

If the stock fits...

Longthorne Gunmakers discuss the importance of good stock fit and what this entails

Stock-fitting is a serious business. We are constantly amazed when a left-handed client arrives wielding a pair of right-handed guns he has bought off the shelf insisting that they fit or at least that's what he was told when he bought them.

Your stock is a very personal part of your gun which should be an extension to your body, so needs to be correct.

A misconception is that stock measurements are the same on every gun – they are not. So if you have had stock measurements taken on a

Browning for example, there is no guarantee they are going to be the same on a Longthorne. Granted, they will be similar, but subtle differences in the shapes of the actions, the shape of the stock, comb thickness, comb radius, etc. do matter.

At Longthorne, James is able to advise you on this. When you buy a gun from us we take some rough dimensions initially and then do a final fitting prior to completion and by using laser bore sights and a pattern plate he is able to establish exactly where you and your gun are looking and by making some final tweaks we are able to ensure the perfect fit. This allows you to focus on the target and be confident that the gun fits no matter what the situation, providing you mount

the gun consistently.

We believe that even if you are a beginner and don't want to spend mega bucks on a gun (and rightly so), if financially possible your stock should still be a good fit. Using a badly fitting stock can lead to bad habits which are difficult to correct at a later date. This can also exacerbate felt recoil which can be counterproductive when learning to shoot and ultimately discourage a person from continuing in the sport or improving their technique.

Stock shapes

When having a gun made there are a multitude of different shapes of stocks to choose from – straight hand, pistol grip, Prince of Wales, to

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James Longthorne Stewart makes adjustments to an existing stock



The sleek, Prince of Wales grip was created by James Purdey & Sons to allow for the Prince's 'trombone-slide' shooting style.



James shapes the stock around the grip

name but a few. Most of the choices are aesthetic and personal preference rather than for functionality, although there are plenty of technical reasons to be considered in the manufacturing of the stock, especially when it comes to competition and sporting guns, which have a different set of rules compared to game guns.

Stock finish is another aspect of having a gun made, our preference is an oiled finish and most clients opt for this. The longer this is applied the better it looks, it usually requires some maintenance from time to time by way of a re-oiling, especially after having been used in wet conditions but the oil will, over time, soak into the wood, hardening and developing a beautiful patina.

Many stocks on mass produced guns have a lacquered finish, this generally offers more by way of waterproofing, but the downside is that scratches will show up and the only way to rectify this is to sand the stock slightly and re-lacquer or, alternatively, take all the lacquer off and oil. We do have some clients who don't have time in their busy lives to re-oil their stocks so for them this is an alternative option, and when they feel it appropriate they can send it in for a re-lacquer. We offer both finishes and, in fact, manufacture our own stock oil.

The wood

Wood choice is very subjective but generally speaking the more figured a piece is the more difficult it is to manipulate, chequer and finish because invariably there are hard and soft spots in the wood which react in different ways. This is one of the reasons these pieces of wood are more expensive. We are able to use highly figured pieces of wood without compromising the



Pistol grip stocks before chequering

Longthorne Gun Oil is available to buy for £7 per 50ml bottle. It is the same mixture used on their guns and gives a true English oil finish.



Most clients opt for an oil finish

PICTURES: LONGTHORNE

strength of the gun because of our stock bolt through the centre of the stock which allows superior strength and rigidity. This is quite a common feature in boxlock and side-plated guns, but relatively rare in true sidelocks.

The function and purpose of chequering is to provide grip in the wet. In reality the coarser the chequering the better the grip, but there is a limit; the coarsest chequering would be 16 lines per inch this is normally associated with hammer guns and wildfowling. We recommend 22 lines per inch for functionality/appearance – this is the most typical English chequering but everyone has their own opinion on what they would like. However, it is perceived that the finer the chequering the better the chequerer's art.

What happens if you decide on a pair at a later date after having purchased a single gun? We have the technology to 3D scan your original

stock and store the shape and dimensions in your file ensuring that any matched pair/triple is identical and can be replicated at any time in the future or in the event of accidental damage.

As a footnote, when giving your stock dimensions to your gunmaker you also need to consider if you have lost or gained weight since you had the stock dimensions taken as this can make a huge difference to the final fitting. ■

CONTACT DETAILS

To contact Longthorne Gunmakers:

■ Web: www.longthorneguns.com

■ Tel: 01772 811215

■ Email: admin@longthorneguns.com

■ You can also follow them on Facebook and Twitter @longthorneguns