



Firearms Act 1968

1968 CHAPTER 27

PART IV

MISCELLANEOUS AND GENERAL

53 Rules for implementing this Act.

The Secretary of State may by statutory instrument make rules—

- (a) prescribing the form of certificates under this Act, and the register required to be kept under section 40 of this Act and other documents;
- (b) prescribing any other thing which under this Act is to be prescribed; and
- (c) generally for carrying this Act into effect;

and rules made under this section may make different provision for different cases.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1** Ss. 53–56 amended by [Firearms \(Amendment\) Act 1988 \(c. 45, SIF 51:1\)](#), s. 25(6)
C2 S. 53 extended (1.7.1997) by [1997 c. 5, s. 50\(5\)](#); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3(b), [Sch. Pt. I](#)

54 Application of Parts I and II to Crown servants.

- (1) Sections 1, 2, 7 to 13 and [^{F1}26A to 32] of this Act apply, subject to the modifications specified in subsection (2) of this section, to persons in the service of Her Majesty in their capacity as such so far as those provisions relate to the purchase and acquisition, but not so far as they relate to the possession, of firearms.
- (2) The modifications referred to above are the following:—
 - (a) a person in the service of Her Majesty duly authorised in writing in that behalf may purchase or acquire firearms and ammunition for the public service without holding a certificate under this Act;
 - (b) a person in the naval, military or air service of Her Majesty shall, if he satisfies the chief officer of police on an application under [^{F2}section 26A] of this Act

Status: Point in time view as at 10/02/2011.

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that he is required to purchase a firearm or ammunition for his own use in his capacity as such, be entitled without payment of any fee to the grant of a firearm certificate authorising the purchase or acquisition or, as the case may be, to the grant of a shot gun certificate.

^{F3}[(3) For the purposes of this section and of any rule of law whereby any provision of this Act does not bind the Crown, a person shall be deemed to be in the service of Her Majesty if he is—

- (a) a member of a police force, or
- (b) a person employed by a police authority who is under the direction and control of a chief officer of police [^{F4}, or.]
- (c) a member of the [^{F5}staff of the Serious Organised Crime Agency][^{F6}, or
- (d) a member of the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency].

[^{F7}(3A) An appropriately authorised person who is either a member of the British Transport Police Force or an associated civilian employee does not commit any offence under this Act by reason of having in his possession, or purchasing or acquiring, for use by that Force anything which is—

- (a) a prohibited weapon by virtue of paragraph (b) of section 5(1) of this Act; or
- (b) ammunition containing or designed or adapted to contain any such noxious thing as is mentioned in that paragraph.

[For the purposes of this section and of any rule of law whereby any provision of this ^{F8}(3AA) Act does not bind the Crown—

- (a) a member of the Civil Nuclear Constabulary shall be deemed to be a person in the service of Her Majesty; and
- (b) references to the public service shall be deemed to include references to use by a person in the exercise and performance of his powers and duties as a member of the Civil Nuclear Constabulary.]

(3B) In subsection (3A) of this section—

- (a) “appropriately authorised” means authorised in writing by the Chief Constable of the British Transport Police Force or, if he is not available, by a member of that Force who is of at least the rank of assistant chief constable; and
- (b) “associated civilian employee” means a person employed by the [^{F9}British Transport Police Authority] who is under the direction and control of the Chief Constable of the British Transport Police Force.]

[^{F10}(4) For the purposes of this section and any rule of law whereby any provision of this Act does not bind the Crown, the persons specified in subsection (5) of this section shall be deemed to be in the naval, military or air service of Her Majesty, insofar as they are not otherwise in, or treated as being in, any such service.

(5) The persons referred to in subsection (4) of this section are the following—

- (a) members of any foreign force when they are serving with any of the naval, military or air forces of Her Majesty;
- (b) members of any cadet corps approved by the Secretary of State when—
 - (i) they are engaged as members of the corps ^{F11}. . . in connection with, drill or [^{F12}target shooting]; and

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- (ii) in the case of possession of prohibited weapons or prohibited ammunition when engaged in [^{F12}target shooting], they are on service premises; and
- (c) persons providing instruction to any members of a cadet corps who fall within paragraph (b).
- (6) In subsection (5) of this section—
- “foreign force” means any of the naval, military or air forces of a country other than the United Kingdom; and
- “service premises” means premises, including any ship or aircraft, used for any purpose of any of the naval, military or air forces of Her Majesty.]

