while the saw worked quite well, the blade proved a disappointment – the metal was just too soft.

Soft metal has its advantages, such as on Opinel knives. It's easy to put a good edge on a soft blade, albeit one that must be revisited during the working day, such as on a grass hook. And therein the clue: a grass hook will dull in fifteen minutes or less when cutting wet grass. The thin metal is harder than the grass, but wet grass takes more effort to cut than dry barley stems. Green wood is likewise wet and the machete blade needs to be hard enough for chopping that medium. It should be halfway between a knife and



Another Midland Game Fair purchase was a short parang. Nice piece of metal

that has held the good edge it came with. We keep it next to the log splitter to trim off those twigs that we missed when harvesting in the woods, or to help moss and ivy let go of our logs. At that task, it's the business, except that the handle it came with detached itself after a week. Frank Berry used a substance by the name of Thermoworx, which is a mouldable plastic, to make a new grip.

The idea is that you raise the temperature of the beads to 62°C at which point the beads become (a) cohesive and (b) transparent. Once they are in this condition you mould the sticky mess into whatever shape you wish and let it cool down. When this happens, the shape (a) hardens and (b) returns to the original colour of the beads. If you are unhappy with whatever you created, simply reheat to 62° and try again.

Pouring about 100 grams of beads into a plastic bowl and adding freshly boiled water, the resulting splodge was wrapped around the Parang's tang. Once cooled, the plastic formed a comfortable, high-visibility handle, that takes the shock of wood chopping with no ill effects. Somewhere along the line the tip broke off the blade.

At a War & Peace show before lockdown changed everything, numerous stalls had sprouted brand new looking machetes like my 1961 purchase in brand new sheaths at an average asking price of £50. I wound up buying



Nearly pristine: this one is wartime dated & made by a subcontractor. Most of these and the later Goloks were made by Martindale.

several at successive shows but dismally failed to keep one pristine in my knife collection: they all got used. I saw one on a stall at Military Odyssey in 2022 with a

£100 price tag: no scabbard but dated 1917. That is the 'oldest' one of this style I have seen, while my 1961 purchase has 1961 on the blade and that makes it the newest one. The 'new' ones that turned up before lockdown all had wartime dates and they, along with brand new looking (but deactivated) M1 Thompsons were said to have been stuff sent to Russia on the Arctic convoys during the war and then never issued to the Red Army.

As a long time and very experienced user of machetes, I think I can evaluate the utility of any type that comes in range. I bought a brand new American designed Chinese made MTECH at Military Odyssey last year because it was quite a heavy blade, the better, I thought, for debranching fallen trees quickly when we got stuck into felling our ash die-backs. It was very good at the job but the blade flew out of the handle after a week.



To this point I can summarize my experience as machetes made for the military work well and last well, while commercially made ones for the bling market are rubbish. A machete is a hacking/slashing tool. Longer ones work better on soft foliage; short ones are more portable.

Saw backs – which were a feature on bayonets before the Great War – are an effort to make a machete into a multi tool.



Gerber machete with a saw back. Its little brother was a waste of money. Note the (shock, horror) hole in the blade. This one is positioned so that it can be hung on a nail or hook when not in use.

That may be useful to some, including our Scottish contributor (below) but if I am confronted with wood that needs sawing rather than chopping, I start my chainsaw. Having a point on a machete blade is not particularly useful. The British army bolo blade has enough of a point to slide it between ivy and a wall to use as a lever or to enable one to stick it in the ground or a tree stump as an alternative to using the scabbard. I used my scabbard until I wore it out after which the machete travelled in a basket with the chainsaw accessories and other tools.

The Bolo blade Is also just right for flipping burgers at a church barbecue. I first used it to turn fried eggs in the 1960s



This year along came a Home Office consultation about machetes. These 'consultations' are them running their plans for new restrictions on the law-abiding public up the flagpole to see who salutes them. They circulate the consultation to the usual yes-men in police departments and such and while these are public consultations, they make little effort to tell the public what they are up to.

We learned of the consultation from a newspaper article and before we addressed it, we received a copy of a reply to it from a Scottish member and his permission to crib from it and this is what he said; ***"I am writing specifically in response to the Government consultation looking at the proposal to add a new object to the Offensive***

Weapons Act 2019.
I want to focus on THREE specific points that I feel have been drastically overlooked:

- 1) The proposal could cause more deaths by stabbing.*
- 2) The proposed text erroneously covers many objects that are common tools.*
- 3) The proposal must include exemptions and defences for legal activities.*

While I fully understand the impetus and desire for new anti-knife crime activities, given the troubling statistics, I was alarmed to read the 2023 proposed legislation updates to the Offensive Weapons Act 2019. I feel this proposal is very wide of the mark and will do more harm than good. It does not at all seem to achieve the goals of the Government (to reduce knife crime and make us safer). In fact, it could increase the number of deaths, as I will expand on below.

In addition to that, I can see a lot of pitfalls evident in the text, which will adversely affect Civil Servants enacting/enforcing it (e.g. Police, Border Force), as well as trades and hobbies trying to comply with it (re-enactment, bushcraft, fishing, TV/film/theatre, gardeners, surveying forestry management, DIY etc). The draft proposal appears impractical and counterproductive.

- 1) The proposed legislation will make the streets MORE dangerous: as I am sure you are aware, the Office for National Statistics estimates that over 80% of knife violence is committed with kitchen knives, with a large proportion of the remaining 20% being carried out with tools like box cutters, chisels, and screwdrivers.*

These are all predominantly used to stab, not chop. Kitchen knives and garage tools are omnipresent and easily obtainable.

Curbing the availability of other forms of knife will have no effect on the availability of kitchen knives, chisels, and screwdrivers. Kitchen knives and screwdrivers are cheap and omnipresent, so these statistics are not at all surprising. Kitchen knives and screwdrivers seem to be the default weapons of knife crime in the UK with things like machete wounds being rare.

If a machete is not available to an attacker, a kitchen knife always will be. A machete, or indeed most of the prohibited knives are usually LESS dangerous than a kitchen knife. Stab wounds are far more dangerous on average than cuts, and statistically more likely to result in death. Kitchen knives are usually far sharper on both the edge and point than a typical machete. Work knives are often virtually blunt to the touch compared to a kitchen knife, and relatively useless as weapons of offence.

Most standard garden machetes are relatively blunt (compared to kitchen knives) and broad tipped, being used to hack, not stab. They will not generally penetrate clothing with a stab due to their shape. Machetes are therefore, in general, much less dangerous than kitchen knives or chisels used in stabbings.

If the criminal intending to use a machete were to switch to a kitchen knife, then this legislation has only succeeded in making the attacker more dangerous, and we should expect deaths to increase correspondingly. Surely encouraging criminals to switch to using more dangerous kitchen knives is a recipe for disaster.

Criminals choose machetes for intimidation due their size, not due to their medical knowledge. Doctors will tell you that kitchen knives are more often dangerous to life than a machete, and criminals will always have access to kitchen knives. Therefore, the only logical evidence-led approach is to concentrate all efforts on the causes of knife assaults (including robust stop and search powers, which Police want), not to try and ban even greater numbers of tools, when kitchen knives will always be available in every kitchen

- *2) The proposed legislation will accidentally ban many common tools: the wording of the proposed legislation is such that it will create confusion among those enforcing it and those living their everyday peaceful lives, by covering an array of objects not so intended. The standard machete is a garden tool, like a billhook or sickle. A standard machete does not have a serrated edge, nor any holes in the blade. Your proposed text will not cover a normal garden machete.*

Any text that you devise to cover a normal garden machete, would also cover such common tools as billhooks, sickles, carving knives, spoke shavers, lawn mower blades, kebab knives or meat cleavers. As is probably clear, these tools are used by numerous trades and pastimes, the length and breadth of the UK and are essential to those trades and hobbies. Why inconvenience hundreds of thousands of citizens, when most of the knife crime is being conducted with kitchen knives?

The criteria of banning knives over a certain size with blades having any two of

- 1) *a conventional edge,*

- 2) *a serrated edge, and*
- 3) *more than one hole in the blade, accidentally runs the risk of covering a wide range of non-offensive and never-used-in-crime tools. The ambiguities even extend to the most fundamental question of what qualifies as an edge or a blade – if a kitchen knife has not yet had the grip added, then what you have is a blade with more than one hole in it. This would become a banned object and illegal to trade or transport – how then would a company manufacture kitchen knives?*

Many gardening tools have serrated saw edges and holes in the blade. Many DIY saws have a serrated edge and holes in the blade. Chainsaws have serrated edges and holes in the blade. Many types of scissors and kitchen knives have holes in their blades. Certain types of sport fencing and historical re-enactment swords have holes in the blade. The list goes on.

- *3) Exemptions and Defences: We have all hopefully learned a lot of lessons from the disastrous banning of curved swords in 2008, and the subsequent amendments to deal with the wording of the legislation to allow the numerous popular legal activities enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of UK citizens to continue (though not unimpeded), such as fencing, re-enactment, theatre productions and experimental archaeology.*

If we learned anything from that episode, it is that we should not allow history to repeat itself. For a high cost, and much stress and time, there has been absolutely no demonstrable benefit to reducing knife crime, and in fact stabbings have continued to rise. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of lawful businesses and people have

been adversely affected and the Police/Border Force have had increased workloads as a result. Nevertheless, lessons were learned from the dreadful wording of the 2008 Act. I therefore ask that if this legislation does go ahead, these lessons be carried forwards - specifically that: 1) ANY new item added to the Offensive Weapons list includes AT LEAST the same exemptions and defences as are in force for curved swords. Namely that a) antiques be exempt from this law, and b) there be defences in place for modern items that are either traditionally crafted by hand, or are being used for filming, theatrical performance, historical re-enactments, or sports/martial arts wood working, gardening forest management etc.

CONCLUSION

If this legislation goes through with its current wording, then it will be a logistical nightmare for all involved, including the Police and Border Force who must enforce it. Not to mention the millions of people it will penalise for carrying on otherwise lawful cultural and healthy activities. Huge numbers of objects would fall under these definitions and be subject to regulation.

