



Peter Hofer Jagdwaffen Ferlach, Austria

Geoffrey Boothroyd

A NUMBER of years have passed since I first wrote about Peter Hofer and the "Valley of the Gunmakers". His craftsmanship and skills were first brought to my attention by several British gunmakers who had seen examples of his work at one of the European shooting exhibitions.

No greater tribute could be paid than to have the admiration of one's peers and I made a promise to myself that I would ask Peter to let me see some of his work. This has been possible and we can also see something of the workshop where the work is carried out.

Peter, now in his thirties, runs under his personal direction, a gunmaking workshop in Ferlach, the centre of Austrian gunmaking, a small town, a few miles south of Klagenfurt.

I have been fascinated by Ferlach ever since I saw examples of the work of the Ferlach gunmakers at an International Exhibition in Florence, Italy. This was a quarter of a century ago! The work of this small enclave of gunmakers has continued to arouse my interest ever since and examples of work from Ferlach has increased my interest over the years.

Peter Hofer attended the renowned School of Gunmaking in Ferlach, gaining his diploma at the age of 21 in 1979. He set up in business on his own in 1986 and created a team of specialists including some of the world's top engravers. And, as readers may know, engraving is one of my specialist interests!

Since then the work of Peter Hofer and his small team of craftsmen has been seen at Exhibitions in Brussels, Paris and in Nuremberg and also in Dallas and Las Vegas, USA. His work has been written up in sporting magazines in many countries in terms of the highest praise.

The materials employed are of the highest quality, the steel for the barrels is bought by a Gunmaker's Co-operative from the famous steel makers Bohler and the wood for stocks is of exhibition quality regarding colour and figure.

Hofer shotguns are made in 12, 16 and 20 bore, stock shape and dimensions are to the customer's wishes. Rifles can, I think, be regarded as a speciality! They are available in a range of over one



Peter Hofer with an example of his work.
Photo courtesy Peter Hofer Jagdwaffen.

hundred calibres and as single shot, side-by-side and over and under. In the European tradition, combination rifle/shotgun weapons are also built.

A list of prosaic specifications would serve little purpose since the products of the Hofer workshop are individual creations of the gunmakers, the engravers and the customer. The result of this collaboration is something personal and unique.

It is equally difficult to provide details of the cost. I suppose the answer, as always, is that if you have to ask the price then you cannot afford it!

If, like me, you cannot afford one of these creations, take pleasure and satisfaction from looking at the illustrations which, better than words, express something of the quality and super craftsmanship which can only be truly appreciated with the gun in your hands. If, on the other hand, you have come into an inheritance, or are just well off, then the address of the creator of this magnificence is shown.

P. Hofer-Jagdwaffen, Buchsenmachermeister, A-9170 FERLACH.
F. Lang-Str. 13, Austria. Tel. 010 43 4227 3683.

Acknowledgments. I have to thank Peter Hofer for his kindness and unstinting help in the preparation of this article.



At the bench of the engraver showing the application of gold inlay. Photo courtesy Peter Hofer Jagdwaffen.



Here we see the stocker at work, note the figure and grain of the wood! Photo courtesy Peter Hofer Jagdwaffen.



For the traditionalist, a double 12 bore single trigger shotgun with superb scroll engraving. Photo courtesy Peter Hofer Jagdwaffen.



Fine game scene engraving on a double 12 bore shotgun with single trigger. Photo courtesy Peter Hofer Jagdwaffen.



From above, a 12 bore shotgun with the makers name proudly inlaid in gold. Photo courtesy Peter Hofer Jagdwaffen.



Detail of the engraving on the over and under double rifle shown on the cover. Photo courtesy Peter Hofer Jagdwaffen.



Detail of the engraving on the trigger guard of a single barrel hi-power rifle No. 297. Photo courtesy Peter Hofer Jagdwaffen.



Every aspect pleases! Superb engraving on the pistol grip cap of the single hi-power rifle No. 297. Photo courtesy Peter Hofer Jagdwaffen.