

Winterise your *shotgun*



Tim Greenwood has been a gunsmith for almost 30 years and his skills are relied upon by many of the top names in clay shooting

Tim Greenwood shares his thoughts on the county revolution, reminds us to think about gunfit before getting dressed and talks us through keeping our guns in full working order throughout the winter

Before beginning this month's article on caring for your shotgun over the winter, I would like to go back in time to the September issue of *Clay Shooting* and an article written by James Marchington about Roger Hoad, the new chairman of the Kent CPSA.

Most of us will never become World, or even British, champions in our chosen clay shooting discipline, but at county level we do have a real chance of success. I live in Kent and was relieved when Roger and a few hardy souls volunteered to join the Kent committee to prevent our county ceasing to exist in the eyes of the CPSA, as we previously had no standing committee.

Several months later, due to the hard work – and in most cases the thankless work – carried out by these unpaid volunteers (they don't even get expenses), a revolution is starting to occur in our county, something I have not seen in many years – the members are starting to become interested again in county level shooting!

Although more feedback from the members is needed, clay shooters are beginning to express opinions and wanting to get involved. Apathy, brought about by a lack of accessible information and the feeling that whatever was wanted by the grass roots shooter was being ignored, is becoming, slowly, a thing of the past! We are beginning to realise that after years of the 'tail wagging the dog' it is possible to change things when the right people start to lead, and of course you can always get an independent magazine to publish the shooter's grievances.

So, I would like to say a big thank you to Roger and the Kent committee for all of their hard, unpaid work and the *Clay Shooting* team for listening to us, the clay shooters. I hope more counties will take up the cudgel and start to fight for what their members really want. It can be done and it will make such a difference.

And so, having got off my soapbox, on with this month's article: *Clay Shooting* regularly publishes articles on 'gunfit', written by both myself and others, and you, the shooter sometimes spend considerable sums of money having your gun fitted to gain optimum performance in your shooting.

And yet, when the chill of winter starts to blow through our Skeet vests, what do some of us do? We put on a great big thick heavy coat and then wonder why we are not shooting as well as we were? A bulky winter coat, even if it is being sold as a shooting coat, will dramatically change your gunfit. Game shooters usually have the opposite problem. As game is only shot in the winter months, their guns are usually fitted to accommodate thick clothing, and then they struggle to shoot well in a T shirt in the summer.

Several thin layers of clothing are far better at retaining body heat: a vest or T shirt, and one or two thin woollen jumpers with perhaps a single skin waterproof/windproof nylon jacket under your Skeet vest will hardly affect the fit of your gun. On extremely cold or wet days, wearing a thicker waterproof coat over the top whilst waiting to shoot, but removing it while actually shooting will also be of great benefit.

Caps are great in the summer for keeping the sun out of your eyes, but useless in the winter. A wax-proofed cap or a woolly hat is a much better option, especially as so much heat is lost through your head. Wellington boots keep your feet dry, but not very warm. If you



If your multichokes are not cleaned and dried after being shot, the build up of rust that will occur can have disastrous results. The rust will prevent a gas tight seal of the choke in the choke aperture, allowing the gas and shot to pass between the choke and the barrel wall. The result is expensive for the shooter and potentially lethal to anyone standing to the side





Two of my old favourites: a Browning and a Beretta. The actions have been shot in the wet without any protective lubrication or regular servicing

Further neglect will almost certainly result in the gun letting its owner down when it is most needed

can afford it, look at the Gortex-lined leather boots available in most gun shops or a pair of Gortex lined walking boots will be less expensive but will do the job almost as well.

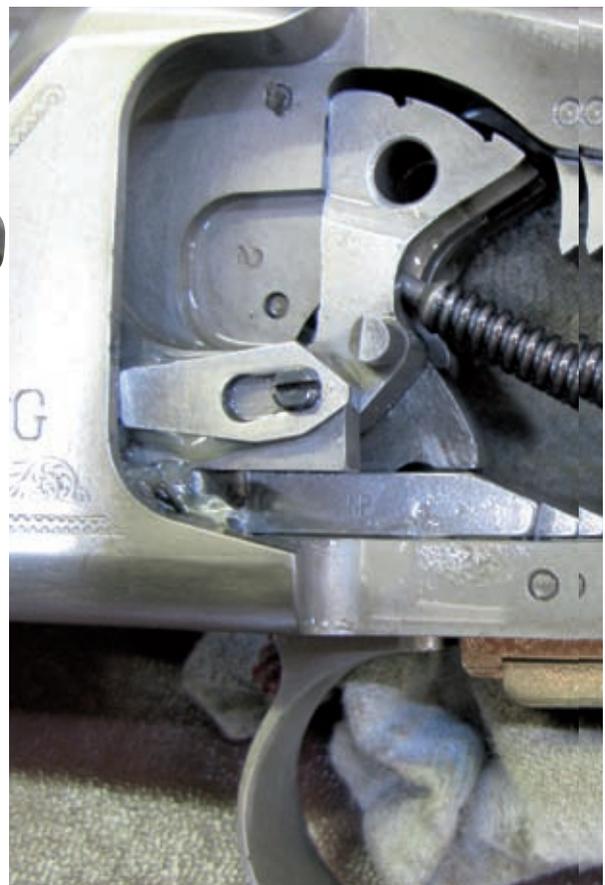
One last suggestion; take some clothing with you to change into if it has been really wet, there is nothing worse than having a long drive home in wet clothes. Look on the bright side, you will not rust, but your gun will – if it has been put away in a wet slip for the drive home, especially if when you arrive home you are unable to clean and oil it right away and decide to leave it until you get home after work the next evening.

