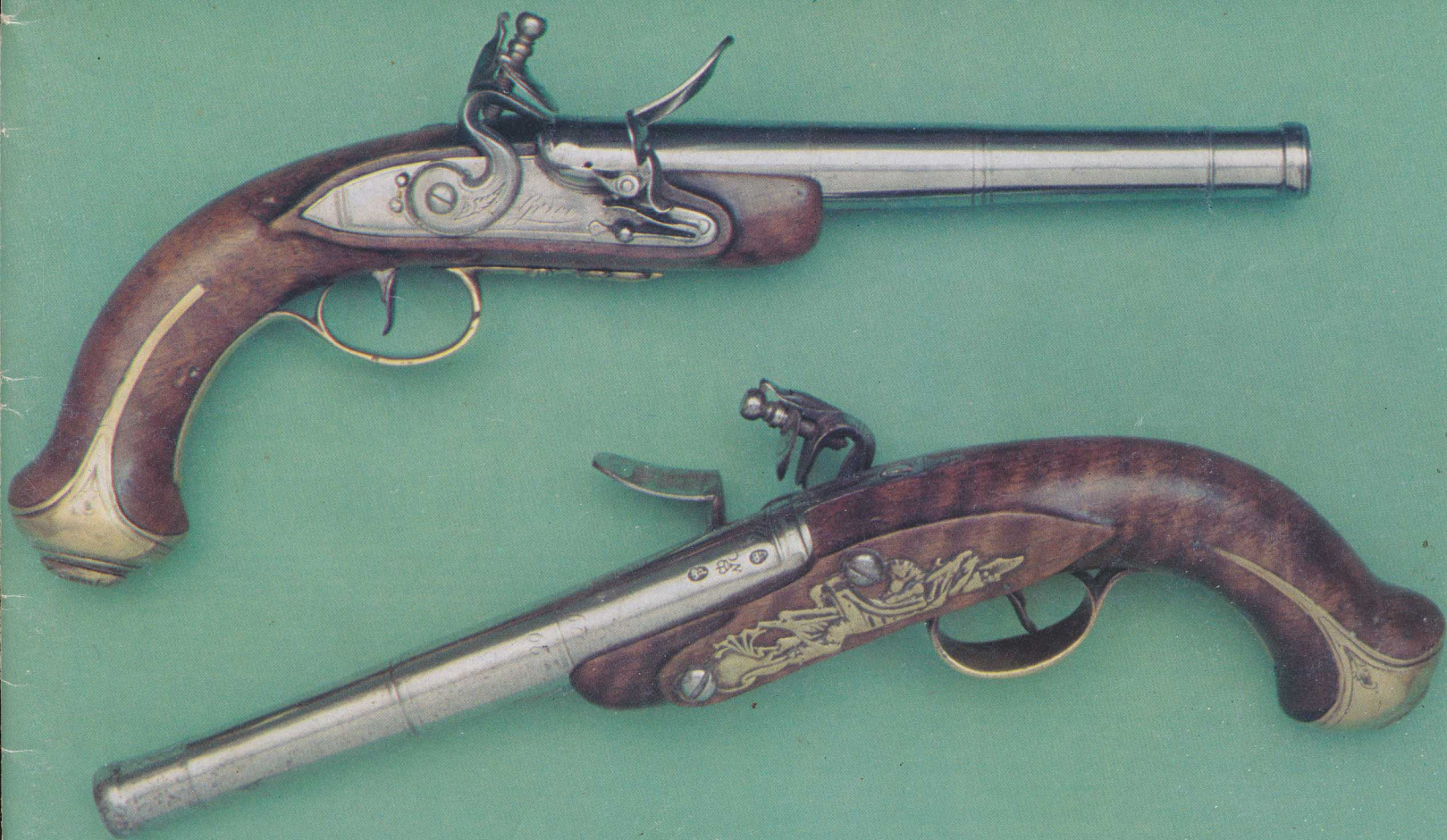


guns review

Volume 25 No. 4

April 1985

Price 75p



Airgun Scene
Review of the HW77

A School Project
SAFETY IN SHOOTING

TA90 9 mm. Pistol
Full report and Gun Review

Bullet Swaging for Practical Shooting

Colour Feature and Report on Wallis and Wallis 300th Sale

THE

guns
review

GUN REVIEW

The TA90 Double Action 9mm Pistol



Hull Cartridge Company's TA90 9mm pistol, showing the right side.

PISTOLS are now an expensive item. Catalogues of yesteryear show good quality handguns being sold for shillings but we are reminded that the value of money has altered. However, taking that into account, guns still cost more than they ever did in the past and Britain's position as an importer of guns exacerbates the problem. In general terms we still get what we pay for and cheap guns are to be avoided. Still, when a gun appears on the market at a price well below its competitors it is often worthy of careful consideration.

