



- **The Single Shot Black Powder Cartridge Rifle Club of Great Britain** -

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# BLACK THUNDER

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## The Great British - American Buffalo Match 7th September 2003



**T**he band of merry men who attended the friendly buffalo match on Sunday 7th September. Some of the finest long range marksmen in the world, including the new world champion, Dave Hicks, eagerly join us for a day of relaxed shooting and socialising. During the previous few days, over half of this group, including Clive and yours truly, were battling it out at 800, 900 and 1000 yards on Bisley's Stickledown Range, in the World Historical Rifle Long Range Championships.

Pictured left to right are: John Gilpin, Steve Baldwin, Adrian Eagling (front), Joe Boyle (back), Harold Itchkawich, Lee Shaver, Charlie Morgan (target marker), Dave Hicks, Mon Yee, Jack Stoner, Phil Morgan, Al Sledge, Clive Taylor, Kelley Roos, Gerry Haines (front), John Taylor (back), Andy Boyle, Guy Milchem, Geoff Hoden and John Grover.

Full report inside...

# Match Reports

## Silhouette #2 Match

**Saturday  
23rd August**



The second of the Silhouette Trophy aggregate matches got underway in bright sunshine at 08:30 sharp. Fortunately, the spell of good weather was still with us, but with the sun high up behind the firing line, it put such a glare on my rear sight disk, that I had to resort to a hat .. a sight you won't see very often.

As usual, we started with the javelina (pig), the bigger of the two 300 yard targets. It enables shooters to get on target faster and also boosts confidence, especially with newer members. Roger Andrews and yours truly, started the ball rolling and both went on to hit 8 out of 10.

There was some good shooting going on when Nigel Dennis equalled the score, Clive Taylor got himself a 9 and both Gerry Haines and John Gilpin shot all 10 straight. Well done lads.

When it was the finally the turn of the "bonsai



Guy Milchem making smoke while "hunting" pig at 300 yards .

chickens", Messrs. Dennis, Gilpin and Morgan, all took the High Chicken award with 7 hits each. I call them bonsai chickens, due to the fact that they look about the size of sparrows at 300 yards.

One thing that should be mentioned in this match report, was the behind-the-line barracking that seemed to get out of hand at one point. A joke's a joke, but please know when to stop. We have to pay enough to shoot at Bisley so let's enjoy every minute of it ... on the firing point and off it. Enough said.

After a good lunch at The L & M we moved back to 500 yards. Clive Taylor and Roger Andrews got us underway, both scoring four on the turkeys. As usual the turkey scores were down in the fours and fives. That bird looks big but it's not very wide. The slightest wide change can take you off target. Only Nigel Dennis and Frank Pfeil managed to score eight. The next closest was my six.

Ram time and the scores went up again. Gerry Haines shot the most with eight closely followed by Messrs. Dennis, Gilpin and Morgan, again, all with seven "kills".



L - R Adrian Eagling, Len Jackson and Nigel Dennis look on as John Grover and John Gilpin tackle the pigs at 300 yards.



This picture shows just how laid back we are at our matches. Geoff Hoden demonstrates the art of sandwich holding, in his teeth, while young Guy Milchem wonders if he's going to attempt to swallow it whole.



John Grover giving his legs an airing while posing for our “spot the ball” competition. John went on to score 5 chickens ... no mean feat at this distance.

Things were heating up and nearing the end of the match. Clive and Guy injected a little humour into the proceedings when they both scored hits on the ram’s “you know what”. Congratulations Clive, I know you’ve been after this certificate for a while now.

At the end of the match, the dynamic trio of Dennis, Gilpin and Morgan took 1st, 2nd and 3rd in that order. Using our American BPCRS comparable scoring, that left three Master Class shooters.

After the scores from the March silhouette match were added to this one, we found we had a 3-way tie for the aggregate, with the first three shooters all on 55 points, 6 clear points ahead of the next best.

Our only option on these occasions is to count up the times ... and you can see the final outcome on the next page.

All in all a very enjoyable day.



Good picture of Geoff Hoden taken about a micro second before ignition. Geoff uses a Shiloh Sharps Long Range Express in .45-70 (2.1")

Photo: Nigel Dennis



John Gilpin checks his sights while shooting the rams at 500. Note the studious look, the spectacles, the pen, the personal note book. This man is going places ... match 2nd place and Master Class shooter is pretty good for starters.

Photo: Nigel Dennis

## Silhouette #2 Results

Shooter	C	P	T	R	Total	Class
Dennis*	7	8	8	7	30	Master
Gilpin*	7	10	5	7	29	Master
Morgan*	7	8	6	7	28	Master
Haines	4	10	5	8	27	AAA
Taylor**	6	9	4	6	25	AAA
Andrews	3	8	4	4	19	AA
Grover	5	1	5	7	18	AA
Jackson L.	2	5	4	5	16	AA
Eagling	4	5	1	5	15	A
Pfeil	1	2	8	4	15	A
Milchem**	2	2	2	7	13	A
Hoden	1	4	2	5	12	A
Vines	0	2	R	R	2	B

\* Winner of High Chicken award  
 \*\* Winner of The Wounded Willy award  
 R = Retired

# Silhouette Trophy Aggregate Results

Shooter	#1	#2	Total	Place
Morgan	27	28	55*	1 <sup>st</sup>
Dennis	25	30	55*	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Haines	28	27	55*	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Taylor	24	25	49	4 <sup>th</sup>
Gilpin	18	29	47	5 <sup>th</sup>
Andrews	27	19	46	6 <sup>th</sup>
Jackson L.	22	16	38	7 <sup>th</sup>
Grover	16	18	34	8 <sup>th</sup>
Pfeil	13	15	28*	9 <sup>th</sup>
Milchem	15	13	28*	10 <sup>th</sup>
Hoden	15	12	27	11 <sup>th</sup>
Eagling	9	15	24	12 <sup>th</sup>

\* Position decided on quickest time.

# USA - GB Buffalo Match

## Sunday 7th September

Picture the scene .. a warm bright day, not too sunny, favourable wind conditions and some of the best long range marksmen in the world, assembled on the 600 yard firing point in "maggie alley" on Bisley's Century Range. The occasion was a friendly buffalo shoot, which we had decided to put on as a means of meeting and having some fun with our American friends.



American team shooter Kelley Roos in action at 600 yards ... Clive Taylor and Andy Boyle caught between shots in the background.

The day was Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September, the day after the close of the World Historical Rifle Long Range Championships. Most of us had endured a long and intensive week of Individual and Team shooting on Stickledown Range at 800, 900 and 1000 yards. It had been a real pleasure to watch shooters such as Lee Shaver, Steve Baldwin, Kelley Roos, Frank Monikowski, Tom Berwick and of course the new World Champion, Dave Hicks (who describes himself as just a country boy from Vermont), consistently hitting 5s and V-bulls using black powder cartridge rifles on targets that appeared no bigger than the full stops on this page. To wind up the Championships, an informal 1200 yard shoot had been arranged for the previous afternoon. Even at this distance, those big heavy bullets, regularly found the inner scoring rings and one couldn't help feeling a little humble to be in the presence of such competence.

Now it was time for some fun. The usual course of fire for the buffalo shoot went straight out of the window, when we were informed by the NRA that we would have to shoot the 600 yard stage first, followed by the 200 yard in the afternoon. A pity really,



Clive Taylor presents the Silhouette Trophy to 2nd time winner Phil Morgan ... but only after a three-way time decider between Phil, Clive and Nigel Dennis.