(name and address supplied)"

We looked at the Home Office consultation and three points leapt out. The first was that, yet again, the Home Office is directing draconian mischief against inanimate objects instead of addressing crime and the causes of crime. Second, the object of their vilification are fantasy products or film prop replicas rather than utilitarian tools – which they’ll catch anyway with their woolly wording and third they propose arbitrary powers of seizure of privately

possessed property in violation of the Human Rights Act 1998.

Last first; our sole experience of the consequences of banning the private possession of numerous prohibited inanimate objects in 2019 was in Luke Jolly’s case when police searching his home seized what they said were throwing stars. They told him they would put them in the weapons amnesty bin and that was the last he would hear of the matter. Then his firearm certificate was revoked on the strength of his having possessed what were claimed to be throwing stars, for which there was no evidence. It is a very dangerous step giving police arbitrary powers and no check or balance by the courts, as it is sure to be abused. And speaking of abuse, the programme of weeding the control freaks, the misogynists, the paranoid and the perverts out of uniform needs to grow legs if it is to catch up with the way firearm certificate holders are being weeded.



Fantasy ‘zombie’ machete (left) - for or against, we don’t know and a fantasy knife (right) copied from the Home Office consultation.

Fantasy products and film prop stuff are not bought to be used, as they mostly will not stand the stress if my experience of modern machetes is anything to go by. Banning knives with more than one hole in the blade is quite bizarre. Holes in a kitchen knife blade work the same way as fullers on a bayonet, while holes in a machete blade serve to lighten the blade, which is counterproductive and suggests

such a machete is meant for display and not for use.

We did look online for machetes like the ones vilified in the Home Office consultation with a view to seeing how long it would last in normal use, but everybody seems to have taken them off sale in anticipation of the ban, which the Home Office proposal will extend to private possession retrospectively.

What we did notice when searching was quite an array of Kukri derivatives. I have my late father's military one in his collection of Boy Scout cutlery but have never used it for anything as it is very old and, in the hand, feels too short to be a machete and the blade is at the wrong angle for it to serve as a hand axe. It could probably do both jobs, so it passes the 'Joy v chief constable of Dumfries and Galloway' test of being 'adequate', while not being ideal. And some modern ones come with holes in the blade...

The problem with directing legislation at inanimate objects instead of at crime and the causes of crime is that it doesn't make any difference to public safety and does not affect criminals or their behaviour. It only affects the public adversely as police ransack their homes in violation of the Human Rights Act to arbitrarily prevent them peacefully enjoying their possessions in private.

The police who raided Luke Jolly made a big thing about his knife collection, much of which, like mine, was inherited.

Our recommendation to the Home Office was and is that there should be no prohibition on public or private possession of any more knife types. We recommended instead an equivalent to section 19 of the Firearms Act. Under that section, someone in possession of his lawfully owned firearm, together with suitable ammunition, or a loaded shotgun, or an air weapon whether

loaded or not or an imitation firearm in a public place can be prosecuted for having it there and then without lawful authority or a reasonable excuse. 'Lawful authority' means for what the defendant was doing at the time and 'reasonable excuse' is a good explanation for not having lawful authority at the time. As an aside, the Home Office guidance to police example of 'a reasonable excuse' to a charge of armed trespass is carrying a firearm for self-defence when serving a search warrant. That suggests armed officers without a warrant can only enter your home with your permission and since they all carry prohibited weapons these days day-to-day policing may be more complicated than we thought.

Originally, that is before Jack Straw got to be Home Secretary briefly, section 19 only applied to licensed firearms, so one would demonstrate lawful authority for carrying a rifle and ammunition through Kings Cross station in London by producing a ticket for the night train to Fort William. 'Loaded shotgun' was because conventionally one unloads a shotgun to walk between drives and many shooting estates, such as Sandringham, have public roads that must be crossed while out shooting. A reasonable excuse for not unloading would be that one is waiting for a gap in the traffic before shooting at crows in the roadside trees. It is only an offence to fire a gun within 30 feet of the centre of the carriageway if doing so inconveniences a road user. Applying the reversed burden of justifiable possession to the bling the Home Office hate, whether in public or



We suspect that action man and his sparring partner would not get their cutlery back on appeal if the court saw this photo.

private, would provide the very necessary judicial oversight to both the police and the suspect, enabling police to seize the holey machete on suspicion and the owner to justify his possession of it to a court to get it back. Or not. It would depend on the facts.

I have no doubt that if the police had genuine – or paranoid - grounds for concern about Luke Jolly’s knife collection they would have seized them anyway and I also have no doubt that a court would have ordered them returned, whereas seizing the machete in the action photo would not treat his neural faeces. Addressing those deals with the causes of crime, which more vilification of inanimate objects will not.

WHAT IS MEANT BY ‘HAVE REGARD’?

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 brought in several firearms-related provisions (clauses 125-133) all of which, as is typical, were directed at the law-abiding.

Provisions in the 2017 Act are.

125. A redefinition of firearms and parts to include some non-pressure-bearing bits that are not essential parts, such as lower receivers.

126. A redefining of the meaning of ‘antique’ firearms and a power to put the 1992 obsolete calibres list, as variously amended, on the books as an S.I.

127. Makes an offence of possessing the tools with which one could convert an imitation firearm into a firearm.

128. Declared every firearm that had been deactivated to that point as ‘defectively deactivated’ and paved the way to new European regulations for deactivation and a national online register of sales.

129. Fiddled with the ‘controls’ on expanding pistol ammunition so that the police can use it legally.

130. Created section 11A in the 1968 Act to replace the borrowing shotguns provision that was 11(5) and the borrowing rifles provision that was in the 1988 Act.

131. Created the automatic extension of eight week’s validity past the expiry date on your certificates, provided you put the renewal applications in early enough.

132. Paved the way for more regulations about fees, which led to enormous costs for approved clubs and section 5 authorities.

133. Created the provision for putting Home Office guidance to police on a statutory footing, which led to the statutory guidance being issued in November 2021. Of note in section 133 is subsection **(4) A chief officer of police must have regard to any guidance issued under this section.** This seemed to us to imply that despite being statutory, guidance is not law and the ‘have regard’ was a bureaucrat begging administrators to at least consider his guidance.

Our copy of the Students’ Training Notes for the training of probationary constables (revised 1963, reprinted 1966) explains in week 1, lesson 26 that **“The police are mainly concerned with that part of statute law which relates to criminal offences and may be dealt with in magistrates’ and higher courts...the law of England may be divided into two classes, common law and statute law...common law (is) founded on immemorial or long custom and supported by judgments in the High Court in cases to be found in the law reports...statute law is the law enacted in Acts of Parliament..**

We get to point 8, which explains Statutory Instruments; thus, **“...Regulations (or Orders, or Authorisations, or Directions) made**

under powers conferred by an Act on a Secretary of State or other Minister of the Crown. Examples are the Motor Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations, made by the Minister of Transport under the Road Traffic Act, 1960.

The concept of 'have regard' only appears in the firearms bits of the Policing and Crime Act in the context of statutory guidance made under section 133. The phrase has been used many times elsewhere in law and there are a number of the relevant authorities in which the phrase 'have regard' has been discussed.

They read as the opposite of our first thought. We have cribbed the following paragraphs from a 2015 judicial review of the London Oratory School's admissions criteria CO/4693/2014. The full judgment is very thorough, moving as it does from rules to regulations to statutory instruments where they have 'have regard' in common as a practise direction.

Lawyers took as their start point that all that was required was, "***... to take the guidance into account, no more; it would be sufficient merely to consider or examine the Guidance in fulfilment of the obligation to do so. The phrase was sufficiently defined for present purposes*** (private school admission criteria) ***a fortiori in Governing Body of the London Oratory School (& others) v School's Adjudicator where it was said that "Section 84(3) of the 1998 Act imposes an obligation, first on the governors of the Oratory School and then on the adjudicator "to have regard to any relevant provisions of the Code". The phrase 'to have regard to' means to take into account. It does not connote slavish obedience or deference on every occasion. It is***

perfectly possible to have regard to a provision, but not to follow that provision in a particular situation: see the decision of the Privy Council in Barber v Minister of Environment 9th June 1997 at page 5 of the transcript".

Barrister Mr. Béar went on (in the 2015 JR) to contrast the Diocesan Guidance under consideration with guidance issued under *section 7 of Local Authority Social Services Act 1970* ("LASSA 1970"), which imposes a clear duty on local authorities, in the exercise of their social services functions, to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State, as in *R v Islington London Borough Council ex parte Rixon* (1996) 1 CCLR 119. Mr. Béar argued that such a code would be entitled to greater deference than Diocesan Guidance, citing Sedley J at p.123 in *Rixon* who referred to the obligation in such circumstances on a local authority:

"... to follow the path charted by the Secretary of State's guidance, with liberty to deviate from it where the local authority judges on admissible grounds that there is good reason to do so, but without freedom to take a substantially different course".

He further relied on the Divisional Court's decision in *Police Negotiating Board v Frances & Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2008] EWHC 1173 (Admin) at [42] (which referred to the 'classic' situation where the legislation denotes a discretion resting with the decision-maker) as affording "quite a wide discretion" for the decision-maker (Keene LJ), that is to say, in this case the Governing Body.

Mr Béar concedes that greater deference still would need to be paid to guidance which had, through consultation and Parliamentary sanction, the force of statutory guidance, citing, as

the clearest example, the Code of Practice to the Mental Health Act 1983 (with its detailed provisions for the use of seclusion for mental patients and reviews) considered by the House of Lords in *R (Munjaz) v Mersey Care NHS Trust* [2006] 2 AC 148: see [20] (Lord Bingham) and [68] (Lord Hope). Accordingly, the provisions of the code in *Munjaz* were properly entitled to:

“... great weight... much more than mere advice which an addressee is free to follow or not as he chooses. It is guidance which any hospital should consider with great care, and from which it should depart only if it has cogent reasons for doing so” (Lord Bingham).

