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*Vintage Guns for the Modern Shot*

*The British Boxlock Gun & Rifle*

that date. I had a Stephen Grant 12-bore, made in 1922, with damascus barrels and I occasionally encounter other, similarly late-production guns with the same original equipment. Some gunmakers continued to offer damascus barrels as an option in their catalogues well into the 1930s.

Here, I shall concentrate on the practical issues for the buyer and user of vintage hammer guns, such as how to recognise different types and qualities, how to recognise faults or damage and how to ensure barrels are properly maintained.

### BARREL MATERIALS AT A GLANCE

Ironically, any barrels marked 'Best London Damascus' or 'English Fine Twist' etc are, almost certainly, Belgian forgeries of poor quality. British makers did not adopt this practice, as a general rule. The various types of damascus, or twist, tubes used by British makers were successfully employed through the flintlock, percussion, pin-fire and centre-fire eras. It is often supposed that forged steel succeeded them because it was a superior material. However, many sportsmen of the day disagreed.



Most barrels will have a barrel maker's stamp. In this case, another example of 'ECH': Edwin Charles Hodges.



Beautifully polished and browned barrels on a Purdey, showing great figure.



These early twist barrels lack the intricacy of finer damascus but they are long-lived and well made.



Acid etched barrels like this were a speciality of Rigby and are a beautiful, distinctive feature of his hammer guns.

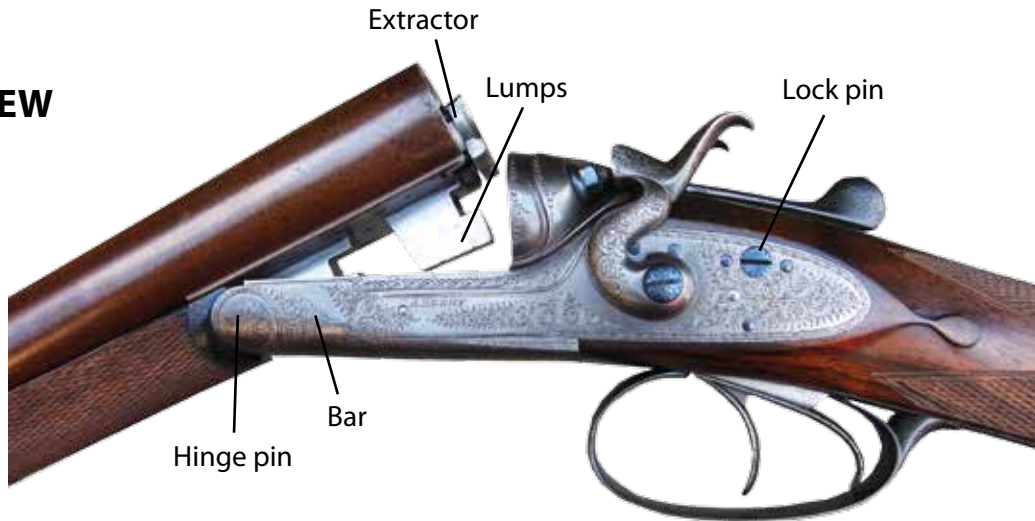
Lord Walsingham was prominent among the nay-sayers. He wrote, after shooting a record bag of grouse to his own gun, actually using number of guns he then owned: *‘Whitworth steel barrels are not desirable for a heavy day’s shooting. The explosion in them makes quite a different sound from that given off by Damascus barrels: there is more ring about it, and I can imagine that this might prove a serious annoyance to anyone who minds the noise of shooting. Moreover, the Whitworth barrels became hot much more rapidly than the Damascus, and this is a serious drawback...I am replacing them with Damascus as in all my other guns.’*

Damascus barrels of all the main types encountered in English gun making will prove serviceable. Many now sold will have been subjected to a modern proof test at either the London or the Birmingham proof house.

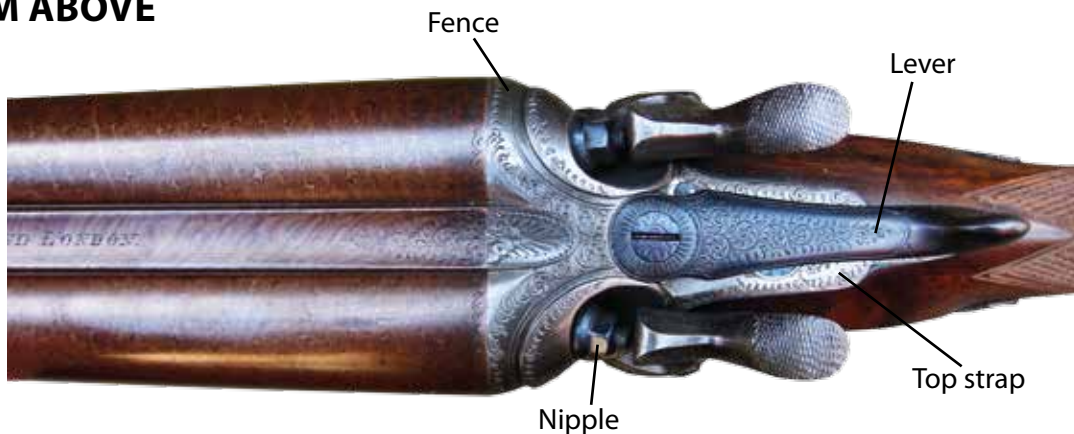
The tests for re-proof are the equal of the tests imposed on brand new guns submitted by current makers, be they American, Turkish, Japanese, English or wherever in origin. Therefore, any damascus barrelled gun with new proof marks can be used with the appropriate modern ammunition with absolute confidence.

