

Fusillade

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Newsletter of the Ballarat Arms & Militaria Collectors Society Inc.
Issue 203: January - February 2026



MY COUNTRY - Dorothea Mackellar

The love of field and coppice
Of green and shaded lanes,
Of ordered woods and gardens
Is running in your veins.
Strong love of grey-blue distance,
Brown streams and soft, dim skies
I know, but cannot share it,
My love is otherwise.

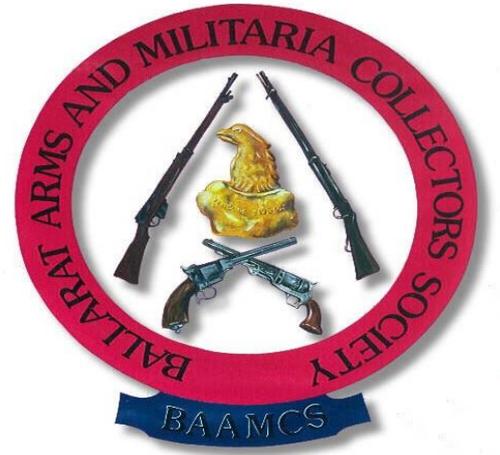
I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.
I love her far horizons,
I love her jewel-sea,
Her beauty and her terror
The wide brown land for me!

The stark white ring-barked forests,
All tragic to the moon,
The sapphire-misted mountains,
The hot gold hush of noon,
Green tangle of the brushes
Where lithe lianas coil,
And orchids deck the tree-tops,
And ferns the warm dark soil.

Core of my heart, my country!
Her pitiless blue sky,
When, sick at heart, around us
We see the cattle die
But then the grey clouds gather,
And we can bless again
The drumming of an army,
The steady soaking rain.

Core of my heart, my country!
Land of the rainbow gold,
For flood and fire and famine
She pays us back threefold.
Over the thirsty paddocks,
Watch, after many days,
The filmy veil of greenness
That thickens as we gaze ...

An opal-hearted country,
A wilful, lavish land
All you who have not loved her,
You will not understand
though Earth holds many
splendours,
Wherever I may die,
I know to what brown country
My homing thoughts will fly.



Executive Committee

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H 5334 4124
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Valerie Williams
Paul Evans
Bruce Pell
Dave Morrison
Mark Sterlson - Fusillade Editor
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The Society has formal meetings on the last Wednesday of the month, except December, January and February.

Special meetings are held in **November** and **February**, see below.

VENUE - Scout Hall, 26 Orion St, Sebastopol

Meetings - Doors open at **7.00pm-ish**, meetings start at **7.30pm**.

Visitors and potential new members are always welcome.

Membership inquiries: 0457 889 989 or email: baamcs@ballaratarms.com.au

Website - www.ballaratarms.com.au

Our collecting interests include: - Military & Sporting Long-arms; Black powder Firearms; Collectable Handguns; All Edged Weapons & Knives; Ammunition and Ordnance; Badges; Medals; Uniforms; Maps; Books and Documents, General history.

We are also an **Approved Shooting Organisation** (Hunting and Target) under the 1996 Victorian Firearms Act

"Fusillade" is the bi-monthly newsletter of the Society

Editor – Mark Sterlson

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Next newsletter closing date is **5th January 2026**

Opinions within these pages are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Society.

Society Upcoming Meetings & Events

See page 8 for further details

Wednesday 25th February – 7.30pm

Regular monthly BAAMCS meeting at Scout Hall, plus show & tell.

Wednesday 25th March 2026 - 7.30pm - Regular monthly BAAMCS meeting at Scout Hall, plus show & tell.

President's Despatch

Dear Members,

Welcome to this edition of Fusillade. I hope all members and their families had a Happy new year,

Firstly, I would like to announce that Graeme Standen has officially stepped down from his position as Secretary and withdrawn from the Committee. Graeme has made this decision due to personal commitments outside the Society. His commitment to the Society over many years has been invaluable. Graeme's willingness to step into the role of Secretary at a challenging time for the club is to be commended. His many hours of work behind the scenes, has allowed the Society to move forward and remain viable. We owe him a debt we can not repay. On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank Graeme for his tenure as Secretary and his many years of service to the club.

Lee Swagerman has now formally begun his role as Secretary. On behalf of Graeme and the Committee, I ask that all matters that previously members would have contacted Graeme over now be directed to Lee using the details above.