We pause to mention that in his book ‘The Rule of Law’, written after he retired, he is quite scathing about statutory instruments.

Lord Hope in *Munjaz* also opined that “cogent reasons” should be advanced for not following what he described as “statutory guidance of this kind” defining what he means by ‘cogent’ in this passage:

“They must give cogent reasons if in any respect they decide not to follow [the guidance]. These reasons must be spelled out clearly, logically and convincingly”.

The reason had to be powerful or persuasive, the use of ‘convincingly’ adding significant colour, in my judgment, to the word ‘cogent’ in Munjaz.

Mr. Béar referred to *R v Director of Passenger Rail Franchising, ex parte Save Our Railways* [1996] CLC 589, where, in relation to guidance relating to railway franchises, Bingham MR said:

“An instruction is a direction with which the recipient must comply. Guidance is advice which the recipient

should heed and respect; it should ordinarily be followed but need not be if there are special reasons for not doing so.”.

The decision of Collins J in *Royal Mail Group plc v Postal Services Commission* [2007] EWHC 1205 (Admin) in which he said of statutory guidance issued by Parliament after public consultation, in which ***“to a very large extent Parliament has indicated how the regulator’s discretion should be exercised... an obligation to have regard to a policy is not the same as an obligation to follow it. However, the context and statutory provisions in question are vitally important. A policy cannot normally be applied without the possibility of departure because it would mean that the body in question had fettered its discretion to act as the justice of a particular case demanded.... The obligation to have regard to the policy recognises that there may be circumstances when it does not have to be applied to the letter but in my view there must be very good reasons indeed for not applying it.”***

The “conventional law” as articulated by Laws LJ in *R (Khatun) v Newham London Borough Council* [2005] QB 37 at [47] (a case concerning guidance issued pursuant to *Part VII* of the *Housing Act 1996*, to which the decision-maker must ‘have regard’, cited recently with approval in *Nzolameso v City of Westminster* [2015] UKSC 22):

“... namely that respondents to such a circular must (a) take it into account and (b) if they decide to depart from it, give clear reasons for doing so”.

The judgment of Wilson LJ in *R(G) v Lambeth Borough Council* [2012] PTSR 364 where, in relation to guidance issued under *section 7* of *LASSA 1970*, he said that:

“In the absence of a considered decision that there is good reason to deviate from it, it must be followed”.

‘Have regard’, therefore, provides discretion to the administrators of the statutory guidance – firearms licensing managers and crown courts hearing section 44 appeals – to depart from the guidance by articulating good and clear reasons for doing so, whereas Statutory Instruments for which administrators are not directed to ‘have regard’ must presumably be followed slavishly and without the exercise of discretion.

Where it gets interesting with Statutory Instruments is in their relation to statute and common law. Blackstone’s Criminal Practice regards the statutory Instrument that section 126 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 (antique firearms) paved the way for as having over-written, despite there being no implied repeal, *Richards v Curwen* – the 1977 case which made the question of antique status one of fact and degree for the jury to decide while Laws LJ said in *Thoburn v Sunderland City Council* that common law could only be amended by primary legislation saying that it was amending the common law on its face.

With respect to the Statutory guidance, for which firearms licensing managers and crown courts hearing section 44 appeals are directed to ‘have regard’ this phrase opens to them the option of departing from the guidance where there are good and clear reasons to do so. And while, so far, all the cases we have had arising from the guidance arise from firearms managers slavishly following it if not stretching it even more than the Home Office intended, the courts seem keen to take the opposite view. The guidance uses the phrase ‘danger to public safety of the peace’ more than fifty times and while firearms managers are

using the guidance to try to reduce firearm certificate numbers, the courts are ‘having regard’ for the fact that the statutory guidance does not amend the common law, where ‘danger to public safety or the peace’ is clearly defined in decided cases, nor does it amend statute law, which does not extend the mental health bar of ‘unsound mind’ to shotgun certificate applicants nor to dealers and their servants.



LETTERS etc

First a note on house style: we typeset what we write for our journals in 14-point Cambria and photo captions *in 11-point Cambria italic bold*. Without, we hope, causing too much confusion, we use ***Cambria 14-point italic bold*** for stuff written by other people for other reasons that we import into the journal. That includes quotes from books, court cases and letters. It saves editing time...

I’m a member of a Japanese Re-enactment group and some of the members have been looking at replica small arms recently, as they would be better for demonstration purposes than modern standard Deac’s or Airsoft.

There is a company based in Japan called Tanaka Works that produces really nice replicas of Japanese small arms. Only problem being is that they have a chamber capable of taking a dummy cartridge.

The barrel is solid, as most European replicas are, and the “chamber” is skeletonised.

It is because of this I’m not sure where they’d stand legally in order to bring one into the country. The load bearing surfaces I doubt would handle real ammunition, and as far as I’m aware, it can’t be fitted with an original bolt assembly.

But it does have a firing pin of sorts due to it being used with Japanese style caps, its a over engineered cap gun to put it bluntly.

There are some good reference videos on YT of the action being demonstrated, the one linked is of a Type 44, but the principle is the same.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWj3dLgFFjs>

Where would something like this stand legally? And what would be the advice on importing one if it is?

TO WHICH a UK BF Manufacturer replied: *It has the appearance of a firearm to which section 1 of the act applies because of its age it is covered by VCRA2006 and so legal to import to make available for re enactment.*

As it is a bolt action if it is Firearms Act 1982 compliant in construction - end of story- if not it can only be section 1 under the Act therefore it would be legal for an RFD with an import licence to bring in, declare it as a RIF for film and theatre and if Border Force release it as a RIF ship straight to the forensic lab in Leeds, pay the money and get the report. If cleared do what you like.

If not you have lost a replica and some cash- but no prosecution. Leeds is the lab NCA and generic plod use- treat it as a vaccine.

Even if it clears customs as a RIF it should NOT be released until the forensic report is in hand and don't fudge the declaration.

It will be an expensive process; it is a commercial procedure with some financial risk either way - but no prosecution.

Life is not meant to be easy. CP

Ian P sent us a summary of his letter to his MP:

- 1. Find correct tree before starting to bark and do not use shooters as scapegoats for other people's criminal failures.*
- 2. Asking why no inquiry following Hungerford.*
- 3. Why was McMurdo allowed to resign and not prosecuted.*
- 4. Whitehead shootings.*
- 5. Plymouth did Davison have a legal certificate or not. Police to answer in court.*
- 6. Licensing dept to be fully trained in law not policy etc.*
- 7. Involve club/syndicate in issuing licence as they know whether someone should not even be allowed near a carpet sweeper let alone a firearm.*

*Regards
Ian FP"*

Well done Ian. The drum we keep banging is that all these licensed killers got their certificates from the police. Michael Ryan's was turned round in 24 hours for him to acquire two rifles for which there were no competitions. Thomas Hamilton was getting very pushy in February 1995 to get into a club in time for renewal. We think the police leant on the Stirling club to take him. In Whitehaven, only the police knew Derrick Bird had certificates. He had no mentors or references from the shooting community. Davison bought a pump action gun for clay pigeon shooting.

In the old days Davison would not have been able to buy that shotgun because the dealer would have been the one deciding if he were suitable or not and whether the gun was 'right' for his intended purpose. I was in Moxham's (Walthamstow) when he refused to sell a shotgun to an intending buyer because he was not satisfied that the dude had a

reason to buy one or a safe place to use it. Once shotgun certificates came in - May 1968 - that went out of the window and dealers sold guns on production of the certificate because that certificate meant the police had pre-approved the transaction.

Ryan had gone through the probation and stuff at a .22" club. He then joined a commercial club (the Tunnel in Devizes, Wiltshire) which followed the gun trade line that it was entirely up to the police to make the decisions about certificates and variations - the police having taken over the vetting of applicants from the gun trade and club secretaries via the unpublished Home Office Memorandum of Guidance for the Police.

The other cases are the same; Dunblane, Whitehaven, Durham and Plymouth, where the murderers were issued certificates by the police, whose decision it was to grant those certificates. Club officials and RFDs are not allowed to be references so the people most likely to encounter us when we have loaded guns are not thought suitable judges of character, yet they are the people most likely to know what an intending buyer was like from his behaviour in the shop or on his first visit to a club...

regards

RL

Ian's MP replied that the Home Office had beefed up their November 2021 Statutory Guidance with a February 2023 edition. We said Huh? We are on the Home Office list to receive firearms related updates and the only one we have received this year (on 13.4.23) told us that the guidance had been updated because the Department of International Trade had changed its name to the Department of Business and Trade.

The answers to Ian's questions are thus:

1. They never do. The Home Office usually has a solution waiting for a problem and has never done anything to address gun crime or the causes of gun crime. They have been successfully drugging the press with irrelevant knee-jerk reactions since 1966 in my personal experience and see no reason not to continue with that policy.
2. Hungerford was the only multiple death disaster of the 1980s not to be subject of a public enquiry. Douglas Hurd's initial reaction was to say that the public had no confidence in the licensing system, which was true, before the Home Office got him onto the knee-jerk scapegoating path that he followed. A constituent schoolgirl and practical rifle competitor heard him explain, on a visit to her school, that the Home Office had a plan for dealing with such weapons as Ryan had 'awaiting a suitable legislative opportunity' - which turned out to be a warmed-up version of the 1973 green paper that Parliament rejected that year. Another constituent, Group Captain Peter Gilpin CBE DFC went to see him at surgery and found Mr. Hurd neither interested in nor briefed on the subject. Our conclusions were that government saw no benefit in highlighting the systemic failures of the licensing system, as they didn't want to replace it with anything else.
3. Nobody knows. The most interesting aspect of the Cullen report is that all the exquisite

detail of Hamilton's firearms related activity were drawn from his FAC. The enquiry never saw the police file.

