

GUN REVIEW

CREATING A CLASSIC

VIC HARKER IS IMPRESSED BY BOXALL & EDMISTON'S NEW SIDE-BY-SIDE SIDELOCK.

One of the many things I admire about Boxall & Edmiston is that they are not just about recreating the past. This is reflected both in the individuality of the guns they make and the innovative processes incorporated into their production. Cad-cam computer-assisted design is used to evaluate every part of the gun to ensure each component will operate efficiently. However, traditional gun making principles as they apply to both form and function are always the final arbiters.

Their first gun, a side-plated boxlock, while having all the qualities of a traditional game gun of this type, incorporated features

which improved both its mechanical function and durability.

Once again Boxall & Edmiston have bucked the trend with their new back action side-by-side sidelock. If this sounds like a contradiction in terms it's not, rather the main spring is located behind the hammer as opposed to in the bar of the action body, hence back-lock.

The back-lock was often the option British makers chose when seeking to produce especially strong guns, and without having to machine the bar of the action to accommodate the main spring, that's what they achieved. In the days of the Empire when English sportsmen travelled the globe in

search of their sport, the back-lock incorporated into both their shotguns and double rifles was a popular choice for its robustness.

The action body is strengthened in another area by the table's greater depth, a feature it shares with the maker's boxlock. As to the jointing of the gun, a full draw on the circle of the rear lump has been introduced - in most guns all the stress is taken at the cross-pin on which the forward lump/barrel hook pivots. By providing another massive extra bearing surface which also includes a replaceable insert between the rear lump and the bridge of the action, stress is distributed more equally creating a much stronger action overall.

While the back-lock gun can have rather an austere appearance, the Boxall & Edmiston's lock plates have an extended leg and so share the same elegant look of a barlock. The lock plates and all the other metal surfaces are covered with a dense acanthus leaf design achieved by employing new laser engraving technology, and the effect is quite stunning. Only the most expert eyes can see the difference between this method and handwork which would add 25 per cent to the price of the gun. The stocking of the gun is also to a very high standard in terms of both fit and configuration. As always, a little less toe and a more pronounced bump would have suited me better, but these are

personal foibles and as with individual dimensions are accommodated by the maker. The example that was sent to me also featured a Deeley catch fore-end fastening, but the Anson rod option is available and would be my preference.

The barrels are manufactured incorporating the monobloc system as opposed to chopper lump or demi-bloc options. A time proven method with impeccable credentials, so far as strength is concerned, and combined with modern welding techniques, appearance mirrors the more traditional kinds of barrel assembly. Both the making of the barrels - including the boring and the exterior profiling - is carried out by highly skilled craftsmen in the London trade who bring their own particular flair to this work, which is immediately apparent in the sidelock's balance and handling.

In fact the overall look of the gun would suggest a price well in excess of its £25,000 (plus VAT).

Shooting impressions

With 30" barrels this sidelock weighed 7lb and had just a little more heft than some English game guns. This is undoubtedly due to the slightly heavier action, and in my view perfectly suited to modern shooting conditions where high birds are much in favour and the cartridges used are consequently more powerful. As the weight was nicely between

the hands, the Boxall & Edmiston gun combined fast handling characteristics but was sufficiently stable to shoot longer birds successfully. While the stock on the sample gun had 15¼" length of pull, long enough for me, 7/16" drop at comb and 2¼" at heel was too low (not a problem and easily altered to suit). And in fact the gun's manageable handling compensated nicely. Shooting the Boxall & Edmiston sidelock at Ian Coley's Shooting School on the high tower and some long crossing targets was an enjoyable experience. This sidelock, while traditional in appearance will, as I have already suggested, suit the modern shooter, the kind of shooting he wants to do and the ammunition that he uses.

Technical specification

Model:	Back action sidelock with intercepting sears
Gauge:	12-bore
Chamber:	2¾"
Chokes:	To customer requirements
Rib:	Game concave
Stock:	Straight hand
Fore-end:	Splinter, Deeley catch or Anson rod option
Engraving:	Full leaf pattern engraving, bespoke engraving by quotation
Price:	£25,000 (plus VAT)
Contact:	Telephone: 01743 762352

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