Since our last Fusillade there has been a major shift in firearm policy and direction in the wake of the well publicised events in NSW. This will have significant impacts for all of us who have an interest in firearms of any kind. While we have not yet been subjected to the knee-jerk reactions we have seen in NSW. The review into firearms legislation will undoubtedly mean changes for us as firearms owners and the industry as a whole.

There will be many opportunities in the next few months to have your say on the future direction of firearms legislation, through petitions, contacting your local Member and formal submissions to the inquiry. Please make sure that any submissions are respectful so we can put our community's views forward in the best light.

The Committee met in the first week of January to discuss the possible ramifications of changes to the current legislation. Jeff Bourman, MLC – Shooters and Fishers Party, joined the committee meeting as he had the most current information available. At this point, we understand that until the review is complete, there will be no change to firearms legislation here in Victoria.

Members can be assured, we as a Committee, have your back. At this stage it is business as usual. As soon as we are informed of the proposed changes, we will let you know forthwith. We are determined to provide a united front with all those impacted, to oppose these yet to be unknown changes to ensure the future direction of our sport.

The committee also resolved that the February 25th BBQ and show and tell will now be a General



Jeff Bourman, MLC, Shooters and Fishers party with the committee during the January meeting,

meeting open to all members. This will allow members to share their concerns and to have input into how we might support the challenges going forward. The BBQ will be rescheduled to a later date but members are welcome to bring 'show and tell' as usual. We ask that members who are planning to attend, please advise the Secretary. This is so we can ensure that everyone who wants to attend has a seat. We expect a larger number of members who do not normally attend our regularly scheduled meetings. Please note that the start time of this meeting will be the regular 7.30pm, rather than 5.30pm as for the BBQ.

Finally, with the events of the last several months, celebrating Australia Day this year is more important than ever. I encourage you to get together with family and friends and celebrate this wonderful country we call home.

Yours in collecting,

Alan Mann
President.

The Lebel Rifle



In 1884, the French government became aware that the German army was being equipped with a repeating rifle. They set up a committee to supply the French army with one as well. In the same year, the French chemist Paul Vieille, invented the first "smokeless" powder which was called "white Powder" or Poudre Blanche in French, commonly known as Poudre B. The committee set up several sub-groups to investigate the various components of the new rifle and work progressed very slowly. However, in January 1866, a new Minister of war was appointed. His name was General Georges Boulanger and he ordered the new rifle to be ready for testing by May of 1866.



Le General Georges Boulanger

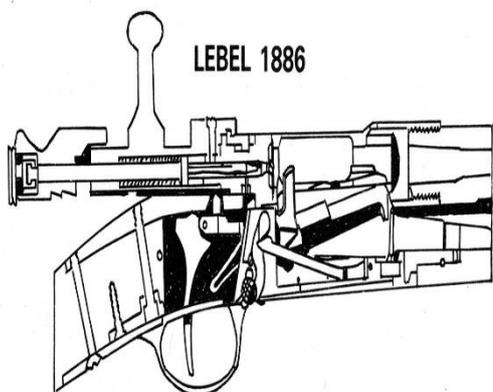
To meet the deadline the groups working on the new rifle could not keep going down the development paths that they were working on. Instead, they had to work with existing designs. The tubular magazine was adopted from the Kropatscheck rifle which had entered service with the French navy in 1878 and was chambered in the 11x59 MM Gras cartridge.

The bolt was from the Gras single shot rifle which was modified to suit a repeating action. Two locking lugs were added to the bolt head to compensate for the increased pressure of the new powder.

The resulting firearm was 51.5 inches/1.3m long and weighed 9.2 pounds/4.173 kgs. The tubular magazine held 8 rounds of 8 mm Lebel with the provision of one round being held on the elevator. It also had a 2-piece stock with a heavy-duty slab

walled receiver so it could withstand the pressure of the new smokeless powder. The rifle was first issued to troops in 1887 and was built by three arsenals, namely Tulla, St Etienne and Chatellerault. Production exceeded 2 million by 1893.

Following the introduction of the rifle, several problems were encountered. Firstly, the rear sight, which was held on by soldering, had the habit of becoming loose. Secondly, if a cartridge failed, the escaping gases were vented past the bolt straight into the shooters face. Changes were made in 1893 by adding 2 rings to hold the rear sight securely and a gas shield was added to the bolt. The new model was known as the 1886, M.1893 and most existing rifles were bought up to the new standard.



Ammunition

The cartridge initially chosen for the rifle was based on the 11 mm Gras case. It was necked down to 8 mm and shortened to 50 mm (8x50mm). This was based on the work lead by a Lt. Col. Nicolas Lebel. It included a nickel-brass jacketed, round nose bullet.

