

Thames Valley Guns

Parker Hale Scout Rifle

Introduction

I had been looking for another interesting rifle to restore and write about when I found a Parker Hale Scout. I had come across a number of Parker Hale rifles over the years but always in a hunting configuration. Build quality of the hunting rifles is reasonable



but as the action was built around the standard Mauser mechanism I felt the rifles didn't offer anything that was particularly innovative from a design standpoint

However the scout was more interesting, it offered a ten round detachable magazine, muzzle break, short barrel and all in a Mauser action that didn't traditionally lend itself to being a magazine fed rifle.

History

I have no plans to discuss the Parker Hale history in any great detail, however it is important to clarify this rifles manufacturing heritage. There are various articles on the Internet and in publications that discuss the companies history and the products they made, with one of the best being John Walters Rifles of the World. The company manufactured numerous rifles in a sporting configuration, models examples being the M1000, M1100, M1200 and the Scout supposedly having the model designation M1300.

However you will find no mention of the Scout in any publication under the Parker Hale name. This was due to the scout being produced after ownership of Parker Hale passed over to the Gibbs Rifle Company (USA) in the 1990, which somewhat confuses matters as the rifle is stamped Parker Hale Ltd, Birmingham, England.

General

There was a couple of rifles available on the UK Gun Trader website but the deciding factor for the purchase of this rifle was that it was supplied with three ten round and one four round magazines. The ten round magazines were crucial as there are no spares available and my theory was, if there was any problems at least I could get one of the three to work.

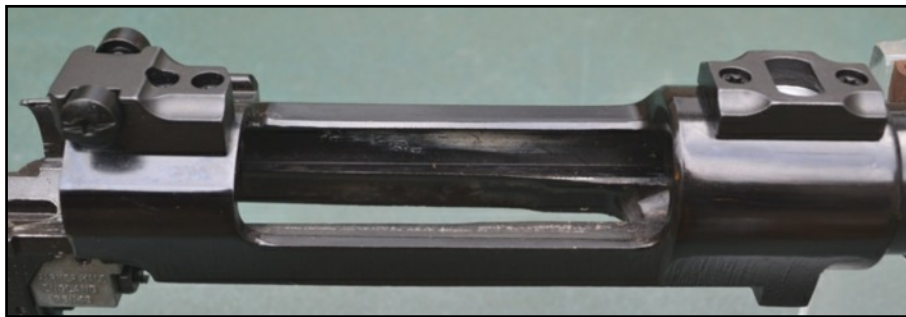
Upon receipt I stripped the rifle down, the bore was in great shape as was the receiver and bolt, however as it the custom in the UK I noticed a number of minor but annoying faults. A washer had been jammed in the mag well to take some free play in the magazine housing, the front trigger guard screw had sheared, a piece of plastic (part of a cable tie) had been jammed behind the recoil block and the stock was starting to fracture around the recoil block locking ring. Why is it that dealers in the UK seem to think it is perfectly acceptable to sell on faulty equipment - Gggrrrr.

The rifle is in effect the 1200 hunting model but has a number of subtle differences which I will discuss in more detail as we progress, the rifle is 41" long and 1.75" at its widest point. Barrel is 18" not including the muzzle brake. It has a detachable 10rd magazine, muzzle brake, laminate stock, barrel is not free floating, the action is not bedded and unlike tradition Mauser actions, the safety is on the trigger and not on the bolt shroud.

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Receiver

The receiver is a typical large ring Mauser design. Whether it is true, I had read that Parker Hale obtained its Mauser receivers from Spain and whether it was in sufficient numbers to maintain its production requirements or whether Parker Hale manufacturers its own receivers I do not know. However I think its fair to say the receiver profile is fairly identical to the original Mauser's with the exception of the rear bridge. The rear bridge has been machined with two flat sloping sides which are perfect for mounting a scope base or target sight. This profiling is carried



on into the bolt shroud which gives a neat modern appearance.

