



WHAT THE GUNSMITH SAW

THE BLOWN, THE BROKEN AND THE BUSTED: OUR RESIDENT GUNSMITH WARNS THAT A LACK OF REGULAR MAINTENANCE CAN CAUSE A WHOLE HOST OF HORRORS – NOT TO MENTION A BIG DENT IN THE WALLET

Over the last couple of issues I have written about various aspects of gun fitting that you may expect a competent gunsmith to advise on and help you with. However, this is by no means the whole story. So for this month's article I want to show you some of the other 'horrors' that I have been asked to repair, mainly because of neglect, harsh use or accident.

The barrel

Multichokes have been a great innovation for both clay and game shooters. A quick change of chokes turns your Skeet gun into a longer range Sporter, or a driven pheasant gun into a high wildfowling piece. Yes, multichokes are wonderful, providing they are looked

after and put into the gun properly, according to the manufacturer's instructions. Picture 1 shows what can happen if this isn't done.

A dirty or damaged choke as shown in the picture may not seat properly into the choke aperture, allowing gas to rip it out of the barrel.

edge of the choke, causing a partial barrel blockage with the results shown in picture 2.

An even more violent result from a blockage in the choke is shown in picture 3. On this occasion it had separated the barrels from the raised rib for eight inches from the muzzle.

'Three tonnes per square inch of pressure deserves care and respect'

With so much carbon and dirt in the threads the choke may feel fully tightened home, but a gap may remain at the back edge or seat. Due to the choke not being seated properly, the gas has lifted the back

That's what three tonnes per square inch of pressure can do – it deserves care and respect. The only way to repair this magnitude of damage is to shorten the barrel, cutting away the blown section. However, smaller



PICTURE 1: A DIRTY OR DAMAGED CHOKE MAY NOT SEAT PROPERLY INTO THE CHOKE APERTURE, ALLOWING GAS TO RIP IT OUT OF THE BARREL



PICTURE 2: THE CHOKE HASN'T BEEN SEATED PROPERLY, RESULTING IN A PARTIAL BARREL BLOCKAGE



GETTING TECHNICAL

By Tim Greenwood



PICTURE 3: THIS IS WHAT THREE TONNES PER SQUARE INCH OF PRESSURE CAN DO



PICTURE 6: A SIMPLE, REGULAR SERVICE WILL SAVE MAJOR WORK

bulges without splits in the outer wall can usually be cold swaged back into shape, then struck off and re-blacked without any visual defects.

Picture 4, however, is my favourite in demonstrating "what can possibly go wrong?" The story behind this damage is that two friends went shooting and when it was time to go home, this Browning was laid in the boot of the car in its gun bag. The other friend went to place his gun in and decided to check

that it was unloaded by pulling the trigger. It wasn't, and this was the result of 28 grms of lead hitting this barrel, from the outside. Thank goodness it was just the gun that got mangled.

Some of you who own older English guns may have noticed little bits of rust, or rusty seepage along the sides of the ribs where they join the tubes and probably thought nothing of it and just wiped it off with an oily rag. Be warned, one day the rib is going to part company with the tubes, and this (picture 5) is what you may find.

Due to degradation of the solder, or pin holes in the solder when the ribs were first fitted, moisture ingresses and together with the acid-based flux can

cause the kind of mess shown in picture 5. Fortunately, this can be put right providing the metal of the tubes has not been eaten away too badly, so please, if you do see rust or seepage, get it checked. The ribs of a gun, whether an over-and-under or a side-by-side, are part of the integral strength of the barrels, supplying rigidity to the tubes. Any lifting or looseness should be inspected immediately by a competent gunsmith and remedial work undertaken before the gun is shot. Also check that the barrels fit tight to the standing breach of the action. Ensure there



PICTURE 4: WHAT CAN POSSIBLY GO WRONG? BE WARNED



PICTURE 5: DEGRADATION OF THE SOLDER CAN LEAD TO A MESS LIKE THIS - WATCH OUT FOR WARNING SIGNS LIKE RUST AND SEEPAGE



is no wobble or movement. Hold the gun up to the daylight and check that you cannot see any light between the breach face and the standing breach. Any gaps or looseness can allow gases to escape sideways, and in severe cases the gun can actually blow open with dire results. Once again, all of these problems can be overcome by a competent gunsmith.

PICTURE 8: EVENTUALLY A LACK OF REGULAR MAINTENANCE WILL COST A LOT OF MONEY



Actions

Most action problems are caused by a lack of maintenance. I suggest to my clients that their guns should be serviced and checked at least once every two years and more frequently if under heavy use, especially if they have been shooting a lot in the rain.

