

# Contents

---

Photograph credits	6	Birmingham boxlock & makers to the trade	96
A few words of thanks	7	Scottish boxlocks	97
Why write a book about boxlocks?	8	Ejectors and non-ejectors	100
What is a boxlock?	9	The boxlock as a wildfowling gun	103
		The boxlock as a competition gun	105
		The boxlock as a game gun	108
		The boxlock as a small bore	111
		The boxlock as a double rifle	113
		The boxlock single barrel	118
		Design change for the production line	119
		Coil springs and C20th mechanisation	124
		Barrels	126
		The most successful boxlocks of all time	129
		The demise of the British boxlock	133
<b>PART 1: DEVELOPMENT</b>	11	<b>PART 3: THE BOXLOCK OWNER'S GUIDE</b>	137
Race to develop a practical hammerless gun	13	Model identification	138
Mr Anson & Mr Deeley	18	Evaluating condition	139
Westley Richards	20	Establishing original quality	140-151
John Deeley	20	Checking for wear and repair	152
William Anson	21	Disassembly	156-7
The Ground Breaking Patent	22	Handling qualities	160-164
The Patent Drawing	24	Stocking	164-168
W.W. Greener and the House of Lords	25	Cost of maintenance	173
The Facile Princeps	30	Buying a boxlock	174
Anson & Deeley	32		
Merits of the boxlock	34-40	<b>PART 4: FAMOUS FIRMS AND THEIR BOXLOCKS</b>	177
Anatomy of the Anson & Deeley	40	Holland & Holland	179
Cost-to-quality scales	41	Charles Lancaster	182
Victorian rivals to Anson & Deeley	42-51	Purdey	183
Variations on the 'droplock' theme	53	Cogswell & Harrison	184
Other trigger plate actions	55	Boss and Robertson	185
Patent protection	57	Bonehill	189
Building A&D under licence	58	William Powell	190
Boxlock houses other mechanisms	59	W.W. Greener	191
Early examples of boxlock	60-62		
Efficacy of third bite in shotgun actions	70		
Bolstered boxlock actions	75		
<b>PART 2: CONSOLIDATION</b>	77		
Quality variations	79		
Best quality provincial boxlock ejector	83		
Keeper's and Colonial-quality guns	86		
Army & Navy 12-bore cordite jungle gun	89		
The London boxlock	90		

Westley Richards	194
Army & Navy	198
Rigby	199
William Evans	200
Charles Osbourne	201
Webley & Scott	202
Frederick Beesley	203
Thomas Bland	204
Provincial Masterpieces	205
<b>THE 21ST CENTURY BOXLOCK</b>	<b>208</b>
Boxall & Edmiston	208
Westley Richards	210
W.W. Greener	213
Tony White	215
A.A. Brown's last boxlock?	218
<b>INDEX</b>	<b>222-224</b>

When writing about guns, I'm mindful of Gough Thomas's warning not to get overly concerned with looking down the 'wrong end of the telescope.' Friends, experiences and access to the great outdoors are the real benefits of shooting.

## Photograph credits

All photographs were taken by the author and remain his copyright except the following, which are used with the kind permission of the photographers credited (page numbers listed after name):

Andrew Orr, Holt's Auctioneers: Pages 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 26, 30, 32, 37, 44, 47, 52, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 72, 78, 81, 91, 95, 98, 113, 122, 131, 138, 182, 183, 187, 190, 191, 192, 194, 195, 198, 202, 204, 206, 207.

Michael Yardley: 163, 168

Tony Murray: 145

Gavin Gardiner, Gavin Gardiner Ltd: 15

Bill Pink: 89

Richard Tandy (W.W. Greener Ltd): 147

David Grant: 2

Matthew Brown: 10, 218, 219, 220, 221  
(matthewbrown-photography.com)

Michael Joseph: 176

The photographs of Greener's gunmakers in the factory and of the Greener factory were kindly provided by David Dryhurst of W.W. Greener (Gunmakers) Ltd and are reproduced with his permission. Other illustrations were taken from old gunmakers' catalogues.





A double flint by Joseph Manton, a beautiful example of what Hawker called 'artistry in firearms'.

# The Race to Develop a Practical Hammerless Gun

THE YEAR is 1871 and the shooting world is in a state of excitement and confusion. The ancestors of your average 'sporting squire' had been using fowling pieces of basically the same style for 200 years.

They were single or double barrelled in configuration, were loaded from the muzzle by means of a ram-rod and initially detonated by side-locks sporting hammers carrying a carefully shaped flint, which created a spark and ignited a charge of powder, via a touch hole in the breech end; thereby detonating the main powder charge in the chamber and sending the payload of shot and wadding down the barrel towards its target.