Textual Amendments

- F1** Words in s. 54(1) substituted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 52(1), **Sch. 2 para. 10**; S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3(b), **Sch. Pt. I**
- F2** Words in s. 54(2)(b) substituted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 52(1), **Sch. 2 para. 11**; S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3(b), **Sch. Pt. I**
- F3** S. 54(3) substituted (1.10.1994) by 1994 c. 29, s. 42; S.I. 1994/2025, **art. 5(2)(g)**
- F4** S. 54(3)(c) and preceding word inserted (1.4.1998) by 1997 c. 50, s. 134(1), **Sch. 9 para. 18**; S.I. 1998/354, **art. 2(2)(ay)**
- F5** Words in s. 54(3)(c) substituted (1.4.2006) by Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 (c. 15), ss. 59, 178, **Sch. 4 para. 18**; S.I. 2006/378, **art. 4(1)**, Sch. para. 10 (subject to art. 4(2)-(7))
- F6** S. 54(3)(d) and word inserted (29.1.2010) by Policing and Crime Act 2009 (c. 26), ss. 110, 116(1); S.I. 2010/125, art. 2(o)
- F7** S. 54(3A)(3B) inserted (14.12.2001) by 2001 c. 24, s. 101, **Sch. 7 para. 9**
- F8** S. 54(3AA) inserted (1.4.2005) by Energy Act 2004 (c. 20), ss. 69, 198(2), **Sch. 14 para. 3**, S.I. 2005/877, {art. 2(1)}, Sch. 1
- F9** Words in s. 54(3B)(b) substituted (1.7.2004) by The British Transport Police (Transitional and Consequential Provisions) Order 2004 (S.I. 2004/1573), {art. 12(1)(b)}
- F10** S. 54(4)-(6) added (1.4.1997) by 1996 c. 46, s. 28(1); S.I. 1997/304, **art. 2**
- F11** Words in s. 54(5)(b) repealed (1.10.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 52(2), **Sch. 3**; S.I. 1997/1535, **art. 3(c)**
- F12** Words in s. 54(5)(b) substituted (1.10.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 52(1), **Sch. 2 para. 3**; S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3(c), **Sch. Pt. II**

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C3** Ss. 53–56 amended by Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 (c. 45, SIF 51:1), s. 25(6)
- C4** S. 54 extended with modification by Atomic Energy Authority (Special Constables) Act 1976 (c. 23), s. 1
- C5** S. 54 extended (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 50(5); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3(b), **Sch. Pt. I**
- C6** S. 54 amended (1.7.2004) by Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003 (c. 20), ss. 73, 120(1), **Sch. 5 para. 4(1)(a)(2)(b)**; S.I. 2004/1572, **art. 3(ddd)(jjj)**
- C7** S. 54(3) extended (which shall come into force on the date notified in the London, Edinburgh and Belfast Gazettes) by S.I. 1993/1813, **art. 7(2)** (as amended (on the date notified in the London, Edinburgh and Belfast Gazettes) by 2001/1544, arts. 1(2), 3(2))
- S. 54(3) extended (which shall come into force on the date notified in the London, Edinburgh and Belfast Gazettes) by S.I. 2003/2818, **art. 9**

55 Exercise of police functions.

- (1) Rules made under section 53 of this Act may—

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- (a) regulate the manner in which chief officers of police are to carry out their duties under this Act;
 - (b) enable all or any of the functions of a chief officer of police to be discharged by a deputy in the event of his illness or absence, or of a vacancy in the office of chief officer of police.
- (2) Without prejudice to subsection (1)(b) of this section, the functions of a chief officer of police under this Act shall be exercisable on any occasion by a person, or a person of a particular class, authorised by the chief officer of police to exercise that function on that occasion, or on occasions of that class or on all occasions.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C8** Ss. 53–56 amended by [Firearms \(Amendment\) Act 1988 \(c. 45, SIF 51:1\)](#), [s. 25\(6\)](#)
C9 S. 55 extended (1.7.1997) by [1997 c. 5, s. 50\(5\)](#); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3(b), [Sch. Pt. I](#)

