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The bargain basement of British over-and-unders

My friend Peter Jones has an interesting over-and-under by Edwinson Green. Green was a prolific inventor and skilled gunmaker based in Cheltenham & Gloucester. His over-and-under design of 1912 was one of the first to show real



This Lancaster over-and-under demonstrates the underlumps that give such early designs their deep actions. This is one of a pair sold in a London auction for £5,040 in 2005.

potential. Purdey used it as the model for their first over-and-under before switching to the Woodward design.

Peter's example is ribless and light and handles very well. The Green design has been described as 'clumsy' and too tall in the action. This is because it has a conventional lump at the bottom, rather than the now-common, Robertson inspired, 'bifurcated' lumps on the sides of the barrel, as used on the Boss and Woodward guns, but in practice it balances nicely and feels the quality gun that it is. Green guns are usually finished to a very high standard. The workmanship is excellent and the engraving style can be varied and idiosyncratic.

Two notable examples of Green over-and-under guns appeared in the March 2004 auction at Holt's.

One was the very first made to this design, and as such was an eminently collectable item as well as a very shootable weapon. Unsurprisingly it was secured by a trade buyer and was displayed for sale at the subsequent summer Game Fairs at a considerable mark up. The engraving on



The Edwinson Green over-and-under. The gun on the left is the first ever made to this design.

both guns was nicely executed but very different in style, one traditional scrolling and the other foliate in nature with various nymphs blowing horns. As Peter says, *'Turn up to a shoot with one of these and everyone knows you have something a bit special'*.

These two well-preserved examples of top quality English gunmaking in the preferred modern style of barrel configuration sold for under £4,000 each. (At the time of



Detail of the bites on a 1920 Edwinson Green over-and-under 12-bore.

GUN ACTIONS

1. Descriptive

Vintage guns of interest to the modern shooter can be roughly divided into two categories:

1. Hammer guns
2. Hammerless guns



Left: Purdey pigeon hammergun. Right: Purdey hammerless sidelock. Both guns are twelve bores and use bar-action sidelocks.

The terms themselves are inaccurate because all guns have hammers really, either they are on the inside of the lock (and called 'tumblers') or they are positioned on the outside of it and called 'hammers'.

Hammer gun locks fall into two main types: 'bar-action' locks (in which the mainspring is housed in a recess cut into the metal 'bar' of the action) and back-action locks (in which the mainspring is housed behind the action body on a lock-plate which is inlet into the stock just behind the hammers). Be aware though that some back-action locks can look rather like bar actions, even though the mainspring is not located in the bar. The position of the pins, seen on the outside of the lock plate, is the giveaway.



These pictures illustrate the internal components of the bar-action hammer lock (inset) and the recesses cut into the wood and the bar of the action to accommodate the internal mechanism. The gun has re-bouncing locks and is by J. Thompson and dates from the late 1870s.

Types of hammer gun

Two main distinctions can be made regarding hammer guns, as stated above:

- **Bar-Action Hammer Guns**, in which the mainspring is housed in a portion of the lock plate forward and below the hammer. The bar of the action is cut away to allow the spring to be recessed into the space provided.
- **Back-Action Hammer Guns**, in which the mainspring is housed in a portion of the lock plate behind the hammer. Wood is cut away from the stock to receive the lock, behind the action body.



Here can be seen the internal components of a back-action hammer lock (inset) and the recess in the stock cut away to receive the mechanism. This is an 1885 Holland & Holland with rebounding locks.



Above left: a conventional bar-action hammer gun circa 1880, by Gallyon. On the right is a late 1870s back-action hammer gun by Purdey. Note the isolated lock plates.



Above: a direct comparison of bar action and back action hammer locks. On the left is a Robert Adams lock from a bar-in-wood hammer gun circa 1868. On the right is an Adams & Co circa 1885. Both have rebounding locks.