The TA90 double action 9 mm. pistol is, in all essentials, a copy of the CZ75 from Czechoslovakia. So close a copy is it that many of the parts must be interchangeable. Externally, the differences lie in the location of the safety, the shape of the trigger guard and the material of the grips.

The pistol is made in Italy by Fratelli Tanfogliani of Gardone. It is a 15 shot 9 mm. Para locked breech double-action self-loading pistol with all the requisite safety features for carrying fully loaded and ready for immediate action in safety. It is built in steel. Overall it is a fraction under eight inches from front to rear, 5½ in. high and 1¾ in. across the grips. Empty, it weighs just 2½ lb.

A staggered double column 15 shot magazine creates a "fat" grip, but this is well shaped with a pronounced hump below the hook at the top of the grip. This fits snugly into the hollow of the palm. Reach for double-action shooters is three inches and is just over ¼ in. less for single action. Only the very smallest hands will be stretched by the grip. The trigger guard is squared for those

shooters who use the index finger in that location in two handed shooting. Balance and feel are good with one or two hands.

The magazine is of standard Browning type with unmarked windows at five and 10 rounds on its left side and at 15 on the right side. The magazine release is a conventional button on the left of the grip frame, just behind the trigger guard. Although it stands proud and is easy to locate and operate, the grip has to be broken to operate the release button and the catch could not easily be made ambidextrous. The magazine is under sufficient tension when empty to ensure that it is pushed well out of the grip on operating the catch. This is a point which "practical" shooters must always check.

The guide rails are machined inside the frame giving contact between frame and slide over a full five inches when the pistol is closed. When the slide is fully open there remains over ¾ in. of contact. Lock-up is basically Browning style. The barrel lies in the slide with two lugs machined from the top of the barrel mating into grooves machined into the slide. The barrel lug has an elongated cammed hole through which the locking pin fits. When the slide is closed, the rear of the barrel is pushed up by the pin so that the lugs come together. A protrusion at the rear of the barrel mates with a recess in the breech face giving lateral locking. On firing, slide and barrel move back locked together until the camming of the pin in the barrel lug causes the rear of the barrel to drop, releasing the lugs and allowing the slide to continue on its own. The barrel locking pin also serves as the take-down pin and its rear portion is the hold-open catch to keep the slide back after the last

shot has been fired. The barrel is 4½ in. long and very well finished inside and out. The coil recoil spring operates under the barrel, running from the recess at the front of the slide to a spring guide which has a small raised point to fit into an indentation in the front of the barrel lug.

The safety has a number of functions. It is located at the rear of the slide and operates under the right thumb. Operation demands a little dexterity if the grip is not to be broken. Applying the catch is done with the weak hand, but it can be released with the strong thumb. The firing pin is of the inertia type which will not reach the cartridge unless it receives a sharp blow of sufficient strength. Applying the safety moves the firing pin forward so that its rear is just inside the slide and the hammer cannot touch it. The safety can be applied with the hammer down or at full cock, but not when the hammer is in its half cock notch. If the safety is applied when the hammer is at full cock, the hammer will fall after the striker has been retracted. The safety disconnects the trigger from the hammer. The half cock position can be achieved either by thumb cocking to that point, or by pulling back on the trigger until the hammer sets in the notch, when the trigger is released. The gun can then be fired either by fully thumb cocking the hammer or by pulling the trigger through to cock the hammer before firing it double action.

The trigger acts through a swinging link to a split bar passing on each side of the magazine well. This bar also acts as a disconnecter. A hump on the bar is pushed down as the slide retracts, breaking contact with the sear until the trigger is released and pulled again. The safety acts on the same bar to disconnect the trigger and it serves also to prevent firing before the slide is fully into battery. The double action trigger pull is a long 11 lb., constant in pressure and easy to operate. The single action is 4 lb. There is about ¼ in. of slack to be taken up and the break is rather long yet not creepy. There is very little backlash. The single action is almost a roll-over style which is particularly well suited to practical shooting. Those who want the very sharp short break will have to have some adjustments made. We feel that target shooters easily adjust to a roll-over trigger and this part of the gun would best be left well alone.

Combat sights are fitted. The foresight has a square faced blade with a rounded front. The square notch rearsight is set into a dovetail in the slide and has white line emphasis. A patridge style sight picture is created which is easy to use in both fast shooting and precision work. Adjustable sights could readily be substituted.

The grips are varnished wood and without any chequering. The frame is nicely blued and is also without any chequering on grip surfaces. The slide is polished and lacks the matt finish often found on the upper surface of a combat pistol. The holding grooves cut into the back of the slide are deep and sharp enough and hold on the slide is aided by the location of the safety. Overall finish and workmanship throughout is very good and compares favourably with competitive weapons.

