

Theoben Engineering

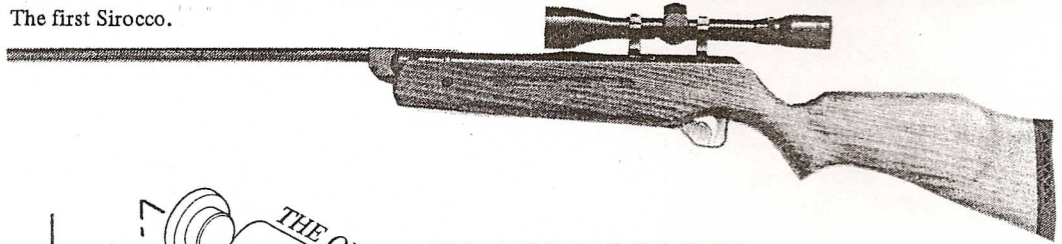
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MANUFACTURERS OF PRECISION AIRWEAPONS

The first Sirocco.



By Trevor Morris

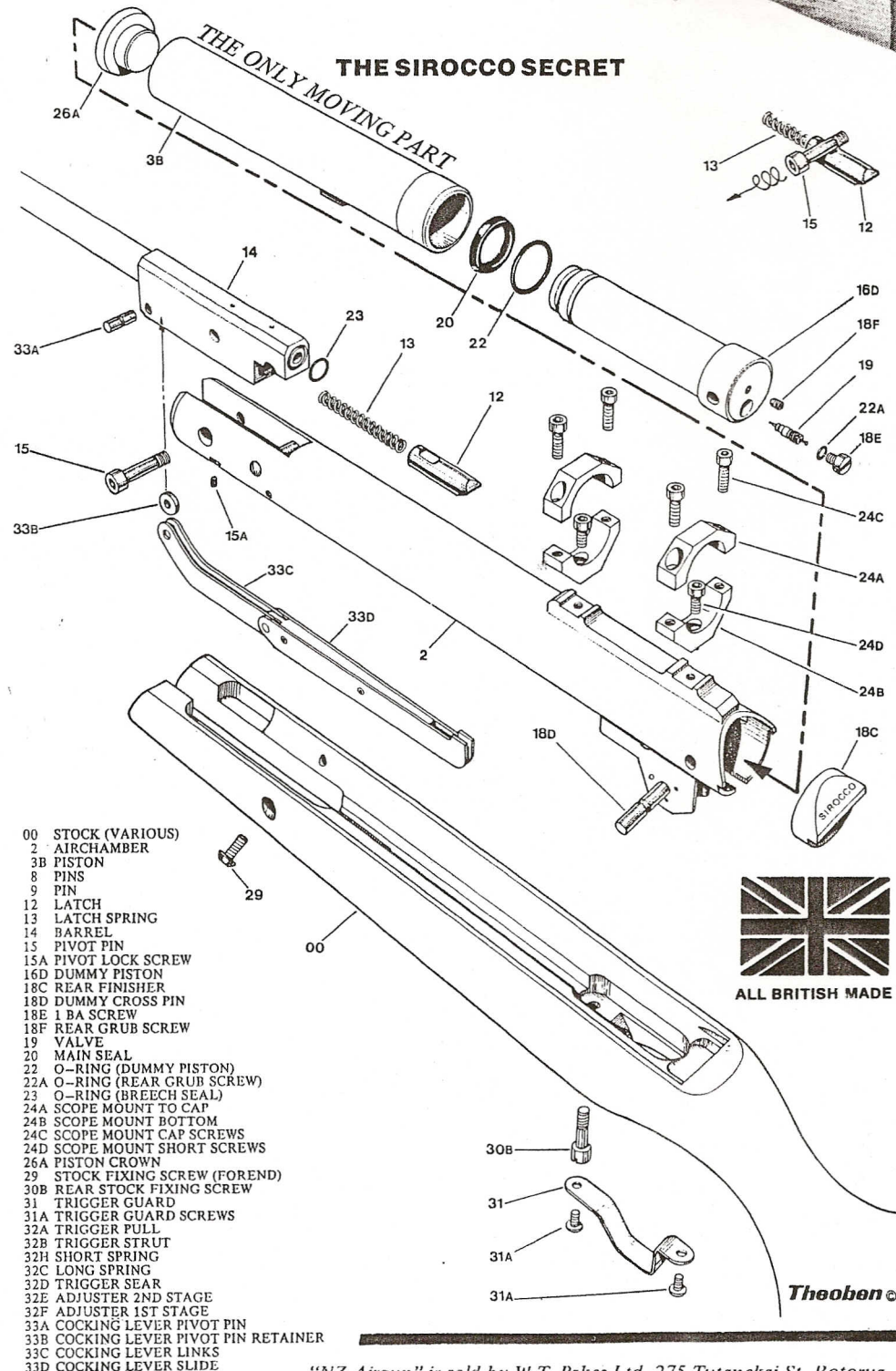
AS A keen rabbit hunter with air rifles, I was recently fortunate to obtain a Theoben Sirocco De Luxe air rifle in .177 calibre, with its unique power source.

