

Horse Pistol

Derek Landers takes a look at a reproduction revolver from Uberti; the Colt 3rd Model Dragoon

After the demise of Sam Colt's venture in Paterson, New Jersey, in 1842, his dream of a firearms manufacturing empire seemed doomed. Over a six-year period the factory had produced a variety of pistols and rifles based on Colt's patent for a firearm with a revolving cylinder and a fixed barrel, the first commercially successful design for this type of gun. Through a combination of bad financial decisions, gun failures, and the lack of any substantial military orders, Sam found himself starting from scratch once again. It was to be five years before the American war with Mexico presented him with an opportunity to revive his vision and this time he did not make the same mistakes.

When the Army came knocking, in the form of Captain Samuel Walker, Colt quickly came up with an improved revolver for use by mounted dragoons. An order for 1000 pistols was subcontracted to Eli Whitney and Sam. The huge Walker revolver, named after Samuel Walker, although not perfect, was good enough to show the military that Colt could provide them with a workable handgun, and by the time the next military order arrived, he had refined the Walker into a smaller, more reliable weapon, and was producing them at his own factory in Hartford, Connecticut.

Steady improvement

The first of these improved revolvers, known as Whitneyville Hartford Dragoons, were produced using new parts and some left over from the Walker models, but by 1848, the first of around 7000 new

First Model Dragoon revolvers came off the production line. Still a large pistol, weighing in at 4lbs 2oz, the 7.5" barrel was 1.5" shorter than the Walker, and the 6-shot, .44 calibre cylinder was slightly smaller. The cylinders were rolled with the same scene that appeared on the Walker, but because of the reduced size, part of the original scene is missing. One of the Walker's principal weaknesses, the loading lever which often dropped during firing, was cured by the use of a catch and latch arrangement just below the muzzle.

In 1850, when the Second Model was introduced, some small internal improvements were made, plus a different type of loading lever catch began to appear. Also, the cylinder stop notches changed from oval to rectangular. Fewer than 3000 of this model left the factory before the Third Model emerged in 1851. Immediately recognisable due to its round trigger guard, this final incarnation saw production up to the beginning of the Civil War, with over 10,000 being produced. A new, flat mainspring replaced the older, v-spring type, and the new 'horizontal' lever

catch was also standard by the time production ceased. Several of these pistols were supplied with a detachable shoulder stock and folding leaf rear sight.

True to type

Uberti has produced examples of all three types of Colt Dragoon. As with the vast majority of reproductions from this factory, the Colt 3rd Model Dragoon (on test) is a faithful rendition of the original.

This is a big pistol! Coming in at 1lb 10oz heavier than its successor, the 1860 Army Model, it is not difficult to understand why these were carried by mounted troops in pommel holsters, rather than on the person.

The black on the half-round, half-octagonal barrel, plus the cylinder, has a nice gloss finish, which is also replicated on the screws and trigger. The rolled cylinder fight scene is nicely done and the panel showing the MODEL U.S.M.R. (United States Mounted Rifles) is very readable, although the proof marks have encroached slightly on one end.



Dragoon revolver and its 'ammunition'



The main components of the pistol

The case colours on the frame, loading lever, and hammer are particularly pleasing on this example, plus the brass is nicely polished. The one-piece walnut grip has the usual Uberti finish and sits a tad proud in one or two places. The metal-to-metal fit is very good, and what I thought were minor gaps between the trigger guard and the frame, were remedied by tightening the 2x rear trigger guard screws.

The hammer cocks smoothly and easily, aided no doubt by the small roller on the rear, which first appeared on the Second Model Dragoon. The lock-up is superb, with absolutely no lateral or fore and aft movement of the cylinder, plus there is no play on the hammer at full cock. The trigger breaks crisply but is fairly heavy. Perhaps a little polishing would help.