John Taylor takes his turn with Kelley Roos' .45-2.4" Meacham High Wall, while Kelley calls the shots and sight adjustments. Note the fine quality of X-sticks being used! Behind them, Brian Olding shoots his original Springfield Trapdoor with remarkable results at the 600 yard stage.

because at the shorter distance, you can almost see the whites of their eyes and the inevitable high scores achieved, gives the shooter a false sense of doing well. Then, after a good lunch, the 600 yard stage usually shatters the illusion.

Seven of the American squad felt that they still had a day's shooting left in them and honoured us with their very welcome presence. First up on the line, just to get things started and show the way, were John Grover, Gerry Haines and yours truly. I was particularly excited because I had been invited to shoot Kelley Roos' very sexy Meacham High-Wall in .45-90 (2.4"). Kelley had some loaded rounds that needed to be fired before he returned to the States and I couldn't think of a better way to empty them. After a nervous start, I settled into a steady routine, scoring some fours and fives but then ran out of time after only 16 shots. But I didn't care! I'd got to shoot a nice rifle and decided to let Dave Hicks win. I say "nervous start" because a few days earlier, the firing pin and lever spring on my Sharps had broken on the same day! It was almost as if someone had been working a bit of voodoo. I did not want the same fate



This is Jack Stoner shooting his 600 yards stage moments before one of his cases separated. Dave Hicks keeps him company and checks to see he's putting them in the right place.



American Team shooter, Kelley Roos, goes for the hardest shot of all, the brain shot ... and gets it! Mon Yee from Dodge City, Kansas watches the action.

to fall on a friend's World-class rifle .. just in case the spell was still lingering.

Next up, were Jack Stoner, the American team coach, Geoff Hoden and John Gilpin. Jack hadn't shot all week and must have been pleased to pull a trigger that morning. He was doing well until his 5<sup>th</sup> shot when he had a case separate and he too ran out of time after 17 shots. John Gilpin went on to score 71 and after the morning stage, couldn't believe that he was one point ahead of Lee Shaver!

At the end of the morning 600 yard session, we all enjoyed a good lunch in the London and Middlesex club. For the afternoon stage of the match, it was decided to slow the pace up a little and make things more relaxed. Instead of the usual sighters plus 20 scoring shots in 30 minutes, we reduced the scoring shots to 15 in 20 minutes. I don't think anyone minded, since it gave more time for talking and brain-picking.

Speaking of brains, at one point in the match, after being told that nobody ever goes for the high-scoring



New World Champion, Dave Hicks spots for Jack Stoner at 200 yards. My daughter, Purdey did a great job of scoring with Adrian Eagling along side to advise as necessary. You can probably tell that she's not that keen on having her photograph taken!



A gaggle of happy shooters ... relaxing and exchanging stories. We must do this again sometime.

brain shot, Kelley Roos rose to the challenge and decided that was the shot for him ... and hit it. It was a pleasure to watch.

The butts crew, Nigel Tammy, Ben and Charlie, deserve a special mention for some excellent marking despite one of the target frames being badly twisted and difficult to operate. Without them, the day would not have gone so smoothly.

After the last shot had been fired and the gear put away, certificates were presented to Dave Hicks (USA) for 1<sup>st</sup> place with a score of 150 ex 175, Harold Itchkawich (USA) for 2<sup>nd</sup> place with a score of 147, and Clive Taylor (GB) for 3<sup>rd</sup> place with a score of 144.

All the shooters were presented with SSBPCRCGB medals and, as a special reminder of the match, our guests were given engraved silver coasters to take back to the States with them.

I would like to think that, from time to time, The Great British – American Buffalo Match of 2003 is remembered with fond memories by everyone who



Harold Itchkawich from California looks pleased as he receives his certificate for 2nd place, a Club medal and silver coaster suitably engraved to commemorate the occasion ... and what a great occasion it was.

was there on that unforgettable day.

Oh yes, the final result, taking the best 7 British scores to even up the team numbers ...

USA (954) ~ GB (896)

## USA - GB Buffalo Results

Shooter	600	200	Total	Place
Hicks	77	73	150	1st
Itchkawich	77	70	147	2nd
Taylor C.	71	73	144	3rd
Shaver	70	71	141*	4th
Roos	72	69	141*	5th
Gilpin	71	66	137	6th
Sledge	64	72	136	7th
Taylor J.	60	74	134	8th
Boyle	62	68	130	9th
Haines	60	64	124	10th
Yee	65	59	124	11th
Grover	57	60	117	12th
Stoner	46	69	115	13th
Eagling	52	58	110	14th
Hoden	42	53	95	15th
Morgan	29	61	90	16th
Olding	29	55	84	17th
Milchem	20	58	78	18th

Maximum possible score =175  
(100 at 600 & 75 at 200)  
\* Position decided on the most FIVES scored

# The Buffalo Match

## Saturday

### 27th September



The Buffalo Trophy is sponsored by Geoff Hoden and awarded to the highest scorer of the two combined matches.

The second of the annual Buffalo Matches got under way on Short Siberia on a warm sunny morning. The weather forecast had predicted rain so we came prepared by bringing all four gazebos. We should have known that it wouldn't rain since Adrian Eagling was shooting and, as he keeps pointing out, it never rains when he's in attendance.

Several shooters were suffering the after-effects of a Friday night curry and Indian beer but despite some occasional sound effects and groans, some very good scores started to emerge. The standard of shooting is definitely rising at a steady rate which is encouraging to see.

We welcomed new member, James Barnard to his first shoot with us. James is Chris Barnard's son and he certainly made a good start after beating his dad by 10 points at the end of the day. Well done James, now show us it wasn't just luck.

The highest score at the 200 yard stage was Clive Taylor's 97 ex 100. That's a new record for this distance, beating my previous best score by 1 point!

Gerry Haines went on to win the match with an impressive score of 169 ex 200 but the Gold Buff.



Adrian Eagling lines up his shot imagining he was on a buffalo-rich prairie in the 1870's.

went to Nigel Dennis, with a combined aggregate score of 321 ex 400. Well done Nigel.

The photographs and captions will finish the story.



Alan Stevens using his RHO scoped Shiloh Sharps in .45-2.6". It really looks the business.



There's something very tranquil about this scene and it captures the atmosphere perfectly. What a great way to spend a Saturday afternoon.



The grand finale ... Trophy sponsor, Geoff Hoden presents top gun Nigel Dennis with his well earned Golden Buffalo. Nigel's had his eye on it for some time. I know it'll be in safe hands until next year.