Like most enthusiasts I had read of its 1982 introduction in England, and followed reviews and test reports with considerable interest. Here was an air rifle which appeared from the beginning to be the ultimate hunting air weapon.

As it is with most well designed inventions, the Theoben system is quite simple. Externally the Sirocco appears to be a normal break barrel rifle, however inside it's a different story altogether.

The rifle is cocked by breaking the barrel, but instead of compressing a spring as in spring/piston weapons, the Sirocco piston is forced back into a permanently sealed compressed air reservoir. Originally inert CO₂ gas was used which insured that lubrication of the seals lasted, but now with the use of highly resistant rubber seals, compressed air (or nitrogen) is used. In essence what we have is a pneumatic ram to replace the usual spring. When fired, the piston is released by the expansion of the compressed air in the sealed reservoir, and the pellet is propelled by air in front of the piston. Theoben tested an early model by firing in excess of 25,000 shots with no loss of power. So reliable is the system that there is a generous guarantee on the power source for the original purchaser.

David Theobald and Ben Taylor, who together make up Theoben Engineering developed this unique and innovative system in the early 1980's after observing air assisted front forks on motorcycles. They modified existing air rifles with their invention and were delighted with the results to the extent that they immediately applied for patents in several countries.



"NZ Airgun" is sold by W.T. Pakes Ltd, 275 Tutaneikai St, Rotorua

Sirocco Countryman with Beech stock.

Sirocco De Luxe
with Webley barrel and open sights.

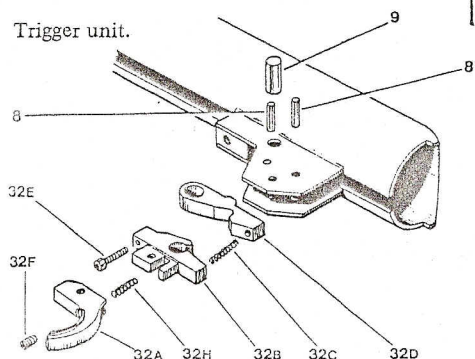
Sirocco De Luxe
with Anschutz barrel and sights.

Sirocco De Luxe
with shortened barrel length and silencer.

Following this they approached two large air rifle manufacturers who showed interest, but not the foresight to back it. Believing in their system, Theobald and Taylor gave up their jobs and established Theoben Engineering to manufacture and market their own air rifles.

Of particular advantage when hunting, is that once cocked there is no spring to wear out, it can be left as long as you like. The absence of lubricant in the compression chamber means there is no form of detonation whatsoever, therefore the rifle is amazingly consistent from one shot to the next. In fact the only lubricant required is a small amount on the linkages from

Trigger unit.



time to time, making the Sirocco virtually maintenance free. Perhaps this is why this weapon has been selected for use by professional vermin controllers, and the Royal Air Force for bird control around airfields!

On firing the Sirocco the shooter is aware that there is less actual recoil, presumably because there is no spring. Lock time, the length of time the pellet is in the barrel, is extremely quick and I find my rifle to be most forgiving, even when firing from a variety of positions — something I find frustrating at times with other air rifles.

The Sirocco is easy and smooth to cock despite being a high power version in excess of 20ft lbs. It is capable of extreme accuracy, better than I can shoot it, although my confidence when shooting rabbits has grown enormously over the past few months. The comfortable walnut stock fits me extremely well and comes up on aim quickly, a point which has allowed me a successful shot at many rabbits who spotted me first and were about to take off. The metalwork is highly polished and the blue equal to the best of the early Webley MK3 air rifles which I admire.

When originally purchased I thought I had obtained an updated recent model with a number of subtle but important modifications, however this was not the case. This trigger I found to be quite tough despite the crisp let off. In ignorance I made my own adjustments

which resulted in the trigger being set too light causing the sear to slip, snapping the linkages (33c). Fortunately I had followed the recommended method of cocking and loading so did no other damage. The links were quickly replaced by Dave Theobald who answered my plea for help by airmailing a new set from England, along with a steel silencer. I have since realised that they are the same cocking links as on later model BSA Meteors.

Theoben use other companies to supply parts for the Sirocco. Early models sported Webley & Scott barrels and sights which have in turn been replaced by Anschutz barrels and sights, as on my rifle. While the Anschutz rearsight is a well made and functional unit, I have removed both open sights and mounted a Tasco 4x scope to take advantage of the Sirocco's capabilities.

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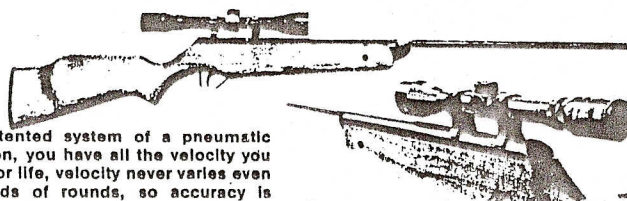
(Precision Air Weapons)

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