

# Cogswell & Harrison

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## Certificate of Origin

Rifle No 28937

*This rifle was produced on an order from our Strand shop and was completed by our craftsmen on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1905. It was built as a type T102 vertical block rifle. The "falling block" was operated by an underlever. The forend was fluted at the action end.*

*The rifle was built in .400 calibre. The barrel was 26" long.*

*The stock was 14 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" long with the bend at the comb 1 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" and the bend at the heel 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>". When finished and assembled the rifle displayed good handling characteristics and had an overall weight of 8lb 2 oz.*

*The rifle was stored from its completion date in 1905 for the remainder of that year and for most of 1906. On 6<sup>th</sup> September 1906 it was delivered from our Strand shop to Tozer, Kemsley & Fisher for an unnamed first owner. The retail price was twenty-five guineas (twenty-six pounds and five shillings).*

*We confirm that the above information was extracted from the archives of Cogswell & Harrison on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2001 for the current owner Mr Harry John Herbert of Gaborone in Botswana.*

Prof MJE Cooley  
Chairman

# Night Elephant Control

by John Herbert

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*As long as I can remember I have been in love with the wild places of this earth, and especially the animals that live in those places. My Mom always said that this interest derived from the fact that my paternal grandfather was one-quarter Cherokee Indian.*

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Some of my first woodland memories were of walks he took me on in the forests that covered the hills around our small town. As I grew, these walks extended into hunting and fishing trips. It was during these expeditions that he would explain the native lore of the land and the secretive habits of animals. His exciting stories of growing up on the banks of the Ohio River in the late 1800s and the unlimited hunting and fishing available were bedtime stories for me.

When I finally reached maturity, I was employed in wild areas such as Yellowstone National Park, the north woods of Ontario, Canada and the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California. It was in these places that I first observed animals such as moose, bear, elk, mule deer and beaver. It was all exciting and great fun, but always, there was a thirst for more. Finally in 1964 a dream materialized when a job in Africa became available and without a moment's hesitation I accepted.

The first years were spent collecting animals in Mozambique, Botswana and Nigeria and then on to a South African University for an advanced degree. By this time, I had been in Africa six years. In the seventh year I was hired as a research officer with the Game Department in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) and was posted to Wankie National Park. It was here in Wankie that my education with regard to elephants began.

The Game Department at that time, had in its employ a number of interesting men. One of them who I got to know quite well and did elephant control work with was Kerry Fynn. Kerry was a ranger and had joined the Department a year before I did. He had many talents such as the park's pilot, animal capture and control work and could repair a Land Rover with the best of them.

I was a few years older than Kerry, but he taught me a great deal about the bush. Kerry

was unfortunately killed during the war for independence, but I am sure we will meet again if there is a great hunting ground somewhere.

Kerry and I flew many hours together surveying the park's elephant and buffalo herds. I also accompanied him whenever I could on problem animal control. Animals such as elephant, lion, leopard, hyena and wild dog would on a regular basis play havoc with local crops and livestock outside the park. A small herd of elephant could wipe out a man's mealie (corn) crop for the coming year and would virtually leave the man and his family destitute. The large predators would kill livestock, again jeopardising a rancher's livelihood.

One evening at about seven, Kerry arrived at the house and said, "Get your rifle. There are elephants crop raiding in Dete." I said, "It's night!" and he answered, "Come on. I'll show you how it's done at night." I went to the gun safe, grabbed my old model 70 Winchester .375 H & H and cartridge belt that I kept full of solids and slipped a box of Kynock solids into the pocket of my bush jacket and headed out the door. Just outside I picked up a full water bag that I kept hanging in the teak tree, jumped in his Land Rover and we were off.

Dete was about 10 miles from Main Camp, over a rough, dirt track and as we bounced and rattled along I asked Kerry how one shot elephants at night. He said he wasn't sure, as he hadn't actually done it, but Len Harvey, one of the older wardens in charge of the Culling Unit had told him how it was done. My eyes were a bit wide at this answer, but I listened carefully as he gave it to me second hand. He said with a slight grin that shooting elephants at night was dangerous and exciting. First of all, he said, you had to find them without the aid of a light as it would

cause them to panic and flee the area. Second, keeping in mind any breeze had to come from them to you as any odour coming from you to them would again spook them. You also had to listen carefully as that was often the only way you could find them. Once found, you then silhouetted them against the horizon and or using any starlight, you found the shoulder and commenced shooting. I had hunted elephant a number of times during the day down on the Tjolutjo border and that had been exciting, but this night elephant shooting was a whole different ball game.

Crop raiding elephant were usually bulls, who knew they were breaking the law so to speak. So at the first noise or indication that hunters were after them, back they would come into the park. I knew this from personal experience driving the dirt track that paralleled the railroad which formed the park's eastern boundary. On the other side of the railroad were a number of hunting concessions. Often as I would drive this dirt road in the early morning, bull elephants on hearing the Land Rover engine would, with tails stretched out, come hurtling back into the park. One could almost sense their canny intelligence.

Kerry had brought his two Botswana river bushmen trackers, Johnny Malupe and Lucky Imbe, to assist with the hunt. I had been involved in previous hunts with these two men and their ability to find animals was phenomenal.

We soon arrived in Dete and found the farmer who's fields were being ravaged. His grass-covered huts were 400 metres from the road and one could see the lights from the town as we made our way to them. It was a cool evening, so standing around his fire we listened to his story. Apparently one of his sons had come to him earlier in the evening saying he had seen elephants heading into the fields but was not able to count their

numbers. The farmer then went to the police station who in turn contacted the warden at Main Camp. The fact that the elephants were still there was good news.

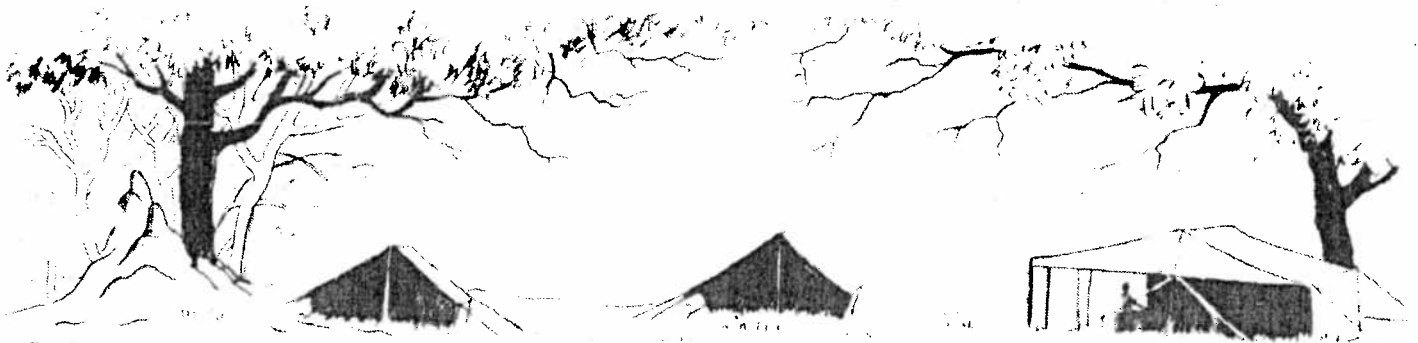
Kerry was using a Joseph Lang .470 NE double which he eventually purchased from the Department when the overseas ammo supply dried up. In fact, the Department sold all of its old doubles to the staff at that time. I had seen Kerry use a Wesley Richards .500 NE double on occasion, but he much preferred the .470. We had spent many hours over campfires discussing the merits of the various big calibres and how the old time hunters like Pondoro Taylor and Selous had used and found them so effective. I was interested in the history of those guns and often wondered what exciting tales they could tell if only they could talk. Sometime later Kerry was given an Army & Navy .450 three-and-a-quarter NE double by one of the great Zimbabwe hunters, Paul Grobbelaar. He eventually traded it to me as I said he preferred the .470. I was chuffed with the trade and after having it restocked, tightened and rebled, I was able to use it effectively on some of the elephant culling programmes that we conducted in the park. I still have the gun to this day. The look, weight and feel of it never fails to send nostalgic feelings through me when I remove it from the gun safe to clean and check it over.

But back to the elephant hunting story. The farmer was by now leading us out to his field and the elephants. It was difficult to walk quietly as the mealy stalks would rattle if you touched them and the dark ground underneath was covered with watermelon. As we advanced we could hear popping, crunching and the rumbling sounds elephants make when they feed. I later learned that the popping and crunching were caused by the elephant stepping on the watermelon to break them and then their feeding on the pieces. Just then Kerry grabbed my arm and motioned for me to squat down beside him. As I did I could just make out the form of two elephants about 30 metres from us and 15 metres apart. The light breeze was from them to us and one could smell that heavy elephant odour which though not unpleasant, is very strong. We had decided earlier that he would take any animals to the right while I was to shoot left and that he would shoot first. We then parted and I could no longer see Kerry. I moved into position and was holding the rifle sighted on the feeding animal's shoulder when Kerry's blast flashed and cracked. I then fired as well. I heard Kerry fire a second time, but my elephant was gone. With the three rifle blasts the mealie field seemed to come alive with stampeding elephants. I clearly remember thinking, "You're in for it now, John. One of these huge buggers is

going to run right over you!" Fortunately they did not and none of us were injured. The elephant, six in number we learned the next day, were hot footed it back to the park. There was nothing else to do as following after dark was impossible, so we walked back to the Land Rover and returned to Main Camp. Naturally the adrenalin was pumping and we excitedly talked and discussed what we had seen and felt during the shoot.

Next morning, early, we returned to the scene and with the trackers' help found one elephant dead in the field and the other dead just across the railroad tracks in the park. The local people were already collecting in mass with knives, axes and scotchcarts in preparation to removing the meat. We had the tusks chopped out and placed in the Land Rover. These eventually were cleaned and shipped to Salisbury (Harare) as all ivory belonged to the government.

Problem animal control was not my assigned job, but I sure took advantage of every opportunity offered by men like Kerry, Barry Duckworth and Willie De Beer. Those were certainly exciting sun-lit days. My only regret was I was unable to tell my grandfather about them as he had passed away years ago, but then, I reckon he saw the whole thing from that Hunting Ground in the sky. □



## You want to take a safari in Zimbabwe?



Zimbabwean born C.G. (right) has been a licensed PH for 10 years and is the CEO of the Zimbabwe Hunters Association (ZHA) and is on the executive of the Zimbabwe Professional Hunters and Guides Association (ZPHGA)

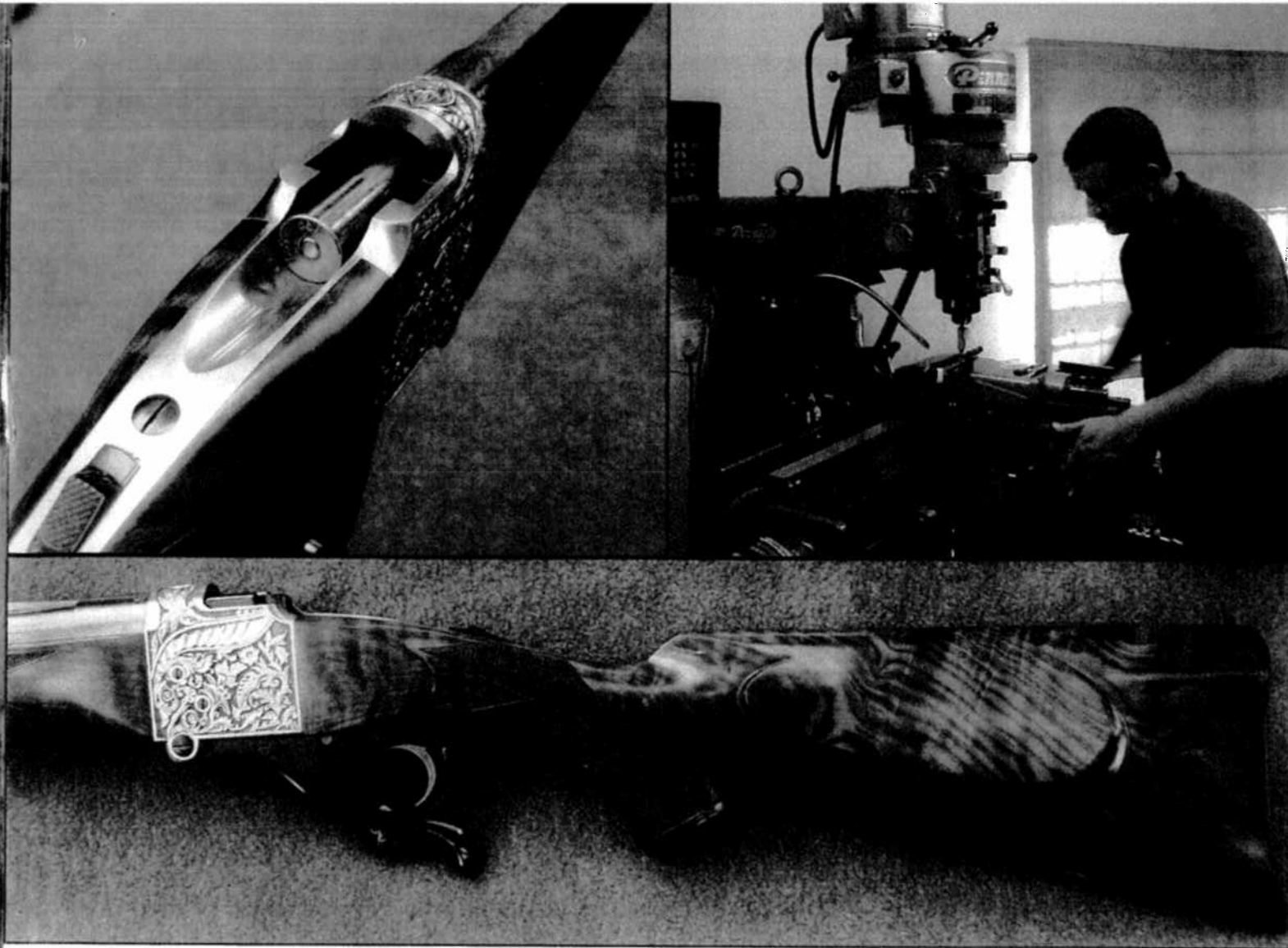
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## Danie Joubert – Riflemaker

**W**hen handed a rifle, the first thing most of us take a good look at is the stock, because it is the most visual aspect of a rifle. However, experienced hunters and marksmen know to look past the beautiful wood and intricate chequering. The barrelled action and various steel trimmings that complement it are the true heart of the rifle. One can get by with a stock that is not 100% right, but if the steelwork has flaws, the heart will not function properly and the rifle is a failure.