## Buffalo #2 Results

Shooter	200	600	Total	Place
Haines	95	74	169	1
Dennis	93	72	165	2
Jackson P.	94	66	160	3
Gilpin	91	68	159	4
Taylor	97	58	155	5
James	84	60	144	6*
Boyle	88	56	144	7*
Morgan	93	47	140	8
Sutton	76	59	135	9
Andrews	87	47	134	10
Eagling	81	52	133	11
Olding	76	56	132	12
Steadman	86	43	129	13
Purser	89	40	129	14
Barnard J.	80	36	116	15
Hoden	80	35	115	16
Grover	86	27	113	17
Pfeil	79	30	109	18
Barnard C.	83	23	106	19
Goodacre	84	19	103	20
Nock	66	34	100	21
Milchem	76	7	83	22
Stevens (Scoped)	90	45	135	(1)
Maximum possible score 200. * Position decided on the most FIVES scored				



## Buffalo Trophy Aggregate Results

Shooter	Buff 1	Buff 2	Total	Place
Dennis	156	165	321	1 <sup>st</sup>
Morgan	164	140	304	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Jackson P.	143	160	303	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Taylor	145	155	300	4 <sup>th</sup>
Gilpin	136*	159	295	5 <sup>th</sup>
Boyle	149	144	293	6 <sup>th</sup>
Andrews	154	134	288	7 <sup>th</sup>
Haines	84	169	253	8 <sup>th</sup>
Barnard C.	136*	106	242	9 <sup>th</sup>
James	97	144	241	10 <sup>th</sup>
Steadman	111	129	240	11 <sup>th</sup>
Eagling	94	133	227	12 <sup>th</sup>
Hoden	110	115	225	13 <sup>th</sup>
Pfeil	115	109	224	14 <sup>th</sup>
Grover	91	113	204	15 <sup>th</sup>
Goodacre	85	103	188	16 <sup>th</sup>
Milchem	95	83	178	17 <sup>th</sup>
Sutton	-	135	135	18 <sup>th</sup>
Olding	-	132	132*	19 <sup>th</sup>
Jackson L.	132	-	132*	20 <sup>th</sup>
Purser	-	129	129	21 <sup>st</sup>
Hinchcliffe	118	-	118	22 <sup>nd</sup>
Barnard J.	-	116	116	23 <sup>rd</sup>
Clareboets	103	-	103	24 <sup>th</sup>
Nock	-	100	100	25 <sup>th</sup>
Farey	80	-	80	26 <sup>th</sup>
Stevens (Scoped)	-	135	135	(1)
Maximum possible score 400. * Position decided on the most FIVES scored				



## Quigley - THE Man Down Under ...

(... and The Shiloh  
Sharps Rifle draw)

**Saturday  
25th October**



Most of the gang who turned out on this bitterly cold day. The photograph was taken minutes before the long awaited draw for the Shiloh rifle.

**A** buzz of excitement and apprehension was in the chilly Autumn air for the last match on our shooting calendar. Not only was it the second match in the Quigley aggregate for the new silver bucket trophy, but it was also the day of the Shiloh Sharps Rifle draw.

Since our early days, the Shiloh Sharps Rifle Manufacturing Company of Big Timber, Montana has been keeping up to date with our development as a pure black powder cartridge rifle club. Their support and encouragement for what we are doing over here has been fantastic. So much so, that earlier this year, Shiloh boss, Kirk Bryan, offered to put up a rifle to be raffled at one of our matches. The Quigley Trophy which incorporates a beautiful engraved Shiloh Sharps silver belt buckle seemed the obvious choice.

With this kind of support, how can we go wrong?

Anyway, on with the report. The first four shooters up on the 300 yards line got things underway while there was still a frost on the ground. I hate shooting when I can't feel my fingers although it didn't affect my results as much as I expected. Only a total lack of



Adrian Eagling, nearest the camera, and John Gilpin photographed during their equal-scoring bucket detail. Clive Taylor prepares for his detail but looks as if he's giving Gilps a good poke with a cleaning rod to put him off.

modesty allows me to tell you that I shot 20 buckets, straight. Perry Goodacre, who was scoring for me, decided he wanted some of this action and later went on to shoot 18, only missing on his 10th and 14th buckets. I'm going to have to watch this boy.

Adrian Eagling also showed his determination by zapping 16 buckets and went on to finish well up the results table. John Gilpin, who managed to match Adrian's buckets in the morning, had some bad luck after lunch when his front sight worked loose.

The only other casualty of the day was Len Jackson who was just about to go for score when a case separated. After much cursing and tapping, it wedged itself firmly in the rifling about a foot up from the breech, where it stayed until Len managed to remove it the following day! He's another one who has an imprint of his rifling in brass.

The morning session finished a few minutes early and this gave us the opportunity for a group photograph. It can be a drag posing for pictures but



Richie James and Pat Farey in full Artic gear. Richie sights up on the 300 yard buckets while Pat waits to spot the shot.

looking back on them months or even years later, makes the effort worth while. It is also a good way to chart the development of the Club and record its history. Isn't that right Roger?

Next on the agenda was the long awaited raffle for the Shiloh rifle. All the shooters' names were placed in a silver tube which was then given a good shake. Alison Buck who had been watching the shooting all morning, willingly agreed to draw out the winning name. I had already decided weeks ago what model of rifle I would have, the calibre, barrel length, wood finish, and so on. All I needed now was to hear my name called out ..... "and the winner is, Gerry Haines".

Gerry Haines? There must be some mistake, my name isn't Gerry Haines. Oh well, can't win 'em all.

Congratulations Gerry, you're a lucky man. Let us know what rifle you finally decide on.



Another view of Vic and Pete with the targets just visible downrange. This side of Century range is known as Magpie Alley because of the way the wind has a habit of carrying your bullets away from the bull and into the magpie ring. We've all been caught out at one time or another.

Highest scorer on the Wagon Man target was John Grover with 16.1. It may have helped to ease the pain as John's car broke down in Bristol, 100 miles away, on his way to the match. Andy Boyle shot a nice detail, scoring 15.4. That's 4 head shots in an 8 inch square at 600 yards.

Steve Karn missed his afternoon shoot after taking his sick friend home. That's what I call a friend.

Just want to say "thanks" to all those who helped out with the scoring for this match and also throughout the year.

And finally, a big "THANK YOU" to Shiloh, for their generosity in donating a rifle for the raffle and for their ongoing support in our commitment to further the sport of BPCR. It seems fitting then, that the match and the annual trophy were both won with a Shiloh Sharps rifle!



Lucky draw winner Gerry Haines from Bristol poses with his original High Wall and shows off his Shiloh gift certificate. The smile says it all.

The 600 yards afternoon session got under way late because the score sheets, and other essential items were in the back of a certain person's car and there was no sign of him. Adrian, in his ever efficient way, went in search and eventually the match resumed.



Halfway through the 600 yards stage and Chris Barnard takes a turn at scoring for Vic Nock. Peter Starley watches and learns before getting his first taste of 600 yard shooting with us.



All that remains to be done ... Pete Starley does a splendid job presenting the certificates and trophies.

Photo: Adrian Eagling

## Quigley “THE Man Down Under” #2 Results

Shooter	300	600	Total	Place
Morgan	20	14.1	34.1	1
Andrews	18	15.2	33.2	2
Barnard C.	16	14.0	30.0	3
Grover	13	16.1	29.1	4
Jackson P.	15	14.0	29.0	5
Boyle	13	15.4	28.4	6
Eagling	16	11.0	27.0	7
James	14	11.0	25.0	8
Taylor	15	9.1	24.1	9*
Haines	11	13.1	24.1	10*
Gilpin	16	8.0	24.0	11
Pfeil	14	8.3	22.3	12
Starley	14	8.0	22.0	13
Barnard J.	9	12.0	21.0	14
Goodacre	18	2.0	20.0	15*
Stevens	10	10.0	20.0	16*
Milchem	11	8.2	19.2	17
Nock	12	5.1	17.1	18
Farey	9	7.1	16.1	19
Olding	10	5.0	15.0	20*
Sutton	9	6.0	15.0	21*
Hoden	7	5.0	12.0	22
Karn	8	R	8	23
Jackson L.	R	R	0	24
Maximum possible score 40.20 * Position decided on the fastest time				