56 Service of notices.

Any notice required or authorised by this Act to be given to a person may be sent by registered post or by the recorded delivery service in a letter addressed to him at his last or usual place of abode or, in the case of a registered firearms dealer, at any place of business in respect of which he is registered.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C10** Ss. 53–56 amended by [Firearms \(Amendment\) Act 1988 \(c. 45, SIF 51:1\)](#), [s. 25\(6\)](#)
C11 S. 56 extended (1.7.1997) by [1997 c. 5, s. 50\(5\)](#); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3(b), [Sch. Pt. I](#)

57 Interpretation.

- (1) In this Act, the expression “firearm” means a lethal barrelled weapon of any description from which any shot, bullet or other missile can be discharged and includes—
- (a) any prohibited weapon, whether it is such a lethal weapon as aforesaid or not; and
 - (b) any component part of such a lethal or prohibited weapon; and
 - (c) any accessory to any such weapon designed or adapted to diminish the noise or flash caused by firing the weapon;
- and so much of section 1 of this Act as excludes any description of firearm from the category of firearms to which that section applies shall be construed as also excluding component parts of, and accessories to, firearms of that description.

[^{F13}(1A)]

- (2) In this Act, the expression “ammunition” means ammunition for any firearm and includes grenades, bombs and other like missiles, whether capable of use with a firearm or not, and also includes prohibited ammunition.

[^{F14}(2A) In this Act “self-loading” and “pump-action” in relation to any weapon mean respectively that it is designed or adapted (otherwise than as mentioned in section 5(1)

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- (a) so that it is automatically re-loaded or that it is so designed or adapted that it is re-loaded by the manual operation of the fore-end or forestock of the weapon.
- (2B) In this Act “revolver”, in relation to a smooth-bore gun, means a gun containing a series of chambers which revolve when the gun is fired.]
- (3) For purposes of sections 45, 46, 50, 51(4) and 52 of this Act, the offences under this Act relating specifically to air weapons are those under sections 22(4), 22(5), 23(1) [^{F15}, 24(4) and 24ZA(1)] .
- (4) In this Act—
- “acquire” means hire, accept as a gift or borrow and “acquisition” shall be construed accordingly;
 - “air weapon” has the meaning assigned to it by section 1(3)(b) of this Act;
 - ^{F16}[“another member State” means a member State other than the United Kingdom, and “other member States” shall be construed accordingly;]
 - “area” means a police area;
 - ^{F17}[“Article 7 authority” means a document issued by virtue of section 32A(1)(b) or (2) of this Act;]
 - ^{F18}[“British Transport Police Force” means the constables appointed under section 53 of the British Transport Commission Act 1949;]
 - “certificate” (except in a context relating to the registration of firearms dealers) and “certificate under this Act” mean a firearm certificate or a shot gun certificate and—
 - (a) “firearm certificate” means a certificate granted by a chief officer of police under this Act in respect of any firearm or ammunition to which section 1 of this Act applies and includes a certificate granted in Northern Ireland under section 1 of the ^{M1}Firearms Act 1920 or under an enactment of the Parliament of Northern Ireland amending or substituted for that section; and
 - (b) “shot gun certificate” means a certificate granted by a chief officer of police under this Act and authorising a person to possess shot guns;
 - ^{F19}“civilian officer” means—
 - (a) a person employed by a police authority or the Corporation of the City of London who is under the direction and control of a chief officer of police; ^{F20} . . .
 - (b)]
 - ^{F21}[“European firearms pass” means a document to which the holder of a certificate under this Act is entitled by virtue of section 32A(1)(a) of this Act;
 - “European weapons directive” means the directive of the Council of the European Communities No.91/477/EEC^{M2} (directive on the control of the acquisition and possession of weapons);]
 - “firearms dealer” means a person who, by way of trade or business,
 - (a) [^{F22}manufactures, sells, transfers, repairs, tests or proves firearms or ammunition to which section 1 of this Act applies or shot guns; or
 - (b) sells or transfers air weapons.]
 - “imitation firearm” means any thing which has the appearance of being a firearm (other than such a weapon as is mentioned in section 5(1)(b) of

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this Act) whether or not it is capable of discharging any shot, bullet or other missile;

F23

“premises” includes any land;

“prescribed” means prescribed by rules made by the Secretary of State under section 53 of this Act;

