

IN THE GUNROOM

EDWINSON GREEN TRIPLE BARREL

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Triple-barrelled guns are nothing new, several flintlock pistols were in this form and the occasional multi-barrel flintlock or percussion gun was built. However, as far as game shooting was concerned, by the 19th century the double-barrelled gun was the norm, built in vast quantities and sine qua non at every shoot.

With the great developments in firearms in the second half of the 19th century, breech-loading, hammerless ejectors, single triggers and the like, gunmakers were always striving for that little extra to make their guns stand out in an era of intense competition and to give them the edge over their rivals.

In this era of massive bags, the rate of fire was deemed very important and this desire drove most of these developments. One or two gunmakers came up with the idea of adding an extra barrel to intensify this rate of fire. Three-barrelled sporting guns in the form of drillings were popular on the Continent, but almost unheard of in Britain.

The first proponent of multi-barrel guns was Charles Lancaster who patented a four-barrelled example in 1882. They were heavy and ponderous and his whole object was publicity. They were certainly ingenious, caught everybody's imagination and were well illustrated in the sporting press and books.

Probably the best of the three-barrelled guns was patented by John Dickson of Edinburgh in that same year 1882. The Dickson trigger plate design was ideal for a three-barrelled gun and in the Dickson three barrel, the barrels were inline giving them the appearance of a conventional double-barrelled gun and very handsome to boot. Most of the guns were in 16 or 20 bore and in total nine were built. They were expensive guns to build, however they looked elegant and handled superbly and were designed specifically for driven grouse shooting.

Yet another exponent of the three barrel was Boss & Co under the ownership of John Robertson. Between 1898 and 1901 he built two triple-barrelled inline 16 bores with his patent Boss single trigger. Being 16 bore, the width of the gun was not more than a conventional 12 bore and they weighed in at just under 7lbs. They looked elegant and at a trial at the London Sporting Park at Hendon, three clay birds were consistently smashed in the air at once. The main reason behind Robertson's building of the three barrel was to prove and demonstrate the reliability of the Boss single trigger.

This demonstration by Boss at The London Sporting Park was where Edwinson Green & Son of Cheltenham and Gloucester drew their inspiration from. Lot 1554 in this sale is an Edwinson Green & Son very rare triple-barrelled gun no. 6650 dating from 1912. The London Sporting Park, owned by William Watts, was the first purpose built clay pigeon ground in London to cater for city dwellers. He leased part of it out to both Boss & Co and Edwinson Green for their customers to try out their new guns. Consequently Green, Boss and Watts had a close relationship.

Edwinson Green & Son were a go ahead company building top quality guns and would later patent one of the first over and under designs in 1912. Spurred on by Boss, they took out a

patent in 1902 for a three-barrelled gun, but unlike the Dickson and Boss examples, the barrels were in a pyramidal form in which the third barrel lay above the other two. Most of the mechanism was derived from the firm's standard sidelock double-barrelled gun, and the third barrel was fired by a trigger plate lock. The gun was offered in 12, 16 and 20 bore, although most guns were built in the smaller bore sizes. A single trigger was fitted and again this was covered by the 1902 patent.

Edwinson Green gained a lot of publicity with his new three barrel as it was so unusual, *The Field* writing "This novel form of shotgun has been designed and adapted for sportsmen who wish, so to speak for an extra string to their bow".

Very few such three-barrelled Green guns were built and what is unusual is that a fair proportion of their production was for the trade. There were sales to Charles Lancaster, Lyon & Lyon and Westley Richards who had the cheek to engrave their gun "Westley Richards Patent Three Barrel Gun". This gun even won the gold medal at the Turin Exhibition in 1911. In 1904 the Green three barrel was tested by William Watts at The London Sporting Park and as happened with the Boss three barrel, the Green gun regularly broke three clays in the air at once.

The aftermath of World War One saw a reduction in the massive bags that were so desired in the late 19th century and consequently demand for the three barrel fell away. Their era was a small window in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Due to the relationship between Boss and Green at the London Sporting Park, Green used Boss's engraver Jack Sumner to engrave their best guns and this gun on offer in lot 1554 has indeed been engraved by the renowned Jack Sumner. So if you want something very rare and pretty special, have a thought about lot 1554 estimated at £10,000 to £15,000 as it will be a long time until you see another three barrel.