SHOOTERS' JOURNAL

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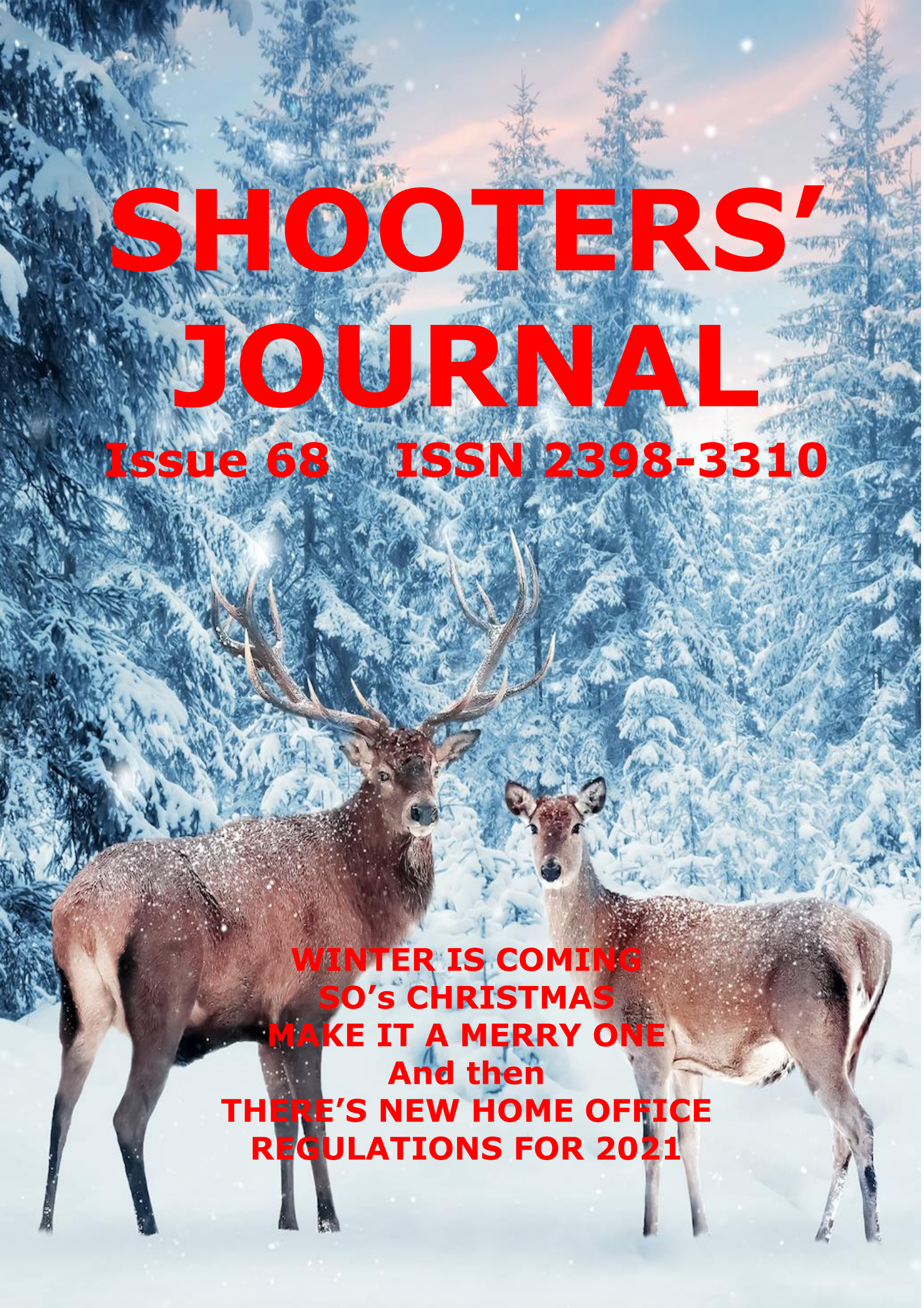

WINTER IS COMING
SO's CHRISTMAS
MAKE IT A MERRY ONE
And then
THERE'S NEW HOME OFFICE
REGULATIONS FOR 2021

SHOOTERS' RIGHTS ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 3
Cardigan SA43 1BN
TEL: 01239 698607
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Existing members have had or will get at next renewal concessions to reflect the dormant period of lockdown. Join in 2020 to get 15 months membership for the cost of 12. New members welcome at any time and you get up to 15 months membership for the price of 12.

SRA MEMBERSHIP FEES

New Individual	£39.50
Extra family members, each	£10.00
CLUBS, GROUPS, SYNDICATES	
(Minimum of three) per person	£22.00
LARGER GROUPS 40+ per person	£15.00
Over 100	£12.50

Group leaders can add new members to their group at any time for £22 per person up to the group's renewal date. Pro rata if that's soon.

Autumn is usually hectic, as we remember three great battles – Senlac, Trafalgar and Agincourt in the space of a fortnight, pause for halloween and Guy Fawkes and then remember our military dead. Welsh lockdown stopped all that, so -

COVER PICTURE
Issue 68 'AUTUMN' 2020

Photo Credit: Shutterstock

Much as we'd like to send all our members a Christmas card, in these restrained times this is as close we could get: a couple of foreign deer in a foreign landscape. That fits quite well, as most of what makes Christmas in the UK is foreign: chocolate, Holy Eucharist, turkeys, whisky, Xmas trees, Yule – enjoy! And let's have a better 2021.

-our membership secretary Elizabeth Law organised our local remembrance as a flash mob and attracted wreaths from our church, the SRA, the local community council, Brownies and Guides, the Fire Station and two Women's Institute groups.

SRA PHOTO

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EDITORIAL

There's always something going on that can or will have an impact on the diverse activities of the SRA's membership: whether you're locked down, self-isolating, shielding, working from home or just working. Even if you're doing nothing, the Home Office is beavering away in the background to make your legitimate interest in guns and older weaponry more difficult for you to maintain safely and legally.

It was ever thus; Lloyd George's government adopted the proposal of Sir Ernley Blackwell's 1917 committee for a system of firearm certificates for the public and registration of firearms dealers for the trade, as the Firearms Act 1920.

The Act was presented to Parliament as an anti-crime initiative while Lloyd George referred to it as making sure only friends of the government had firearms. Sir Ernley Blackwell's brief had been to find ways of preventing bankrupt European governments selling off surplus weaponry to third world hotspots once the Great War ended.

Blackwell was a Home Office mandarin with no skills, knowledge or interest in any goings on outside his own Home department. He'd had his hands full anyway. Events which doubtless coloured his thinking: in the simplistic world of dictatorial bureaucrats banning something is seen as a solution.

The Home Office first came up with the idea of banning handguns in 1870 and what Parliament allowed instead was the Gun Licensing Act – a tax. The department made several attempts to further control firearms in the 1890s and Parliament rejected all but allowed the Pistols Act 1903 – another tax.

He probably wanted to ban handguns in 1917, but if he ran it up the flagpole nobody would have saluted it: they were too useful and the pet Home Office gun-ban project wouldn't fly politically.

Prior to the Great War, two significant handgun incidents occurred, and both have gone down in history for their severity. These were perpetrated by eastern Europeans who brought their automatic pistols to the UK with them.

First up was the 'Tottenham Outrage' in 1909: an attempted armed robbery. The suspects hijacked a tram to get away, hotly pursued by the Metropolitan Police in another tram, to Chingford, where they got into their hideout and committed suicide. Over 1,000 shots were fired; ten times more than in the Hungerford massacre of 1987 with the difference that in Hungerford only the murderer was doing any shooting.

The following year, the siege of Sidney Street. Blackwell's boss, the Home Secretary for the time being Winston Churchill, attended the scene to be immortalized in movie newsreel footage. He got close enough to the action, depending on which account you follow, for a bullet to have passed through his top hat. This started when three anarchists burgled a jeweller's in the City of London. Three responding police officers and one robber were shot dead and two officers wounded. Metropolitan Police officers pursued the suspects to a house in Sidney Street where a Met officer was wounded. Then the army came in support and the house burned down during the engagement.

After 1910 came further attempts to restrict handgun sales and to licence the gun trade. The Great War put these on the back burner, so when Blackwell was asked to 'do something' about war surplus sales to the third world, he simply trotted out his same old ideas.

The Home Office remains famous to this day for shelving bad ideas. They await, in Douglas Hurd's words, a 'suitable legislative opportunity'. The 1920 Firearms Act was as near as Blackwell got to fulfilling his department's 1870 plan.

The next fifty years saw police attempts to introduce de facto bans administratively thwarted by Parliament and the courts. Shotgun certificates were awaiting a suitable legislative opportunity in 1966 as a replacement for the 1870 gun licence when Harry Roberts obligingly shot three Metropolitan Police officers and Roy Jenkins knee-jerked them through Parliament to head off media demands for restoration of the death penalty.

While every legislative control of firearms since 1870 has been directed at making it more expensive and difficult for the law-abiding, doing it administratively really took off after the 1968 Firearms Act. The 'restricted' 1969 memorandum of guidance to police told them to criminalize the gun trade and resulted in a crime wave.

Firearms crime has increased dramatically since 1968 and most of the increase has been the persecution of the people who thought they were acting lawfully. Real gun crime as committed by real criminals has been lost in the statistics.

And so it continues: a reinvention of which guns can or can't be antiques (elsewhere in this issue) is the Home Office's Christmas present to people who thought they were doing everything right. Based on calibres, this way of excluding some antique firearms from antique status was rejected by the Court of Appeal in 1977. Home Office policy is thus at odds with the common law.

There's more to come: the Eurotrash legislation has to be adopted, retained or repealed and guess which way that'll go in the case of deactivated firearms.

Not to mention the MARS rifles ban, still hanging over owners like the sword of Damocles. Stuck, we think, because the treasury can't afford it. What is needed is for politicians to take a good look at the Home Office 'Serious Violence Unit' and its handling of the law-abiding public as target criminals. There's so much trash on the statute books slipped in through the Dead Parliament and while Theresa May was Home Secretary that where we are now is not a good start point.

One ray of hope is Priti Patel has publicly identified her other ridiculous department – immigration – as not fit for purpose; and survived her department's attempt to shrug her off the way they dumped Amber Rudd. Now we need her to look at our problems, as the minister in charge of public order – Kit Malthouse – has proved he's just another sleepwalker. Ω

CORRECTION

Massad F Ayoob spotted some fake news in issue 67, which we are pleased to correct. Mass succeeded Jan Stevenson to the position of Handgun Editor for Guns Magazine, a position he still holds.

