



PRICE:  
£297

# SHIP AH-OY!

**Derek Landers** takes a look at the Uberti Colt 1851 Navy percussion revolver

On May 16th, 1843, Edwin Ward Moore, commander of the Texas navy, set sail from the port of Campeche in south-east Mexico aboard his flagship *Austin*, a 500-ton, 125 feet long sailing ship armed with 20 x 24-pound smoothbore cannons. Alongside was the brig *Wharton*, which was slightly smaller with 16x 18-pound guns. These two ships were in effect the Texas navy and were aided by a few smaller, slower vessels from the Mexican state of Yucatan, which was trying to gain independence.

Across the bay was the Mexican navy headed by two steamers, the *Montezuma* and the *Guadalupe*, both armed with Paixhan guns which fired explosive shells. Making up the Mexican numbers were half a dozen armed sailing ships. It was a one-sided contest from the start. Undaunted, Moore sailed headlong into battle and the Mexicans, ravaged by

yellow fever on their ships, soon turned tail and ran. Although no ships were lost in the fight, the Mexicans suffered substantial losses to personnel before Moore, his ship damaged and taking on water, broke off and returned to Campeche, and both sides claimed victory. On board the Texas vessels were a number of Colt revolvers and carbines although the two factions never got close enough for them to be used. Colt revolvers had long been embellished with decorative scenes on the cylinder periphery and to commemorate this act of Texas bravery, in 1850 Colt tasked engraver W.L. Ormsby

with designing a scene for his new Belt or Ranger pistol, which collectors subsequently named the 1851 Navy. The same scene is used on the Colt 1860 Army revolver.

### Transatlantic success

Throughout its production run, from 1851 until 1873, there was only one basic style offered for the 1851 Navy. It's a single-action, six-shot percussion revolver with a 7.5" octagonal barrel. The earliest examples – some 4,000 or so – had a square back trigger guard, but from then to the end they were oval. The guns made at Colt's factory in Hartford had a brass trigger guard and back strap, often silver plated.

When the 1851 Navy was produced at the Colt factory in London, from January 1853 until December 1856, the British public was not impressed with the brass, so all English pistols had a steel trigger guard and back strap. A little over 215,000 pistols were produced in Hartford, with another 42,000 leaving the London factory. Today's collectors will often express the opinion that the London guns



The loading lever locking arrangement is very secure, note the octagonal barrel



Detail of the rear sight on the hammer



The Ormsby signature on the cylinder, note the 'run-in' to the locking notch

are better made than those from the other side of the Atlantic.

### Attractive favourite

With very few exceptions, the reproductions from Uberti adhere faithfully to the specifications and appearance of the original models on which they are based, and this revolver follows that pattern. Other than the markings and metric threads on the screws, this pistol is almost a dead ringer for a 19th-century Colt.

The frame, loading lever and hammer have case colours, which have a nice combination of grey, blue and tan. The barrel, which has quite sharp edges to the flats, has seven grooves with a left-hand twist, and along with the cylinder, trigger and all screws, is gloss black. The straps on this model have more of a satin finish to the brass and the guard is a fairly large oval.

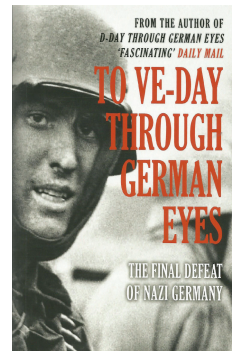
The very plain, walnut one-piece grip is the standard red/brown

colour and is finished with Uberti's high gloss varnish. All metal-to-metal fit is very good, with the grip having some very slight raised edges where it meets the straps.

The capping cut-out on the right side of the recoil shield has a shallow groove to aid cap placement and the face of the shield has a groove to the right of the hammer which, in theory, allows any spent cap fragments to fall clear as you cock the hammer for the next shot. It doubtless does help some but is not infallible in preventing the 'cap in the hammer slot' syndrome which can be encountered in these Colt open-frame revolvers.

