

# Second Visit to PURDEY

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #239 —

Returning to the Purdey plant in London to check on your "guns in process" is an interesting and nearly unique experience – as there aren't many things in life that you order and they're still "in process" twelve months later. We hadn't inquired about the stage of completion beforehand, we just showed up, with a little advance notice; the guns were laid out on a table for our review as Tom Nicholls gave us a tour. We were able to handle them carefully, noting the steps that had been completed, then discussing with the manager the remaining steps in the process.

Purdey guns are "handmade" and require about 700 bench hours across the various process steps, plus time in the queue between the steps, waiting for their time with the craftsman assigned to the gun(s). At the benches they were using large and small files - coarse and fine; polishing stones and sandpaper; and, of course, screwdrivers, hammers and chisels.

Purdey considers that there are seven distinct stages in making a gun, and they have teams of craftsmen assigned to each stage. But I count at least 13; 1) roughing out the action and parts in the machine shop, 2) boring and assembling the chopper lump barrels, 3) making the locks and the triggers, 4) assembling and shaping the complete action with the barrels (actioning), 5) proofing at the London Proof House,

6) stocking, 7) finishing the wood, 8) checkering, 9) polishing the metal, 10) engraving, 11) metal finishing, 12) case making, 13) final inspection. Please note that these steps aren't all sequential, though some are. There's a lot of back and forth in the two-year process.

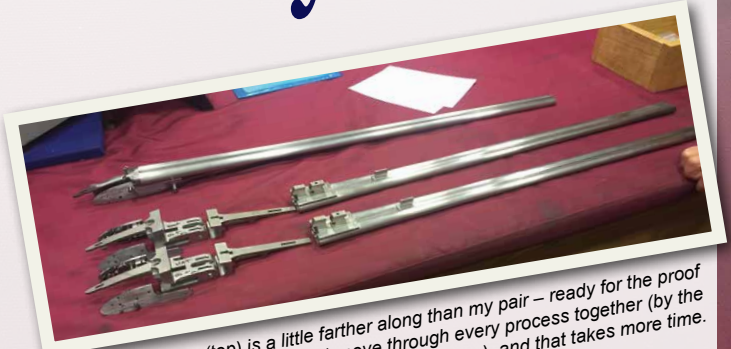
**"There's a lot of back and forth..."**

Of course, the best part of the visit was simply being in the shop where the guns were made. Here we spoke with the craftsmen, young and old, who had worked on or were working on our guns, and those of many others – some of which we had met a year earlier. It's a pity, but I wouldn't think they get to see many Customers in the shop, and even fewer who have an appreciation and understanding of the gun making process.

Next year we'll be back in England, hopefully to shoot some grouse and again tour the Purdey plant. Russell's single gun will be finished or nearly so; but, my pair will likely still be in the final stages, perhaps still at the engraver.

Larry Potterfield

James Purdey and Sons  
London, England  
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Russell's gun (top) is a little farther along than my pair – ready for the proof house. A pair of guns (bottom) move through every process together (by the same craftsmen), and that takes more time.



Russell and I pose with our "works in process." We placed our orders nearly a year earlier, and this was the current state of the "hand-made" process. These are 28 gauge/bore guns, with nearly every aspect of function and appearance being made to our personal specifications – as all Purdey guns are.



Sara and I leaving the showroom on Audley Street. Purdey sells many interesting sporting items there, besides guns.