



The guns used include, from the top, a Roedel, Prague 12 gauge by 11mm drilling; a Butterfield 10 gauge percussion; an Arden 10 gauge; and a T. Stevens High Holborn, London, 16 gauge.



Rob's Weimaraner, Daryl, found this rooster in heavy cover. When it flushed, the heavy 10 bore did the job. The 10 to 12 Little Skeeters were now field tested on game with complete success.

Off Season ROOSTERS

Old rifles come to life on challenging birds. • By Miles Gilbert

Wm. Arden, London, was engraved on both lockplates and they were nicely case-colored. The 10 bore barrels were gloriously banded in brown and black outwardly, glassy smooth inside. At the otherwise bargain-less Flagstaff, Arizona gun show, why was it priced so attractively? Because the lovely laminated steel barrels had been dropped on their muzzles and both were flattened. Close inspection of the wrist also revealed a break across the rear tang screw hole and the wrist had three fresh cracks. The left hammer seemed frozen on full cock and its screw head was broken off. Oh well, I have friends who know how to fix these

things, and I didn't own a 10 bore, much less one from London with a sidelever and so much engraving and original color. The purchase was made.

A visit with Larry Maier, who is equipped with a machine shop and know-how, saw the muzzles rounded, the tang welded, and the broken off hammer screw removed. A visit to Dick Counts saw the wrist cracks disappear and the hammer screw replaced, with an appropriately engraved and colored head.

Lacking 10 bore loading equipment, how to shoot the big beauty was solved when Mark Nielsen offered the use of his Little Skeeters 10 to 12 bore chamber

inserts. These marvels allow the smaller gauge to be shot handily in the larger, within limits. Low pressure loads such as Winchester's AA low noise, low recoil loads worked fine on clay birds, so what was to prevent trying this worthy system on worthy game?

My friend Greg Sutherland had never shot a pheasant even though he owns a safe full of pheasant artillery including his W. W. Greener, No. 55490, a Facile Princeps with 28" Roses steel barrels and a W. W. Greener No. 68182, an FH 50 ejector gun. I wanted our outing to be mostly British so in addition to the Arden 10 bore, I packed along a

delightfully light, beautifully engraved Jones underlever 16 bore by T. Stevens, High Holborn, London, and a 10 bore percussion single barrel by Butterfield of Bradford.

Having moved back to Arizona from South Dakota before the season opener for pheasants in that upland shooter's paradise, I shopped for a game bird farm within a half day's driving distance. I found Robinson Game Birds LLC in Durango, Colorado. Rob and Allison raise between 3,000 and 5,000 birds a year and are open seven days a week, except for holidays. Chukars and pheasants are their forte.

Rob Robinson had the good sense to choose Buzzy and Darlene Robinson for parents. They treated eight year old Rob to a safari with Harry Selby in 1966 when he took them as his first clients into Botswana. The Robinsons made a total of 15 safaris, some with PH John Sutton, spending an entire year in Africa at one time. One of Rob's favorite photos includes himself and his parents with Robert Ruark. Rob apprenticed to Harry Selby as a white hunter from 1975 to 1979. With this interest in hunting and knowing how to treat hunting clients, Rob and Allison began commercially in 1992.

They have three well-trained and eager dogs. We began with Daryel, a non-nonsense Weimaraner. Rob had put two roosters out in heavy cover while we readied ourselves by wrapping our appropriate clan colors about our throats to block the cold Rocky Mountain breezes. We followed the wide coursing dog for about 15 minutes until he pointed one of the two roosters. I stepped forward with the Little Skeeter loaded Arden and upon the flush, swung up and ahead of the rooster and dumped it cleanly. I had been skeptical of the effectiveness of 7-1/2s on these big birds until the aforementioned T. Stevens 16 had dropped one for me in South Dakota the previous year. I had loaded it on a MEC Junior press with Remington plastic hulls with two drams equivalent of Clean Shot blackpowder substitute and an ounce of 7-1/2s. The Little Skeeters 10/12 combo subsequently proved equally effective on a chukar. I had never hunted these big "quail on steroids" before, but I'm hooked now.

Daryel soon found the other rooster and Greg's Greener FH 50 grade did what it was built to do 75 years ago for what Greg's first pheasant ever. After a few more pheasants and chukars a piece, we headed to the headquarters for lunch. Rob treated us to smoked goose breast and smoked salmon. He learned well from Harry Selby. Treat 'em good and they'll come back. While lunching, we watched old home movies of the Robinsons on safari with Harry Selby, the famous .416 Rigby prominent on his left shoulder.

