



# Optical journey



Paul Childerley heads to the forests of Germany to sample some divine optics – and to bag a wild boar or two in the process

To launch two new scopes to the Victory V8 family, one for long distance pin point accuracy and one for close, moving targets, Zeiss staged a media event in Laubach, Germany – and I'd managed to bag myself a ticket. This prestigious event is one of the highlights of the year, but with the event being held on 11-12 December 2015, it also takes place during my busiest time of year. We are fully booked with Chinese water deer hunting, and also running two driven shooting estates. I weighed it up, and this was an event I could not miss – so leaving my head gamekeeper Scott in charge, I headed for Germany.

With an early morning flight, I arrived at the shooting range at 11am to be welcomed by the Zeiss team. After catching up with a few familiar faces from around the world, we sat down to a traditional barbecue lunch and

were given the itinerary of the day's events. After lunch I headed to the range where I was greeted by Alexandra Baur, head of PR for Blaser, who allocated me a .30-06 Blaser Professional Success rifle with a Victory V8 1.1-8x30 scope and ammunition, and showed me to my lane on the 100-metre range.

I was asked to have a few shots of the rifle to make sure we were happy with the zero. I wound the scope to maximum 8x power, which gives good clarity and magnification at 100 metres. After the first couple of shots the rifle was shooting a little high, so I wound it down a couple of clicks and repeated a few times until I was happy with my final shot.

Next proficiency test was the driven boar target, a moving target approximately 30 metres away, crossing from right to left with a variable speed to simulate the real thing. I wound the scope down to 1.1x and shot the

target several times, striking the vital zone every time. Previously, I found it difficult to zero low-magnification driven scopes, but knowing it was zeroed on 8x mag on the 100-metre range gave me the confidence to wind down the scope to 1.1x for the moving targets. With my proficiency tests completed, I was confident for the driven hunt the next morning.

Once all the participants had completed the range tests, we were invited into the hunting lodge for the seminar of the new products. Firstly the Victory V8 1.1-8x30 driven hunt specialist, which I had tested in the morning, and secondly the long-range Victory V8 4.8-35x60, which I look forward to testing in the summer.

That evening we all enjoyed a meal together and I was able to meet Gavin Mills, the new head of the UK sports optics



## Germany: Wild boar

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division at Zeiss. As we left it started to snow – a change from the very mild days typical of this autumn and winter.

The following morning everybody was in good spirits, ready to be picked up at 8am to get to the hunt area. On arrival we were greeted by the hunt master, Ruediger, and his team of foresters, game keepers, dog handlers and the traditional horn band. Ruediger assembled all the hunters together to give them the day's briefing. First on the agenda was hunting safety and ethics of the day; next was the quarry list. We could hunt young red stags (without a crown), red hinds, older mouflon rams, roe does, raccoons, raccoon dogs, foxes and wild boar – but no female wild boar with followers, which we were told to “let run”. This was a great and varied selection for the day's hunt. Following a traditional horn blower's fanfare, we were allocated into groups to be placed around the forestry in high towers.

Once ready, we loaded our equipment into the forester's 4x4 and set off on a winding road through the mixed forestry. The snow from last night had turned into sleet then rain, making conditions very wet on the ground. It was another mild day, which was good news for waiting in a high seat for long periods of time.

We arrived at a big block of mature beech trees, and the forester told me it was my stop. The forester showed me to the high tower, where I'd be spending the next three hours waiting for my opportunity. When we arrived, he briefed me on the safety arrangements, telling me places where I couldn't shoot, as the dog handlers could be approaching from that direction. He then disappeared back to the car and I quickly got myself ready as I knew the quarry starts moving as soon as the woods start to be disturbed with vehicles and hunters being placed out.

I loaded the rifle, set the scope magnification and put the red dot on. The great thing with the V8 is that the red dot is on an angle sensor, so will automatically turn off if you stand the scope upright, preserving battery life – but as soon as you pick it up to use it, the red light will come on again, ready to use.

As I was doing this, I glanced at my field of view to shoot over. There was a small bank to my left with an open shooting area, leading to a young, thick spruce plantation trailing away from me with a wide 40-metre ride to the side. To my right was thick cover with small self-set beech trees giving way to mature beech trees in the distance.

The excitement was brewing as the first shot was fired in the distance, which tends to

alert all your senses. After about 20 minutes, there had been several shots echoing around the forest but I hadn't seen any movement.

I could hear the hounds deep into the forest – they must have been a good mile away at least but the noise was getting louder, which was a good sign for me. I waited. By now the hounds were in full cry about 400-500 metres away, and I was poised and ready, thinking the quarry would head for the thick spruce plantation in front, which I had full view of and could cover on two sides.

To my surprise, a single boar came from my back left side, heading down the bank towards the spruce. It was in full gallop, weaving through the young saplings about 40 metres away. After a quick manoeuvre, the red dot was on him and I swung through, gave him an inch of lead, and squeezed the trigger.

I knew the shot was good from the boar's reaction but he kept on running as his adrenaline was in full force. I cycled another round in quick succession and the dot was on him again for the second shot. Even though I was confident he would drop, I placed a follow-up shot to make sure the job was done.

Meanwhile, there was commotion just over the bank, where my boar had come from. I could hear hounds baying and fighting with a boar and I was hoping they were going to



flush it my way, but the next minute there was a bang – the dog handlers had obviously dispatched it. But another boar appeared over the bank, heading for safety in the thick cover in front of me. I couldn't take the shot because I could see the dog handlers just over the brow behind it. I let it come down the bank slightly further, which made my shooting window very small. I knew it was a miss as soon as I pulled the trigger.

Thinking that this boar would head across the end of the ride in front of me, I stayed ready. It bolted flat out across the far end, and I had two quick shots in succession – and missed it clean again. I was on the right line but hadn't given it enough lead. Even though I couldn't get this boar, I was so pleased to get one, and to experience a very exciting hunt.

At 1pm I was greeted by the forester and we collected my boar. I examined my two shots and I was amazed he'd carried on after the first! We headed over the bank to collect the boar the dogs had caught; they were both the same size. After the gralloch we dragged them back to the forester's car for collection for the evening parade.

We all gathered back at the hunting lodge to share success stories and compare notes on how the scope performed. The feedback from all the hunters was so positive. It was great to have the extra magnification on the scope because a couple of hunters shot red deer, which were standing 150 metres away in the woodland.

That evening, we walked to the castle where we had a cup of gluhwein and gathered around the courtyard where the morning's bag was laid out between the four burning corner fires. The horn blowers were at one end and Ruediger and Simone Zaha were at the other. According to tradition, each successful hunter's name is read out, you are congratulated by the hunt masters and given a sprig of spruce. The next part of the ceremony is that each species has its own tune, played by the horn blowers, as a mark of respect to the quarry.

The evening was finished with a wild boar banquet held in the castle, with speeches and of course a few drinks. It was a privilege to hunt and be a part of another country's hunting tradition while testing new products. ■

*The new Zeiss scopes are scheduled for release in March. For more details: 01223 401520, [www.zeiss.co.uk/sportsoptics](http://www.zeiss.co.uk/sportsoptics)*



Drawing a bead, Paul puts the Zeiss V8 scope to good use



A single boar is more than enough for Paul after a breathtaking hunt



The final bag, ready for the traditional salute