

51587

4820

(1809 )John Manton 60 bore rifle.  
Octagonbarrel 31 7/8 " barrel No proof marks  
Percussion conversion from Flintlock  
Two barrel lugs. 3 leaf sights on top flat  
Ramrod has big button on outer end. Rosewood, brass tip.  
Cased in new case made by owner.  
Nice little Dixon patent Powder Flask in Case

In 'The Manton Supplement'. P. 52

*Lock plate marked*

*MANITON LONDON*

*S# on sunburst on trigger guard + stamped on underside of barrel.  
Safety on cock*

Warminster 23/12.

18th. Nov. 1970.

Bishopstrow House,  
Warminster,  
Wiltshire.

Dear Ritter,

Will you please excuse a slow response to your kind letter which arrived here during my absence abroad. I am ashamed that I have not replied before.

First regarding your wanting another Manton, I have decided to offer you my very fine double flint Joseph Manton No. 4280 which I purchased some years ago from my old friend Revd. Edward Alston. A full description of this gun appears in our Manton book, so I will not repeat these details. Suffice it to say that it belongs to the vintage years and is only a few numbers away from Hawkers Old Joe No. 4326. The gun belonged to Colonel Jackson of the 67th. Regiment and is so marked on the brass escutcheon of the mahogany case. On the silver escutcheon of the gun it has a complicated series of initials in cypher and below 67th. L.I. (67th. Light Infantry) The gun is in perfect condition, locks crisp and original throughout, no cracks in cocks or replacements anywhere. A little original blueing here and there on the furniture, original case hardened finish on the locks but no colour. No pitting anywhere, everything crisp. The stock has been lengthened about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch during its working life, obviously by Manton as it is so well done. Stock completely sound with no damage or repair anywhere excepting the lengthening already mentioned. The engraving is crisp everywhere. Numbered on trigger guard 4280, in ink on the stock below barrels 4280, on the barrels 4280 and again on the patent breeches. Locks finely engraved with crisp signature and the pancovers marked Joseph Manton Patent No. 1953 & 1954. The gun is a superbly preserved example of the best period of Joes work. Case has been extremely well relined with correct baize of the old pale green colour exactly like original. Lock compartment has been renewed. Label is Hanover Square and must have replaced original label. It has a full complement of accessories, some old some later. The powder flask and wad punch are old, the cleaning rod is correct but recent, so is the oil bottle (brass) turncrew and flint wallet. The price is £2400. which is about what it would fetch at auction today.

Labels. I suppose the method you suggest would do well, but I imagine it would be costly.

There is no gunmaker today who would even consider making a double flint gun at any price

it would cost a fortune if they did as they are not tooled up for this and have no workmen who could or would do it. So this I can assure you is out. Purdeys charge over two thousand pounds for a best gun today and cannot fulfil orders under about two years I believe.

Here is the address you want.

MacDonald Hastings,  
Browns Farm,,  
Old Basing,  
Basingstoke,  
Hants.

Certainly use my name as an introduction, I know him quite well although do not always agree with what he writes. He is a nice chap and has an engaging manner.

Yes I bought Alan Dace's collect on from Kay his widow, and I shared it with his other friend David Sack. David has the favourite single barrel flint gun by Clark and also the double, both of which Alan got from me years ago.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

*Keith Neal*

*I will be glad to send you good  
photographs of the Tor mansion if  
you wish*

Warminster 2372

Bishopstrow House,  
Warminster,  
Wiltshire.

8th. Jan. 71.

Dear Ritter

I am wondering if you ever  
received my letter and photographs  
of the Joe Manton flint gun in  
the case - I sent them last  
November - after you had  
written telling me you wanted  
a good Joe Manton gun. I shall  
be glad to hear from you as  
I have been holding the gun  
awaiting a reply.

Thank you for yours X me

Card good wishes - I may

I wish you a Happy New Year

I good hunting with 1/2 per flint lock  
gun!

