

# If at first you don't **SUCCEED...**

**Tim Greenwood** continues work on his new Skeet gun and meets an interesting customer with some very unique requirements



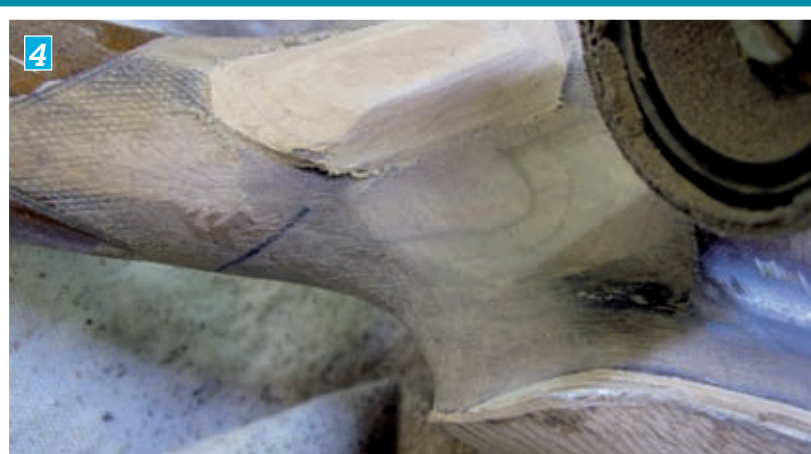
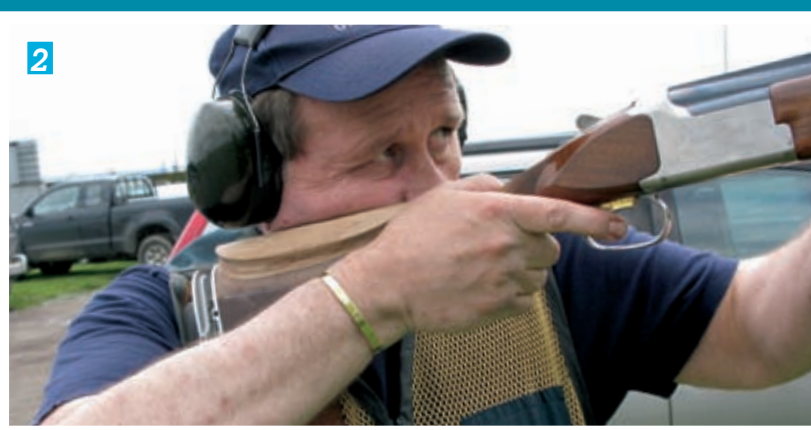
**Tim Greenwood** has almost 30 years' gunsmithing experience and is relied on by many of the top names in clay shooting

**I**n last month's article, I started to make the changes to my venerable Browning 325 32" 12b. I hoped these changes would make it suitable to shoot Skeet with, without aggravating old neck and shoulder injuries that have prevented me from shooting for some 2 ½ years. The customisation included fitting a heavy Gracoil recoil absorbing system, and a roll-over comb to decrease the drop and increase the width at the top of the comb.

The end result was not very pretty but, with a little cleaning up and shaping to the comb, off I went to Kingsferry Shooting Ground to try out my new baby.

It wasn't bad, but it felt a little unwieldy and not an extension of me. It was more like I was using someone else's gun who was twice my size! It wasn't very comfortable in my face and I was quite sore under my cheekbone for a few days afterwards. There was some good news though – I could repeatedly mount and fire the gun without feeling any recoil through my neck and shoulders. To me, this meant my inability to shoot had finally come to an end and I could re-join my fellow clay shooters in the best sport in the world.

Back in the workshop, I lowered the comb by removing a few layers of veneer, being careful to keep the comb parallel to the rib. This is vitally important when you wish to reduce recoil through the face. I also thinned down the side where my face sits to allow my head to



line up with the rib more naturally, and tweaked the length of pull and position of the pad on the Gracoil. As you can see<sup>7</sup>, the drop from the back of the comb to the top of the pad needed to be 30mm to give me a comfortable "head up" position<sup>2</sup>. Back to Kingsferry, and I have to say, much better! Although I was only practicing, I remembered most of what I had once known about Skeet shooting and was scoring 22/23's without any damage to my cheek, or felt recoil through my shoulders and neck. However the gun still did not feel an extension of my hand and arm.

So, it was back to the workshop to start work on the grip for my right hand.