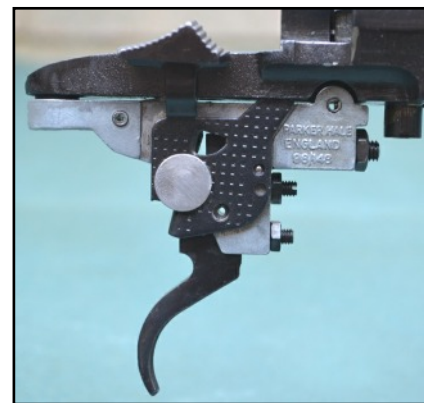
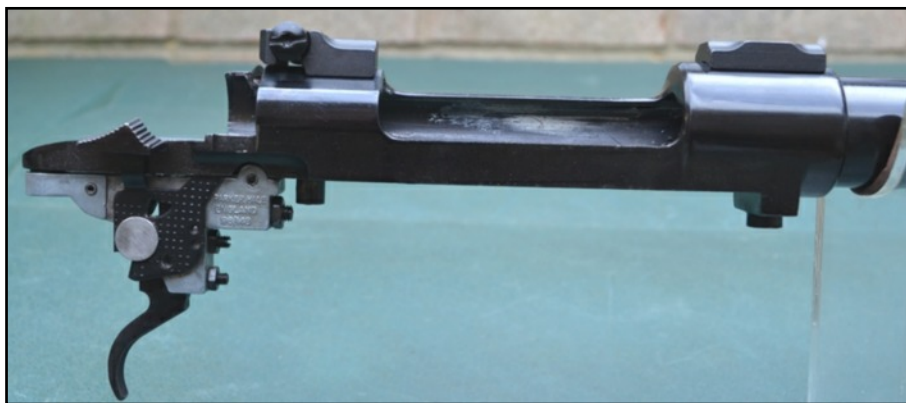
The overall finish and bluing quality of the receiver is excellent with the large ring and bridge being drilled and tapped for scope bases. This rifle had the original aluminium Parker Hale bases which by today's standards are dated and therefore I replaced them with superior Leupold standard model as

shown in the image above. These base/rings are excellent and permit course adjustment should you need it, the only downside is that the rear base required an extra hole to be drilled and tapped as the distance between the mounting screw were different.

On the underneath of the receiver there is the standard locking lug and through this passes the main king screw. At the other end of the magazine well is a small stud welded to the receiver with a threaded hole in it and is used to secure the trigger guard. This stud is unique to the scout as the detachable magazine precludes the use of the typical one piece internal magazine unit. Another minor difference is a small slot machined into the receiver to the right of the rear bridge. This allows the bolt lock to pass through the receiver from the safety catch.

Trigger Assembly

The mounting of the trigger assembly is the same as for all Mauser's utilising a singular pin, however Parker Hale has done away with the traditional Mauser trigger and replaced it with a self contained unit of their own design. It is a neat, effective and compact



design that secures to the receiver using the customary pin and the rear king screw. For its diminutive size the assembly contains the safety catch, bolt lock, adjustments for backlash and trigger pressure. The safety has a good thumb plate with plenty of grip and when operated has a positive on-off detent action. The safety can only be applied when the action is cocked and in doing so, locks the sear and raises a plate which passes through the receiver and locks the bolt in the downward position. If the operator remove the trigger assembly or adjusts it in any way then the trigger must be "set-up" as per instructions otherwise the sear can bind and the rifle cannot cock. Trigger pressure adjustment can be varied between 2-5lbs.

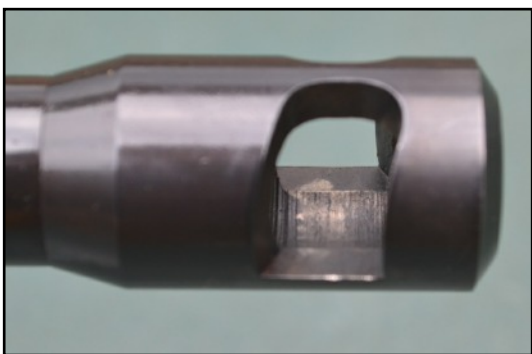
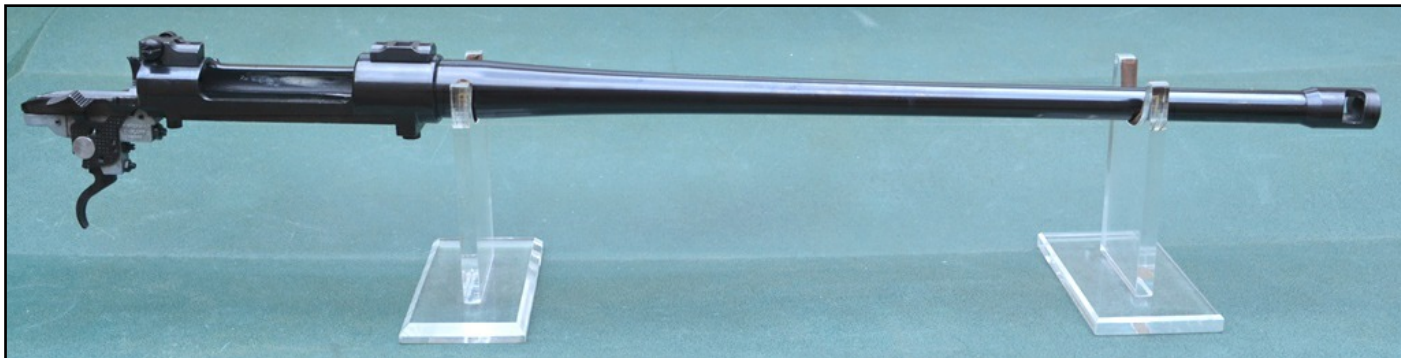
Barrel

