

The Longthorne over and under 'Hesketh' game gun

TESTED BY: VIC HARKER

A new English gunmaker is something I don't have the opportunity to report on very often. To build and market an entirely new gun in the UK represents a daunting challenge financially, although perhaps with the modern methods of manufacture that are now available, slightly less so technically.

Creating something genuinely original with exceptional qualities of its own is almost certainly the most difficult task, but I believe James Longthorne has done just that. The Longthorne over and under is, in my view, nothing less than a sensation – both in terms of the characteristics it incorporates and that all-important price/quality equation. I first saw the gun at the recent gun show in Newark, and amid the hurly burly, it was not the best place to make any kind of evaluation.

My first impression was of the sidelock's small dimensions and light weight by modern standards. My first thought was "that's going to kick with anything but the lightest cartridges".

Apart from that, its appearance was understated – it certainly didn't blow you away with elaborate cosmetics. Nor was it a Boss or Woodward clone, although it shared the same kind of draws, wedges and bifurcated bolt to lock it together. If it reminded me of any other gun it was a Beretta SO although the action body is much smaller.

I arranged with Jim and Elaine Longthorne to

shoot the gun at Ian Coley's ground in Gloucestershire, and that's where it all got more interesting. This gun just moves – that's the only way I can describe it. You point, swing, hit the target and that is it.

The prototype is an ounce under 7lbs, very fast handling but controllable. Recoil is surprisingly negligible even with big cartridges – Jim says this is due to very careful jointing. Shooting fast driven targets, there was a total absence of vibration and no recovery time was required between shots. This may be explained by the barrel assembly, tubes, lumps and ribs all machined in one piece from a special high grade Swedish steel.

The 30in barrels are beautifully light and weighed just 1.420kg, Jim's favourite trick at the Newark show was to put them on the ground and jump on them to demonstrate how strong they are. Unusual behaviour for an English gunmaker, but the Longthorne sidelock is an unusual gun!

To create the handling characteristics that he was looking for in an over and under game gun Jim took as his model a friend's Purdey, made in 1897. "I think, perhaps, something has been lost in the making of game guns that just seemed to point themselves," he says.

If this is the case, then he has recreated that quality in this exciting and original new gun.



Tubes, lumps and ribs are all machined in one piece from a special high-grade Swedish steel



The barrels are beautifully light, but the gun's maker has been known to demonstrate their strength by jumping on them

TECH SPECS

LONGTHORNE 'HESKETH' GAME GUN

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- **Price:** Price should read £12766.00 inc vat