The confusion arose in our tiny editorial mind because Mass wrote for Police Magazine and its predecessor Police Product News, while neither he nor Jan held an editorial chair in that publication, and we apologise to both for the confusion. Ω

New regulations from the Home Office

Announced in November with the intention of this slipping into law before Christmas, the Home Office have drafted a Statutory Instrument they claim will enshrine their 1939 cut-off date and the obsolete calibres list in law, with the following alterations:

Seven revolver rounds are to be removed from the list:

- .320 British (also known as .320 Revolver CF, short or long)
- .41 Colt (short or long)
- .44 Smith and Wesson Russian
- .442 Revolver (also known as .44 Webley)
- 9.4mm Dutch Revolver
- 10.6mm German Ordnance Revolver
- 11mm French Ordnance Revolver M1873 (Army)

These are all centre-fire rounds - developed in the 1870s after Rollin White's bored through cylinder patent expired. They did not make the transition from black powder propulsion to nitro, superseded by better rounds. Home Office concerns about them – particularly the .44 Smith and Wesson Russian – are based on a rogue dealer having imported some and sold them with made-up ammunition to people who used them on each other.

He'd have been caught much sooner

if HM Customs had reported his imports to the Proof House. The guns were exempt from import controls but not from the requirement to be proved or certified proof exempt.

.320" was omitted from the 1992 list because the Forensic Science Service said there were too many of them about and ammunition was still available. It was true one could buy a box marked .320" but it contained short blanks. Fiocchi did a production run of this round in 2015, which maybe attracted Home Office attention, as their sale wouldn't have been restricted in Italy.

Twenty-three cartridges will be added to the obsolete calibres list:

- BSA (.26 Rimless Belted Nitro Express)
- .33 BSA (.33 Rimless Belted Nitro Express)
- .360 No 2 Nitro Express
- .40 BSA (.40 Rimless Belted Nitro Express)
- .400/360 2 3/4 in Nitro Express
- .425 Westley Richards Magnum
- .475 x 3 1/4 in Nitro Express
- .475 No 2 Jeffery Nitro Express
- .475 No 2 Nitro Express
- .476 Nitro Express (.476 Westley Richards)
- .50-90 2 1/2 inch
- .50-110 2.4 inch.577 – 3 in (Black Powder & Nitro Express)
- .577 – 3 1/4 in (Black Powder & Nitro Express)
- 6.5 x 53mm R Mannlicher (Dutch/Romanian)
- 8 x 56mm Mannlicher Schoenauer
- 8 x 58 mm R Krag
- 8 mm Murata
- 9 x 56mm Mannlicher Schoenauer
- 9 x 57mm R Mauser
- 9 x 57mm Rimless Mauser
- 9.5 x 57mm Mannlicher Schoenauer
- 8mm Roth Steyr

Apart from the last-mentioned, these are all black-powder rounds for shoulder arms.

1939 has been the Home Office preferred cut-off date for obsolete ignition systems since 1986 when they set it out in a draft revision of the restricted 'memorandum of guidance to the police' for a pre-publication consultation. It was another example of the Home Office doing, in the words of Mr Justice Wien, "***...something which Parliament has not seen fit to define."*** And defies Lord Butler-Sloss's view, in an antiques firearms case (R v Brown 1994) that ***"time has moved on and so must the definition."***

The restricted 1969 memorandum caused the gun trade crime wave that started in the 1970s as police applied the changed definitions of prohibited weapons etc. which the Home Office put into their guidance *without telling anyone.* By keeping their policies secret, both the gun trade and

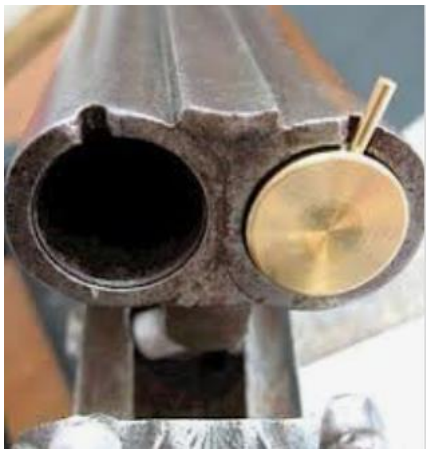
individual certificate holders fell afoul of these new interpretations of the law, which caused Clarke & Ellis to comment in their 1981 book on how few firearms cases had been to the High Court and Court of Appeal before 1968 (two in 48 years) and how many after (dozens in 12 years).

If one must have a cut-off date, it's actually quite a good one for obsolete ignition systems. What it means is stuff predating 'modern' self-contained metallic cartridges: matchlocks, flintlocks, cap locks, capping breech-loaders, pinfire, needle fire and such. If we follow one example – pinfire – this French invention by Casimir Lefaucheux first appeared in the 1830s.

The 12-bore shotgun cartridge version predates central fire by a decade or more and Eley made pinfire 12 bore cartridges until 1968. Pinfire revolvers were made up to 1939 or a bit later: the Belgians resumed making them after the Great War and production ended when German forces over-ran them in 1940.

Pinfire is truly obsolete; but other systems, such as matchlock, flintlock and percussion cap systems are in current manufacture. Take percussion: 'originals' start to appear in the early 1800s. Sam Colt (1814-62) and Robert Adams (1810-70) both had good percussion revolvers on show in the Chrystal Palace Great Exhibition of 1851. Centre-fire cartridges from 1873 and on gradually superseded these 'loose ammunition' products.

Colt sold their 'cap and ball' production tooling to Mexico where manufacture continued for a while: uptake of cartridge firearms followed the railways the Belgians made them until over-run in 1914 and the British gun trade made percussion muskets for the tribal areas of the British Empire well into the 20th century. There's a dead spot until Aldo Uberti started making cap and ball revolvers again in 1959. His market was to give buyers the Wild West experience without them having to use expensive antiques. These 'later production' cap and ball revolvers didn't count as firearms for licensing purposes in his home country or most of the rest of Europe, but they were and are section 1 firearms in Britain.



Post-1997, the Europeans made a lot of versions of their cartridge revolvers with cap and ball cylinders so shooters could continue using the same holsters. Ω

The Obsolete Calibres List

This way of differentiating between antique and modern firearms dates from 1903 when the Pistols Act didn't count pistols for which ammunition was available as antiques. What was meant remains untested. The Pistols Act 1903 obligated handguns owners to buy a ten shilling (50p) licence if they wished to carry their sidearm outside the limits of their dwelling AND IF they hadn't bought a gun or game licence. The 1920 Firearms Act repealed the 1903 Pistols Act and stated that nothing in it applied to any antique firearm possessed solely as a curiosity or ornament. Ammunition ceased to be relevant.

This one phrase encapsulated the two legs on which a defendant must stand to prove his property benefits from the exemption from the need to hold a firearm certificate. The terms 'curiosity' and 'ornament' came together in 1878 when used to advertise 'Exchange and Mart' magazine, so by 1920 everyone knew what they meant.

'Antique' means "a collectable object that has a high value because of its age and quality" according to Google. This definition implies one couldn't dignify ancient junk by calling it antique and when the courts looked at antiques in a case their view was the value of an item gradually descends as it ages. It's an antique when it goes up again in value because of its age, rarity etc. (NB. It works with most things except coins, Ed.)

We've had a hand in numerous cases where defendants have been charged with possession without a certificate and the prosecution has never sought to discredit the owner's claim of antique status by calling his treasured old firearm 'junk' or 'worthless'. Many were but have other emotional values as an heirloom, an inheritance or keepsake.

The onus is always on the prosecution to prove a firearm is too young to benefit from the exemption and they only have to address that after the defendant has satisfied the court his possession was solely as a curiosity or ornament, because failing on the first leg results in a conviction anyway.

This test: leg 1, establish curiosity or ornament and then leg 2, consider age, superseded, obsolete etc. is what the 1920 Act says and was enshrined in common law by a 1977 Court of Appeal judgment 'Richards v Curwen'. The Crown argued that a firearm capable of use with modern ammunition could not be an antique, as it could still be used. The Court of Appeal rejected the argument. It did not matter to the court whether the firearm *could* be used; what mattered was firstly whether the defendant possessed it solely as a curiosity or ornament or not – i.e. he didn't use it and then how old it was.

The two revolvers considered were of 1890s manufacture, so over 75 years old at the time. In allowing the appeal, Lord Widgery remarked he couldn't envisage firearms made in 'this' (the 20th) century as being antiques.

In R v Brown (1994) Lord Butler-Sloss considered a 1906 dated War

Office pattern rifle and in allowing the appeal said time had moved on and so must the definition. A fixed cut-off date is therefore at odds with common law, as is the antique calibre list; statutory or otherwise. As to whether secondary legislation can over-write common law, we'll have to ask a lawyer.

Lord Justice Laws said 'no', in the 'Metric Martyrs' case (Thoburn v Sunderland City Council 2002)

Lord Bingham said 'no' in his book 'the rule of law' (2011).

Lord Hewart of Bury said 'no' in his book 'The New Despotism' (1929)

Our research continues. Ω

EUROPEAN FIREARMS PASSES

These cease to be valid on 1st January 2020 regardless of the expiry date showing on the document. You will need to comply with the specific licensing or other requirements imposed by the country you're in at the time or you wish to visit in 2021 and on. Britain's exit from the EU is what invalidates them.

Chapter and verse on how to be legally compliant in the future should be available to you via the organization hosting your visit; your hunt tour operator if you're after game shooting or the event organisers if you're going to a re-enactment event.

The 'loss' of EFPs only affects UK residents going to EU countries with guns. It does not change anything for EU citizens bringing guns to the UK: they will still need a visitor's firearm permit issued by a UK police force to the visitor's host. Ω

The SRA and the VCRA 'defence'

Members will be aware SRA membership includes public liability insurance, which happens to be what realistic imitation firearms (RIFs) vendors look for from customers as their 'defence' under the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006. The VCR Act is unusual in making selling 'realistic imitation firearms' a criminal offence, except when selling it to an 'authorised' person – one who demonstrates a good reason for acquiring it.

The 'problem' with the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 regulations 2007 is only historic re-enactment is mentioned as a possible good reason, whereas RIFs have been in use for decades for other good reasons including theatrical purposes, collecting, target shooting, air soft skirmish, basic training, and history displays.

Back in 2006 the Home Office only seemed concerned with air soft guns as 'realistic', and at the time the SRA was the only PLI scheme which mentioned airsoft skirmish. We think that's why they went for PLI as the base evidence for an intending buyer to show as 'good reason'.