The Scout barrel is unusually short at 19" and is fitted with a single baffle muzzle brake giving a total length of just 20" making a very handy and compact rifle. The muzzle brake can be removed by slackening off a small grub screw on the underneath of the brake and unscrewing. However I would advise leaving it in situ unless it is to be replaced by a moderator. The reason being is

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it is very effective at reducing felt recoil. The recoil baffle is 0.4" wide, curves forward and deflects gases backwards at a 30° angle.



The barrel is not floating but is designed to be supported by approximately 2" of the forend, the finish is a good quality deep blue and is stamped with the words "Parker Hale Ltd, Birmingham, England. The bore is in excellent condition, has four grooves and the rifling has a twist rate of 1 in 12.

Breech Block

The breech block is very much the traditional, classic Mauser design and therefore I have no intention of dwelling upon it. The only minor difference is the bolt shroud. As the safety catch is now part of the trigger assembly the old "flag" style safety is redundant and therefore the shroud is now profiled to the receiver, giving the rifle a more modern appearance.



Trigger Guard/Magazine housing assembly

Traditionally Mauser designs utilise an internal double stacked box magazine which usually consists of the trigger guard, box magazine, floor plate, spring, magazine platform as a complete assembly and the two king screws pass through the assembly and secure to the receiver. It is highly efficient mechanism with rounds either being loaded singularly or utilising a clip and rarely suffers any form of misfeed and the magazines lips are integral within the receiver

Therefore to apply a detachable magazine requires considerable redesign of the trigger guard/magazine housing assembly and slight alteration of the receiver. A double stacked ten round magazine is too wide to fit in the original magazine and therefore Parker Hale have broken down the original design into three specific parts. For ease of description I will start with the middle section which is the magazine housing. The magazine housing is a sheet steel box section which houses the magazine, it is pinned down at the front by the second section which consists of



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the front king screw and its plate. The third section is the trigger guard and this is secured by the rear king screw and a small screw at the front of the trigger guard which passes through the guard, a plate at the rear of the magazine housing and into a threaded boss welded to the receiver. This small screw is essential as it secures and stabilises both the trigger guard and the magazine housing, however it is hidden by the magazine release catch and is regularly broken by amateurs who think the stripping the Parker Hale Scout is a similar to a standard Mauser. Also to access the screw, one must remove the magazine catch which requires the support of both the rifle and the trigger guard at the same time, which is not the easiest of tasks. The front of the trigger guard also incorporates two horns which act as a initial guide to align the magazine with the housing.

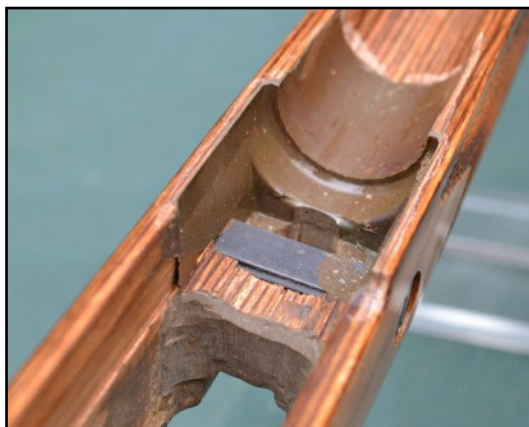


The rifle is supplied with a four round flush fitting magazine together with a ten round version. The 4rd magazine is designed for the 30.06 cartridge and therefore the .308 cartridge has a way to travel before it is fed in the chamber. I am unsure if the 10rd magazine is common to other models or unique to the Scout, however it is fairly traditional in terms of its layout. It has a spacer at the rear of the magazine which aligns the .308 cartridge more accurately with the feed lips and which may indicate its past history as a 30.06 magazine. The front face of the magazine has a small stud brazed in place which is designed to support the front of the magazine when it is located in its housing. However as the reader may note in the image above, the work looks like it was done as an "afterjob" as the finish is poor.

Unfortunately my rifle suffered from unreliable feed problems with the bolt passing over the top of the first round. This was directly due to too much movement of the magazine in the magazine housing but was also indirectly attributed to a combination of the sheared magazine housing screw and to much free play between the housing and the woodwork.