## Quigley “THE Man Down Under” #2 Aggregate Results

Shooter	Q #1	Q #2	Total	Place
Morgan	28.0	34.1	62.1	1 <sup>st</sup>
Andrews	27.0	33.2	60.2	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Barnard C.	30.0	30.0	60.0	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Taylor	35.4	24.1	59.5	4 <sup>th</sup>
Grover	20.2	29.1	49.1	5 <sup>th</sup>
Haines	19.1	24.1	43.2	6 <sup>th</sup>
Gilpin	18.2	24.0	42.2	7 <sup>th*</sup>
James	17.2	25.0	42.2	8 <sup>th*</sup>
Eagling	15.1	27.0	42.1	9 <sup>th</sup>
Stevens	17.1	20.0	37.1	10 <sup>th</sup>
Pfeil	13.0	22.3	35.3	11 <sup>th</sup>
Jackson L.	32.0	0.0	32.0	12 <sup>th</sup>
Milchem	12.0	19.2	31.2	13 <sup>th</sup>
Sutton	15.1	15.0	30.1	14 <sup>th</sup>
Jackson P.	-	29.0	29.0	15 <sup>th</sup>
Boyle	-	28.4	28.4	16 <sup>th</sup>
Steadman	27.1	-	27.1	17 <sup>th*</sup>
Brock'	27.1	-	27.1	18 <sup>th*</sup>
Goodacre	7.0	20.0	27.0	19 <sup>th</sup>
Farey	8.0	16.1	24.1	20 <sup>th</sup>
Starley	-	22.0	22.0	21 <sup>st</sup>
Barnard J.	-	21.0	21.0	22 <sup>nd</sup>
Hinchcliffe	19.0	-	19.0	23 <sup>rd</sup>
Nock	-	17.1	17.1	24 <sup>th</sup>
Olding	-	15.0	15.0	25 <sup>th</sup>
Hoden	-	12.0	12.0	26 <sup>th</sup>
Karn	-	8.0	8.0	27 <sup>th</sup>
Maximum possible score 80.40 * Position decided on the fastest time				

# THE ROWELL LADLE

By

Paul A. Matthews

During more than fifty years of casting bullets, I have used everything from a pinched-up teaspoon to a Lyman dipper to various and sundry hand-made ladles and dippers for casting heavy .45 and .50-caliber bullets. And if there is any one thing I have learned over these past years, it is that different moulds often require the use of a different ladle or dipper in order to get a match quality bullet.

Just recently I read that the nozzle of a dipper must make a sealed fit with the beveled hole in the cutoff plate. Now this is fine on a base-pour mould just as long as the mould is adequately vented and air can escape between the bottom of the cutoff plate and the top of the mould. However, if there is a seal between the ground face of the cutoff plate and the top of the mould blocks due either to the close fit of the two members or sometimes because of treating these two faces with a coat of mould-prep thus restricting air escape around the periphery of the bullet base, then you are apt to have voids within the bullet base and/or rounded edges on the base of the bullet and sometimes on the driving bands.

An even worse condition is to try to cast bullets in a nose-pour mould with a dipper having a nozzle that forms a seal in the beveled hole. In most cases these bullets will come out of the mould looking absolutely perfect, but will vary in weight by as much as four grains because every one of them will have a “pipe” in the nose due to air being trapped in the mould.

In order to cast premium quality bullets with a minimum amount of weight variation and free of voids, it is necessary that air be easily expelled from the mould cavity as the cavity is filled. This is true even when you maintain a constant casting temperature of both the mould and the bullet metal. It is also true regardless of what style mould you are using – base-pour or nose-pour, aluminum, brass, cast iron or steel.

One other factor that influences the effectiveness of the dipper or ladle is the size of the mould blocks. The larger the blocks are, and the larger the cavity is within those blocks, the faster you have to get the molten metal within

the mould before it starts to cool. It takes longer to get large mould blocks up to casting temperature than it does smaller blocks, and the larger blocks – once they have reached a good casting temperature – will usually maintain this casting temperature better than the smaller blocks. However, if you are casting at a borderline temperature, any delay in getting the molten metal within the mould usually results in a bullet with rounded driving bands and/or a radius edge around the base.

All of this adds up to the fact that the ideal ladle or dipper for casting large caliber heavy bullets in all styles and types of moulds should have a large capacity and a nozzle or spout with a large pouring hole. The latter is especially important. Lead and tin oxides quickly build up inside a closed nozzle during the casting process and restrict the flow of bullet metal into the mould. I always wire brush the hole within the nozzle with a .22-caliber brush prior to each casting session, and often rap the bowl of the dipper against the rim of the lead pot during the casting session to dislodge any oxides that might have accumulated.

About six or eight years ago while in search of a better dipper, I purchased a two-pound capacity bottom pour Rowell ladle today being marketed by Bill Ferguson. Why I chose a two-pound capacity, I don't know. It was a bit large and unwieldy for use with single cavity moulds. But I did try it and found that the bullets I cast were very consistent in weight and superbly filled out. However, being too large for the job at hand, I set the ladle aside and went back to the conventional dipper.



Last year after using two new dippers, one made by myself and the other by Charlie Canoll, I ordered a second bottom-pour Rowell ladle from Bill Ferguson, this one having a capacity of one pound. Like the larger model, this one also seemed a bit awkward, but after using it for a

couple of casting sessions and trying different pouring techniques, I learned that this is the ladle I have been looking for. This is the one that promotes the best consistency in my bullets with the fewest problems. This is the one that works regardless of whether the mould is base-pour or nose-pour.

The one-pound capacity Rowell ladle has a cast iron open bowl 2-1/4 inches across on the inside and an inside depth of a bit more than 1-1/8 inches. The pouring spout is shrouded and is located on the left side of the bowl relative to the handle, so that as you pour into the mould the bullet metal comes from the bottom of the bowl where it is free of all oxides and foreign materials. The pouring spout itself has a very generous opening half an inch wide that isn't going to clog and is easily kept clear by simply tapping the bowl against the rim of the lead pot. The handle is a foot long and consists of a length of quarter-inch steel rod capped with a full size screw-on wooden handle. It is a ladle that any buffalo hunter would have cherished.



After using small capacity closed-spout dippers for so many years, the open bowl Rowell ladle takes a little getting used to. At first it seems slow and clumsy, but once you get used to it, you can cast as fast with the Rowell ladle as with any dipper – and with fewer rejects. During my last casting session, I cast 100 bullets per hour, which is about 20 bullets more than my usual rate. However, I am really not interested so much about quantity as I am quality.

Those who choose to try one of Bill Ferguson's Rowell ladles will soon develop their own technique for doing so. For starters, here is the way I do it.

First, you should understand that I use a 36,000 BTU outdoor burner purchased from Gander Mountain in 1995 when they still had a catalog business. For a lead pot, I use a large stainless steel mixing bowl that my wife purchased some 35 or 40 years ago. This will hold 35 to 40 pounds of bullet metal, and the outdoor burner will run the heat up to well over 850F. if one is foolish enough to want it that high. My normal casting temperature with a 30 to 1 lead-tin alloy is about 770F. plus or minus ten degrees. An RCBS lead thermometer is kept in the melt at all times.