After lunch, we took a Puddlepointer named Athos. I used the Butterfield 10 bore percussion loaded with three drams of Elephant FFG, a .125 over powder and prelubed felt cushion wads under a load of 1-1/8 ounces of #4s. This proved effective on a big hen pheasant. I needed to exonerate myself with this gun, having missed the first game I had aimed at, a blistering fast chukar. I bet you're thinking "If I had

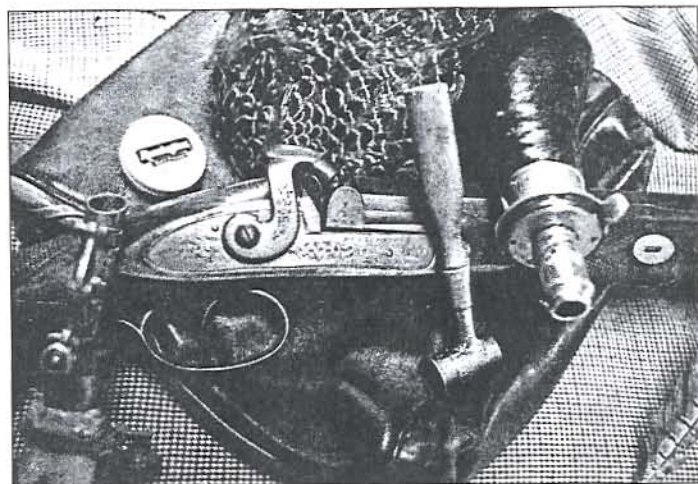
a double barrel, I could have fired again." Yes, if I'd had a second shot readily available earlier, I could have missed that bird twice instead of only once. Following Ross Seyfried's excellent advice, I had cured the barrel with Thompson/Center's Bore Butter, so the piece was easily reloaded. Having dropped a few cabs due to cold fingers, I have since acquired a straight-line capper from Dixie Gun Works.

Greg switched to the more open choked 95 year old F grade Greener because he had missed a few shots with the tight choked FH 50. His next rooster hit the ground, with Greg stating "No more Mr. Nice Guy!"

We then switched to a German shorthair named Shadow. Shadow worked so well and looked so much like Greg's untrained shorthair that he inquired about schooling for it. Rob and Allison have trained countless dogs and their acumen is available for a very reasonable fee. I'm eager to accompany Greg for more shooting when he takes his shorthair to school.


Greg had whacked a hen pheasant that set its wings and sailed over a rise out of sight. We needn't worry. Shadow found it where it had piled up. On Rob's command, "Take it!", Shadow sprang forward and retrieved the lifeless hen. We would have had real difficulty finding that naturally camouflaged bird in the sagebrush without Shadow's nose and eyes.

Little Skeeters were made so that owners of steel barrel guns can shoot them with mild subgauge smokeless loads at a tiny fraction of the expense of the excellent Briley subgauge full length inserts available to put new life in old blackpowder guns. Literature accompanying these mini-tube gauge reducers



"Butterfield" is visible on the lockplate, and "Bradford" is on the top flat of the barrel, which is located in northern England, near the border with Scotland.

specifies that they are to be used in modern, proofed steel barreled guns with new factory target ammo. I used them with good success in my thick-walled, laminated steel barreled 10 bore blackpowder Arden. They are available in 10 to 12 gauges, 12 to 20, 28, and 410; 16 to 20, 28 and 410; and 20 to 28 and 410. Contact Little Skeeters LLC at 633 Commerce St., Dept. BH, Thornwood, NY 10594, (914) 769-5509.

Big roosters and Little Skeeters made for a glorious day afield. Whatever you may be armed with, if you are looking for a feathered sport, I recommend Robinson Game Birds LLC. You can contact Rob at (970) 247-9415. Robinson's provides excellent hunting for hens, roosters or chukars. Colorado does not require a hunting license for birds taken on a commercially licensed operation like Robinsons. 



An original Hawksley flask makes a suitable accouterment for the Butterfield 10 bore. Three drams of FFG and 1-1/8 ounce of 4s, stopped this hen. Outfitter, Rob Robinson, is on the right.