



PURDEY

Gun & Rifle Makers

Gun No. 19,395

Completed: 2nd April 1909

Calibre: 12-bore (2³/₄in. case)

Description: A bar-in-iron hammer pigeon gun

Weight at completion: 7lb. 11³/₄oz.

Barrel length: 32in.

Choke: Both Fullest Choke

Stock length: 14¹/₂in.

Built for: H.M. The King of Spain

Notes:

Action with third-grip and clip-sides

Action chased by Barré, all work blued

Spring-blade right trigger

Padded guard

Forend inlaid with gold shield, engraved with crown and arms (as per reference in ledger)

Gun named and numbered on flat of action

Barrels with pigeon rib

September 1923: New 32in. barrels fitted 'to shoot as well or better than old barrels'

Retrieved from our records, 8th August 2017



PURDEY

Gun & Rifle Makers

Gun No. 19,395

guns M.L. 41000

4 is now in the Book.

ALTERATIONS:

NAME: *A. King of Spain*

DATE: *21/4/1909*

BORE: *12*

LEVER: *Drop*

FORWARD: *chaps.*

BEND: *F 13/8*

LENGTH: *B 14 1/2*

CAST OFF: *1/32*

WEIGHT: *1/16*

BARRELS: *1/16*

FILLS: *1/16*

BALANCE: *2 3/4*

TRIGGER: *5/8*

REMARKS: *Chamber by Barre's*

STOCKER: *A. Dean*

PUT TOGETHER BY: *Warren*

Gold shield inlaid in purple. Amun. 2 3/4 in case

Remarks: *Chamber by Barre's as with this Spring blown R trigger. Ground polished 2 3/4 in case.*

Barrels: *3 1/2 8 1/2 4 1/2*

Weight: *1/16 1/16 1/16*

Cast off: *1/32 1/16 1/16*

Bore: *12*

Lever: *Drop*

Forward: *chaps.*

Bend: *F 13/8*

Length: *B 14 1/2*

Balance: *2 3/4*

Trigger: *5/8*

Remarks: *Chamber by Barre's as with this Spring blown R trigger. Ground polished 2 3/4 in case.*

Stocker: *A. Dean*

Put together by: *Warren*

Gold shield inlaid in purple. Amun. 2 3/4 in case



PURDEY

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Gun No. 19,395

19395 - Sep 1925
New Barrel fitted
31 5
length 32
Old Bl name

THERE was a time when gun engraving was taken no more seriously than basket weaving or cottage thatching by those who separate craft from art. Today's work, however, rivals Lorenzo Ghiberti's bas-relief carving on the baptistery doors in Florence. To the consternation of some, gun engraving is no longer secondary or subservient to the firearms it is intended to enhance. British engraving's epic journey has led from naïve gamebirds scratched on Manton barrels through Purdey's workmanlike rose and scroll to today's high-art guns. Modernism seems to have started when James Purdey the Younger commissioned a French engraver and Commune exile named Magloire Aristide Barré to carve a firearm for the teenage King of Siam. According to official historian David Laynard, Barré is "the only engraver mentioned in the Purdey dimension books until recent times".

Two of Barré's Purdey masterpieces are reserved in the Royal collection at Sandringham as part of the Keene Bequest. In his book, *the Royal Gunroom at Sandringham*, David Baker describes one of the guns: "Here we have riot of mythical beasts entwined with foliage and, on the top strap, an urn and mask."

Barré's work graced a brace of 20-bores for the Paris Exhibition of 1878, "showing artistic taste", according to Her Majesty's commissioners' report. As well as exhibition guns, Barré was clearly the "go to" engraver whenever Purdey required extra finish for the great and the good: he sculpted royal presentation firearms for the Shah of Persia in 1892 and King Alfonso XIII of Spain in 1909.

Barré died on 21 May 1915, having engraved a couple of guns for the aforementioned Rama, the King of Siam. When a third gun was commissioned, it fell to a "general engraver" in whose name Harry Kell to work in the craftsman's oeuvre. Kell trained with his father, Henry John Kell, to engrave jewellery, silverware and watches but "as demand for English guns grew through the late 19th century and into the 20th century it is likely that certain engraving workshops turned to gun engraving as a speciality simply because the volume of business presented to them in terms of daily orders from the gunmakers made it an economic possibility". So said Christopher Austyn in his seminal volume, *Gun Engraving*.

It was Kell's fortune to have broad experience at the dawning of the heyday of the shotgun but it was his great skill that allowed him to fuse realistic gamebirds with Barré's deep scroll. Because he adapted Barré's style and nurtured a new, younger generation of gun engravers such as Geoffrey Casbard and Ken

Hunt, auctioneer Austyn has dubbed Kell "The Great Connector".