After the mould is up to casting temperature, I rest the handles of the mould – just behind the mould blocks – on the rim of the lead pot so that the blocks themselves are directly over the molten metal and are tipped forward just enough so that excess bullet metal will flow off the front

edge of the cutoff plate. With the mould thus positioned, hold the bowl of the ladle in contact with the front edge of the cutoff plate at just about the outside bottom of the pour spout. Tilt the ladle to let the molten metal flow into the mould, and just as soon as you see the alloy backing up through the hole in the cutoff plate indicating that the cavity is full, tilt the ladle still further to create a very rapid flow until the bowl is empty. This little maneuver fills the base of the bullet to a knife-sharp edge and makes certain that every driving band is filled out to its maximum. It also keeps the mould much hotter than with the conventional closed-nozzle dipper.

Because the flow of the bullet metal off the top of the mould keeps the mould much hotter, it takes the sprue a few seconds longer to freeze. To hasten the cut-off, I keep a bore mop in a container of water, and just as soon as the sprue freezes I swab it with the bore mop and cut it free from the base of the bullet.

All of this is far simpler and easier to do than it sounds. And the end result is usually a bullet free of any blemish and filled out to a maximum diameter. I believe it is a better bullet than I can get with the conventional closed-nozzle dipper.

Although there is usually a strong inner resistance to change from any procedure we have successfully used for many years, the use of a bottom-pour Rowell ladle is one that deserves your attention. In my opinion the Rowell ladle is the answer to every problem ever experienced with other dippers and ladles. It has a large capacity, a superb flow rate, and the bullet alloy comes from the bottom of the bowl where the metal is free of slag, oxides and other impurities.

#### Editor's Note:

Rowell ladles are available direct from the manufacturer through The Single Shot Black Powder Cartridge Rifle Club of Great Britain . See page 23 for details or visit our new Internet "Shoot Shop" on [www.ssbpcrc.co.uk](http://www.ssbpcrc.co.uk)



# World Historical Rifle Long Range Championships 2003

**S**unday 31st August, saw the start of the week-long World Historical Rifle Long Range Championships at Bisley. Forty eight competitors from Britain, the USA, Germany, France and The Netherlands, competed in one of the friendliest Internationals that I have ever witnessed.



Couldn't resist this one! ... Three Club members who represented Great Britain in the World Historical Rifle Long Range Championships at Bisley. The British team went on to win bronze medals in what turned out to be the best Championships to date. L-R: Clive Taylor, Phil Morgan and Vic Nock.

A warm up practice took place in the afternoon at 600 yards on Century Range. This gave shooters the opportunity to get a feel for Bisley and test ammunition which, in the case of the American Team, had to loaded on Bisley Camp.

Monday consisted of registration, weapons control, a tour of the NRA museum (always a treat) and a welcome party and barbecue at the Honourable Artillery Company.

Tuesday was a whole day of individual practice on Stickle-down Range at 800, 900 and 1000 yards. The serious stuff was about to start. In the evening, the German Team hosted a barbecue at their Bisley clubhouse, "The Spott", with much German beer and bratwurst sausages. Yours truly won the bratwurst eating competition with seven sausages, closely

followed by team mate Dave Pearce on six.

Wednesday saw the first day of the Individual Championship at all three distances. Dave Hicks of the USA finished the day in 1st place with 133.4 ex 150.

Thursday was a repeat of the previous day, with Robinson Nitsche of Germany finishing 1st with a score of 130.8.

The combined scores over the two days gave us the new World Champion ... Dave Hicks of the USA with 255.8, closely followed by Robinson Nitsche of Germany with 254.13. Harald Rudiger of Germany was 3rd with 254.10 and Frank Monikowski of the USA was 4th with 253.8. All very close scores.

From the results of the Individual matches, the teams were selected for the final stage of the competition, the Team matches. These started on Friday with the 800 and 900 yards stages occupying the whole day. The 1000 yard stage on Saturday morning ended the Championships, giving Germany the Gold Medal, USA Silver and Great Britain Bronze.

On Saturday afternoon, there was an informal 1200 yard shoot, for those who still had ammo and hadn't had enough shooting. The prize-giving dinner at the Honourable Artillery Company clubhouse gave everyone a chance to talk about the week's shooting, cement new friendships and plan for the next World Championships in Capetown, South Africa in 2006.

Anyone aspiring to this level of competition should make his or her ambitions known. There is always room for new blood. And finally, a group shot of everyone, (excluding Kelley Roos and Mon Yee from the USA, who were unfortunately stuck down at the butts until the hooter went!)



Most of the competitors and support staff, assembled on Stickle-down's 1000 yards firing point. It's usually the non-shooters that make these events the success they are and these Championships were no exception. Well done to all of them.

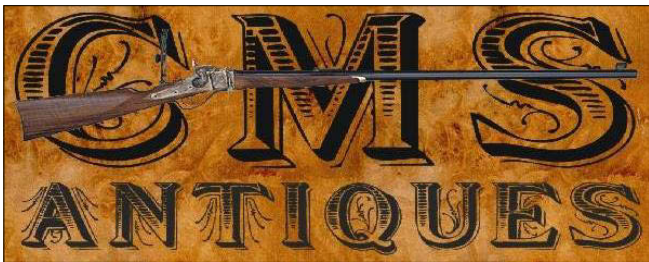
Photograph courtesy of Reg Hankey.

## BLACK POWDER DELIVERY SERVICE

For a small charge, we can deliver most powders to our Bisley shoots. This should help members who have trouble getting hold of powder, especially Swiss.

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## Caption Competition

There doesn't seem to be as many "twisted" people out there as we originally thought! These were some of the *better* entries submitted:

"John's misapplication of Viagra finally got put to some good use" (John Brocklehurst)

"Right foot wrong rest" (Richie James)

"John's "sole" solution" (Guy Milchem)

"Foot loose and fancy free" and "Sharp eyed and legless" (Jackie James)

But in the opinion of the Editor and his dog, after ten bottles of Bud (the Editor, not the dog), the winning caption came from the man himself!

**"If these buffs stampede now, I am knackered !!"** (John Gilpin)

Congratulations John, you've won a truly crap bottle of Chateau Plonk de Toilette and an even crappier bottle of Chateau Regurgitive 2003.



Photo: Clive Taylor

## WANTED

The Club is seeking sponsorship for The Creedmoor Cup and The Precision Trophy matches. If you are interested in sponsoring either of these matches, we'd like to hear from you. Cost is £25 a year and you get to have your sponsor name engraved on the trophy. (*Any interest from the USA?*)

### Club Rules & Regulations

Minor rule changes aimed at maintaining the original concept of the Club, will be introduced with effect from January 2004. A revised set of Rules will be issued with the membership renewals for next year.

*Did you know ...*

*In the heyday of sailing ships, all war ships and many freighters carried iron cannons. Those cannons fired round iron cannon balls. It was necessary to keep a good supply near the cannon, but they had to find a way to prevent them from rolling about the deck. The best storage method devised was a square based pyramid with one ball on top, resting on four resting on nine that rested on sixteen. Thus, a supply of 30 cannon balls could be stacked in a small area right next to the cannon. There was only one problem...how to prevent the bottom layer from sliding or rolling from under the others. The solution was a metal plate called a "Monkey" with 16 round indentations. But, if this plate were made of iron, the iron balls quickly would rust to it. The solution to the rusting problem was to make "Brass Monkeys." Few sandlubbers realize that brass contracts much more and much faster than iron when chilled. Consequently, when the temperature dropped too far, the brass indentations would shrink so much that the iron cannon balls would come right off the monkey.*

*Thus, it was quite literally, "Cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey". (And all this time, you thought that it was a rude expression, didn't you?)*

## Reading & Viewing

- SHOOTING BUFFALO RIFLES OF THE OLD WEST by Mike Venturino

Published by MVL Enterprises, PO Box 914, Livingston, Montana 59047, USA

Priced at \$30 + p&p.

