

Stephen Grant & Sons 12-bore

The new English over-and-under made by Atkin Grant & Lang – a clever mix of well-proven design concepts and modern production methods – is a “shooter”, says Michael Yardley

THE new English 12-bore over-and-under made by Atkin Grant & Lang, carrying the Stephen Grant & Sons name, weighs in at 7lb 11oz (though it feels lighter when handled) and boasts 31in barrels, a rounded action bar, ornamental side-plates (with engraving designed and executed by well-known craftsman Keith Thomas) and a non-selective single-trigger. The RRP is £28,000, including VAT. This is a significant sum but a competitive price for a new over-and-under.

The creation of any new gun is a major undertaking. The concept for the Grant began only a couple of years ago, the result of a collaboration between Matt Hunt of Atkin Grant & Lang – a man with great knowledge of English and Continental guns – and independent gunmaker (and Trinity Cambridge qualified engineer) Don Custerson. Steel was first cut earlier in the year and a 20-bore model is planned for 2017 and a 16- soon after. The objective was to create a gun that could rival the upmarket models of the famous Italian makers, as Hunt explains: “The idea

was to compete toe to toe with Perazzi and higher-grade Berettas. We wanted to make something robust, a shooter, to prove that as a country of great gunmakers we could produce a usable gun at a sane price but offering London quality finish.”

“Using the Grant was a gratifying experience. It mashed successive clay targets without excess effort. Little was missed”

The Grant featured is a clever mix of well-proven design concepts, modern production methodologies and best London artisan hand work in key areas: engraving, the final striking-up on the barrels and the majority of the stocking. First impressions are good. It is svelte and particularly well finished. The

gun incorporates some classic Grant features, such as rounded-action shapes and fluted fences. It scores especially high for presentation. Wood to metal and metal to metal fit are impeccable. The hand chequering and stocking, like the striking-up and blacking of the barrels, are first class, too. My only critical comment is that the action, which is bright, might have looked better with a little more engraving, though what is there is to a high standard, as one might expect of an engraver of Thomas’s reputation. Colour case-hardening might have suited the gun well, too, and extra engraving may be ordered.

UNUSUALLY FIXED BARRELS

The full specification of the test gun includes a low-profile action with trunnion hinging, an unusually narrow (6mm-4mm) tapered and solid sighting rib, superior London proof, 2¾in chambers (3in are a no-cost option) and Teague thin-wall interchangeable chokes. Barrels – made from high-pressure tubing but struck up in traditional manner – are monobloc and unusually fixed into position using high-tech adhesive. Joints are laser welded and invisible. Hunt comments: “We spent a long time with Don to get barrel profiling right. We are using hydraulic pipe manufacturers rather than traditional methods to create them. The shapes and dimensions have been carefully conceived with a master barrel-maker, providing finishing touches using conventional handwork.”

The well-proportioned and remarkably figured stock is attached by a stock bolt rather than a breech pin as with most modern over-and-unders (simplifying manufacture and reducing costs). The woodwork was particularly impressive with pleasing shapes and an impeccable finish. The open radius grip and rounded fore-end (attached by an unusual latch) are attractive and comfortable. Standard dimensions are sensible, too. Length of pull was 15in with ½in extra to heel and ½in to toe. There was ¼in of cast at heel and drop measurements were a classic London 1½in and 2in. Nothing to take issue with here and the execution of the stocking is to a very high standard. Much bench work is evident but the heading is done to fine tolerance by high-tech machinery before the bulk of the job is accomplished traditionally. ■



Bifurcated barrels combined with a side-plated round action-bar showing classic Grant shapes

TECHNICAL DATA

The Grant is not ground breaking in its mechanical specification but the manufacturing process does break new ground. The action is CNC machined from pre-hardened tool steel billet. It can be finished and engraved in this state, though there is a final nitriding stage to create surface hardness.

Stud-pin hinging and Perazzi-esque lock-up allow for a low profile. Draws and wedges provide additional strength amidships. Helical springs ensure reliability. The recoil-operated single trigger may have its firing order changed (there is a section in the inertia block that can be turned around if the stock is removed). The stock bolt allows for this to be accomplished easily. The barrels are monobloc and the carefully profiled tubes – created by a high-tech piping company but struck and finished by hand – are fixed into the monobloc with a high-tech adhesive. Joints are laser welded to give a strong, attractive assembly.



SHOOTING IMPRESSIONS

The gun felt lighter than its 7lb 11oz. This may be put down to good balance (about ¼in forward of the hinge pin) with the light-for-length barrels. A 29in model weighed in at 7lb 4oz (a 7½lb 30in gun is easily achievable). The stock shapes were efficient, the capped pistol grip was fairly open in radius and a good size providing both comfort and purchase. The rounded fore-end was pleasing. The top lever was a whisker short (soon to be rectified). Using the Grant was a gratifying experience. It was exceptionally pointable and swung easily. Trigger pulls were good and felt recoil less than average. The 18.6mm bore barrels and Teague chokes threw efficient patterns that mashed successive clay targets without excess effort. Little was missed. Stephen Grant made guns beautiful, strong and simple. This gun carries on that tradition. The 20- and 16-bores will be awaited with interest. Meantime, this one qualifies as a “shooter”.

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STEPHEN GRANT & SONS
ENGLISH 12-BORE OU
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