4. Derrick Bird's rampage came out of the blue as only the police knew he had certificates. He was not known to the shooting community or RFDs in his area. David Cameron kinda shut that one down by saying that one could not legislate for a switch flicking in someone's head, so the Home Affairs Select Committee took the matter up and recommended extending prohibited person status to catching people who get suspended sentences and extending prohibition from possession of firearms to include antiques. Another example of stuff awaiting a suitable legislative opportunity.
5. The question was answered; he had a shotgun certificate. His guns had been seized under the seizure policy and subsequently returned. No enquiries were made of the shooting community to see what people who had met him when he had loaded guns thought about his suitability.
6. Quite the opposite: the College of Policing draft handbook for Firearms Enquiry Officers is wholly based on policy and only makes one reference to common law (in the context of seizing firearms). Every appeal case we have had in since the statutory guidance was issued has been wholly based upon it. Yet the Policing and Crime Act 2017 says that police should 'have regard' for the guidance and Lord Bingham said, in a Judicial Review, that

means anybody not following the guidance must set out his reasons for not doing so - such as by following common or statute law instead.

7. No chance: the system is so geared up to treating us all as target criminals that they don't trust us, with the result that we don't trust them and all their cockups land more manure in our laps.

We were copied in on this:

Hi Paul,

Further to your / Edgar Bros. Circular on the need to add UN 0509 to our acquire and keep permits, I prodded Kent police as my permit doesn't have 0509. According to a call from the explosives officer just now, they have had no instructions regarding this and as far as they are concerned, no further additions to the permit is required.

Right hand, left hand?

Cheers.

So we went internet surfing and found: Exemptions Related To The Nature Of The Transport Operation UN 0509 is in the ADR book as a smokeless powder.

The ADR books detail the provisions for transporting hazardous goods in bulk. I had an ADR qualification for many years and the smokeless powder UN0509 is classed as flammable, not as an explosive. That makes it the same as disposable petrol cigarette lighters. To carry them in bulk meant an equipped and marked vehicle - orange haz plates fore and aft - warning signs on the outer packaging, a safety-gear-equipped trained driver and the UN stuff from the book printed out and on the dashboard. You don't need any of that to carry a cigarette lighter.

So my guess is that Edgar Bros receive it in bulk, whereupon the hazchem regulations apply to its transportation, but in small user quantities, it is exempt, as above. As a smokeless powder it has nothing to do with explosives licences.

regards

RL +

From a member who read the journal;

Many thanks for issue 77, the Plymouth debacle spurs me to pen a couple of observations following our FEO's recent visit.

We understand that at least two clubs have been closed down due to administrative failures and possibly another local club has just lost it's HoA approval, details are sketchy. We shoot clays, as you may know.

Our FEO was very keen to know how we vet club members and guests, and one theoretical question was despite knowing someone for X years, if we hadn't seen him for the past 12 months, would we view him as a full or probationary member?

The point being that we are being viewed as vouching for their good character, and that a failure to attend club fixtures is being regarded as a failure of their probationary obligations to the club, and thus we should expeditiously terminate their membership, plus absence deems we cannot in turn vouch for their good character. In this respect, I've had the police ask twice in the last month regarding FAC renewals; not only were they members, but also regular attendees.

The second and implied threat was that anyone, especially guests, need to not only sign the daily register, which we insist on, but by default alluding to declaring that under section 21, they were not a proscribed person to hold a

firearm, OR SHOTGUN and that we would be in default and at risk of losing our HoA approval if we did not comply.

Ergo, the clay shoots are now members only and any guests subject to the same protocols as full bore attendance, eg two weeks notice, full name and address and compliance to section 21.

XXXX police are taking 4-6 months to process FAC renewals alone and I'm holding a rifle for a chap since last October who is in need of an FAC as part of his vermin control contract which he cannot fulfil.

It's evident the system could never put shotguns on section 1 but the police can certainly lean on the clubs to tighten up their procedures especially if it holds HoA approval. Food for thought.

We now also have the new NRA edict on hand loaded ammo now being part of the future shooter certification cards as part of the NRA / MoD requirements for the use of hand loaded ammo on their turf as falling to the club chairman's responsibility. Not totally unexpected as we live in increasingly paranoid times.

SRA SECRETARY: What I can't read into the police micro-management of your club is whether they are trying to catch a prohibited person slipping through your controls or find a way of closing the club down by any means or just being menacing.

I wonder if creating a separate clay pigeon club would do it? An application to the chief constable for 11(6) permission in the name of the new club and a lease agreement from the parent club to the Clay Pigeon Control subsidiary which will have a constitutional membership limited to shot gun certificate holders and their

guests. Anyone without a certificate can then be a guest without formality. SRA membership PLI covers members and their guests.

Have a look at sections 11 and 11A of the Firearms Act 1968. 11A was enacted in 2017 and changed 'use' to 'possess' in two circumstances that used to be 'use'. Prior to that there were four circumstances in which someone without a certificate could 'use' a gun. That 2017 change reduced it to two - miniature rifles under 11(4) and shotguns under 11(6). The latter exemption only works if the chief constable has granted an 11(6) by letter, but behind the term 'use' can be seen the fact that in those circumstances the lender would be unable to check the borrower's credentials to be satisfied that the borrower is not a prohibited person. The 2017 change clearly makes an offence by the borrower if s/he is prohibited but created no mirror image offence of lending to a prohibited person. There would be a way of charging that, but it would turn on proving guilty knowledge by the lender. The late Colin Greenwood quoted a case where a prohibited person could not be charged with possessing a firearm without a certificate because it was a fairground gallery rifle. They charged him with something else instead because he used it to shoot a third party. The barrister who prosecuted the 'full metal jacket' club whose bullets ricocheted into the M25 Junction 26 Truckstop reckoned that prosecuting a prohibited person who took part would succeed. I don't know and the bill about miniature rifle clubs currently before Parliament does not seek to change 'use' to 'possession' at such clubs.

If Home Office approval were withdrawn there is no appeal so it would

be a judicial review to the High Court. Looking at section 11A you can carry on as normal but without police interference - provided you all belong to another Home Office approved club: otherwise, Home Office approval disappearing can include revocation of certificates issued solely for use of rifles at the club.

I learned many years ago that one must belong to two clubs - this was in the context of London clubs but the advice held me in good stead at Bisley too. The reason for belonging to two is so that if you run into a crashing bore at one, you can remember an appointment at the other and excuse yourself.

I am reminded that overtightening a nut strips the thread and thus is a failure of control as the wheel will fall off. That is what is happening.

regards

RL

We sent a 'stock' answer to more than a dozen enquirers about renewal issues - or the lack of:

The position with certificate renewals was that it was in a mess prior to the national emergency of Covid 19. Police reaction to that emergency, so far as firearms licensing goes, was to arbitrarily decide not to accept new applications or variation applications to concentrate on renewals. Dyfed Powys police were two years behind before the crisis hit. The administrative problem would have been the 2-metre spacing and such, which had the effect of reducing the number of desks that could be used. I worked in a team of 174 people as an established civil servant in the 1970s and thinking back to our open plan office - long gone by the way, replaced by computers - we could have achieved that by opening on Saturdays and having two of each six-

section block in per day - two days a week each instead of five day working.

People in police headquarters would have had to make similar decisions with the modern advantage of work that could be done from home. We did that in 1973 for various reasons including the IRA's London bombing campaign, rotational power cuts caused by the miners' strike and rail strikes. I took home everything I could work on - letters were dictated by telephone to a typing pool recording machine then - and virtually everything done by emails now was telephone calls then.

During this 2020-1 crisis period, the Home Office made the GP medical pro forma obligatory to replace the ad hoc forms in use in some police areas and their November Statutory Guidance kicked in requiring antiques owners to apply for FACs - that the police departments were not accepting. Other arbitrary police department decisions included only accepting renewal applications online and, for example, Merseyside returned applications if the GP pro forma did not arrive within a week of the application.

The law regarding renewals is set out in primary legislation. If the police believe that continued possession by an applicant would constitute a danger to public safety or the peace their duty (Section 12, Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988) is to revoke the certificate before it expires and to seize the firearms to which it relates. If the owner appeals successfully the property must be returned and if unsuccessful, disposal is a matter for the court.

2017 legislation gave certificates an automatic eight-week extension provided that the application had been entered more than eight weeks prior to the renewal date. Once the expiry date is

passed, the police have no power to seize firearms. After that eight weeks grace has expired the law requires the police to issue a section 7 permit to cover possession until the certificate is renewed. If renewal is refused, permits continue to cover possession until 21 days after the refusal, or 21 days after any appeal is abandoned or dismissed. 2021 statutory guidance says that if an application is received less than eight weeks prior to the renewal date, permits do not have to be issued and firearms must be removed to storage, such as at one's club or in the gun trade.

That caused quite a few problems in 2020, as we had people in Dyfed Powys being told to put guns into dealers' shops while they were closed by government order and they weren't allowed out anyway except for a walk; people who had put guns in who then could not get them out and so forth; I don't think even half of that mess is sorted out yet.

In practical terms, if you applied for renewal more than eight weeks before the expiry date the police should issue a permit, provided the application was complete. If that is so, you can judicially review the chief constable's decision in the High Court seeking an order for the permit to be issued so that you can recover your property, the costs of the application and any costs arising from damage occasioned while they were beyond your control.

Most problems we have had with that cut-off date have been caused by GPs. Back in 2021, I took the non-statutory medical form to my GP on 13th March, because I wanted to enter the FAC application with 1st April as the date. I got it back in August, so I only got the application in three weeks before the Home Office deadline on 11th September and that was before Dyfed Powys were

accepting new applications anyway. I got a new one signed in January 2022 when I was at the surgery for the HGV medical and again in January 2023. Someone will want to see them eventually...

I presume your application for renewal is still pending and that there will eventually be a renewed certificate or a refusal letter. Our case 'Philip Morris' is similar to your position: he was obliged to put guns into store because of the eight-week rule. Then six months after appealing, the police decided he could have the certificates again, which they issued two months later, backdated to the expiry of the old certificate.