Possession of a Realistic Imitation Firearms is not an offence, whether it be an air soft, the Chinese knock-off versions that shoot gardener's water retention pills, a replica gun made to comply with the 1982 Act and subsequent guidance, a blank firer or a 3D print. We reach the point where SRA members can buy any of these RIF products by protecting vendors with

their SRA membership and then possess them without any additional authority being necessary. There are restrictions on having any of them in public, which are to be found in the Firearms Act and public order legislation. Essentially, discreet and secure transportation solves most problems.

What you need to buy one is a good reason for having it and PLI as proof. Soldier of Fortune wouldn't sell RIFs to SRA members until we included the word 're-enactment' on the membership certificate. The United Kingdom Airsoft Site Association (UKASA) affiliated all their members to the SRA after they negotiated SRA membership as a defence with the UKARA cartel.

UKARA – United Kingdom Airsoft Retailers' Association - is the umbrella body for businesses importing air soft products from the far east. They developed a registration system for airsoft players. Those taking part in airsoft skirmish are registered by their site with UKARA and get a reference number for making purchases – after a certain number of visits. The vendor can look them up on the register for verification purposes and that was one of the three flaws in the system UKASA perceived.

They thought vendors having access to the register violated the Data Protection Act. The registration scheme didn't include a renewal date, so there could be people on it who dropped out of active usage years ago and it isn't backed by public liability insurance, as mentioned in the 2007 regulations.

However a member of the public acquires a RIF, his possession is legal - unless he crosses one of the legislative lines in the Firearms Act or public order legislation. Specifically, Jack Straw made a pig's ear of section 19 of the Firearms Act 1968 by extending its reach. Originally, a person carrying a legally possessed loaded shotgun or a firearm together with suitable ammunition in a public place could be prosecuted, whereupon the onus was on the defendant to prove he had lawful authority for what he was doing at the time, or a reasonable excuse for what he'd been caught doing.

Peter and Harry Pullenger were stopped en route to their shooting club (by a policeman who had enquired diligently as to when they'd next be going shooting) in a car full of guns and ammunition: so, they had lawful authority for being in a public place in a car full of guns (going to their shooting club) and were duly acquitted. The policeman involved in this entrapment exercise changed his statement four weeks after the original incident from 'firearms and ammunition' to 'loaded firearms'; which made no difference to the event. It took two and a half years out of their shooting lives to get acquitted and their guns back.

An example of 'loaded shotguns in a public place' crossing our desk was a group of lads thinning out a rookery. They stood on the road to fire, then cleared up the empties and the bodies and hid in the ditch until the rooks

settled a bit and then did it all again. The complainant was a curtain twitcher half a mile away and when police arrived, they seized guns and prosecuted under section 19 and under the Road Traffic Act for firing from within 30 feet of the centre of the carriageway.

It's only an offence to discharge a firearm (or a firework) in proximity to the carriageway to the inconvenience of a road user and at court the police couldn't produce one. The court wasn't asked to decide between 'lawful authority' and 'reasonable excuse' in this instance, as the police withdrew the charge and returned the guns.

Section 19 was thus about having legally owned guns and ammunition in a public place; the question was one of motive or intent, as the guns would only be capable of endangering public safety if misused. Jack Straw's amendment was to stretch section 19 to encompass 'an imitation firearm' and to separate an 'air weapon' from 'firearm' so having an air weapon without any ammunition would be an offence unless the defendant could show a lawful authority or a reasonable excuse for having it in public without ammunition.

This potentially complicates using air guns, replicas, blank firers and 3D prints as props on your living history uniform, as the definition of a public place is somewhere to which the public have access at the material time, whether on payment or otherwise: the War and Peace showground is a public place, as is any other country show, re-enactment fest, museum, castle, court, street etc.

Given all this started with a Home Office panic about air soft products, it's interesting they chose to exclude them from the Firearms Act altogether in 2017 by way of a new addendum to the 1968 Act – section 57A – which says nothing in the Act applies to air soft products. It leaves air soft owners only at risk of public order legislation if indiscreet about travelling with their weaponry.

It's not usually the weapons that attract criticism though; the last several media attacks on re-enactment/living history have been directed at Nazi flags and German uniforms. Liking German stuff can bring other problems with it; Blair Grindle's firearm certificate was revoked in Gloucestershire twenty years ago because, inter alia, he had a Nazi flag (souvenired by his Dad in the war) airing on his wall when police visited. And the same concern came up again sixteen years later when he tried getting his certificate back.

In Essex the popular Firearms Enquiry Officer Dave Sims was prosecuted for possession of various firearms – and acquitted: but what drew attention to his Great War collection was the mannikins in his private museum wearing -shock, horror, German uniforms.

Back to the Violent Crime Reduction Act; we've established the firearms aspects of it have nothing to do with violent crime, we wondered what was driving Home Office paranoia. In the round, the police kicked off a policy of

reducing the number of firearms in the hands of the public to an absolute minimum in 1972. Parliament rejected the policy, presented to them as a green paper (Cmnd5297) and it took many years of lobbying and court battles to get some of these police policies reversed.

Now it seems to be going the other way – the Home Office want stuff back in the controls; they've re-worked the obsolete calibres list and are trying to make it stick so some 26,000 antiques will have to come back onto firearm certificates or into the section 5 trade. Then there's the requirement to register defectively deactivated firearms with the 'Serious Violence Unit' by April 2021. We don't know whether they're coming or going. What's really obvious is the Home Office is a poor choice of department for managing trade and industry.

The basic problem with the Home Office approving rifle and loose ammunition pistol clubs is precisely that. Having no expertise in the management of sport, they have been using their approval sparingly to eliminate some firearms from club usage, while also failing to admit developments in the sport. It's about withering the shooting sports on the vine by getting rid of some firearms whereas a proper government department with expertise in the realm of what the public do for organised enjoyment would sort all these ridiculous problems out. Ω

Latest gun ban – from South Australia Police

Announced on 7 October and effective the day after, gel blasters became classed as imitation firearms in South Australia. Gel blaster projectiles are 6-8mm diameter water-retaining beads used by gardeners and are frangible on impact. Invented in China, the guns are mechanically (and/or electrically) similar to air soft guns but are not made from metal. The far east market for these products has been driven by anti-air soft legislation in mainland China, Pacific rim countries and parts of Australia. The guns would probably be classed as 'realistic imitation firearms' in the UK and the projectiles as gardening accessories.

The Officer in Charge of SAPOL's Firearms Branch, Superintendent Stephen Howard made the announcement, saying, "The firing mechanism in a gel blaster compresses air to fire a projectile and therefore meets the threshold test to be defined as a firearm. A gel blaster can easily be mistaken for a real firearm, with potential to cause concern in the community and trigger a police response that could involve the use of police firearms, or other tactical options."

What he means is anyone playing with one of these toys in public is going to be 'mistaken' by police as an actual threat to public safety and shot.

This arbitrary change of category catches some 62,000 gel blasters currently in private ownership in the South Australian community and which will now be subject to licensing and regulation. At the press launch of this latest counter-terrorism initiative, Supt Howard said they would be regulated the

same as paintball ‘guns’, which in South Australia means their use is restricted to ‘approved’ paintball sites and their transit and storage is the same as for actual firearms.

A spokesman for UKASA – the United Kingdom Airsoft Site Association – said gel blasters weren’t really in the UK market, although there are on-line adverts for them. Anyone turning up at an air soft site with one wouldn’t be allowed to use it for safety reasons, but it would probably be OK at a paintball venue. The gel beads are used by gardeners for water retention purposes in flower beds and have to be soaked before use in a gel blaster launcher.

Being larger and heavier than air soft projectiles, but launched from a mechanically similar device, gel blasters have a more pronounced arc of trajectory than air soft and thus a shorter range. They can’t be used in conjunction with the usual air soft skirmish mesh facial protection because the bead is frangible on impact and some bits as well as the water content would penetrate the mesh vizor. Ω

WELCOME BACK

SRA Founder member Robin Stokes has retraced his steps to the UK after several years of travelling in the east and we also welcome Nang, who is here to keep an eye on him. Permanently. The SRA’s founder members were those who joined following the association’s launch in the October 1984 edition of Handgunner magazine and prior to the association adopting a policy of legal costs insurance for all its members.

In other words, those who put their £10 membership up when there was nothing in it for them besides sharing the grief of those whom the powers that be were trying to eradicate from the shooting sports.

Jan A Stevenson’s editorial in the October 1984 magazine concentrated on a Council of Europe proposal that British shooters should have to qualify to continue their sport via a series of ‘tests’. Fifty hours of classroom study of flora and fauna followed by the tests and then a shooting qualification test for each type of firearm.

1984 rings a bell. Jan Stevenson believed the proposal emanated from a country sports organisation, presumably hoping to become the body controlling the syllabus and tests.

It didn't come to anything in the end, but the SRA's in-tray filled up with other stuff, including quite a few appeals. An early editorial bemoans the fact that after a year none of the appeals had come to court.

It was the fifth newsletter (Autumn 1985) before court reports started to appear and one such was Graham Walsh. His case was adjourned on the 18 December via other dates to the 6 March 1986 and on the day Robin Stokes turned up, accompanied by another founder member Mr Bahadir Niazi (Bee to his friends) to offer moral support.

It went further though: the police barrister was Mr Jeremy Carter-Manning. Graham told him he had two witnesses coming later, so naturally Mr Carter-Manning was both interested in what they would have to say and anxious to get the case into court before they might arrive.

Then Robin and Bahadir arrived; Robin recognised Mr Carter-Manning from a previous occasion and said, "Good morning Jeremy," at which point Mr Carter-Manning's entire effort pivoted around to figuring out who this was.

Robin and Bee Joined Graham and SRA Secretary Richard Law in the lobby and started a conversation – until it was realised policemen were hanging off the staircase trying to eavesdrop on them.

Bee was in the process of negotiating a lease on a shop in Stoke Newington to open as a gun shop, so all the conversation was around that topic. The police side stalled the case trying to crack who these mystery 'witnesses' were until the lunch break, after which the real witnesses walked in – both character witnesses who worked with Mr Walsh.

The case itself was an anti-climax: Graham's firearm certificate had been revoked and the letter sent to his local police station for service by hand – except nobody took it round to him and by the time it was realised and the letter served on him it was months old and New Scotland Yard had renewed the 'revoked' certificate by post in the interim.

The cause of NSY's consternation about him having a certificate had also resolved itself, so the appeal was adjourned while Mr Walsh made a fresh application for a certificate and then abandoned when it was granted.

