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The French have hit the mark with this delightful, lightweight game gun, as West London Shooting School's **Mark Heath** explains.

Chapuis C40 12 bore

FROM
£3,800

Prior to picking up the Chapuis C40 for this month's review the only other French shotgun I had shot before was a Darne made in the same region of France as the Chapuis but with a unique sliding breech action. So on opening the travel case I was quite relieved to find a conventional over-under 12 bore.

In the Middle Ages the area of St. Etienne supported the manufacturing of swords and knives. In 1665 a storage facility was created in Paris to store military weapons made in St. Etienne. When the French Revolution got under way in 1769, 12,000 weapons a year were being produced in the area. The city was renamed Armsville during the revolutionary era and production stepped up to arm the revolutionaries. Later, when the Napoleonic Army was on the rampage, intent on the conquest of Europe, over 30,000 firearms were being produced annually. Things are a little calmer now, however, and firearms are still produced in the region, including by Chapuis.

Jean Louis Chapuis was born in 1899 and was the first member of the family to create his own workshop. In the 1930s it was in the barn at the back of his bar, 80 years later Chapuis Armes has evolved significantly and are now an internationally recognised gunmaker with 65 workers in their factory producing shotguns, double and straight pull rifles and also



The C40 is well put together and handles like a dream.

In the field

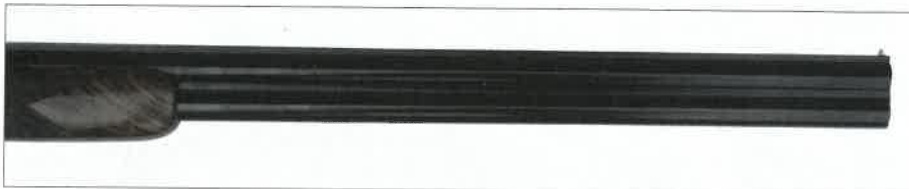
This is the first Chapuis I have seen let alone shot, so the first job was to put it together. With the Chapuis you do have to get the angle of attack right to get the barrels to slot in with minimum effort to the action, the good news is once you get this correct its simple and the barrels go onto the action right first time every time.

Out onto the shooting school for what turned out to be a bit of an eye opener with one of my usual co-testers, Paul Gendall. We started on the 40ft tower to get the measure of the gun and it soon became apparent what looks like a perfectly normal off the shelf medium priced gun has got some amazing handling

qualities. The patterns were absolutely stunning with the fixed ¼ and ½ chokes, the gun was fast handling but controllable, we moved the targets around and we were both impressed quickly. Onto the 80ft tower for something a bit more serious. We both shot the complete variety of targets straight overhead and out wide left and right, the handling was stunning and perfect breaks on the targets, literally the whole clay ground to powder. We both changed our timing to shooting the bird normally and then some really fast breaks straight off the tower, the handling of the gun was completely flexible. We were shooting a variety of fibre wad cartridges from

24gram No.7 ½ up 32gram No.5s. The gun was fitted with the chequered butt plate, the gun was comfortable with little felt recoil, this was due to a combination of the balance and the measurements.

We started the test expecting average fairly neutral handling with a 'does the job' sort of response and came away incredibly impressed. If your thing is shooting pheasants closer to Pluto than Earth you might want something a little heavier or the 32in barrel version with some multi chokes rather than the fixed ¼ and ½ on the test gun, but as an all round game gun the Chapuis has some great strengths, especially its handling. ■



This C40 has 30in barrels but 28in and 32in versions are also available.

revolvers. Most of the staff are recruited from the gunmaking school in St. Etienne - food for thought for our gun trade.

The Chapuis we are testing is aimed at the UK game shooting market, the demonstrator we were sent was a 12 bore with 30in barrels. It is also available in 28in and 32in barrel options. It was a fixed choke gun with $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ chokes, a multi choke option is available with the chokes made by Chapuis themselves rather than an aftermarket manufacturer. An auto non selective safety catch is also a standard feature.

The woodwork had pleasant figuring with straight grain through the grip to give strength, and a chequered butt plate. The fore-end was of a rounded type and particularly

comfortable, the wood to metal fit is of the highest standards.

The guns overall weight was 7lb 4oz so falls in the category of a lightweight 12 bore game gun and the balance was perfectly on the pin with the barrels coming in at 1,400g. The gun test was going to be interesting. But before that the stock measurements were some of the best off the shelf measurements that I have seen, the length of pull was $15\frac{1}{8}$ ths with drop measurements of $1\frac{3}{8}$ ths at comb and $2\frac{1}{8}$ th at heel with $\frac{1}{4}$ in cast off at heel. The reason for this became apparent later when I spoke to Stephane Dupille, the founder of Stephen & Son gunmakers, who declared that the stocks were made to his specification. He is a prime dealer in the UK for Chapuis and also its UK repair centre.



The stock and the grip can be made to the customer's preferences.

or vented and the action can be ordered with case hardened colour finish. Additional barrels are also available to order. Chapuis can be ordered in 12, 16, 20 and 28 bore. Lastly there are case options, the standard is a plastic travel case or alternatively there are canvas and leather options.

The gun tested at West London Shooting School was in the basic version but clearly there are a fabulous range of options that you can specify to the extent that you will have a custom individual gun made to your specifications. ■

The C40 has a wide range of options in addition to barrel lengths that we have already mentioned. There are choices of grip style including straight hand, Prince of Wales and pistol grip, two fore-end options rounded and schnabel. Wood upgrades can also be added to the specification and the stock made to bespoke specifications. Ribs can be specified as solid

Scores

Engineering: 9/10 Appears very well put together and executed. It feels properly screwed together and comes with a two-year warranty. I think the way the safety catch works gives an indication of the quality of the gun, this one has a reassuring, very precise click on and off.

Handling: 10/10 A real shock in this department to a significant degree with some truly fabulous handling.

Looks and finishing: 9/10 A very well presented gun, that has been well finished, my personal preference would be slightly darker wood but then with a Chapuis I could upgrade the wood.

Value: 9/10 With a starting price of £3,800 you can then customise your gun with various extras and bespoke measurements in a way that I am not sure many others currently offer. I would add bespoke fitting, upgraded wood and either the canvas or leather case.

Customer service and reliability: 9/10 Chapuis does not have a heavy brand presence in the UK however they are definitely not new to gunmaking. Stephen & Son is well known within the gun trade and back these guns and provide first class service to boot.

Overall: 46 /50