Although we have a number of good stock makers in South Africa, master metalworkers seem to be few and far between. Danie Joubert of Pretoria is one of the best we have and the work he has done for me has always been to my complete satisfaction.

Danie grew up in Louis Trichardt in the old Transvaal, but after completing his military service he moved to Pretoria where he

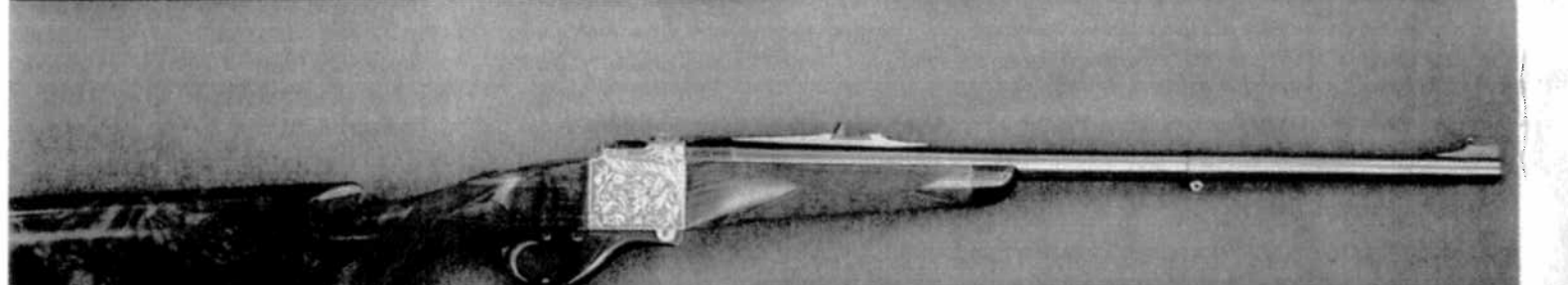
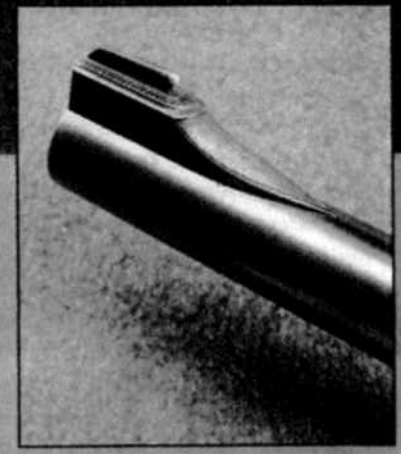
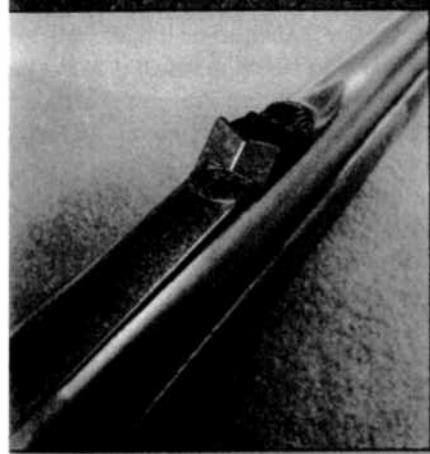
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By Koos Barnard

joined the CSIR and qualified as an instrument maker. While still a student he acquired a gunsmithing licence and started making rifle parts in his spare time for pocket money. During that time he ordered a custom rifle and, although the overall package was acceptable, Danie was disappointed in the quality of the workmanship on the steel parts. There and then he decided to build his first rifle. The reaction from friends convinced him that there was a future for him as a riflemaker – the rest, as they say, is history. Today Danie runs his own light engineering business and he builds rifles in his spare time. He will (reluctantly) take on certain types of general gunsmithing work but would rather build rifles and prefers to make most of the steel

components himself rather than ‘assembling’ a rifle from parts supplied. He likes the work of some American riflemakers but prefers to build rifles in the classic British style. (Not being a stock maker, Danie uses some of our best specialists to craft the stocks for his rifles.) Danie also makes components such as bolt-handles, main screws, grip caps, barrel bands and three-position safeties for Brno rifles and, time permitting, he is willing to take on special projects – he once made a beautiful peep-sight for my 7mm Mauser. He and his partner, Bjinse Visser, also produce Dzombo monolithic solids for larger calibres (9.3mm and bigger) and these, I might add, are favoured by National Parks Board rangers.

I have examined several bolt-action rifles built by Danie and have fired two of them. One, chambered for the .300H&H cartridge, belongs to a lawyer friend Nigel Woodroffe. Danie did all the metal work and slicked up



Opposite top right: Danie Joubert in his workshop. All the other pictures speak for themselves – Andrew Tonkin took the rifle, still in 'the white', to London for proofing, and afterwards showed it to the directors of the famed Purdeys company. They were so impressed by his work that they offered Danie a job. There is certainly no bigger accolade than that. Stock work is by Faan de Vos and Rubik Arakelyan did the engraving.

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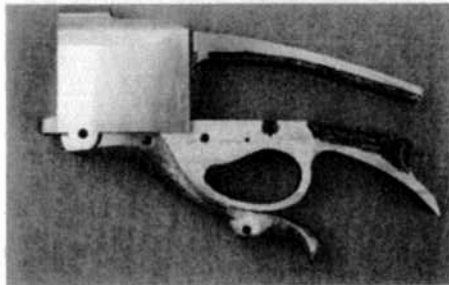
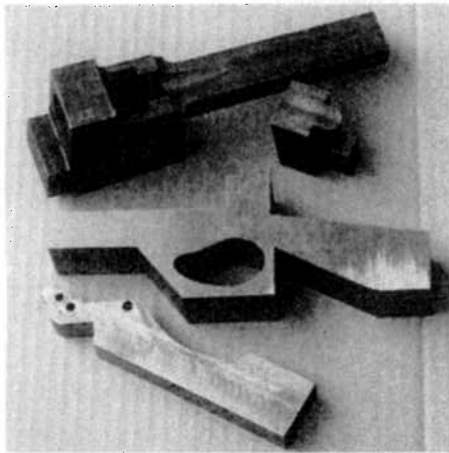
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Danie's Farquharson action in different stages of production. They used Böhler M200 steel.

the action to such an extent that it is the Mauser with perhaps the smoothest action I have ever handled. About a year ago I had the privilege of examining and firing an outstanding Danie Joubert single-shot rifle. Chambered for the .500 NE (3") cartridge, it is built on a copy of the famous Farquharson action which Danie had built from scratch. *Magnum* is partially responsible for the existence of this rifle because I referred a German gentleman to Danie after the former had contacted *Magnum* and asked about the availability of South African built actions suitable for calibres in the .600 Nitro class.

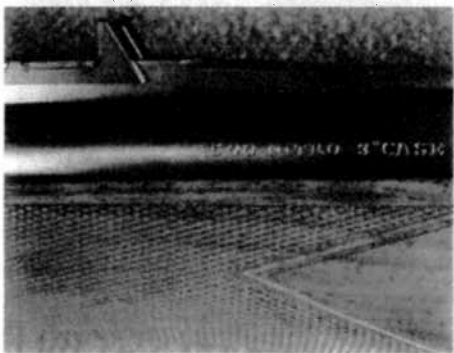
Apparently nobody in South Africa could supply such an action at the time, but intrigued by the German's request, Danie started doing research and one night, whilst paging through Australian rifle expert, Wal Winfer's book on Farquharson actions, Danie's eyes fell on the autograph that Wal wrote for him: "To Danie Joubert, one of the shrinking brotherhood of rifle craftsmen."

After reading this Danie decided that he would attempt to build a Farquharson action from scratch which would be big enough for a 'serious' elephant calibre.

With no proper working sketches/plans available, Danie took measurements of falling block actions that he had in his workshop and then set out to design his version of the Farquharson. He tried to follow the general Farquharson design (after the Farquharson patents expired, several gunsmiths and manufacturers made changes) but it was inevitable that some of Danie's own ideas would feature in the final design.

Danie's stock maker at the time, Faan de Vos, also added a few useful tips which helped Danie to complete the design to his satisfaction. They decided to use Böhler M200 steel and after acquiring the steel Danie started the machine work. Work commitments (and perhaps the lack of pressure from an anxious client) led to it taking Danie almost a year before the action was completed. Of course Danie feels that his action is stronger and better looking than the true Farquharsons, and rightly so, because the final product is a real masterpiece. By then Danie and Faan had decided to build a complete rifle, so they ordered a 24" Vektor barrel. To get a 'decent' piece of walnut for this special rifle Danie enrolled the help of an English friend and gunsmith who secured a stunning walnut blank – but the asking price was an astronomical £1,000. As Danie wanted only the best for his 'Farquharson' he bought the blank and Faan started to work on it – very carefully!

Before we discuss the rifle any further let's quickly refresh our minds on the much sought-after Farquharson actions. John Farquharson was born in 1833 in Perthshire, Scotland. He grew up hunting and stalking and later worked as a game keeper, first for Lord Abercromby and later for Lord Rosebery. Farquharson became one of the best long-range target shooters of his time. He used to shoot for Alex Henry's team using the latter's rifles, but in December 1870 John Farquharson filed for patent protection for an improved extractor system on the rifles he was using. At the same time Henry filed for protection on the same invention in France and this started a legal battle because both men claimed to be the original inventor. Two years later Farquharson applied for patent protection for a hammerless falling-block action which caused quite a stir when he showed it off at the annual Wimbledon shooting event in July that year. Alex Henry



**Top: The Farquharson handles very well and shooting the rifle was not intimidating at all. Above: A touch of class – the serial number engraved in the pistol grip section of the action. Left: Danie's one-of-a-kind rifle is chambered for a 'serious' elephant calibre.**

immediately accused Farquharson of pirating the idea from him and another court battle followed. Although some believed that Alex Henry was indeed the original inventor, he lost the court case with costs and, on 3 January 1873, John Farquharson was granted patent No. 1592. He reassigned the patent to George Gibbs, William Metford and Thomas Pitt in May 1875.

Initially George Gibbs, another crack rifle shot of the day, was the original and only manufacturer of Farquharson actions in Great Britain and he used these actions coupled with Metford barrels to set many shooting records during the last years of the black powder era. Because of Gibbs' success, Farquharson actions became sought-after items and, after the introduction of nitro-cellulose (smokeless) propellants, the influ-

ential WJ Jeffery & Co started using the Farquharson actions for its hunting rifles.

By 1895, after the Farquharson rights held by Gibbs had expired, anyone was free to manufacture this action and Jeffery immediately took advantage of that by introducing their copy, called the M95. This design was widely accepted in Britain for nitro chamberings and it became the most successful hammerless, underlever, British falling-block action. Over the years design changes were made, of which the most significant ones were probably the moving of the safety lever from the side to the tang, and the slight lengthening of the action. Jeffery was also responsible for redesigning the breech block's face to set it at a 1.5° angle to the bore – the main purpose of that being to facilitate extraction of stubborn cases. Interestingly, the Jeffery company never manufactured these actions – it is generally believed that most were supplied by the Belgium firm of Auguste Francotte & Co, but actions were also sourced from other suppliers.

Anyway, back to the Danie Joubert Farquharson. Danie fitted the Vektor barrel and made all the steel trimmings – barrel band, sights, grip cap and butt plate, etc. The front sight is a bead on an elegant ramp and the rear consists of two folding blades, both of the classic wide 'V' design, zeroed for 50m and 100m respectively. Danie fitted a steel butt plate because he believed that a rubber recoil pad would not do a rifle like this any justice at all. Many might question the wisdom of that, but I have fired this rifle and can assure you that it is as comfortable to shoot as such a big kicker can be. The total package weighs 10lbs and has a length of pull of 14.75".

Danie's 'South African Farquharson' was still in the white when I shot it about a year ago at Otto Planjavski's range near Pretoria. It certainly has all the accuracy that is needed for this kind of rifle – I was easily able to place all my shots in the killing zone of a paper buffalo at 50m. As you can see from the pictures, I also fired the rifle from the sitting position with no ill effect at all. Rifles in the .500 NE class recoil with authority, but because of this rifle's good balance and stock design, the experience was not at all intimidating.

Andrew Tonkin, well-known in the South African gun trade, took the rifle, still in the white, to London to have it proofed at the London Proof House. While still in London, Andrew took the rifle to Purdey's in South Audley Street where he discussed the action with Peter Blaine in the hallowed Long Room. When the meeting was over, Mr Blaine asked if he could keep the rifle overnight as he wished to show it to the other directors. When Andrew picked up the rifle the next day, Blaine told him that the other directors were very impressed and asked if Danie would be interested in a career at Purdey's. Well, that is the ultimate accolade, need I say any more?

This beautiful rifle was engraved by Rubik Arakelyan who unfortunately died shortly after he had completed the job. In March I was fortunate enough to view, handle and photograph the completed rifle and must say that it is one of the most beautiful and well-made rifles I have ever had the pleasure to hold. The metalwork is absolutely outstanding and it will be very difficult for anyone to better Faan de Vos' stock work. Good news for connoisseurs, collectors and others who can afford such one-of-a-kind treasures, is that Danie's 'Farquharson' is for sale – I trust our photos do it full justice. For more information on his work, call Danie Joubert during business hours on 012-807-4892. 