Sincerely,

W. Keott near

1 August, 1967

Mr. W. Keith Neal  
Bishopetrow House  
Warminster, Wiltshire  
England

Dear Mr. Neal:

I have just finished reading for the second or third time your excellent Book on The Mantons (in collaboration with Mr. D.H.L. Back). I have enjoyed it thoroughly and cannot object to anything in it or the way that it is put together. It is delightful! But as important as the intense pleasure I derived from it I have been able to consider my own guns in a more specific chronological order. For this the whole collecting world will be indebted to you. Also I suspect that you may well serve as a clearing house for information concerning owners and identification of Manton guns. You may even derive some little specific information concerning beginning and ending serial sequences etc. from those of us who have Manton guns in our collections. With this in mind I include some identifying information on my own Manton guns for whatever use you may have for it.

1. ~~JOHN MANTON~~ ~~PERCUSSION~~ RIFLE, 20 ga. 33" barreled No. 3562 (Purchased from Tony Groom, 1943)  
Marked on top rib: Manton London in Capitals in Gold. Gold Touch holes, two gold bands on patent breech rear one wide, front one narrow. Sunken (old) London proofs and serial no. 3562 on right barrel only, reading from muzzle. Barrels NOT relieved at locks, (Breech). LOCKS, nearly identical to your illustration in plate 52 even to the engraving. No serial number or any other marks on the locks except the name MANTON in capitals engraved on each. STOCK: Walnut with slight cheek-piece on left side. Checkered wrist with sterling name plate on top and sterling key plates, oval in shape. Tail pipe and finial on trigger guard in good matching pineapple pattern of the age. Trigger guard is large and the tang is rolled to give a pistol grip. Serial number is engraved in a sunburst on the boss of the tang to the trigger guard, No. 3562. Front (right) trigger is short, other normal. This is my favourite sporting gun. I use it for every kind of game I shoot: quail, pheasants, squirrel, turkey, deer and bear. It has bagged many.

2. MANTON RIFLE No. 4820 Percussion (probably converted from flint) 31 7/8" Twist barrel. .577 calibre, leaf sights 100, 200, and 300 yards. Marked top of barrel: Manton London Under barrel stamped deep and solid 4820 with 2 barrel lugs and under rib (for half stock). 9 wide grooves in barrel silver blade front sight, Horn button on ram rod and brass, concave end for loading bullet, no worm or screw nor cap. Case hardened patent breech with wide lug on the breech fitting the top of lock plate behind the cock. Short bar on barrel in front of false breech (Patent breech). LOCK: Good Manton style Cock like Plate 55 or 56 in your Book. Lockplate rounded in front like on flint guns Manton's late projection on top of lock plate not on plate but on the standing breech. Lock plate bolt does not go through the breech but just behind it as on earlier guns. Serial no. 4820 in good relief on top of edge of lock plate (just) under the hammer and cock. Sliding breech safety lever on top of breech in sterling, oval in shape. Trigger guard large with rolled tang to give a pistol grip, in flint style with serial no. 4820 in sunburst engraved on boss of pistol grip. Pineapple finial on trigger guard. Simple tail pipe in horn tipped half stock.

3. J. MANTON & CO. Double barreled 14 ga breech loading shotgun No. 15987.  
31" Twist barrels Marked Top: J. Manton & Co FINE DAMASCUS STEEL, Doll's head tang on rib. Under Barrels: Birmingham proofs 14 and 15987 on right barrel. Detachable locks marked J. Manton & Co. Water-table Marked with Birmingham proofs and the serial no., 15987. This is a very good gun but the engraving is not up to the old quality.



These John Manton guns speak well for the history of the company. The fling is right in all respects except that I have had to replace a main-spring. The Percussion rifle is a bit of a problem on account of its low serial number. The number on the pistol grip is worn and not too clear though readable. The number under the barrel is perfect and very deeply stamped and the number on the edge of the lock-plate is clear and in perfect condition. If this were a flint gun the serial number is alright and the conversion has been so well done that there is no evidence of the conversion except the serial number. The lock has been completely replaced and the standing breech has been remade to fit perfectly. The engraving and the cock is of the right style for Manton's percussion production. I got this gun from H.M. Farris, Portsmouth, Ohio and he told me he got it from you. Now, the breech loading gun is another matter and a good example of the later manufacture of the company. The only reason I bought it is that it was in nearly mint condition and shoots beautifully. The engraving is poor compared to first class firearms but excellent compared to many American guns of the period or even today. It has been broken through the stock at the wrist and it has a pistol grip in the wood. I may have to restock it one day. You mention in the book the mass production of trade guns marked simply Manton, which came out to the colonies. I have had about a hundred of these guns and have passed them on to others. I have found them of two qualities. The first has engraved identification and the second is stamped. They are usually marked simply Manton on the locks and barrels vary from Manton, London, to Manton, fine Twist or simply London Twist. Most of these are good guns and perform well. They are much better than American production of the same type at the time and were a great contribution to our shooting in their day. Most have Back Action locks but many have bar locks. Some were in Duck and Goose gage and lengths, and many were single barreled. I keep no record on these at all. This latter category were all percussion so far as I have seen.

