

Accurising the .577 Enfield

By Jeff Tanner

Many of these comments refer to the Parker-Hale Repros but some also apply to the originals.

The big problem lies in the bedding of the barrel to the stock, which is often awful. The barrel channel is routed with a ballnosed cutter which matches the diameter of the barrel at the nose cap. This is taken through the barrel channel twice at a slight angle so as to widen the channel to the correct width at the breech end. This leaves a central ridge in the wood which can allow the barrel to move as it warms up.

The other problem is the ramrod spoon and this applies to originals as well as repros. I have had a good few Enfields through my hands over the years and have found without exception that the spoon bears on the underside of the barrel. This pressure will alter according to whether the ramrod is in place or not; hardly a good state of affairs.

To return to the barrel channel. The easiest way to bed the barrel, without special tools, is to first put some marking agent on the underneath of the barrel. This can be engineer's Prussian Blue, ink squeezed from an old Biro pen or black shoe polish. This needs to be put on in an even film, using a stippling action, with an old toothbrush or the like. Replace the barrel in the stock, tighten tang screw and barrel bands, then tap along the entire length of the barrel with a soft-face mallet, piece of wood or wife's old slipper. Remove screw, bands, and inspect. You will probably find a few disappointingly small areas of contact. These areas must be scraped down until a much larger area of contact is obtained. (You can sometimes see more by looking at the underside of the barrel to see where your marking agent has been rubbed off).

The tool to use for scraping is simply a steel washer of about $1\frac{3}{16}$ th dia. The edges can be sharpened by filing as per the illustration.

Just hold the washer between finger and thumb and draw over the high spot (See illustration).

Keep repeating the whole process i.e. re-blueing underside of barrel, refitting and scraping until better contact is obtained.

Make sure the lock is removed during this treatment as quite often the nipple snail will contact the lock plate and hold barrel from the wood. This must be corrected with a file after satisfactory bedding is obtained.

After a period of this treatment you may come to the conclusion that a fairly large area near the breech will never touch the wood. DO NOT DESPAIR! This is quite easy to overcome by glueing a thin veneer of wood in the offending area. Plastic padding or similar can be used but your rifle will then be ineligible for International Events.

Return to the blueing and scraping not forgetting the tang (small chisels need to be used here) until a goodly area of the barrel is well supported, making sure there is no hard central ridge of contact.

Keep an eye on the barrel bands as the barrel moves lower into the stock. You may have to pack them with paper to keep downward pressure. Also make sure there is a slight gap where

the screw goes through otherwise no pressure will be applied to the barrel.

I always remove and discard the ramrod spoon as a matter of course and shoot with the ramrod removed. This does away with an unwanted source of vibration.

You will probably be quite surprised and pleased with the improvement to your Enfield shooting. If this is so, when you next see me at Bisley just press a fiver into my hand and murmur "THANK YOU".

Drawings by James Tanner

