

# Boar hunting

**Mike Yardley** gives some thoughts and tips on the last really economically accessible big game – with more than a whiff of risk and excitement too

One of my best shooting experiences last year was a boar drive in Croatia where I had the good fortune to shoot three beasts in rapid succession with my Border Barrels modified .300 Win Mag.

I don't know quite what it is about pig shooting that makes it so addictive, but it really takes hold of you. There comes a time in the life of many a shooting man when he has shot his fair share of birds. A lot of experienced Guns today may move on to stalking. It is a skilled business, and there is something wonderful about woods and hill. Moreover, it has never been more popular.

I still love my driven days and pigeon shooting, but there are other things to experience as well. Africa is a magical place – and I have clocked up 20 odd safaris – but, the dark continent is an ever more expensive destination. There is not as much bang for the buck as there once was; even an average buff is going to cost you ten grand. So, what do you do? What offers real old-fashioned excitement, novelty and sport without spending a King's Ransom? The answer must be boar shooting.

## It's a porcine world

In boar shooting there is the adrenalin rush of big game hunting at comparatively reasonable cost (budget realistically on a couple of thousand quid for a three day shoot). There is not the need to travel that far afield (though if you are adventurous, Texas, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Southern Africa, Australia and New Zealand all offer great porker opportunities). There is the joy of being deep and dark in the woods where the big, bad, wolf may still roam. And, there is the opportunity for some socialising if you are a party of a dozen guns or more (as typically you will be on a battue shoot in Europe).

To date, I have shot pigs in Australia, Africa, France, Poland, and Croatia. They are feral in Oz (i.e. the ancestors of swine dropped off by Captain Cook and similar). Africa offers warthog and bushpig (which warrant the greatest respect - especially in poor light). In France, Poland and Croatia true boar are the quarry (though some may have a bit of domestic pig blood as a result of cross-breeding -

A very close encounter – Mike Yardley with a large boar shot that he shot at about 5 yards

organisers are always keen that you shoot these mongrels).

## Of all these, Australia gave me my best pig story;

**Guide:** "Take the torch, take the Winchester and crawl down the tunnel there and you'll get your pig".

**Me:** "You're kidding"

**Guide:** "No, mate."

**Me:** "Well, let's just say I crawl down the tunnel, see the pig and shine the torch in his eyes..."

**Guide:** "You've got, you've got it!"

**Me:** "I bring the Winchester up [an old semi-auto loaded with SG and without a forend]..."

**Guide:** "That's it, that's it!"

**Me:** "... and the Winchester jams... what happens then?"

**Guide:** "Well then you're screwed mate!"

**Me:** "Did you ever try it..."

**Guide:** "No but we persuaded one fellow to do it..."

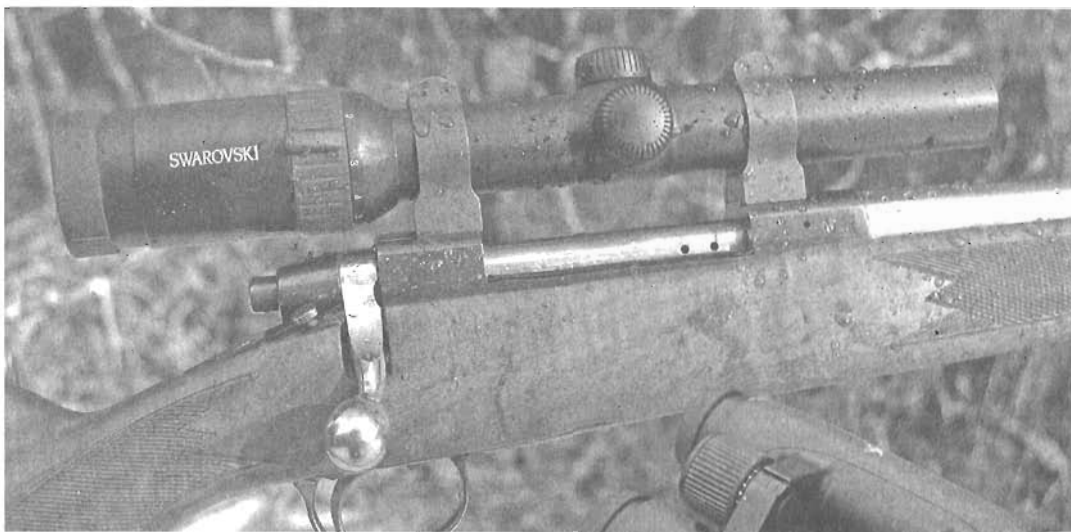
Knifing pigs in New Zealand (where big ferals roam) probably comes into the same category (though I must confess I am tempted). The beast is brought to bay with dogs, the hunter walks in, whips the back legs out and administers the coup de gras with a large Bowie.