#### Now for the JOE MANTON GUNS:

1. Double barreled Joseph Manton 14 ga. No. 8071 (From Tony Groom)  
28 inch stub twist barrels Marked: JOSEPH MANTON, DAVIES STREED, BERKELEY SQUARE, LONDON. INVENIT ET FECIT BY HIS MAJESTY'S PATENT. (Engraved, not gold filled) Under barrels: CL London proofs 8071 and end of tang on patent breech plugs marked W G (both). Tiny piece of brass in the fabric of the twist barrel just in front of blow-out plug on left barrel. False Breech and top rib elevated tapering to muzzle. LOCKS: Bar type marked JOSEPH MANTON, above PATENT. Bold scroll engraving with Dragon heads and terminals of scrolls on rear and front of lock plates and on the conventional hammer (like plate 84 on Hawker's "Old Joe") Trigger guard has pineapple finial and bold trophies (Horns, drums, flags etc, engraved and the tang bears the engraved serial number 8071. Standing breech has wide curved flash guards and boldly engraved in best scroll style. Walnut Stock with silver, oval key plates, and silver plate with the initials G V in scroll on the plate. Sheekered wrist. I have used this gun every season since I got it. Incidentally it once had a slight swelling on the right barrel near the muzzle. I think Tony told me he got it from you.
2. Double 14 ga. Tubelock with elevated rib, 28" barrels NO SERIAL NUMBER. No bar on breech of barrels, patent breeches cut away 3/16ths " from outside diameter. Platinum touch holes, sterling front sight. Especially uniform twist barrels and top rib. Patent breeches case hardened with polished scroll engraving. Top rib marked in script: Joseph Manton, Hanover Square.

Locks: Marked (Engraved) in very small capitals under feather spring, JOS<sup>H</sup> MANTON LONDON. Lock plate very similar to Manton's patent specification No. 4285. No bar being on the barrels, this plate fits close to the outside, which is relieved at a small angle for about  $\frac{1}{2}$ " in front of the patent breech. This lock has a projection in front of the priming tube holder more pronounced than on most plates in your book. The Hammer is "Joe Manton" for sure but it has a flash fence on the nose of the strikers. The simple engraving is right for this action too. STOCK: This is unusual as it appears to me to be white ash and is very heavy. It has a straight grip with checkering at the wrist. The Key plates are of sterling but rectangular in shape. The tail pipe is pineapple and in sterling. Trigger guard has pineapple finial but is oddly shaped with a squared guard in front and rolled in the typical pistol grip style of earlier guns. There is a sunburst engraved on the boss of the pistol grip but no serial number. The standing breech is engraved in the best Joe Manton style. I got this gun from Fred G. Aylott, 62 Pondcroft Road, Knabworth, Herts. There is no label in the case and the mahogany case is in an outer case of cardboard covered with leather. The case and gun are near perfect in condition. In spite of the absence of a serial number I am satisfied that this is a genuine Joe Manton gun. Everything else is correct.