Bee went on to open his gunshop – Albion Arms in Stoke Newington – and ran straight into trouble on two fronts; one was the local gentrification community who objected to a country sporting goods store in their inner city enclave and the other was Hackney's Labour Party prospective Parliamentary candidate Ms Diane Abbot, who thought a shop called Albion Arms (it was in Albion Road) must be a white supremacist front for a right wing backlash against her becoming the first black Member of Parliament.

Bee sort of headed that one off by his presence; a Turkish Cypriot by birth, a UK resident to avoid national service and a bachelor because his Mum hadn't sorted him out a wife yet, he couldn't have passed for a white supremacist under any circumstances.

He won the various planning appeals and traded until the 1991 recession stopped him.

Robin went on meeting barristers in his capacity as a Waltham Forest magistrate and later as chair of the juvenile court before heading east for such adventures as the east has in store for those who go there.

So welcome back; it's time to drink root beer and talk about the war. Ω

Jermaine Baker 'was complying with police' when shot

Jermaine Baker was the front seat passenger in a stolen Audi motor vehicle when shot dead by a police officer known as SFO W80 while the vehicle was parked near Wood Green Crown Court on 11 December 2015.

The police operation was to intercept and prevent anyone assisting Izzet Eren escape from custody. He was being driven to the court from prison in a security van for sentencing after pleading guilty to possession of a Skorpion machine pistol and a loaded handgun on 13 October.

Papers submitted to the Court of Appeal on behalf of the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) say the officer thought Mr. Baker was getting a gun, which the IOPC says it was a "mistaken and unreasonable" belief.

The IOPC is challenging a court ruling (see Journal 65) blocking them from bringing misconduct proceedings against the officer SFO W80, for the use of "excessive" force.

The police were monitoring the three men in the stolen Audi with two bugging devices, yet when they closed with the vehicle it is said they didn't know how many people were in the car as the windows were steamed up.

Counsel for the IOPC, said in documents W80's position was that Mr. Baker moved his hands "up towards a bag slung around his shoulder... despite calls to put his hands on the dashboard. W80 says this action caused him honestly to believe that Mr. Baker was reaching for a firearm and put him in fear of his life and that of his colleagues."

"However, the evidence shows he didn't have a gun in his bag and that the instructions given immediately prior to the fatal shot were for Mr. Baker to put his hands up. The evidence also shows the position of Mr. Baker's hand at the time he was shot was consistent with him putting his hands up in compliance with one of the instructions given to him."

"If one officer is shouting 'Hands up' and W80 is shouting 'put your hands on the dashboard' whatever Mr. Baker did was going to hit one officer or another's panic button," comments Richard Law.

Lawyers for W80, who are opposing the IOPC appeal, say police had been provided with intelligence that those involved in the plot had firearms - a 'gun' variously described as a replica Uzi machine gun or as a BB gun was

found on the floor of the car next to the back seat.

SFO W80 was investigated in 2015 following the incident after which the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) decided not to charge him with anything.

In 2019, the High Court ruled an attempt by the IOPC to launch disciplinary proceedings against him for gross misconduct was unlawful because the watchdog had applied the wrong legal test in assessing the officer's claim that he had acted in self-defence.

The court said the IOPC should have applied the criminal law test, meaning W80's belief that his life was in danger when he opened fire would not have to be judged on whether or not it was "reasonable" in the circumstances.

At the start of a three-day appeal, Counsel for the IOPC said the High Court ruling was "wrong". His legal submission says that if the judgment is allowed to stand, "firearms officers who make honest but unreasonable mistakes when using potentially lethal force cannot face any disciplinary proceedings for their conduct".

In legal documents presented to the appeal judges, Rosemary Davidson, who is representing W80, says he has a "legitimate expectation" that the criminal test for self-defence will be applied.

"It would be an abuse of power for the [IOPC] to adopt a different test at this late stage in the disciplinary process," she says. The case hadn't publicly concluded as we went to press. Ω

The SRA's VIEW

Armed policing is a fraught interaction of conflicting behaviour and limited training. The problem is that police carry arms under common law for their defence, while doing so to an arrest or a premises raid is an offensive act. If anybody else did that, the act of taking a loaded gun to where it gets used is the evidence the prosecution would rely on to demonstrate premeditation, such as in a murder case.

The training problem is officers tend to do on the street what they've been trained to do, which is to react with gunfire to the suspect's movements, whatever they may be: you can't wait for the gun to appear in most interactive video training programmes 'cos you'll lose. Next problem is police do such live ammunition training one at a time, whereas in the street there may be several of them all shouting at once and not necessarily saying the same thing; so in this case both "hands up" and "hands on the dashboard" might have been shouted.

The Met's initial instruction when approaching a vehicle used to be to identify themselves as armed police and then order the driver to throw the keys out the window. In New Hampshire, learner drivers were taught at driving school how to behave in a traffic stop - get your driving licence and the pink slip (car registration) ready and put both hands out the window to show them to the approaching officer.

On Jermaine Baker's side of the street, same as in other fatal shootings

that started with the deceased in a vehicle, there's no obvious way to demonstrate immediate compliance with the babble of shouted instructions - if there are any - especially when what happened before the shooting is included. Azelle Rodney's movements may have been related to trying to get over having just been in a car crash without his seatbelt on and Mark Duggan was fleeing a car crash until the police arranged themselves in what we refer to as the Irish firing squad position.

Those shootings come down to 'justified' because there was a gun in Azelle Rodney's car and Mark Duggan managed to throw his over a fence as he de-bussed. We didn't think prosecuting Tony Long for the Azelle Rodney shooting was either a good idea or likely to succeed – as in SFO W80's case because they were reacting to their perception of what was going on in light of the prior briefing they received.

In these shootings, the question is what would a reasonable and prudent person do, knowing what he knew at the time? Then one is looking at training limitations at the scene and the contents of the briefing beforehand. If you go back to the Jean Charles de Menezes shooting in 2007 the reasonable and prudent officers were incorrectly if not recklessly briefed he was a suicide bomber and that, to our mind, points at corporate manslaughter. We do think such a charge would have been a better runner in Azelle Rodney's demise than the murder charge on Tony Long.

In Jermaine Baker's case, armed officers have been deployed pre-emptively to engage an unknown number of suspects in a stationery vehicle with steamed up windows: so very unlikely to be about to do anything hasty themselves. Tony Long comments in his book about the adverse consequences of a senior officer ordering armed officers to take action, when waiting it out was preferable.

What three men with a dummy gun snoozing in a stolen vehicle might have done besides getting arrested for being in a stolen vehicle and prosecuted under section 19 of the Firearms Act for possession of a replica (or was it a BB?) gun in a public place can never now be known. That would have been a result and the chances are Izzet Eren's ride to court wouldn't have been interrupted anyway.

Senior police officers have been described to us by a retired Metropolitan Police constable as having 'sloping shoulders syndrome': to get to the top you have to have sloping shoulders so any slurry directed at you cascades down to the lowest available rank. That's what happened in this case; the briefing doesn't feature; all the focus is on the man on the ground.

And it's the problem: armed officers are told to expect to be treated thus and its always life-changing when it happens. And it keeps on happening because investigators aren't looking for culpability in the right place. Ω

Breona Taylor

We briefly reported the death of Ms Taylor, an emergency room technician aged 26, on 13 March 2020. She was in bed with her boyfriend Kenneth Walker in Louisville, Kentucky when three (white) plain clothed police officers used a battering ram to break into her home shortly after midnight. Mr Walker got up and engaged the intruders with his licensed handgun: firing first, his shot hit Johnathan Mattingley in the leg. Mattingley responded with six shots - according to the FBI - who annoyingly don't say where they went. Mattingley's partner on the battering ram was Myles Cosgrove; he fired 16 shots and of these 22 bullets from the two officers, five or six hit Ms Taylor while Mr Walker survived unscathed.

Meanwhile, the third officer on the search warrant, Brett Hankinson, fired ten shots into the apartment next door. This proved to be the grounds for his employment being terminated, as he fired with no clear line of sight to a valid, or indeed any, target.

Breona died of her wounds before medical attention arrived: that may have something to do with the police dismissing the stand-by ambulance an hour before effecting entry to the premises.

This sudden death emerged through the 'black lives matter' campaign – she was black – but our interest in it is because UK police have taken to turning up armed with prohibited weapons at the homes of firearm and shotgun certificate holders to make 'routine' and sometimes other enquiries or to seize firearms on the strength of the 'seizure policy' developed by police chiefs and firearms managers to separate gun owners from the peaceful enjoyment of their possessions without any judicial oversight or accountability. Certificate holders have experienced numerous encounters with armed officers, such as during the 'orderly surrender' of handguns in 1997 when they were 'covered' by armed officers while doing so and one assumes the same will happen again if or when the treasury pledge the Home Office sufficient funds for them to welch on paying out for the 'orderly surrender' of MARS rifles.

British police behaviour towards firearm and shotgun certificate holders is tailored by the Home Office 'serious violence unit' which regards all legally owned firearms in exactly the same light as possession of any firearms – all – including those held by the armed forces - are perceived as and treated as a public order risk. The problem is if armed officers are briefed to expect certificate holders to be risky or dangerous to deal with, it's only a matter of time before an armed officer mistakes an innocent movement for something sinister and shoots a certificate holder in case the briefing were real.

We monitor and review such information as emerges following the death of any suspect by police gunfire. What becomes clear is where officers are briefed to expect a suspect to be armed and dangerous, they can and

will open fire pre-emptively; justified because they are proactively defending themselves; whereupon the over-egged briefing becomes their defence.

Jean Charles de Menezes was shot on those grounds, as he was believed by pursuing officers to be a fugitive would-be suicide bomber when they ran into Stockwell underground station two weeks after the 7th July 2005 London suicide bomb attacks.

There was nothing he could have done to dissuade the police from riddling him with bullets, because they were faithful to the briefing and thought he would explode himself if they gave him the chance to. And since he was a dangerous suspect at the time, it was OK to shoot him.

The same can be said of Harry Stanley in 1999. The police believed the brief they were engaging an armed suspect, while he thought he was walking home from the pub: and then he turned to see who was shouting behind him, and that was sufficiently 'suspicious' enough to attract pre-emptive 'defensive fire' at a range of 100 yards.

Mark Duggan, killed in 2011, probably should have known the police who engaged him would have been briefed he was armed and dangerous. He got shot because, with time to respond to the moving traffic stop – he exited the vehicle and his actions – fleeing the scene - convinced police at the time he was a threat until stopped by a 9mm bullet. What he did was to exit the vehicle and when running away from one officer he ran straight at another, who fired. The bullet went through Mr Duggan and stopped against the other officer's radio.

