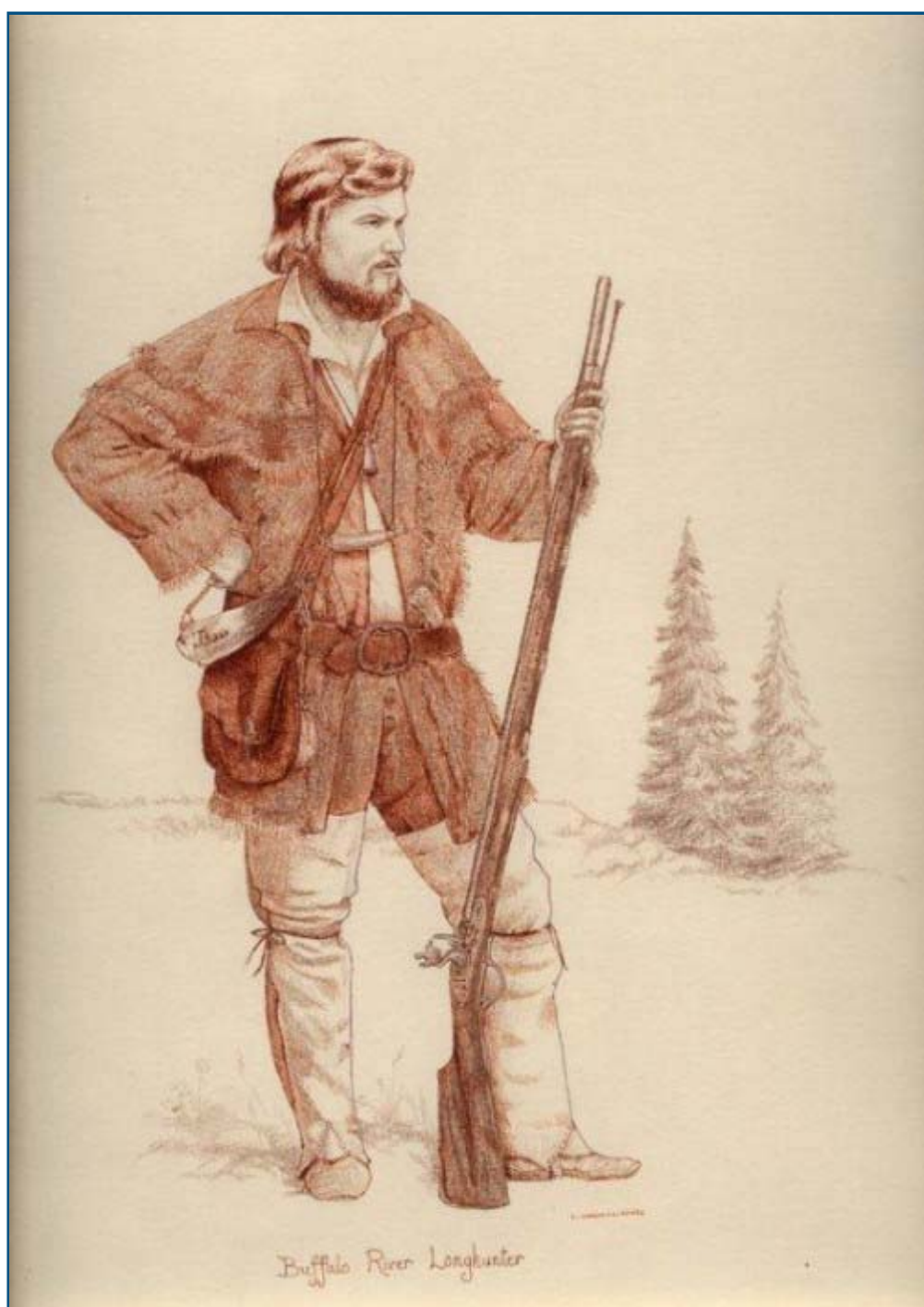


## Vol. 23, March 2010

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Buffalo River Longhunter (Glen Mitchell with his Bess) Drawing by Linda Hynes

Okay, summer is over and cooler days are with us. Time for some hooting and whooping and lots of shootin'!

Firstly, a big cheer for Glen who shares with us the prized drawing above by skilled artist Linda Hynes. At 26, Glen certainly cut a dashing figure as a Longhunter, holding that cherished smoothbore Bess that he describes to us in our feature story this edition.

Secondly – Easter is almost upon us and it's our first primitive camp for 2010. That is followed closely by Anzac day weekend stretched to a three day-er if you can make it.

Are you ready for some shooting fun? Ready to Rondyvoo? Come to Bernard's Cache!

## Events – Coming Very, Very Soon

April 2nd – 5th. An Easter bunny and egg hunt at magical Bernard's Cache, Caveat.

April 24th – 26th. ANZAC day weekend – look for more rabbit pie at Bernard's Cache.

## Other Events later this year

June 12th – 14th. Queen's Birthday weekend – Winter Quarters at Bernard's Cache.

Our 5th Anniversary of Primitive Rendezvous camping in the central Highlands area.