#### Percussion

3. Double barreled Joe Manton 14 ga./shotgun No. 8954 (Purchased in America) 29 $\frac{7}{8}$ " barrels, stub twist, marked on top rib, JOSEPH MANTON. HANOVER SQUARE. LONDON. Under barrels marked with London proof on patent breech and on barrels WF and engraved serial no. 8954. Square nipple bases and blow-out plugs not pierced but platinum. Bar on barrel at breech 1  $\frac{5}{8}$ " long. LOCKS: Shape identical to plate 110 in your book, stamped 8954 on front, top inside of each plate. Engraved JOSEPH MANTON. PATENT, foliated monster with Bird Head in front and foliated scrolls at rear. Dragon-headed monster and foliated engraving on cocks. Detachable striker retained by a screw on the INSIDE of each cock (not through as in plate no 110 of your book. Striker head is same as in illustration plate no. 110. Trigger Guard has pineapple finial Guard properly engraved with trophies and sheet music etc. Tail pipe has pineapple finial too. Serial Number on tang of straight stock, engraved 8954 reading from muzzle. Sterling escutcheon plates oval in shape. Stock is Americal <sup>alnut</sup> I believe (Very dark and dense) checkered at straight wrist, plain name plate on wrist/behind standing breech which is properly Joe Manton style.

*Serial No 8954 stamped on both Cocks (inside)*

4. Double barreled Joe Manton 14 ga. shotgun (percussion) from Walton collection Roanoke, Va.) Barrels Marked on top Rib: JOSEPH MANTON LONDON (Platinum plug not pierced) Under barrels: Birmingham proofs on each barrel (no other marks). These barrels have a larger outside section for the first 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ " from breech than a ferrule and reduced size to muzzle (see gun no 1713 page 279 in your book) Barrels 28" long and nicely balanced. LOCKS: bar, marked JOSEPH MANTON (engraved) with pheasants and scroll on right and snipe, flushed and a scroll on left one. Plate is squared at rear. Cocks are odd in that they are rectangular in section but with an "S" curve to the shank and a detachable striker with a belled shape at the nose. This is locked with a screw that goes through the striker from the outside, the screw appearing like an eye on the cock. Key plate is steel engraved, oval in shape with small circles at the ends to admit the screws which hold it in place. Trigger guard has pineapple finial with scroll engraving at butt end and typical Manton twist "rope" at the very rear finial. Tang of trigger guard has engraved serial no. 10178. The tail pipe is late style and has only the leaves of the pineapple and the rest is a bulb nicely engraved. This is my favourite clay pigeon gun as it handles so quickly. I had always wondered about these barrels but had decided that in Joe Manton's distress that he just might have used a Birmingham barrel occasionally. The engraving on the locks and the hardware is conclusively (to me at least) Manton's style. This gun is stocked in Circassian walnut and was in poor condition when I got it. I have spent more in repairs than on the purchase.



That list concludes my own Manton guns and you can see that I still do not have a double Flint lock Joe Manton. I am still in the market if you know where one is to be had. Incidentally about a year ago I was offered a double Joe Manton flint by a man in Minnesota. I had him ship it to me and I returned it to him as in too poor condition for the price he asked for it. It was marked No. 3030. I had purchased this same gun from Greener's in London in 1944 and made notes of it at the time. I rejected it this time for the same reasons that I did not keep it originally. This gun had Manton's Cocks with the heavy breast when I saw it before. They are goose necked now and probably not proper. This Gun is in America somewhere now. I am sorry that I do not know where.

There is one gun that you may want to include in your own catalog of Manton guns which I have been trying to buy for some time. Unfortunately the owner knows what he has and won't sell at all. This gun is in poor condition but is genuine in all respects. It belongs to Mr. Kent Hoge, Burkes Garden, Virginia. It is No. 10577 and is a double flint shotgun. The barrels are very pretty rose patterned twist and marked on top rib: JOSEPH MANTON. 6 HOLLES ST. CAVENDISH SQUARE, LONDON (No & Son) The breeches are stamped in GOLD with Manton's stamp "Joseph Manton Patent" with the crown" reading from the breech. It has gold touch holes. Under side of barrels marked with London proofs 13 and 10577 reading from breech (stamped I think) Locks: Like plate 106 in your book but with no gravitating stops. Both are stamped with the serial number 10577 on the inside in front at the top of the plate (not on the edge) The hammers have only an engraved border, no numbers) It is stocked in good walnut and the trigger guard is large and the tang of the guard is engraved with the number 10577. This gun is in poor condition but apparently original. This number would indeed place it late in Manton's production, wouldn't it?