Our view is the certificate should have been valid for five years as it was treated as a grant, not a renewal. If he had received permits, there would have been no point to backdating the certificate. The trouble is that nobody on the police side seems that bothered about complying with the law and where they slide in error or criminality, they investigate complaints themselves about themselves and can't find any fault with themselves.

A case in point was Mark Holmes in Gwent. The assistant chief constable there relied on Mark's 'convictions' - of which he had none - as grounds for refusing him. There was an old drink-drive conviction in the police bundle but it was someone with a different middle name. Mark had a DVLA letter confirming he had no convictions and his 1989 paper driving licence but the judge preferred the ACC's oral evidence and dismissed the appeal. We complained the ACC had obtained dismissal of our appeal by lying in the witness box. The officer dealing with the complaint simply brushed it under the carpet.

Our view is that the complaints processes are designed not to work and that the best solutions are through the courts.

Dear Sir/Madam, I have a small collection of antique firearms, all under the "Obsolete calibre" classification. One of them (a .320 British revolver) fell foul of the recent changes to that classification so I applied for a Firearms certificate in September 2021. I joined a local club and have been shooting regularly since August 2021. I should also add that I have had an FAC previously. I recently had a visit from the local FEO during which I expressed an interest in putting one of my .32 rimfire rifles on the certificate as I thought it would be nice to shoot it. I was under the impression that I could put it on certificate to shoot it for a while and if I wished to sell it I could inform the police and it would revert to its antique status. According to the FEO this is not the case and they are saying that once on certificate it is no longer an antique and I would have to get it deactivated to remove from my licence? Is that correct? I have made enquiries on a shooting forum, and had replies from some who had done this without any problems. Others said it is simply a case that some Forces will do it, others won't. Hoping you can offer advice.

SRA SAID: The 2021 change that put .320" onto firearm certificates did not require owners to offer any good reason for keeping one. Possession prior to the change was reason enough and applying for the FAC (or a variation) to keep it is authority in law to possess it while the application or any subsequent appeal is pending. The problem most often encountered was that many police forces were not accepting applications for new

certificates or for variations during the aftermath of Covid 19 until after the Home Office deadline for such applications to be made.

With respect to .32"rimfire, it is still on the antiques list and thus can change hands without certificates being involved. Home Office advice to police is contradictory in places in that members of an appropriate club can fire antiques occasionally out of curiosity without putting them on the firearm certificate first. That advice was drafted by someone thinking of muzzle loaders. The problem with .32rimfire is getting the ammunition without a certificate and if one puts the ammunition variation on the FAC advice to police elsewhere is that possession of ammunition suitable for use in an antique brings into question whether that antique is possessed solely as a curiosity or not.

The other problem with Home Office advice to police, as highlighted by the Plymouth inquest into the Davison murders, is that the people charged with administering the firearms legislation don't seem to have read the legislation itself, the common law or any of the guidance from the Home Office, statutory or otherwise. That is, unfortunately, the way bureaucracy has developed. I was a social worker for many years and attended an advanced law course every year at which I got 'digests' or interpretations of new social services legislation: I never saw any source documents and those digests were not infallible.

My best guess is that your FEO is conflating .32" rimfire with .320" having moved off the antiques list. You can put a .32"rimfire on the FAC to use and take it off again as necessary. The caveat is the possession of ammunition. I had a case in which the FAC holder owned a set of

Martini Henry rifles as antiques and a trade variant on his FAC for shooting. When the police rolled over him he was charged with all the Martini Henrys as 'possession without a certificate' because he had the ammunition that would fit them. That was someone interpreting the Home Office interpretation of how the law might be used to reduce certificate numbers.

RL

Air of Battle by Wing Commander William Fry M.C.

First published in 1974,
our review copy is the
Kindle version published by
Lume Books 2020; ASIN: B08BX111TW.



Amazon rate the book as 107th in Air Force biographies and 110th in biographies of WW1. We have been meaning to publish a review of this book for over a year, having first encountered him when researching around the Billy Bishop legend. Bishop wrote 'Winged Warfare' about the exploits that gained him a V.C., a D.S.O and an M.C. from the hand of King George V – all at one investiture – in 1918 when he was in his twenties, while William Fry left publishing his memoir until he was nearly eighty.

There is a certain freshness in books written soon after events that is replaced in books like this one with perspective – and third-party input. What we first noticed about Willie was that while his recollections were vivid and detailed, in places they seemed inaccurate. That happens to us all, which is why we advise members to write up what happened when something happens to them. We have just given that advice to a member whose guns were swopped for a firearm certificate revocation notice over the weekend.

As an eyewitness to history, he was a good observer and a pleasure to read. He had joined the Territorial army – *“the London Rifle Brigade (5th City of London Regiment) with its Headquarters in Bunhill Row”* before the war started. He was mobilised in August 1914 and sent to Bisley. They moved to Crowborough in September 1914 and landed in France on the 5th of November, at Le Havre, thus qualifying him for the 1914 ‘Mons’ Star and the ‘5th Aug-22nd Nov’ clasp. Of this adventure he says;

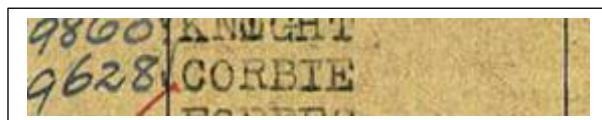
“Our battalion went to France with the older long-barrelled Lee Enfield rifle and the first thing most of us did after we got into the line was to acquire from a dead man or from some other source one of the short-barrelled type which the Regulars had. There were plenty lying about.”

Hopefully he remembered to find a bayonet for it too. The Long Lee came with a 12-inch dagger bayonet, while the S.M.L.E. came with an 18-inch sword bayonet and neither bayonet fitted the ‘wrong’ rifle.

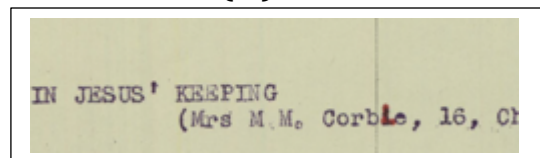
He was still in the trenches on Christmas Day and his account of that day is: *“This particular corporal was outstanding in a reckless crew and, egged on by his companions, climbed up on to the front parapet of the trench just as dawn was breaking on Christmas Day. Normally this would have meant certain death but he was not shot at. After a minute or two and some shouting on both sides a German soldier stood up on their parapet and then the two men slowly made their way towards each other, climbing over and through the barbed wire, met, and shook hands in the middle of ‘no-man’s land’. During all this we had been looking up over the parapet. After a*

pause and more shouting, men from both sides began to climb out of the trenches...Both sides got together and arranged the burial on the spot, in rough graves dug with entrenching tools, of the dead who had been lying between the lines for several weeks. This was the first thought in everyone’s mind. It took several hours as the ground was frozen. Soon after midday, messages, quietly passed along, began to arrive from the rear ordering both sides back to their trenches and by about one o’clock the area in between was clear. No shots were fired for an hour or so, but the fact that the truce was over was brought home to our platoon, as the first shot fired by the other side in our locality went through the head of a man in our platoon killing him. His name, Corbie, comes back to me as I write, after more than fifty years. He had shown his head for but a moment.”

Pte E Corble died on 5th January 1915 and was buried in the London Rifle Brigade cemetery, which suggests ‘died of wounds’. The graves registration form



lists him as ‘Corbie’, as did the headstone form, where the (i) has been changed in red ink to an (L.) That sets several hares



running: that Willie remembered him as ‘Corbie’ suggests he served as ‘Corbie’ so whether that was a nickname (it’s easier to shout than Corble), a false name he enlisted under or a typo on earlier documents that he decided to live with. His date of death suggests either he was carried out of the line alive and died in a

field station, or he was killed as Willie says, on Christmas Day and his date of death relates to when his mortal remains reached the bureaucracy.

Fry was commissioned in the Somerset Light Infantry in 1915 and *“collected my uniform and kit. Strange to think we had to provide ourselves with swords. There was no issue of anything. We were given £25 and expected to fit ourselves out with it, which was quite possible, but I got everything in London on credit and spent the £25.”*

He trained as a pilot at the Military Flying School, Birmingham, on 24 May 1916: *“I flew my Royal Aero Club test for a pilot’s certificate on the same machine. It’s probable that the elastic undercarriage bindings had to be renewed. The number of my Royal Aero Club certificate was 3003. This test was entirely a civil matter ...”*

Willie gives us his take on aerial navigation; *“flying south down the east of England on a misty day it was not difficult for an inexperienced pilot to mistake the Crouch or Blackwater estuaries in Essex for the Thames estuary and then when he reached the Thames estuary to suppose he was over the Channel — and then Kent became France. It certainly happened to me in the first war, and even in the last one the same sort of thing...on a day when I was in command at Hawkinge, near Folkestone, in 1941, a group of us were standing by the watch hut on the airfield when what we at first took to be two Messerschmidts came flying low and firing at ground targets. Someone said, ‘Those are Spitfires not Messerschmidts.’ Indeed they were, and from a squadron in our group as we soon confirmed with the operations room. The pilots had been sent on a*

ground-strafting operation patrol looking for trains in Northern France and when over Kent had thought they were over France, so began shooting up locomotives and putting the fear of God into Southern Railway crews and passengers. Luckily they did no serious damage, and even more luckily for the pilots they made no exaggerated claims when they landed so did not get into serious trouble.”

That anecdote is one of the few comments the author writes about what he did in WW2. When WW1 ended, he was posted to *“the pilots’ pool at Aboukir near Alexandria. After a few days there I was posted to No. 5 Fighting School at Heliopolis which had just begun to function when the war ended and was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Tedder, who later became Lord Tedder...”*

He left the RAF and then re-joined, thus losing some ten years of seniority. T E Lawrence did the same; feeling better out than in until they got out and then missing the regular meals and wages. The atmosphere of that post-war posting is nicely captured and worth the investment in a Kindle copy, but back to the Great War;

“about this time we heard of the Royal Flying Corps Club in London and I applied for membership, which was approved. The club was in a large former private house in Bruton Street and had, I believe, been originated and financed by Colonel W.C. Bersey, a rich Canadian, who was attached to the RFC. (His portrait hangs in the present-day RAF Club.) Comfortable, well run, with a friendly staff and a number of bedrooms, it was a godsend right through to the end of the war and afterwards to RFC officers, especially to those like myself who had no home to

go to on leave. We made it our headquarters when on leave from France and could always be sure of finding friends there. It was absorbed by the Royal Air Force Club when that opened in the splendid building in Piccadilly given by Lord Cowdray ..."