The choice of projectile came from the pioneering work of Eduard Rubin. The projectile weighed 232 Grains and was designated as Balle M.



232 grain round nose jacketed bullet



198 grain Spitzer bullet

In 1898, the French adopted a spitzer bullet for the Lebel which weighed 198 grains. They cut a groove in the base of the case to prevent the point of the bullet from hitting the primer of the next case of the magazine. This round was designated Balle D. In 1932 the final cartridge was adopted, Balle N, which was a high-pressure machine-gun round, many lebel's were adapted for this round and the barrels and receivers were marked with a letter N and arrows.

Bayonet

The bayonet used on the Lebel was a 20.5 inch/ 52 cm epee style cruciform with nickel grips and a hooked quillon. However, with material shortages in 1916 the nickel grips were replaced by brass and the quillon was removed.



Even though the Lebel was at the cutting edge of technology at the time of initial production, advancements in firearms, particularly in magazines, soon rendered it obsolete. The Lebel rifle remained the main Infantry

weapon in the First World War, supplemented by the Berthier which used the same ammunition. Very few Lebel's were made between 1914-1918. Those that were, used existing stocks of parts with very few new parts made. The Lebel was declared obsolete by the French in the 1920's but continued to see service through the Second World War.

See www.ballaratarms.com.au/newsandevents for further details.

But please note that our website is being re-built and is currently unavailable. We'll let you know when it's up and running again.

Upcoming Events 2026

Wednesday 25th February – 7.30pm General Meeting at Scout Hall.
Regular monthly BAAMCS meeting at Scout Hall, plus show & tell.

Wednesday 25th March 2026: 7.30pm Regular Monthly Meeting at Scout Hall
Regular monthly BAAMCS meeting at Scout Hall, plus show & tell.

Advertisements

These ads are free, but need to be kept up to date: ballaratarms.com.au/contact-us

Australian Fine Arms Auctions:

australianfinearms.com.au Telephone: 0488 480 836

Central Vic Bang Sticks: Military and black powder firearms, sporting firearms, ammunition, reloading components, deceased estates. Viewings by appointment. Appointments available 9am to 5pm Mon to Friday, 9-12 on Saturday.

Lexton. Phone **5466 7391**

Dave Wright Militaria and Collectables: Buying and selling Militaria. Sheppard St, Ballarat, Vic 3350. (*rear of Dan Murphy's bottle shop, between Mair and Curtis Sts*). Ph: 0353384377. Open Tues to Friday 9am to 5pm. Sat 9am to 1pm. Email djwright@iinet.net.au. Web www.davewrightmilitaria.com.au

For all your Private gun and parts ads, try "Universal Used Guns.com.au"

www.universalusedguns.com.au

H. REHFISCH & Co P/L: Guns, Fishing, Archery, Gun safes, clothing, et
903 La Trobe St, Ballarat. 53313677

Military Lane - Classic Arms & Collectables:

auctions.militarylane.com.au Telephone: 0490 780 400

Ozgunsales: for all your online gun purchases and sales - www.ozgunsales.com

R.F.Scott & Co.: 910 Howitt St, Wendouree. Sporting Guns, Rifles, Ammo, Gun Cases, Black powder & accessories. phone /fax (03) 5331 7111 BH.

Wanted: WW2 Australian artillery & anti-aircraft ordnance - fuzes, shells and cartridge cases.

Particularly 3.7" & 3" 20 cwt AA. Graeme Davenport, Ballarat 0438 049 880.

Front cover photo: "Koala BBQ" – Shutterstock.com
"My Country" By Dorothea Mackellar, 1906, courtesy
<https://www.dorotheamackellar.com.au/my-country/>

Any transfer of ownership of licensable firearms advertised in this newsletter must be completed through a Licenced Gun Dealer. The 28 day cooling off period applies for a first purchase. Please keep your Postal, Residential, e-mail addresses and phone numbers up to date, with the Society.

Members are reminded if they change ANY of their address details, storage address, contact home/ mobile number, they MUST advise LRD in writing, within 7 days.

Not to do so is an offence!

ALWAYS send documents to LRD via ***REGISTERED POST or EMAIL.***

ALWAYS make copies of those documents for your files

LRD - Call 1300 651 645 – Wed 10am-2pm

Postal Address - GPO Box 2807AA, Melbourne 3001 Email - lrd@police.vic.gov.au

———— The End ————