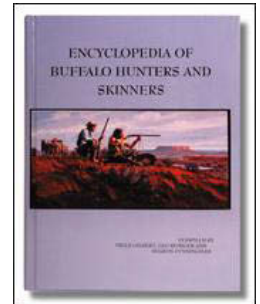
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## NEED A BED FOR THE NIGHT?

The Exhibition Hut is the Bisley club house of the Muzzle Loaders' Association of Great Britain and has 6 heated bedrooms with 2-4 bunk-beds in each. There are mixed toilets and showering facilities, and whatever time you get there, you'll be able to make a hot drink.

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The Exhibition Hut, in all its colonial splendour, is the clubhouse of the Muzzle Loaders' Association of Great Britain. You'll find it just up from the NRA offices.



# Rifles & Stuff .. American Style

## Rifle pin-up # 6 ...



One of the sexiest rifles I've shot in a long time. This Meacham High Wall in .45-90 (2.4") belongs to Kelley O. Roos from California and was used by him in this year's World Historical Rifle Long Range Championships at Bisley. I borrowed this rifle to shoot a 600 yards match and I can tell you ...this is a rifle to die for!

## Rifle pin-up # 7 ...



Lone Star Rolling Block in .45-90 (2.4") made by Dave Higginbotham. It has a 34" barrel and sports an MVA Buffalo Soule sight. This engraved and inlayed one belongs to Tom Berwick of Houston, Texas and is insured for \$8200.



## Rifle pin-up # 8 ...



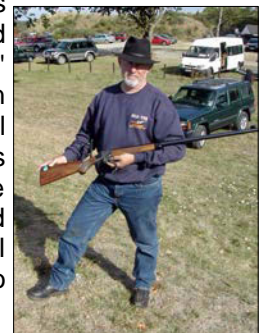
This is Lee Shaver's Sharps, best described in his own words: "My Sharps started life as an IAB Sharps rifle that was imported into this country about 20 years or more ago. I bought it probably 15 years ago or more. I decided to replace the barrel after I ruined the original with some Pyrodex, and not enough cleaning. It has the first Badger barrel I ever bought on it. Ernie had taper lapped the bore so it is .0003" larger at the breech than muzzle. I don't think he will do that any more. I eventually restocked it, but shot it for a year with the rasp marks still on the wood for grip. The stock was modelled off of a 77 Sharps stock, and even has a 77 Sharps trigger, and trigger plate installed. I also re-profiled the action, and lock, and etc, etc. It's a 45/100 that's throated out a ways, and the barrel is 34" long. It's just a Lee Shaver original, but I like it, and shoot it more than any other rifle I have".

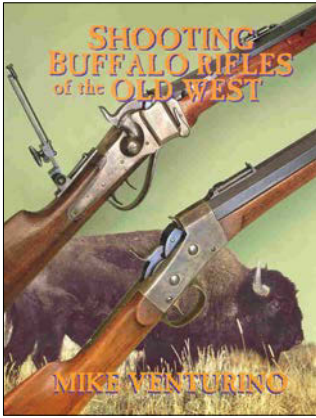


## Rifle pin-up # 9 ...



Al Sledge's re-built Borchardt. Al bought it as a beaten up military action. He cleaned up the action, made a sight base, milled a mortise in the top tang and installed the sight base. The receiver sides were milled out on a CNC machine and Ebony panels, also cut on a CNC, were installed. Being part owner of Pacific Marine Propeller, Al has all the equipment for detailed work. The barrel is a Krieger 34" in 45/90. The forearm has an Ebony tip in the style of original Borchadts and the checking was also traditionally done. The engraving is 25% covering and 80% density in the traditional styling to keep as it as close to what was offered at that period.





We now conclude the serialisation of Chapter 11 of Mike Venturino's new book, *Shooting Buffalo Rifles of the Old West ...* now treat yourselves to the whole book for Christmas.

## **BASIC RELOADING FOR BUFFALO RIFLES**

### **PRIMERS**

The proper primer for buffalo rifle ammunition is just about as complex a subject as powders or bullet alloys. Everyone has their favorites. As I said in the introduction to this section, the very first primer I try when working with a new rifle is the Federal 215 Large Rifle Magnum. I've never really had poor results in using it. That doesn't mean it is always used, however. Occasionally, one or the other types of primers will give significantly better results. Some shooters are even using pistol primers now for their black powder cartridge reloading.

In preparing this chapter I ran several "primer tests" at different ranges. Note that at 100 yards the Federal 155 Large Pistol Magnum primer gave the very best group. However, also note that its velocity variation in only five shots was about three times that given by most of the other primers. Also see that RWS Large Rifle primers gave almost the lowest variation in the five shot string, but largest group of any of the 10 primers tried.

**PRIMER TEST#1 : 100 YARDS & 5 SHOT GROUPS**

RIFLE: Shiloh M1874 .45-70 30" with 6 x RHO Scope

POWDER & CHARGE: 60 grains of Swiss 1 1/2Fg

BULLET: Lyman # 457132, 520 grains of 1/20 alloy, SPG lube, sized .459 inch

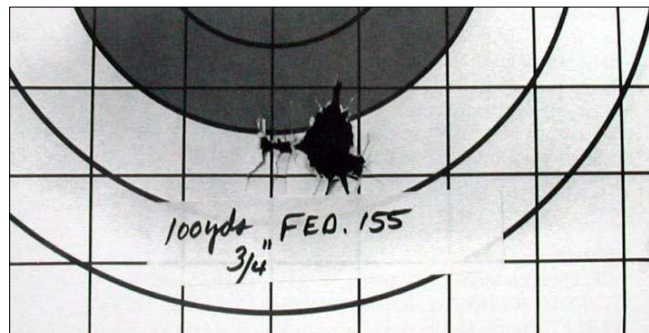
BRASS: Starline

WADS: John Walters .060 inch vegetable fiber

PRIMER	VELOCITY & VARIATION (fps)	GROUP (in.) (5 shots at 100 yds.)
Federal 215 Large Rifle Mag.	1,134 & 12	1 5/8
CCI Large Rifle Benchrest	1,131 & 16	1 3/4
Federal 210 Large Rifle Std.	1,133 & 10	1 3/8
Winchester Large Rifle	1,136 & 5	1 3/4
Remington 9 1/2M Large Rifle Mag.	1,135 & 14	1 7/8
CCI #250 Large Rifle Magnum	1,114 & 13	2 3/8
CCI #200 Large Rifle Std.	1,123 & 5	1 1/2
RWS Large Rifle Std.	1,117 & 9	3 1/2
Remington #2 1/2 Large Pistol	1,113 & 11	3 1/4
Federal 155 Large Pistol Mag.	1,144 & 43	3/4

Note: The rifle was cleaned after every group and a single fouling shot fired before the next group. The fouling shot was not counted in either the group size or the chronograph readings. These 10 groups were all fired on one very windless, cloudy afternoon.

In the Author's primer test, at 100 yards the Federal 155 Large Pistol Magnum types gave the tightest five shot group despite having the largest extreme spread by a factor of almost three.