He was away from the war for over a year getting commissioned and trained to fly; *"my log book on posting away, signed by the CO, is: Posted Overseas 26/6/1916 ... Total time as pilot 27 hours 40 minutes."*

Back at the war; *"The front line was easily recognised from a distance by the line of British and German kite balloons dotted the whole way along the front and crowded together on each side on the Somme battle-front. The trench lines could be recognised when nearer by the ground showing up brown or chalky white where the earth had been thrown up. The whole area was pock-marked with shell holes."*

Of his airfield, *"The two main landmarks when in the air were the dead straight tree-lined, St Pol to Arras, and Dourness to Arras, main roads. Our aerodrome stood approximately in the middle of the V made by the two, so it was not too difficult for a beginner to find even in bad weather. Where the two roads converged, a mile or two outside Arras, were sited side by side two large tented casualty clearing stations to which thousands of wounded were brought during the Somme and, later, the Arras battles to be attended to. Those who survived were sent on by hospital train or ambulance to base hospitals or straight to Calais for England. It was every soldier's ambition to get what was known as a 'Blighty one', and one stood the best chance of being sent back to England with a light wound just*

before an offensive, as it was the policy to clear out all casualty clearing stations and hospitals to make room for the rush of casualties."

Of getting into action, sort of; *"In my first combat report when flying Morane Bullets I stated that on meeting two enemy scouts I turned away, which was exactly what I had done, it being all I could do to fly the machine without getting involved in fights."* That was also what German pilots did, according to Billy Bishop. Most of the aircraft flying over the trenches were not fighters; they were up with jobs to do, such as artillery observation, mapping and photographing enemy positions and such, but *"It was about this time that German single-seater scouts, Fokkers, with fixed forward-firing machine-guns began to make their appearance in numbers which rapidly increased. A BE2c attacked by one of these had little chance of getting away and was practically defenceless. The observer had a Lewis machine-gun, but on an awkward and primitive mounting and with little field of fire except back over the pilot's head, and then there was a good chance of shooting the tail off his own machine."*

On arriving at his squadron, *"The next morning I was detailed to C Flight, commanded by Captain W.A. Bishop, commonly called 'Bish', who had just been promoted to captain and flight commander and was rapidly making a name for himself and was highly thought of by the CO. A Canadian who had graduated through the Canadian equivalent of our Sandhurst, he had transferred to the RFC from the infantry as an observer and after a time got his wings as a pilot. Good-looking, fair, strong, open and uninhibited, he was a success in the*

squadron and popular. It was good to be greeted by the old ground crews and I at once became Bishop's deputy leader in the flight. He was friendly and I could not have had a better welcome."

Besides all the other jobs, he got sent out to bomb something: *"July 15th, exactly a fortnight after joining the squadron. The target was in the small town of Courcelles some miles over the lines. These raids were the first manifestations of Trenchard's obsession with the value of bombing from the air, which he relentlessly pursued and which was followed by his apostles, culminating in the formation and use of the enormous Bomber Command in the Second World War."*

"My log book for this raid carries the brief entry: 'Dropped 2 112 lb bombs at Courcelles'"

Of the French-built Nieuports, he says *"... only instrument fitted at the factory was the altimeter. The rest of the (instruments) in French squadrons were personal property of the pilots who moved them ship to ship. British ones got fitted forwards before going to squadrons".*

Brereton Greenhous (writing in 'the making of Billy Bishop') describes *"the cockpit looks like the inside of a locomotive cab. In it is a compass, airspeed indicator, radiator thermometer, oil gauge, compensator, two gun trigger controls, synchronized gear [oil] reservoir handle, hand [fuel] pump, gas tank gauge, two [ignition] switches, pressure control, altimeter, gas pipe, shut off cocks, [fuel and radiator] shutter control, thermometer, two cocking handles for the guns, booster magneto, spare ammunition drums, map case, throttle, joystick and rudder bar. "*

Willie Fry pours out anecdotes and name-drops, *"FE2bs but having 110-h.p. Clerget rotary engines. Lieutenant Insall had been awarded the Victoria Cross a few months earlier for conspicuous gallantry when flying one of these machines in the Squadron. All rotary engines were as a rule lubricated with vegetable oil — in this case castor oil, the smell of which permeated everything connected with flying in units with rotary engines."*

"On October 17th, Lieutenant Robertson and I were sent up to try and intercept an enemy machine reported on the Somme front. We saw nothing and the clouds being low, had difficulty in finding our way back to the aerodrome. We became separated and Robertson eventually tried to land at No. 2 Squadron aerodrome at Hesdigneul, near Béthune. He came in down wind very fast and ran into a wood on the edge of the aerodrome and was killed." Norman MacLeod Robertson can be visited in Bethune Town Cemetery.

That Lewis Gun on its Foster mount, Fry says, *"...have no recollection of receiving instruction in the changing of drums or of being made to practise the procedure on the ground or of any armament officer or otherwise satisfying himself that one could do so. It was entirely up to the pilot...our armament officer was always beseeching us to keep and return the empty double-sized Lewis ammunition drums as they were specially made for the RFC and were scarce, but to save time we nearly always threw them overboard as we feared being caught with our gun down."* Rare and collectable now, unless or until our beloved Home Office manage to shift the

classification of magazines from accessory to component.

We said he does detail: *"...Lypne aerodrome, a few miles away, as it was the starting point for new machines being ferried across the Channel to France. I was asked if I could fly one over, was given the log books of a DH9, a type I had never seen, and told to go and find it and take it to Marquise aerodrome behind Calais, the delivery aerodrome for new machines before they went on to an aircraft depot. The DH9 was one of the series of de Haviland two-seaters, of which the DH4 with the Rolls Royce engine and later, the DH9a with the American 'Liberty' engine became the best known, and very fine machines they were. The DH9 had the six-vertical-cylindrical Siddeley 'Puma' engine and was somewhat underpowered. The engine had not quite come up to expectations. I always disliked flying behind a vertical-cylindrical engine as it lacked the rhythm of the V-cylindrical type. As far as I can remember, the Beardmore 120-h.p. and 160-h.p. and the Siddeley 'Puma' were the only water-cooled vertical-cylindrical engines put into service by us during the 1914-18 war, although the Germans relied on them almost exclusively. I found the plane, No. D.141 out on the aerodrome, where there were dozens of all types, and the NCO in charge. I checked with him that it was filled with petrol and oil, signed for it, collected my luggage... the control for advancing and retarding the ignition; it had been fully retarded by the fitter for starting the engine and I did not know enough about it or the machine to advance it when running the engine up and taking off."*

His war ended in 1918: *"On May 27th my engine failed on the way home from*

a patrol and I crashed on the edge of the aerodrome, turning over. A few days later the wing medical officer came over to Ste Marie Cappelle, and after examining and questioning me sent me straight off to 24 General Hospital where wards, with specialist doctors were by now reserved for flying personnel. That was the end of my war flying in France where, in 637 hours flying since July 1st 1916 I had flown 381 operational sorties, or a few either way."

That's three WW1 fliers reviewed. The difference is that McCudden and Bishop wrote at the time, while Willie Fry takes the longer view and tells us what stuck in his mind. Which brings us back to Billy Bishop's V.C. day. Fry did not believe his exploit and at one point in his book, obliquely sneering at Bishop's aerial combat claims, Willie mentions shooting down a German aircraft. He did not claim it at the time, having no witnesses and did not want to be thought of as boasting. The kill was confirmed by a researcher in the 1970s who matched the German casualties to Fry's location and found a British AA gun site report of seeing the action.

Researchers have trawled over and over Bishop's claims without being able to pin down much, while McCudden's claims stand that test better. The difference between those two V.C. medallists is that McCudden was forcing his air machines ever higher to catch German spotters over British lines while Bishop was trawling behind German lines where his kills were not seen by friendly observers.

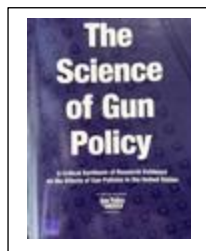
We may have mentioned that the risk assessment part of the brain gels around age twenty-five. Bishop and McCudden were under that age when writing, while Fry wasn't. And that perspective as Fry

looks back to his youth is overwritten by the ageing process. He might have felt as invincible as the others at the time, but as a pensioner looking back, he was constantly aware of his own mortality and the frailness of the aircraft. They all lost friends and comrades to accidents; of the 8,394 'air force' personnel in the care of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, half could have gotten there without direct contact with the enemy.

THE SCIENCE OF GUN POLICY

**A critical synthesis
of research evidence on
the effects of gun policies
in the United States**

**Published by the Rand
Corporation in 2018**



ISBN -10 0-8330-9841-1 \$80.00 but you can download a free electronic copy at www.rand.org/t/RR2088 according to the back cover.

A second edition came out in 2020, which is maybe why our print copy of the first edition was £5. And the American Amazon website has a third edition published in March this year. The trouble with American books about the politics of gun control is that they tend to be partisan – promoting a pro or an anti-gun stance – and any potential buyer wants to know whose side the author is on. Americans will not buy or read books by the other side of the debate to their own position, nor will anyone who has no position in the matter.

What fascinated us, looking at the three editions in America and the two available in the UK, is that nobody has reviewed any of them online.