# A Born Again Farquharson

By John Herbert

*Brief History: The Farquharson action was patented in England on 25 May 1872 by the Scottish sportsman and rifleman, John Farquharson. This action has an enclosed centre hammer designed with a box-shaped rectangular receiver. The most significant and identifying feature of the true Farquharson action is the forked and slotted cocking bar; to a lesser extent so is the double extractor system found only in the true Farquharson. (Extracted from Harthan 1963).*

The following calibres have been listed as being chambered for the Farquharson action. This list includes black powder as well as cordite cartridges: 297/230 Morris (or .22 centerfire), J.255, .300 no. 5, .475, .450 no. 2, .600 cordite. .303 Jeffrey Sharp, .303 Henry, .450 Deeley Edge, 450-3 1/4 N.E., 500/.577/.120 Sharps, .400-3 1/4, .303 British, 450 W.R. no. 2 .256 Mannlicher, .500-3", 450/.400., .470 nitro, .350 Rigby, .350, .577-3", 350 N.E., .500/.450, .375-2 1/2 N.E., .375 Mag, .406? (Webley & Scott barrel), .275, .465, 280, .425, 220, .400/.360, .300Rook, 22 Hornett, 322 N.E., .318, .32/04, .476 N.E., .461 Gibbs no.1, .461 Gibbs no 2, 360 Gibbs no. 2, 360 Gibbs no.3 .360 Gibbs no.4, 256 Gibbs flanged, .380 Long Rook, 280 flanged nitro express, 320, .255 380 Long, 442 Long 450 Long, .360-2 1/4", .450/400-2 3/8, .300-3", .577-2 3/4. (From Kirton, 1985 and Harthan, 1963)

"Hey, Buck. Do you have any old rifles or shotguns?" Buck was running a metre wide kiaat log through the blade of his sawmill, slicing off planks. We watched as a 26 mm slice peeled off the screaming saw and flopped on a catching rack. An assistant with a long hook pulled it out of the way. Both Buck and the man were covered in red, wet sawdust and the air in the open shed was thick with dust and diesel fumes. Buck was in his typical attire of those days, singlet, shorts, veld skoen and a bush hat shoved down on his head. As the last plank peeled away, Buck turned and over the noise of the unmuffled diesel engine, yelled to have a look in the junk pile at the back of the open-sided building.

It was the early 1970s and we two game department officials were visiting Buck De Vries on his ranch in the Gwai Valley of Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia). The ranger with me was Kerry Fynn who was later to die tragically in the war in Zimbabwe. I remember thinking, "What would a firearm be doing in a junk pile?" but went to investigate.

While Kerry talked with Buck about the

purchase of planks for furniture making I dug about in the various truck parts, old tins, angle iron, buckets of nuts and bolts, worn out jerry cans and five-gallon petrol tins. Everything was rusty and covered in a mixture of saw dust, oil and dirt, plus the cattle used the shed so their dung was everywhere. I was just ready to give up looking when Buck walked over and bending down at my feet said, "Ach man, if it had been a snake, he would have had you!" and pulled out a metal frame with a single shot action that had the barrel cut to 20 cm welded to it. The ranger with me started laughing and said, "What the hell is that?" Buck said, "that's my trap gun which I've used on leopard and hyena but it doesn't work so well." I had no idea what it was, but being an avid gun fancier asked, "How much do you want for it?" "Ach, take it, man. It don't have any use to me," he said in South African accented English. Buck was very generous to the people in the game department in those days, not only with wood but various pieces of metal and best of all he let us go bird shooting on his property near the Gwai River.

I thanked him and put the action in the back of the Land Rover with the ranger's wood and we drove back to the park. I was the Research Officer (I/O) of Hwange (Wankie) National Park in those days, and upon getting home from work, I took it out in the sunlight examined it closely. It had a covering of rust, the cut off barrel was welded to a frame which permitted it to stand facing downward. A wire or light chain had been attached to the trigger which in turn was attached to a piece of meat. When the predator grabbed the meat and pulled the action fired a shot into the top of its head. Since then I've seen these 'trap guns' used effectively in other countries in Africa. So reaching for the hacksaw, I sawed the metal frame away and studied it. Not having seen a falling block except in pictures, I wasn't sure how it worked and besides it was frozen solid with rust and grime. What was left of the barrel had the following letters, numbers and figures:

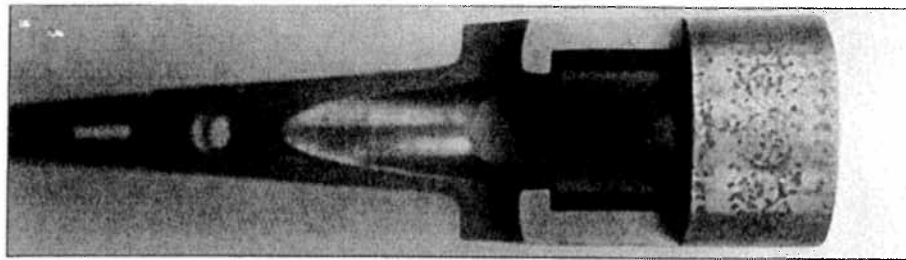
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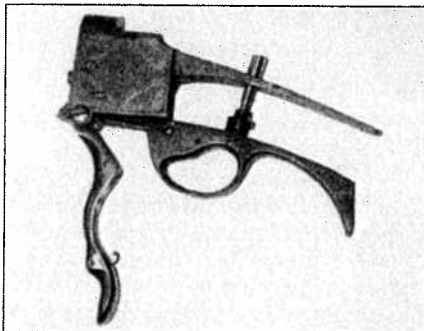
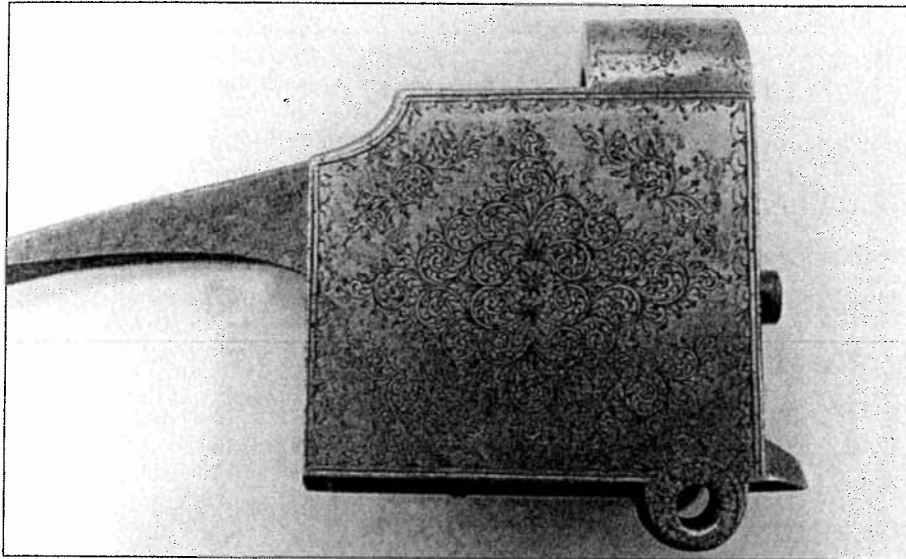
28937  
400 EX.

Tinkey Haslam, the Warden at Main Camp in those days, said that a good way to loosen old rust was to soak them in paraffin (kerosene). So taking a cut off five gallon tin, I filled it half full and put the action in it. It was elephant culling time so I got involved in that and the action soaked for three months. Finally one Sunday afternoon, being alone at the house with only the dogs asleep in the yard, I was in the hut cleaning my model 70 Winchester 375 H7H which I had been using in the elephant culling programme. Looking around I saw the oil tin and remembered the action. Kerry, being the parks pilot had given me some out-of-date 100 octane airplane fuel which I was using in my Land Rover and so, after thoroughly washing the action, it was again examined in the sunlight. With a stiff wire brush I scrubbed it removing all visible rust. A dorm of scroll engraving appeared on both sides and on part of the trigger guard. On moving the ejector handle it slid up and down exposing the breech. Encouraged I removed all the small parts, cleaning as I went. Some of the metal screws required tapping with a hammer and the screwdriver but eventually all came loose. Everything was laid out on a clean cloth to be examined. It was then I saw how the tang safety worked.

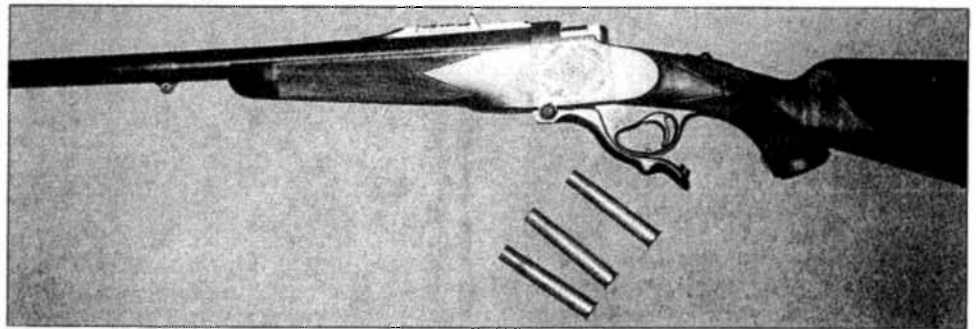
A couple of days later Canadian friends of ours came to visit from Nigeria. Graham was a veterinarian in virus research and was an avid hunter and gun collector. When he saw the action laid out on the work bench, I noticed his keen interest. With a light on his eye he said, "That's an old falling block and I'll give you US\$50 for it." In those days a game department salary was very slim and US \$50 was good money. I was tempted but knew Dr. Kemp from previous dealings and declined saying, "Thanks, but I want to hang on to it and maybe build you a rifle someday." He



Above and below: Pictures after Joubert cleaned and dismantled before engraving was recut.



450/4003" Farquharson action possibly made by Webley and Scott.



The finished rifle 4503 1/4 Calibre

noded and with a wicked grin said, "Believe that action is a Farquharson and they are quite rare and valuable. A fellow I know in States, Tom Shelhammer, builds beautiful rifles from those actions and I have always wanted one."

The years went by, we left Rhodesia and lived and worked in Puerto Rico, the USA, Libya, Zimbabwe and eventually Botswana. I carried the action with me hoping to find someone willing and capable to do the work of building up a first class hunting rifle. Once passing through London, I stopped to talk with the people at Holland & Holland. When I showed the picture of the rifle to the man in charge of their firearm repairs he said that if the action were a true Farquharson, it would be extremely valuable. He went on to say that a group in Australia called Century Arms were capable of building up such a rifle. When I got to Zimbabwe, I immediately wrote Century Arms on two different occasions, but never got a reply.

Finally two years ago, a hunting friend in Pretoria, Bill Garvie, suggested we visit a gunsmith, a machinist friend, who is very keen on double and single shot rifles. I took the action with and when Danie Joubert examined it he said it would be necessary to

have the breech block machined due to the heavy pitting of the old one. As I listened to Danie talk about single shot rifles and observed the ones he was currently working on, it was evident he was very knowledgeable and certainly knew what he was doing as his workmanship was excellent. Something started to stir within me but then this had happened with other possible gunsmiths but had died when I looked at their finished products. This was not the case with Danie. Here at last a craftsman of the old school. He was young, but aren't we all at one time in our lives? We talked Farquharsons and he explained the various types. As he examined my action with careful hands he said, "This is a large Farquharson action and, yes, I can make you a rifle you will never forget." It was magical, believe me. Time stood still, dust particles floated in the sunlight, in that organized clean machine shop.

The various ideas on what calibre to make it were discussed. I favoured the .450-3 1/4, Danie suggested the .470. It had originally been an .400 Express. We discussed the wood, the sights, the checking, the barrel and the engraving. I stuck with my decision of the calibre so 450 it was. Not only for the history of that old African calibre, but the fact I had an Army & Navy double rifle in that same

calibre. Besides wildlife ecologists are not the wealthiest men in the world and with cost of ammo, I figured to economise with the potential for reloading. Finally a price to do the work was agreed upon. My knees got weak and then knew that I would have to put my lovely school teacher wife into another line of work like diamond merchant or gold smuggling.

At last the final count down was started. In the preceding months I have watched the progress. Danie machined the new block, he made a new firing pin, a link lever and a spring for the safety. He also built a traditional H&H spearpoint sight arrangement and added new metal screws and a barrel band. A 36 mm barrel blank was secured from Musgrave and turned to size. After taking photos of the action Danie removed all the old and pitted engraving and when finished he took it to Tinus Els to re-do the engraving from the photos. Each time Danie would write or phone and/or I would visit Pretoria, we would discuss the progress.

Danie suggested Bennie Laubscher from Paarl as the stock maker. Bennie, in conjunction with Johan Morkel made the stock in the classic English style. A buffalo horn fore-end tip, a screw out trap grip cap, a silver oval and silver recoil pad were used to make the stock look as much like an original as possible.

Now what does one do with a rifle of this quality? Some say put it in your gun room, take it down periodically to clean and admire, show it to your friends and certainly not to take it out for fear of damage or theft. Me, I feel differently about firearms. My mind keeps going back to Buck's junk yard, to all the thought, effort and money that has gone into recreating it. Recently I wrote Buck in Zimbabwe where he operates Lion Safaris on the same cattle-timber ranch in Gwai Valley. I asked him for any information he might be able to supply on the history of the rifle.

So once the sighting is completed and a number of rounds are shot through the barrel, the work will be completed. I plan to make a traditional long life case with green beize interior and jute exterior.

