



SPRING BORED? NOT LIKELY WITH A WEIhraUCH HW80K

Alpha Militaria's Rich Saunders goes back to his roots to discover his appreciation of an HW80

Like most airgunners of a certain age, my hobby began with a spring powered rifle but has become consumed by modern, high-tech pre-charged pneumatic guns. Undoubtedly, PCPs are easier to shoot and flatter our inner marksman. Indeed, I use one on most of my hunting trips and for my pest control responsibilities simply because I am more accurate.

I owe it to my quarry to be on the top of my game and if I can get into position on a rabbit, pigeon or squirrel, it is as good as in the bag. In fact, I'd say that most of the time it's the challenge of getting into the right place to take a shot than pulling the trigger. Sorry if that makes me sound like a big head, but in truth it has more to do with the quality of PCP rifles because I am an average shot at best.

On the range, of course, the dynamic is different, and I'll admit to the fact that other than satisfying myself that my PCP is properly zeroed, pouring pellet after pellet through the same hole is less of a challenge – satisfying yes, but challenging no.

I can't tell you why it took so long to dawn on me, but the obvious remedy was to go back to my roots and dust off the HW80 springer I had as a kid. It's a 1981 mk 1 in .22. I had sold my BSA Airsporter S to buy it from my friend's brother – best deal ever.

Since then, it's been restored with new internals and an overhaul of the metal and wood work. It looks a million dollars and although it shoots just as well, it demands more input from me as the shooter to get it right.

Much has changed in the 40 years since my mk 1 came off the Weihrauch production line, and in truth, all that tuning and tweaking means it is a much different rifle to the one I wielded all those years ago. The current model, looks a little different – the forend is rounded as opposed to the angular finish on my rifle – but does it still sit at the top of the spring leader board?

Courtesy of Hull Cartridge, I got the opportunity to find out when a brand new HW80K in .22 arrived at Alpha Militaria for review. I'm lucky enough to get my hands on plenty of rifles, but this was a little special.

At just under 4kgs, the HW80K carries on a Weihrauch tradition for substantial springers, although in its defence, the rifle was developed initially to deliver 20+ ft. lbs. for the US market where it was marketed as the Beeman R1. UK and European power limits are well within its design capabilities and the result is a recoil that is easily manageable, but enough to remind you this is 'aint no PCP.

'Workhorse' is a term often associated with the HW80, even by Weihrauch, and I've always thought it a little unkind because its performance is up there with the best. But I can see why the label has endured because frilly design features are few and far between. There's some chequering on the pistol grip and a black spacer on the solid rubber butt pad but that's it.

However, there is a beauty in the simplicity. The beech stock may be undramatic, but it is perfectly proportioned and provides excellent shoulder fit. Even though it is available only as a dedicated right hander, southpaws will still be able to use the HW80 without much discomfort.

That pistol grip sets you up perfectly to address the sublime Rekord trigger with a thumb up or wrapped around grip. I don't know if the unit on the current HW80K is much different to the one on my 40 year old mk1. It certainly feels the same – zero creep, clear definition between the two stages and a let off that breaks like a wine glass. The adjustment screw, which is easily accessed via a hole in the trigger guard, makes tweaking the weight easy. A light tap breaks the barrel, which sweeps back with a minimum of effort to cock the action and locks up on return with no movement. The cocking stroke also automatically sets the safety button at the back of the action which you'll have to push in before taking a shot. The HW80K's 410mm barrel (500m on the full length HW80) is threaded and comes with a Weihrauch silencer. I'll be honest and say that I'd always thought silencers on springers was largely a waste of time. I've changed my mind now, big time.

With a scope mounted on the generous dove tail rails, I couldn't wait to relive my youth down the range. Shooting a springer requires a technique that simply isn't required as much with a PCP. The HW80K demands respect in the form of consistent hold, controlled breathing and proper trigger attack. And once I'd stopped taking the liberties I'd got used to with a PCP, the rifle smashed 10p coin groups at 30 metres time after time.

Accurate and consistent as it is, the HW80K has a slight twang, as do many Weihrauch springers. It didn't affect the rifle's performance and in truth it is only noticeable simply because your ear is right next to the action. The good news is that the HW80, like many of its stablemates, responds well to some light tuning and fettling.