This book has some two dozen contributing writers, all of whom have letters after their names and most are Ph.Ds. The book strives to be a study of the available scientific data on the effects

of various firearms policies upon gun users without having conducted any original studies of their own. The literature review groups looked at accidents and unintentional injuries, defensive gun use, gun industry, homicide and violent crime, hunting and sport shooting, mass shootings and taxation, mental health, officer-involved shootings, public information campaigns and suicide.

Since the application of any policy throws up unintended consequences and anomalies, our reading quest was to see how such were addressed. We started with the gun industry, as we know quite a lot about how UK government policies have been reacted to by the gun trade in the UK.

Carter C Price Ph.D. contributed the gun industry reviews in just two areas. His take on the effects of bans on assault rifles and high-capacity magazines was of prices rising and, in some instances, production increasing in the run up to a ban, with this also showing on product lines that the ban would not impact upon. That highlights market and policy differences between the USA and UK. In America, 'bans' are not retrospective, so prior to the federal ban on high-capacity pistol magazines, for example, owners stocked up. A key impact of bans in the UK has been the gun industry developing new products to comply with the new legislation only to find them targeted by hunt-sab style policing.

He could not distinguish any trends in relation to legislatures easing the limitations on concealed carry. Gun sales did not spike, but 'Guns & Ammo' magazine subscriptions did increase. It's the absence of data that limited his ability to discern trends. When Texas introduced a concealed carry law in 1996, applicants had to have completed a

training course to complete their application. That beefed up attendance at courses, according to our source and people attending courses already had the sidearm. What was not measured for was any product lines increase of sales, such as of holsters and such but the increased sales of 'Guns & Ammo' magazine could well reflect the search for such accessories. Our first attendance at such a course caused us to acquire a different holster.

The brief chapter on gun free zones found so many variables as to the definition of a gun free zone that one study reckoned 10% of mass shootings took place in them while another reckoned 96.2%. The variable definition of a mass shooting also contributed to these two studies having somewhat different conclusions as in all probability did the original researchers' positions.

Having read far enough to see that this book found no gun policy that impacted upon the gun industry we started trawling to see what evidence they had for compliance. Hard to pin down at the best of times. Studies in the UK suggested a 25% compliance rate with the requirement to acquire a shot gun certificate when these were introduced in 1968 when 600,000 applications were made.

The upwards trend in certificate numbers 1968-1988 was partly driven by late take up of the requirement by existing owners as well as by people entering the sport having to get a certificate before getting a gun. Prior to shot gun certificates, a buyer had to satisfy the seller that he was a safe person to sell to; someone who knew what he wanted and had a good reason for acquiring a gun and a place to use it. Once shot gun certificates came in, the trade stopped vetting intended

customers, because the police had taken over responsibility for doing that, which made buying a gun much easier: produce the certificate and buy the gun - no questions asked.

In contrast, compliance with the requirement to put air cartridge revolvers onto firearm certificates in 2004 was complied with by barely 5% of owners - 40% of whom were not granted the certificates and thus lost their property without compensation for trying to comply with the law.

We didn't find any studies mentioned in this book about compliance with restrictions rates. Studies cited found no impact on violent crime rates after purchasing restrictions were introduced. Background checks *might* have caused a slight decrease in in violent crime and total homicides but that would likely be because making buying a gun more difficult shifts those with violent, homicidal or suicidal intentions to another means; as Emile Durkheim established in his suicide research at the dawn of the 20th century. Waiting periods likewise. They did find anecdotal evidence of positive benefits from educational campaigns, such as safe storage. Living in a country where the legislation obligates safe storage and only permits gun owners access to their own private property on limited occasions, we do not have the sort of accident rates America has. Data suggests that education about safe storage does reduce access to guns by those who intend to abuse them - from children exercising curiosity to suicidal types who know where to look for a gun when they want one. The evidence for a reduction in gun suicides by 14-20-year-olds is apparent but limited.

What has gone unresearched, it seems, is whether the 'gun-proof your children'

campaign made any difference. Locking stuff away so that children cannot access it when you are not looking – be that guns, medication, intoxicating liquor, adult DVDs, car keys etc. means they can't abuse that stuff out of curiosity when left unsupervised. Teaching them the safe way to handle those products when relevant or necessary debunks the build-up of mystique surrounding such items, when small people are allowed to discover that it's not for them until they are older.

Overall, the book's conclusions are that policies directed at making access to firearms by the groups most likely to abuse them – under 21s & the mentally ill – seem to reduce gun violence, homicides and suicides with those people as perpetrators. That's Durkheim's displacement theory upheld.

For much of the other areas the authors sought to trawl, there was nothing to harvest: ***“no studies meeting our inclusion criteria have examined required reporting of lost or stolen firearms, required reporting and recording of firearms sales, or gun free zones”*** they conclude. Colin Greenwood's research (Firearms Control; published by Routledge & Kegan Paul in 1972 – ISBN 0 7100 7435 2) did not consider gun free zones but he did conclude that the bureaucracy of firearm certificates and dealers' registers had never solved a crime, nor demonstrably prevented one. It created some crimes by dealers and certificate holders by omission and that is currently a Home Office favourite target of opportunity for cracking down on the law abiding who try complying with the law. What the book is telling us is that in the fifty years since Greenwood, nobody has undertaken any worthwhile research into the subject. What we take from this book is the usual call by

academics for more research to be funded. Campaigners, hunt-subs, policemen and bureaucrats knee-jerk their agendas into legislation without any objective research beforehand and no study of impacts, collateral damage or the unintended consequences thereafter.

How about this? **“Conclusion 9. The modest growth in knowledge about the effects of gun policy over the past dozen years reflects, in part, the reluctance of the U.S. government to sponsor work in this area at levels comparable to its investment in other areas of public safety and health, such as transportation safety.”** The Home Office likewise doesn't sponsor any independent research into the effects of its policies, it just keeps churning them out. The Americans have the same problem: proposals for anti-gun restrictive legislation and all solutions looking for a problem and they have all been tried, tested and failed elsewhere. The gun lobby resists everything thrown at them in the certain knowledge of the previous sentence and nobody is conducting any objective research to see what *could* be done to address whatever problem one researches around.

The trouble with an objective approach is it throws up potential solutions that are unpalatable to the powers that be. The Home Office *likes* banning stuff because that increases the crime rate in relation to possession of banned stuff and makes the police look busy. Have a look at the proposed ban on machetes elsewhere in this issue. Why do people attack other people with garden implements?

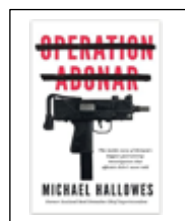
Our money is on the root cause of urban violence being overcrowding. There are too many drug dealers in the space available, so gun and machete violence are spawned by that

overcrowding. In springtime and nearly every year, I will come across a dead Robin on my walks. Robins will fight to the death for territory, and drugs dealers will do the same. In the case of Robins, an intervention that enriches the land – something to enhance insect and worm numbers – enables Robins to live well on a smaller territory.

Conversely, policies that reduce worm and insect populations, like the monoculture of grazing grass liberally swamped with nitrates, lime and slurry in which barely two worms per square metre survive cause a population decrease – or displacement of the Robin population. The same thing happened around here with pigeons after farmers stopped planting barley.

In the case of drugs dealers, overcrowding their territories more will not make matters any better for them, which is why they developed county lines into the rural abyss surrounding their overcrowded towns. But take away their control of drugs and they will have nothing to fight about. RL

Operation Abonar
By Michael Hallowes
Published by Clink
Street Publishing
in 2023



ISBN 978-1-914498-88-6 paperback
978-1-914498-89-3 eBook

We looked at both versions for this review as well as other sources. A Metropolitan Police Officer, the author was a police inspector by 1997 when seconded to intelligence section S013 at New Scotland Yard for six months, during which he completed the training to become a substantive detective inspector.

The problem with ‘intelligence’, as he discovered, was that those who have

information keep it to themselves because knowledge is power. Operation Abonar was put together to research why MAC 10 machine guns marked ‘SF FIREARMS PO BOX 218 TUNBRIDGE WELLS KENT’ – and other firearms – were turning up variously in abandoned vehicles and in drug gang shooting incidents where blue-tipped 9mm ammunition with I.M.I. headstamps was also recovered.

The Abonar team reached out to other police teams as far afield as Glasgow – who didn’t tell Abonar what they knew – and gradually, by analysing communication methods, isolated several suspects, one of whom was in prison. The prison connection was that the prisoner’s family were acquiring firearms from a shady underworld armourer, planting them in abandoned vehicles and then telling the prisoner where they were so that he could tell his solicitor who in turn could tell HM Customs. They were trying to pass the prisoner off as supergrassing international gun runners thus to get him early release or even a pardon.

That prisoner, given a cover name in the book, had spent time on remand with two Liverpool drug dealers who used this technique to get pardoned just 11 months into 18 year sentences the year before when Michael Howard was Home Secretary. All this was going on in the period after the Dunblane murders and while Michael Howard was in the process of introducing the handgun ban in the Firearms Act 1997 and started after the discredited and now defunct Forensic Science Service witchfinder hunt for MAC 10 pistols within the licensing system.

Michael Howard left office on 2 May 1997 when John Major’s government – described by Keith Littlejohn as ‘**a government at sleaze with itself**’ lost a

general election and were replaced by Tony Blair's New Labour administration with Jack Straw as Home Secretary. He introduced a second Firearms Act 1997 to wipe out bits of the legitimate shooting sports that Michael Howard had not and presumably did not interfere with what the criminals and criminal investigators were up to while looking for more harm to do to the people who were trying to act lawfully.

Michael Hallowes reports the well-kept secret of a Brockwell Park drug gang shooting in which he claims a MAC 10 was used to catch six gang members in one burst, killing four of them. Debriefing on return from a course, he is told that the gun has not been recovered, so if it actually happened, a MAC 10 being involved is guesswork. A Colt revolver carried by a kidnapper when shot by SO19 was from the same source as the car dumps and 'Pinkie' had a Brocock air pistol converted to fire .38" Special: to which we said, "Huh?" Inaccuracies like this together with the writing style made this book read as a novel and it might be best to consider it and the flights of fancy within it as such.

