

# HAMMER DOUBLES

## A Pair of Lancasters

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #293 —

On the dealer's table at the Safari Club International convention, they looked like old "worn-out" hammer doubles, made in 1875. But the hang tags showed that they were a pair of guns, by a respectable London maker, and deserved a closer look. Upon examination, the locks were tight and crisp, and the 30" cylinder bore barrels had never been refinished on the outside and the bores never polished on the inside. Except for hardly any finish, and a few dings on the barrels, they were a solid, well cared for, matched pair of guns.

These were Charles Lancaster guns, a London brand never to be embarrassed with. While they were marked "1" and "2" on the top of the barrels, bottom of the foreends, and on the guards, they were "ten" serial numbers apart. Still made for the same owner, just not ordered at the same time. They weighed just over seven pounds each. The "maker" had a long background in barrel making with Manton, dating back to the early 1800's. Originally, he made barrels

for Manton (his former employer), Purdey and Boss—and many others. Somewhere along the line he began making his own guns. Mr. Lancaster died before 1850, and the second generation was running the business when these guns were made in 1875.

Purdey had patented the sliding bolt in 1863, to open and close a gun, with the "in the guard" thumb lever, to open the guns (move the sliding bolt back). This was the best system ever developed, and Lancaster would have paid a



*Old brown guns, but a great maker and they have not been refinished.*

royalty to Purdey, of two British Pounds to use this sliding bolt and thumb lever to open and close their gun.

My choice of shells, on any vintage gun, is always light loads—24 grams of shot and a velocity of 1200 feet per second works well. Not many companies make this load, but one needs to be really picky with vintage guns. With this load, I shot pheasants and quail and sporting clays, locally and it worked

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**“...but how could I ever shoot the guns together?”**

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fine in a hammer double—but how could I ever shoot the guns together?

Argentina for doves was the answer, if you do the cocking yourself! You see, the Spanish place the loader slightly different than the English. The English stand beside the shooter, while the Spanish sit either in front of or behind the shooter. Yes, I would recock the hammers personally, for safety's sake.

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*Purdey patented the sliding bolt in 1863. The thumb lever opener had a minor change as part of the patent also.*



*In 1875, Damascus barrels were the norm in England, and all over the world.*