Colin Greenwood, author of 'police tactics in armed operations' (Paladin Press 1979) said (but not in the book) the safest course of action when engaged by armed officers is to faint.

Detailed information rarely gets into the public domain when a suspect is shot and injured; it does happen, though. Stephen Waldorf was shot and wounded in January 1983. He was the unarmed front seat passenger in a yellow mini at the time: a case of mistaken identity and again, he could have done nothing to calm police nerves, as he didn't know either he was a dangerous armed suspect or that he was in a gunfight until the bullets started hitting him: or more accurately, when he woke up in hospital after the surgery to remove them.

Following the fatal shootings of two robbery suspects at the Plumstead Slaughterhouse in July 1987, we learned that before them and after Waldorf the Metropolitan Police had shot eleven other suspects; all survived and none were armed. One of them would have been Cherry Groce: shot and paralyzed in 1985 when an armed officer mistook her fleeing black female form an advancing hostile black man. The shooter 'saw' what he had been told to expect.

The backstory to the Breona Taylor assassination is police suspected Ms Taylor's ex-boyfriend Jamarcus Glover had used her address for drugs

deliveries (he said it was clothes he had delivered there) and it seems they didn't know he was no longer her beau; she having dumped him. The relationship started in 2016 and their last telephone contact was in February 2020. Mr Glover was arrested the same night on the same warrant and declined to name Ms Taylor as a co-defendant in proceedings against him, despite being 'leaned on' to do so.

And therein a clue: they picked him up the same night on the same warrant – so the officers on the raid knew he wasn't at the address. Crashing in with a battering ram during the hours of darkness to an apartment they believed to be occupied by a woman alone was a 'shock and awe' tactic: a form of terrorism.

Three armed white men doing this after dismissing medical backup and without a female officer present to search the 'suspect'; nor any uniformed officer to enable the occupant to identify the intruders as law enforcement seems to us to be inviting the disaster this incident became.

The officers didn't know about the current boyfriend being there and legally armed. No drugs were found on the premises, but the district attorney watered it down when he said the search authorized by the warrant did not take place following the shooting, thus to 'suggest' there might have been something to find. Mr Walker was charged with the attempted murder of the officer he shot. The case has been dropped, as it would have been in the UK if the court hearing it followed common law.

Our interest in this case is that plain clothed officers forced entry to a private home during the hours of darkness and shot up the occupants. In Louisville, Kentucky, as here, the 'problem' bringing armed officers up against law-abiding members of the public is 'intelligence': it's the over-egged briefings and speculative search warrant applications that set the train of events on the path leading to the death or wounding of a 'suspect' in the comfort of his or her own home.

In the UK, search warrants tend to be served at dawn, or at least in the hours of daylight. We think this is a tried and tested modus operandi, which works; more policemen are on duty in the daytime than at night, so rounding up extra bodies from other duties is easier; and detectives don't do unsocial hours in the UK.

The Kray twins were arrested in dawn raids on the 7 May 1968 – dawn that day being shortly before 5am. Stone's Justices Manual (1907) differentiates between day and night in the context of search warrants thus; ***"the search should be made in the daytime, if there be probable suspicion only, but where there is positive proof, the warrant may be executed in the night-time (Crozier v Cundey 1827).*** Moriarty's 'police law' (Butterworth's 1929) says warrants to search for stolen goods should be served in the daytime and can be both applied for and served on a Sunday, while 'the police officer's assistant' (1954) is silent about day and night

but indicates a warrant of commitment or in respect of arrears under a bastardy or wife maintenance order must not be executed on a Sunday and must be in the possession of the constables executing the warrant. The five-volume 'Book for Police' (1958) is likewise silent on the question of timing. Overall, common law was suspicious of the whole warrant business a hundred years ago and much has changed (legislatively) since.

Stephen's Commentaries gets quoted in the 1907 Stone's Justices Manual in the context of murder; ***"if any person attempts….to break open a house in the nighttime and is killed in such attempt…. the slayer shall be acquitted and discharged."*** 'Any person' would presumably include a police officer. John Hurst, who served 30 years in the Metropolitan Police said the first one through the door was at risk if there were an armed response. In R. v. Geogiades (1989) a charge of possessing a firearm with intent to endanger life was quashed. He'd pointed his shotgun at intruders and stopped threatening them when they identified themselves as police. As an unchartered chemist, his initial thoughts related to protecting his stash.

We went to vintage reference books in search of any common law custom and practice around warrants and found none, but in consideration of the 'daylight principle' there are some anecdotes to introduce. In the 1986 case in Essex where the Bamber family were massacred in their own home, Jeremy Bamber alerted police to the incident happening and then met officers at the scene during the hours of darkness. The police would not attempt to enter the premises until dawn. Our 'interpretation' of this is any intruder onto private property during the hours of darkness is fair game for an armed householder, as per the reference in Stephen's Commentaries and the 1924 decision Rex v Hussey.

But not once they break off the attack, as Tony Martin discovered.

In 1989, the burglar alarm went off in the Liverpool Pistol Club and various committee members responded, but weren't allowed in until dawn, when an armed Merseyside police unit preceded them to 'sweep' the premises.

Back in 1983, the Metropolitan Police were searching for fugitive David Martin, a persistent escaper who was known to have handguns on account of his having used them in his hasty December 1982 departure from custody. The police trailed Susan Stephens, suspected (or assumed) to be his girlfriend. She picked up Stephen Waldorf, who was superficially similar to David Martin (blond curly hair) and as the officers closed with her yellow mini while it waited at traffic lights, Waldorf dropped his spliff and bent forwards to pick it up. An innocent movement persuaded the three officers to open fire, hitting Waldorf with five of the fifteen rounds they pumped into the vehicle. They stopped shooting after 15 rounds because they each had a five-shot revolver and no further ammunition.

In Louisville, Kentucky, the opaque reportage doesn't include details such as what arms the officers had or who hit what with their gunfire – apart from Brett Hankinson – who hit a patio door, a window, the closed blinds behind them and next door's apartment; nor is it clear how 22 shots entering the apartment found Breona five (or six, depends on which report one reads) times while missing the armed and provenly hostile co-occupant altogether.

If we translate the Breona Taylor search warrant visitation to the UK, we expect the raid to have been at dawn, or at least in the hours of daylight, with at least one uniformed officer present and at least one female officer or matron present to search a female suspect. Forced entry can be authorised by a magistrate – it's to secure evidence occupants might otherwise have time to destroy.

And that brings us back to the over-egged briefing scenario. In Breona Taylor's case, the expectation seems to be she would be home alone. They knew where her erstwhile boyfriend was to be found: so they turn up using shock and awe tactics, without anybody who can search a female suspect in the middle of the night and expect it all to go all right? Ω

US SUPREME COURT MATTERS

In the run up to the US Presidential election in November 2020, John R Lott Jr. provided a detailed consideration of what might appear to outsiders as a fringe issue: that of appointing a judge to the United States Supreme Court. The court has nine judges, who sit for life. Ruth Bader Ginsberg died in September 2020 creating a vacancy and choosing a successor to the post is the President's job.

In the bipolar world of American politics a president will nominate someone whose track record suggests empathy with his views and those of his party. This seems to be fairly easy to divine, given the gulf fixed between the two wings of American politics. One searches in vain for the fuselage.

Gun control is one of those wedge issues dividing the Union. Simplistically, Republicans support the second amendment right to keep and bear arms while Democrats favour controls, restrictions or limitations on ownership.

Gun owners are a minority in the United States. It is said around one in four Americans owns a firearm while 3% of the population own half the guns in circulation. Gun ownership is a broad church, ranging from sporting hobbyists to a central core of Americans outside the military who have guns for defensive purposes – law enforcement, security guards and those who own guns to defend their selves and homes against attack – to a right wing of anything but well-regulated (and mostly white) far-right militias.

Pausing to think for a moment; most Americans can, like most Brits, pass through their lives in peace without having anything to do with guns, police, drugs, violent crime, abortion or any of the other issues that become critical in American political debates. It

was ever thus: readers with long memories or a history channel subscription will be familiar with the polarisation in American society a century ago on the subject of drinking intoxicating liquor.

To start at the beginning, America was founded (white America anyway) by religious dissidents emigrating there in the early 1600s to escape the confines of the embryonic and still developing Church of England. 'Organised' religion had, since the time of Constantine the Great (AD272-337) been a tool of governmental social control (and the cause of more unnatural deaths than any other cause besides the Mongol expansion) and the Church of England's 'control' position was one needed the intercession of an ordained priest via his absolution and Holy Communion to achieve a state of grace with the Lord.

The Pilgrim Fathers and subsequent think-a-likes believed a state of grace with God could be achieved without the intercession of an ordained priest. These 'puritans' had (negative) views about the pleasures of life – Oliver Cromwell's tenure as a military dictator in Britain saw theatres closed, bear-baiting banned and the feast of Christmas reduced to just Christmas. Puritans didn't drink intoxicating liquor although what counted as such is a muddle.

America's British white settlers took abstinence with them – Native Americans didn't drink anyway – and sent tobacco products back. French and Spanish settlers took grapevines with them and later German immigrants took with them the knowledge of brewing.

By the end of the 19th century, beer drinking was very popular and the industrial quantity brewers were primarily German-American dynasties. The temperance movement grew as the brewing industry – or more accurately its advertising – grew and the brewers had to become a political lobby to defend their industry.

And they were big; breweries owned the bars, which were political hotbeds, employments exchanges, union meeting houses and where the ballot box was during elections.

The Great War had a considerable impact on the brewing industry - because of their German names – and the temperance movement won in 1919 with a national prohibition on the production and sale of alcoholic beverages in 1920 passed as the 18th Amendment.

The unintended consequences of imposing rural puritanical values on the urban majority who didn't have abstinence anywhere in their genes was the opportunity it afforded organised crime to flout the ban and give the people what they wanted. The 21st Amendment to repeal the 18th Amendment passed in 1933 and reduced organised crime to serve the much smaller demand in certain niche markets, such as gambling and prostitution.

Thus America nationally see-sawed from one extreme to another. There are still local 'dry' areas on a county by county basis; that trend had been developing before the national ban

kicked in and continues to this day. And it's not uniquely American. The fifteen counties of Wales were 'dry' on Sundays from 1881 and periodic referrals to the public saw gradual shifts until 1996 when a referendum saw most go 'wet'. The law was repealed in this century to spare supermarkets the 'uncertainty' that a potential change of policy perpetually hangs over interested parties.

