

A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE

Tim Greenwood takes a much-needed day off to look back at his first year in the West Midlands

I decided to take the day off recently. We have had so much work since Christmas I have even been working Saturdays and Sundays just to try to keep on top of it all, something I swore I would not do after leaving the South East, so we headed out to explore. Jen, the dogs and I decided to head over the border and visit a couple of Welsh shooting grounds, which are only about 20 minutes from home, which you can see in **picture (1)**, and however much I love our new home and workshop, sometimes they can become a gilded cage if you don't occasionally escape.

I didn't take the gun with me, as the trip was more about being nosey and having a break, but to be honest, I wish I had taken a shotgun to my first stop was at Fauxdegla Shooting Ground, which turned out to be only 50 minutes from my house. It is a fantastic fight with eight covered layouts including all the Trap disciplines and Skeet, as well as 14-stand Sporting layout.

The ground was beautifully presented, with a superb clubhouse and views out over the layouts and excellent backgrounds for picking up targets. Peter at the desk was helpful and allowed us to wander around and have a good look, though, unfortunately, the owner and major investor in the ground, Mike Faux, was away for the weekend. The ground was so good it made me want to start Trap shooting again, even though I am still having problems with my neck and shoulders, but perhaps the odd 25 or 50 won't kill me? I will soon find out.

On our way to the next ground, Jen and I realised that it was a year, nearly to the day, that we moved up here to Shropshire in the West Midlands, which, of course, sent us off reminiscing about the last 12 months

Setting up the new workshop last August, September and October was hard work and at times nerve wracking: from the arrival

of the vault (2.5 tonnes of fireproof steel hanging in the air), **picture (2)**, to building the security bunker to house it, **picture (3)**.

Installing new equipment in the workshop, **picture (4)**, otherwise known as my daughter Laura as my apprentice, was even worse, and having Jen take over front-of-house duties such as answering the phone and booking in customers was for me even more worrying. Those of you who know me from the South East will remember I have always worked on my own and sharing my space with others on a permanent basis at times really tried my patience and their ability not to lose their tempers with me, but I have to say I think our greatest accomplishment since the move has been all of us learning to play nicely with each other, most of the time.

I remember the first simple repair I taught Laura: a cracked forend, glued with industrial cyanoacrylate then locally re-chequered and re-finished, **pictures (5) and (6)**. We then made and fitted the two ironwork screws missing from when the gun was manufactured. The job was easy – unsticking Laura's fingers took a little longer.

Since moving we have seen good repairs from other gunsmiths and some really bad ones. One of the worse was a repair to a Browning stock where the perpetrator had used a broken drill piece in the cheek to act as a re-enforcing peg, **picture (7)**. With a lot of inspiration and a little perspiration, we managed to save the day, **picture (8)**.

But, if I was asked what has really made our time up here so far so memorable, I would have to say the people. We have so far been visited by over 260 customers in just over six months of being open. We have really appreciated your support and the kind words you have said about our repairs, but I have to say one or two of you really stick out as memorable.







Gordon Lee's visit with his Krieghoff K-20, asking us to alter it to fit by lowering the comb, deepening the placement for the ball of his thumb, **picture (9)**, then re-finishing it to our new Cheshire Standard of shiny finish, **picture (10)**, will always be remembered as this was the first Krieghoff I have ever personally wanted to own.

Then there was Phill Rose, **picture (11)** who travelled down to us from Yorkshire with the first gun I worked on for him – a Miroku Trap gun. We set it to the correct length and pitch with a Jones Adjuster and Kick-Eez pad, extended and re-shaped the grip to fit his large hands then completely re-finish the whole gun. I will never forget the look of sheer pleasure on his face when I pulled it out of the gun slip to show him: it's not money that makes this job so worthwhile, it is producing work far above the client's expectations based on the

previous attempts of others.

I will never forget the first time I met Ray, **picture (12)**, at West Midlands Shooting Ground at Hodnet – The Ritz of Sporting clay grounds and only ten minutes from my front door. Ray previously had his Miroku cast left handed three times by other gunsmiths, all of whom had failed to remove the aluminium tube from the grip so the gun sprang back. As he was somewhat distrusting of the southerner who had just moved up here, I agreed to do it for him without payment for six months to prove it would stay left handed where I put it. He was back after three months asking me to carry out further work to bring the gun more to his face by inserting a piece of wood and making the stock a flat-shooting Monte Carlo – he also insisted on paying me for the casting work that hadn't moved.

One of my proudest memories was helping Ray's nephew, Steve in **picture (13)**, gain a place back in the British FITASC team that proceeded to win gold medal for the Veteran's team event, as pictured in last month's issue. Though the gun is not yet finished and still needs final tweaking, he won't let me have it back until the end of the season as he is managing such good scores with it he can't afford to lose it for the few weeks I will need it.

However, my favourite memory of the last year has to be one of my most recent, when Joe Kitson taught my daughter and apprentice Laura on the Skeet range at Millride Shooting Ground, **picture (14)**. The look on their faces says it all and for me it was a wonderful moment, my little girl being taught to shoot by a legend – it really doesn't get any better than that. ●



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- 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 www.greenwoodgunsmiths.co.uk or ask Tim's advice by emailing: huw.hopkins@futurenet.com