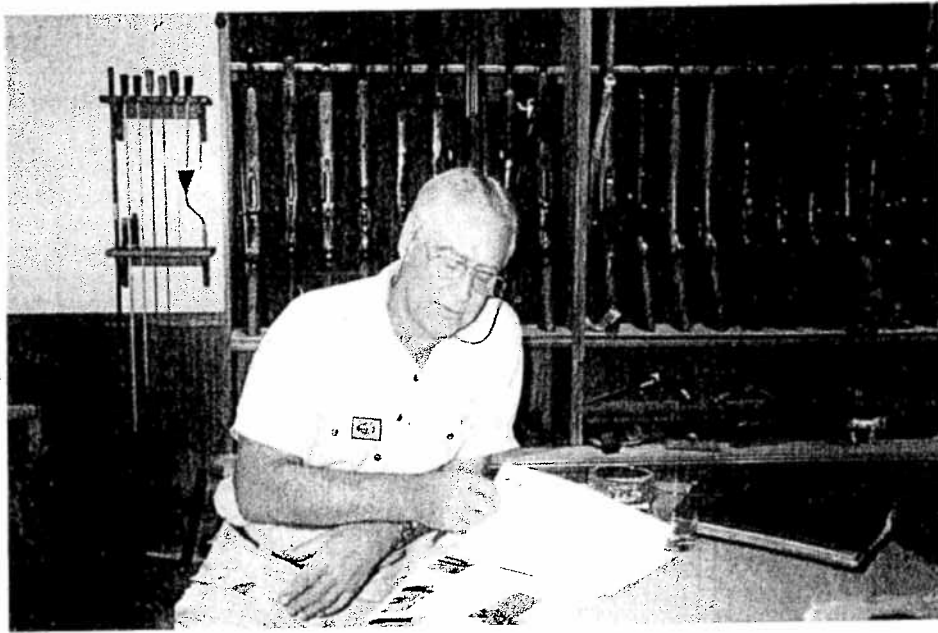
Eventually I will contact Buck and see if a buffalo hunt can be organised and hopefully then use the rifle for what it was originally designed, shooting big game. The serial number of the rifle is 28937 and from the research it was probably a ~~Jeffery~~ **A COGSWELL**

Acknowledgements **HARRISON**

Thanks are due to Bill, Garvie, Danie Joubert and Dr. G.E. Kemp who offered constructive criticism and photographs during the writing of this article. 🐾

# Some Fine Guns and a Magical Gun Room in South Africa

by John Herbert



*The owner of the gun room in his special room.*

As we pass through life those of us who are interested in guns and the shooting sports evolve and create ideas of building our own gun room. This can vary from a section in one's workshop to the creation of a full-blown gun room with figured hardwood, green baize backed gun racks, solid wood panelling, reloading benches, cleaning rods and gunsmithing tools. It could have trophies on the walls, knives, spears, zebra skin lounge chairs, pictures of hunting and a smell of Hoppes No. 9 bore cleaning fluid. If one could convince oneself that a built in refrigerator, overhead lighting, movable lamps, gun books, fishing rod racks, heaters, exhaust fans, crystal glass tumblers and a good stock of whisky are necessary additions then one is getting close to a gun room that a friend of

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As one passes through this door, one moves into a room such as Holland & Holland, Purdey and Rigby have created in London to lure their customers into a sense of 18th century living. My wife, who is not as smitten with guns and shooting as I am, upon seeing this room said, "My goodness, what a lovely room!" That to me said it all.

The owner of this room has been working towards this sanctuary for the last 42 years. Our friendship goes back to the 1960s when we met while hunting in the South African lowveld. Since then we have spent many hours shooting, not only big game, but game birds

as well. During the past weekend I had an opportunity to examine and photograph a portion of his English and European rifle and shotgun collection. All of his weapons are maintained in an excellent state of repair and if possible returned to "original" condition. He is not one who is concerned about "collectability and value" as related to a piece of wood and metal who such and such used in the Zulu Wars and the termites and rust have reduced to a "What's that?" state. Therefore, all of his guns are shootable and in working order.

To my way of thinking his best weapon is a Westley Richards .425 magnum express double rifle. Not only does it have extensive unworn engraving, but the barrels are excellent. Show me a double rifle that has been used under African conditions with the old cordite ammunition with its corrosive primers and I will, almost 100%, show you pitting. Therefore, this gun is a real exception and was meticulously cared for. The wood on this double rifle is beautiful well-figured Circassian walnut. The Westley Richards Company in the United Kingdom report that only 28-inch barrels were produced for this weapon, however the barrels now measure 26 inches and there is no indication that the barrels were cut. John "Pondoro" Taylor stated that one of the complaints of the Westley Richards doubles was the length of the barrel and that anything longer than 26 inches would hang up on the bush. This double was completed on 27 June 1928 and released to a M.C. Piggott who also purchased two 16 gauge shotguns in the same order.

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Now we come to the shotguns. The four that I choose to photograph and write about are all of English manufacture and show the excellent workmanship of those old craftsmen. In this battery of double barrels, there is a heavy strong W Greener 12 gauge box lock which was brought to South Africa by his paternal grandfather during the Boer War. Apparently his grandfather had no love for the English and being Scots aided the Boers in their struggle with his training as a chemist and veterinarian. This shotgun was given to one of the grandfather's sons who sold it to my friend for British pounds. Apparently the uncle had an affection for the bottle and needed the money. This Greener has 32 inch barrels and was extensively used for waterfowl shooting. The present owner and grandson who, at the age of 15 years and not knowing much about choke, wondered why the few birds he was able to shoot were in so many pieces. It wasn't until he started reading and researching that he found out that both barrels were fully choked and shot a tight pattern. Today he uses it for duck and goose shooting.

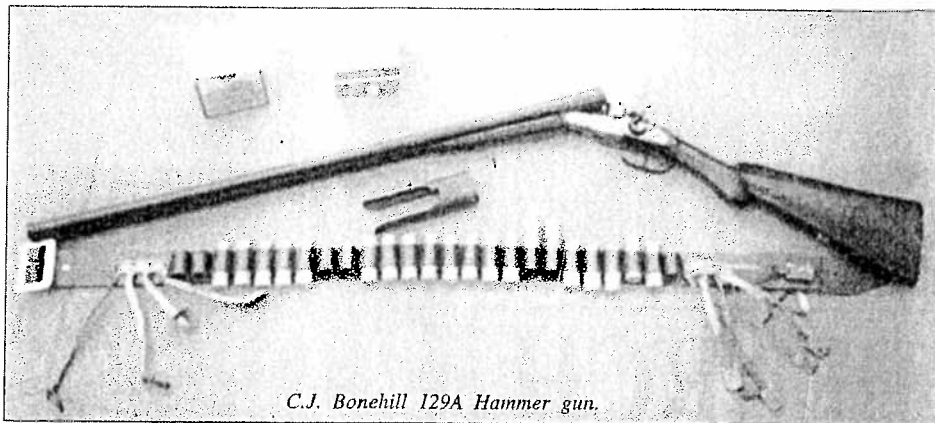
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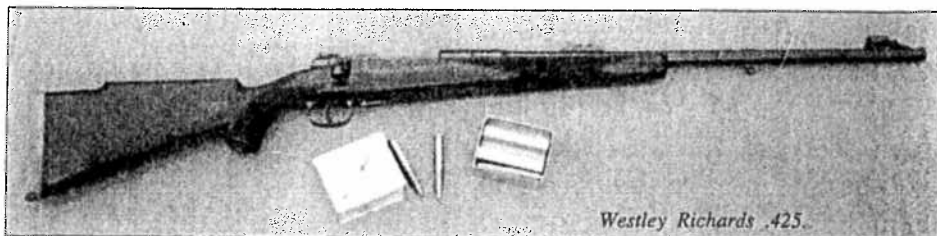
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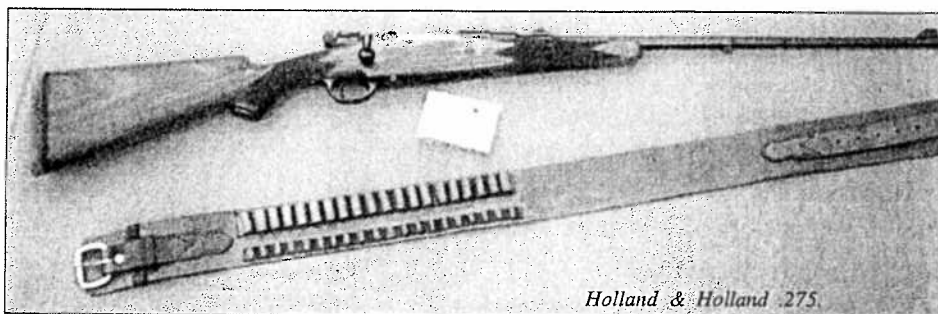
Unfortunately I needed to return to Zimbabwe and couldn't spend more time examining and discussing his various guns. On the ride up to Zimbabwe I was thinking of an Arabic proverb I had learned when I worked in the North African country of Libya. It goes something like this, "Allah does not deduct from the allotted time of man, those hours spent in fishing". I am sure Allah would let one carry this one step further and include those times spent in hunting and in gun rooms. 🐾



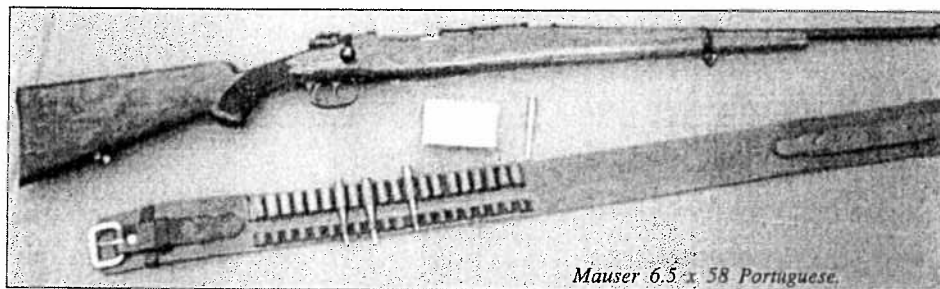
*C.J. Bonehill 129A Hammer gun.*



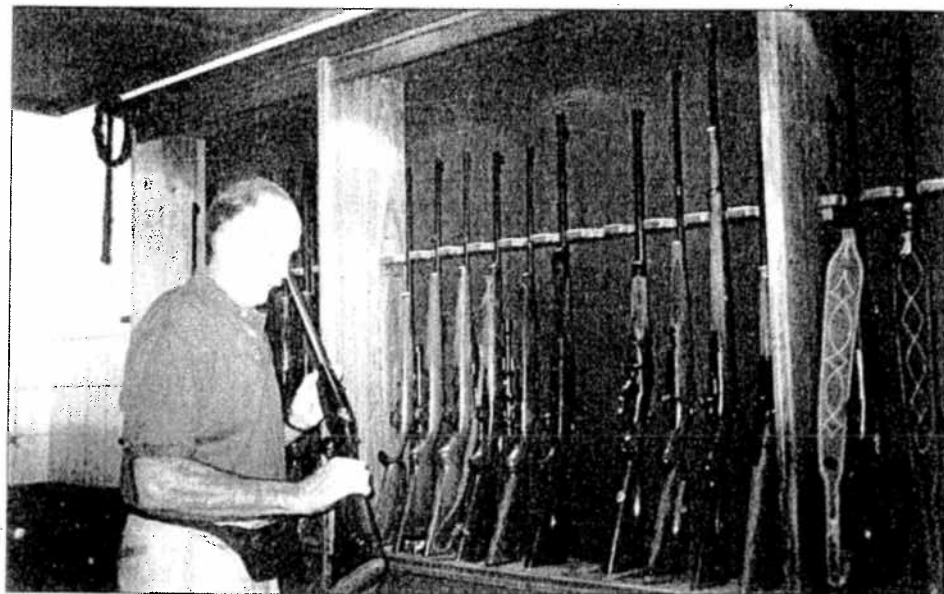
*Westley Richards .425.*



*Holland & Holland .275.*



*Mauser 6.5 x 58 Portuguese.*



*The author examining some of the guns.*

# Mdoda

By J Herbert

Illustration Bill Garvie

In the late 1960s my wife and I moved into a beautiful bush camp next to Kruger National Park for a three-year study of waterbuck in the South African lowveld. After my contract as a field mammalogist with the US National Museum (Smithsonian Institute) ended I had accepted a scholarship to work for my Master's degree at the University of Pretoria. A wealthy business man had made the camp available and except during the cool season, we virtually had the place to ourselves.

Harry Kirkman, ex-Kruger Park Ranger who had worked for the famous first warden Stevenson-Hamilton, was the warden of the area and one couldn't have had a better teacher concerning the bush and its lore. In the beginning my days were spent in finding and learning the habits of the waterbuck and then erecting tree houses as viewing platforms. It has been my experience that most antelope don't look up so I could at times have waterbuck (and other animals) right under me. This made my research and photography much easier and more accurate.

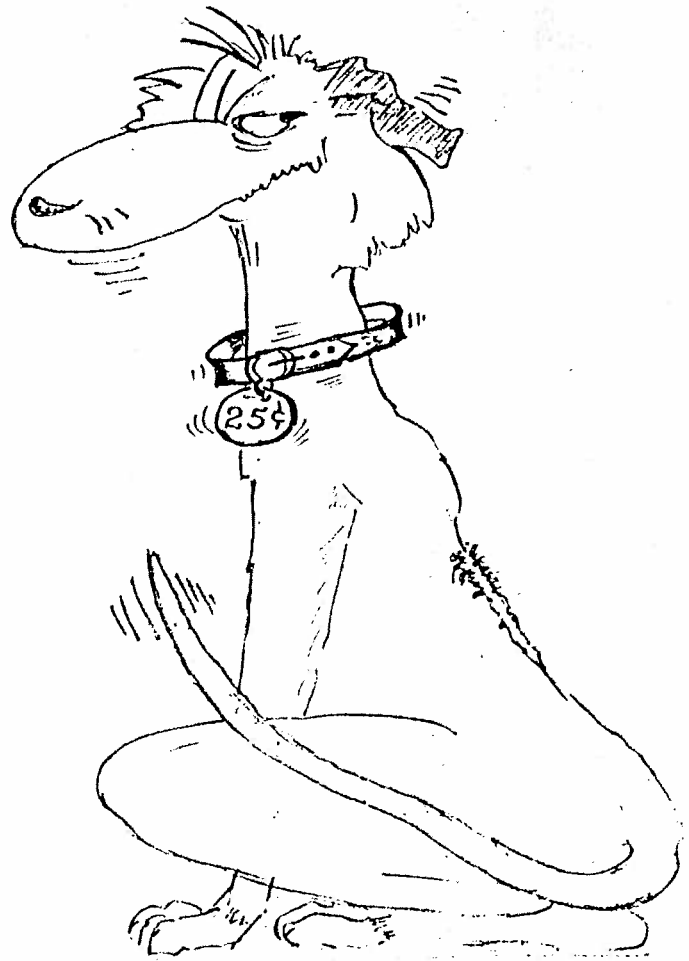
My wife and I had often talked of having a pair of those African dogs with the peculiar hair formation like the ridge-back and one day I asked one of the Shangaan camp employees to find me a pair of puppies. He went home that weekend and on the Monday he arrived with two tan pups which were all head and stomachs – and the ridges. He apologized for them costing too much. When I asked, "How much?" he replied, "25c each!" The pups looked like they needed to be treated for worms and dusted for fleas. I said I would take them.