We could write a book about that – on the firearms/antiques see-saw – but an article elsewhere will suffice on this occasion.

In a recent BBC Radio 4 programme 'two minutes past nine' journalist Leah Sottile explored Timothy McVeigh's bombing of the Alfred P Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on 19 April 1995: drawing a thread through prior events and influences and introducing gentle Radio 4 listeners to America's militia, such as 'the Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord' or CSA for short.

This band of interesting people blended a Christian identity of some sort with survivalism and preparedness for whatever came over the horizon hostile to their beliefs. Their relevance to Leah Sottile's thesis was the plan McVeigh executed was one they'd talked about and been gaoled for talking about some years before he actually did it.

19 April 1995 was the second anniversary of the end (in flames) of the siege of the Branch Davidian sect's compound near Waco, Texas. The siege started when the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms attempted to serve a search warrant on the sect, who were ready for them (tipped off by the press) and what started as federal authorities showing off their might and storming the place deteriorated into a firefight in which four ATF officers were killed. No clear evidence of any federal offence subsequently emerged, and no Branch Davidians were prosecuted, as they all died in the incident.

The year before, federal authorities had tried to arrest Randy Weaver at his Ruby Ridge, Idaho, home for failing to appear in court on firearms charges. There was a gunfight in which Deputy U.S. Marshal W F Degan, and Randy Weaver's 14-year-old son Sammy were killed. During the siege, an FBI sniper shot and killed Randy's wife Vicki, while missing the child she was holding in her arms at the time. The siege ended with Randy's surrender. He was subsequently acquitted of all the charges laid on him – including the murder of Marshal Degan - except for the original bail violation that brought the heavily armed authorities to his door in the first place.

McVeigh's bomb exposed the real detachment of the right wing quasi militia from the core principle of volunteer warriors in a free society – which is the obligation to turn out *in support of the government* when circumstances demand it, *or when the government requests them to do so*. McVeigh, the CSA and such had lost their understanding of that basic obligation and sought to enforce a principle that they weren't responsible to any government. What they called

'freedom' is defined in the dictionary as 'anarchy'. It was the beginning of the end of extremist outfits in the 1990s.

America's right would make a comeback in due course and in various guises, seeking to enforce their 'rights' not to be loyal to their government. A far cry from when Jimi Hendrix played the national anthem at Woodstock on the last day, to remind everyone that you can love your country and hate your government at the same time.

Randy Weaver was, like the Mormons before him, a separatist rather than an extremist. A man who wanted to live his life in reclusive seclusion and as it turned out he wasn't doing anything wrong in doing so. Except missing a court appointment.

The Branch Davidians seem to have gone to some lengths to stay within the law: all the circumstantial evidence to the contrary assembled in the ATF's 67-page search warrant didn't include any allegation of a violation of any Texas law – nor any federal law either and thus didn't establish any lawful ground for their intrusion. They suspected the sect were acting lawfully, so they must be hiding something. The document contains no locus for the federal authorities to act on: it was intended as a lucky dip search or a shock and awe smack in the face for the sect.

It matters to us when federal authorities take violent action with fatal consequences against people who it seems weren't doing anything wrong, because the same thing happens here in the UK and now that some police forces are routinely using armed officers to carry out firearm certificate renewal enquiries it's only a matter of time before someone gets shot here for having a firearm certificate.

In seemingly going 'over the top', particularly in Randy Weaver's case, the authorities are following the trail blazed by their forebears during prohibition. Enforcing the unenforceable lead federal authorities into committing criminal acts on an 'end justifies the means' basis. That also happens in the UK now the police are routinely using the unlawful 'seizure policy' to grab guns from certificate holders who have no way to challenge such violations of firearms law and the Human Rights Act.

John R Lott Jr. takes the view that the Second Amendment is hanging in the balance, and Trump's Supreme Court nomination of 7th Circuit Judge Amy Coney Barrett is thought to be to the right of centre. At the first senate hearing, much was made of her not saying which way she'd go on abortion rights – another 'wedge' issue. She stuck rigidly to the protocol we expect of judges – she would consider the evidence if a case came before her and vote in the Supreme Court according to the evidence.

We have our own opinions about the abortion issue and have long since learned to keep them to ourselves. What separates the extremes is the rights of the pregnant woman on the one hand and the rights of the unborn child on the other: any favouritism one way or the other highlights the

resultant doctrine of competing harms.

Politicians struggle with that concept – weighing the evidence and following its lead. In American politics, certain wedge-issue areas of law seem to be up for reversals: it depends on the make-up of the supreme court bench at the time. A somewhat right wing or conservative supreme court ruled in favour of the 2nd Amendment right to keep and bear arms in the Heller case in 2008, while President Elect Joe Biden has indicated opposition to that position and the court itself has avoided the issue for a decade.

The US Supreme Court opted for women's rights over those of the unborn child in the 1973 case Roe v Wade. In both cases the opposite wing of politics wants to see the court reverse its decision in their wing's favour. More immediately, if the outcome of the presidential election continues to hang in the judicial balance after we stop writing this issue, having gotten Amy Coney Barrett in place before the election started swings the court Donald Trump's way. At her second hearing, democrats boycotted it, paving the way to her appointment.

American politicians have to nail their colours to the mast on these wedge issues. At a town hall event in New Hampshire in September, Joe Biden was asked whether he agreed that the Second Amendment protects an individual's right to own guns. Biden made it clear enough that he would overturn the court's Heller and McDonald decisions: "If I were on the court, I wouldn't have made the same ruling." Interesting place to make that observation, New Hampshire: a low-crime state where half the (mostly white) adult population have concealed carry permits to keep it that way.

John R Lott Jr. tells us the Supreme Court considered 10 Second Amendment cases in 2020 but declined to hear any of them. Four Republican-appointed justices clearly care about enshrining the right to self-defence, but probably feared Chief Justice John Roberts would side with the liberal justices. Roberts did so in cases concerning religious freedom, immigration, and Obamacare.

The lower circuit courts in states controlled by Democrats (with jurisdiction over 24 states, plus D.C.) have approved even the most draconian state gun control regulations. These courts have upheld the refusals of California, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, and New Jersey to recognize that people have a right to self-defence *outside* of their homes. States such as California and Illinois require residents to pay $400 to $1,000- plus to get concealed-carry permits, putting gun ownership out of reach for minorities in high-crime neighbourhoods. Illinois now completely bars non-residents from carrying. (We used to carry there on New Hampshire permits to take part in the Second Chance fest – Ed)

No gunmaker has figured out yet how to meet California's requirement for micro- stamping — a technology by

which firing pins would in theory imprint a unique, identifying code on each shell casing, which reminds us of previous legislative forays into the micro-management of the firearms industry: such as the misunderstanding of Glock's polymer frames which led to a prohibition on guns not made substantially of metal. You couldn't make it up. Ω

RUMBLES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Tim Bonner of the Countryside Alliance reminds us 'Wild Justice' rated a mention in shooting magazines last year, made famous because they threatened the legal action that caused Natural England to withdraw General Licences for the control of avian pest species. A bit of bureaucratic re-jigging later and the licenses were back, slightly re-worded to by-pass the 'Wild Justice' threat.

This year, Tim Bonner reports the same group has been pursuing another Judicial Review – this time of DEFRA's policy on allowing the release of pheasants and red-legged partridges on or near Special Protected Areas (SPAs). Wild Justice argued that the Government could not be sure the release of gamebirds was not causing damage to SPAs and under the 'precautionary principle' enshrined in EU law that their release should therefore be prohibited on SPAs or within 5km of them as the failure of Natural England to carry out assessments and monitoring of SPAs which could have provided the necessary information on which it could have acted to prevent any damage.

The Government changed its position in October and said that it would introduce an interim licensing scheme for the release of pheasants and red-legged partridges on or within 500m of an SPA until assessments had been completed and a monitoring program put in place. In light of this, Wild Justice have indicated their intention to withdraw their case. The Government will now consult on its proposals.

Wild Justice will probably claim this as a victory but in reality it is very likely that little will change in practical terms for shoots on or near SPA's that are operating to best practice, and there is little evidence any are not. The Government has suggested that there will be a General Licence with release densities based on GWCT guidance. All that Wild Justice will have achieved is another layer of bureaucracy and an awful lot of wasted Government time and resource at a time when it has plenty of more important priorities. This is exactly what happened last year when the only practical impact of Wild Justice's legal challenge on General Licences was that farmers and conservationists were not able to manage corvids and other species during the crucial Spring period, and the General Licences were subsequently reinstated by Defra in an almost identical form to those that were withdrawn.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that Wild Justice is fundamentally a vehicle for pursuing

the prejudices - and polishing the egos of - its principal members - Chris Packham and Mark Avery. They have identified what is, from their perspective, a rich legal seam created by an unholy conjunction of EU legislation and Natural England's failures. This allows them to make mischief in the courts even if it simply means that the Government has to find alternative routes to delivering the same policy result.

Further legal challenges therefore seem inevitable unless the law, especially on issues like the precautionary principle, is changed. The irony is that the really significant impact of Wild Justice's legal activism may well be that it forces the Government to consider divergence of UK law from EU environmental legislation after the UK leaves the EU: which was what the people who voted 'leave' had in mind all along.

Another 'issue' that is sure to come up is lead shot. The EU are pressing ahead with a general ban, which the UK government doesn't want to. An 'independent' lobby in the UK are pressing for a lead shot ban while cartridge manufacturers are against it. Ω

NB. At the time of writing, the Home Office are predicting their changes to the definition of antiques will add 26,000 antique firearms to certificates – an increase of 6.5% on firearms held.

Previous changes attracted only a tiny proportion of owners to bring their 'off-ticket' possessions into the controls. An estimated 1% of air cartridge revolver owners applied for firearm certificates in 2004; that didn't increase the number of certificate holders as none of those applicants who didn't already hold a firearm certificate was granted one – so far as we can tell.

In 1968, 600,000 people applied for shotgun certificates, representing about a quarter of owners. The legislation didn't schedule the guns held, which didn't feature on the application form either, and much of the 'increase' in certificate numbers up until 1988 is attributed to people belatedly finding out that they needed one. Ω

Air 'weapon' 'Licensing' in Scotland

Back in 2015, the Scottish government was firmly set on the path of creating a licensing system for air guns in Scotland, while largely misunderstanding what they were blundering into. At the time, there were thought to be about 200,000 air guns in Scotland, and we thought it was time we had a look at what happened.