By July 1997, Abonar had been sidelined by higher-ups so that they didn't blunder in anywhere and thus disrupt the supply chain the Scots were investigating. Once Abonar identified their supply suspect to a police conference, Strathclyde Police confirmed that they already had that name. They could have mentioned it earlier, but intelligence being what it is did not.

That calls to mind how other secrets being kept caused problems, like the Scharnhorst meeting H.M.S. Glorious and sinking her in the North Sea in April 1940. 'Intelligence' knew Scharnhorst and Gneisenau had sailed from Kiel and told the Royal Navy but attributed the

information to a fake source to protect the real one. The Navy treated the information as unreliable due to the lack of provenance and did not forewarn their ships that were returning from Norway after the campaign there was ended.

South East Regional Crime Squad arrested Anthony Mitchell on the 16 July 1997 and the book gives such a detailed account of his interview that it could be a transcription of the tape or a fictional version of what the author wished had been said. We recollected being contacted by Mitchell's girlfriend after his arrest. We had a meeting with her and his solicitor at one of our (then) London premises, discussed matters and heard no more from her – or him. We went looking for the case file and it turned out to relate to an earlier arrest in 1993, which is mentioned in passing but in this book.

SERCS had gone off at half-cock, partly by not talking to Michael Hallowes before serving the search warrant, so they went to the wrong address in search of his accomplice. Landing on the wrong address gives suspects a clue that they are suspects. We had a call from a member some time back who had received a midnight call (UK time) from a police officer who instructed him to walk backwards out of his house and up the street with his hands on his head towards the lights. He was at breakfast in a Hong Kong hotel at the time and thought it was a wind up.

The searches turned up a lot of circumstantial connections and he was released after interview so the author directed his people at the missing accomplice and Mitchell's suppliers – a Leeds based large scale arms dealership and SF Firearms in Kent, looking for how stuff was leaking out of the legitimate gun trade. The Leeds company had been

using Mitchell as a subcontractor to deactivate guns and he had negotiated keeping some back as part payment for the work but had deactivation certificate numbers for all the ones he had kept. The New Scotland Yard heavies also 'interviewed' Chris Perkins at SF Firearms and Guy Savage at Creative Gunsmithing. A week later, Michael Hallows and his boss were summoned to the Home Office where they were told to close Abonar down.

The rest of the book is his account of blundering on, having been told not to, thus disrupting the M.I.5 Operation Shillelagh on which Perkins was working at the time. The Home Office was trying to protect that by telling him to close. Not doing so had eventual consequences for the various parties, including he. The drugs dealers who got pardons from Michael Howard were eventually re-netted and the prisoner who was trying the same scam – which is where Abonar came in – never did benefit from telling HM Customs where to find the guns. Other parties we meet in these pages got prison terms for their parts in the reactivation and gun running. Shunted out of the way into the Home Office he was used for his new-found expertise in such matters as international trafficking and deactivation standards until he retired from the rank of Detective Chief Superintendent in 2011 and took an appointment as an Emergency Services Commissioner in Australia: from which, it appears he feels it is safe enough to defame Guy Savage and Chris Perkins, who were never implicit in the criminality Operation Abonar was concerned with. They were concerned with busting reactivation crime – Perkins in Shillelagh and Savage in Operation Townsend – which was bigger than Abonar.

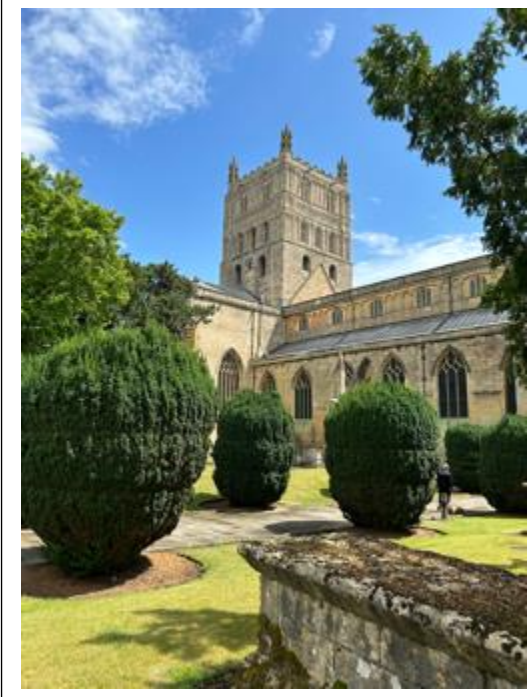
Guy had been convicted in 1994 in a test case of the import and supply of Australian Arms Pistols and conditionally discharged. He continued as a gunsmith and as the Metropolitan Police/gun trade liaison through Operation Townsend until 2010 when the Metropolitan Police arbitrarily closed him down without his committing any offence in the UK.

The book is quite muddled about Chris Perkins. He had been arbitrarily closed by Dyfed Powys Police - before Abonar started – without his committing any offence in the UK. He and James Edmiston took over Guy Savage's premises after he was shut down to make service rifles for the Chilean government, which the Metropolitan Police arbitrarily shut down. His next attempt was refused by Sussex and both the Met and Dyfed Powys Police turned up at the appeal to help Sussex resist the application. At his third attempt, Sussex Police reacted by raiding him (Operation Teal) before prosecuting him for some non-event bits in a case that went nowhere.

He applied again after his acquittal and obtained his RFD – and his costs - on appeal twenty-one years after it was first revoked for not doing anything wrong. We are still waiting to see what Dyfed Powys are going to do about their part in unlawfully restraining his trade.



Tewkesbury Abbey - and battle 2023



An abbey can be a monastery or a church associated with one: run by the monks but also open to other churchgoers. Tewkesbury Abbey was one such until King Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries and sold the building to the townspeople for £483 to use as a parish church – which it still is.

Despite having been a mere parish church since 1539, it looks and feels like a cathedral within – those medieval



(Left) the nave and (right) the Abbey gets into the swing of the annual re-enactment by the Wars of the Roses Federation

tombs that survived the puritanical 'cleansing' of places of worship by King Edward VI's church commissioners – who were also hoovering up church plate and bequests to fund the treasury that

Henry VIII had bankrupted during his reign.

Other claims to fame for Tewkesbury Abbey include it being the venue for our late Queen Elizabeth II's distribution of the Royal Maundy Money in 1971 – the first royal visit since so much royal blood was shed there 500 years earlier - and the gift shop, of which the guide says, ***"Not many shops can boast a medieval location with the Duke of Somerset buried under the till."***

He followed the Prince of Wales, the Earl of Devonshire and Lord Wenlock to Tewkesbury where, on 4 May 1471 their column was engaged by King Edward IV (whom they were seeking to oust from that job), Richard of Gloucester (later Richard III) and the Duke of Clarence (whom Edward IV executed seven years later – drowned in a vat of malmsey wine according to Shakespeare).

The Prince of Wales back then was Edward of Lancaster, the only son of King Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou, who was then aged 18. His mum was leading the campaign to get the throne back from Edward IV. He seized it in 1461 after defeating King Henry VI at Towton and imprisoning him in the Tower of London.

None of these medieval warlords could have imagined that this messy and sporadic tribal conflict would later be dignified as the Wars of the Roses by Sir Walter Scott.

The reason for the battle at Tewkesbury was that Margaret and her son landed at Weymouth and headed for Bristol gathering support while other supporters tried to keep Edward IV in London. He met and defeated them in the Battle of Barnet before heading west, causing Margaret to decide to do the same, except she was kept in England by the River Severn. Unable to cross at Gloucester because the garrison there

denied her the bridge, she headed up to Tewkesbury where the river could be forded.

‘Gathering support’ was the traditional way to raise an army. Nobody got to vote back then, so they voted with their feet, joining or refusing to join any cause that came looking for support. The Norman system was that everyone held his position – land, titles etc – of the king and thus had to turn out with an entourage befitting their rank when called upon to do so. By the tail end of the Plantagenet dynasty, people were getting warier about who to support and those who wanted to raise an army found that they had to pay people to be soldiers. Most of the army Henry V took to Agincourt (1415) were paid Welsh archers. Both sides at Tewkesbury had some archers and the Yorkists also had paid-for Burgundian gunners with their artillery.



(Left) Burgundian gunner before he dressed (2022) and (right) the Abbey joins in the mood.

The Yorkist army arrived before Margaret could cross the river so they engaged in fields next to the Abbey grounds. The young Prince of Wales was killed in the action, as was the Duke of Devonshire and Lord Wenlock – in one version he was knocked on the head by the Duke of Somerset’s mace, the latter outraged at finding him retreating. The Duke of Somerset then also retreated and sought sanctuary in the Abbey while the Abbot negotiated his safe passage from the warzone. Once that was agreed he

came out he was arrested. Edward IV subjected him to a quick trial for treason and a quick execution, which is how he earned his place under the till in the gift shop.

The other senior Lancastrians who died on the battlefield were buried at the Abbey – Lord Wenlock might have later been moved to Luton - and Royalty left it 500 years before setting foot there again. Having decisively defeated the House of Lancaster, the Yorkists spent the next twelve years fighting among themselves. It took a Welshman to sort it. Pembroke Castle born King Henry VII defeated King Richard III at Bosworth in 1485 and then married the late king’s niece, thus to conjoin the houses of Lancaster and York before the Wars of the Roses were invented.

The battle was re-enacted at eighth scale this year by over 1,200 men and women who dress the part. If you include the audience – free entry (£10 car parking) we were more on the field than in 1471. The re-enactment occupies the position where the Duke of Somerset formed his men up on the Lancastrian right, from whence he was pushed north – to his left until the battle ended in what is still known as bloody meadow – for those who could not swim the river were butchered there.



(Above) the re-enactors moving toward the arena and (below) the battle in progress (from Viva O’Flynn’s video)



Next Issue: The RAF kindly remembered the last Pilot of the Caribbean
But what about
the Ladies?



Tewkesbury 2023



The goings on about Trinity, book reviews and more....