The safety feature comprises 6x short pins on the rear of the cylinder, each one sitting on the rear face, in between the nipples. Pulling the hammer back just far enough to drop the locking bolt allows the cylinder to be turned to align any one of these pins with a notch in the hammer face. Let the hammer back down and the cylinder is locked to prevent

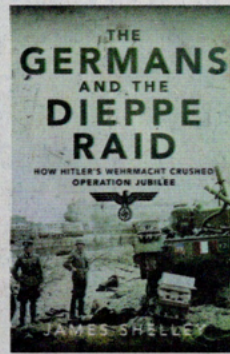
accidental discharge if the pistol is dropped. Cocking the hammer as normal brings it into the firing position.

The sights also mimic those on other Colt 'open top' percussion revolvers, with the rear being no more than a v-notch cut into the top of the hammer face, while the front is a steel blade with a black edge and polished white sides. The sight picture is adequate for the work this revolver will do.

Visible marks are kept to a minimum, with the serial number on the barrel lug and frame, along with the proof marks on the lug, cylinder, and frame. The latter is partially hidden by the trigger guard. There is also a date code (22) stamped in a square on the side of the frame, while the obligatory 'A. Uberti Italy' and 'Black Powder Only' are hidden under the loading lever.

When it came to dismantling the pistol for photographs, I found I could not get the barrel off the arbour without completely removing the wedge. Not a big deal on the workbench, but it meant that extra care was needed not to lose the wedge screw when cleaning was needed during the shooting stage.

BOOKSHELF



TITLE: The Germans and the Dieppe Raid

AUTHOR: James Shelley

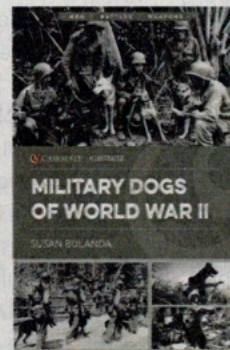
PUBLISHER: Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire

ISBN: 9781399030601

PRICE: £25.00

Much has been written about Operation Jubilee, the commando raid

against Dieppe, mainly from the Allied point of view. This is a major turnabout and looks at events from the German perspective. Using archive material from German sources, the author presents their reactions to the Allied attack. It has been a long-held belief that the Germans might have known the Allies' intentions, indeed it appears they had double agents feeding false information to the Allies. This included the fact that the 110th Division was in the area, when it was actually in Russia. An unforeseen event of a German convoy crossing the path of leading Allied vessels increased their state of alert. Also, Allied intelligence failed to identify several important defences at Dieppe. Along with failings with the tanks, these are two more points which beset the mission. This book will make the reader rethink the mission.



TITLE: Military Dogs of WWII

AUTHOR: Susan Bulanda

PUBLISHER: Casemate Publishing, Barnsley, South Yorkshire

ISBN: 9781636243252

PRICE: £24.94

Dogs have served in military roles for over 2,500 years and continue

to provide valuable support to modern armies around the world. After a brief recap to introduce the subject, the author settles down to make a very good fist of things. The book is packed with great illustrations to support statements and discusses dogs serving in freezing cold climates, to humid, tropical islands during WWII. The US Army created the K9 Corps to train dogs for roles in WWII, which included 'donated' pets, such as the singing star, Rudy Valee's, Doberman Pinscher. The Russians trained over 50,000 dogs and the British Expeditionary Force had 600 dogs on strength in 1940. This text is full of fascinating facts, such as Germany being banned from having dogs in the army under the Treaty of Versailles. Very good history well told, with plenty of individual canine stories.

Detail of the rear sight cut into the hammer



(Above) U.S.M.R. marking on the cylinder, note the proof marks could be better placed. (Left) Detail of the safety pins and ratchet on the rear of the cylinder

A handful

Given the significant weight, the Dragoon is not for everyone, and it will probably be a while, if at all, before you see one at your club range. These guns, like their big brother the Walker, are more for a bit of fun and some range cred, rather than serious target work. Granted, that weight is going to help in taming any recoil, but holding it steady to aim gets the shakes going even before you pull the trigger!

