

## SHOOTING

By Gary Girvan



Stefano explains some of the Xtreme's finer points to Martyn Coe.

# AT BOOMROCK

## Beretta's New A400 Autoloaders Unveiled at The Bunkers

**"Would you be interested in coming to Boomrock to get an exclusive first look at the new models in the Beretta A400 range?"**

Would we what! The Editor and I didn't need to think twice about accepting this invitation from Martyn Coe, Managing Director of Beretta New Zealand. You don't turn down the opportunity to combine two great experiences: to be introduced to the exciting new additions to the A400 family by Beretta's International Sales Manager, Stefano Quarena and Technician, Andrea Rizzini, and then to put the guns through their paces at one of New Zealand's most spectacular clay shooting venues.

### Beretta and Boomrock

Although it is located in Wellington, a long way from Beretta New Zealand's head office in Auckland, Boomrock is an ideal venue for such an occasion. Indeed, Beretta are the major sponsors of one of Boomrock's important activities, The Bunkers clay target shooting layout. Beretta guns, clothing, and signage are very much in evidence here.

The whole Boomrock experience is the brainchild of owner, Jonny Eastwick. With a working farm of around 3000 acres, he has diversified its activities and capitalised on the spectacular views from the property's 8km of coastline on Wellington's wild west coast. The Boomrock

experience he has created has three main components: the Lodge, the Track, and the Bunkers.

The Lodge is central to the operation. It serves as a luxury function centre for receptions, conferences and the like, and for fine dining. Its location, close to the edge of sheer cliffs 250 meters above the Tasman, offers breathtaking views over Cook Strait to the South Island.

The Track is a purpose-built car-testing circuit which offers a variety of experiences ranging from rally car racing to driver training. Off-road driving is a feature. These driving experiences are run in conjunction with Mercedes-Benz.

Jonny is an enthusiastic and skilful shotgunner. The Bunkers is a result of this enthusiasm. The concept began some years ago as a one-off Duck Shooters' Day offering clay bird shooting and a fine lunch prior to the opening of the game bird season. Its success led to an increase in the number of such days offered and each year the event's popularity has grown to such an extent that in 2011 over 500 shooters took advantage of these days. It was evident that such an activity would be popular year-round and so, developed in association with Beretta New Zealand, The Bunkers clay target club was created.

Located in the southern end of the property and overlooking Cook Strait, The Bunkers takes its name from the emplacements on the cliff tops where Home Guard units were posted during WW2 to protect the capital against Japanese invasion. The site has been developed to create three distinct 5-stand sporting clays fields. Each one is designed to simulate a different game bird experience: duck shooting, driven pheasants and driven grouse. Fifteen traps, well hidden in the bush, can be adjusted so that the difficulty of the targets can easily be tailored to suit shooters' abilities.

Such has been the success of the Bunkers concept and Beretta's involvement in it, that club member and Hunting&Fishing Otaki's owner, Charlie Meyer, has incorporated a Beretta Room in his shop to display the best of their shotguns and clothing and to service the interest in that brand from the many visitors to Boomrock and from members of the Bunkers club.

### The Guns

Our Italian representatives had three guns to demonstrate to us. Two of them were versions of Beretta's brand new A400 Xtreme, the gas-operated autoloader which is designed to replace the AL391 Xtrema2 as their ultimate waterfowling shotgun. This synthetic-stocked shotgun is offered



Andrea Rizzini smokes a target using the Xplor Action.



New Beretta fans: Springboks Francois Louw and Patrick Lambie with Stefano Quarena in the middle.



Martyn in action with the black synthetic Xtreme.

with a choice of two finishes: matt black or with Realtree's Max-4 camouflage pattern and both were on show today.

Stefano explained its salient features for us. The Xtreme is smaller and lighter than its predecessor, the Xtrema2, but using the A400 Xplor's gas technology, it cycles all 12 gauge ammunition from light 2 3/4-inch target loads through to the heaviest field loads in 3 1/2-inch shells. Using Beretta's Blink technology, it cycles the shells as fast as you can pull the trigger.

Particular attention has been paid to reducing the effects of recoil. The gun incorporates the latest generation of Beretta's Kick-Off system into the butt-stock – Kick-Off Mega. The two oil-damped cylinders which compress to spread and soften the effects of recoil are now located, not at the end of the stock as on the Xplor, but mid-way along its length. A flexible black synthetic gasket covers the area where the cylinders compress. A third hydraulic cylinder absorbs the impact of the bolt

against the back of the receiver.

