



SCRAPING THE BARRELS

Tim Greenwood kicks off a series on gun cleaning, starting with the barrels

This month's article is in response to an email received by *Clay Shooting* magazine from Paul, a regular reader.

"Is there a book available that deals with the cleaning and weekly maintenance of the competition shotgun? When I say maintenance I mean just the simple stuff i.e. where to use oil and grease where not to use oil and grease; how to take apart ejectors and how to clean different parts of the gun and with what? Also, the merits of guns, and the pros and cons of barrel length 28ins to 34ins? The pros and cons of different makes and the best type of gun for all around shooting (Sporting, Skeet and Trap)?"



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

Well Paul, for a fairly short email, the reply, I'm afraid, is quite lengthy.

To the best of my knowledge, there isn't a book available that deals with these basic questions, so over my next few articles I shall do my best to help you and other novices out there understand basic cleaning and maintenance and offer some advice on choosing the right shotgun to begin clay shooting with.

This month, I thought I would start with basic cleaning of your barrels after shooting.

Does your gun look like the chambers/ barrels shown in picture (1)? If they do, you

should be ashamed. Apart from the dangers of shooting a gun in this condition, the chances are you are storing your cartridges in a very damp place, which has prevented the powder igniting correctly.

Though picture (1) illustrates about the worst build up of dirt I have seen, many guns come to me with obvious signs of neglect that are easily visible in the chambers and bores. When your gun was new and you looked up the inside of the barrel, it was very shiny without any streaks or dull patches. Certain shooters out there, even top shooters, seem to think that neglecting regular, thorough cleaning is a badge of honour. Perhaps it is because they can afford to replace a gun frequently or are sponsored so they don't have to

care? All I can say is that to neglect your barrels is to put both yourself and shooters around you in peril. Dirty, restricted bores or severe pitting can cause the breach pressure of the gun to rise dramatically with the possible consequence that the barrel can bulge or even split. Neglecting something that contains an explosion producing three tons of pressure per square inch, eight inches in front of your nose is not macho or funny; it is stupid and disrespectful to those shooting with you.

If you walk into any well-stocked gun retailers, you will see racks and shelves full of various cleaning products. Pictures (2), (3), (4) and (5) show just a small selection stocked by my own local retailer, Chris Potter in Kent: but which to choose?





“ Next job; drink your tea and allow the solvent to work for another 10-15 minutes ”

Which products work and which don't? I have not tried all the cleaning products on the market, neither can I say that my own method of cleaning barrels is definitive, but what I can say is it works and will keep your bores shiny and clean.

As soon as you finish shooting, preferably while the barrels are still warm from firing, squirt Phillips Gun Barrel Cleaner, picture (4), down each of the bores. This is an active cleaner designed to remove lead and plastic fouling from the walls of the bores and chambers. Spraying it into the bores when the barrels are warm helps prevent the lead and plastic cooling and hardening in the bore, so even while you are driving home from the clay shoot, the solvent is already making your job of cleaning so much easier.

When you get home, put the kettle on (we all need a nice cup of tea after a hard day shooting) and, while the kettle boils, give the barrels another spray of the cleaner. This is best done outside as a non-shooting member of the household might object to the rather strong but not unpleasant smell this product has.

Next job: drink your tea and allow the solvent to work for another 10-15 minutes.

Assemble your cleaning rod, usually two or three sections, and fit a phosphor-bronze cleaning brush to the end. Push the rod and brush several times through the bores from the breach to the muzzle. By all means scrub the brush as it goes through,