Although I have not pushed the envelope all the way when boar shooting, I have had my moments. In France ten years or so ago I had a very close encounter with a massive boar when armed with a single shot 7mm rifle, having just shot his smaller friend.

In Poland, a couple of years back, I bagged a fair sized animal (see pic) at 4 or 5 yards (having had it surprise me at 3yds).

Last year, I had a beast charge towards me. I had shot another, and my rifle misfired (the first time ever) as I brought it into aim. Happily the boar turned, but without that good fortune, and had I been brought down, I would have been left only with my 'Now that's a knife' knife (which I habitually carry in my right Dubarry boot) when hunting.

Some of my best experiences of pig shooting have been in Croatia recently. It is an interesting country which offers good value and plenty of sport, both in open areas and on closed estates (the advantage of the former is wild sport, the lure of the latter is predictable numbers). I have gone on several boar shoots with Bogdan Srejcic of Lasarata. Bogdan is young and enthusiastic and fast gaining a reputation



**Tikka 65 rifle modified by Border Barrels and fitted with Swarovski scope**

as a reliable provider of high quality sport. I have the highest regard for him, but have to say that there are some people out there who do not operate to the same ethical standards. I have heard tales of many people being completely ripped off recently, or, more commonly, charged excessive 'trophy' fees (check the tariff very carefully before making any booking and get references if you can and follow them up).

If all this makes it sound as if pig shooting should be taken seriously, then you're right, it should. It is not especially dangerous – nothing like as risky as elephant or buff hunting – but it has a capacity to go wrong on you quickly if you do not approach it with the right attitude. There are several recent

cases of people being killed or badly injured boar shooting. One has to prepare well and keep in mind this is not a home counties bird shoot. If you can imagine nervy rottweilers being driven towards you, then you would be nearer the mark. Wild boar don't like people much, and will do everything they can to avoid them under normal circumstances. BUT, beware when you catch their attention and are not prepared for action.

## Guns and sights for pig shooting

I use a .308 Mannlicher, and, a .300 Win Mag (the latter modified by Border Barrels) for

## Good binoculars are always useful - these Swarovskis cannot be bettered

boar shooting. The .300 is my favourite both for reliability and knock-down power. It is built around an old, and butter smooth, Tikka Model 65 action. Other good calibres are 7mm Rem mag, 8x57, 8x57JRS, 30-06, .300 Holland & Holland, .300 WSM, .338 Win Mag., 9.3x62, 9.3x64, and even .375 H&H. For double rifle fans, 9.3x74 (the classic pig round) and 375 H&H are the favoured calibres, while 8x57JRS and .30 Blaser also offer double possibilities. The new .338 Federal (a necked up .308) would be ideal for pig and has the advantage of feeding in a short, quick, bolt action. The new .370 Sako (a stoked up 9.3) would also be a good choice (and the new Sako 85 rifle, I might add is a very fine rifle and chambered for both). A Blaser might be another consideration for straight-pull fans, while those that like lever action would find a Marlin in .45-70 or above very useful.

Your scope (if you use one – many experienced pig killers don't) will be just as important as your rifle. Funds permitting, you could not do better than a new Swarovski 1-6x variable or a Schmidt and Bender Zenith. I am not a great fan of dedicated red dot and holographic sights – popular though they are with some, they tend to make longer shots more difficult because the dot itself covers too much of the target. Don't skimp on your



**I always use a stick or a tripod - the former may be used as a rest in some circumstances, the function of a tripod in this situation is to bring the rifle into immediate action**



**Hunters and dogs set off - all are wearing high visibility 'day-glo orange' tabards and/or hi-vi hats or hat bands**

optics (bins as well as scopes) and make sure that the scope on your rifle has a low power option – magnifications above 2x can get you in real trouble in some circumstances – you can't shoot running beasts at close range easily. Much better an old 1x or 2x power scope than a 4-12x variable.