A chance to re-live those fantastic first winter camps all so enthusiastically embraced.

September 17th – 20th. Spring Rendezvous with friends at Beaver Creek, Whorouly.

An extended single weekend – Friday 17th through to Monday 20th.

November 6th & 7th. Melbourne Medieval Fayre and Tourney (MMFAT) at Berwick.

## Bessie and Me

Our feature story by Glen Mitchell

Thirty years ago, when I was but a full grown lad, my lovely wife bought a wonderful birthday present for me. A second wife? Well, no! It was only a muzzleloader, but it was the start of a new long-lasting love affair. Being a wannabe woodsman, I already knew about mahogany (monogamy) but didn't take long before my eyes started to wander again.

You might think two wives would be enough, but I had come across a possible "mail order bride" advertised as residing in Sydney town. She was tall and slender and possessing a somewhat darker complexion – sort of a walnut shade, but not yet glowing. So, with wife number one's blessing, I sent off for another new bride.

I can still remember the day she arrived at the train station and boy, was I ever excited! Leaving her resting in my car, I scampered into the staff room at the Tech in search of Bill and Charlie, insisting they come immediately to my vehicle for introductions to Bess. To me she was "Bess" right from day one. After a lot of drooling and general silliness with these two envious mates I headed home to show off Bessie to Wife No.1.

Afterwards, with a grin from ear to ear I picked up Bess and headed out to the office, closed the door behind me so as to not be disturbed, and gently laid Bess on the work bench. For quite some time I just stared at her – I knew she was meant for me. Then with a sort of eagerness I stripped her down – took everything off! She looked different, but in a familiar sort of way. I was excited! I took my time! I polished all the bits that needed polishing. Then I polished them all some more.

Next I started to oil her up and she seemed to like it, so I oiled and rubbed some more. This oiling went on for several days until my arm ached from all the rubbing, but her timber had taken on a beautiful glow with that well-oiled look. I couldn't wipe the grin from my face. Then I carefully replaced all the furnishings that I'd removed and she was complete again. She now looked just how I thought a fine Bess should look.

Bess, or Bessie, the name depended on my mood at any given time, but by either name we had a lot of good times together. She was a 3rd model Brown Bess musket and I was just 26 years old and they were untroubled days. Many years later, through a combination of politics (gun laws) and hard times we parted company. Today I am sad that this happened and that goes for many of the guns I once owned.

But Bessie was more special! Whether it was all the loving work I put in polishing the brass and hand rubbing the oil finish to the stock, or what I can't say, she was just special. I'd kinda like to

know where, and with whom, she spends her time these days. Hopefully she receives the same fond affection as I still feel for her. Glen Mitchell.

## The Phoenix

Those of us who have never experienced first hand the devastation of raging bushfires cannot possibly imagine the sense of total loss many people suffered in February 2009. John Morland contributes to our series about how we give a pet name to our firearms -

“It took a crowbar and a lot of physical effort to open the twisted wreckage of my burnt-out gun safe. Once achieved, one glance at the contents would cause many a grown man to weep. There were lots of pieces of burned metal such as barrels, locks and receivers (Oh yeah, I lost some modern stuff as well). There were numerous bits of melted brass. Of the timber stocks there was nothing left at all. No maple or walnut could survive that heat! I was just one pissed-off Trapper, standing there in the ashes.

Time passed, and then came word from a certain Free Trapper who often gets his wagon bogged. Any bits I may have recovered were needed by a certain Western Districts Trapper, and don't ask any questions!

Enter No.3 in a trilogy of fine rifles recently built by Ian Convey, each of them different but with stocks beautifully hand crafted from the same tree.

A fine Kentucky long rifle she be. With a poured pewter for-end tip, browned patch box with silver heart inlay, another inlay in the but-plate strap. Browned furniture and barrel with the Southern Cross inlaid in the nearside of the butt. From the charred ashes to this – truly amazing!



The Phoenix

Next I acquired a mould and run some ball, the patch and ball size is well known to me, for this barrel and I have travelled many trails and entered many off-hand matches, but will it be the same. Alas, no, not to be! This fine rifle has risen from the ashes with a completely new character, putting me and the “Phoenix” on a whole new learning curve. And I still can't get this smile off my face.

Sometimes a simple thank-you seems totally inappropriate for all the hard work, time, and skill that were required to rebuild this rifle, a gift which means a lot to me.

To you Ian, I say – THANK YOU!” John Morland

## Convalescing

It was a full month after the event when we received word that Judy Harley, our lady host at Bernard's Cache, had been in a nasty accident early in January. The tractor Judy was driving along the road got out of control on a steep incline, forcing Judy to take to the trees rather than crush the much smaller tractor being driven by Bernie.

A broken collar bone and several busted ribs along with deep cuts to head and knee will keep Judy out of action for several months. The Club has forwarded a card with get well messages and we here again reiterate our very best wishes to Judy for full recovery in the speediest possible manner.

## Hitting the Mark – Line of Sight meets Point of Impact.

“One went wide and one went low; where the hell did the other one go……?”