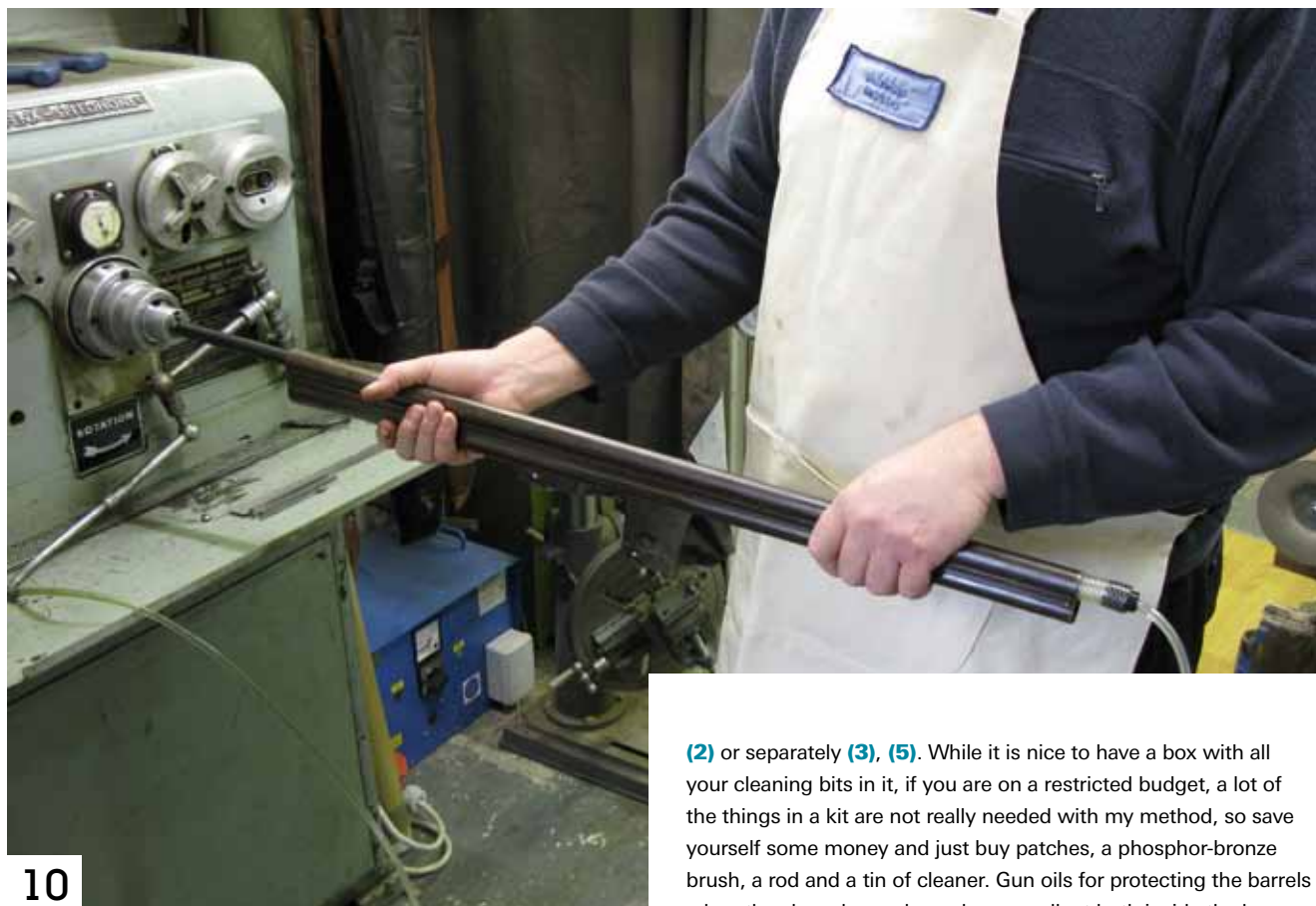


but never pull the brush out the same way it goes in as you can pull dirt in behind the ejectors and even damage the ejectors if you are too vigorous. If the chambers are very dirty (and they always are at least once a month), use a 10b phosphor-bronze brush as a chamber brush, or a proper 12b chamber brush with a short handle, to specifically target any carbon or plastic in the chambers. You can use this by hand with a section of your cleaning rod or in the chuck of a battery-operated drill (6). Make sure you keep a tight hold of the barrels, or you can put them in a well cushioned vice.

Next, take a piece of paper kitchen towel and push it into the chamber (7), then place a 4x2in patch over your phosphor-bronze brush and push it through the barrel, breach to muzzle (8). A pool of horrible, black, oily fouling will run out of the muzzle together with the paper towel so do this on some old newspapers as it'll stain anything it touches. Look up the bore; is it clean and shiny with no streaks or dull patches? If it is, you are finished cleaning your barrels; if not, repeat the earlier steps until this is achieved.

Cleaning rods, brushes and patches can all be purchased as a cleaning kit

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(2) or separately (3), (5). While it is nice to have a box with all your cleaning bits in it, if you are on a restricted budget, a lot of the things in a kit are not really needed with my method, so save yourself some money and just buy patches, a phosphor-bronze brush, a rod and a tin of cleaner. Gun oils for protecting the barrels when they have been cleaned are excellent both inside the bores and outside, but, to be honest, I have used WD40 for years and it certainly does not remove blueing, or eat the solder, which hold the ribs on. It is also excellent for repelling damp while the barrels are stored in your gun safe. Don't forget, always store your gun barrels down so that oil runs out of the muzzle, not down into the action with the potential for damaging your woodwork.

You may find that if you haven't been taking care of your barrels, using my method might not get rid of all the build up of lead and plastic straight away. Persevere, perhaps even use a battery-operated drill to spin your phosphor-bronze brush on the cleaning rod up and down the barrel (9).

If, after a few weeks, there are still dull patches or streaking, I am afraid the neglect has gone too far. You will need a competent gunsmith/barrel maker who can lap or preferably hone your bores to produce a shiny surface again. Picture (10) shows me with my honing machine working on sadly neglected, old damascus barrels.

Next month I will deal with basic maintenance, including ejectors, multichokes, actions and woodwork. ■

What can Tim Greenwood do for you and your gun?

- Tim offers a full gunfitting service and free help and advice
- He can do anything required to your stock, barrels or action
- 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 or ask Tim's advice by emailing: asktheexperts@blazepublishing.co.uk