We had anticipated this flea infestation and on our last trip to Nelspruit had purchased flea powder and worm pills and were ready to clean and de-bug the pups. In no time at all, they were healthy, intelligent additions to our family and good watch dogs. As time went on I taught them to sit, to come, to stay and even to retrieve a made up ball with francolin feathers inside. Training dogs is not difficult. All that is necessary are firm, decisive and kindly methods. As I said, they were intelligent, obedient and good watch dogs.

The owner of the camp had asked me to shoot two impala a week for the staff's meat rations and for our own use. One one occasion I wounded a female impala which made off in the thick bush beside a gully, locally known as a *donga*. As it ran off, I yelled to the dogs, which were in the back of the truck some 100 yards away, "Sic 'em!" – they were off like a shot.

Very soon I heard barking and ran to the sound. The female was standing off a bit, it was she that had barked, the male dog had the dying impala by the throat. Believe me I was very proud of them and they certainly were well rewarded with impala meat at feeding time.

The owner of the camp, a well-known bird shooter, had a pair of English springer spaniels which had been bought and trained in



the United Kingdom at considerable cost. I had seen them work on several occasions and they were very good. Their fawning desire to please was to my way of thinking a bit overwhelming, but to each his own, if you know what I mean. For some unknown reason he took great glee in telling me that my 'K-dogs' needed some basic alterations to make them presentable – tails and ears docked. I've never gone along with this – not only is it painful and can cause infection, it is also possibly a destabilizing factor in a dog's balance. (I am sure I will hear from some readers on that one!) He had apparently forgotten the old hunters' maxim about never making fun of another man's dog, wife, or rifle (not necessarily in that order) because he repeatedly stated that my dogs were not much good.

I had not had my dogs for very long when the camp owner brought some English friends along for some bird shooting. After dinner one evening we were sitting around in large over-stuffed leather chairs in front of the fireplace telling stories about the bush. I had explained my waterbuck study to the visitors, when the conversation turned to dogs and their merits and the camp owner looked directly at me and said, with a tinge of malice, "Only pure-bred bird dogs can retrieve properly." His dog, Satan, was nervously sitting and staring at him, while my dog, Mdoda was asleep at my feet. He added that his dog was one of the best springer spaniels to come out of England. I was getting a bit hot under the collar from his constant put down and retorted, "Mdoda can retrieve very well." As I said this, I saw the other men perk up a bit as if to say, "Aha! Things might get a bit interesting here!" The owner sneered and said, "No way. Not that dog of yours."

I really didn't want to get into an argument, we were living in his camp and eating his impala and besides I needed to finish the research for my degree, but like a dog worrying a bone he kept after the issue and finally said, "Let's have a little contest in retrieving."

He had the habit of throwing one of his slippers for Satan to retrieve. I was not sure of Mdoda's reaction to this foreign object but decided to go with the flow. We agreed that he would throw a slipper out into the night and the dogs would retrieve it in turns. One of the large glass windows, that opened outwards from behind the chairs, was opened; he told his dog to sit, showed him the slipper, threw it out into the darkness and, after a 10-second interval, told the dog to fetch. The dog, who was sitting vibrating on the spot with excitement was up and over one of the chairs, sailed through the window into the night, and in nothing flat came flying back in the window and down the chair to drop the slipper at his owner's feet. It was a good performance.

With a smirk, the camp owner said, "Let's see your K-dog do that!" I spoke to Mdoda who sat up facing me. I showed him the slipper

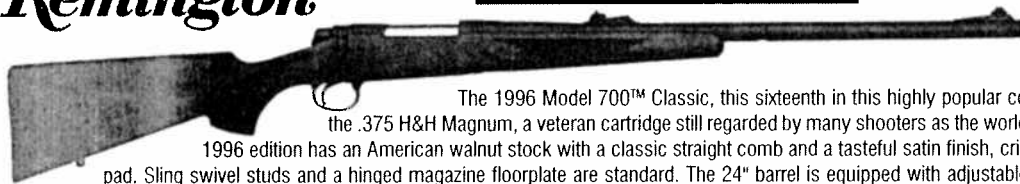
and told him to stay. I then threw the slipper out the window. He looked at me and after a bit I told him to fetch it. Well he got up, trotted out the door and returned back through the door and sat in front of me with the slipper in his mouth. I took it from him with the word, "Give." I patted him and said, "Good dog," when really I wanted to hug him for his stellar performance. He then again lay at my feet. I turned to the owner and said, "You really should teach your dog some manners and how to use the door. It's really not on (to use the English vernacular) to jump on furniture and out the window." With that there were hoots and much laughter from the other men. My 25c dog had really come through!

Mdoda lived with us for many years, even travelling to Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) where he was a steady companion on Gwaii River bird shoots. He and his sister, Mfazi, were a first warning alert of any animal or human coming near our house in Wankie (Hwange) National Park and they both had numerous adventures. But that's another tale ...



**Remington**

**MODEL 700™ CLASSIC**

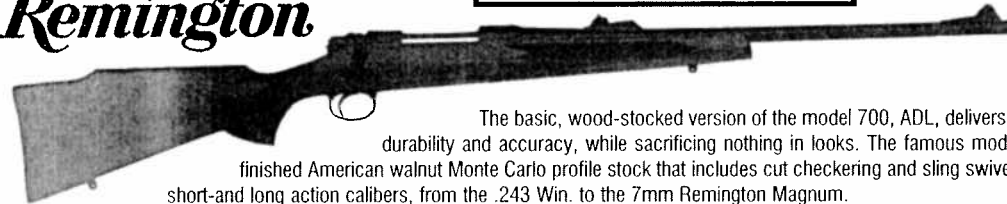


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**Remington**

**MODEL 700™ ADL**

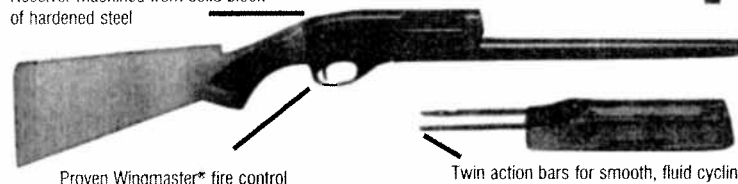


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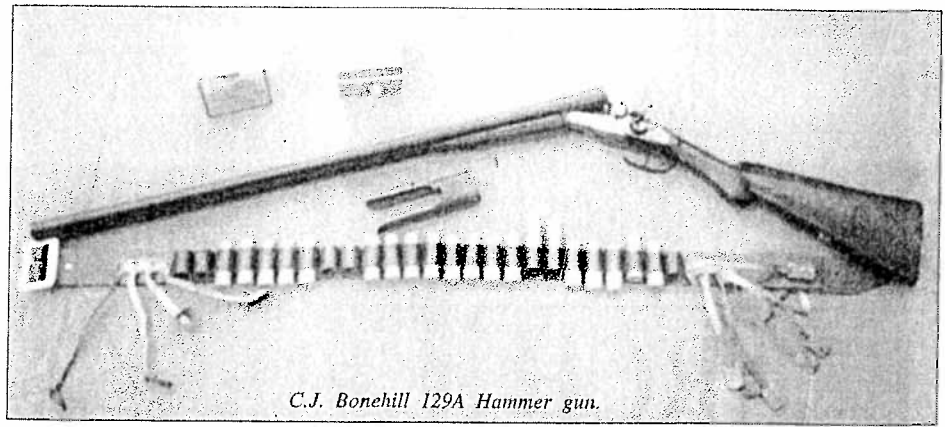
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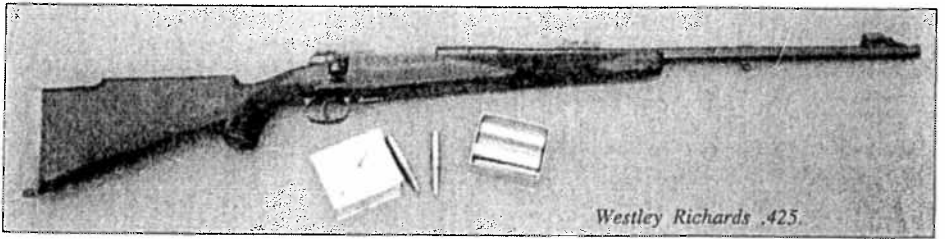
While standing there looking at the described guns and many more, I was aware of a brown side pair of barrels lying behind the other guns. I asked the owner what it was and replied that it was a J & W Tolley that he was working on. The metal parts were soaking in large jar of paraffin and the cracked and broken stock and forehand piece were beyond repair.

In looking at the barrels, I could see the lovely patina of Damascus steel under the combined dirt and grime of many years. On examining the metal parts of the box lock all looked unworn and serviceable.

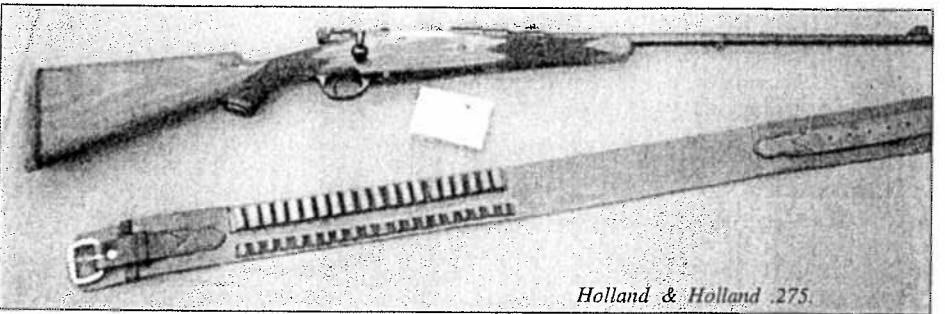
Unfortunately I needed to return to Zimbabwe and couldn't spend more time examining and discussing his various guns. On the ride up to Zimbabwe I was thinking of an Arabic proverb I had learned when I worked in the North African country of Libya. It goes something like this, "Allah does not deduct from the allotted time of man, those hours spent in fishing". I am sure Allah would let one carry this one step further and include those times spent in hunting and in gun rooms. 🐾



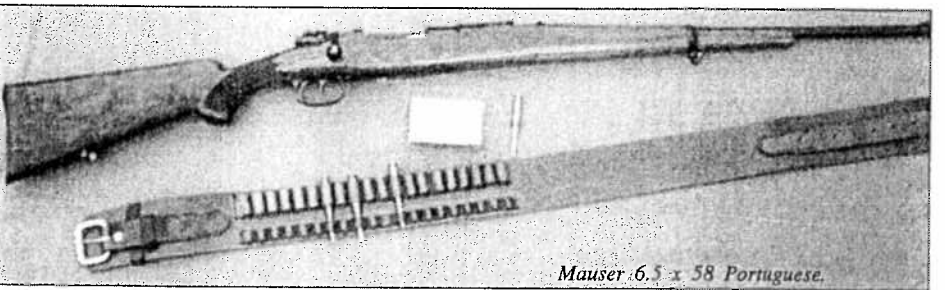
*C.J. Bonehill 129A Hammer gun.*



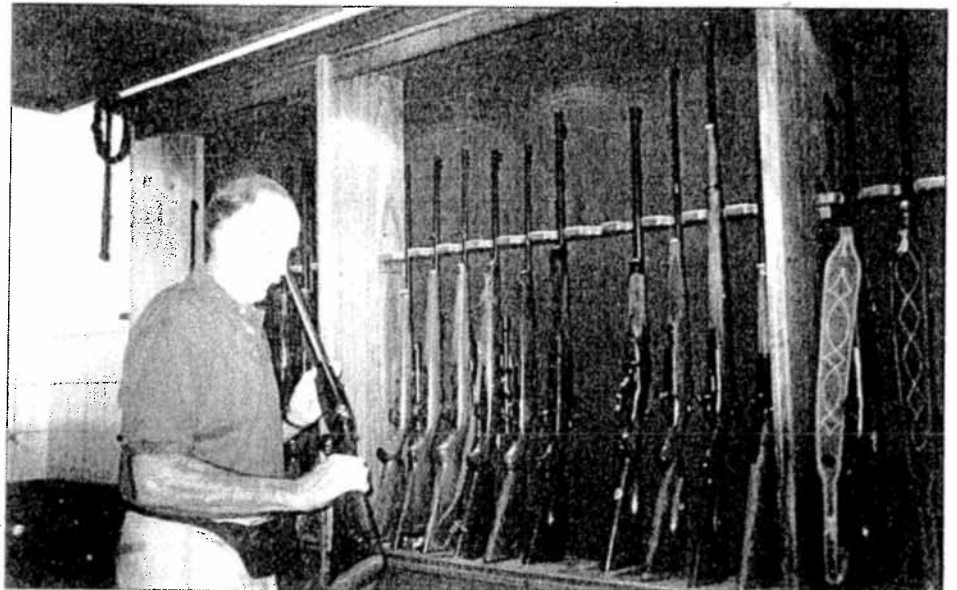
*Westley Richards .425.*



*Holland & Holland .275.*



*Mauser 6.5 x 58 Portuguese.*



*The author examining some of the guns.*

# A Born Again Farquharson

By John Herbert

*Brief History: The Farquharson action was patented in England on 25 May 1872 by the Scottish sportsman and rifleman, John Farquharson. This action has an enclosed centre hammer designed with a box-shaped rectangular receiver. The most significant and identifying feature of the true Farquharson action is the forked and slotted cocking bar; to a lesser extent so is the double extractor system found only in the true Farquharson. (Extracted from Harthan 1963).*

The following calibres have been listed as being chambered for the Farquharson action. This list includes black powder as well as cordite cartridges: 297/230 Morris (or .22 centerfire), J.255, .300 no. 5, .475, .450 no. 2, .600 cordite. .303 Jeffrey Sharp, .303 Henry, .450 Deeley Edge, 450-3 1/4 N.E., 500/.577/.120 Sharps, 400-3 1/4, .303 British, 450 W.R. no. 2 .256 Mannlicher, .500-3", 450/.400., .470 nitro, .350 Rigby, .350, .577-3", .350 N.E., .500/.450, .375-2 1/2 N.E., .375 Mag, .406? (Webley & Scott barrel), .275, .465, 280, .425, 220, .400/.360, .300Rook, 22 Hornett, 322 N.E., .318, .32/04, .476 N.E., .461 Gibbs no.1, .461 Gibbs no 2, 360 Gibbs no. 2, 360 Gibbs no.3 .360 Gibbs no.4, 256 Gibbs flanged, .380 Long Rook, 280 flanged nitro express, 320, .255 380 Long, 442 Long 450 Long, .360-2 1/4", .450/400-2 3/8, .300-3", .577-2 3/4. (From Kirton, 1985 and Harthan, 1963)

"Hey, Buck. Do you have any old rifles or shotguns?" Buck was running a metre wide kiaat log through the blade of his sawmill, slicing off planks. We watched as a 26 mm slice peeled off the screaming saw and flopped on a catching rack. An assistant with a long hook pulled it out of the way. Both Buck and the man were covered in red, wet sawdust and the air in the open shed was thick with dust and diesel fumes. Buck was in his typical attire of those days, singlet, shorts, veld skoen and a bush hat shoved down on his head. As the last plank peeled away, Buck turned and over the noise of the unmuffled diesel engine, yelled to have a look in the junk pile at the back of the open-sided building.