Dave Doran's Lonesome Louie cartoons first appeared in the pages of Muzzleloader magazine.

Getting a new muzzleloader to hit the mark, one need not experience the embarrassment or frustration of Fast Freddy if he only follows a few simple guidelines. If the sights are not aligned correctly, then the sights should be adjusted to bring the line of sight to meet the point of impact.

This usually involves firing a number of shots from some sort of sturdy and very stable rest. Three shots should be a minimum guide; five is nearly twice the fun.

The idea is to establish a “group”, and then the sights are adjusted to move the line of sight closer to the group. Further three (or five) shot groups should be made each time the sights are adjusted, until the sights are correctly aligned. It's all part of the joy of shooting.

[Wikipedia, the free online encyclopaedia](#) gives these detailed instructions for adjusting sights:

- To move the line of sight DOWN (the shots hit BELOW the point of aim) the REAR sight is RAISED or the FRONT sight is LOWERED.
- To move the line of sight UP (the shots hit ABOVE the point of aim) the REAR sight is LOWERED or the FRONT sight is RAISED.
- To move the line of sight LEFT (the shots hit LEFT of the point of aim) the REAR sight is moved RIGHT or the FRONT sight is moved LEFT.
- To move the line of sight RIGHT (the shots hit RIGHT of the point of aim) the REAR sight is moved LEFT or the FRONT sight is moved RIGHT.

## Tattler

Next time you're having a cold'un with Blind Fox ask about his you-beaut 4WD auto fridge and battery discharger. Luckily an observant Grey Wolf with one spare dollar and a good lead got the jump on Kevin and likely earned himself another cold beer. Just ask Richard!

## Letters to the editor

Hi Chook, I enjoyed the latest online newsletter with the lead article on undertaking of other

aspects of Living History. Just a cautionary note on soap making – When using caustic soda it is best to do the mixing up of the soap ingredients in a glass or terracotta bowl and then ladling it into a wooden mould as caustic soda will eat thru anything metal. I have had several buckets destroyed due to leaving the ash sitting in the bucket too long after cleaning out my fireplace. An aluminium vessel I once used for soap making was completely eaten away by the caustic. Jenny Baker.

Hi Chook, Thanks for the newsletter online, it's always a good read. Getting to the Easter camp could be a problem but the ANZAC weekend looks good. Keith Hendry.



“I do wish he’d train the dog to do his fetching!”

Our tongue-in-cheek caption for this attractive picture of Susan Schwer. Dick and Susan are regular visitors from South Australia. Photo by Kevin

### **Chook on christening Muzzleloaders.**

Well, to be truthful, I’d never referred to any rifle or smoothbore I’ve owned other than by using

the make & model e.g. Pedersoli Mortimer. But, after Ian refurbished my Remington barrel I had a problem – to continue calling it “The Remington” seemed totally wrong as it certainly wasn’t that anymore. (See my story in Vol 21) But then it never was the authentic replica as touted in the sales pitch. Some forums suggest Remington had their “custom shop” commemoratives made by the Hatfield Company, but the Remington spokespeople are rather coy on this – wonder why?

So, if it wasn’t a faithful copy of a Remington, and the Hatfield connection is rumour, a sudden thought inspired its new pet name. The Hatfield Company’s heritage links back to the feuding Hatfield’s & McCoy’s. Ian used that Remington branded barrel, mated with a Davis lock and the Convey craftsmanship of a hand carved stock with hand-made trigger and all iron furniture, to come up with a dinkum custom made rifle. – It’s the real McCoy. It is time “McCoy” and I went for a walk in the bush!

## **Two Centuries of Growth and Decline 1810 – 2010.**

The U.S. Federal census of 1810 lists around 200 gun powder mills across America. One of the earliest known advertisements for powder featured in the Pittsburgh Gazette some 10 years earlier:-

POWDER. The subscriber has for sale, the best RIFLE POWDER – he can supply Merchants and others, at reasonable prices, at his Powder Mill on Peter’s Creek. Jacob Ferree (owner), Alleghany County, Mifflin Township, September 13, 1799.

Sadly, that large number of powder makers gradually dwindled, until we seem to have only two sources of black powder available to our dealers in Australia today, and if I am correct, only three or four in the USA. Wano, a German brand, and the very expensive Swiss Schuetzen seem to be the only current choice here, while our US mates have these two, plus Elephant brand and their own home-grown Goex to choose.

Free Trappers requiring powder will find all their needs met by contacting Roger Mowbray at Northern Shooter’s Supplies division of Stock, Lock Antique Arms – see [our Trading Post ads](#).



Murray the Club Treasurer – holds centre

**Members Please Note: Club Annual Subscriptions due!**

All subs for 2010-2011 fall due on 31st March. We are able to maintain our very low fee of only \$20 per adult member. i.e. \$20 Singles; \$40 Couples; Children -18 free!

All members will be aware that three quarters of this fee goes towards paying our Public Liability insurance premiums. Your prompt payment of subs helps us to maintain the low rates. Please forward your cheque or money order direct to our Treasurer – Murray Convey, 2806 Colac / Ballarat Road, Dereel 3352.