Every year I am presented with several guns that have received this treatment and in extreme cases have even rusted to the inside of the gun slip; so here are some suggestions for looking after your gun in the winter months:

Carry a spare gunslip with you to the shoot, but keep it dry in the car. Carry your gun around the shoot in a gun slip to keep the worst of the weather from deeply penetrating the action and the woodwork. When you have finished shooting, at the very least spray some oil or barrel cleaner down the bores, take the forend and barrels off the action, wipe all the parts as dry as you can with an old teatowel, then spray a cloth with some light oil such as Browning Legia or even WD40, and wipe over all the metal



Fortunately they are both very well made guns and straightforward to de-rust. Notice they both now have a smear of grease at the vulnerable points in the action, to prevent wear and water ingress, and a light film of oil applied for protection



parts. Put the gun back together and place it in the spare, dry gun slip for its journey home. Gun slips with a full length zip are preferable as they can then be thoroughly dried over a radiator before their next outing. At least then, if you are too cold and wet to clean it properly straight away, you have given it some immediate level of protection.

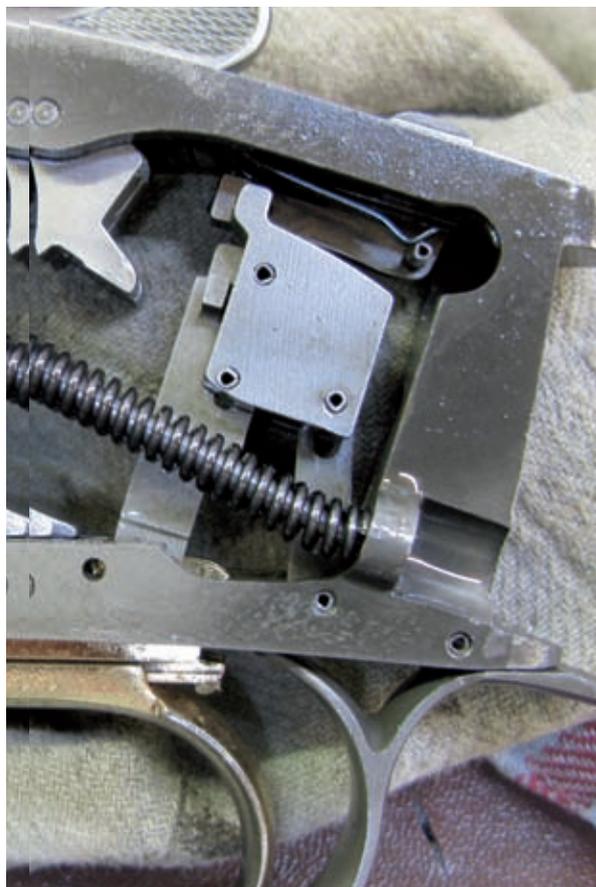
As regular readers of *Clay Shooting*, I am sure you have all followed the advice given about having your gun regularly serviced by a competent gunsmith, but just in case you haven't, my next suggestion is to take your stock off, as described in a previous issue, or if it's a sidelock, remove the lock plates and give the exposed action a squirt with a light oil.

Allow the action to stand for a while on some kitchen roll for any excess oil to run out (you don't want it soaking into the head of your stock), then re-fit the stock onto the action making sure it is fully tightened. However well headed up your stock is, some water will always find its way inside and in the absence of a proper service, this will give some measure of protection in the wet weather to come, and should be good until your next service.

Applying some light grease to either side of the barrel lumps, around the ejectors and the locking point; and a light smear over the forend ironwork in the forend will help repel



If you are shooting an expensive sidelock or an automatic, take it out in the wet without basic maintenance, prevention or regular servicing and this can be the result



water from these particularly vulnerable areas, but always remember to remove the grease after every shoot in case it has picked up some grit whilst in use.

Lastly, your woodwork needs to be thoroughly dried, not, I hasten to add, by putting it in the airing cupboard or right next to a radiator or fire. First of all, wipe any excess moisture from the wood. I find, whether the wood is oil finished or sealed in some way, a light application of boiled linseed oil, available in most good DIY stores, using either your hand or a soft cloth, will feed and waterproof your wood in equal measure. Leave the stock for half an hour, then buff off all the excess oil with another clean cloth. Do not leave excess oil

on the wood as it will dry to a sticky mess.

After all this cleaning and maintenance, it is best to leave the gun out for a few hours at room temperature before returning it to your gun safe, but in these times of heightened awareness over gun storage and safety, it is not always advisable. If you are in this situation, invest in some silica gel crystals, once again available in any good DIY store, to put in the bottom of your safe to absorb any last vestiges of moisture.

We are unlikely to have a warm and dry winter, but following these suggestions may help to make it more bearable for you and your gun – and not quite so expensive when you next visit your gunsmith. ■

What can Tim Greenwood do for you and your gun?

- Tim offers a full gunfitting service and free help and advice
- He can do anything you need doing to your stock, barrels or action
- Tim specialises in wooden stock extensions matched to your existing stock
- Tim will also make any specialist parts as required and offers full servicing and maintenance services
- Visit Tim's website: www.greenwoodgunsmiths.co.uk or ask his advice by emailing asktheexperts@blazepublishing.co.uk