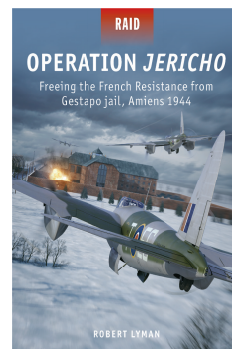
The cylinder is rolled with a slightly modified representation of the sea battle described above, along with the date of engagement and the attribution to Ormsby for the design. The rear of the cylinder has a safety pin between each nipple recess, and this can be located in a slot in the face of the hammer

## BOOKSHELF



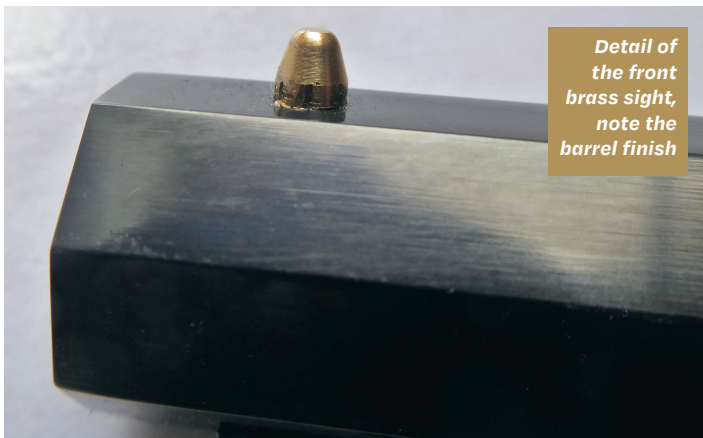
**TITLE:** To VE-Day Through German Eyes  
**AUTHOR:** Jonathan Trigg  
**PUBLISHER:** Amberley Publishing  
**ISBN:** 9781398112360  
**PRICE:** £10.99

In the final chapter, the author reminds the reader that 335 days elapsed from the time of D-Day to the 8th May and Germany's surrender. So why did it take the Allies more months to liberate those territories which the German army had overrun in 1940? The answer is revealed in the pages of this well-researched book which weaves together background details of episodes of the campaign in northwest Europe along with first-hand accounts from the German point of view. This includes the military, civilians and non-Germans from France and Holland who volunteered to fight for them. Similar works have appeared before, but this is a refined style and the author interweaves a good balance of accounts covering trauma and how ad hoc units, known as 'Battle Groups', were formed to keep fighting in the defence of Germany until the very last. An excellent general read or something to use as a reference work.



**TITLE:** Operation Jericho  
**AUTHOR:** Robert Lyman  
**PUBLISHER:** Osprey Publishing, Oxford  
**ISBN:** 9781472851970  
**PRICE:** £14.99

Most books on bombing missions during WWII tend to focus on the well-known operations, such as the Dam Busters, the attacks on Tirpitz and the Schweinfurt raids. This title reminds readers of one of the most audacious, low-level raids conducted against a precision target. Operation Jericho was launched on the 18th February 1944 to attack the prison at Amiens in order to release French resistance fighters to prevent the Germans from getting vital information from them. The book takes the reader through each stage, from the reason for the attack, the plan itself, the biographies of the pilots and their first-hand accounts. The attack was undertaken at rooftop height using the main road through the town as their line of approach at speeds in excess of 200mph, to hit the walls of the prison only 20 feet high. This is a well-told and gripping account of an epic operation, all the more so because it is true.



Detail of the front brass sight, note the barrel finish



Note the spiral grease groove on the cylinder arbour

which locks the cylinder in place to prevent an accidental discharge if the pistol is dropped when loaded. Around the cylinder are six slots which accept the locking bolt, and each has a 'run-in' groove which is longer and deeper than those found on other manufacturers' revolvers of this type.

The basic sights show a v-notch in the top of the hammer spur and the front sight is a conical brass post. It is a fairly basic setup but does the job reasonably well if you do your bit. The loading lever is held in place with the ubiquitous catch and latch arrangement, with the wings of the catch having serrations to aid grip, and lock-up is very secure.