“prohibited weapon” and “prohibited ammunition” have the meanings assigned to them by section 5(2) of this Act;

“public place” includes any [F24highway][F24road within the meaning of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984] and any other premises or place to which at the material time the public have or are permitted to have access, whether on payment or otherwise;

“registered”, in relation to a firearms dealer, means registered either—

- (a) in Great Britain, under section 33 of this Act, or
- (b) in Northern Ireland, under section 8 of the M3Firearms Act 1920 or any enactment of the Parliament of Northern Ireland amending or substituted for that section,

and references to “the register”, “registration” and a “certificate of registration” shall be construed accordingly, except in section 40;

[F25“rifle” includes carbine;]

“shot gun” has the meaning assigned to it by section 1(3)(a) of this Act and, in sections 3(1) and 45(2) of this Act and in the definition of “firearms dealer”, includes any component part of a shot gun and any accessory to a shot gun designed or adapted to diminish the noise or flash caused by firing the gun;

“slaughtering instrument” means a firearm which is specially designed or adapted for the instantaneous slaughter of animals or for the instantaneous stunning of animals with a view to slaughtering them; and

“transfer” includes let on hire, give, lend and part with possession, and “transferee” and “transferor” shall be construed accordingly.

F26[(4A) For the purposes of any reference in this Act to the use of any firearm or ammunition for a purpose not authorised by the European weapons directive, the directive shall be taken to authorise the use of a firearm or ammunition as or with a slaughtering instrument and the use of a firearm and ammunition—

- (a) for sporting purposes;
- (b) for the shooting of vermin, or, in the course of carrying on activities in connection with the management of any estate, of other wildlife; and
- (c) for competition purposes and target shooting outside competitions.]

(5) The definitions in subsections (1) to (3) above apply to the provisions of this Act except where the context otherwise requires.

(6) For purposes of this Act—

- (a) the length of the barrel of a firearm shall be measured from the muzzle to the point at which the charge is exploded on firing; and
- (b) a shot gun or an air weapon shall be deemed to be loaded if there is ammunition in the chamber or barrel or in any magazine or other device which is in such a position that the ammunition can be fed into the chamber or barrel by the manual or automatic operation of some part of the gun or weapon.

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Textual Amendments

- F13** S. 57(1A) repealed (1.2.1998) by 1997 c. 64, s. 2(7), **Sch.**; S.I. 1997/3114, art. 4, **Sch. Pt. II**
- F14** Ss. 57(2A)(2B) inserted by **Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988** (c. 45, SIF 51:1), **s. 25(2)**
- F15** Words in s. 57(3) substituted (10.2.2011) by **Crime and Security Act 2010** (c. 17), **ss. 46(3)**, 59(1); S.I. 2011/144, art. 2
- F16** Definition in s. 57(4) inserted (1.1.1993) by S.I. 1992/2823, **reg. 5(2)(a)**
- F17** Definition in s. 57(4) inserted (1.1.1993) by S.I. 1992/2823, **reg. 5(2)(b)**
- F18** Definition of “British Transport Police Force” in s. 57(4) inserted (14.12.2001) by 2001 c. 24, s. 101, **Sch. 7 para. 10**
- F19** Definition in s. 57(4) of “civilian officer” inserted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, **s. 43(2)**; S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3(b), **Sch. Pt. I**
- F20** S. 57(4): para. (b) in the definition of “civilian officer” and the word “or” immediately preceding it repealed (3.7.2000) by 1999 c. 29, s. 325, 423, **Sch. 27 para. 22, Sch. 34 Pt. VII**; S.I. 2000/1648, art. 2, **Sch.**
- F21** Definitions in s. 57(4) inserted (1.1.1993) by S.I. 1992/2823, **reg. 5(2)(c)**
- F22** S. 57(4): words in definition of “firearms dealer” substituted (6.4.2007 for certain purposes and 1.10.2007 otherwise) by **Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006** (c. 38), **ss. 31(3)**, 66(2); S.I. 2007/858, **art. 2(e)**; S.I. 2007/2180, **art. 4(a)**
- F23** Definition of “indictable offence” repealed by **Criminal Law Act 1977** (c. 45), **Sch. 13**
- F24** Words “road (within the meaning of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984)” substituted (S.) for “highway” by **Roads (Scotland) Act 1984** (c. 54, SIF 108), s. 156(1), **Sch. 9 para. 62**
- F25** Words inserted by **Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988** (c. 45, SIF 51:1), **s. 25(3)**
- F26** S. 57(4A) inserted (1.1.1993) by S.I. 1992/2823, **reg. 3(5)**