They'd already designed the paperwork and designated the forms with the initials AWL before they realized that they couldn't create a 'licence' if they wanted to ape firearms controls: it had to be a certificate. And so it came to pass: the Scots got air weapon certificates via the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015.

The term 'licence' crept in because part 2 of the Act is all about alcohol *licensing.* In the same vein, police firearms departments call themselves

licensing departments because they deal with explosives *licenses.* Or used to; they're called certificates in the 2014 regulations.

The Scottish government left their 'AWL' codes in place but use the word 'certificate' 189 times in their guidebook. They still use 'licence' six times and 'licensing' 70 times, but mainly when quoting legislation that incorporates the word.

The controls themselves are largely a clone of firearm certificate controls, but adapted in places and *sans* the more recent Home Office obsession with medicals. The fee is payable on application, for example and while most of the 'conditions' shadow those used on firearm certificates there is no such thing as an approved air gun range in Scotland. Nor is there in the rest of the UK – the army stopped the Range Safety certificate programme in 2006 because the Home Office had rendered it obsolete.

The term 'weapon' is used generically in 'air weapons' to encompass them all. Pedants dislike it but 'gun' means, according to where you were brought up, either a smooth bore gun, such as a shotgun or a cannon on wheels with a maximum barrel elevation of 45 degrees. 'Rifle' excludes smooth bores (except in the Home Office definition) and a lot of early air guns (hence 'guns') were intended for use with darts and thus didn't have rifling.

There is a distinction between pistols and rifles to be found in the Firearms (Especially Dangerous) Air Weapons Rules: pistols have a maximum power output of 6 foot pounds or the French equivalent while rifles can do 12 foot pounds. Besides the power output, the rules are silent as to how to tell one from another.

The 'transitional' arrangement for air weapon owners was that applications for certificates were accepted from 1 July 2016 and owners had to apply before 31 December 2016 when the hammer came down. That said, late take-up is possible, as the application form didn't ask any applicant for details of what he has – or intends to acquire. New certificates were not necessarily issued for five year terms, thus to avoid a traffic jam in 2021 and interestingly, provided a certificate holder applies for renewal in good time next year, his old certificate continues in force until the new one arrives: however long that takes.

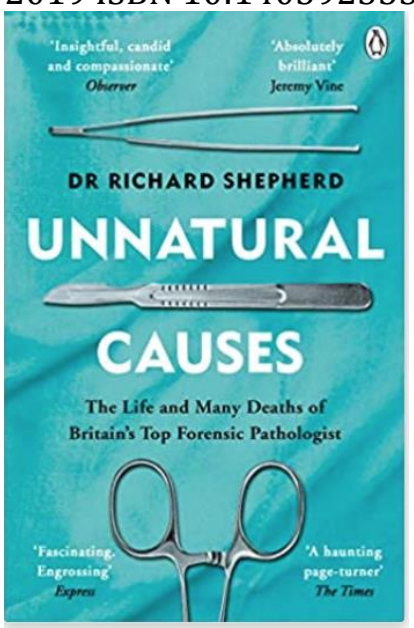
The Scottish air weapon certificate is a 'fit person' certificate covering any number of air weapons, limited only by the holder's capacity to safely (i.e. securely) store them. The weapons are not scheduled on the certificates making it impossible to know how many of the 200,000 air weapons in Scotland are currently being held by the 29,769 successful applicants (334 applications were refused).

Police Scotland don't keep records of air weapons handed in – if they're anything like West Yorkshire they'll have been recorded as firearms seized – but they did tell us in an FOI request that 690 were surrendered in a two-week campaign in 2018.

There is no provision in the transitional arrangements for people who didn't find out about the requirement in time to apply late, but a lot of these applications were made after the cut off date because anyone holding a firearm or shotgun certificate doesn't need to apply for the air weapon certificate until their existing certificate is due for renewal: so we won't have the total number of applications in until the end of next year.

The current numbers pan out to an average of six per certificate, which suggests a much higher compliance rate than the Home Office have ever achieved with changes to UK law and is probably a reflection of the much greater publicity the licensing scheme was given in Scotland. The only topic to get more airtime is the campaign for yet another referendum. Having lost two, the SNP seem intent on making it the best of five. Ω

Unnatural Causes by Dr Richard Shepherd. Published by Penguin in 2019 ISBN 10:1405923539



At 464 pages in paperback it's a bumper read. Dr Shepherd trained in medicine at St George's Hospital medical school in London and completed his postgraduate training as a forensic pathologist in 1987, whereupon he joined the forensic department at Guy's Hospital under Dr Iain West.

It was a phase of multiple death incidents; in his own words, ***"In the late 1980s the UK saw a series of disasters which claimed many lives. Few if any of these disasters could exactly be called an accident. They almost all exposed major systems failures. Or maybe this was a period when post-war values of self-reliance were morphing into conflicting interests of self and state. Certainly, attitudes were changing as the population grew and the systems we relied on had to increase in size and complexity. In March 1987 the car and passenger ferry Herald of Free Enterprise capsized outside the Belgian port of Zeebrugge because the bow door had been left open: 193 passengers and crew died. In August 1987 Michael Ryan went on a killing spree and shot thirty-one people in Hungerford before killing himself*** (The only incident on this list not to have been subject to judicial scrutiny. Ed)***. In November 1987 a lighted match dropped down through an escalator on the Piccadilly line at King's Cross, causing a fire that claimed the lives of thirty-one people and injured a hundred more. In July 1988 the Piper Alpha oil rig in the North Sea blew up, killing 167 men.***

On 12 December 1988 three trains collided due to signal failure just outside Clapham Junction. Thirty-five passengers died and more than four hundred were injured, sixty-nine of them very severely. Later that month a bomb planted on a Pan Am jumbo jet exploded over the Scottish town of Lockerbie, killing all 259 people on board and eleven on the ground. Less than three weeks later, on 8 January 1989, an engine fault developed in a British Midland Boeing 737 which, compounded with pilot error, brought down the plane on the embankment of the M1, just short of the runway at East Midlands Airport. Of 126 people on board, forty-seven died and seventy-four suffered serious injury. In April 1989 ninety-six Liverpool football fans were crushed to death and more than seven hundred were injured at Hillsborough stadium in Sheffield. It was only in 2016 that a second inquest ruled the victims were unlawfully killed due to gross negligence: the police, ambulance services and safety standards at the stadium were all criticized. In August 1989 a collision between a pleasure boat and a dredger in the Thames claimed the lives of fifty-one people, most of them under the age of thirty. Each event shocked the nation. Each resulted eventually in significant improvements, when emotions were calmer and the often multiple, interconnected causes had been unravelled and analysed. Ancient systems were overhauled, the health-and-safety culture blossomed – some might say exploded – employers began to recognize the importance of training, of corporate and state attitudes to risk and responsibility. These areas had suddenly become more serious and security was no longer just a managerial afterthought but a necessity."

Dr West took his summer holiday in August, so it was Richard Shepherd who got the call about multiple shootings in Hungerford on the 19th: much to his boss's chagrin. He introduces himself as the forensic pathologist who copped that case – and name drops repeatedly thereafter (Diana, Princess of Wales – at the Stevens Inquiry; Stephen Lawrence, Harold Shipman, Rachel Nickell: and many involved in the above list), while filling in the background of his growing up in a one parent family, the years of training for the job he got: inspired, he says by reading a third edition of Professor Keith Simpson's 'Forensic Medicine' that one of his friends brought into school.

That book is still around, now in its 14th edition: reworked and updated by others (Richard Shepherd did the 12th) and the mortuary photos thus sanitised for the 21st century: which is why early editions are sought after. Keith Simpson (1907-85) also wrote '40 years of murder' and handled quite a few famous cases. He probably holds the record for the number of post-mortems he was presented with at one time, as his biggest case was the 173 people crushed to death at Bethnal Green tube station in 1943: panicked by the noise of a newly installed anti-

aircraft rocket Z battery opening fire in Victoria Park.

Hungerford remains Dr Shepherd's record – 17 bodies at one time. He dealt with the murderer first to get him out of the presence of his victims. As there was no public enquiry, any insight into that case is sought after by the shooting community who inadvertently became its victims: not so much of the murderer but of the political consequences. We learn little from Dr Shepherd: he confirms that the murderer committed suicide and that he'd shot his mother down at a distance and then closed to shoot her twice in the back.

Other than that, he comments that Michael Ryan seems to have fired on his longer range victims with single shots while firing multiple shots at closer range victims and in making that observation he may not be correct. Ryan was inexperienced with the firearms he'd bought on the strength of joining a commercial club of the sort that wouldn't have been a 'good reason' for owning firearms at all until the Home Office made it so by their policy shift in 1969.

Until then, commercial ranges were shooting galleries where patrons either took their own firearms or used 'club' guns. In seeking to prevent that casual access to firearms, the unpublished and restricted 1969 guidance to police introduced a condition for firearm certificates that guns held on the certificate for target shooting could only be used on MoD approved ranges.

That change stopped firearm certificate holders using commercial ranges until the range proprietors went through the bureaucracy of creating a club, adopting a constitution and affiliating their club to the NRA as a route to getting an army range safety certificate. The unintended consequence was that casual users of commercial ranges became, without the social checks and balances provided by proper clubs, members of a club that was a good reason for getting their own firearm certificates.

Most 'proper' clubs could trace their pedigree back to those volunteer rifle regiments raised in Victorian times to keep Napoleon III on his side of *La Manche*. Despite that objective, these were social clubs and their annual meeting on Wimbledon Common (the first one opened by Queen Victoria in 1860; moved to Bisley after 1894) became a fixture in the social calendar, as that was where every eligible bachelor with sufficient income to buy his own fancy uniform and rifle would be – coincidentally in the same season as debs came out to play. A bunch of later clubs were Home Guard units, who adjusted to being rifle clubs for the same reasons: preparedness for defending the realm, while having a

good time in the social company of their like-minded peer group. The commercial clubs had none of that.
The police only paid lip service to their duty to check firearm certificate applicants, according to Jan A Stevenson (he joined the Oxford Pistol Club in 1974) because the police trusted the clubs to only put suitable people forwards and while traditional clubs did that, commercial clubs didn't. The police said it was their responsibility to decide who got one and the commercial clubs left them to it.

The police thus approved Michael Ryan for possessing firearms without him having gone through any process of training or mentoring that a probationary member of a proper club would; and he would never have lasted in such a club anyway. He fired multiple shots at all his victims and the further away they were, the fewer bullets found their mark.