Being designed as a waterfowler's shotgun, the Xtreme features Beretta's Aqua technology to combat the corrosive effects of the typical waterfowling environment.

To review the effectiveness of these and other new features, we will be doing a full testfire of the Xtreme in a later issue after we have used the gun more extensively.

Our main focus was to be on the Xtreme, but the third gun was an interesting one. The Xplor Action is a lighter version of the A400 Xplor, being chambered for 3-inch shells, as opposed to the 3 1/2-inch of the Xplor. This wood-stocked model has a unique feature: an electronic device, the GunPod, installed in the pistol grip. This device displays information that will be of particular interest to competition shooters. It records in two ways the number of shots the gun has fired: as a cumulative total and as the total of a particular session. The GunPod also gives a display of the recoil generated by the cartridges fired and can give an indication of the power of different shells for comparative purposes. It even displays the current air temperature.

## The Bunkers

Stefano's informative introduction over, it was time to shoot the guns. The extraordinary views over Cook Strait provided a spectacular backdrop to each of The Bunkers' three fields. We were served up an interesting and challenging variety of targets on each field. National honour was preserved in the 3-man team competition that spontaneously evolved through the morning. We kiwis managed to hold off a strong challenge from the Italians, but it was a close-run thing with Jonny Eastwick's expertise being called on to make up the numbers for the Italian duo.

We were restricted in the kind of ammunition we could use. To protect the environment, only felt wads are permitted here. When you consider the volume of shooting that goes on, this is a sensible requirement, but it meant that testing with magnum steel ammunition will have to take place elsewhere. Nevertheless, in the course of the morning we managed to shoot through an impressive amount of target loads as well as felt-wadded hunting loads designed specifically for driven pheasant shooting.

As you might expect, the recoil generated by these loads proved no challenge to the hydraulic Kick-Off system of any of the shotguns. All three proved to be exceptionally soft-shooting. I enjoyed shooting each of them, but I was particularly impressed with the handling of the two Xtremes. In comparison with the Xtrema2, the new models are much less bulky and are substantially lighter so that they are faster pointing but without losing the steadiness of the earlier version.

There is no doubting the effectiveness of the Kick-Off system in reducing recoil. However, a small number of shooters have found the

rearward shuffle of the butt-stock against their face as the cylinders compress to be an annoying distraction. The new positioning of Kick-Off Mega will probably overcome this objection. The compression, slight as it is, now takes place forward of where most shooters' cheeks will contact the stock.

If field testing the Xtreme proves it to be as pleasant and responsive to shoot with magnum game loads as it was with these felt wad ones, then I fear that my trusty Xtrema2 might be about to lose its number one slot in the gun rack

## Lunch

Shooting clay targets is not the only attraction the Bunkers offers. You can enjoy the fine cooking of resident chef, Mark Hartstrong, in the comfort of Boomrock Lodge and sample the selection of fine wines. Over a splendid lunch, we were able to relax and enjoy discussing the performance of the guns while we awaited the arrival of a couple more guests for the afternoon's shooting.

## Springboks at Boomrock

The Springbok World Cup team happened to be staying in the same Wellington hotel as Martyn and the two Italians. Springbok lock, Bakkies Botha is a partner in a gunshop in Pretoria and he recognised Stefano as Beretta's International Sales Manager. Bakkies was very keen to try out the new A400 Xtreme prior to ordering them for his shop, so Martyn invited him to Boomrock. In the event, Bakkies had to have a niggling injury attended to. He sent two younger members of the team to take his place. Patrick Lambie and Francois Louw were delivered to the Bunkers after our lunch. Neither of these Springboks was very experienced with shotguns. However, after some expert tuition from Jonny Eastwick they were soon breaking clays in fine style. They quickly became new fans of the Boomrock and Beretta experience. No doubt they took a positive report on the shotgun's performance to Bakkies.

Our two visitors from Beretta Italy have seen the best of shooting all over Europe, but they were genuinely impressed by their Boomrock experience. Beretta's slogan "500 years. One passion", is prominently displayed on advertising posters at each of the Bunkers' shooting stations. That passion for excellence and for shooting is shared by Jonny and is reflected by Boomrock and The Bunkers. Beretta and Boomrock complement each other perfectly.



Andrea and Stefano with the new guns against the spectacular backdrop of Cook Strait with Mana Island in the distance.



Jonny Eastwick enjoyed shooting the Xtreme.



Charlie Meyer and his wife Kelly in their Otaki Beretta room.