It was the early 1970s and we two game department officials were visiting Buck De Vries on his ranch in the Gwai Valley of Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia). The ranger with me was Kerry Fynn who was later to die tragically in the war in Zimbabwe. I remember thinking, "What would a firearm be doing in a junk pile?" but went to investigate.

While Kerry talked with Buck about the

purchase of planks for furniture making I dug about in the various truck parts, old tins, angle iron, buckets of nuts and bolts, worn out jerry cans and five-gallon petrol tins. Everything was rusty and covered in a mixture of saw dust, oil and dirt, plus the cattle used the shed so their dung was everywhere. I was just ready to give up looking when Buck walked over and bending down at my feet said, "Ach man, if it had been a snake, he would have had you!" and pulled out a metal frame with a single shot action that had the barrel cut to 20 cm welded to it. The ranger with me started laughing and said, "What the hell is that?" Buck said, "that's my trap gun which I've used on leopard and hyena but it doesn't work so well." I had no idea what it was, but being an avid gun fancier asked, "How much do you want for it?" "Ach, take it, man. It don't have any use to me," he said in South African accented English. Buck was very generous to the people in the game department in those days, not only with wood but various pieces of metal and best of all he let us go bird shooting on his property near the Gwai River.

I thanked him and put the action in the back of the Land Rover with the ranger's wood and we drove back to the park. I was the Research Officer (I/O) of Hwange (Wankie) National Park in those days, and upon getting home from work, I took it out in the sunlight examined it closely. It had a covering of rust, the cut off barrel was welded to a frame which permitted it to stand facing downward. A wire or light chain had been attached to the trigger which in turn was attached to a piece of meat. When the predator grabbed the meat and pulled the action fired a shot into the top of its head. Since then I've seen these 'trap guns' used effectively in other countries in Africa. So reaching for the hacksaw, I sawed the metal frame away and studied it. Not having seen a falling block except in pictures, I wasn't sure how it worked and besides it was frozen solid with rust and grime. What was left of the barrel had the following letters, numbers and figures:

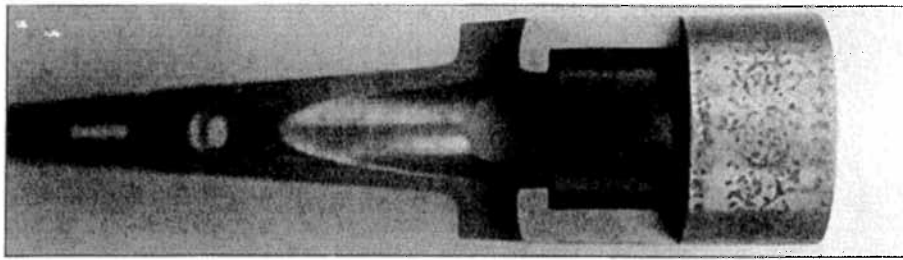
Z CORDITE 60 - 400 MAX

8

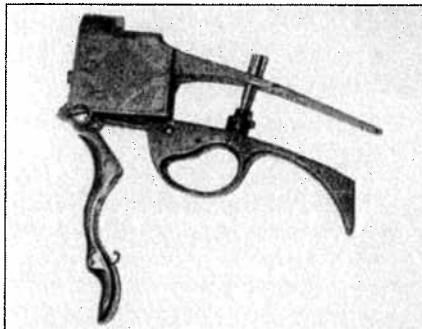
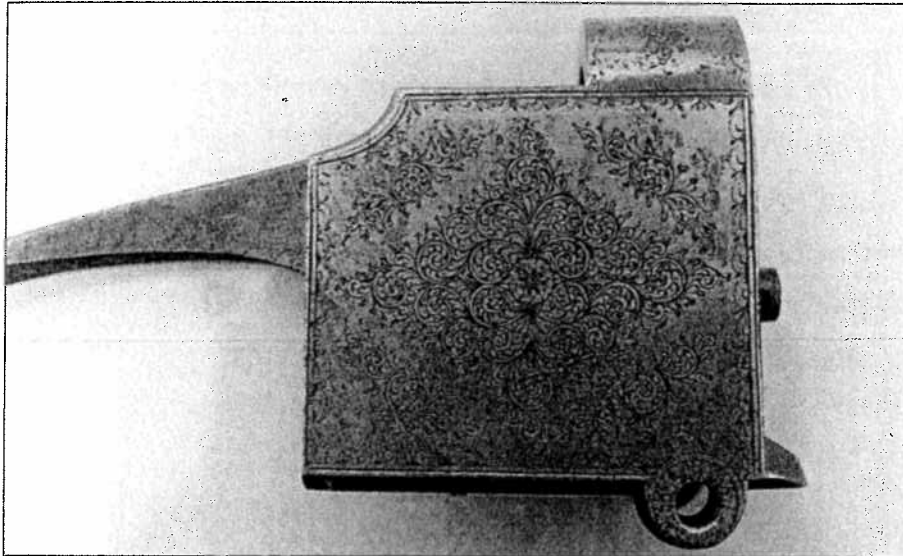
28937  
400 EX.

Tinkey Haslam, the Warden at Main Camp in those days, said that a good way to loosen old rust was to soak them in paraffin (kerosene). So taking a cut off five gallon tin, I filled it half full and put the action in it. It was elephant culling time so I got involved in that and the action soaked for three months. Finally one Sunday afternoon, being alone at the house with only the dogs asleep in the yard, I was in the hut cleaning my model 70 Winchester 375 H7H which I had been using in the elephant culling programme. Looking around I saw the oil tin and remembered the action. Kerry, being the parks pilot had given me some out-of-date 100 octane airplane fuel which I was using in my Land Rover and so, after thoroughly washing the action, it was again examined in the sunlight. With a stiff wire brush I scrubbed it removing all visible rust. A dorm of scroll engraving appeared on both sides and on part of the trigger guard. On moving the ejector handle it slid up and down exposing the breech. Encouraged I removed all the small parts, cleaning as I went. Some of the metal screws required tapping with a hammer and the screwdriver but eventually all came loose. Everything was laid out on a clean cloth to be examined. It was then I saw how the tang safety worked.

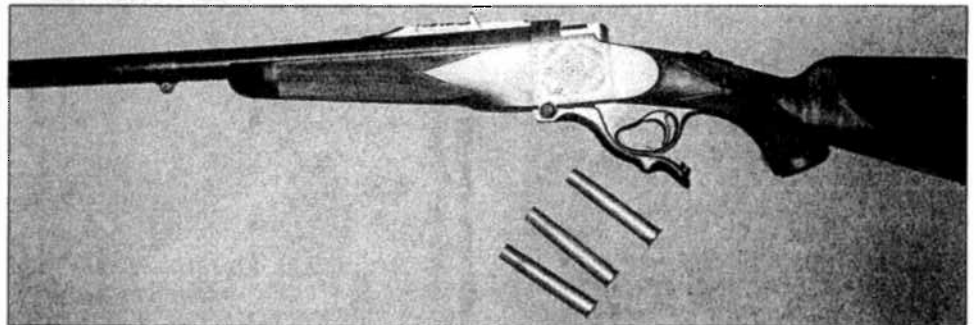
A couple of days later Canadian friends of ours came to visit from Nigeria. Graham was a veterinarian in virus research and was an avid hunter and gun collector. When he saw the action laid out on the work bench, I noticed his keen interest. With a light on his eye he said, "That's an old falling block and I'll give you US\$50 for it." In those days a game department salary was very slim and US \$50 was good money. I was tempted but knew Dr. Kemp from previous dealings and declined saying, "Thanks, but I want to hang on to it and maybe build you a rifle someday." He



Above and below: Pictures after Joubert cleaned and dismantled before engraving was recut.



450/4003" Farquharson action possibly made by Webley and Scott.



The finished rifle 4503/4 Calibre

noded and with a wicked grin said, "Believe that action is a Farquharson and they are quite rare and valuable. A fellow I know in States, Tom Shelhammer, builds beautiful rifles from those actions and I have always wanted one."

The years went by, we left Rhodesia and lived and worked in Puerto Rico, the USA, Libya, Zimbabwe and eventually Botswana. I carried the action with me hoping to find someone willing and capable to do the work of building up a first class hunting rifle. Once passing through London, I stopped to talk with the people at Holland & Holland. When I showed the picture of the rifle to the man in charge of their firearm repairs he said that if the action were a true Farquharson, it would be extremely valuable. He went on to say that a group in Australia called Century Arms were capable of building up such a rifle. When I got to Zimbabwe, I immediately wrote Century Arms on two different occasions, but never got a reply.

Finally two years ago, a hunting friend in Pretoria, Bill Garvie, suggested we visit a gunsmith, a machinist friend, who is very keen on double and single shot rifles. I took the action with and when Danie Joubert examined it he said it would be necessary to

have the breech block machined due to the heavy pitting of the old one. As I listened to Danie talk about single shot rifles and observed the ones he was currently working on, it was evident he was very knowledgeable and certainly knew what he was doing as his workmanship was excellent. Something started to stir within me but then this had happened with other possible gunsmiths but had died when I looked at their finished products. This was not the case with Danie. Here at last a craftsman of the old school. He was young, but aren't we all at one time in our lives? We talked Farquharsons and he explained the various types. As he examined my action with careful hands he said, "This is a large Farquharson action and, yes, I can make you a rifle you will never forget." It was magical, believe me. Time stood still, dust particles floated in the sunlight, in that organized clean machine shop.

The various ideas on what calibre to make it were discussed. I favoured the .450-3 1/4, Danie suggested the .470. It had originally been an .400 Express. We discussed the wood, the sights, the checking, the barrel and the engraving. I stuck with my decision of the calibre so 450 it was. Not only for the history of that old African calibre, but the fact I had an Army & Navy double rifle in that same

calibre. Besides wildlife ecologists are not the wealthiest men in the world and with cost of ammo, I figured to economise with the potential for reloading. Finally a price to do the work was agreed upon. My knees got weak and then knew that I would have to put my lovely school teacher wife into another line of work like diamond merchant or gold smuggling.

At last the final count down was started. In the preceding months I have watched the progress. Danie machined the new block, he made a new firing pin, a link lever and a spring for the safety. He also built a traditional H&H spearpoint sight arrangement and added new metal screws and a barrel band. A 36 mm barrel blank was secured from Musgrave and turned to size. After taking photos of the action Danie removed all the old and pitted engraving and when finished he took it to Tinus Els to re-do the engraving from the photos. Each time Danie would write or phone and/or I would visit Pretoria, we would discuss the progress.

Danie suggested Bennie Laubscher from Paarl as the stock maker. Bennie, in conjunction with Johan Morkel made the stock in the classic English style. A buffalo horn fore-end tip, a screw out trap grip cap, a silver oval and silver recoil pad were used to make the stock look as much like an original as possible.

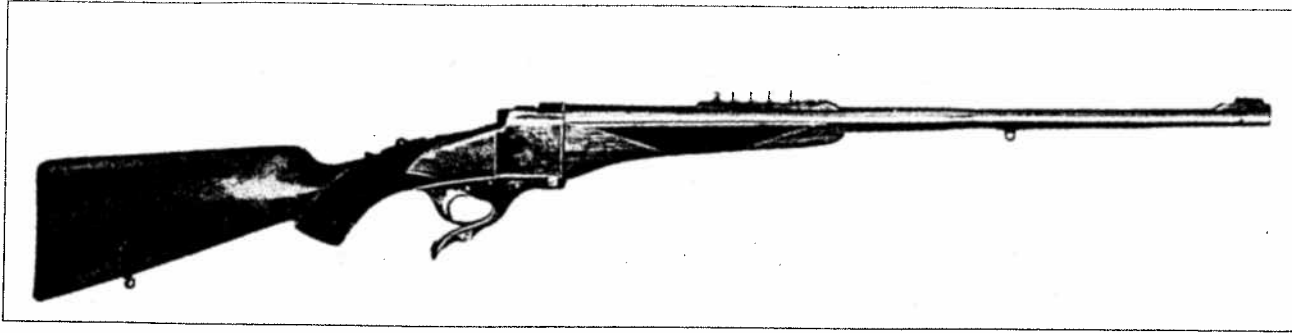
Now what does one do with a rifle of this quality? Some say put it in your gun room, take it down periodically to clean and admire, show it to your friends and certainly not to take it out for fear of damage or theft. Me, I feel differently about firearms. My mind keeps going back to Buck's junk yard, to all the thought, effort and money that has gone into recreating it. Recently I wrote Buck in Zimbabwe where he operates Lion Safaris on the same cattle-timber ranch in Gwai Valley. I asked him for any information he might be able to supply on the history of the rifle.

So once the sighting is completed and a number of rounds are shot through the barrel, the work will be completed. I plan to make a traditional long life case with green beize interior and jute exterior.