Field stripping is a simple process. The magazine should be removed and the breech checked. With the hammer at half cock, the slide is pushed back about ¼ in. until marks at the rear left hand side of the slide and frame are aligned. The locking pin protrudes to the right of the frame and this is pushed in until the pin can be pulled out to the left. The slide will then slip off the frame forward. Mainspring and guide, and then barrel can be lifted from the slide. No further stripping is necessary. It takes no more than a second or two.

Functioning tests with the pistol were very satisfactory. We ran through half a dozen different makes of commercial ammunition without a hitch. The importer had told us that the earlier models of the pistol might produce misfires if military ammunition with



Field stripping is simple. The similarity to the CZ75 shows quite clearly.

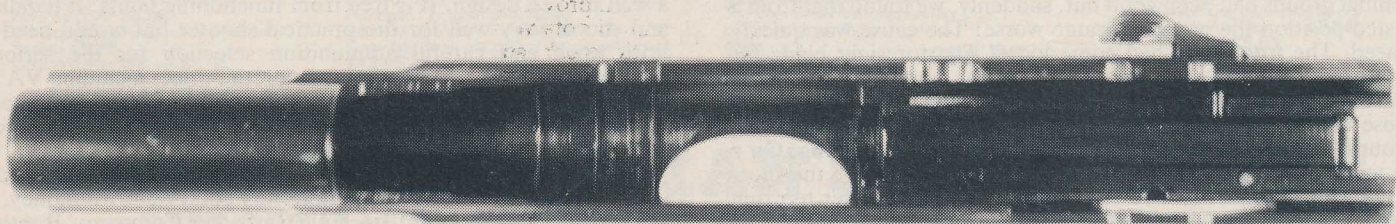


The left side of the pistol. Note the position of the safety, locking pin and magazine release.

very hard primers was used. We searched through the stocks and eventually came up with some old military stuff which did misfire, but that problem is already solved. The importers have had an upgraded hammer spring fitted to cope with all primers likely to be found. Functioning was otherwise perfect. The magazines were easily filled and deliberate sloppiness in loading them did not cause failures to feed. Ejection was always positive and clear. The gun displayed no idiosyncrasies about ammunition and fed soft nosed and round nosed bullets just as well as full jacketed.

On the range we first tackled practical style shooting and found the pistol well suited to all forms. Its pointing and handling

Continued on page 262



Good workmanship shows on the inside of the slide. The shiny part opposite the safety lever disconnects the trigger when the safety is applied.

BOOK REVIEWS

Safari Africa. Edited by William R. Quimby. 128 pages 11 × 8 inches, paperback. published by Safari Club International, 5151 E Broadway, Suite 1680, Tucson, Arizona 85711, USA. Price by airmail to countries other than USA. \$25.95.

For most sporting riflemen the African safari remains the ultimate dream. It is a fact, however, that more people than ever before are able to realise that dream. But Africa has changed and is changing at an accelerated pace with a population explosion at the core of the problem. This magnificent volume presents African hunting as it now is. A series of articles describe the sport available and the mechanics of taking advantage of it. Amongst those articles are adverts from the continent's professional hunters and outfitters and from suppliers of rifles, ammunition and accessories.

It is difficult to select articles for special mention from the 22 features. Jeff Cooper's account of a buffalo hunt in the Okavango with a .460 G&A Wildcat produces the sort of magic which is Cooper at his best — all tension and excitement. An introductory article remembers Africa in the past when a safari might have at least 200 porters on staff, or the safaris of the 1960's when travel was easier but the hunting was still in classic mode. Holt Bodinson's discourse on selecting an African battery of rifles is both informed and well written, almost creating a sense of recoil as the rifles are fired. African game does not, at first thought, seem suitable for handgun hunting, but as T. D. Jones shows, a heavy calibre scope sighted pistol can do the job, though we felt that the back-up professional hunter would be much appreciated.

Special supplements detail the animals available and the hunting areas and give a wealth of practical information to help organise a safari.

This book has appeal on two levels. For

those contemplating a trip to Africa it gives a foretaste of the adventure and a lot of practical advice. For those who may never be able to make the trip, it offers the dream. The book may not be cheap, but what price hours of beautiful dreams?

The Shooting Handbook, 1985. Edited by John Humphries. 216 pages 9¼ × 7¾ inches, paperback. Beacon Publishing, Northampton. £5.95.

We criticised previous issues of this potentially useful book because they stuck rigidly to the "English Country Gentleman's" myth of what shooting sports really are. The word pistol, for instance, did not even appear in the index of the last edition, and only certain types of shooting were thought acceptable, it seemed. The new edition reverses that trend and presents a more rounded and complete picture, though there is still the perfectly natural bias towards the majority sports.