AUTHOR'S NOTE: Before doing this primer test again at 200 yards, I acquired a custom Steve Brooks bullet mould duplicating the Lyman #457125.

PRIMER TEST#2 : 200 Yards - 10 Shot Groups

RIFLE: Shiloh M1874 .45-70 30" with 6 x RHO Scope

POWDER & CHARGE: 60 grains of Swiss 1 1/2Fg

BULLET: Custom Brooks mould copying Lyman # 457125, 523 grains of 1/20 alloy, SPG Lube, and sized .459 inch

BRASS: Starline

WADS: John Walters .060 inch vegetable fiber

PRIMER	VELOCITY & VARIATION (fps)	GROUP (in.) (10 shots at 200 yds.)
Federal 215 Large Rifle Mag.	1,131 & 12	3 7/8
CCI Large Rifle Benchrest	1,139 & 17	4 1/2
Federal 210 Large Rifle Std.	1,109 & 4	5.00 (8 in 3.00")
Winchester Large Rifle	1,135 & 19	5 1/2
Remington 9 1/2M Large Rifle Mag.	1,132 & 15	5.00 (9 in 3 1/8)
CCI #250 Large Rifle Magnum	1,122 & 15	6 1/4 (9 in 4 1/4)
CCI #200 Large Rifle Std.	1,113 & 23	4 3/4
RWS Large Rifle Std.	1,145 & 23	5 1/8
Remington #2 1/2 Large Pistol	1,113 & 8	5 1/4 (9 in 4.00)
Federal 155 Large Pistol Mag.	1,111 & 58	3 7/8

Note: The rifle was cleaned after every group and a single fouling shot fired before the next group. The fouling shot was not counted in either the group size or the chronograph readings. These groups were fired on three separate days. Although the shooting was done on days that were evidently windless this variable could have had an effect on the groups. Changes in temperature, barometric pressure and humidity could also induce variables in the chronograph readings.

Upon repeating this test at 300 yards, I decided to measure the group sizes in another manner. They were checked for height, width and then for distance between the two furthest shots. Sometimes that latter measurement was the same as either height or width, and sometimes it was slightly more when the two widest shots were spaced diagonally from one another.

PRIMER TEST#3 300 Yards & 10 Shot Groups

RIFLE: Shiloh Model 1874 Sharps 30" with 6 x RHO Scope

POWDER & CHARGE: 60 grains of Swiss 1 1/2Fg

BULLET: Custom Brooks mould copying Lyman # 457125, 523 grains of 1/20 alloy, Lubed with SPG, and sized .459 inch.

BRASS: Starline

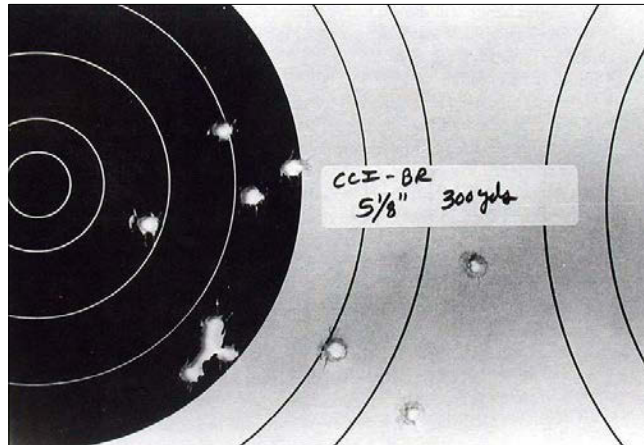
WAD: John Walters .060 inch vegetable fiber

PRIMER	VELOCITY & VARIATION (fps)	GROUP (in.) HIGH WIDE	Furthest 2 Shots
Federal 215 Large Rifle Mag.	1,137 & 13	4 3/4" X 6 1/2"	6 1/2"
CCI Large Rifle Benchrest	1,116 & 14	4.00" X 5.00"	5 1/8"
Federal 210 Large Rifle Std.	1,111 & 7	4 1/8" X 6 3/4"	7 1/2"
Winchester Large Rifle	1,136 & 31	7 1/2" X 7.00"	9.00"
Remington 9 1/2M Large Rifle Mag.	1,117 & 9	4.00" X 10.00"	10.00"
CCI #250 Large Rifle Magnum	1,107 & 18	9.00" X 4 1/4"	9.00"
CCI #200 Large Rifle Std.	1,111 & 14	6 1/2" X 7 1/2"	8.00"
RWS Large Rifle Std.	1,109 & 12	5 1/4" X 6 1/4"	6 1/4"
Remington #2 1/2 Large Pistol	1,130 & 17	7.00" X 13.00"	13.00"
Federal 155 Large Pistol Mag.	1,122 & 13	6.00" X 8 3/4"	8 3/4"

Note: The rifle was cleaned after every group and a single fouling shot fired before the next group. The fouling shot was not counted in either the group size or the chronograph readings. These groups were fired on three

separate days. Although the shooting was done on days that were evidently windless this variable could have had an effect on the groups. Changes in temperature, barometric pressure and humidity could also induce variables in the chronograph readings.

When the primer test was repeated at 300 yards the best 10 shot group was gotten with CCI Large Rifle Bench Rest primers.



And what has all this shooting with different primers proven? Is one better than another? No way! What it has proven is that primers can make a considerable difference in the accuracy and ballistic consistency of a black powder handload. It will be up to each specific rifle, coupled with the particular components being used to point out which primer it prefers. In preparing all the sample loads shown in the following cartridge sections I decided to stick with only one primer. That was Federal 215 Large Rifle Magnums.

## ***CRIMPING***

The last factor that I consider important with my hunting type buffalo rifle loads is the combined one of seating depth and crimping. For ammunition that will be carried afield, I do not want any lubricant exposed. It will gather dirt and grit, which in turn will be fired down the rifle's barrel. Therefore, bullets are seated so that all grooves are covered. Then a firm crimp is applied in the proper crimping groove or, if that is lacking, in the topmost grease groove. This crimping step isn't done as an aid in accuracy or to improve ballistics. (Although sometimes a crimp will do both.) It is a functioning aid. As said elsewhere, I believe that hunting ammunition should simply fall into a rifle's chamber. When a game animal is wounded there is no time to battle with a hard chambering cartridge. A glance at the cartridge photos accompanying the data sections herein will show a heavy crimp of case mouth to all bullets.

As a synopsis of just how I go about reloading my own buffalo rifle cartridges I'll finish up thusly:

- Resize all cases fully.
- Make sure all cases are trimmed to the same length.
- During case preparation clean primer pockets.
- Clean inside of case mouths with stainless steel or bronze brush.
- Bell case mouth so a bullet base will start freely, and use an expander stem at least .002 inch smaller than the bullet's diameter.
- Prime with Federal 215s (or other primer that has been proven better).
- Use a bullet cast of a suitable alloy such as 1 - 20 tin-to-lead that is of barrel groove diameter or .001 inch over, and whose nose will be approximately .002 under barrel land diameter.
- Lube the bullet with an appropriate black powder bullet lubricant.
- Charge the case with enough black powder so that the bullet will compress it about 1/16 of an inch, including the wad if one is used.
- Seat bullets so that all grease grooves are covered and give case mouths a firm crimp into crimping groove or top grease groove.

That is exactly how each and every cartridge included in these data sections was prepared, and their performance is charted to show the results.