Well, now I have had my say and hope you have not been too bored with it. I too like to examine my pets and to brag about them and their performance. My best guns are not Mantons but the Mantons are the favourites. I still have hopes of finding a good double Joe manton flint to use in regular shooting. I am willing to pay for the privilege too. So far I have not seen one I would have in recent years. Most are poor condition or they wouldn't be on the market. The only ope is to get one from a collection and I still hope.

Thank you for your time and thanks again for the book. You have done an excellent service to the collectors everywhere. I have only one suspicious regret. Some few people will try now to alter the engraved names, addresses and serial numbers to match the book and I think this will be unfortunate.

Incidentally, do you have a copy of your book handy? If so and you will please send a copy out to Tony Groom in Australia with your autograph, and send the bill to me. I want him to have a copy and I'd like your autograph in it for him. Thanks for everything.

Sincerely yours,

Guy A. Ritter, Jr.

2 November, 1967

Mr. W. Keith Neal  
Bishopstrow House  
Marminster, Wiltshire  
England

Dear Mr. Neal:

I thank you very much for your latest letter and am particularly glad to know that you anticipated some more of your books so that you might send one out to Tony Groom. I think his address is indeed still 9 Beech Road, Mosman Park, Western Australia. Remember to send me the bill for the book.

First off, I hope we can get together again over here. I don't anticipate getting to England any time soon though I would like to do so and it is not nearly as difficult as it once was. I believe you do come to the Arms Collector's Association meetings and the NRA meetings following. I am not a member of the Arms Collectors but would welcome a recommendation from a member for the privilege. But I do go to the NRA Meetings occasionally when they are near to Salem. I was Chaplain at the National Matches at Camp Perry last year and this one too. So I know some of the officers and welcome the opportunity to see them all. I believe that the NRA meetings will be in Washington D. C. this next year and perhaps we can get together at that time. I will look for the opportunity anyway.

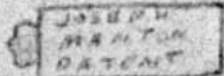
There are other things on my mind at the moment too. Since I have written you I have found at least four other Manton guns and have bought one of them and am expecting another momentarily. I inclose a description of the John Manton shotgun and a pair of detached locks that I would like to have you attempt a date on. I want to make up an entire gun from these locks and have only them to start with. I believe I will attempt to make it as nearly like a 1785 Manton as possible with one exception — I want some choke in the barrels for my own shooting. I really need a pair of Manton barrels or some equally good in stub twist to look right. I have a pair of Parker Damascus barrels that would work well but they are of the rose patterned Damascus and it just won't look right on a Manton gun. Do you know where a separated barrel (or pair) is available? This would not necessarily have to be Manton but quality with the right pattern on the trit. I would like any other pieces of correct hardware you might be willing to part with. That is: Butt plate, trigger guard, triggers and standing breach. I can make all these but it is not easy and they would not be genuine anyway. I am still thinking about casting the butt plate and trigger guard in sterling. This is the easiest way to do it and the least expensive incidentally. I am tempted to use the acorn finial on the trigger guard and a bulbout tail pipe like the one on your coloured plate No. 2 (page 64). Of course I would put the gold on the barrel too. Gold in the touch holes gives me a problem. I don't know how they did it but I have blown out several new ones. And that is expensive since I never recover them — they just disappear in the smoke. Now what do you think of such a project?



One other thing that appeals to me at the moment is Labels for cases. You gave me a replica label once and this reminds me that perhaps you have reproduced others. This one was on brown paper so I wonder if you have any replica labels printed on white paper. Some of my cases do not have labels and I would like labels for them. Others are eaten by silverfish and torn and not pretty at all. I do believe the original label is better than a replica though it is legible at all. Let me know your own thoughts on this. With modern reproductive processes they can be printed easily.

Of course I am still looking for Joe Manton guns and want very much to have a genuine Joe double flint. When you have one for sale let me know as I will pay the market price for same and it must be dear now.

Incidentally did Joe Manton ever use a stamp for his name on the breeches in this form:



I did not find it in your book. But I have gone back to Surkes Garden to try to purchase the flintlock I wrote you about in my latest letter, No. 10577. I noted that this stamp is in gold and that the crown is outside the rectangle. This gun just does not add up for me and I think I will forget about it for the moment.