Eventually I will contact Buck and see if a buffalo hunt can be organised and hopefully then use the rifle for what it was originally designed, shooting big game. The serial number of the rifle is 28937 and from the research it was probably a Jeffery. A COGSWELL

Acknowledgements HARRISON

Thanks are due to Bill, Garvie, Danie Joubert and Dr. G.E. Kemp who offered constructive criticism and photographs during the writing of this article. 🐾



## THE FARQUHARSON FALLING BLOCK

Period: Patented 1872

To most single-shot rifle enthusiasts there is something magical about the name "Farquharson" and to them it means only one thing—the finest single shot rifle action ever made. Asked what he thinks is the most desirable action to own and chances are he will say the Farquharson. Most lovers of the single shot regard this action as the "ultimate" in a falling block design, most will consider it the strongest action ever made, many will regard it as the best looking action, and all will agree that it is the action of actions. To the rifleman who appreciates graceful lines and balance in a gun, the Farquharson is the "classic" action, and round it a truly classic rifle can be built.

Patented May 25, 1872, the usual Farquharson action is a fine example of the English gunmaking art and craftsmanship. Like many other fine English firearms, each Farquharson action is an "individual" action in that it was mostly hand made. It is a rather large action, very rugged and strong, yet it has the lines and feel of a much smaller action.\* Properly stocked by an expert stock artisan it allows the finest pistol grip to be made of any single-shot action. This is perhaps the most outstanding single fea-

ture of the Farquharson action, in that the grip can be made small enough in circumference for the smallest hands, and yet long enough for the largest hands. The long action tangs, plus the two tang screws, add strength to the slim grip and provide a solid anchorage of the stock to the receiver.

The Farquharson is a true lever activated falling block action. The solid breech block is connected to the lever with a long linkage bar and moves up and down in the receiver recess at right angles to the barrel. Thus there is no camming action to help seat a stubborn cartridge. It is also a hammerless action, in that the hammer is not exposed. The breech block fits very snugly into the recess in the receiver and when the action is closed there is no possible chance for foreign material to get into the action from the top. The bottom of the action is equally well protected; all parts fit very closely. The top tang is deeply grooved so when the action is open (the top of the breech block also has a shallow groove to match the tang groove) a cartridge can be placed in this groove to guide it straight into the chamber.

Other features that make the Farquharson outstanding among all single-shot actions are the positive extractor, good trigger pull, fast lock time and a strong firing pin.

The extractor is a solidly built yoke having double extractor hooks. It is pivoted in the action on a separate screw and just ahead of it is a secondary extractor cam-lever also pivoted on a screw. There is a solid lug on the hinged end of the finger lever and when this lever is swung down to

open the action, the lug comes into contact with the cam-lever, which in turn moves the main extractor. There is ample leverage and power to easily extract the fired case.

Due to the excellent workmanship that went into the average Farquharson action, and to the relationship of the hammer to the trigger, the trigger pull is usually very good. The long trigger aids in making the trigger pull quite light for an action that has a direct hammer/trigger sear engagement.

The hammer is made fairly light in weight and the stiff and snappy main spring provides the power so that hammer fall is very fast and ignition positive.

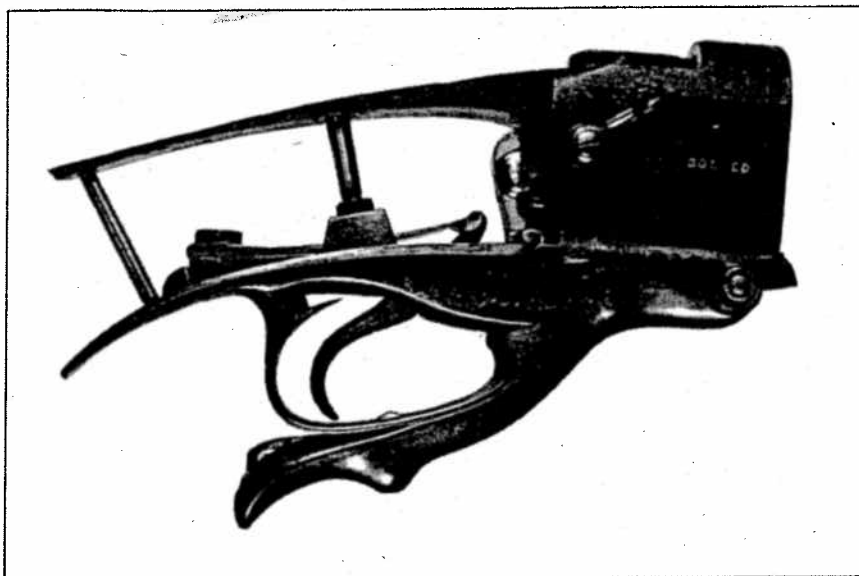
The firing pin in the Farquharson action is made to take a lot of punishment. This is in sharp contrast to the puny pins found in many other single-shot actions. The head of the Farquharson firing pin is enlarged so there is little chance of it being battered out of shape by the hammer. The pin is well supported in the breech block and held securely in place by a sturdy cross pin. A sufficiently strong coil spring around the tip of the pin retracts it into the breech except when the hammer is in the down position. The firing pin tip and the firing pin hole are small enough so the breech block does not generally have to be "bushed" when the action is barreled for a modern high intensity cartridge.

As with most English made single shot actions, there are quite a few variations in the Farquharson action.

*Illustrated above: A Farquharson rifle made by Jefferey; caliber .450/400.3".*

\* Farquharson actions, actually, varied quite a bit in size, some of the very early ones (by Gibbs, the original manufacturer) being on the small side. On the other hand, some later so-called Farquharson actions (true copies made in Belgium, for one, and types not truly John Farquharson's patent design (Webley, Thos. Bland, Westley Richards, et al) are sometimes very large. John Amber has one of true Farquharson design, one of a small number bought in Belgium in the 1930s, that weighs 3 lb., 1 oz., is 1 3/4" wide and measures 7 7/8" over-all. This one should do for the .600 Nitro Express!

This specimen has the link with ovalized slot at the top to cam the firing pin back, and is without firing pin coil spring.



An example of the Farquharson single shot action as made by George Gibbs of Bristol, England, one of the several gunmaking firms in England who made these actions. It is considered by many to be the ultimate in design, construction and workmanship. The Farquharson is certainly the "classic" of all single shot rifle actions and is a highly prized one on which to build a classic large caliber sporting rifle. This particular action has a safety lever on the side of the receiver which can be used to block the hammer to prevent it from striking the firing pin.

This is due to the fact that they were largely custom made for individual orders and by several different gun making firms, such as Gibbs, Bland, Jeffery and Westley-Richards. The Gibbs made Farquharson is by far the most common and it is this action that is shown and discussed in this chapter. The greatest variation that did exist was usually in the type and placement of the safety. Some early actions, like the one pictured, had a side safety lever which blocked the hammer from hitting the firing pin in case the trigger was accidentally released. More modern actions usually had a top tang safety like a modern shotgun which would lock the sear. Other variations consisted of the shape of the grip or finger lever or in the method the firing pin was retracted.

Some Farquharson actions also had an external cocking lever on the side which was mainly used to let the hammer down into the half cock notch, to be cocked later when the rifle was to be fired. Most of these actions are externally decorated with some engraving and many of them are entirely covered with the fine English type scroll engraving as on the action pictured.

The operating cycle of the Farquharson action is as follows: Assume the action is closed with the hammer in the down position, having just been fired. Simply stated, when the operating (finger) lever is brought all the way down the hammer is cocked, the breech block is lowered and the fired shell is extracted from the chamber. A new cartridge is then inserted into the chamber, the lever pulled up to

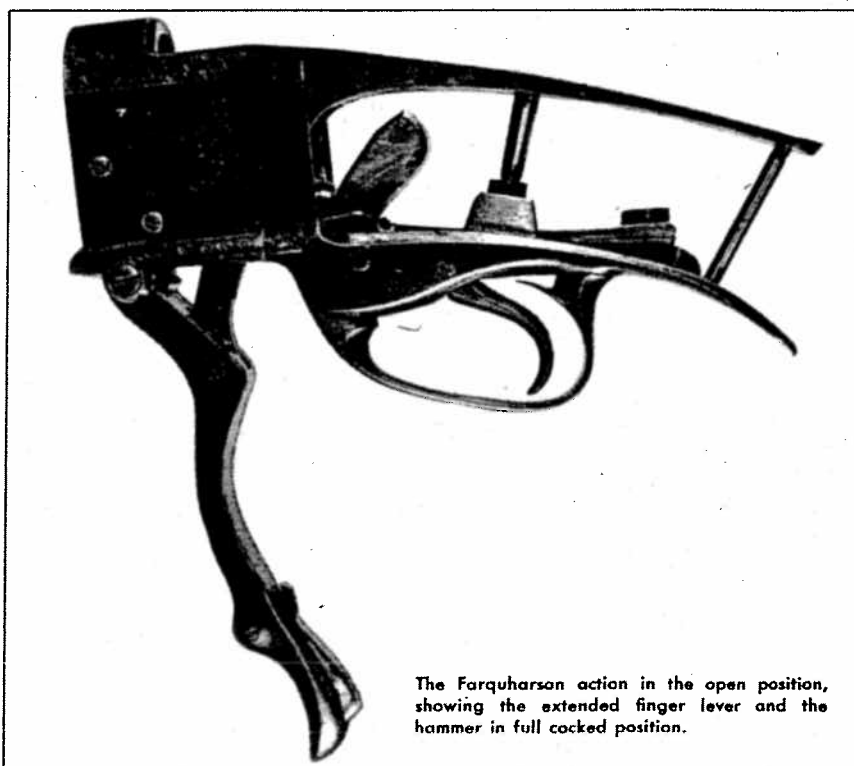
the trigger guard and the rifle is again ready to fire. However, to clearly show how this action really works and to show the function of each part and their relationship to each other, I will describe the operating cycle in detail.

The cycle begins when the shooter places the tip of the thumb on the small lever locking latch (22) and depresses it. This unlocks the hook from the recess in the trigger guard

(18) and allows the operating lever (20) to be pushed down. Continued pressure from the thumb on the lever pushes the lever farther down and the initial movement of the lever after it leaves the guard also moves the cocking lever (31) which is attached to the hinged end of the finger lever with a pin (33). This slight movement of the lever and cocking lever immediately begins to push the hammer (4) back so that it no longer bears on the head of the firing pin (5). This allows the firing pin spring (9) to retract the firing pin out of the fired primer and into the face of the breech block (10) so that it will not interfere when the breech block begins to move downward in the recess in the receiver (12).

The link (30) connecting the operating lever with the breech block has an oblong hole at each end, or just on the top end, which allows sufficient downward movement of the operating lever to permit the firing pin to be retracted before the slack is taken out of the linkage to begin pulling the breech block down. Further downward movement of the lever then pulls the breech block down and pushes the hammer further back, which also compresses the flat main spring (1). When the lever is nearly all the way down the hammer is pushed back to full cock position allowing the sear tip of the trigger (25), under tension of the trigger spring (24) to fall into the sear notch of the hammer. At the same time the lug on the hinged end of the operating lever has come into contact with the extractor lever (15).

(Not all true Farquharson actions



The Farquharson action in the open position, showing the extended finger lever and the hammer in full cocked position.

have a firing pin retractor spring on links slotted at both ends. Over the years links were also made slotted at either end; earlier specimens generally have the upper hole elongated, and no firing pin spring is used. Later types, with slotted link hole at the bottom, employ firing pin springs and have no other mechanical retraction of the firing pin. See "John Farquharson's Rifle and Its Competitors," in the GUN DIGEST, 17th ed., pp. 48-55, for a full account of these rifles and actions.—ED.)

The final movement of the operating lever causes a number of things to happen which demonstrates how closely the parts are related to make this action function so well. First and foremost, the final movement of the lever causes the lever lug to bear on the extractor lever, which in turn bears on the extractor (11) to forcibly extract and eject the fired cartridge case over the top of the lowered breech block.

Meanwhile, the cocking lever is still pushing back on the hammer even though the sear has engaged. At the same time the breech block has bottomed on the cocking lever and since this lever has been placed in a slightly elevated position by its rearward movement in the receiver, the block is cushioned slightly. The final motion of the lever has pushed the