These are the components used in what the author considers his "standard" .45-70 load. The bullet is Lyman's #457125 design or a copy poured in a custom Steve Brooks mould.

## TESTING & DEVELOPING LOADS

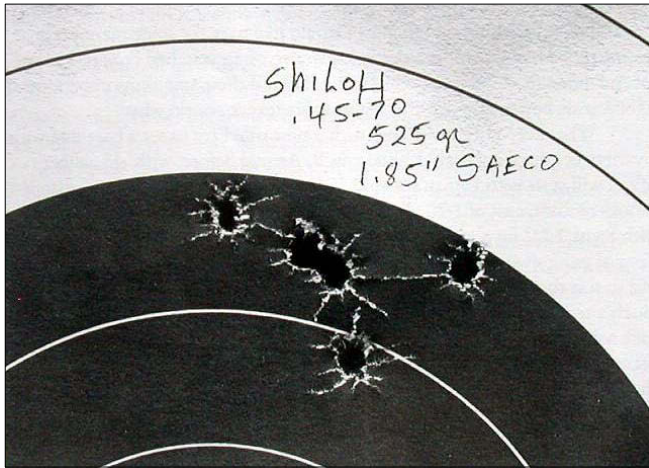
Before finishing this chapter I would like to make some mention of testing procedure when developing loads. I've often watched cohorts change several different variables at one setting. Then if their ammunition significantly better they were clueless as to the exact reason why.

Whenever I begin working with a new rifle I try to set a base line with a variety of components that I know well. As said before, with .45 caliber rifles I will start with Lyman's #457125 bullet (or the copy from my custom Brooks mould), cast of 1/20 alloy and lubed with SPG. Then I load rounds with Swiss 1 1/2 Fg and Federal 215 Large Rifle Magnum primers. Several groups will then be fired from a solid rest. Some buffalo rifle shooters like to test their loads from a crossed stick rest. I consider that almost as much of a test of the shooter's skill than of the rifle or load. I want the rest to be rock solid. And too, I say don't be afraid to use some sort of "sissy bag" between the rifle's butt and your shoulder. These buffalo rifles have more than enough recoil so it does no harm to pad oneself.

Also take note that I said above, "several groups." A single group means nothing, while several mean a lot. I think this is especially true if the groups are fired over a period of time. Anyway, after the base line is set with certain components, then I change only one factor at a time. Such is the way the powder and primer tests earlier in this section were done. When developing a load, I will try three to five primers, three to five different bullets, a couple of different powders, .060 and .030 inch wads, and perhaps even several sizes of ball expanders if available. Remember only one of those variables should be changed at a time. Somewhere along the way a load will usually emerge that is head and shoulders above the others in regard to accuracy. If that load is tested several times and its performance is proven, then write down all details about it, even down to the brand of reloading dies, and the size of the expander ball in the dies. All these details are important to record. Many times over the past 20 years I've developed fine shooting loads and then neglected to record in-depth details about it. That particular rifle may be set aside for a year or two and then, when it's returned to, all the data gathered previously has been forgotten. And don't just put the information on the hard drive of your computer. Make a paper copy and put it in a notebook.

Testing loads can go on forever because the possible combinations of components could run into the thousands. Somewhere the testing must stop and then shooting, hunting, and competition must begin. I admit to being fairly addicted to load testing with buffalo rifles. I truly enjoy it. Often, even after one or more good loads are found for a specific rifle, I'll keep trying just to see how tightly it can be made to shoot. Usually I'm not so lucky as some of my friends and fellow shooters in that the very first load tested is the one stuck with. Sometimes I've fired hundreds of rounds before hitting upon a winning combination.

So, how good is good enough? In my opinion most good buffalo rifles and their modern replicas will group around two inches at 100 yards when fed proper ammunition. Often an individual group will be significantly smaller, and occasionally one will be larger; this is with a decent peep sight arrangement on the rifle. I'd allow about another inch on the average for open barrel sights. I would still hunt big game with a black powder cartridge rifle that



The author feels that with a good quality rifle with good sights, and good black powder handloads, groups should be in the 2.00 inch range at 100 yards.

grouped up to four inches with open sights if it did so consistently. I've heard many stories of rifles that would shoot groups of one inch at 100 yards even with metallic sights. I'll believe an occasional group might go that small, but I personally have never seen anyone shoot their buffalo rifles that well, day in and day out. High grade match rifles built for BPCR Silhouette and Long-Range Target shooting are a different beast, and their accuracy potential will be discussed in the chapter on match quality reloading.

And lastly, don't be afraid to just give up. Occasionally a rifle pops up that just won't shoot adequately. Whether that's caused by a bad barrel, broken or loose stock, or just gremlins, it does happen. In the fall of 2001, I fired over 500 rounds of .45-90 ammunition through a Shiloh Sharps M1874 that I'd had rebarreled and rechambered. Something went wrong, and after putting about 40 pounds of lead through that rifle, I had to admit defeat. It was then given to Montana gunsmith John King who re-lined it. Now it's a tackdriver. More details on this can be seen in the chapter on Reloading Match Quality Ammunition.

So, my advice is to shoot a rifle plenty, and experiment with a variety of components. It will make you a better shot if nothing else. Keep track of what you did, and don't hesitate to consult with others if it looks like you have hit a dead end. Sometimes it is. These rifles can be amazingly accurate, but that sort of shooting doesn't always come easily.

#### Some other books by Mike Venturino:

- SHOOTING SIXGUNS OF THE OLD WEST
- SHOOTING COLT SINGLE ACTIONS
- SHOOTING LEVER GUNS OF THE OLD WEST
- SPG LUBRICANTS BLACK POWDER CARTRIDGE RELOADING PRIMER  
(Written with Steve Garbe)

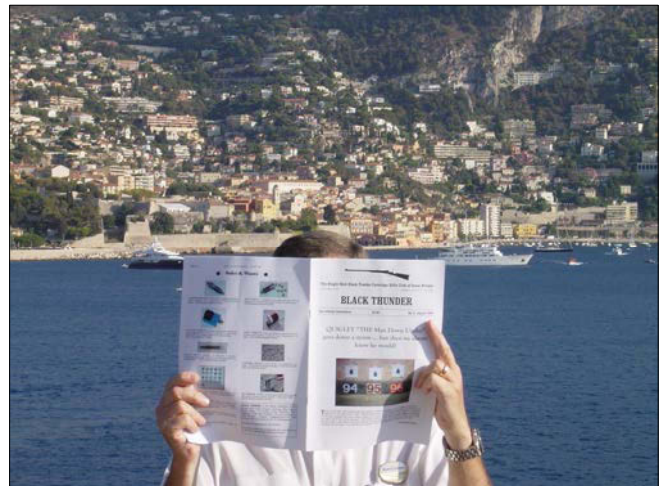
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It seems that John is having trouble putting it down as he is pictured, still reading it in Villefranche, next to Nice on the French Riviera.

So ... where do you read yours? Why not send in a picture and show us? The further away the better.



"Ah, this is the life ... you can't beat a good read". John Brock' pictured on board his ship with Villefranche in the background.

### In the next issue:

- Thoughts on Bullet Alloys and Shapes for Hunting - Steve Garbe
- The Snover Eye Cup - Paul Matthews
- The Kermit Hoke Tang Sight - Paul Matthews
- Hardening Lead with Tin and Antimony - Vic Nock
- Make a pair of match-winning cross sticks.

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