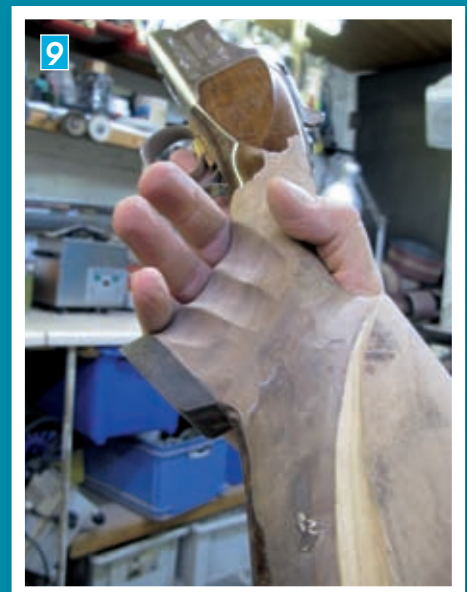
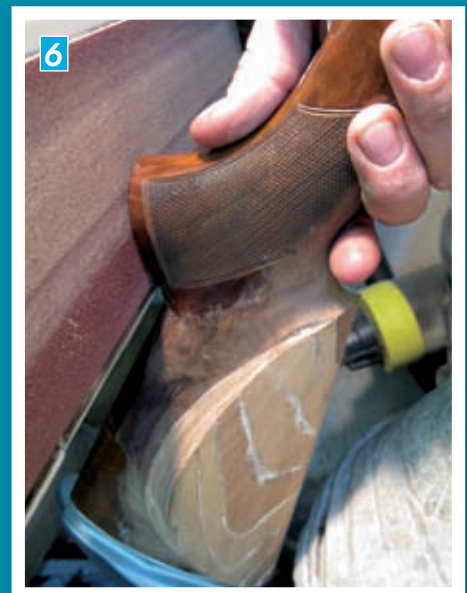
I had already changed the standard Browning grip a little to allow my hand to fit more comfortably down the side of the stock. This is my preferred hold as I feel it allows the master hand to point the gun better at the target, but I wanted to re-create the anatomical grip I had fashioned on my old Beretta Trap gun.

First, I glued some more layers of veneer<sup>3</sup> onto the right hand side of the grip which, when dry, I shaped using a wheel into a palm swell. I also deepened the indentation on the right hand side of the nose of the comb to allow the ball of my thumb to sit into the grip more comfortably<sup>4</sup>. I wanted to extend the grip downward too as, in this new position, the base of my hand was hanging off the grip<sup>5</sup>.

To achieve this, the end of the pistol grip needed to be sanded flat and square using a bench mounted sanding belt machine<sup>6</sup>. Next a piece of ebony (not ebonite, the plastic sometimes used to extend stocks) was cut from the block shown and roughly shaped to the required size to fit onto the flattened area<sup>7</sup>. This extended the grip down by 12mm, enough for the base of my hand and little finger to grip.

With all the additional bits of wood now added to the grip, it was time to start shaping the grip to my anatomical requirements. As previously stated, a larger wheel was used to shape the right hand side for the palm swell, and a smaller mini drum sander was used to form the positions for my other fingers and thumb to sit<sup>8</sup>.

As you can see in pictures<sup>9 and 10</sup>, with this work undertaken, the basic anatomical shape for my right hand was formed and the gun was ready for another outing.



So many shooters who I do this work for want to rush ahead and get the whole project finished as soon as possible; however finishing the gun is, in most cases, the most time consuming and therefore the most expensive part of the whole job. You are much better off

shooting the gun a few times to make sure it is perfect, rather than having to cut into a beautiful finish to make minor tweaks later on.

I often curse the fact that I find it almost impossible to buy a gun "off the rack" that fits me as I want it too; being

a tall, somewhat overweight chap with exacting requirements can be a real pain. This was all put into perspective a few months ago when I met a young man called Ben who has some real physical challenges to overcome.

Ben has been taken under the wing of Robert and Jack Sparrowhawk, well known local shooters, to help him achieve his wish to shoot. Amongst Ben's physical challenges are hands and arms that do not fully extend, spinal problems, and a very long but stiff neck.

Robert and Jack had put together an old single barrel .410 with some wood added to the stock to see if Ben could cope with shooting. I am assured, he not only coped but proceeded to shoot pigeons out of the air with this gun, much to the amazement of all. After showing his capabilities, Ben took some of his hard earned money and purchased an 28b o/u and came to me to have it adapted to him.

As the gun was a lot heavier than the .410 originally shot, between the three of us we came up with several ideas to help Ben control and shoot the gun. First<sup>11</sup>, I made a plate which swung down from the stock into the shoulder pocket with a rod screwed into place so that the gun could rest on Ben's shoulder and stay in position while waiting to shoot. This also lifted the gun up to his face allowing him a sight picture along the barrel.

The second alteration<sup>12</sup> required an additional handle to be installed under the trigger guard for his right hand to grip and a further handle coming back from the forend which his left hand could grip and help support and swing the shotgun. Ben "pulls" the trigger with the back of his right thumb.

As you can see in picture<sup>13</sup> the gun is very much a prototype and not very pretty at the moment, but over the next few months I am sure between the three of us we will be able to refine it. The gun may never be a thing of beauty in the purist sense, but it will be a real thing of beauty for Ben as it will allow him to eventually join us in our sport. ■



### What can Tim Greenwood do for you and your gun?

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- He specialises in wooden stock extensions matched to your existing stock
- Tim will also make any specialist parts as required and offers full servicing and maintenance services
- Visit the website: [www.greenwoodgunsmiths.co.uk](http://www.greenwoodgunsmiths.co.uk) or ask Tim's advice by emailing [asktheexperts@blazepublishing.co.uk](mailto:asktheexperts@blazepublishing.co.uk)