Back to Dr Shepherd's book, 23,000 post mortems took their toll on his mental health and ended his marriage. Writing the book was cathartic for him – lots of self-analysis as well as in-depth reviews of the other traumas in his life. His Mum died when he was nine and years later Dad produced the postmortem report and asked the now qualified Richard to explain it. Which he did. Later in the book, he gets told off by a registrar for opening the sealed envelope containing the notes for death registration from the doctor who attended his father at his end. The rather unsympathetic registrar insisted upon recording the cause of death with the doctor's spelling mistake: unwilling to be corrected by the next of kin whoever he was. It amuses the author that his Dad is the only one in medical history to have died of what the registrar wrote.

A very entertaining writer, Dr Shepherd flicks from one extreme to another; discussing his emotional baggage as he climbs the greasy pole of his trade while not pulling his weight domestically: abandoning the family for a call-out when he was supposed to childmind while his wife studied. There's the incident where he took his son with him to wait in the car while he did a post-mortem on the south coast; so that they could take a walk along the cliffs afterwards.

The official at the mortuary thought leaving the kid in the car was child abuse and took him into the office *through* where Dr Shepherd was wielding the knife. His son didn't seem to mind much, such as when he entered Dad's study without knocking and found Dr Shepherd attacking a pillow with a knife. Dad had to explain that he was trying to figure how wounds in a particular case had been caused and could it have been this way or that?

Half an hour later, he comes back with his small sister; "Dad, we think we've got it…" and while they explain Mum walks in and icily reminds the good author that she leaves her work at the hospital. In between these family anecdotes we get three pages of the minutiae of understanding infant deaths and the differences death

makes to a baby as the corruption of all flesh stalks the tiny remains.

A call out west to what seems a routine death at a traffic accident becomes more than that when he is introduced to the heavyweight detective brass at the mortuary on a Sunday. The deceased had crashed his car, got out and lit a cigarette, got in a row with a pedestrian who tried to stop him lighting up because of the spilled fuel on the ground and then died.

Dr Shepherd identifies damage to the guy's neck caused by the crash as the cause of death – to the relief of the brass, as the pedestrian involved was an off-duty police officer and their concern was whether his actions had played any part in the casualty's death.

Professionally, Shepherd wants to both identify the knives that caused the wounds he sees on his slab, such as when Stephen Lawrence was before him AND understand the dynamics of the incident in which those wounds were caused. Sharp instruments seem to feature in the bulk of his unnatural cause's portfolio. Gradually, another kind of death features in his work – deaths in police custody – and with the 'black lives matter' campaign still active, his findings in these deaths are significant.

But hear some of that in his own words: "***Even today most lay people probably think that constricting the neck simply cuts off the air supply. But we know that asphyxiation alone can't always be the cause because some victims die very quickly from pressure on the neck. In fact, a few die almost instantly, giving no signs of classic asphyxia. And even those who do show those signs have generally died too quickly for lack of oxygen to be the sole cause…compression of the jugular vein – here in the neck – will increase venous pressure in the head to an unbearable extent – that's what turns some victims blue. Pressure on the carotid arteries, here, means the victim will rapidly lose consciousness as blood supply to the brain is cut off. But strangling can also put pressure on the nerves of the neck, which then can affect the parasympathetic nervous system. This controls the bodily processes we don't really think about, like digestion. One of the main nerves in this system is the vagal nerve and you can die instantly from neck pressure, which, via a complicated mechanism, instructs the vagal nerve to simply stop the heart beating. It's a reflex reaction.'***

This extract is in the context of restraint techniques applied to people who the Home Office were having deported. Dead bodies turn up in the mortuary wearing a heavy leather belt that has handcuffs bolted to it. One woman had four metres of sticky tape wrapped round her mouth – after she'd spat at officers – and in the heavy exertion of fighting for her life, she simply couldn't get enough oxygen into her body through her nose alone. She had sickle cell trait and the way that reduces the oxygen supply to the body anyway seems to him one of the reasons why a disproportionate

number of deaths in police or immigration custody die during a physical struggle. “I can’t breathe,” as one recent victim got time to mention.

You can test this yourself. Take a slug of mouthwash and see how long you can go while exercising moderately without having to spit it out. You probably won’t make it through a four-minute shower.

He became involved in training those who find it necessary to manhandle other people in safer ways of doing it but doesn’t feel he got much credit for that. No, he finds that he’s better remembered for other cases. Lampooned for his reconstruction of the Rachel Nickell murder, he was ignored when he got a similar victim on his slab because as far as the police were concerned, they’d got their man and he was in custody.

Then there was the matter of the missing hands. When the *Marchioness* collided with a dredger fifty-one people went to Davy Jones locker. And gradually returned from it in varying stages of decomposition, which he discusses in such detail you can smell what it was like doing the post-mortems. Doctors engaged in that work carve up the bodies and take samples. Mortuary staff put everything back in the chest cavity and prepare the bodies for undertakers to remove to their final resting places.

Bodies that have been in water for any length of time show that off and the Thames isn’t only water; it’s a fast moving salty tidal river full of hard obstacles (like bridge buttresses and propeller blades) and constrictions that make it quite deadly. Those who died that night were dead in a matter of minutes, but only gradually made it to the mortuary over a period of weeks. It was a complicated job identifying the bodies to be sure that every bereaved family got the right corpse and part of the process was to fingerprint the bodies.

Since fingerprinting was specialized work in the case of people who’d been in the river for long (you know what your fingers look like after an hour in the swimming pool) the hands were amputated and sent off for fingerprinting. And then the press found out. Normally – if we can use such a word here – the hands would be processed and returned to the bodies where mortuary staff were skilled at reassembling the remains before bereaved relatives viewed them.

Dr Shepherd has always favoured bereaved relatives viewing bodies if they want to, whatever their condition, and after suitable preparation. This wasn’t allowed for some reason in the *Marchioness* case, which raised relatives’ suspicions and then the missing hands episode stuck firmly to his CV for eleven years until Lord Justice Clarke’s non-statutory inquiry exonerated his profession.

A few pages on his children’s growing up, the millennium, giving up smoking, buying a retreat on the Isle of Man, resuming flying and a lot of meetings for planning – more brainstorming really – for how London would cope with an emergency get interrupted by the 2001 attack on New York, which he watched on live

television. Nine days later he was there; partly to help, but also to clean off the Americans that which might help London prepare for something big.

Here's a few of his words on the aftermath; ***"Finally, in 2015, 1,637 victims had been identified, accounting for just 60 per cent of those believed to have died: the others had become dust, as all bodies must. Now there are plans to turn Fresh Kills*** (to where the rubble was taken and sifted twice for human remains) ***into one of the world's largest urban parks. An anthropologist friend who worked sifting through the debris was, like many others involved in the disaster, traumatized by it. After months of sieving for bits of human tissue and bone she developed a horror of flying. When she returned to the UK, before boarding her flight she wrote her name on every part of her body, every single limb, in case the plane crashed and she was dismembered."***

The 2005 London bombings on a bus and three underground trains became the first test of the developed mass-disaster plan they signed off only a few days before it happened. He hoped by having a plan, they wouldn't be called upon to implement it. Bodies were taken to a temporary clearing mortuary on the Honourable Artillery Company's playing fields – the most valuable rugby pitch on Planet Earth and holes appeared in the plan soon after.

Relatives of the *Marchioness* victims had criticised the full post-mortems carried out on their loved ones as unnecessary, since the cause of death was obvious and in consideration of that, post-mortems were not carried out on the 7/7 bombing victims. Then their relatives accused the emergency services of causing some deaths by the delays in getting help to the injured parties. Without having conducted full post-mortems, Dr Shepherd couldn't comment either way. He does say ambulance crews can't go into harm's way and they'd been told to wait in case there were further bombs. (The delay was for Geiger counters to be brought from Lippits Hill to check if the bombs had been 'dirty bombs' – Ed)

As the book brings us up to more recent times, pathology got privatized; dumped by the universities for not publishing enough academically: instead of getting paid by universities as lecturers, Dr Shepherd et al now have to bill the police, courts etc for their services.

Some cases keep coming back to bite participants. One such was the murder of Rachel Nickell, for which Colin Stagg was convicted. Dr Shepherd commented when examining another slasher victim – Samantha Bisset – she looked like Rachel Nickell had in a passing comment ignored by police – but eventually Colin Stagg was acquitted, and Robert Napper convicted of both murders. He was already in Broadmoor by the time this was put together.

Sally Clark's conviction was overturned on appeal and rebounded on Sir Roy Meadow who'd given the chances of having two Sudden Infant

Deaths in the same household as 1 in 73 million. The GMC struck him off. He was over 70 by the time they reinstated him.

And then one of his 'SIDS' cases came back to haunt him. Baby Noah turned into the catalyst for his PTSD overtaking him while the General Medical Council investigated him. And then dropped it.

Many 'what might have beens' and he kept the biggest until last. Diana, Princess of Wales, died of injuries sustained in a car crash in Paris in 1997. If she and Dodi had put their seatbelts on, she'd have survived. The only one of the four in the car to have been wearing a seatbelt was her close protection officer. He survived getting squashed by her cannoning into the back of his seat as the air bag blew up in his face.

Her injuries included a small internal bleed that went undetected at the scene where she was treated second, being apparently the less seriously injured of the two survivors.

His retrospect at the end of his career and looking back, is how we've changed: thin was as normal in the 1980s as obesity is now. Tattoos and piercings are common now: as is death. Ω

NEXT ISSUE:

Lead shot

We'll round up all the issues, historical, political, and practical. Europe versus Britain and within Britain the 'pro and anti' views of the various interested parties: shooters, cartridge manufacturers, landowners, and government departments.

MEDICALS

Firearm and shotgun renewals

Policing has shifted from a presumption that there's nothing wrong with you unless your GP says so to presuming that there's something wrong with you unless your GP says there isn't.

This mission creep has gone from refusing to process applications of people who aren't registered with a GP through to asking all GPs for chapter and verse about all applicants including shotgun certificate holders, in case they have a condition that makes them a danger to public safety or the peace and then as an afterthought to all dealers. How one gets medical approval of a limited company remains to be seen.

We'll look at the whole mess in out first 2021 issue.

Merry Christmas Y’all

IMAGE CREDIT: SHUTTERSTOCK

IWA Outdoor Classics

When NürnbergMesse once again hosts the world's leading trade fair:

12 to 15 March 2021

Participants will not have seen each other for two years because of the pandemic. That makes talking in person and closing deals with a handshake all the more important – even if the handshake is likely to be only symbolic in the circumstances.

IWA
OUTDOOR
CLASSICS 2021

High performance in target sports,
nature activities, protecting people