Barré begat Kell and Kell begat Hunt; but it was Ken Hunt, whose son and daughter both became engravers, who was the game changer. "Ken was a pioneer of modern-day gun engraving and made big leaps in turning the craft into a true art form. Ken's style of engraving pushed the boundaries of gun engraving and his work featured on some of Holland & Holland's 'Products of Excellence' and other fine sporting guns. His work was, and still is, much sought after and he paved the way for engravers to make a real name for themselves. He will be remembered as one of the highest regarded British engravers whose work inspired a whole generation of craftsmen and women," says Daryl Greatrex, managing director at Holland & Holland.

"Ken led the way for many years in this country and no doubt was responsible for creating a demand for 'art engraving' - no other engraver could produce the variety and quality required for these 'special' guns. Our development was partly due to the demand for collectable guns that he created," says Alan Brown, who, together with his brother, Paul, represents English engraving's greatest fraternity. In 1977, the brothers pooled their life savings and borrowed in order to purchase a Purdey on which to demonstrate their embellishment skills. After a further two years and much gold inlay, they created a presentation piece and, in the process, elevated gun engraving to heights not seen in England since the Prince of Wales acquired a Pirauze flintlock in 1805. Trips to the Wallace Collection fired their enthusiasm for the luxuriant, eccentric rococo scroll seen on Johann Christoph Stockmar's flintlocks and the lavish Empire style on Nicolas-Noël Boutet's firearms. Employing the ethos of artisanal production of an earlier age, the Browns produced modern updates representing both styles. Later, they developed two techniques of their own: precious metal inlay, which is unprecedented in its artistry; and carving executed in high relief, which manages to be both minute in scale and monumental in impression.

The Browns are self-taught but Welshman Phil Coggan took a different approach: he travelled to Italy for a fortnight of tuition. "I met Cesare Giovannelli at the Game Fair in London in 1983. He invited me to his school, which I visited in 1984." Coggan, of course, had more influences than just Giovannelli. "You're right, Ken Hunt had an influence on me because he pioneered a lot of what you see today on >

Right: Westley Richards exhibition grade guns and rifles engraved by Paul Lantuch



Beasts on the beauties

From crude etchings to extravagant fantasy scenes, gun engraving has become an artform in its own right, as Douglas Tate explains

though apprentices were still taught by the older men who stayed behind.

Knowing Purdeys' reputation as rifle makers, the War Office had asked Athol to fit, test and deliver these telescopic sights as soon as possible. The first batch of six were, ironically enough, of German manufacture and were completed and delivered to the War Office on 28 June 1915; whereupon a further order was issued for the fitting of English telescopes to service rifles and 499 were mounted, tested at the grounds, and supplied with leather cases between July and December the same year. At the same time, the muzzle-protectors continued to be produced and 94,000 were completed by the middle of September.

The main credit for the successful reorganisation of the factory staff to deal with this sudden flow of completely different work, must go to the new factory manager, Ernest Lawrence. He had to ensure that the standard of the work supplied to the War Department was of the highest quality and when, later in the war, precision sights were made to the order of the Royal Flying Corps, his own genius of invention and adaptation was to prove invaluable. At the same time he had to complete the building of guns still on order and any new gun orders as they came through, and also to continue to train gunmaking apprentices for the future in spite of the fact that the boys left to join up when they reached the age of eighteen, just as they were beginning to know their jobs. All of this he achieved with great skill and patience so that Athol was able to take further war orders, and between January and July 1916 some 944 telescopic rifles were completed. At this point, the requirements of the Ministry of Munitions began to take precedence, and the machining and manufacture of magazines for the Mark 2 Lewis gun kept some of the men very busy for the remainder of 1916, while others were employed on the manufacture of the Hutton sight for Lewis guns. On top of that, 'spade-grip' thumb-triggers with safety catches for Lewis guns were produced at the rate of 200 per month, and special loading devices were made for the same weapon.

Fortunately for the gun side of the business, there was still one country which, being neutral, continued to place orders — namely, Spain. Eduardo Schilling ordered eleven new guns including sets of three, in 1915, and twelve more in 1916. Casa Paolo of Madrid and Emeterio Echererria of Eibar ordered fourteen between them in 1916, one heavily chased for £150, and individual sportsmen such as Conde Romanones and the Marques Fuentes el Sol had guns built during 1917 and 1918. In the same period King Alphonso, 'one of the best friends Purdey's ever had' as Tom wrote in the ledgers, continued to order his cartridges, taking 40,000 between 1915 and 1917 and 100,000 in 12- and 16-bores in 1918. Somehow Athol and Lawrence between them managed to build all these guns and load these cartridges within the delivery times expected, and also to keep up war production to the standards and delivery demanded by the War Office.

PURDEY'S - THE GUNS + THE FAMILY

RICHARD BEAUMONT c 1984