In picture six are the sidelocks from an Army & Navy. I think they had not been serviced for a little more than two years – probably nearer 60

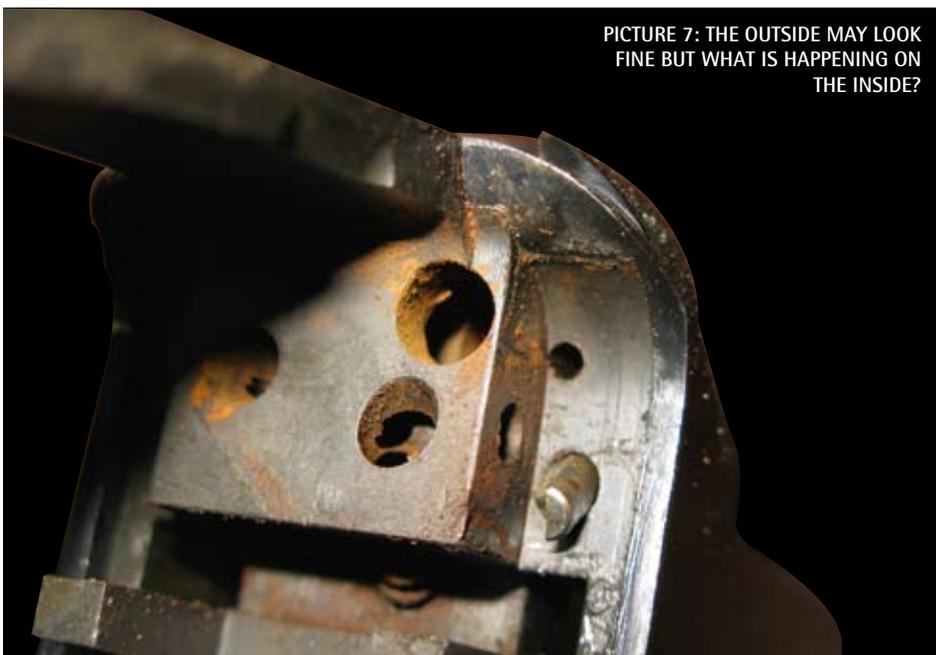
years. The result was that a lot of strain had been put on the action, causing the tumbler links to break. A simple service would have saved this turning into a major part-making job. Although the links shown are small, they are extremely fiddly and time-consuming to make.

The customer who bought me the Perazzi shown in picture 7 could not understand why it had “packed up”. When I asked him whether he had had the gun serviced he replied “Well – I have only had the gun five years. I always give it a wipe over with an oily rag”. He was right, the outside was fine – but the inside?

Picture 8 shows the rest of the internals from this poor Perazzi. Actually, it’s a testimony to the skill of Perazzi gun makers that it kept working for as long as it did.

Once again, a simple service at the end of a season’s shooting would have saved this man a lot of money. Apart from all the parts having to be polished then re-blackened, all of the action springs had to be replaced – which cost four to five times more than the cost of the service.

PICTURE 7: THE OUTSIDE MAY LOOK FINE BUT WHAT IS HAPPENING ON THE INSIDE?



GETTING TECHNICAL

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PICTURE 9: A BROKEN OR DAMAGED STOCK CAN CAUSE HEARTBREAK – BUT ALL' NOT LOST



Stocks and woodwork

Unless you have had a broken or damaged stock, you cannot understand the heartache that you go

through when that beautiful piece of Walnut that has been lovingly fitted to your gun is lying in fragments at your feet, or is bearing the wounds of broken clay hitting it.

is not lost, it can be repaired or refurbished". As you can see, the Beretta stock in picture 9 has broken longitudinally through to the top of the grip.

have your gun re-stocked.

Further examples of my work, together with advice on choosing a gun and gun fitting, can be found on my website at the address below.

'Guns should be serviced and checked at least once every two years'

through when that beautiful piece of Walnut that has been lovingly fitted to your gun is lying in fragments at your feet, or is bearing the wounds of broken clay hitting it.

I get a great deal of satisfaction when the customer arrives in my workshop and I can tell him "All

However, picture 10 demonstrates that with a little time and patience it can be repaired to as good as new.

Modern glues and methods have meant that most repairs are permanent, not temporary, and are a real alternative to having to pay to



PICTURE 10: GOOD AS NEW – WITH A LITTLE TIME AND PATIENCE THE WOUNDS CAN BE FULLY HEALED

Tim Greenwood offers the following services:

- Full gun fitting service, free help and advice gained from working with some of the best shooters in the world.
- All stock work, including cast, bend, lengthening, shortening, repairs to broken and cracked stocks, re-finishing, re-chequering, re-heading.
- Specialises in wooden stock extensions matched to your existing stock.
- All barrel work, including choke alterations, re-black, re-brown, re-lay ribs, dent and bulge repairs, lapping to remove internal pits and marks.
- All action work, including servicing to O/U, box locks, side locks. Replacing of firing pins, mainsprings, top lever springs, tightening, full rejoining, and all ejector work.
- Specialist part making available if required.

Visit Tim's website at www.greenwoodgunsmiths.co.uk