

BIG GAME REPEATER



Derek Landers tries a quality reproduction of Winchester's big bore lever gun; the Model 1886, from Pedersoli

PRICE:
£1755

Following on from the success of their small calibre lever-action rifles, the Models 1866 and 1873, Winchester introduced their Centennial Rifle in 1876, chambered for more powerful ammunition to cater for hunters chasing the larger North American game.

Whilst the new model, which became known as the Model 1876, was an improvement on the previous offerings in terms of power, the rifle continued to use the toggle link action from the earlier models, albeit in an enlarged form. The design of this action limited the overall cartridge length that could be used, and the popular large calibre cartridge of the day, the .45-70 Government, could not be accommodated in this rifle.

Fortunately, the agreement that Winchester had formed with John Browning in 1885, whereby they purchased the rights to future Browning patents, gave them access to a new Browning-designed rifle, which combined the lever-action system of earlier Winchesters with the strong camming and bolt-locking method of his single shot model, and they were able to furnish the public with a rifle that could not only handle the .45-70, but was a repeater too.

Bigger and stronger

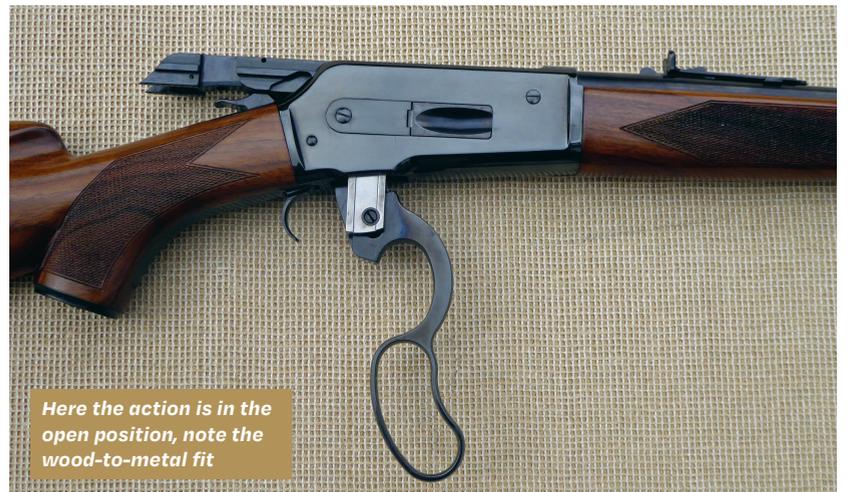
After some improvements by Winchester's own William Mason, the new rifle was offered to the public as the Model 1886, following the company's tradition of naming their lever guns after the year of their introduction. This new rifle was a dramatic improvement over earlier Winchester lever-actions and was available in a number of large calibres from .33 W.C.F.

to .50-110 Express, which made it popular with big game hunters, not only in America but also in Africa.

One of its great admirers was Theodore Roosevelt. The key to the Model 1886's improvements over the 1876, was in the strength of the improved breech bolt and its locking mechanism, using twin, vertical locking lugs. With the action closed, these two lugs located into two corresponding cut-outs in the breech bolt, making for a very secure and strong setup. The frame was shorter than the two previous models and gone

were the removable side plates, giving it a more streamlined appearance. A new 3-piece loading gate was incorporated to allow for the longer cartridges for which the rifle was chambered.

The Model 1886 was available as a carbine, rifle or musket and a new innovation was the 'take down' version, with the gun coming apart at the front end of the receiver. With a production run lasting some 49 years, the total number of pieces manufactured was relatively small at 160,000. In 1935, Winchester made a modification to the frame of this rifle and it was renamed



Here the action is in the open position, note the wood-to-metal fit



The front sight with brass bead and hood



An efficient microcell butt pad

the Model 71 and offered in only one calibre, the .348 Winchester. Pistol grip stocks and a 3/4 length magazine were standard, along with a choice of a 20 or 24" barrel. By the time the model was discontinued in 1957, a little over 47,000 of this variation had been produced.

Handsome classic

With their expertise in manufacturing large calibre single-shot rifles, it seems natural that Pedersoli should choose to produce the Winchester 1886 as their only lever-action model to date, and offer it in a classic Western chambering. They say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and there would surely be few who would not say that the Pedersoli is a handsome-looking rifle. This model certainly does look streamlined when compared to the earlier 1873 and 1876 models, and I do not think I have seen such a high gloss finish on any reproduction firearm over the last 25 years. Open the box and

everything about the look of this rifle shouts class. Showing it to a non-shooting friend his comment was: "That's too nice to shoot!" But it was made for shooting and shoot it we would, albeit with a great deal of care.

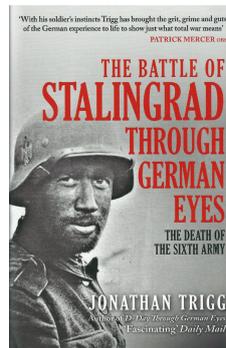
All of the metalwork is a very deep black, with the receiver being especially glossy. The two pieces of walnut have what appears to be an oiled, semi-gloss finish and both are nicely chequered. The pistol grip is finished with a metal cap. The wood-to-metal finish is almost flawless, with the tiniest perception of overlaps in a couple of areas. The butt is topped off with a nice rubber pad, which proved very welcome during shooting, a measured improvement on the standard Winchester curved metal plate. Oddly enough, for a rifle with a strong 'Western' flavour, this pad does not look out of place.