The whole package brings together a mating of function and form and shows why the Colt 1851 Navy revolver remains a favourite today as it did a century and a half ago.

**Capable CAS performer**

Taking the gun out of its plastic bag, you are met with a liberal coating of oil over the whole surface, intended to keep it in good condition during what could be a lengthy stay in a shop inventory, and this needs to be wiped off, not forgetting a mop down the bore. On my visit to the Uberti factory in 2005, I watched as the guns were given a final inspection, then the guy had a bucket of oil and a paintbrush and 'painted' each pistol before putting it into its bag!

My normal use of these pistols would be at 20 or 25 yards and I find that a charge of 25- grains of Henry Krank's fine black powder, behind a .375"

round lead ball, is more than enough to put that ball just about where I want it to go. The face of the loading rammer is cone-shaped, should you wish to use conical bullets, but I have not seen these for sale recently, although moulds are available if you feel like giving it a go, but from what I read, they are not worth the effort.

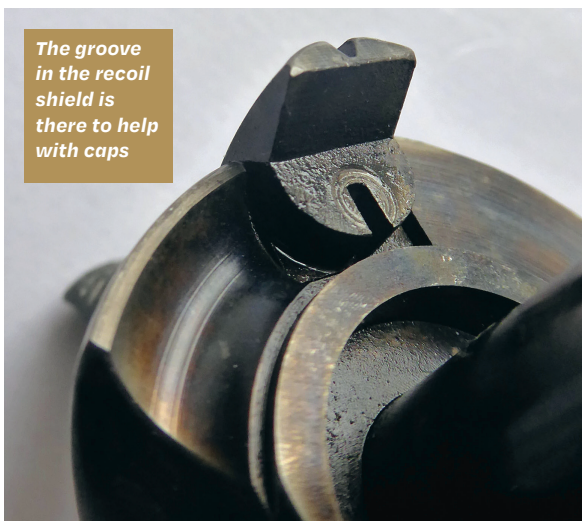
If I have them on hand, I will add a lubricated wad between powder and ball and if not, a thin disc of mixed beeswax and candle wax. Colt's early instructions for shooting this revolver indicated no lube was needed, so I'm not sure there is any real benefit, but it has become a habit over the years. Percussion caps are Remington and this pistol preferred No. 11. Whilst I never consider these guns to be tack drivers, although I have seen some very nice performances with them, it is easy enough, shooting off-hand, to keep your shots on a small paper plate, more than good enough for those shooting CAS events. The groove in the recoil shield does aid in getting rid of spent caps, particularly if you tilt the revolver 90° to the right as you cock it, and I did not experience

a cap fragment falling into the hammer slot in some 100 shots.

**Keep it clean**

How long it takes for the black powder fouling to begin slowing down the action varies from gun to gun and with the different powder charges in use, and this one managed 36 shots before I felt the need to clean it up a little. Mindful of past experience with tight wedges, I have a plastic hammer in my box and this one needed it! The wedge has a slot in its upper surface into which is pinned a sprung bar. This bar has a lip on its inner end and a screw in the frame catches this lip and prevents the wedge from coming out of the frame completely.

A brush around the forcing cone and through the cylinder centre, followed by a little grease on the cylinder arbour – there is a spiral groove here to hold a bit more grease – and we were good to go again. Back home the gun was broken into its three main components and the barrel and cylinder, having taken out the nipples, were cleaned with boiling water. A wipe with an oily rag, including the bore and cylinder chambers, once everything was completely dry and the gun was ready to go back to Henry Krank. **GM**



The groove in the recoil shield is there to help with caps



Sharp cutting on cylinder rear, note the safety pins

**TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION**

- Name:** Uberti Colt 1851 Navy
- Type:** 6-shot percussion revolver
- Barrel Length:** 7½"
- Overall Length:** 13"
- Weight:** 2½lbs
- Price:** £297.00 (at time of writing)
- Contact:** Henry Krank - [www.henrykrank.com](http://www.henrykrank.com)