## Parts of the Hammer Gun

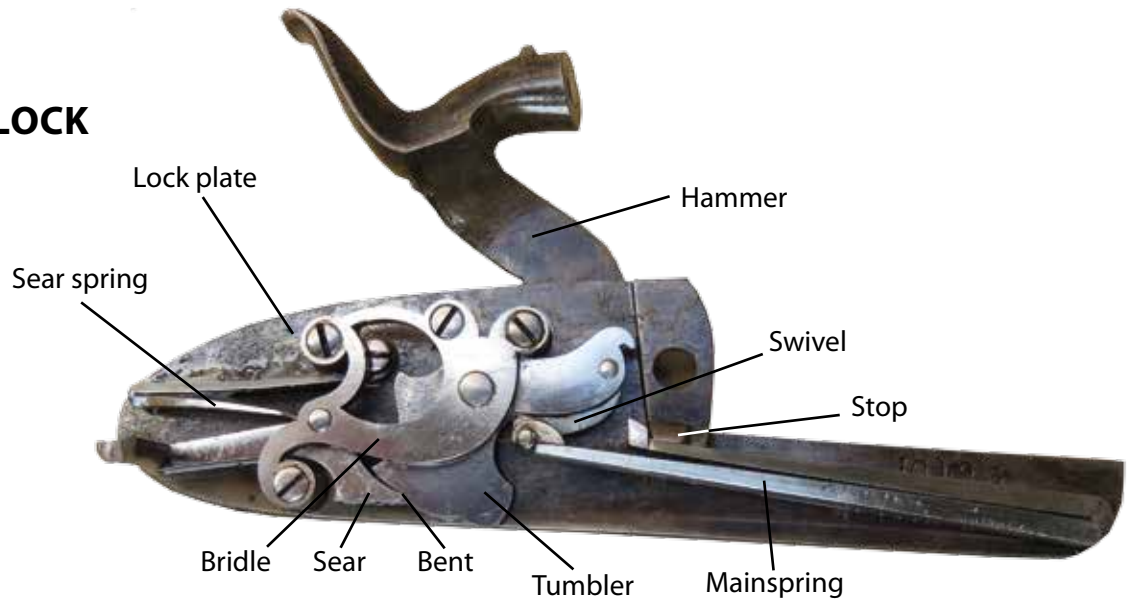
### SIDE VIEW



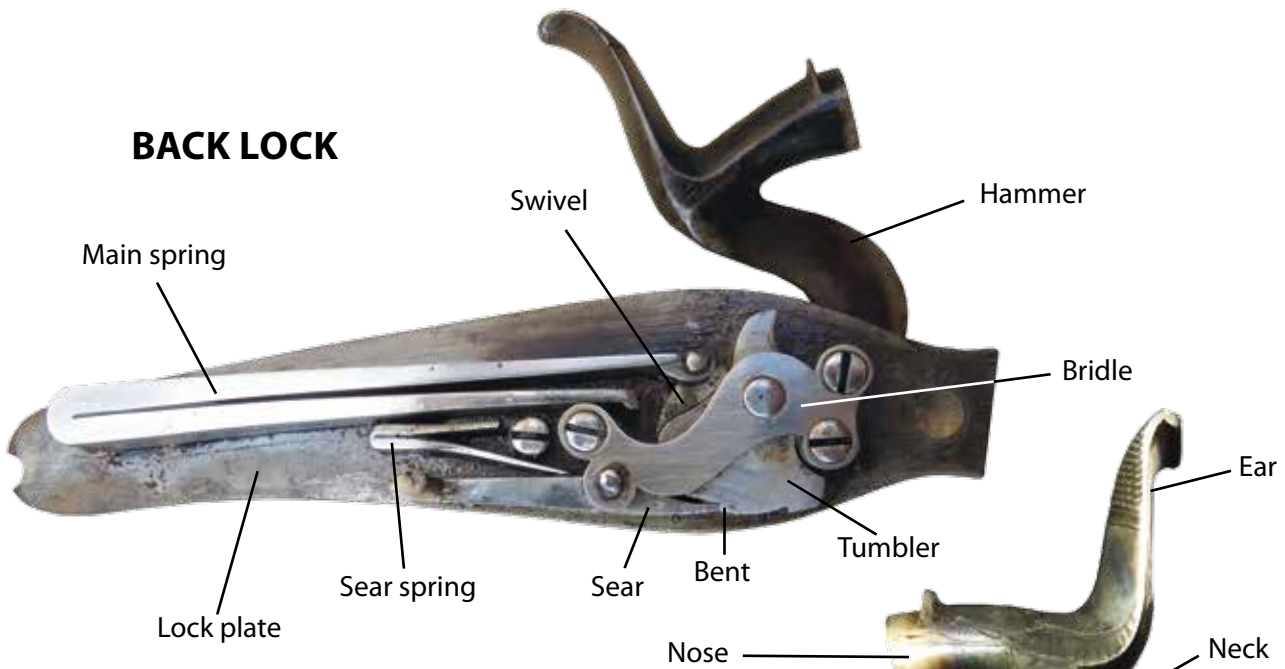
### FROM ABOVE



## BAR LOCK



## BACK LOCK



## THE HAMMER