The rifle is fitted with two QD rings for the attachment of sling swivels, lending weight to the



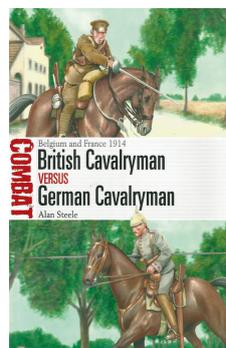
Bolts compared: 1886 (TOP) and 1873 (BOTTOM).

BOOKSHELF



TITLE: The Battle of Stalingrad Through German Eyes
AUTHOR: Jonathan Trigg
PUBLISHER: Amberley Publishing, Gloucestershire
ISBN: 9781398110717
PRICE: £20.00
 There are some battles from WWII which

continue to fascinate even after a wealth of books have been published about them. This is one of those battles, the very name of which is well known, but still has so much more yet to be revealed. As the title of this gripping work explains, it is told from the German point of view and, in doing so, reveals much in-depth detail. It reveals how the Germans moved through various stages, from optimism to a feeling of forlornness. The way in which the German soldier begins to understand the Russians and respect their fighting ability is also evident. Refusing to believe his army was losing, Hitler forbade surrender and the end, when it came, was not mentioned in Germany. The author concludes this excellent book with a short list of the fates of some who fought at Stalingrad, which echoes great poignancy.



TITLE: British Cavalryman versus German Cavalryman
AUTHOR: Alan Steele
PUBLISHER: Osprey, Oxford
ISBN: 9781472848826
PRICE: £14.99

In this excellent book, the author reminds the reader how much movement was made during the early months of the First World War, especially by the cavalry units. Much was expected of the cavalry, still considered to be an elite force on the battlefield, to screen the flanks and provide reconnaissance. The author covers training, including riding skills, the use of a lance and sword, plus the welfare of the horses. In the early stages of the war, the cavalry was very active and engaged in some short but fierce actions. One of these was fought at Le Montcel on the 7th September, when the British 9th Lancers faced German lancers in one of the last true cavalry charges, which the author relates in a masterful way. Full of detail to satisfy battlefield tourists to wargamers, this is a title to add to the shelves of any library.



Detail of the semi-buckhorn sight that's found on several models



The chequering on the forend is well executed



At last, Winchester had a rifle to handle the .45-70 cartridge

argument that this is intended more as a hunting rifle than a target arm. Sights are fairly basic, with the typical semi-buckhorn rear, which allows for elevation and lateral adjustment. The front features a base screwed to the barrel and has a sloping, serrated front edge leading up to a blade with a brass bead on top. This unit is covered with a removable hood. The rear has a square notch in the blade and the sight picture is quite good.

While the top tang is not tapped for the usual Creedmoor-type site, there are a couple of options for improvement in this area. The top of the bolt has a couple of slots and holes for the fitting of a small aperture sight, available as an £84 option. The top of the barrel shows two tapped holes filled with screws (there may be one or more under that rear sight too) that allow for the fitting of a scope base. This latter option is another nod to hunting use.

The curved operating lever looks much smaller than the standard straight version but in actual fact, it accommodated the various hand sizes of all who handled the rifle. To me, it did feel a shade more uncomfortable than the usual lever, particularly at first when the action was a little stiff. However, my experience with lever guns tells me that the operation will get smoother with use, so this may not be a problem.

Bring the gun up to the shoulder and it feels really comfortable with its 14¾" length of pull and reasonably high comb, meaning there is no need to tilt the head to pick up the sights. The trigger pull was around the 5¾ lbs mark and broke cleanly. So, we have a rifle that looks good and feels good.

Hunters not cowboys

As stated earlier, this gun looks set up for hunting, so it is one lever-action that you will

probably not see at a Western shoot. I have to say that hunting is not my choice of sport and from what I have read the .45/70 Government cartridge is well suited to short range, big-game work or boar hunting. I restricted my use to shooting pieces of paper and it did an admirable job!

The shorter-than-normal magazine holds 5-rounds and I loaded it to capacity only once to check the feed, not that I doubted it would be flawless. After that, I fed single rounds through the ejection port, an operation made simple by Winchester's top ejection design. I figured it would not take too many of these large cartridges to mark that nice finish on the loading gate!

For the short range at which I would be using the rifle (up to 100 yards), a mild combination of a 405-grain bullet with 12.5-grains of Trail Boss powder, running out at around 1,000 fps, was more than adequate. At 50 yards, 3-shot groups averaged around 3", opening up to almost double that at 100 yards. Although the gun weighs in at only a shade over 7lbs, that rubber recoil pad did its job admirably and felt recoil with this light load was negligible. The pad would obviously come into its own if the gun was used with full power loads for hunting. The trigger pull was very crisp with no creep and broke at a little over five lbs on my gauge.

The addition of the optional sights would no doubt help to reduce group size, particularly in the hands of a more capable shooter. Although this is a relatively expensive piece of kit for what would be, for me, a 'fun gun', it is quality all the way and would doubtless be giving someone else years of pleasure long after my shooting days were over.

A check on the Pedersoli and Henry Krank websites shows several variations of the 1886, but these would need to be ordered and could result in a fairly long wait for delivery. Would I buy this rifle? This particular version, no, but should I be in the market for such a gun, I would opt for the Classic style with the 26" barrel, full-length magazine, straight stock and curved butt plate, purely because of its Western heritage. **GM**

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

- Name:** Pedersoli 1886 Winchester Sporting
- Calibre:** .45/70 Government
- Barrel Length:** 24"
- Overall Length:** 41"
- Weight:** 7.1lbs
- Trigger Pull Weight:** 5¾ lbs
- Length of Pull:** 14¾"
- Price:** £1755.00 (at time of writing)
- Contact:** Henry Krank - www.henrykrank.com