Again, thanks for writing and reading my letters. I hope they don't bore you. Yours are a delight always. But keep me in mind when you are in the U. S. and if you have any of the parts I need for my Manton project.

Sincerely yours,

Guy A. Ritter, Jr.  
Asst prof of Religion

Warminster 2312

25th. August 1967

Bishopstrow House,  
Warminster,  
Wiltshire.

Rev'd. Guy A. Ritter Jr.  
Roanoke College,  
Salem, Va.

Dear Mr. Ritter,

Thank you so much for your most kind and appreciative letter, I am so glad to hear you have enjoyed 'The Mantons' book.

How very good of you to give me all the details of your many Manton guns, I could wish we had had them in time to put in the book, but I had no idea you possessed them, and I congratulate you on such a fine group. I shall remember your wanting a good Joe double flint and will try and find you one. As you say they don't come on the market any longer, the only chance is to get one from a private collection. I do not know of one available at the present time but will not forget you.

Now about your guns. The John double no. 3562 is a beauty, I think I owned it long ago.

The rifle no. 4820 sounds like a good rebuilt John, I do not remember this rifle at all. It is possibly a rebuild, done by another maker of less skill than Manton, this often happened.

Your Joe double no. 8071 is a fine one, I think it belonged to me once. It must have been a pellet lock originally and all the more interesting for that.

The tube-lock is odd having no numbers. I have an

idea it may be a gun which came from the Ashburnham collection, several of these had strange stocks, very heavily built and were in almost unused state.

One day when I am in the States I hope we can meet, I would enjoy seeing you and your collection and talking guns.

I am getting some more copies of my book and will send one on to Tony Groom and autograph it. I presume his address is still 9, Beech Rd. Mossman Park, W.A.

Kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

*W Keith Neal*

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TELEPHONE 2312

BISHOPSTROW HOUSE,

WARMINSTER.

WILTS.

14th. Dec. 1967

Dear Mr. Ritter,

I am so sorry not to have replied to your letter before but have had so much anxiety and worry with my wife's illness that I simply have had no time. I did have a copy of the Manton book sent to Tony Groom, I had to do it through my bookseller, but I signed the copy and no doubt Trotman will be sending you a bill for it some time as you asked.

I am interested to hear you were at Camp Perry as their Chaplain, I wonder if you know my friend Jac Weller, we dined together at our Rowland Club in London recently.

Regarding the pair of early Manton locks you have found, they appear to date from the 1783-1785 period and must be from one of his first, un-numbered guns. I can well understand your wanting to make a gun to fit them, but it will be a considerable task to do and not easy to get it right, if we lived nearer I could help. I have no spare parts suitable for such a gun for disposal, I do have the remains of a fairly good Joe Manton double converted by Ross of Edinburgh but the barrels would be unsuitable and too late. Frankly the only way it could be done would be by having the real thing to copy, without this as a guide I do not know how you would get it right.

I have never reproduced any of Manton's labels, the one I gave you was one given me by a man now dead who had copies made. I never liked them and like you I would prefer a battered genuine one to any copy.

The stamp you draw of Joseph Manton's on the gun with the high serial number looks phony to me, and I think it is wrong. There was a man who faked these guns about forty years ago and had a die cut and stamped them rather like the one you draw. I discovered this by chance when he tried to sell me one! The clue to them is that the die does not make a clean sharp impression.

Gold touch-holes should be made so that the gold goes right through into the inside of the barrel and is beaten over inside to lock it in. This was the old method used by Twigg.

I have just acquired a nice late single flint gun by John Manton & Son. It has the "V" pan with the platinum bar down the centre. I don't think anyone had touched it since it was last used, so I had a little difficulty getting it all apart, but I have done so and it is in pretty good shape. It is a completely un-recorded one. Made about 1823.

I keep on hearing from people who own Mantons who write to me after reading the book. Have heard of some fine ones but no early ones so far or great rarities with the exception of a pair of pistols which seem to date from about 1785.

I hope that you managed to get some of those guns you were after, I fancy there must be a good many in the U.S.A. now and I wonder how many collectors really appreciate them as you do. There are still sleepers to be found here but it is hard getting people to part with them, they just like to hang on to them.

With all good wishes to you and your family for Christmas

Yours sincerely,

W Keith Neal