The most important part of the book is a directory of manufacturers and retailers of just about everything the shooting man might need. There is a feature on clothing; a list of gunshops by county; a section on sporting hotels; a listing of clay shooting grounds but still no mention of rifle and pistol ranges or clubs. Manufacturers of guns, cartridges and accessories are listed with their UK agents and this now includes handguns and airguns, with some mention of antiques. The shooting world is a large and very diverse affair. This handbook is getting towards the point of bringing all sections together. There is some way to go in extending some sections but the publishers are clearly trying to ensure that all are represented.

Introductory articles by established writers in the field provide interest and instruction, rounding the work off nicely and making it much more than a mere reference book. We can certainly commend this edition to our readers.

The Art of Shooting with a Rifle by Sir Henry St John Halford. 93 pages 6½ × 4 inches, hardbound. Re-publication of the original 1888 Edition by W. S.

ammunition, but during a subsequent testing session, the foresight fell off!

It would be easy to make a great song about the foresight falling off but it is a problem which, once recognised, is easily rectified. We would like to see the sight sweated or screwed in place but we do not doubt that the fixing is now being carefully examined to eliminate the problem. The slide of a 9 mm. takes quite a battering during use and a small rivet is likely to prove inadequate. This was, however, the only thing about the gun which hinted at inadequacy.

Overall this is a nice pistol both to look at and to use. It follows a well proved design. It is free from functioning faults. It handles and shoots very well for the practical shooter but would need a little work and careful ammunition selection for the serious precision shooter. All this comes at a retail price, including VAT, of £220, complete with spare magazine and an instruction sheet which is perfectly clear despite a translation into English which raises the odd smile!

This is not a cheap pistol; it is not even an inexpensive pistol; it is a less expensive pistol which offers very good value for money.

The TA90 is imported by Hull Cartridge Company, Bontoft Avenue, National Avenue, Hull and is available through normal retail outlets.

Curtis Publishers, PO Box 217, Newport Pagnell, Bucks, MK16 9YD. Hardbound Edition £10, softbound £8 plus 60p post and packing in UK and £1 overseas.

W. S. Curtis is carefully selecting a small number of classics in the field of 19th century shooting for re-publication under his imprint. This example is indeed a classic. It will have appeal and interest to arms historians and users of vintage arms but that is not the limit of its merit. Sir Henry Halford's instructions on rifle shooting techniques both for target and game shooting are, in many respects, as valid today as they were when written.

Halford was closely associated with Metford on whom he has relied for technical information but on the subject of shooting techniques he develops and tests his own theories. The picture that emerges is one of a well-to-do man wholly committed to one science and well ahead of his time. Clearly, he spared no effort and no expense in pursuing his goals. Chapters on shooting in various positions and at various ranges, on range and windage allowances and other related subjects are followed by reports on the effect of fouling, how to coax the best results from a rifle and on cleaning.

A chapter on game shooting includes a discussion on choice of calibres. Noting that deer heart shot with an Express bullet may run 30 to 50 yards, Halford continues, "So I should think a charging tiger struck through the heart at close quarters would, in the two or three seconds of time remaining to him of life, be fit to do some very unpleasant business."

This book has style and charm as well as technical merit.

The Great Rifle Controversy by Edward Clinton Ezell. 344 pages 9 × 6 inches, hardbound. Arms & Armour Press, London £16.95.

E. C. Ezell is already well established as a leading authority on military smallarms. In this book he looks critically at the US Government's attempts over the years to supply its soldiers with the most suitable rifle available. In so doing he has had to look at the international scene, including

GUN REVIEW — continued from page 261

characteristics are good and with the squared trigger guard we found that both one-handed and two-handed grips gave excellent control. For an out-of-the-box gun all the operating features were readily to hand and easily operated. It was fast in magazine changes and gave no hang-ups. The trigger was smooth and the hammer easy to find and cock. We found the half-cock position particularly useful. Accuracy was certainly up to the standards of the shooter.

The first lot of precision shooting was most disappointing. Our combat groups had been good but, suddenly, we found that from a rested position the groups became worse! The cause was quickly traced. The front sight had come loose! The foresight blade fits into a recess in the slide and a post on the bottom of the blade serves to hold it in place by being rivetted over. This had worked loose during early shooting and handling and was now wobbling around. We rectified matters by peening over the rivetting. On a 25 metre target we found that we could just about keep the shots inside the 9 ring from a rested position but did not get ten ring sized groups. That sort of accuracy is adequate for practical shooting but less than the UIT shooter will be looking for. We had hoped to extend accuracy tests to a larger group of commercial