The vertical style latch and catch that holds the loading lever in place is not as easy to use as the later horizontal type, and I wonder why Colt did not make the latter standard on all Third Models, as they were around during Second Model production. I can only think that someone found a lot of the verticals in the parts bins that needed to be used up. The lever and plunger are a fairly substantial affair, and the balls were rammed home without much effort. A decent-sized capping cut-out is milled into the right side of the recoil shield, making capping by hand fairly easy.

Using a load of 36-grains of Henry Krank's fine black powder behind a grease cookie and a .454" lead ball (weighing 140-grains), the recoil was indeed very manageable. However, when shooting offhand, if you just let it roll, the muzzle still jumps close to a foot above horizontal. A 2-handed hold kept 25 yard, 5-shot groups a bit tighter. I have got into the habit of tilting these guns to the right while cocking, and find this eliminates

any chance of the spent cap from falling into the hammer channel.

It took only 24 shots before the powder fouling began to bind the cylinder and the barrel had to be removed to give the area a bit of a clean. Mindful of having to remove the wedge, I had brought a small magnetic tray to hold it and its screw, as losing either would have ended the day. A little grease was added to the spiral groove in the cylinder arbour and off we went for another couple of dozen shots.

Conclusion

While I no longer own a black powder revolver, I still enjoy getting to use one now and again, especially one like this, as it brings a smile to my face. It would not be the gun of choice for MLAGB or BWSS competitions, where smaller and lighter .44 calibre revolvers are more suited to the job. However, if you are not too serious about competing and want a handful of fun, then these big pistols supply that in spades. **am**

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

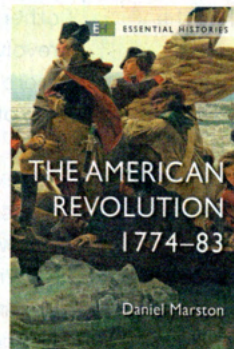
- Name:** Uberti Colt 3rd Model Dragoon
- Calibre:** .44
- Barrel Length:** 7.5"
- Overall Length:** 13.5"
- Weight:** 4lbs 2oz
- Price:** £395.00
- Contact:** Henry Krank - www.henrykrank.com

BOOKSHELF



TITLE: Roman Mail and Scale Armour
AUTHOR: M.C Bishop
PUBLISHER: Osprey, Oxford
ISBN: 9781472851703
PRICE: £14.99
 The impression of soldiers in the Roman Legionary for most people is that of a man

wearing armour made from bands of metal segmented together to protect his torso. This is the image most often seen at re-enactment events and in films such as 'Gladiator'. For anyone who thinks that was it, this book stands to not only correct this assumption but also broaden their understanding of armour used by the Roman army. Drawing on the evidence shown on carved statues, and archaeological evidence unearthed at sites from the Roman world, the author examines in-depth mail and scale armour. Using these sources and historical accounts, which provide examples of the effectiveness of other types of armour, he charts the development of each type and the variations. Tables of comparisons show the differences as used by mounted troops and archers. This is an excellent reference work for scholars, war gamers, modellers, and re-enactors.



TITLE: The American Revolution 1774-1783
AUTHOR: Daniel Marston
PUBLISHER: Osprey Publishing, Oxford
ISBN: 9781472857392
PRICE: £12.99
 The outcome of the American Revolution, also known as the War of Independence, is

celebrated by Americans on the 4 July every year, which marks the founding of their nation. This title, the latest in the Essential Histories series, covers 1774 to 1783, which takes in the events leading up to the start of the war and ends with its conclusion by the signing of the Peace of Paris. In little over ten years, an army of what Britain considered a rebel force, had bested a professional army and outfought its generals. This is a sweeping history delivering many facts, including the political, military, and social history of the time. The armies, their tactics, and the battles are all covered in this very concise work, which delivers much detail and unravels a very complex episode in history. This book is ideal for general readers but will also appeal to students studying socio-political history in the 18th century.