Furniture

Although a 90's rifle the stock has a very Boyd's look about it, although I doubt Boyd's had a hand in it. It is a good quality stock that has been accurately machined. The stock was originally finished with a plain lacquer which gives a slightly yellow tint, it has a plastic butt plate which although acceptable could be better and has checkering both on the forend and the pistol grip. The



receiver is not bedded and the barrel rests on the forend which does not necessarily reduce accuracy. My only minor criticism is the yellow tint and the poor fitting of the recoil block. The two locking rings do not sit central in their recesses and as a result over the years as the rifle has recoiled and has caused the wood around one of the locking rinks to fracture.

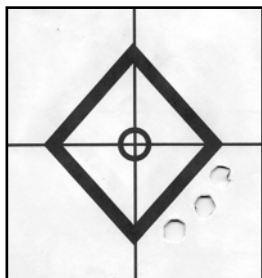
You may also recall in the last paragraph I mentioned about the loose fit of the magazine housing, therefore I decided the stock required repairing and upgrading. My first task was to bed the receiver, ensuring the barrel still rests on the forward section of the forend, next I relieved the recesses that housed the locking block rings and super glued the fractures. Using the same two pack epoxy resin that I used to bed the action, I reduced the length of the area where the mag housing sits by 5mm, thereby ensuring there was no movement and

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consistent positioning of the magazine. Finally I refinished the woodwork and stained it with Georgian oak to remove that horrible yellow tint.

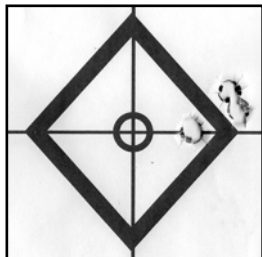
Range Test

Having made good all the repairs, solved the feed problem and restored the woodwork it was time to start thinking about a range test.



As the rifle was ninety's technology I wanted a 90's scope and therefore opted for a good quality Redfield 4-12 x44 which I had shipped in from the US. At this point I wasn't considering working up a specific load, maybe later, so I opted for a standard load straight out of the manual which was a 150gr Sierra FMJBT bullet and 43.5gr of Vihtavouri N140, which I was using for magazine feed rifles.

My first range test was to zero and attempt a group. I was shooting prone, at 100yds, using a bag rest with a moderate wind, however it started to rain and whilst I don't mind getting wet, I detest the rifle getting wet, therefore I started to rush as I was trying to avoid the rifle getting a thorough drenching and I cut the range test short when I got within a inch of the bull with 28mm group shown.



My second attempt was on a far more pleasant day, shooting from the bench and of a rest, I obtained a group 14.5mm and went on to accurately zero the rifle. I expected the short barrel and relatively light rifle to generate some noticeable recoil, however I was very surprised at the rifle's moderate recoil which indicated a very effective muzzle brake.

Summary

Although owned by the American company at the time, this is still an English designed and manufactured rifle and therefore to me, has considerable appeal. I shoot multiple rifles when I go shooting and the Scout tends to go with me on most shoots. This is because it is a handy, fun and more importantly, flexible rifle that is at home on any 100yrd to 600yrd range



with the scope being the limiting factor at longer distances. I often see unfair and inaccurate comments made on various forums comparing the Parker Hale Scout to more modern designs such as the Ruger and Steyr Scout rifles. I doubt very much that this rifle was designed to the "scout rifle" concept that we understand today although that concept is nothing new. The rifle's heritage was from slow firing hunting and targets rifles but as Parker Hale had been recently acquired by Gibbs the rifle was more likely being marketed as a mid range, handy, high capacity "working" rifle and therefore targeting new markets and increased sales in the US.

With modification to the magazine well, up to date scope mounts, repairs to the sheared screw and relieve of the recoil block this twenty year old rifle has been returned to its former glory. I think its profile makes it a "good looking rifle" and its short dimensions make it a handy, compact and its Mauser action, good barrel and trigger mechanism make it unusually accurate for this rifle configuration. The efficient muzzle brake effectively minimises recoil, coupled with the ten round magazine produces a healthy rate of fire for bolt gun.

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I have no previous experience of the Ruger, however I know the Steyr Scout, its furniture is all polymer, built in bipod, spare magazine and picatinney rail make it a robust and practical rifle that fulfils the one stop shop "scout concept".

However if you must compare rifles, from a personal stand point the Steyr is damn ugly, lacks character and in the rate of fire and accuracy stakes the Parker Hale would give it a good run for its money.

First published: 25 May 2015
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