Then, around 1807, the Reverend Alexander Forsyth invented the 'scent bottle lock' his precursor (via Manton's 1816 pellet lock) to the copper percussion cap of 1822. Forsyth's gun became known as the 'scent bottle' lock because it featured a container of fulminate, which rotated to pour a measure of the compound onto a channel on the central spindle. Forsyth made no money from his invention and died a poor man in 1843, having striven for years to find an application of his idea that would find general favour. However, he had paved the way for a revolution in gun making, so he deserves our appreciation.

With the introduction of the percussion cap, the need for a flint was rendered obsolete. Instead, a simple hammer falling onto a nipple charged with a copper cap containing a compound of fulminate, created the required spark. It was quicker, more reliable and more weather-proof.

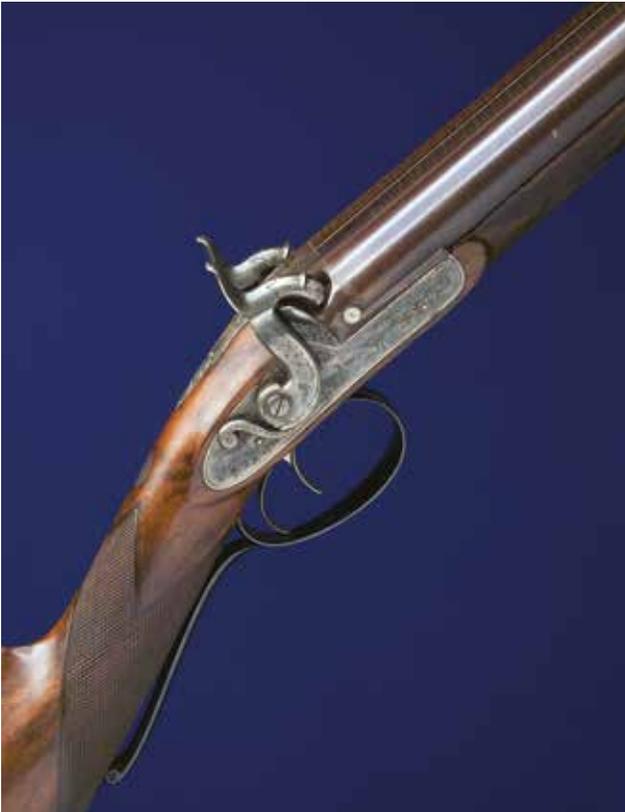
Between 1814 and 1816 a number of gunmakers were working on the same improvements and the cap-lock emerged. It is variously credited to Joseph

Manton and Durs Egg in Britain and Joshua Shaw in the USA.

The concept of a copper cap atop a hollow nipple, sending a hot flame down a channel to ignite the main charge, was quickly recognised as a sound system. Copper caps became easily obtainable, cheap and reliable, and thus the principal means of detonation for sporting guns until the 1850s was settled. The percussion gun was still loaded from the muzzle, like the flintlock, but it was now quicker to ignite, quicker to load, more weather-proof and easier to maintain.



An Innes double flintlock, circa 1810. The flintlock at its highest development was a sporting gun with balance, beauty and grace. However, the ignition system had reached the end of its development and new avenues had to be explored.



A double percussion sporting gun by Alex Martin. Percussion muzzle loaders improved massively on flintlocks in terms of ignition. The style, grace and quality of the best of them are easy to appreciate. However, to speed up the firing cycle, muzzle-loading had to give way to a new system.

The percussion muzzle loader's era spanned the 1820s, 30s and 40s before it ran into any serious competition and then, as Hawker had once defended the flintlock during the early days of percussion, so gunmakers like William Greener fought against the tide when the 'next big thing' emerged onto the scene: the breech loader.

The Great Exhibition of 1851 brought the embodiment of this idea to Britain from the continent. Casimir Le Fauchaux exhibited what was disparagingly termed 'the French crutch gun' by a number of British commentators. It was a revolutionary concept to the average sporting man, who had previously only ever considered the loading of a shotgun possible by pouring powder and shot down the muzzles. Breech loading, however, was not then a new concept: screw-barrel breech-loading flintlock pistols had been used as far back as the English Civil War.



A 12-bore pinfire gun by Dougall on his 'Lockfast' patent of 1860. Pin-holes in the barrels allowed the hammers to strike the protruding pins and detonate the charge.



Pinfire cartridges put the detonation charge, the main powder charge and the shot charge into one portable container. For the first time, a new unit could replace a spent one in a second.