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C12** S. 57 amended (1.7.2004) by **Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003** (c. 20), **ss. 73**, 120(1), **Sch. 5 para. 4(1)(a)(2)(b)**; S.I. 2004/1572, **art. 3(ddd)(jjj)**

Marginal Citations

- M1** 1920 c. 43.
M2 OJ No. L256, 13.9.91, p.51.
M3 1920 c. 43.

58 Particular savings.

- (1) Nothing in this Act shall apply to the proof houses of the Master, Wardens and Society of the Mystery of Gunmakers of the City of London and the guardians of the Birmingham proof house or the rifle range at Small Heath in Birmingham where firearms are sighted and tested, so as to interfere in any way with the operations of those two companies in proving firearms under the provisions of the ^{M4}Gun Barrel Proof Act 1868 or any other Acts for the time being in force, or to any person carrying firearms to or from any such proof house when being taken to such proof house for the purposes of proof or being removed therefrom after proof.
- (2) Nothing in this Act relating to firearms shall apply to an antique firearm which is sold, transferred, purchased, acquired or possessed as a curiosity or ornament.
- (3) The provisions of this Act relating to ammunition shall be in addition to and not in derogation of any enactment relating to the keeping and sale of explosives.

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- (4) The powers of arrest and entry conferred by Part III of this Act shall be without prejudice to any power of arrest or entry which may exist apart from this Act; and section 52(3) of this Act is not to be taken as prejudicing the power of a constable, when arresting a person for an offence, to seize property found in his possession or any other power of a constable to seize firearms, ammunition or other property, being a power exercisable apart from that subsection.
- (5) Nothing in this Act relieves any person using or carrying a firearm from his obligation to take out a licence to kill game under the enactments requiring such a licence.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C13** S. 58 amended by [Firearms \(Amendment\) Act 1988 \(c. 45, SIF 51:1\)](#), **s. 25(6)**
- C14** S. 58 applied with modifications (6.4.2007) by [Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 \(c. 38\)](#), **ss. 50(3)(d), 66(2)**; [S.I. 2007/858](#), **art. 2(h)(ii)**
- C15** S. 58 extended (1.7.1997) by [1997 c. 5, s. 50\(5\)](#); [S.I. 1997/1535](#), **art. 3(b)**, **Sch. Pt. I**

Marginal Citations

- M4** 1868 c. cxiii.

59 Repeals and general savings.

- (1) The enactments specified in the second column of Schedule 7 to this Act are hereby repealed to the extent specified in the third column of that Schedule.
- (2) In so far as any certificate, authority or permit granted, order or rule made, registration effected, or other thing done under an enactment repealed by this Act could have been granted, made, effected or done under a corresponding provision of this Act, it shall not be invalidated by the repeal of that enactment but shall have effect as if granted, made, effected or done under that corresponding provision; and for the purposes of this provision anything which under section 33(1) or (2) of the ^{M5}Firearms Act 1937 had effect as if done under any enactment in that Act shall, so far as may be necessary for the continuity of the law, be treated as done under the corresponding enactment in this Act.
- (3) Any document referring to an enactment repealed by this Act or by the ^{M6}Firearms Act 1937 shall, so far as may be necessary for preserving its effect, be construed as referring, or as including a reference, to the corresponding enactment in this Act.
- (4) The mention of particular matters in this section shall not be taken to affect the general application of section 38 of the ^{M7}Interpretation Act 1889 with regard to the effect of repeals.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C16** The text of s. 59(1) and Sch. 7 is in the form in which it was originally enacted: it was not reproduced in Statutes in Force and does not reflect any amendments or repeals which may have been made prior to 1.2.1991.

Marginal Citations

- M5** 1937 c. 12.
M6 1937 c. 12.

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M7 [1889 c. 63.](#)

60 Short title, commencement and extent.

- (1) This Act may be cited as the Firearms Act 1968.
- (2) This Act shall come into force on 1st August 1968.
- (3) This Act shall not extend to Northern Ireland.

Status:

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