## Boar basics

There are some basic rules for boar shooting. Become as familiar as you can with your rifle before going (make absolutely sure that it is well zeroed – you may not have the chance to check zero). I use a tripod – not to shoot from, but to allow me a comfortable platform upon which to rest the gun when waiting. It saves me a vital second or so when getting the gun into action. Keep quite on your stand – pigs have good hearing, a wonderful sense of smell and poor eyesight. Make sure you are dressed appropriately; an orange hat or hat band is a necessity on driven shoots so that other guns can see you, as is warm clothing that will not hinder your movements. Take something to sit on in the woods, a decent torch such as a Surefire, and a bag for all your bits and bobs (my preference is a canvas Barbour utility bag which is a constant companion these days whatever the quarry).

Safety is a BIG issue too. Don't shoot deer in front (if they are legitimate and included on the potential quarry list). Don't shoot boar beyond 40 yards or at any time when the beaters

**Hunting boar in Europe can call on a high level of physical fitness from the participants**



**Traditionally dressed huntsman herald the start of the hunt**



**The result of a well organised day's boar shooting**



are within 100 yards of you by sight or sound. Don't shoot a leading sow, and, don't take the risk on roe deer unless you are sure that you are shooting a doe (bucks can cost a ton of money on the Continent). A shot at a moose or wolf can (and they are quite common in parts of Poland – notably the area up near the Russian border) have you on the next plane home or worse.

You have to keep your thinking head on when boar shooting. Most people miss pigs because they get over excited. The red mist has all sorts of negative effects. You have to steady things down, pick your beast, and push through (just like a bird). If you do bring down your quarry, or, indeed, if you wound it, stay put and wait for the beaters and the dogs. There is a particular danger in leaving your peg.

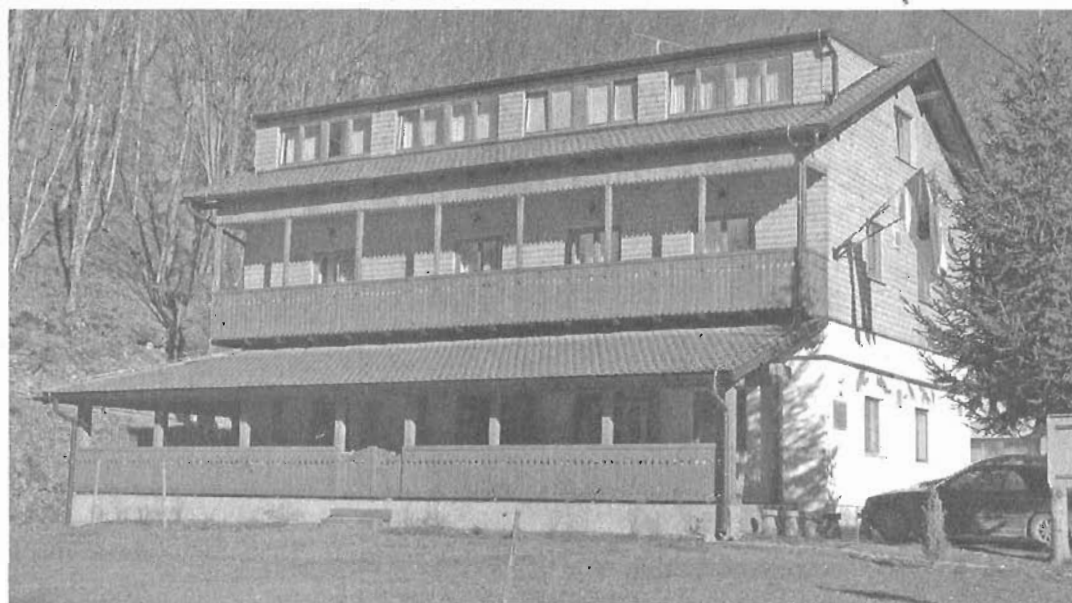
Boar deserve respect as noted. Shooting them is a fantastic experience, however, and worth the effort of preparation and training. If you're interested, my advice would be to give Bogdan a ring. You can contact him on 02392652791 or 0783100524. Alternatively visit the website at [www.lasarotta.co.uk](http://www.lasarotta.co.uk)



**Michael Yardley with another nice Croatian boar**



**Dragging a boar back to camp**



**Some hunting lodges in Croatia are of a very high standard**