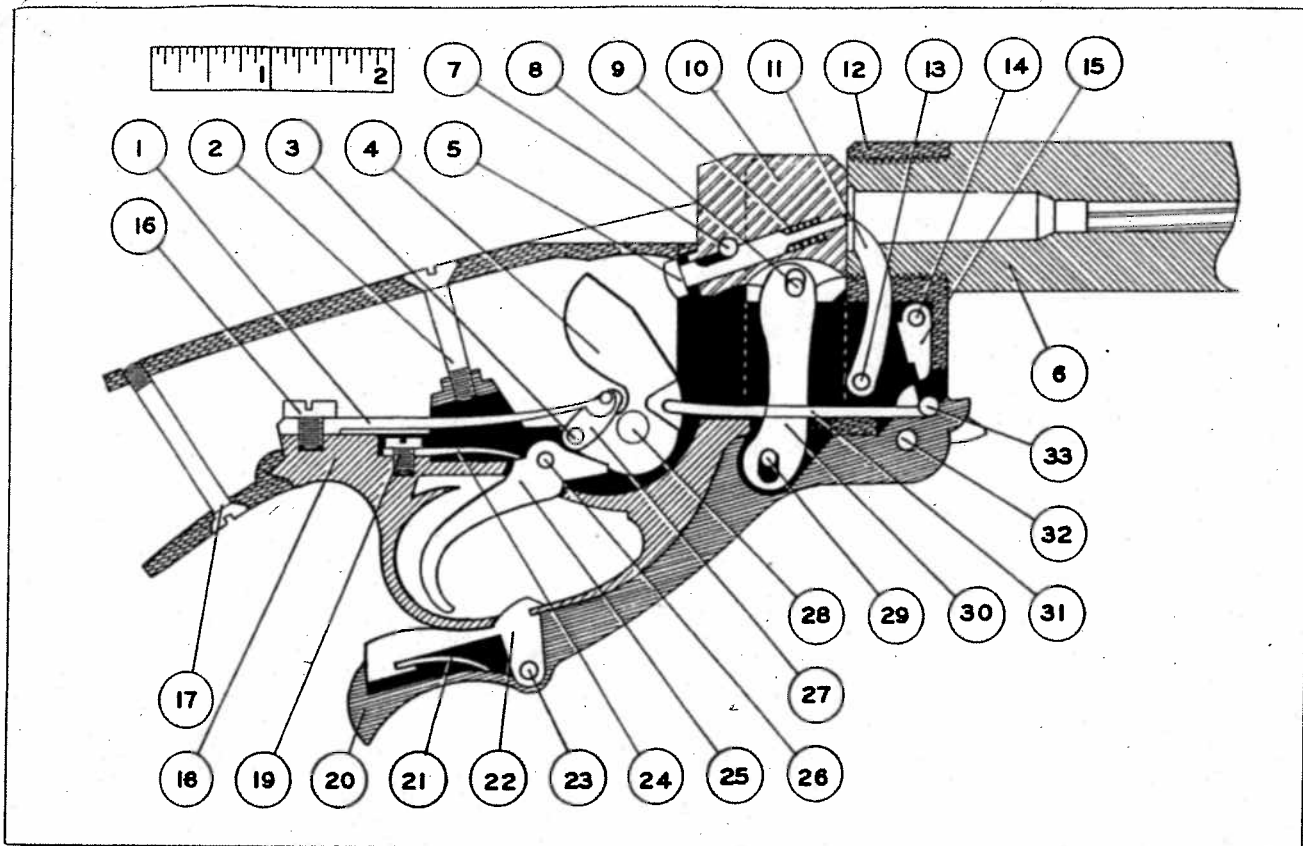
hammer back further than needed or past the point where the sear has engaged. Releasing the operating lever to reload the rifle will allow the hammer to go slightly forward until the sear has fully engaged. Thus the hammer will push on the cocking lever which in turn moves the operating lever slightly back from its full open position. This allows the extractor to be almost entirely free and permits the extractor hooks to fall back into the recess in the breech end of the barrel. Thus, in inserting a new cartridge in the chamber, the cartridge will drop all the way in so that the action can be closed. It is not necessary to push the cartridge into the chamber with the tip of the thumb, and to depress the extractor in so doing. After the chamber is loaded the lever is pulled up to the trigger guard and the latch locks it in place so it will not drop down from its own weight. This has placed the breech block squarely behind the chamber with the firing pin hole centered on the primer, and the hammer has been left fully cocked. Pulling the trigger to release the hammer completes the operation cycle.

The Farquharson action is quite difficult to disassemble. To remove the breech block the bottom plate must be removed from the receiver. This requires the two tang screws

(17 & 2) be removed as well as the two forward screws in the plate on the sides of the forward edge of the trigger guard. In addition the lever hinge screw (32) must be removed, allowing everything to be withdrawn from the bottom of the receiver except the extractor and extractor lever.

As mentioned before, most single shot rifle fans consider the Farquharson the apex of all such actions, and while I certainly admire it in many ways, I do not fully share this opinion. There are several things I do not like about it, such as the grip, lever and firing pin. The action is a little too long in the tangs, and while a nice slim grip can be had, the slimness also makes for a weak stock at this point. This would not affect a varmint rifle but I would not trust this if the rifle were used for big game hunting. I also dislike the bulky operating lever and the need for a latch to keep it closed. Lastly, I dislike the upward angle of the firing pin which can be the cause of poor ignition.

This action is very desirable in building up a custom varmint rifle and many have been used for this purpose. To obtain a Farquharson action today takes considerable doing, about the only way one can be had is to purchase a complete rifle from a collector or single shot rifle fan, and they value them quite highly.



## FARQUHARSON FALLING BLOCK ACTION

### Parts Legend

- |                                |                               |                              |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Main spring                 | 12. Receiver                  | 23. Finger lever latch screw |
| 2. Front tang screw            | 13. Extractor screw           | 24. Trigger spring           |
| 3. Stirrup screw               | 14. Extractor lever screw     | 25. Trigger                  |
| 4. Hammer                      | 15. Extractor lever           | 26. Trigger pin              |
| 5. Firing pin                  | 16. Main spring screw         | 27. Stirrup                  |
| 6. Barrel                      | 17. Rear tang screw           | 28. Hammer screw             |
| 7. Firing pin retainer screw   | 18. Trigger guard             | 29. Lower link pin           |
| 8. Upper link screw            | 19. Trigger spring screw      | 30. Link                     |
| 9. Firing pin retractor spring | 20. Finger (operating) lever  | 31. Cocking lever            |
| 10. Breech block               | 21. Finger lever latch spring | 32. Finger lever screw       |
| 11. Extractor                  | 22. Finger lever latch        | 33. Cocking lever pin        |

### FARQUHARSON ACTION SPECIFICATIONS (GIBBS)

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Type                | Single shot, falling block, operated by under finger lever.   |
| Receiver            | Machined steel, with integral upper & lower tang. Trigger guard plate is a separate part.                             |
| Receiver finish     | Polished and blued, and usually engraved.   |
| Take-down           | None provided. Barrel screwed tightly into receiver.  |
| Stock fastening     | Via the 2 tangs and 2 tang screws.  |
| Ignition            | Inside hammer, powered by flat main spring. Separate firing pin in breech block. Hammer cocked on opening the action. |
| Trigger             | Plain, with trigger in direct contact with hammer.  |
| Safety              | None on action shown, various types on other actions, such as tang or side lever.                                     |
| Extractor           | Automatic, semi-ejecting.   |
| Action weight       | 2 pounds  |
| Action thickness    | 1.340" (These dimensions vary with size, type and period.)  |
| Side-wall thickness | .120"   |

#### BARREL SHANK SPECIFICATIONS

|                                    |       |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Diameter                           | 1.00" |
| Length                             | .845" |
| 14 V threads per inch (right hand) |       |

## **HARRY JOHN HERBERT**

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E-mail: johnnyroller36@yahoo.com

### **EDUCATION**

Doctoral Student in Wildlife Management: 1991  
Cambridge University, Cambridge, England, UK

Master of Science in Wildlife Management: 1969  
University of Pretoria, Republic of South Africa

Bachelor of Science in Biology: 1959  
Baldwin Wallace University, Berea OH, 1962

### **EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

- Mar 2003 to present Self-employed Ecological Consultant (East Palestine, OH)  
Sierra Club officer, Youngstown State University chapter working on  
environmental problems
- 1995-2003 Self-employed Ecological Consultant to private game ranches in Western  
and Southern Zimbabwe and in Northern California.  
Part-time teacher, Westwood International School (Gaborone, Botswana)
- Jan-Dec 1994 Instructor, University of Botswana (Gaborone, Botswana)
- July 1992 - Aug 1994 Wildlife Ecologist, Zimbabwe Forestry Commission (Bulawayo)  
Wildlife Consultant to the Commission 880,000-hectare estates. Assisted  
with management plans, ostrich and crocodile farms, supervised wildlife  
ecology trainee, set up wildlife survey methods and game  
capture/relocation program, supervised Forestry Protection Unit.
- Mar - July 1992 Ecologist (GS-11) U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Carlsbad, CA)  
Worked on endangered species in various habitats.
- Apr 1988 - Aug 1991 Wildlife Consultant, Conservation Services (Ohio)  
  
Forest Restoration Manager, Conservation Services  
Planned and developed a privately owned 38-acre section of regenerating  
Eastern hardwood forest for wildlife management and human recreation  
This included tree and wildlife food planting, trail planning and

construction, buildings and physical structure maintenance and rehabilitation of a one-acre lake for fishing and recreation.

- Apr 1982 - Mar 1988 General Manager, La Bate Farms (Negley, OH)  
Managed a 400-acre company farm, hunting reserve and tree farm facility; including hiring, training and supervision of a staff of 15 employees; design and construction of fish ponds; stream erosion control projects; conversion of waste strip mining land into usable wildlife habitat.
- Jan 1985 - Apr 1988 Senior Consultant, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Boqueron, Puerto Rico)  
Biologist under contract to conduct field research & removal of an introduced population of rhesus monkeys from Desecheo Island National Wildlife Refuge, PR. Studied feeding ecology, ecological impact; live-trapping & removal; status of native, endemic & introduced wildlife and supervised of students' thesis projects.
- Nov 1979 - Dec 1981 Biologist-in-Charge, Kouf National Park (Beida, Libya, North Africa)  
Developed long-range plans for park management; including feasibility studies for reintroduction of native large mammals extirpated from the area in historical times; supervised an international staff of five research biologists; conducted faunal & floral surveys of park including collection & identification of specimens, estimation of wildlife population.
- Feb 1975 - Aug 1979 Scientist-in-Charge, Caribbean Primate Research Center (Sabana Seca, PR)  
Supervised management of free-ranging research/breeding colony of 2,000+ rhesus & patas monkeys located on islands offshore of Puerto Rico including logistical supply, facility design, supervision of construction & maintenance personnel; co-ordinated graduate student research projects; collected ecological, behavioral, management data for primate colony.
- Feb 1970 - Nov 1975 Research Officer-in-Charge, Hwange National Park( Zimbabwe, Africa)  
Planned & implemented management of 5,000 square mile national park; supervised two staff biologists & five game scouts; supervised & conducted wildlife population & distribution surveys, vegetation analysis (exclosures, trial burning plots) & ecological research; culling, capture, translocation of large mammal species as elephant, rhinoceros, buffalo, zebra, waterbuck, wildebeest.
- Mar 1967 - July 1970 Graduate Student, University of Pretoria (Pretoria, South Africa)  
MSc thesis: bioecological study of waterbuck antelope
- July 1964 - July 1966 Research Mammalogist, Smithsonian Institution (Nigeria and Southern Africa)  
Conducted field research for ecto-parasite study throughout southern and western African countries; collected & analyzed mammal specimens, ecto-parasites, blood samples.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

Observations on the Status of the Herpetofauna of Desecheo Island National Wildlife Refuge, Puerto Rico. M.A. Evans, H. John Herbert and Karl Rohnke in Status y Distribution de los Reptiles Y Anfibios de la Region de Puerto Rico. J. Moreno & R. Joglar, eds. Miscellaneous Scientific Publication #1, Puerto Rico Department of Natural Resources. 1991.

Kouf National Park Wildlife Survey and Development: 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982. The Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands. 1982.

Establishing a Free-ranging Breeding Colony of Rhesus Monkeys, Part 1. W.T. Kerber, Harry John Herbert & James A. Vickers. Journal of Medical Primatology, 8: 129-142. 1979.

The Past and Present Distribution of the Black and Square-Lipped Rhinoceros in Wankie (Hwange) National Park. Arnoldia, Vol. 5, No. 26. March 1972.

The Population Dynamics of the Waterbuck in the Sabi-Sand Wildtuin. Mammalia depicta. 1972.

## **HONORS**

Baldwin-Wallace College Athletic Hall of Fame  
East Palestine Distinguished Hall of Fame

## **REFERENCES**

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## AFRICAN ARTIFACTS

| No. | Item                             | Ethnic Origin | Country             | Date Acquired |
|-----|----------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1   | Tobacco Roll                     | San (Bushman) | Botswana            | 1965          |
| 1   | Game Capture Net                 | San (Bushman) | Botswana            | 1965          |
| 1   | Skirt (female)                   | San (Bushman) | Botswana            | 1965          |
| 1   | Carry Bag                        | San (Bushman) | Botswana            | 1965          |
| 2   | Beads                            | San (Bushman) | Botswana            | 1965          |
| 3   | Tortoise Shell Powder Puff       | San (Bushman) | Botswana            | 1965          |
| 1   | Small Board w/Thong              | San (Bushman) | Botswana            | 1965          |
| 3   | Bows                             | San (Bushman) | Botswana            | 1965          |
| 1   | Quiver w/Arrows                  | San (Bushman) | Botswana            | 1965          |
| 1   | Ostrich Egg "Water Bottle"       | San (Bushman) | Botswana            | 1965          |
| 1   | Fly whisk                        | San (Bushman) | Botswana            | 1965          |
| 1   | Bow                              | Shangaan      | Mozambique          | 1964          |
| 3   | Arrows                           | Shangaan      | Mozambique          | 1964          |
| 3   | Stools (large)                   | Batonka       | Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) | 1973          |
| 2   | Stools (small)                   | Batonka       | Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) | 1973          |
| 1   | Sword w/Sheath                   | Fulani        | Nigeria             | 1967          |
| 3   | Hand-woven Wool Blankets (large) | Bedouin Arab  | Libya               | 1980s         |

| No. | Item  | Ethnic Origin | Country                 | Date Acquired |
|-----|---|---------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| 1   | Wool Blanket (large)  | Arab          | Syria                   | 1980s         |
| 1   | Wool Rug (small)  | Bedouin Arab  | Libya                   | 1980s         |
| 1   | Kross Blanket, Hand-sewn skin patchwork   | San (Bushman) | Botswana                | 1965-66       |
| 2   | Hand-woven Cotton Blanket   |               | Nigeria                 | 1967          |
| 2   | Lengths of hand-woven Cotton Cloth  |               | Nigeria                 | 1967          |
| 2   | Leather "Poofs"   |               | Nigeria                 | 1967          |
| 1   | Carry Bag (female)  |               | Nigeria                 | 1967          |
| 1   | Banded Cobra Skin (untanned)  |               | South Africa            | 1970s         |
| 2   | Momba Skins (untanned)  |               | South Africa            | 1970s         |
| 2   | Puff Adder Skins (untanned)   |               | Bechuanaland (Botswana) | 1965          |
| 1   | Python Skin (untanned)  |               | Bechuanaland (Botswana) | 1965          |
| 2   | Drums   | Shangaan      | Zimbabwe                | 1980          |
| 2   | Flat piece of raw latex rubber  |               | Nigeria                 | 1967          |
| 1   | Large animal trap (for lion, leopard, hyaena)   |               | Rhodesia (Zimbabwe)     | 1972          |
| 1   | Elephant Gun: Cogswell & Harrison<br>Falling Block action, .450 31/4 cased rifle<br>with case and ammo. |               | Rhodesia (Zimbabwe)     | 1973          |

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